

STAGE 2 VISUAL ART - PRACTITIONER'S STATEMENT

BODY OF WORK

Beyond the Surface

Oil on perspex, canvas and projection

"Beyond the Surface" is a series of paintings (body of work) of my Grandfather, Peter Wallace, with the core theme of expressing his unique identity through a range of portrait styles, taking the tradition portrait to a new place. Each piece utilises a different media and style, but are all centred around the main concept, each with the intention of expressing the identity and individuality of my Grandfather, expressing the story behind his face.

My grandfather has played a significant role in my life as we have similar personal traits, such as determination, compassion and leadership, although the most significant being both our humour and work ethic. This connection promoted me to choose him as my sitter as I felt I could effectively convey these qualities in my work. At the commencement of this year I was certain that I wanted to explore portraiture further and had an interest in the portrayal of individuality, yet my subject was undecided. So, when considering a range of opportunities and numerous trials of various subjects, I always seemed to come back to my grandfather, due to this deeply personal connection.

I explored a range of techniques inspired by the portraits which communicate stories of individuals, by Ahn Do, Ben Quilty, Stephen Bennett and Daniel Connell, to name a few. These artists all connect with the concept of *"faces telling a narrative"* in various ways. As a result of my conceptual and practical experimentation, I resolved that my paintings connect powerfully with this concept as a body of work, drawing either practical or conceptual inspiration from all of the artists explored over the course of this year. Each artist draws connects to the primary concept of individual narratives.

Using Perspex as a medium, was largely inspired by the work of Ray Turner and his series of many small portraits on glass. Initially trialling glass as a medium, I wanted to explore other options, as I was not fully satisfied with the resolution of glass. Although I was still determined to use a transparent surface as the captivating nature of the large scale transparent pieces, lies in their unconventional and unique appeal. Paint on perspex or a "glass like" surface is transparent and easily removable, and this concept of transparency and impermanence signifies the fragility and beauty of each person's story, made up of continuous depths of experience, challenge, triumph and emotion, powerfully connecting with my concept.

The combination of painting on perspex and visual projection, has resulted in a piece that expresses to the audience that, *"A picture is only the start of the story."* The portrait uses a monochromatic colour palette and has purposeful negative space; both factors taken into consideration to allow the projection to transfer through the hanging perspex and reveal the shadow of the face on the wall. The projection is a combination of old home movies and photos from the course of my grandfather's life, in chronological order, as a demonstration of his ongoing growth. This continual loop of storytelling plays through the portrait and can be viewed on the opposing wall, casting a shadow of the face over the top of the moving imagery. Inspired by the work of Trent Parke and Vernon Ah Kee; the engaging and unique combination of projection and monochromatic portraiture provides the

audience with a brief insight into the life and narrative behind the portrait. This directly links with the concept of *"Faces telling a story"*. This reminiscent style imagery also evokes personal memories to the audience, highlighting the individuality of each person.

The free-hanging, large scale, colourful oil painting on perspex connects with the idea that there is much more to someone than their exterior appearance. Many of the artists that I have investigated over the course of the year explore this notion in their own works. *"If I never knew your name,"* allows the audience to be fully immersed in the portrait as it is free hanging and when viewed from the front, the top colours and layers are seen, but as you move to the other side of the portrait, the base colours are exposed in all their authenticity and truth. This has a conceptual link to the identity of people in everyday life, their true "colours" are not exposed at first glance, but once explored further, no matter what changes are made on the exterior, their primary roots always remain unchanged. The expressive use of colour conceptually links to the uniqueness of each person and how each wrinkle, scar, freckle, makes up an individual. This hanging work also invites the audience to engage, walk around and become connected to the subject – becoming a part of the narrative, for just a few seconds.

"Lived a life that's full", is a colourful oil painted portrait on canvas. Inspired by the vibrant work of Stephen Bennett. This piece is focused on capturing the true essence and personality of my grandfather. The joyful composition illustrates his enthusiasm for life, determination in all things, compassion and love for others. The stark white background colour was chosen to enhance the contrasting colours of the portrait, while also giving the impression of the portrait sitting out from the background, better engaging with the audience. The colour palette and composition work seamlessly in unison to convey an expressive and "alive" portrayal of my Grandfather, providing a slightly different perspective of his personality, in comparison to the other two pieces.

As a body of work, the three portraits collectively link with the concept of *"faces telling a narrative"* utilising a range of techniques and media. This provides the audience with three different portraits, portraying different perspectives of the same subject. Without the strong connection I have with my grandfather, the portrait would

not of had such a significant portrayal of his true personality and individuality. The influence of other artists, while incorporating my own style and perspective has resulted in this body of work inviting the audience to see *"Beyond the Surface"*.

WORD COUNT: 994

