

Cordilleras

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I wanted to further explore and use the theme 'culture'. In recent a visual study, I discovered my relation to a collective indigenous Filipino tribe(s) called the Igorots or the Cordilleras which means 'mountaineer' as they are located North of Luzon, Philippines, on a mountainous region. The indigenous ethnic group(s) is untouched by colonizers which is remarkable as Philippines has a history of different eras of colonization, primarily from the Spaniards.

With an authentic and deeply rooted Filipino meaning behind my surname, creates a feeling of cultural pride and I thought to express this through identity. Researching further into the Igorot tribe, I discovered how vivid and storytelling the textile patterns the Igorots wear in their clothing and I perceived this as symbolic. The colours, patterns and shape all indicate a meaning, from the predominant colour, red, which signifies blood, strength, bravery, independence, and a badge of honour, to tringles or zig zag which symbolizes a nature element, the mountain.

My artistic influences are Australian artist Mariana Mezic, Fin Dac and Filipino artist Pacita Abad. I take a lot of influences from Mezic. I found her captivating and something more than just pretty. She captivates the empowerment and diversity the women she paints hold. Whereas Fin Dac's purpose is to create an urban aesthetic. Similarly, to Mezic, Fin Dac likes to portray women from different ethnic groups, but he prefers to display them in their traditional clothing as it represents the racial and ethnic differences between the women. Fin Dac is heavily inspired by Asian culture and displays his appreciation of its beauty. Filipino artist, Pacita Abad, is known for her vibrant patterned art as an abstract painter.

The challenges I've faced were the long process of mostly using coloured pencil. The hair took the longest part, and I almost ran out of the black colour. Shading and lighting on the face is another thing I struggled with. Realistic art can be challenging, as I cannot easily recreate the woman's face accurately. However, I really loved Igorot clothing the woman wears, because it goes along with the background and together contrast with the woman's monotone and stoic face.

I've always liked portraiture as faces is the most common and repetitive things you see every day. Expression is often seen in faces but can sometimes be misunderstood. I myself have a hard to express in any form. Art is something that I can use express what I am truly interested in which is emotions and identity. Two things that can have relation to one another. In truth, although I love portraiture, I feel as though it is not something that can always express easily.

My personal aesthetic is actually quite dark and 'sinister' because those types of things are often misunderstood but displaying a different and new side to art is what something that I actually enjoyed and perhaps found a new personal aesthetic, the vibrant and bold. The portraiture stands out and screams cultural pride from the very colourful patterns. I describe myself as a person who is the opposite of that, who doesn't like to stand out, but I found a new side of my own ideas that I truly like.