

36.5°

## Erin Clements

36.5° is a pair of portraits that evolved from the ideas of young romance and blooming feelings. After initially brainstorming possible themes, I realised that I wanted my work to portray an innocent-like sweetness instead of exploring heavy social or environmental themes that leave a lingering sadness in the viewer. The pair of paintings portray a cute and cliché scenario between two strangers and their first meeting.

I found inspiration from pop-culture surrounding the themes of romance and clichés where the interpretation of my pieces is universal and instil the same 'blooming' and 'fluttery' feelings my subjects feel. I first started my research into artists that utilised body language to aid the portrayal of their theme such as Betz from Etam Cru and Tran Nguyen. I learnt that the slight positioning of each body part can majorly influence communication such as how the fingers link together and how the subject interacts with its environment. I was particularly influenced by Joanne Nam who uses a pop-realism style and delicate rendering technique, and Kelogsloops who incorporates symbolism by painting flower details onto his subject's body and weaves the 'red thread through his compositions.

I experimented with these features and incorporated my own ideas surrounding the feeling of 'blooming' such as butterflies, facial expressions, flowers and hand gestures. I trialled different painting styles: looser and more energetic, and smoother and delicate which felt more natural to me and shared characteristics with the artist Anne Wallace. Ample time was taken to explore different compositions and the incorporation of different poses, props, costuming and colours that would either help characterise my subjects or deepen the symbolism and meaning in my pieces.

To make my pieces more personal, I decided to use myself as a reference for the female subject and one of my 'idol crushes' from a Korean Pop group. I found photos of the idol in similar poses that aligned with my plan and took photos of myself according to my desired composition. Initially, I planned to create a set of three paintings, where the last piece has the most symbolic imagery and illustrates the two subjects together, utilising chiaroscuro to dramatize their interaction.

However, after completing the two single portraits, I realised that just the two would be more impactful in their simplicity and the intention to be sweet, pure, and almost 'childish' in their cliché. I hope that my pieces can make a viewer happy, reminding one of simple pleasures in life despite social and environmental issues or encourage one to recall their first love or idol crush that made their heart race.

The paintings are a summary of my thoughts and experiences. I found myself drawn to painting in a smooth and pop-realism style which is something I will further experiment with and develop. Unity was created within my paintings due to the colours and similar aspects such as the floral details and hand gestures, which create a visual connection between the two pieces and enhance the storyline. This idea was enjoyable to explore, and I am very satisfied with the result.