

## Daydream

### Emma Harrison

My final work, titled Daydream, includes a set of 3 major and 4 minor fantasy landscapes. Each a different landscape with a matching fantasy element. The series was done in oil paint with a variety of brushes and pallet knives on wooden boards and canvases.

Initially I was influenced by silk painting, a very distant medium from my end point. The flowing colours and gentle white outlines were calming, and you could get lost in the detail of the fabric. After some consideration, I knew I wanted to paint landscapes to present a gentle perception of the world and develop my own skill as an artist.

I found perception and attitude to be important in choosing and recreating a scene as well as how it effects the viewers. Different landscapes may appeal to people because of their memories, like the memories that were my inspiration, including the places I have visited and loved. Of the major pieces, the mountains were inspired by New Zealand (the track to Milford Sound), the forest was inspired by the Redwood Forests and photographs from relatives in Germany and the lotus pond was inspired by the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. I learnt from landscape artists that lovingly recreate the world around them and the escape that gives them.

It is important for us as people to find calming and creative interests. At the height of Covid restrictions I was more drawn to painting nature. People seek out rich natural experiences, as it draws back to primary comforts, and acts as a calming distraction from everyday modern struggles. I used my own photographs throughout my folio and when caught in a rut went for a short walk around my street. Walking helped me make close observations of structure, colour, texture as well as providing inspiration for my own depictions of nature, aiming to display natural beauty. I was most inspired by the separateness of these natural places and how they held their own world from the surrounding urban environment. Originally, I thought of landscapes as a window to somewhere else. However, my pieces evolved into a world separate from reality based on places I have been.

Like the practitioners I researched, Claude Monet, Bob Ross, Dan Nastasie, Natalie Ryan, Les Darlow, G.M. Choo, I drew inspiration from the places I live and have visited, aiming to illustrate how it felt. While my final products have a vastly different style connections to their influences can be seen. The pallet knife techniques I learnt from Bob Ross are evident in the mountains, though I dramatized this effect by intensifying warm and cool colour. The impressionistic style I learnt from Monet can be seen in the change from foreground to background, providing depth. I learnt from Darlow's general composition, how he would give the clouds a prominent position to give a sense of completion to a piece (shown in each major final). Ryan's work especially influenced my minor works, with detailed attention to flora and fauna as well as provoking my research into the symbolism behind them. My understanding of the importance of recreating personally relevant landscapes was from Nastasie, and atmosphere from Choo as I aimed to instil a sense of calmness and awe in each piece.

Each of my three major finals represents a place from my past, present and hopefully future. All have the mindset to live in the moment, not be stuck in the nostalgia of the past or ambitions for the future. It was a long, indecisive process of too many ideas, switching media and topics. I kept changing my mind because initially I did not have a clear goal. I am more accustomed to realism but once I found a clear connecting theme it came much easier. I settled on painting landscapes important to me with a fantasy twist, very unlike the artists I researched. Representing how the world feels, even if it seems childish – hence the name 'daydream'. Stories are full of raw emotion, and I chose to use this to present a passive optimistic philosophy, using landscapes to help the viewer to slow down. The paths either side represent a journey with the final destination in the centre being a single statue at peace. My smaller pieces, work on a different type of calmness that can be found in the small scenes that create a landscape and offer perspective.

To tie my pieces together, I use overlapping symbolic elements, fire, flowers, and stone, creating the fantasy theme. All the elements were enjoyable to paint. Stone was the first repetitive element I chose. It perfectly represented stillness in nature as moss creeps over, this is seen in the stairs, wall, and statue. Flowers are seen in each piece in various qualities and messes, but the lotus flower had the symbolic meaning of change and rebirth. Though generally representing passion, fire is fascinating and comforting in a hypnotic way, and I used this to suit my passive atmosphere. The birds and candles either side of the centre pieces act as guides to the final resting point.

For these pieces I worked outside of my usual pencil detail-oriented aesthetic, developing my skill further in areas such as colour and texture. Oil paint proved to be a challenge as it was so versatile (and messy). The large canvases were also quite daunting. I improved my technical skill with miniature practices, either of the whole final or an aspect I was struggling with at the time. I completed my folio in conjunction with painting my finals, switching between them to reconsider my goal and progress.

Choice is very important in art. I think you can find your own personal aesthetic when the choices are entirely your own, not second-guessing if it appeals to everyone, or follows conventional patterns. I did not think I achieved that with this work. However, it was eye opening discovering what I think a personal aesthetic really is; unapologetic.

In the end, I wanted to convey the magic and wonder that can hit you at any time, that makes a place special.