

## *Distant Pink Clouds*

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Nostalgia is defined by a person's sentimentality and longing for the past. It is the personal and emotional attachment to a period in the past that is unreachable. If you ask a person what period of their life that they feel the most sentimental for, the majority will answer 'childhood'. Childhood is the factory for a person's most vivid and emotionally impactful memories as a child's mind is the most impressionable. It was the time of zero responsibility and innocence, where the skies were always bright, and the nights were calm.

The initial ideas I had for my body of work were artworks that conveyed raw emotion. I would use words from the *Dictionary of obscure sorrows* to inspire each painting with how I would interpret that word. An emotion that I wanted my audience to feel could be fear or disgust, and I would have used Surrealist imagery to convey this.

However, I ultimately wanted to create something personal and unique. I concluded that my body of work should depict different parts that I vividly remember of my hometown, Cabramatta in Sydney. The themes of these paintings have been inspired by my visual study that explored how artists create a sense of 'intimate security' in their still life and interior painting. I found that the romanticisation of mundane life and the appreciation of the simple, small details were a large factor in conveying intimacy. The warm colour palette, emotive lighting, and close while realistic camera shots and angles were all important attributes.

When in the process of developing my composition for the central painting, I believed the Freedom Plaza Gate would be suitable as the gate is a defining feature of the place thus, I have a vivid memory of it. The gate's size and significance are emphasised through the slightly exaggerated low angle shot, which will also display more the sky. The gate being positioned on the sides and corners of the canvas provided a dynamic and interesting composition, but as this main painting will be placed in the centre, it would be more appropriate for the gate to be centred. I had two designs for the sky; one being inspired by the manga 'Akira' with shard-like shapes coming out of the sun, or clouds circling the sun. The simplistic clouds would complement the detailed gate. While developing my clouds' style, I analysed the clouds of the artists' Rebecca Sugar, Vincent Van Gogh, John Constable and Studio Ghibli. Studio Ghibli and John Constable had the most influence on my work, as their clouds were fairly realistic and soft. Constable's delicate application of paint against his blue sky creates an ethereal atmosphere that I aimed to achieve. Constable's clouds are also loose formed, containing wispy clouds that create a sense of energy in the painting.

As the sun is placed in the centre above the gate, I had to next determine which way the clouds would face. After experimenting, I concluded that clouds with their underside facing the away from the sun creates a more claustrophobic composition, while clouds that had their undersides facing the sun makes it seem as if they are bursting from the centre, creating a more dynamic composition and therefore, more positive atmosphere.

I explored what the other smaller paintings would depict, ranging from food to places in Cabramatta or something in between. As the sky and clouds are a significant and defining feature of my central painting, I must keep the visual theme consistent by continuing the sky in all smaller paintings. Therefore, I used scenic photographs that were viewed from a low angle to display more of the sky. To emphasise the sentimental attachment to childhood memories and the idea of fading memories, the farther the clouds are from the sun, the more faded and softer they will be. All the paintings are viewed from a low angle, which reflects how these nostalgic memories are viewed from a child's perspective. As childhood memories are distorted and usually viewed from "rose tinted glasses", the banners on my left painting are 'smudged' and textured with a palette knife. The theme of "rose tinted glasses" is also emulated through the warm, peach-pink filter on each painting.

Through creating my art pieces, I have developed my skills on water-based oils and enhanced my skills on how they are used on realistic styles. A range of different mediums has been used to enhance my paintings. For the obscured banners, I have incorporated impasto and oil paints together to create texture with the use of the palette knife. The exploration of applying paint through the palette knife has expanded my knowledge and confidence in this more expressive form and medium of painting. Paint and permanent markers have been used for smaller details that are difficult to paint. The chiselled side of a purple marker has been used to detail the main red sign. The use of the marker on the centred sign improved the painting drastically, as before the addition of smaller details, the painting seemed plain and amateurish. For the main gate's pillars, I personally found it difficult to replicate its marbled texture, so I depended on using texture rather than colour to depict the marble pattern. A problem that I encountered while painting my lion statue was that the tonal values did not fit with the sky and other paintings, so I applied light yellow to the highlights to emulate the sun's glow and presence.

I believe that I have expressed my personal sentiment towards my nostalgia for Cabramatta through the subject matter and atmosphere. My personal aesthetic has been developed and enhanced by the stylistic approach to a realistic subject. The title *Distant Pink Clouds* refers to the pink clouds being the most notable feature of my body of work, while 'distant' refers to the fading memories of Cabramatta.