

Family Man

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Memories of my father became the central focus and driving influence for my body of work. In 2011, my Dad passed away after a prolonged battle with bowel cancer, at the age of 42. This event has significantly shaped my life and personal values, as I desire to continually portray the best version of myself in the short life we have. Thus, I wanted to create a tribute to his undeniable presence in my life and a memorial displaying his beautiful values as he became the Family Man. My work captures a glimpse of pivotal moments and symbolic memories, primarily involving myself, that embody his charismatic and passionate nature. Through my body of work, I attempted to powerfully demonstrate and effectively showcase his involvement in my life, both past and present.

To explore my initial concept of developing a painting in tribute to and memory of my father, I completed thorough research on portrait artists, enabling me to gain inspiration for my works. Specifically, the bold works of Robert Hannaford and Lucy Culliton's sentimental, emotive paintings became pivotal sources of inspiration to successfully capture memories of my father. I drew inspiration from Hannaford's unique style combining realism and expressionism, allowing him to form a powerful painterly technique. His ability to target the accurate colours, tones, and movements in a visual field is a technique I aspired to adopt in my paintings. Additionally, I loved the emotional connection Culliton developed in her works, depicting the natural warmth of significant individuals in her life through colour and compositional elements, an aspect I wanted to achieve.

The preliminary idea for creating a body of work situated around my ability to paint realistically on a small photographic scale. Thus, I conceptualised painting a collection of intimate memories conveying my Dad's adult family life through symbolic images. The works of Tom Brown and his array of small Australian landscapes significantly influenced this body of work in terms of layout. I intended on creating eleven works, referencing the year of his death being 2011. Wooden boards, similarly scaled to photographs, were selected to allow for smooth paint application and fine detail development.

The selection of the images was not formulated during planning stages. Instead, I collated images portraying significance to me throughout the painting process. Initially, images were selected due to the visual appeal of the layout. I sourced photographs which reinforced our strong relationship and showcased different stages of his family life to attempt to convey a story. Moreover, images were selected for their symbolic reference, enabling me to create deeper connections within my work. For instance, the painting displaying a river mouth in the background is at Port Noarlunga, South Australia. This was the location where, after his passing, we spread his ashes, reflecting and engaging a grieving undertone within the works. Contrastingly, other works were selected to showcase his free-spirited, adventurous nature and willingness to have fun, as seen in the painting at Victor Harbor of my Dad and myself with our hands out. Ultimately, the location and stance within each painting became crucial to completing a compelling, symbolic and personalised work.

I decided that using acrylic paint would be preferable due to my familiarisation with the medium, knowing the style with its fast drying properties would allow me to add layers to areas requiring emphasis. I implemented a painterly technique, rejecting a hyper-realistic approach, to emphasise and express the raw and imperfect aspects of his life.

The colour scheme and painting selection was also manipulated to create visual balance. Three images converted into black and white were selected and, once painted, placed evenly throughout the layout creating a levelled asymmetrical appearance. The use of black and white is also symbolic indicating the reality that my Dad is no longer physically present in my life, however, the contrasting use of colour overpowering this tone showcases and signifies that his essence will infinitely live on. Pink is a reoccurring colour within the paintings, used as a visual motif reflecting my youth and innocent relationship with my Dad. Furthermore, three paintings with blue sky were strategically placed in the arrangement to further create visual aesthetic balance. Central focal points were developed through selecting two close up paintings, providing an element of contrast within the composition.

The overall tone I intended to evoke was happiness, through capturing our expressions and embraces within the paintings. This successfully demonstrates my love for my father, however, also serves to juxtapose the reality of the depth and emotional aspect to the collection.

The aim of my practice was, through utilising contemporary painting techniques, to produce an intricate, unique display of powerful artworks conveying a story my Dad could no longer tell. My final refined pieces are titled "Family Man", suitably alluding to my Dad's love for his family and his involvement in our lives. I believe my artworks capture and highlight glimpses of his life, portraying his incredible personality that will live on through the recollection of my memories.