

School No. 232

"Seb"

Oils & Synthetic Polymer paint on canvas

My painting portrays my friend Sebastiano captured in oil paint with broad spontaneous palette knife strokes of monochromatic blue acrylic painted in the background. My work symbolises the struggle some students face to find themselves and concerns of what the future may hold. Through my folio, I explored youth culture, and the influences and uncertainty faced by young people. In exploring this theme and the various artists who portray youth in their art such as Robert Hannaford and David Bromley, I was able to find my own form of expression to communicate a personal message about the pressure and fear experienced by young people today and their search for identity.

One of my best friends, Seb is the subject of my work. The large monochromatic cool blue acrylic brushwork behind Seb symbolises the pressure placed on young people to succeed and conform to the expectations of society. I wanted to evoke the emotions associated with fear experienced by many young people, and I have depicted this through Seb's gaze and body language. Capturing Seb realistically was very important, as I wanted the audience to feel the mood and emotions conveyed in this portrait. I was able to achieve realism through accurate tonal modelling of the flesh and the addition of small details such as the texture in the strands of his hair, the tiny hairs on his eyebrows and addition of his unique freckles. After taking numerous photos of Seb, I chose the one that I felt best captured his likeness. I wanted his gaze to project his doubts about life after school. The constant pressure of needing to make decisions concerning the future and what is expected of us in a world that is constantly changing on so many fronts; political, social, and economic, inspired my work.

Australian artists; Robert Hannaford and David Bromley's stylistic features were influential as I found their portraiture particularly captivating. I specifically liked the way they were able to create certain moods in their subject by using intense and direct eye contact with the audience. I was inspired by David Bromley's compositions - cropped portraits such as 'Belinda with Flowers'. I also liked the spontaneous brushwork and palette knife application of Australian artist, Ahn Do and the art of Spaniard, Yago Hortal. These artists' work captured my interest and I wanted to create similar tactile qualities in my own.

Oil paint was my preferred medium, because through exploration of modeling wet in wet (*alla prima*), I found the treatment of the surface to be very effective and easy to blend. I also liked the way oils appear, enabling me to capture a broad palette of skin tones accurately. The *alla prima* and *sfumato* techniques were effective for blending colours easily, especially in large areas of the face, neck and chest. These techniques helped me to achieve tonal variations and build layers of paint, especially on the more challenging sections of the face. Acrylic paint was used in the background for several reasons; firstly, this medium dries quickly, and secondly my choice of the vibrant colour provided textural qualities and good visual contrast. I was successful in creating depth and contrast between the diverse cool blue hues and the warm skin tones. The background was deliberately left white, to further enhance the subject and draw attention to Seb. One of the greatest challenges I faced in my portrait was balancing the tonal changes and shadows in the body, however I believe I have accurately captured Seb's likeness in my work and communicated my ideas effectively.