

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Racing to the Grave***

Rachel Rohde

Since a young age I have always had a sincere love for animals and a passion for their wellbeing, and this initial interest was what sparked the idea for my concept. I have created paintings that depict the different cruelties various animals face within contemporary society. Although both works stem from a similar issue of animal cruelty, they are presented in their own unique way.

*Racing to the Grave*, depicts a dead horse lying solitary on the floor of a stable, referencing the injustices that occur within the horse racing industry. It is estimated that in Australia around 10,000 horses each year are considered 'wastage' within the industry and are sent to the slaughter due to poor performance, injury or are just required to be discarded. This figure never fails to stagger me, thus my reasoning to highlight this issue through my art was something I was eager to embrace.

My painting drew inspiration from contemporary street artist ROA and his large-scale animal paintings that occupy the streets of many countries. ROA's paintings expose the raw truth of humanity that confront the viewer immediately through his colours and realistic depiction, yet it is not completely obvious what the meaning is. ROA's works, especially, had direct connections with my second work, *Cutting Deeper than we Know*, of the Brahman cow face and the gory bloodstained background.

In *Racing to the Grave* I wanted to achieve drama and passion, which I attained through my use of colour and style of application. French painter, Theodore Gericault, was an artist I immediately drew inspiration from as he created sensitive paintings of horses that appeared to lurk within the shadows of the background. His works featured tonal colours and powerful muscular horses appearing from darkness. Although the intention of his work was not to comment on animal cruelties, his style still connected with my own. The distinct muscular definition evident within his works was something that I wanted to incorporate in my own painting through the strong and defined application of my paint.

I also explored Chiaroscuro, where light and shadow is used to maximize the drama and mood within a painting. This technique was something I intended to incorporate in the background and the horse, with the aim being that the background would be dark and hidden, allowing the foreground and the horse to be the main focus of the composition. This, I hoped, would emphasize how powerful horses really are, yet how small and powerless my subject appears in my painting.

Both my works explore different aspects of animal cruelty that unfortunately occur in today's era, both for unique reasons. Each work was created intentionally dissimilar to clearly present the issue via paint application and colour. Each work drew inspiration from different artists of various time periods, yet they both aesthetically convey their issue in a way that does not appear too subtle, yet enough to stir thought in the viewer. Hopefully I have achieved this with you?#