

Home: a Collection of Objects & Memories

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Initially influenced by the Impressionist and Surrealist movements I wanted to create something that connected to a sense of childhood whimsy. By experimenting with the painting techniques of artists like Solomon J Solomon and Vincent Van Gogh and the ideas of artists like Hayao Miyazaki I attempted to create something that embodied my personal emotions and thoughts. This preliminary work had a very similar aesthetic quality to a lot of my previous work with added movement gained from the impressionist/post-impressionist artists I studied. Though I learnt a lot about how to plan and paint a big piece, this memento mori concept did not mirror the wonder I wanted to convey.

Going back to the drawing board I decided to rethink my approach and began looking through children's books. "My Strange Shrinking Parents" by Zeno Swords is what evidently sparked my imagination. This concept of small people whose dreams have been minimised is something incredibly common with both families of immigration and children of "broken homes", both things prevalent in my own life. However, the elements of small people can be linked to my favourite childhood films including "Thumbelina" and "Fern Gully" whose courage and imagination prevailed regardless of their size.

To connect the framework of my family with that concept of people, small against the world, I took to one of my favourite ways to indirectly tell stories and highlight character, still life painting. I find that you can tell so much about a person by the objects they've decided have worth to them, it can show a personal aesthetic, hobbies, values, and cultures. I specifically wanted to put my own spin on Swords compositions by focusing on the character of objects rather than the figures themselves, while also highlighting my own culture.

When choosing the objects, I wanted to feature in my still life paintings I focused on what times my family is most connected to each other and our history, which as Italians, is when we are cooking. I also planned to paint a few accent pieces inspired by the tiles we have in our house as they remind me of my Nonna-Zia's home and add to the "ethnic aesthetic".

Still wanting to use the post-impressionistic influence I investigated contemporary painters who utilise similar skills including gestural brush strokes and bold colours. Both Patti Mollica and Alai Ganuza have inspired my work for a few years and studying their styles in still life painting felt like a given. Both artists cherished the idea of making any mundane object or scene appear beautiful and bright. Through doing studies of these two artists, I was able to push my understanding of colour and contrast in my own paintings making them bolder.

Following this concept of portraying the mundane lead me to learn about the 'Kitchen Sink Painters'. This group of four artists - John Bratby, Derrick Greaves, Edward Middleditch, Jack Smith - presented similar scenes to Mollica and Ganuza but instead focused on the mundane and brutal realism of domestic life in 1950's Britain. Combining

this duller, more realistic style to the boldness of Ganuza and Mollicas still life paintings allowed me to create a diverse depiction of my home and family culture.

While my body of small paintings were able to highlight these ideas, I wanted to push further and create something I'd never made before, an installation. Rather than just viewing the story through 2-dimensional works I wanted the audience to be able to be immersed in the world I built. As I am not familiar with creating installations, I looked at a showing of *Shredding*, work of Helen Fuller curated by Andrew Purvis. This exhibition involved the main themes I've been using, home, family, and memories, and the composition helped me understand how to have objects and images work together to tell a story. This was my way of having the art extend beyond the wall and cement this small universe in our reality.

Each still life composition featured in this installation is made using the objects that feature in my home. Books, bottles, suitcases, some things my stepfather's antiques, others my mother's trinkets. This mismatched array of objects portrays how people who are quite different can come together to build a family. I also feature two pairs of shoes, a mother's and a father's, that add to this concept of a traditional family structure. Adding my painting of our SMEG kitchen appliances also reinforced this idea as the brand is often linked to the concept of a traditional middle-class family unit.

To finally add that feeling of whimsy I aimed for from the start, I looked to Sally Smart to add small ghostly figures inspired by *Sworder* throughout both the paintings and the installation. These figures portray that feeling of closeness you have with those you love when you remember times you have together. It is all too easy to get hung up on the small annoyances when you share a home with someone, but those memories are what remind us of what family means.

This piece ended up being a tribute to my own strange little family and the home we built together over the past few years. Highlighting the small moments that lead us to where we are now. Through the series of paintings, the progression of my painting skills and aesthetic can be seen along with my new interest in creating multi-media and 3D elements to complement my painting.