

*Howard*

## **Tabitha Zdanowics**

My initial intention was to create a piece capturing the essence of an individual or group through expressive painting. I explored concepts around families, people with disabilities and settled on local heroes. Ahn Do's paintings of celebrities led me towards the concept of capturing a well-known figure with an inspiring life story. My final, titled Howard is a vibrant painting of Howard Hendrick, a 97-year-old war and local community hero. The piece emphasises Howard's character through his facial expression whilst his medals appear to help tell his story. Anh Do's series of celebrity portraits from the tv show Anh's brush with Fame was the key influence on my work.

I was captivated by Anh's ability to capture the essence of his subject's personality and focused on celebrating Howard's life story in a similar fashion. I love Anh's style of thick, long and sweeping brushstrokes and imitating this technique was a key part of my work. Ben Lustenhouwer's smooth use of oils and the close, facially focused compositions of Paul Cadden's work also played a role in influencing the direction of my piece as can be seen in the focus on the eyes as a connection point. My aim for this piece was for it to be a celebration of Howard's life, his personality, his strength, and his remarkable humility. I had many conflictions over whether to incorporate his war service into the final piece as when talking with Howard he was just as happy to talk about birds or the land as he was to talk about his many awards and heroic war efforts.

However, I asked Howard to bring his medals to a meeting and the pride in his voice as he, in detail, told me about the medals and their meaning, convinced me they should feature in the final. My work accurately expresses Howard with correct shaping through tonal changes around his smile to the expression in his eyes and the creases at the top of his nose. The overall tonal combination is visually appealing, and my use of negative space keeps the painting pared back whilst enhancing facial shape.

The inclusion of oils adds richness, texture and warmth which effectively draws the viewer in. I decided to keep the use of oils to a minimum to prevent the painting from becoming too heavy and disrupting the balance of the composition of the medals in relation to the face. The spray glazing technique effectively fulfilled its purpose by darkening the medals closest to Howard's face, bringing him forward. Although I mostly used acrylic instead of oil paint due to the cost of oils, there is a strong correlation between my final and Ahn Do's work.

I clearly emulated his expressive brush strokes and intuitive inclusion of non-realistic coloursto create form. Like Paul Cadden's work I chose to have a close-up shot of Howard's face to make him present prominently in a gripping manner. I thoroughly enjoyed creating this piece as my favourite aspect of art is capturing a person and telling their story. This was enabled as I got to know Howard well over lengthy conversations.

The piece has strengthened my desire to continue to capture people through painting in this newly established personal aesthetic.