

## *Burn Out*

### **Ruby Wheelan**

My self-portrait titled *BURNOUT* navigates my experience with burning out and anxiety, most particularly this year, which has taken a significant impact on me thus far.

I was inspired greatly by the works of Henrietta Harris, who paints portraits highlighting themes of identity, and the loss of it, in the form of visual abstraction. Her art influenced my style and subject matter with stylised realism and themes of identity and the loss of it. I also observed the winner and finalists' submitted portraits for the 2022 Archibald prize, in addition to other various portraits for inspiration in terms of creating emotive and effective portraiture.

To create my self-portrait, I initially made a background of various grey tones consisting of messy brushstrokes, adding chaotic strokes of vivid purple and orange, lending to subtle symbolism. I utilised the grid technique when drawing my portrait to ensure accuracy in my painting. Referring back to this using my laptop, and particularly Adobe Illustrator also allowed me to isolate colours for ease of mixing the correct tone. I created a base layer of paint before delving into refining details, alternating between different techniques, such as using a wet or dry brush, or my finger, to blend the colours to satisfaction. I ended up straying from my final sketch and leaving out a component, due to the risk of crowding the composition, losing a layer of meaning but not significantly so. I finalised the artwork by painting the edges of the canvas and refining the background.

*BURNOUT* is a personal reflection, in terms of my school journey, and the increasing burnout and anxiety I'm experiencing as I reach the end of the year. This can also be a statement, calling for attention to the stressful ordeal of balancing work and life, and the pressure of needing to know your passage in life at such a young age. I intend the audience to look beyond the initially unsuspecting portrait and begin to analyse and ponder the choice of colour, prop and brushstroke, beginning to understand the symbolism. I hope to inspire a sense of reflection, as I also undertook in the making of the self-portrait.

In development of *BURNOUT*, I was able to further develop my knowledge and practical skills in terms of different brushstrokes, using acrylic paint (particularly mixing and blending colours) and creating emotional and whimsical portraiture. I was able to apply my own art style, breaching the confines of just creating a realistic portrait. Even without one of the layers of symbolism intended, I believe *BURNOUT* accomplishes everything I had initially planned in an effective manner.