

Practitioner's Statement

Self Portrait in the Morning

Mae Fagan

My second piece attempts to capture the individual nature of my home. By using an impasto-like painting technique, combined with natural hues and black outlines, I my aim was to convey the simplicity and warmth of my household in the mornings.

Intrigued by contemporary portraiture, my intention was to create a portrait which included elements of still life. Straying from realism, I decided to explore more abstract styles which involved the building of texture which I feel adds an extra dimension to the piece.

I enjoyed the candid representations by Russian artist, Kostya Lupanov's and his ability to capture an honesty about his characters. This involved textured paint strokes but I realised the arrangement and positioning of the subject also played an important role. Exploring this approach I experimented with facial expressions and body positioning. I also found a warmer colour scheme created a friendly atmosphere.

Exploring colour further I found the bold and colourful works of Henri Matisse very enthralling, and I this gave me the idea of incorporating contrasting hues into my piece in addition to experimenting with black outlines. Experimenting with different mediums like impasto and specifically drawing and pastels, I eventually returned to acrylic paint.

For a theme I originally intended to focus on an idea that conveyed 'thought'. A natural human activity prompted by many experiences and situations I was going to use blues and browns in the piece as I felt those colours best describe a person absent in thought. My idea changed however, once I took reference photographs because I felt they did not have the level of excitement I was looking for.

Looking for artist who incorporate a narrative into their portraits I found the work of Andrew James most engaging. His figures pretend in everyday situations give the viewer a great deal of personal information about the sitter. I therefore decided to paint a self-portrait. I arranged our kitchen at home with flowers, mugs and pots. Choosing to sit, I had my brother take photos of me in different positions and angles with my pet cockatiel. I was very happy with the photographs as they captured happiness and serenity that exists in our home.

When transferring the drawing onto the canvas I changed aspects of the composition to create enough variation so that it would maintain the interest of the viewer and assist the narrative in my image. During the painting process I worked one colour around the canvas at a time so that I could maintain a balance of both colour and texture made by the brush strokes. I then worked on the highlights and built up the dark to emphasis shadows.

Finally I believe the piece turned out well and I am happy with the final product. I learnt a lot about the impasto painting technique. The composition and the painting technique has been instrumental in making a busy and expressive piece and I think it conveys a truthful representation of myself and the warm environment I live in.