

Metamorphosis

Lilly Barker–Robertson

The overall concept for my body of work is centred around the term “metamorphosis.” My intention was to explore this complex and nuanced term by delving into the physical, biological, spiritual, and emotional aspects that are intertwined in the topic. I aimed to achieve this through my research of a versatile range of artists, and analysis of their artworks, and their use of artistic techniques and media to convey their messages. Furthermore, I strove to explore metamorphosis by generating a diverse range of ideas for my final body of work. I intended to strengthen my artistic abilities by creating meaningful final works with a strong personal influence.

To achieve this, I delved into the associated factors of metamorphosis through my folio, to evaluate and experiment with how to portray my intention. My researched artists guided my creative journey, with Maria Sybill Merian introducing me to scientific illustrations, Del Kathryn Barton and Pieter Claesz to spiritual connections, and Janet Fish to unapologetically vivid use of colours. Merian was influential to my work, with her intricate renditions of insect metamorphosis, and the artistic infusion of biology in art. Similarly, I was infatuated with Del Kathryn Bartons psychedelic pieces, and her manipulation of proportions, use of patterns, and the underlying spiritual tones.

To create my major finals, I used media which I felt was my strength, watercolour and pastel pencils, as I aspired to display my artistic abilities, and create highly refined pieces. When creating *Happy Birthday*, I initially found the proportions of my subject matter inaccurate, as I found it challenging working on such large scale. However, after utilising a ruler to measure sections I was able to accurately replicate my reference photos. I used Derwent Pastel Pencils to gradually layer and blend, using cool and deeper tones for shadows, and contrasting warm tones to form three-dimensional depth in my subject matter.

For *Cycle of Healing*, I lightly sketched my underlying references on high quality watercolour paper and applied a light wash of Burnt Sienna. By underpainting, I was able to create natural warmth and dimension in my subject matter. Kuretaki Gansai Tambi Watercolours, were layered with Artist Spectrum gouache and Derwent Academy coloured pencils to accentuate details and incorporate finer linework in the hair. Furthermore, I applied a Uni-Ball Signo Fine Gel Pen to portray highlights created by the front on light source. I was inspired by Kasia Szczesniewski's work primarily her freeing formation of abstract shapes rendered in vivid colours. I applied this technique when creating my backgrounds, allowing the watercolour to pool and intertwine. After drying, I used Derwent Academy coloured pencils to trace the free-flowing organic lines and capture the natural movement of the paint underneath. However, in the second of the folio I worked with media and materials that I was not highly experienced with. Julie Patterson inspired me to use printmaking to create frames for my watercolour portraits. I found the process of carving lino, rolling, and pressing ink laborious but rewarding, and have a newfound appreciation for this method. I carved six individual prints, which I pressed onto (size here) mountboard using black block ink in an evenly spaced and alternative pattern. I applied a light wash of Winsor and Newton Black Indian Ink to form shadows. Finally, using Pigma Micron Fine liners, I stippled over the wash, to replicate the textural presence of the printmaking ink. I desired to create a connection between the delicate linework in my watercolour portraits and

incorporating finer details in my prints I felt I was successful. Furthermore, by using personal reference photos for my prints, I felt a stronger connection to the work I had produced.

To create my printed illustrations, I used a combination of Micron Pigma Fine Liners, Kuretake Gansai Tambi Watercolours, and Uni-Ball Signo Fine Gel Pen. I was inspired by Florence Broadhurst incorporation of Japanese cultural symbols, her black and white monochromatic colour palette, and Maria Sybilla Merian's intricate scientific illustrations of nature. I created both greyscale and colourful illustrations, to align with both my monochrome and colourfully rendered majors. Moreover, I feel this successfully intertwines my body of work, as the pieces are visually interconnected. I used delicate paintbrushes, to form thin linework, and fine pointed liners and gel pens to create intricate stippling.

Happy Birthday has deep personal connections and I wanted to portray my bittersweet emotions towards my childhood birthdays. After facing adversity as at such a young age, the joyful excitement surrounding birthdays diminished, despite the loving affirmations my family enveloped me in. I incorporated a complex mixture of both vivid warm tones and deep cool tones represent these complex and nuanced emotions. I wanted to replicate a core memory, of blowing out the candles and making a wish for enlightenment and contentment. The soulful and dejected eyes are surrounded by the warm tones created by the light source and cool toned shadows to align with my emotional state. I portrayed the background to align with the emotion state of my subject matter, the blue tones associated with sadness transcending and blending to vivid green hues, which have connotations towards healing and growth. My organic line work in the background, leads the viewers eyes to the right of the piece and across the composition towards the emerging apparition which is wished upon.

A Cycle of Healing portray a healing journey after facing adversity and intertwines emotional and biological metamorphosis. Each stage of recovery is framed with a stage in insect metamorphosis, depicted through the life cycle of a butterfly. I framed the childhood portrait with a butterfly egg, the beginning of a butterfly's life and the start of my healing journey. Deep hues create a dejected mood in the second portrait and the vertical placement of the subject matter aligns with the caterpillar print. Moreover, the cocoon like position of the subject matter in the third portrait represents the framing chrysalis pattern. Finally, the butterfly wings is aligned with enlightenment and a blissful recovery. The background colours are symbolic with the mood, such as purple tinged with blue representing peace and the imaginative magic of childhood, and monochromatic for sadness. I purposefully intertwined all the colours into my final portrait with green to represent healing despite the challenges.

My botany illustrations symbolically encapsulate metamorphosis. The koi fish is attributed to strength and perseverance when facing adversity in Japanese culture. Similarly, the dragon fly depicts new beginnings and transformative change. I purposefully chose to portray the cherry blossom branch with flowers at different stages of blossoming and maturity to represent new growth, and therefore biological and emotional metamorphosis.

I feel that I have achieved my intention of displaying and connecting the different meaning of "metamorphosis." I have incorporated biological, spiritual, emotional, and physical processes into my final work. Furthermore, I have strengthened my artistic abilities, and produced personally meaningful and emotive final.