

Dragons of Tranquillity

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After the SACE art show, I was inspired to base my first practical around dragons and culture as it is something I have always been heavily invested in. This led me towards a variety of artists who focus primarily on dragons and work in a variety of mediums. Most of the artists I'd chosen had work featuring traditional eastern dragons. The artists Chen Rong, Keisuke Teshima, and Ami James, all inspired me to further investigate Chinese dragons and compare them with European dragons. While European dragons mostly represent aggression and war, Chinese dragons represent peace and tranquillity. This is shown even in Chen Rong's ink work where the dragon's present a chaotic energy. Stephan Hickman, an artist I investigated who paints European dragons, allowed me to further explore the differences in culture and assisted me in developing ideas for my final practical. His style of tone and bold brushstrokes is something I was fond of using as it let me depict my dragons having more energy, life, and movement.

The three dragons each represent the theme of peace. The blue as nature, health, tranquillity, healing, and rest. The yellow as good fortune, power, warmth, wisdom, and wealth. The red as happiness and good luck. These colour depictions also relate to the Eastern ideas of colour theory. In Western culture, instead of happiness and good luck, red tends to symbolise love or anger. To depict the warm traits in Eastern colour symbolism, each dragon was given a soft expression and I used bold colours to signify their importance. This concept was expanded through the application of thick paint and intricate detail carefully worked into each dragon.

This gave my painting texture and helped to create necessary focal points that led the viewers gaze through the painting. I chose to depict dragons from a Chinese festival within my work to symbolize culture and inclusivity. The Chinese believe that performing the dragon dance during festivals drives away evil spirits and brings good luck and blessings for their community. This was what I wanted to achieve within my painting. Australia is a very multicultural country and by focusing on Chinese culture, I wanted to create something that represented harmony through all nations, thus the dragons twist and overlap each other with fluid form and relaxed expressions.

The different contrasting colours of the dragons and stylized builds of their faces show how different they are from each other, but by showing them move in harmony, I was able to symbolise peace in diversity. This depicts my overall message of the importance of culture as like the dragons, it brings wisdom and colour into everyone's lives. The layout of my work was predominantly inspired by the work of Keisuke Teshima in which he depicts dragons twisting down a black page. It is similar to the paintings that decorate my home and brings me a sense of warmth and belonging that I aim to bring to others through my work. I was also able to create my own art aesthetic that I developed when completing the folio as I looked at different dragon artists both historical and contemporary. The research that was done throughout the folio also helped me to better understand the importance of culture and led me towards the ideas for my final piece.

Overall, throughout my work I have been able to capture energy, life, and push forward a message of peace.