

Our fragile world through rose-coloured glasses

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My work is about the fragility of nature and how we as humans must look realistically at the impact of nature's destruction. Initially, I was drawn to the spiritual connection people have to nature, inspired by the *Immortal* book series by Gillian Shields. I began painting and drawing images of people amongst nature, enjoying nature's sensory gifts, with an emerald, ethereal quality. I predominantly used acrylic paints, as I was most accustomed to them. Anna Platten's *Woman and Man Embrace* inspired me to use photography to capture the emotion of a woman laying amongst a bed of leaves, experimenting with composition, colour, and detail. I explored further how people connected with nature and how artists depicted this.

While drawing mandalas, I began to incorporate symbols of nature and human body parts in an ordered pattern, symbolic of how art and nature are integrated. Expanding on this idea, I used natural objects as the tool to paint, and the medium which I used to make art, as well as the subject matter.

Surrounding myself with nature while painting led me to research the connection that Indigenous Australians have with their land. On a trip to Uluru, a painting workshop with Aboriginal artist, Sarah, proved restorative, and also educational about the symbols used for different aspects of nature. Having created a painting about the Earth around me, I thought about how people mistreat the Earth and how nature is becoming eroding.

In researching environmentally-minded artists, I discovered Pedro Marzorati, a sculptor who created an exhibit showing men progressively submerged in water, representative of the rising sea levels from climate change. In response to this, I painted a spray-paint mask with a destructive scene, representing another effect of pollution - the lack of air to breathe. I promptly realised that climate change was the topic I would work toward resolving into my artwork.

Considering repurposing and recycling materials, I cut up all my used paper paint palettes from the year to collage a rose on paper. Recycling these palettes demonstrated what we can do to help our Earth, rather than what will happen if we do not. This was a rewarding process and became a part of my final exhibition, but I still wanted to connect my body of work with the spiritual connection people have with nature.

Contemporary artist Natalia Drepina, creates paintings that portray women holding roses or with roses in their hair, both blotched and stained with blood. The paintings are photo-realistic, ominous but also delicately picturesque. In my mind, Drepina united the woman with the rose, depicting that if the flower is hurt, and the woman is too. This made me think about how hurting our environment does parallel damage to humans.

Intrigued by oil paints, I created studies of graduating forms; an egg, eye, rose and other flowers, before deciding this was the medium I wanted to use for my body of work. I enjoyed the smoothness of the medium, its ability to blend and how it could achieve detailed and photo-realistic results.

Self-portraiture workshops with Australian contemporary artists Ellie Noir and Daniel Connell allowed me to search myself physically and metaphorically, linking identity with my artwork. I sought to reveal and how I see myself in art.

My body of work consists is a series of six paintings in rows of three. Through this composition, I aimed to generate a visually demanding large surface area and a mirrored bottom row. I used a rose to symbolise nature as a whole. I linked the mysticism of the Earth and people's spiritual connection with it. I wanted the top row to have a delicate, sweet and idealistically naturalistic surface aesthetic. The pink hue in the paintings relates to the phrase, "seeing through rose-coloured glasses". This row of paintings in monochrome pink, represents what people prefer to see and the deliberate ignorance that is shown towards our Earth's destruction. The French titles of the rose-coloured paintings also characterise this, as we discover the true meaning in the English titles of the grey paintings that lie beneath.

The second row demonstrates the ugly truth behind our ignorance, painted in black, white and grey. The lack of colour symbolises the morbid truth underlying the colourful lie. Both rows become progressively darker in tone, to reflect the sinister narrative: the death of the Earth.

The first painting in the series conveys a rose in its natural state, beautiful and peaceful as it rests on its stem, connected with the ground. The black-and-white painting below reflects this rose exactly, but with a horizontal brushstroke effect across its entirety, to give the aesthetic of a reflection in water or a picture in motion, whizzing by. The message is if nature is left in its natural state, it will remain peaceful and picturesque.

The central painting portrays a woman wearing rose-coloured glasses, with roses in her hair, smelling the same rose seen in the initial artwork, now cut from its stem. This image represents her physical connection with nature, and her wanting to preserve and admire its beauty by cutting it from its plant and having it for herself instead of admiring it on the bush. Her closed eyes along with the glasses is another symbol of her blindness to reality. Reflected below, using the same horizontal stroke technique, the same woman holds a dagger to her own throat, in place of the rose. Again inspired by the message I saw in Drepina's work, this implies that as we kill nature, we are killing ourselves, ironic of the fact that it was her selfishness and indulgence that led her there.

The third painting depicts a dead rose that has shrivelled after being discarded by the woman, with dried petals scattered around. Inevitably, this is reflective of the death of nature as a whole. Beneath is a blank black canvas, symbolising a lack of life, with the mirrored shadow of the dead rose suggesting a life that once was. The paint is applied extremely sparingly, portraying how people wear our resources thin, and our world with it.

Our Fragile World through Rose-Coloured Glasses is intended to be a thought-provoking body of work that asks the viewer to reflect on their choices, and whether they abuse nature similarly. The temperate surface aesthetic is questioned when regarded deeper in the confronting reflecting row, communicating my passion for the care of our fragile world.

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