

## *Family, Culture, Symbolism & Traditions*

### **Mia Maurici**

"Nonna's Love" is a three-piece painting depicting the nurturing kindness and healing for my family. "Mangiare (Eat)" is a bird's eye view painting portraying the connections between food and family. This body of work is based around family, symbolism, culture, and traditions. Inspired by the history of religious triptych paintings and the tradition of the triangular composition that places Jesus at the centre and at the top of the work. I used 3 raw linen canvases, one large size for the middle, and two medium sized for the sides.

For the second part of my body of work, I used a 61 x 122 cm white canvas that fits perfectly below the linen triptych. On all four canvases, I used clear gesso to prepare the surface, and oil paint as my medium. Within these three linen canvases, "Nonna's Love" is a metaphor about my family, it's culture and history. The focal point of the triptych is the portrait of my Nonna who represents a strong female figure in my life. When researching and exploring strength or beauty in women from the media or in art, I found that rarely is an elderly person shown. This is why I wanted to paint my Nonna because she is strength and beauty. She hasn't had the easiest life, but she still cares and holds our family together with such strength and courage, which makes me admire her, and why I called the triptych "Nonna's Love". I painted her so she is looking down at the viewer, showing her power and strength within herself,(which again, is rarely seen in portraits of women).

The painting of the crushed, sliced, and whole tomatoes represents my dad's side of the family. My family has had so much falling out throughout the years, even before I was born which is why all the tomatoes are not whole and clean. But one of the only things that keeps us together is my Nonna. We will gather around her dinner table and eat traditional Italian meals (mostly tomato based) and reconnect as a family again. This continues into the last painting that is my Nonna washing the tomato, which is a metaphor for her 'cleansing' the family with the dinner table. This is where the idea of continuing Italian culture and my family's symbolism into my folio, to continue in "Mangiare (Eat)". I chose a big birds-eye view image of my Nonna's dinner table underneath the triptych to extend the story and themes of my family, culture, and symbolism.

Understanding the story from the triptych above, helps tie into understanding that my Nonna's dinner table as shown, is where my family heals, celebrates, shares culture, and identifies symbolism in the food, plates, and location. For my title, Mangiare is the Italian word for eat, and my Nonna would always say "Mangiare! Mangiare!" when the food was served or you denied her offer of food. Growing up, I always heard stories about how both sides of my grandparents didn't know how to feel that my parents were marrying outside of their ethnicity.

Now at family events I watch as my mum's parents and my Nonna sit down at the dinner table, and celebrate the Italian culture together, creating a bond. One of my biggest inspirations for these paintings are the European renaissance artists. For example Titian, Rossetti, Verticordia, Adolphe, etc. I admire the way the paint looks so soft, smooth, and blended from that era, and because of the realism in the paintings. The main influence for "Mangiare (Eat)", is Gustave Caillebotte's oil paintings. In his oil paintings he used big brushstrokes, which I incorporated into the table painting when doing the process for the food or plates.

The body of work has rule of three, form, shape, colour, value, texture, space, balance, unity, variety, movement, pattern, repetition, proportion, emphasis, and contrast. My goals for this artwork was to portray the story and emotions I had put behind it and improve my skills of painting with oils. The paintings came out how I had envisioned, and it was so amazing to watch it come to life in person. I would have never thought that I would do a huge still life because it is very far from my comfort zone, and even the realism of the triptych.

These final art pieces has helped me reach even further to my goals as an artist by pushing me to create something out of the cliché and push myself to improve my skills and techniques. In the future I will look back on these paintings and remember how I got out of that 'artist block' to create something so unique and personal. Hopefully one day I will look back and see how I have grown as an artist from these paintings, technical and mentally speaking.