

Practitioner's statement

Robert Hannaford

Henry Cockington

Historically art was taught and learnt often through a master apprentice relationship. From Rembrandt to Faritius, the first hand passing of knowledge and skill thrived. Similarly, growing up in a family of artists has enable me to learn from my elders, particularly my mother and grandmother. My mother paints realistic landscapes and my grandmother creates tonal realist works of still life's, landscapes and portraits. They see themselves as visual recorders of the world around them; similarly to the European painters of the 1600s – 1800s.

Like my family I paint and draw because I enjoy portraying realist subject matter using traditional methods and materials. I try to draw or paint something every day. This repetitious practice and skill development does parallel the regimes instilled by past painters and also my family creating daily at home. I have always had a love of traditional realist style art and its power to capture you without necessarily having a conceptual meaning to decipher.

Since I can remember there has been a Robert Hannaford (iconic South Australian artist) self-portrait sitting on our mantelpiece at home; this portrait captures his somewhat arrogant gaze directed to the foreground. Hannaford was taught by Ivor Hele and like myself they were both old scholars from my school. This inspired me to interview Hannaford, and over time I was able to forge a relationship with him. Many apprentices have painted their masters portrait as a sign of respect, hence why I was compelled to paint Hannaford's portrait and continue the legacy of master apprentice, and the generational relationships of my school.

Similarly to Hannaford, I drew and painted my family and myself from life. It was convenient and beneficial to create from life rather than a photo to capture the complexities of translucent skin tone layers and the 3D form of a human bust in comparison to the 2D static perspective of a photo.

The ever-changing nature of natural lighting and inevitable movement of humans was a challenge in my pre-studies. As a result tonal blends were at times harsh, and edge contours particularly those receding due to foreshortening of a side profile required constant adjustment of proportion.

Recreating masters works, such as portraits by Rembrandt; was an important aspect of Hannaford's training. Similarly I recreated Rembrandts works and soon became allured to the crisp broken brush stoke application in his later self-portraits, and layered hazy chiaroscuro backgrounds. I found parallels in technique between Rembrandt and Hannaford, particularly how they capture sharp realism from a distance through many broken tiny strokes which harmonize.

My aim was to represent real life to the best of my ability and as Hannaford says, *"always let the work speak for its self"*. Interestingly, many viewers felt my portrait portrayed Hannaford's strength and wisdom of character due to my vibrant colours and varied layered brush marks which evolved from the techniques of Rembrandt and Hannaford. My visual arts learning and confidence flourished under the teachings of Hannaford, he said *"I have been painted many a time, they have all be rubbish however, this has me down to a tee"*, his opinion reinforced my realist painting style and skill development. My work illustrates the invaluable knowledge and support that can be fostered through the mentoring master apprentice relationship.