

I Fly

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'I Fly' is a realistic oil painting of my sister, Georgina, which symbolises, the ability one must grow, maintain faith and discover their true identity while facing challenges in life.

Developing my folio, I became captivated by portraiture, particularly how eyes can define certain expression and emotion. I explored various angles and perspectives to evoke the emotion of my sister and engage the viewer. In exploring artists who portray emotion in their artwork, Elly Smallwood and Daniel Martin were influential in their ability to communicate a personal message about overcoming difficulty in order to experience personal growth. I was able to personally relate to their stories through dealing with my own challenging experiences as an adolescent, in my journey to discover my true identity.

Investigating photographs of numerous people, I discovered the elements that were influential to capture the subject's true emotion and identity. My subject was my older sister Georgina, who I am tremendously inspired by her strength and resilience. The artwork represents a personal awakening for me that in order to progress in life, I too, like Georgina, must learn to overcome difficulty to experience the feeling of 'flying'. Georgina's expression, particularly her deep gaze into the distance, successfully depicts the collective emotions of resilience, wonder and uncertainty. Rendering Georgina realistically was important, as I aimed for the viewer to feel the mood and emotions conveyed that this style can best express. I was able to achieve realism via accurate tonal modelling of the skin, especially under her eyes, and the addition of small details including texture in the strands of her hair, the small hairs on her eyebrows and her unique beauty spots.

Toronto-based, Canadian artist, Elly Smallwood and Dutch artist, Daniel Martin's stylistic features create certain moods by using side gazes which forced the viewer to become intrigued and curious. I was inspired by Smallwood's compositions - cropped oil painting portraits such as her untitled work of 2014. Belgian artist, Rene Magritte's 'The Son of Man' (1946), also captured my interest of skies and I wanted to create similar tactile qualities in the background of my portrait.

'I Fly' is painted with oil paint using a wet on wet technique. This allowed me to replicate Georgina's skin colour as accurately as I could by blending and building different values of flesh tones. The oil glazing technique, evident in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, was a technique I wanted to achieve in my portrait. It was effective in creating quite accurate tone and shadow, especially in the ear, neck and large areas of the face, achieving a softer aesthetic to emphasise the expression of the subject.

By using the rule of thirds, I was able to create balance and flow in my work. The muted blue-grey colour scheme and white clouds create contrast between the subject which is symbolic of life's uncertainty, and Georgina's journey. The visual contrast of this muted colour against the realism of the bold flesh tones was effective in expressing an emotive mood.

Overall, I am extremely content with my artwork as I believe it embodies the message I wanted to portray. A challenge I faced in my artwork was balancing the tonal changes and shadows in the skin yet, I believe I have accurately captured Georgina's likeness in my work and effectively communicated my ideas with a well-blended finished portrait.

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