

Practitioner's Statement

Hospitalised

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On Boxing Day 2014, my parents were involved in a major car collision, which led to a three-month recovery for my dad who suffered major physical and mental problems. In particular, during his early stay in the intensive care unit; he experienced powerful hallucinations due to a severe combination of pain and medicinal drugs.

From this, flowed a shift in my artwork, where it transitioned from being meaningless to meaningful, which reflected my passion towards the recovery of my dad, and the total journey my family endured. I began exploring particular portraiture from a handful of styles. My first influential artist was Ben Quilty. Throughout the exploration of his work I learnt the importance of colour. I then was influenced by the art movement of French Impressionism who approached their artwork with a sense of spontaneity and recognition of the lighting around them, rather than detail. This branched off into my exploration of the work of Robert Hannaford. After analysing his work and attending his exhibition at the Adelaide Art Gallery, I felt that his art was traditional yet impressionistic. I was completely influenced to follow the principals of impressionism throughout the portrait of my dad, and I read through articles on impressionism to lengthen my understanding of this style. However, I wanted to showcase the hallucinations my dad experienced, which led me to my final artist of influence, Pablo Amaringo. He creates intricate spiritual designs after taking the hallucinogenic plant drug 'Ayahuasca.'

I explored and considered the effects of different colour schemes and compositions. To express the surreal incident that had occurred for my family, I chose to distribute three faces of my dad on the canvas. This conveyed two primary elements, one being that his "mind is all over the place" and appeared distorted like "triple vision." Photographing my dad allowed me to explore a range of emotions and expressions that were in association with the accident. These included sadness, anger, confusion, optimism, gratefulness and acceptance. Rather than dwelling on the negatives, I chose to express the more positive side of the incident which was experienced when my dad's recovery was progressing well. This required a well-suited image, and I finally captured when where my dad was gently smiling.

After outlining the three faces with a light pencil, I began applying thick, bright smears of oil paint to areas of the paint. These were my base tones, and they were balanced out with lighter, natural skin tones, which consisted of oil and acrylic paint, in quick, free brush strokes. This gave the features a more natural appearance in which I was happy with, because it confined to the rules of impressionism. The most important technique I was involved in was the progressive steps between the faces. Because I was painting the same faces three times, they need to look very similar, so therefore if I did something to one face, I'd do it to the other. I used a variety of paintbrush thicknesses depending on the painting task. For my coverage of colour I used a thick flat brush, for detail, a finer tapered brush was used, and for the background base colours, a large wide brim was used to cover a bigger area of the canvas at once. The background colours were explored, and initially I had settled on a design that showcased bright colours and black. I faced many struggles when composing the background of my final piece. This was the area in which I wanted to express most of the stories and hallucinations that corresponded to the entire car accident and my dad's hallucinations.

Initially I started follow the style of Amaringo however I later found that this wasn't a strong point for my painting. I felt as though anything I was applying to the background looked badly. This was not a positive way for me to continue so in an act of frustration, and doubt I impulsively painted of the background with grey oil paint. This decision allowed some of the previous bright colour to almost show through the back in the form of a hue. And I ended up loving this and just progressed onwards. I added symbolic details to the piece, which express things relative to my dad's hospitalisation.

For creating a confusing portrait of my dad that symbolised his hallucinations in hospital, I painted a large portrait consisting of three of the same faces, painted in an impressionistic technique. My initial idea of painting a background in the style of Amaringo, shift to a simple background of grey, which features some turquoise lines, flecks of white paint, and a hand holding medicinal pills. Each of these associated to my dad's experience, to creating my final piece seemed to be more progressive and I really only developed my final idea as I painted it.