

Practitioner's Statement

People of Adelaide

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My painting collection, titled 'People of Adelaide', was created with the purpose of projecting the diverse colourful personas of the people living in Adelaide. The starting points for this project were few and unrelated. Prior influences for this project included my work in past years, and the artists that I had briefly explored during visual studies. I was certain that I wanted to paint for my final, so I made that my inspiration focus and branched out from there. A simple brainstorm mind map aided me to find other types and styles that I found interesting and work a path towards a unique style.

I had first discovered the style of surrealism via artist Salvador Dali, a style which I was rather intrigued by. Surrealism spoke to me more on a theme and subject basis, but I did not enjoy the realism and highly blended brush strokes. Fauvism was a painting style that strongly stood out to me aesthetically. Studying Fauvism and its unrealistic randomly chosen colours and multi-coloured backgrounds is where I began investigating into ways a person could be displayed in a similar semi or unrealistic manner. Many aspects of the Fauvism style were incorporated into my end piece.

Next I had stumbled across impressionism and its sub-styles. This style of painting was something I loved aesthetically and could connect to. I found paintings done in this manner appealing as they were flowing and sculpted when viewed from afar yet coarse and uneven when analysed up close. The concept of creating 'an impression' of the subject matter through painting unrealistically or roughly was an aspect I wished to incorporate. Several of the sub-styles that I researched into included post-impressionism, modern impressionism, and abstract impressionism. Of these sub-styles, modern impressionism was my favourite. The blocky, angular, and broken lines mixed with a multitude of bold colours produced very dramatic pieces of work.

I related to modern impressionism through how the larger brush strokes represented imperfection, yet structure was maintained. Overall, this portrayed each individual piece as unique. The use of vibrant colours such as reds, yellows, and light blues in a broken format made these paintings stand out above all surrounding paintings. I first had ideas on creating a collection of paintings which would be viewed together when observing the way the colourful pictures on my 'modern impressionism' folio page stood out. I highly enjoyed how the dramatic paintings stood out amongst the greyer ones with flatter tones.

To further develop my understanding and knowledge of modern impressionism I had attempted to find artists who had employed this style in a number of their works. Out of the numerous artists who used aspects of impressionism, two stood out the most. French artist Françoise Nielly's works focused on the variety of bold colours used to portray up-close faces of famous individuals. Nielly however used the palette knife, a tool that I did not enjoy using. The choice of colours were very strong and artificial. I wished to use the warm/cool colour template that Nielly employed to a degree in my paintings. Ben Quilty was the second artist that I had drawn ideas from. Although Quilty may not be viewed directly as an impressionist artist, he has often used aspects of the style such as larger, bolder strokes, a wide range of strong colours, and the use of the impasto technique. Whereas Nielly used pure black to demonstrate shadows, Quilty used darker tones and values of the similar colours. His paintings also used colours that would generally not be used to portray lighting, such as very dark greens and blues.

After feeling confident with my exploration of modern impressionism, I wanted to create several style experimentation pieces. These allowed me to trial and test the use of brush stroke direction, hard or soft edges, vibrancy of colours, and how to show the direction of lighting on the face. I enjoyed the slightly distorted facial structure, as long as it maintained mostly correct placement of features and still has resemblance to the subject. I liked how it showed imperfection, and the beauty of imperfection.

To continue the investigation, I researched facial structure and proportioning, I completed a brief investigation into the different types and shapes of eyes and noses. Sketching these out helped improve my skills on drawing or painting resemble a subject. At this point I had been giving more thought towards what my final piece would look like. Dedicated to creating a collection of modern impressionism paintings, I drew rough plans for what I wished the final collation to look like, and how it would be presented.

I had also discovered the effect of using an impasto technique on the paintings, and how a third dimension improved on the aesthetic qualities of the imperfection. I had chosen to use a wooden board to paint on instead of canvas, as I preferred the solidity and weight of the MDF boards. The development of theme and message arose when I first discovered Fauvism, and how the vibrant unrealistic colour choice and slight inaccuracies showed the uniqueness of the portrait subject. I had built on this theme, and decided to photograph randomly chosen citizens of Adelaide City as the subjects.

The final product is aimed to ideally be viewed from a distance, as it gives the effect of the 'Fauvism styled' multi-coloured background, spread across several paintings. Those that go closer to the paintings would notice imperfections and inaccuracies, representative of the imperfections in all human kind. The slim black border that runs around each piece aids to frame it, representing the individuality of each subject. Stepping back, you see the larger picture, and can see how the mix of bold colours and larger strokes give shape and impressions of the people. Overall, I am highly satisfied with the final outcome of my painting collection. It can be linked to the modern impressionism style, yet contains Fauvism and post-impressionism aspects throughout. I strongly believe that it achieves its aim of representing the uniqueness and vibrant personas of the people in Adelaide.