

## *Coco & Milo*

### **Niamh Breen**

'Coco' and 'Milo' are two portraits drawn in a realistic manner on plain white card in blue biro pen. My intention was to portray my love and appreciation for animals by creating a realistic representation of the two pets I have grown up with that have shown me how comforting a human-animal relationship can be.

My dogs have always been an important part of my life. However, being a Year 12 student, having a part-time job, and spending a week on and off in separate houses with Mum and Dad, has interfered with the amount of time I do get to spend with Coco and Milo. I wanted to incorporate their beauty authentically into my artwork, so I began my research with an interest in hyperrealism in the back of my mind. The first work that I found intriguing was from M.C. Escher and his detailed tessellation pieces created from linoleum cut, woodcut, lithography, and mezzotint. Whilst I did not want to use this type of media for my final, I was interested in how Escher employed repetition of line, shape and form, movement, contrast and value into his artwork. Escher's employment of the principle contrast and value influenced the development of how I was going to create light and dark fur for both my pets.

I was particularly inspired by Sarah Esteje, a french artist, and her hyper-realistic animal ballpoint pen drawings. After analysing her work, I wanted to distinctively use blue biro for my final and felt that a lot of her techniques to communicate beauty and realism, especially her hatching technique with changes on pressure to create tone and reflect highlights and her variations in density of directional linework to effectively portray fur, were best suited for my drawings.

My ideas led me to choose two individual portraits of my dogs in a similar position facing front on but slightly looking on an angle. I decided to choose two reference photos where they were both looking the same direction, for not only a balanced series, but because I felt the positioning and composition of the pieces would be captured more successfully than a high-angle shot or a low-angle shot. I used Chuck Close's grid method to translate my reference photos onto white card to enhance the accuracy of my drawings rather than free handing them. I worked from the eyes outwards of both my dogs, using small lines with hard and medium pressure and little to no negative space for black fur, and then light pressure with negative space in between line work for white fur.

I completed 'Coco' and 'Milo' using a rich blue inked biro pen. Biro was a medium that I was relatively new to but drawing with one simple colour allowed me to control the depth of tone and focus more on detail. The use of the pen adds meaning to my work as a ballpoint pen is a convenient and useful tool that I use in everyday life. As much of my time is consumed by school and other commitments, where I find myself with little time for my pets, drawing them in biro is symbolic of how lifeless ink has been turned into an expression of something I love. I have successfully produced a work that has a significant meaning to me. I believe that my starting intentions were effectively achieved in the finished product.