

The Eyes are the window to the soul

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Enticed to a focus on viewpoints and perspectives, I have always been attracted to eyes and the perception of sight. My body of work integrates the theme of eyes throughout, symbolising a flawed perception of the environment and nature. The aspect of a journey inspired my interest in landscape art, prompting me to represent living amongst the perceptions and illusion of mankind, reflected through the natural world. Juxtaposed with the fragile beauty of nature and finding sanctuary, the various figurative representation of eyes, focus on longing and existentialism, capturing aspects of surrealism within the positive and negative aspects of human perception.

Inspired significantly by Elly Smallwood, her rough and experimental depictions of human features and figures prompted my exploration into an expressionist painting style, which was beyond my usual and preferred hyper realistic style. Using rough brushstrokes to represent vulnerability and distortion, Smallwood's work aided in visualising my own interpretation of the concept, leading me to consider painting on the surface of glass, to further express the dichotomy between perception and reality from a personal perspective. Further investigation led me to Henrik Udalen, an expressionist artist whose work surrounds classical figurative painting, with several works depicting eyes and mouths painted on glass. The application of paint presented an existentialist nature conveyed through realism, his works inspiring my connection to illusion and actuality within perception, reflected through expression.

Taking photos of the eyes of my family and friends enabled me to understand the diversity of visual perception. Initially, I struggled with applying paint on the smooth glass surface, however, I trialled different media and techniques such as gouache, acrylic paint, and oil paint on a gesso base coat. Overtime, I was able to add dimension and improve my application of oil paint, with a muted colour pallet, to conceptually convey my idea. Focusing on both the duality and limitations of perception, the five painted eyes on glass reflect the transparency of perception, capturing the individuality of the human experience. Individuals have the inability to be aware of their own bias perceptions, living within a superficial society it is essential to evaluate the natural aspects of the world. I aimed to reflect this through my final installation.

Exploring landscapes through a variety of artists such as Tara Jane Crandon, Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh, enabled me to immerse myself in the essence of journeys through nature, trialling aspects of impressionism. Exploring variation in colour, I was inspired by the lack of consistency within perception, what one person sees another will not see the exact same, encouraging me to reflect on my own subjective perception of landscapes. I made trips to both the Botanical Gardens and the Mount Lofty Gardens, to walk through and take photographic evidence of my own personal journey to paint.

My three books, which I handmade from woven fabric and natural materials, contain painted interpretations inspired by original photos. These represent a journal or diary, using imagery rather than words, to reflect my own innate connection to nature, a place in which I find contentment. My love of the environment and romantic motifs creates for fairy-tale-like paintings that tell stories of my personal places of comfort from my childhood, looking at the world through rose tinted glasses. My perception has changed overtime, innocent optimism begins to fade, like a story which unfolds.

This childlike perspective was further represented through the vibrant use of gouache media, providing a whimsical appeal, where the line between imagination and reality is blurred, much like a story within a book.

The painted window with the repetitive eye design, the central focus of my installation, represents the illusion of perceiving, the duality of perception within contemporary society, particularly influenced by others. Despite the similarity in appearance and the universality of that which is secular, art, like the natural environment, triggers entirely different individual responses from each person who views it. Hence, the piece was made to feel claustrophobic, with overlapping eyes in a variety of vibrant colours, to reflect aspects of conformity within self-image. From a distance, the overpowering colours and shapes steered the canvas to be placed at the centre back of the installation, allowing the eyes to look back at the viewer, intimidating them to consider their own tinted illusion of perception and consider their personal connection to nature.

Issues with application arose, particularly ensuring the colours correlated with my other works and the composition of the work was balanced, this took a lot of trial and error. Texture was a key feature I decided to include, the use of impasto for the vines was essential in providing depth and variation within the work. I wanted to work with a variety of surfaces and textures within the installation, however, I have not painted like this before, straying away from my usual use of graphite, using the impasto medium and working on such grand scale such as the canvas was a challenge to navigate. The wooden logs on the floor provide a path to enter, to experience stepping into my work.

Through the development my practical, I have learnt extensively about the implementation of an installation, as well as the magnitude of work required to set up an arrangement of such, to portray my own personal aesthetic.

The meaning behind my work differs in intimacy from viewer to viewer, depending on their own visual perception. Experiencing the world through meditated images and mass communication, my final work was inspired by my own visual perception of the natural environment, shaped by individual attitudes, beliefs, and values about the world. The eminent quote, "The eyes are the window to the soul", indicates looking into the eyes of a person, one can see their hidden emotions, attitudes, and thoughts, further prompting me to consider the reflection of my own personal perception of nature within my works.