

Melanie in Void

Chelsea McLean

My love of portraiture inspired me to develop a portraiture piece. I used oil-paint on a thin canvas to initially depict the side profile of my friend, Lucy. After further experimentation and my love for vivid colour and broad-brush strokes led my artworks to paint two portraits named "Melonie". The paint application process of my piece was inspired by the visible brush strokes and layering texture of Van Gogh's work. I intended on applying dramatic brushstrokes to express emotion in my portrait, much like Van Gogh achieved through the colour of the painting.

For my first attempt of "Lucy" I used an image taken of her as a reference to sketch her profile onto my canvas using a range of different media, such as lead pencil, fine pen and bold texta. I outlined my subject, lightly erasing my sketch as my painting progresses. I incorporated a saturated yellow background to complement and contrast with the blue clothing of the figure, whilst composing the figure centre-left in keeping with theory.

I explored a range of blending and paint patch techniques, after researching into painting techniques, I decided to apply my paint inspired by Egon Schiele's blotching experimentations, using white paint mixed with darker cream tones to replicate the skin of my subject. Furthermore, I applied light blue patches to the skin to indicate where the shadow meets the light. The subject's clothing consists of brush strokes in different directions, creating movement.

My piece provided an expressionist approach, exhibiting my explorations of depicting subjective emotions that portray impression of the character. To further showcase my subject's character through my piece, I linked colours with her general personality and tones that best reflected her. For example, the yellow background represents the subject's lively approach, whilst the blue clothing represents the subject's calm nature and practical personality. This experimentation of colours was inspired by Roy Lichtenstein and his incorporation of colours in his pieces, conveying and emphasizing the emotion portrayed by the subject. For example, Lichtenstein applies a soft, blue background to complement the saddened mood of the subject. This is evident in the expression of the subject in correlation to the pose or action of the model/topic.

When finalising my piece, and further experimentation, I completely changed my colour palette using cool colours of blue and green. Dark blue layers over the background in vertical brush strokes created a crisp and strong contrast against the pale skin. The piece was inspired by Van Gogh's impasto technique, painting layers of colour to give the effective tonal detail. The current 'Bob Ross' documentary on Netflix also developed my enthusiasm to achieve a quality piece. This led to two acrylic portrait paintings that I named "Melonie- Inner Void" and "Melonie-Unveiled".

Painting requires hours of execution and reflection. I realised this when painting the 'Lucy' portrait and upon reflection and experimentation I changed my original painting. The "Melonie" paintings have been derived from my artist exploration and love for colour and overlaying of broad-brush strokes. I have learnt that creating the perfect art piece requires resilience and determination and many hours of experimentation.