

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Spíti***

Elizabeth Kalfas

'Spíti' (meaning *home* in Greek) is a body of three graphite drawings on aged paper inspired by my Yia-Yia's home and the unique patterns and details of the ornaments and furnishings contained within it. Together, the drawings capture the still, unchanging and timeless atmosphere of my Yia-Yia's home through my use of harmonious tonal values and unified contrast and depth. However, their unique framing and the subtle introduction of surreal elements such as the forest expanding into the hills out of Yia-Yia's window and the rug swirling into a mossy forest floor symbolize the wondrous, adventurous and almost mysterious side to the lavish and rich rooms, which always seemed like halls of a great castle to me as a child.

Initially, I took inspiration from portrait artist Belinda Eaton who paints women immersed in vivid, contrasting patterning to trial the integration of my face as a child with the patterns I photographed in my Yia-Yia's house. At this point, I intended to explore how my heritage has moulded me as a person. However, I decided that I wished to focus specifically on Yia-Yia's home after she spoke to me during my photographing it. She told me that, after coming to Australia with very little, it's the character, history and love contained within the house I was photographing rather than the ornaments within it. Thus, I decided to utilize graphite to capture a more nostalgic, thoughtful and reflective angle to my concept.

Furthermore, I wished to utilize decorations from Yia-Yia's house as motifs and patterns in a more abstract format, inspired by whimsical and light fairy-tale illustrations by Courtney Brims. However, I found these illustrations too soft and fine for the dramatic character I see in the house. Thus, I then found artist Lucy Hardie, who uses fine ink stippling to create opulently detailed and mysterious interpretations of fairy tales and mythology.

Inspired by Lucy Hardie's use of varying texture in her work, I wished to try and replicate the feeling of my Yia-Yia's rug underfoot and the ambience of her lamplight flooding the rooms. To do this, I was inspired by the etched illustrations within *The Princess and The Goblin* by George Macdonald not only to use hatched lines to recreate movement and form, but to amplify the childish wonder I felt at my lavishly decorated Yia-Yia's home by using heavier contrasts. After noticing the gloomy and mysterious portrayal of forestry in the illustrations, I was interested to then photograph the outside of my Yia-Yia's house, the garden, trees and plants. I realized that to communicate the fairy-tale of Yia-Yia's house, I could tie the interior to the exterior in my work as a way of juxtaposing comfort with fascination, and normalcy with adventure.

The framing of my work and choice of three separate scenes set from different angles of the same room were inspired by the heavily hatched illustrations in *Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick, which jump from one page to another similarly to a film cross-cutting. I aimed to tell a short story in my piece, as if there were a princess residing within this room and it transformed alongside the vivid imagination that it inspires in her. It reflects my love and appreciation for my Yia-Yia and realization that home truly is where the heart is.