

Me Myself and I

Isabella Viana

"Me, Myself, and I" is a self-portrait which is an exploration of abstraction and self-expression. I employed a mixed media approach, combining acrylic paint, oil pastels, and watercolour pencils on canvas to bring my vision to life.

"Me, Myself and I" carries a strong influence from the Australian artist Kim Leutwyler, known for her captivating portraits of LGBTQ+ individuals and allies. She skilfully blurs the lines between realism and abstraction, exploring the intricate layers of identity, gender, and beauty. While my painting primarily aligns with her artistic style rather than her thematic focus, being a self-portrait, it does touch upon the themes of self-discovery and identity, drawing a subtle connection to Kim's central themes. I see this painting as me on a canvas, literally and metaphorically. Everything about it is what I have subconsciously wanted to create, and learning how to do that through my folio has taught me a lot about myself and my aesthetic. I always thought I was only capable of standard realism paintings and copying directly from a reference photo. This painting has taught me how to create more than that and, like Leutwyler, to break boundaries in art. Her artistic style, which seamlessly bridges the gap between abstract and realistic elements through her gestural and colourful brushwork contrasting against hyper realistic portrait painting, is a concept I've loved throughout my year of work. I admire how she tackles colour exploration in her works, as I see it as another way of expressing whoever she paints, which I have kept in mind when creating my work. Like Kim, I tried to utilise my interest for bright and bold colours to highlight myself uniquely and almost use the colours to paint myself in a different form. I first came across Kim's art earlier this year, and she had given life to my very vision for my creations, making her a standout source of inspiration right from the start.

I gained new understandings from several other artists while creating my folio. Notably, artists like Evert Ploeg and Peter Churcher influenced my approach to capturing my facial realism. Their hyper-realistic portrayals of the human form, combined with their ability to convey the essence of their subjects, captivated me instantly. In the sections of my face that surfaced from the abstract background, I aimed to meticulously emphasise the details of my facial features, echoing the techniques employed by Ploeg and Churcher. This endeavour compelled me to view my self-portrait through their artistic lens, to capture the same rawness and intensity that had intrigued me in their works. Another influence is Adam Cullen, whose fearless yet intentional brushwork intrigued me. I intentionally set out to imitate his skills, incorporating fluorescent orange to define my subject and embracing bold, seemingly spontaneous brushwork – mirroring his distinctive style of roughly outlining his portraits with black gestural strokes. Cullen's approach of incorporating scattered paint drips and unconventional hints of colour into his exuberant portraits also intrigued me. To personal this style I started blending elements of the abstract background into my portrait, a departure from the conventional approach inspired by Cullen's unusual choices. This experimentation led me to embrace a riot of coloured paint drips scattered across my piece, which I found incredibly enjoyable to create. As I immersed myself in the works of these artists throughout the year, I naturally absorbed their techniques and preferences, unknowingly practicing and integrating what resonated with me the most.

This ultimately led to the development of my painting, which can be seen as a fusion of the techniques I learned.

This final piece represents a milestone in my artistic development, highlighting the evolution of my aesthetic and learning process. "Me, Myself, and I" departed from the familiar. It felt like a culmination of my year-long exploration of various artists' work, infused with my own perspective. This journey has reshaped my artistic identity, expanding it beyond the boundaries of traditional portraiture. I've gained the confidence and expertise to create art transcending hyper-realistic faces, delving into a more complex realm of expression. My work now captures the essence of subjects through a rich interplay of colour, mark-making, composition, and other abstract elements, moving beyond the literal to convey a deeper, more profound sense of identity and emotion.