

## *Jeannie's Journey*

### **Jenna Vowles**

I knew from the beginning of this folio that I wanted to do something that was of personal importance to me and something that I had the ability to access a large amount of information and visual resources on. I knew that my Nanna, Jeannie, was going through a tough point in her battle with oral cancer, affecting her speech, interactions with others and her overall emotions. I wanted to be able to pay tribute to some aspects of my art to her, whether it be the whole artwork and folio or include her in an overarching theme. This topic of my Nanna and her love and commitment to her family, is highly relevant to my life currently and is a personal topic which I found meaning within. Jeannie's strength and determination against her cancer and the chemotherapy has been extremely inspiring and admirable to see her fight and be resilient against the setbacks she is experiencing.

Over the course of creating my folio and concepting, I came across multiple artists who I thought would be able to convey my theme of love and commitment. Armenian collage artist and painter, Minas Halaj's bold work including flower crowns and a central portrait of her subjects. I took influence from Halaj's work by creating my own flower crowns using photos from Jeannie's Garden and my own photoshoots of flowers, weeds, and succulents to be used for my final artworks. I also incorporated influence from American acrylic painter Cris Wicks' colourful typography portraits, using words to contour the shape of a face and his newspaper backgrounds. Instead of using the newspaper background, however, I was inspired to use Jeannie's recipe book, full of her and her mother's favourite recipes. My Nanna is the mother of 5 boys and has always been well known for her cooking and entertaining crowds. Jeannie's strength and resilience against her cancer is also a considerable influence on my determination and inclusion of certain elements like succulents to represent perseverance.

My intended meaning behind 'Jeannie's Journey' is to show the emotion and strength of my Nanna whilst representing her story and struggles of oral cancer, in a discrete form of things she loves, like her garden which she is committed to and her recipes which she enjoys preparing for other people. Through my artwork I am trying to portray the cycle of Jeannie's cancer journey and the various times of challenges she faces. To do this, I decided on 3 artworks, varying in size, that all fit under an overarching story. Representing the ups and downs of her cancer diagnosis and it attempting to take control, represented in the weeds, but her also thriving and surviving, like the succulents. The wrapped ivy vines wrapped around the hand, evident in the artwork, represent the cancer trying to strangle and restrict her from fighting and 'escaping its grasp' embodying a dark part of Jeannie. While the succulents of the second A3 picture represent Jeannie's growing and succeeding, much like a succulent which is known for its ability to be adaptive and resilient, traits that I was able to see Jeannie exert throughout her cancer journey. The succulents are much like her in this way, hence the inspiration for the choosing of the succulents for one of the artworks. The final part of the 3-piece artwork body is that of a portrait of Jeannie with a flower crown. I have depicted Jeannie with a flower crown to show her driven personality and how there may be challenges that lie ahead, A crown in many ways symbolizes victory and leadership,

I see these traits in Jeannie too as I know she'll fight her cancer and still manage to support everyone else.

When evaluating my own practical work, there are both positive and negative aspects that are evident to myself. In a negative light, the topic of my Nanna's cancer journey is extremely raw and personal, leading into potential topics and findings like her tumor's increasing severity, the effect it plays on her speech and the challenges she had faced and continues to face. Although, it brings positive aspects too, through this art project, I was able to develop my bond with my Nanna and help her to see her journey and herself in a positive light, about how strong and kind she is. There are also positive aspects to my work too, not only is it symbolic to her journey, but it also shows bright and realistic colours to depict the flowers and Jeannie's face. Through these artworks too, I was able to explore my skills within botanicals and photoshoots.

Throughout my folio, I looked at a total of 5 different artists, all with differing media and styles, but aspects that I picked specifically to concept and take inspiration from. Some artists like Minas Halaj and Cris Wicks were incorporated into my final artworks, for the inspiration of the flower crowns and the newspaper backgrounds previously mentioned, which I felt I could tie into elements of Jeannie. Although I concepted for artists like, American painter Lillian Yeast, Australian painter John Olsen and American coloured pencil artist, Fred Hatt. Hatt's work inspired me through the messy pencil technique, much like how Jeannie would be feeling, a bit messy and lost, which is what drew me to his works.

From my folio, I developed a personal aesthetic and better understanding of Nanna's values and beliefs. Jeannie values friends and strong relationships, but she also believes in selflessness and the ability to constantly give and rarely take. The flowers and succulents within the artworks represent the bright and kind personality she has, but also works in cohesion with the warm and loving nature of her hands and her ability to be so generous. My Nanna Jeannie helped me to understand the values of the important friendships and maintaining strong relationships despite challenges and hardships that may be faced throughout our lives.