

## *Intergenerational Farming*

### **Meg Slade**

Beginning with the broad concept of connection, I refined my major work to conceptually analyze the intergenerational connection many rural families have with farming, and their land. Before completing my major body of work, I experimented with a range of concepts, including technological connection, communication as a form of connection, romantic connection, platonic connection, and maternal/paternal connection. I found that family connection resonated with me, and focused on the way our hands have the ability to tell hundreds of stories.

My family began farming over 600 years ago in Aston Upthorpe, the South Oxfordshire District of the United Kingdom. The land in this area was passed down in my family through the generations, until my Great-Great- Great Grandfather migrated to Yorke Peninsula, South Australia, in the early 1900s to farm. My body of work demonstrates the way farming has brought my family closer, working together for centuries, and passing down the lifestyle that comes with working the land. Additionally, it illustrates the process of farming wheat, and the annual practice of seeding and harvest. A crop begins with soil and seeds, the soil is watered, and eventually, after a few months, the wheat crop is ready to be harvested. My work shows the connection we as humans have to our environment, and the way our farming methods have adapted and evolved over the generations. Even in the course of just two generations, my grandfather went from farming with a small tractor, of only 100 horsepower, to 550 horsepower in approximately 50 years. Farming is one of the noblest of professions, providing society with many different food groups. Foods such as natural meats, vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains all come from farms. Hence, all humans have a connection to farming, as we are consumers, and eat at least one of these food groups.

My personal preferred aesthetic of realism is inspired by the time I spent throughout my childhood with my Nanna, who was an artist that favoured painting realistic landscapes in watercolour. She has greatly impacted my love for art, teaching me and helping me with our shared hobby for as long as I can remember. I successfully communicated my personal aesthetic of realism by painting with oil, just like my Nanna's grandmother, and observing the style and technique of artist in residence, Marisha Matthews. I developed and learnt skills like painting wrinkles, hairs, and water through sessions with Marisha, and a lot of trial and error. I observed the likes of artists Jocelyn Maughan and Scott Hutchinson, who dabble in realism, both in sketch and application of oil paint and colour. I am pleased with how far my technical skills have progressed throughout the course of this year, from the first practical of hands I completed, inspired by Hutchinson, to my major practical.

Technically, my paintings all achieve immense tonal variation, between where the light hits the hands, and where the remainder of the image falls into shadow. The wrinkles and hairs on the first painting in this series demonstrate age, and the way farming in my family has been passed down through the generations.

Wrinkles filled with dirt are observed on the palm of the hand, illustrating the dirtied hands of many farmers. The faint allusion of water in the palms of the second painting was achieved by adding white highlights, where the light reflected off the water. Water

is a critical aspect of crop farming, as without water, seeds would not grow into successful plants ready to be harvested and fed to the populace. The jade beads and watch on the first and second painting from the series served as a good means of indicating the general form of the wrist. My youngest brother's chubby fingers, wrapped around stalks of wheat, ready to be harvested as the final step of growing the commodity, serves to connect the intergenerational idea of farming, from old to young.

I employed Marisha's technique of painting colours in patches, helping to achieve realism from afar. I battled my mind to accept this technique, rather than blending all the colours together smoothly, like I normally would. Although when observed closely, each patch of colour is clearly visible, from afar "our brain muddles all the colours together", and we assume the form of a hand, according to artist Marisha Matthews.

Overall, I am content with my conceptual and technical resolution of my practical, "Intergenerational Farming", as it communicates the intergenerational connection many rural families have with their land.

I would like to thank my wonderful teachers for all their support with Visual Art this year.