

Sea the Change

Alexandra Matters

The ocean has always played a huge role in my life and has many memories associated with it. I wanted to present a piece of art which showed the connections to these memories as my younger self all the way to now. I researched several artists who represent the ocean within their artworks as well as famous artists like Frida Kahlo and Henri Matisse. I was hugely influenced by Lisa Stevens who creates ceramic sculptures and tiles inspired by the ocean and in particular, the coral reefs. This shaped my final piece in a significant way. As I began to sketch ideas, more layouts and plans came to me. Another influence was resin artist, Marie Antuanelle who creates ocean landscapes from resin on circle boards. I was inspired by her use of circles which sparked the idea of the resin circles to create a wall hanging. Another influence was Henri Matisse's use of colour. I didn't want to create a piece of art which was dull, rather a piece that stood out as the ocean has a boundless supply of colour. As Matisse's colour range is unlimited, I took inspiration to widen my colour range which is why I wanted to represent the bright coral in Stevens style. Researching all of these artists allowed me to take aspects from each style and combine them to create my own aesthetic and techniques. There are so many skills involved with creating resin and ceramic pieces. From artists like Simonne Joyce and Lisa Stevens, I have learnt so much about the safety concerns and the skills involved with both materials. Resin has many safety concerns as it is toxic which meant that I had to wear a mask at all times along with gloves and glasses in a ventilated area. Resin creates a lot of bubbles which had to be removed by using a heat gun.

The main meaning behind this artwork is to represent the beauty and the simplicity of the ocean whilst subtly showing the human impact to raise awareness. The detailed clay tiles represent the healthy, bright coral found across the world. The resin on the other hand, represents the ocean and the sand. The sand resin tiles have shells, rocks and coral which were found across several beaches in South Australia bringing a personal connection to the memories that I have had. The ocean is represented by the blue tiles which are filled with sand for the shallow end of the piece and rubbish in the deeper end. The rubbish in the deep end shows the connection between nature and human impact. As the ocean is so unpredictable, I wanted my artwork to show a side of unpredictability as well. Using glazes, the colours and texture is so unpredictable, and it turns out different depending on how many coats and the temperature. The resin is completely transparent which allows the light to shine through and highlight the focal points.

Whilst my artwork has a personal connection to the places I have been, my childhood, and memories, many other artists have had similar connections which has inspired my piece. Antuanelle's artwork resonated with me as she has collected many shells and sea glass from her travels which she includes in her pieces. The artworks have been sold all across the world so that people can have little bits of the whole world throughout their home. Whilst my shells and sea glass have only been collected within South Australia, what amazes me is how the ocean distributes and shares. The sea glass that I have found has not only come from South Australia. It has sat in the ocean for years in order to frost and have round, smooth edges. Each piece of sea glass has its own story which is so unknown making it so interesting. Resin, however, is not good for the ocean which contradicts what it stands for. I decided to still use resin as, although it is a type of plastic which cannot break down easily, I have taken great care with disposing the parts that I do not need.

Personal art aesthetics differ for everyone. The appreciation of a piece of artwork allows the personal connections to everyone even when they haven't created it. I want my art piece to be broad enough to connect to people but defined to allow a strong connection to those who have had a similar upbringing to me. As a young child, growing up at the beach and continuing to live that lifestyle now has allowed me to connect in different ways to so many people which I want my art piece to do for itself. Having pieces of shells and sea glass from the beach which people may have been to or have memories from is really special and creates that appreciation between the art and the audience. The colours and nature of the wall hanging combine to create a bright and vibrant piece but also still complement each other. The colours of the resin work together to create their own picture whilst the clay represents its own aesthetic. Combined they tell a story.

My final piece is very successful, I want the meaning of the ocean to me, transferred through people so they can feel a connection as deep. The ceramic tiles turned out colourful and the fantasy glazes worked really well for the coral tiles. The glazes for the plain tiles did not turn out as the colour that I was going for as they were glazed as greenware which meant that the colours soaked in, but they still work well. This piece needs to promote the issues that the ocean is facing with pollution and also needs to show the beauty of the ocean. Without promoting the beauty of the ocean, there is no motivation to do something about it and change the way we think.

If I present the nature and show the impacts, I hope that it will create awareness and allow for change so that my memories stay alive and all people that have a connection feel the same way.