

Practitioner's Statement

Lest We Please Forget

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My initial idea for my major piece was to create an artwork focusing on the people involved in the war. I began researching the impact war has on the service men and women, and experimenting with painting them. It was important that I was able to capture the emotions of the older soldier, still having fearful memories and feelings towards his younger self.

I studied the artist Ben Quilty and focused on his portraiture pieces about war veterans. I also focused on Quilty's use of colour and his exhibit "After Afghanistan" which told the story of the service men and women some of which were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Finding out more information on PTSD inspired me to use my major not only as a meaningful piece of art but a way to make people aware of this disorder and how long lasting and horrible it can be. My main philosophy about art is that it can be used as a way to send a message to viewers, which is what I am using my major to do.

My Major piece is an oil painting of the same subject (Danny Donohue) 50 years apart. The younger version of Danny is on the left side of the painting and is him when he fought as an Australian Soldier. I painted this image using 3 different photos of Danny from during the war all of which were in black and white. To get a realistic idea of the colours he would have in his face, I used an image I had taken of my friend Tom. I used less saturated colours in the younger face to make it appear as if it had slightly faded- like a memory. The old face on the right is a picture I took of Danny when I went to visit him. I used more realistic colours in his face to make it clear this image is from the present. I displayed both faces to be quite serious and sad- to represent that during the war Danny saw some horrific scenes and that he still does. Danny still suffers from PTSD even though he fought in the war decades ago.

The composition of the painting was planned so that there is one face higher than the other to create a flowing line through the old man's shoulder through to the young man's jawline. Having the faces left to right/ old to young represents time passing as we read left to right.

"Lest we please forget" is based on the common saying "Lest we forget", meaning we will remember the war and recognise what the soldiers sacrificed for our country. "Lest we please forget" is a play on words from the 'mouths of the veterans', meaning that they want to forget the terrible experiences they had during the war.