

## *Earth and Soul*

### **Bridie Messent**

From a young age I was taught that beauty was to be admired, embraced, and most of all, discovered. Through the gentle teachings of my beloved grandmothers, I understood their intrepid appreciation of natural beauty, and realised that this is a rare and highly prized quality. As I grew older, I observed the connections between nature and its nourishing relationship with spiritual energies. The universe is in a constant state of symbiosis between its spiritual and physical realms, where nature appears to be the binding stitch in the tapestry of life.

*"Earth and Soul"* intention was to discover the connection between spirituality and nature, and portray this mutual limerence through expressive landscape artworks. It is a series of 4 raised canvases, (2 x 35cm by 30cm and 2 x 25cm by 20cm) that each capture a different form of landscape: a scenic mountain, a crashing wave, a lush pond, and my grandmother's garden. These each respectively represent: ones' higher self, life's inevitable trials, reflective contemplation, and generational wisdom. Within each canvas are personal motifs. The limbering willow tree represents the guarding owl of my grandmother's garden, a symbol of timeless wisdom and love, the forest of pines beneath the mountains represents my maternal grandmother's connection to Norfolk Island and the power of shared memories and knowledge. I included Easter lilies and bells in my garden landscape as a commemoration to both of my grandmother's Irish heritage.

To begin my creative process, I brainstormed potential art subjects, media, and styles that I found interesting, then refined my research to the topics of spirituality, sentimentality, heritage, and nature. I explored the works of multiple contemporary landscape artists such as Lisa Palombo, Laura Reilly, and Deiter Duhm, as well as historically iconic artists Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh. Furthermore, I developed my understanding of the Impressionist Art period, its purposeful use of colour and directional, emotive brushstrokes.

During the development of my resolved practical, I began implementing important artistic conventions which led to the solving many painting problems, which ultimately contributed to the success of my resolved artworks. I discovered that warm tones raise objects towards the foreground, whereas cooler tones tend to place the object further back in the viewers' eye. Additionally, I gained an appreciation for the impacts of layering, as I learned that realistic depth and dimension is effectively produced from the careful placement and overlapping of various tones, tints and hues. This also provided my canvases with intricate detail, accompanied with the use of a range of brush sizes and strokes. I consciously began my painting process with the intention of rendering "not the landscape, but the sensation produced by the landscape" as thoughtfully described by Jules Castagnary, an influential 19<sup>th</sup> century art critic.