

## ***Deterioration***

Emily Richardson-Smith

My subjected body of work (*Deterioration*) seeks to make a connection between actions and consequences and by extension encourage the viewer to wonder what is hidden in the unknown/future. This theme was developed around my underlying love for Australia and how, with negative actions, negative effects are occurring and compromising the pristine land we call home today, giving it the protentional to deteriorate and no longer hold its enticing beauty.

I began by researching the way historical artists depicted Australia during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Landscape artists John Glover and Arthur Streeton both used paint to capture Australia's dry and inhospitable characteristics through colour, light and heat, along with using panoramic, horizontal landscapes to emphasise the country's vast expanses. As I was so impressed by Glover and Streeton's portrayal of Australia, I opted to use their techniques within the background component of my piece. This can be seen in my abstract/vague portrayal of a dust storm that is used as a backdrop across all three boards, that when connected create one whole picture. Various brown tones and dusty grey tones were used to showcase Australia's iconic heat and bareness, while strong light direction and brush strokes assisted in showing the lands barren, sparse and stark qualities.

The native Australian flower bouquets seen centred in the middle of each of the three boards not only strategically conform to the Australian theme, but are also representative of Australia's stages of deterioration. The first frame of flowers appears fresh signifying that the land was originally pristine and untouched. The second frame of flowers are slowly dying, wilted and are visually unpleasing, showing that the land is becoming of a lesser quality. The third and last frame of flowers are completely dead, this frame is representative of the future as if nothing is done to rectify the current damage, the land will be unrepairable and exponential complications will arise.

Australian still-life artists Margaret Preston and Margaret Olley use natives to create a point of difference and intrigue in their compositions as natives have shapes and textures that are not seen in conventional bouquets. I channelled this technique by incorporating unusual banksia cobs and spiky leaves into the bouquet, creating the same effect.

Flowers have also been used as they are a symbol of beauty, which simply represents the beauty of the land in a symbolic manner. Though the flowers are deliberately arranged to be visually appealing, whereas nature is beautiful by default.

By having the flower bouquets hovering in the centre of each board I could incorporate subtle surrealism to finally pull together all components of the piece and have the message shine through. It was the words of Rene Magritte which inspired me to use this approach within my art, as it perfectly complements and connects everything. Magritte once said that; *"Everything we see hides another thing, we always want to see what is hidden by what we see, but it is impossible. Humans hide their secrets too well .... There is an interest in that which is hidden and which the visible does not show us. This interest can take the form of a quite intense feeling, a sort of conflict, one might say, between the visible that is hidden and the visible that is present."* Magritte's master piece *The Castle of Pyrenees 1959* among his many others that follow this same view of wanting to know what is hidden by what we see, assisted me in tying together my composition.

In this context, the floating flowers hide the unknown, we see flowers, we judge their beauty, then we move on. My intent with this piece, was to have the audience not only see beauty in the flowers, but look past them and wonder what is the real problem, what is making them die and ask why they deteriorating? The unknown future is hidden by the flowers.

Furthermore, the additional medium of impasto was applied to the third and final board to allow the piece to transform into a resolved body of work. This medium harbours expressive traits that allowed a free flowing, three-dimensional effect. Dimension, emotion and movement, along with texture was also added using this newly introduced medium and this changed the way the piece looked and felt. Vincent Van Gogh said it perfectly *“Sometimes the subject calls for less paint, sometimes the material the nature of the subjects themselves demands impasto.”*

By also conforming to the basic elements art – colour, form, line, shape, texture and value, and the principles of art itself, balance, emphasis, movement, proportion, rhythm, unity and variety, the body of work become a cohesive, visually/aesthetically pleasing and organized body of art work.

The body of work has been hung in a progressive manner to encourage the viewer to follow and explore the changes in the painting as well as the changes in the world around them. The size and position of the boards depict and reflect the size of the problem being of a large proportion. I believe I have successfully produced a body of work that expresses the impact of actions on the surrounding environment that also provokes the viewer to look deeper into what is portrayed. My intention, to expand my audiences’ minds and challenge them to think about a damaged, changed, different and broken world, that has been effectively achieved.