

'Sonder: Do You See Me?' and 'Tattoo'

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I've developed two interconnected oil painted artworks with Brent Faiyaz being my subject. '*Sonder: Do You See Me?*' is a portrait, and '*Tattoo*' is of his chest tattoo. Sonder is defined as the realisation that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own (The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows). Together the title, "sonder" and "do you see me?" serves to highlight the importance of realisation and strengthens the connection between the art and viewer. '*Tattoo*' holds significance as the tattoo is of a specific quote of Keith Haring's: "I don't think art is propaganda: it should be something that liberates the soul, provokes the imagination and encourages people to go further."

The connection between "sonder" and the Keith Haring quote lies in the shared emphasis on the transformative and thought-provoking nature of art. Sonder encourages empathy and deeper understanding of those who surround us, whilst the quote encourages to make meaning out of the world from art. Together, the concept encourages people to think about the world in a different way and to reflect on the human experience, making a connection through the power of art to evoke soul-searching. "Sonder" has been portrayed in my work through a portraiture painting. The eyes of the portrait endeavour into the human gaze and the intricate relationship between the subject and the viewer, alluding to the title '*Sonder: Do You See Me?*'. The tattoo across his entire chest can carry particular significance as it is a central and personal location on the body. Therefore the tattoo can symbolise a message that is central in one's life, close to their heart. Together the portrait and chest tattoo painting portray a strong message of integrity, identity and belief.

Jurell Cayetano is an artist that inspired and piqued an interest in me, not only for his portraiture and use of oil paints, but because eye contact is common in his work. With the personal connections with his subjects and himself, the eye contact makes me interpret it to be more personal and more sacred. Prior to the artmaking process I have never experimented with oil paints or studied facial features. I created both works with Art Spectrum series 1 oil paints, on 20 x 24 canvases. I began both with a red acrylic underpainting to create a warm skin undertone, as well as to create an inviting and positive atmosphere. In the nature of realism, the art elements were important to consider. In the portrait, I chose to centre him to create balance and a focal point. The centrality and space aligns viewers with the subject curating an intimate atmosphere. While positioning him this way, the viewer can see him for who he is and experience sonder. Similarly, in '*Tattoo*' I have painted specifically his chest to allow the quote to be portrayed clearly.

I painted in realism with the aim to portray the raw reality of being a person. Sonder is a very real experience, and in a way we can experience it when we look at art. Through this development, it has enabled me now as an artist to look at other artists' work and think about the complex life that they live and what led them to their creations. As expressed in the quote, art allows us to explore and make a meaning of the world, which art making has enabled me to do, and that's what makes it so beautiful.