

## *Life's Gallery*

### **Georgia Rogante**

For years I would always dismiss the upcoming high school years, the years that created a foundation for adulthood, with the thought of "I've got plenty of time ahead of me". Now towards the end of my final year in high school I began to wonder where they all those years went. I found the quick pace of time most frightening, holding closely memories of the past, and consistently revisiting them as a means of escape from distressing situations. However, my lack of present moment presence further sent me in a spiral regarding the inevitable aging, I felt ungrateful. Through recognising that reminiscing is best approached to appreciate the journey and not dwelling on "what ifs", but rather focusing on the now.

Over the past year, I found myself overcoming obstacles, like recognising false friendships. I began to look after myself in the ways in which I deserve, fighting against self-destructive thoughts, I learnt to not deprive myself of basic needs and talk to myself with the best intentions. These achievements are big moments which have led me to appreciate myself. This artwork is about my journey of conquering an internal battle through selfreflection and acceptance, strengthening my mind, my identity, my love for myself. The artworks depict six frames in the background. The frames are intentionally positioned to convey directional movement, starting from the bottom right towards the top left further emphasised by the light to dark gradient of the background.

The content within each frame symbolises an element or memory in my journey over the past year. The path begins with a variety of broken clocks in the dark corner of the artwork, which represent the overwhelming feeling and pressure stemming the inevitability of change. The circular frame depicts an unsettling, stormy background as a hand emerging from broken glass with cuts. Instead of blood, the cuts bloom with lily flowers, to portray the beginning of growth in rough conditions. Following the path, the rectangular and oval frames portray myself as the two subjects, reaching for each other as vines wrap around their arms pulling them together to emphasise my strength of pulling myself up out of troubling times, supporting myself.

The background of these frames is similar to the previous ones, however, the colours progress from greys to a light blue as the journey comes closer to present moment. The smaller rectangular frame depicts a heart surrounded by feathers, inspired by a metaphor, "Hope is the thing with the feathers". Symbolising the importance keeping a heart of hope through this journey. Lady bugs on the frame further confirm that good times are coming. The last frame portrays myself extending my hand to the subject in the foreground conveying the final "memory" of the journey before reaching my present self, represented by the lifelike and proportionate subject in the foreground. Within the frame, number eights surround the subjects chosen as it is personally relevant.

The lotus flower weaves throughout frames representing a new beginning. Using elements of memories and personal experience was inspired by Jammie Holmes, along with the idea of using symbolism to represent a narrative concept which is similarly portrayed in Nadia Waheed's artworks.

My journey concept was communicated through the use of directional movement influenced by Kerry James Marshall. My lifelike aesthetic and combination of symbolic nature elements was influenced by Stephen Mackey and Jeremy Hush. Before painting on my canvas, I used tones of brown as an acrylic underpaint to create an outcome of warmer undertones through the oil paint.

I found it harder to see the sketches done with white pencil and understand the lights and darks on the subjects faces. I overcame this problem by using underpainting again using different shades of brown to block light and dark shades, inspired by Mackey's technique of chiaroscuro. Throughout the creative process, I learnt that it is important to apply layers of underpaint that signify the highlights and shadows to avoid a lack of depth in colour in the subjects.

I feel that this artwork has helped me improve my skills in incorporating nonrepresentational objects and nature in portraiture as I investigated surrealism aesthetics. Unlike my past artworks regarding personal experiences, this artwork isn't open for the viewer's interpretation but only my own created by the symbolism.