

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Heroes***

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In my body of work, I have explored the depiction and representation of heroes. I believe we define ourselves by the heroes we choose, they are symbols for the qualities and ambitions we endeavour to achieve, giving an ideal to strive towards. However, unlike the perfect heroes of old, our relation to these "larger than life" figures is solely grounded by their flaws and imperfections, and hence their human nature. Despite their fictional abilities, I have always idolised and aspired to embody the moral and honest standings that super heroes employ, therefore I have attempted to symbolize this in my final practical. It seemed appropriate to portray the concept of superheroes through a comic book style art. Initially I investigated Roy Lichtenstein who explored the ideas of clichés and icons in his work through Pop Art. In the beginning, cartoons and comic strips were largely used as source material, although after time he eventually moved away from this initial style. However, the use of Ben-Day dots, (named after the inventor Benjamin Day's 1879 technique for reproducing printed images, by using dots to recreate gradations of shading,) persisted in a majority of his work, such as "Drowning Girl" and "Crying Girl".

Having examined Lichtenstein's style of work, I considered using the Ben-Day technique to capture the classic comic book style, however, upon reflection, decided against it as it was a representation that was used to depict comic books of the time, and is now outdated. Instead I chose contemporary illustration techniques through the use of Adobe Photoshop to capture the modern hero. This enabled me to evolve my own style that I used to depict the heroic figures.

In the same way Pop Art captured the style of comic books of the time, I wanted to create a style of work that would offer a contemporary take on comic books in the digital age. Initially, when creating my practicals, I aimed to utilise various digital techniques to generate a stylised superhero comic book artwork. To achieve this, I explored human anatomy to develop an in-depth understanding of the human body, allowing me to more easily depict and illustrate the heroes in my final pieces.

Investigation into the following artists proved incredibly useful, allowing me to borrow and emulate various stylistic components that I employed when creating and developing my own personal aesthetic. Ivan Reis was inspirational to my work, as his illustrations consistently utilise foreshortening and perspective to apply energy and depth to his work. Reis often uses dynamic poses throughout his panels to provide impact and interest to the viewer. I aimed to achieve this level of dynamic composition in my work by using numerous foreshortening and dynamic poses, to convey movement and force.

Furthermore, the semi-realistic style of facial illustration and colouring used by Todd Nauck was also influential to my work. To ensure serious, but semirealistic scenes, I emulated his art style by utilising thick line weights and vibrant colours, vividly depicting the scene with great depth, allowing me to achieve an authentic comic book image. Additionally, also inspired by Nauck, I focused on the heroes' hair, utilising Photoshop's "oil painting" filter

atop the mottled colours to emulate individual strands of hair with varying tones. This allowed for a more stylised representation of the figure as the filter achieves an interesting affect.

The costume design of my heroes were heavily influenced by contemporary artist Greg Capullo's work. Evident in his illustrations, Capullo often simplifies the heroes' design, instead using sharp and dramatic shadows to illustrate the finer details of their costume, something of which I have attempted to emulate throughout my work. I believe a busy cluttered suit detracts from the heroic aesthetic achieved by the stoic figures. Because of this, despite small detailed elements, I limited the colours and general design of the various costumes donned by my heroes, creating a simplistic fundamental clothing design.

My work was also influenced by historical artist Todd McFarlane. I was adamant in ensuring that one of the four compositions would consist of exaggerated foreshortening and strong two point perspective, to provide depth in the image. McFarlane was known for his frequent use of foreshortening and so I have emulated this in the hopes to achieve the same level of dynamism found with his illustrations.

The artwork is intended to capture a strong sense of action and energy by utilising techniques of contrasting colours and tones, foreshortening, perspective, bold line work, limited colour palette as well as various textures and effects. Furthermore, the stoic, bold, and dynamic scenes create the heroic and "larger than life" aesthetic I was hoping to achieve. Additionally, the multiple piece design of my final allows each image to be displayed and viewed individually, while still relating to the other pieces. This is ideal as my initial idea of illustrating two full pages of comic book panels overcomplicated the composition and resulted in a disappointing and meaningless outcome.

Two of my heroes are depicted taking watch over their city, showcasing their vigilance and loyalty whilst the other two are presented in a more dynamic scene, highlighting their bravery and courage. I did this as I wished to portray that though they are obviously superheroes, it's their actions and high standing of morals which makes them heroes.

Though initially constructed with strong colours and black line work, I discovered numerous ways to enhance the depth of the pieces using a Wacom tablet and digital techniques in Adobe Photoshop. Oil-painting filters were used to more realistically depict the strands, natural volume, and texture in the figures' hair. Additionally, a combination of "Noise" and "Gaussian Blur" was used to further enhance depiction of texture and motion whilst also creating convincing backgrounds when rendering clouds. Finally, heavy shadows are cast to dramatise the work and create a variety in colour tones.

The final practical was presented as four A1 sized posters depicting stylised heroic figures in a dramatic, or dynamic scene. The work has been produced at a full resolution of 300dpi to maximise the level of detail, giving the work a true but over scaled comic book appearance.