

## *An Entanglement of Found Significance*

### **Ella Garrod**

My body of work, *An Entanglement of Found Significance*, comprises of two pieces - *Self Portrait* and *Adelaide* - that visually communicate the breadth of human belonging and connection through objects of importance. A fascination with identity, symbolism, and belonging underpinned my artistic process, with each of the two pieces reflecting a unique facet of this evolutionary journey.

The *Self Portrait* is a symbolic still life painted with traditional and acrylic gouache onto a 60cm by 90cm stretched canvas. The piece delves into the significance of inanimate objects as vessels of personal identity. The amalgamation of these objects, which I have accumulated over my childhood, represents a visual narrative of my experiences and values. Therefore, the still life composition effectively serves as a symbolic portrayal of my sense of self, utilising the storytelling and symbolism inherent in each object. Within my creative journey, I explored the complexity of self-identity, wanting to understand the interplay between abstract concepts and physical objects. The resulting symbolic 'self-portrait' showcases my deep connection to the people around me. My inclusion of handmade gifts, photos with friends, and family heirlooms within the collection of objects emphasises the integral role of community and connection in shaping who I am.

*Adelaide* further explores the concept of belonging, the significance of objects, and my personal connection with family. Employing a tactile collage style, I incorporated embroidered maps, beads, alcohol ink-dyed fabric and paper cut card into a three-dimensional installation. I have created visual depth by primarily composing the piece from 15 layers of 50cm by 65cm card, all of which have been carefully cut by hand. The layers revolve around *Adelaide*, a well-travelled teddy bear that carries multi-generational layers of meaning in my family. The bear is the centrepiece, cut from hand-dyed canvas cloth and embroidered with iridescent navy beads and thread. She lies at the heart of the installation, which establishes her thematic hierarchy as a visual focal point. On a broader level, teddy bears have become a signifier of identity and connection to their owner, and *Adelaide* is no different, symbolising not only nostalgia but the enduring bonds of family and connection. The bear was originally a gift from my uncle to my mum at 17 when she departed Australia for a 12-month Rotary Exchange in Japan. As a child, mum handed *Adelaide* down to me, and to this day, the bear has pride of place nestled in the many pillows of my room.

In executing these pieces, I experimented with various media, from alcohol ink techniques to embroidery and gouache. These explorations highlighted the role of material selection in conveying meaning and enhancing my overall message. Throughout the body of work, a carefully selected colour palette and considered composition contributed to a sense of flow and unified aesthetics across the pieces. As a whole, *An Entanglement of Found Significance* expresses the significance of objects in constructing representations of self-identity, belonging, and connection. My development process has reinforced the importance of symbolism, storytelling, and composition choices in weaving a rich visual narrative.

My initial interest in subject matter central to identity was marked by a curiosity about the authenticity of self-identity and how it could be portrayed artistically. I discovered the breadth of meaning that inanimate objects could carry, realising that the symbols and stories attached to objects can represent facets of self-identity as effectively as traditional self-portraiture. My opinion transformed from a focus on self-image to a more holistic understanding of self that incorporated the significance of connections, memories, and shared experiences.

My ability to visually record processes evolved significantly during the creation of these works. I became more attuned to the subtleties of composition, colour, and texture, which allowed me to convey complex ideas visually. Regarding documentation, I remained confident in my ability to communicate coherently but improved in clarity over time. In the second half of the folio process, I was able to make educated choices regarding whether content was necessary to convey my artistic processes or would clutter the pages. By undertaking such an extensive visual record, I could effortlessly look back to my previous techniques to inform the development of the practical.

Throughout the development of *Self Portrait*, my personal visual aesthetic crystallised. Contemporary Vanitas and self-portrait still life as inspiration sparked inspiration for my work. These genres, characterised by their symbolism and composed arrangements, resonated with my desire to convey complex ideas through visual storytelling. The use of gouache exemplifies my growing preference for rich textures and layered compositions, which multiplied in my creation of *Adelaide*. The colour palette across both pieces is characterised by earthy neutrals and vibrant bursts of colour, reflecting a deliberate choice to evoke a sense of nostalgia and memory.

My artistic approach to *Adelaide* was integrally shaped by the collection of found materials that I amassed. I realised that these materials – textiles, maps, and a brochure of Tokyo, among others – enriched the symbolic meaning of the piece. These materials encapsulated not only memories but also the passage of time, which leaves its marks in the form of worn textures and subtle patterns. The symbolic representation of my mum's and my hands signify the second generation of *Adelaide's* journey and emphasises the enduring connections formed through objects. The layers move from dark to light, guiding the viewer's focus to the foreground, where the fabric bear rests.

Ultimately, the development of *An Entanglement of Found Significance* reveals the impact of belonging, connection, and memory, encapsulated within the broader concept of the sense of self. This body of work is the culmination of a visual journey into the intricate layers of self-identity and the profound significance of objects in shaping our narratives. My awareness of the impact that artistic choices have on self-perception and the viewer's perception has evolved, with various influences shaping the foundational aspects of my pieces and their development. The result of my wide-ranging visual representation effectively conveys that the significance of a singular object or identity is woven over time by many separate memories bound together.