

## *Transmogrify*

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The overall aim concept of my work is to explore still life and its different styles, colours, textures, media, subject matter and the deep use of symbolism. The aim was to be explored by painting, drawing, and etching still life subject matter with different surfaces and equipment. Understanding and researching every aspect of still life further improved my practical skills allowing me to reach my aim. New methods of oil painting were also explored experimenting and growing in my understanding, for example allowing me to gloss my finals and use fast drying mediums. The second part of the body of work continued this same aim but also added the concept of including portraiture through the reflection of still life objects, by still experimenting with new mediums, materials, elements, and principles.

The first part of the body of work is personally relevant as it portrays themes of growth, loss and maturing in life as well as the balance of energy. These themes are relevant to me as a growing teenager and the learning process I am undertaking as I grow into an adult. Energy balance reflecting both positive with negative and a healthy work and personal life equilibrium as I strive to maintain and develop healthy maturing habits moving forward. Part of the art process has supported this growth.

The second part of the body of work is also personally relevant as it explores themes of self-expression and practicing the expression of self-portraiture on still life objects. Self-portraiture encourages self-exploration by using specific colours, elements, principles, and facial expressions to portray certain emotions I may be feeling or wanting to portray.

My initial idea was exploring symbolism with still life objects and telling a story through these items similar to the technique of Pieter Claesz. To create a story within my work I decided to have my final in a series of three separate oil paintings. Over the three first set of paintings an apple starts healthy and ripe and deteriorates as a beetle discovers it and consumes it. Throughout the paintings a beetle discovers an apple when it is ripe, lays its larvae within it and then in the final painting a new healthy beetle that has grown from the apples' nutrients fly's away leaving the decaying apple behind. Each painting gets darker and darker in tone as the apple deteriorates ensuring that emotions are not just portrayed in the objects but also portrayed in the tone of the work. This represents the balance of life on earth (as one organism thrives another one suffers, the transferring of energy). This story portrays emotions of sadness, melancholy, and darkness when referring to the apple but also happiness, positivity and new life when reflecting on the new life of the beetle. Highlight and shadow placement was effective achieving a 3-dimensional realist appearance. Texture was also successful reflecting the real textural appearance apples and the apples flesh as it decays.

The next part of the body of work explores the combination of still life and portraiture styles through the appearance of the reflection of faces on still life subject matter. The appearance of faces on spoons, pots and fishbowls distorts the facial shape applying an abstract treatment to the artwork. Distortion and use of dark or light colours can portray funny and playful emotions or sad and frightening emotions. The Final painting shows a person's hand holding a cheese knife, with the reflection of their face in the knife. The facial expression is surprised but due to the strange harsh shadowing and grey monochromatic tones, the painting slightly portrays sadness, and unsettling emotions suggesting the person is unhappy

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with their reflection or insecure with their distorted looks. The use of reflection of a face on still life object was inspired by the work of M.C. Escher.

Personal emotions and researching other artists inspired my finals. Pieter Claesz, Jacob Foppens Van Es, Jean Baptiste Simeon Chardin and M.C. Escher each use symbolism in their artwork to portray deep meaning and emotions within their work. Symbolism such as clocks representing the mortality of humans, silverware and oysters representing baroque, quills and books representing wisdom, and reflection of faces representing self-reflection. The research developed allowed me to develop a deeper meaning in my final through the use of symbolism and placement of specific objects that represent emotions and in my final the beetle is symbolism for regeneration and renewal, and the apple symbolises good health and happiness. Elements and principles were also researched and emulated from these artists. Rough texture from artists such as Jacob Foppens Van Es and Pieters Claesz were then used in emulations to incorporate realism into the artworks. Shadow and highlight placed used from all of these artists were also emulated and incorporated realism within artwork and composition.

The style of the first series of artwork is still life and the treatment of realism. The background and surface the apple is placed on was painted first using water-based oil paints and fast drying medium on a 30 x 40 cm primed canvas. Medium that improves flow and gloss was used as well as medium speeds drying and increases gloss. Water based oil paints were used as they are faster drying than usual oil paints and give desired texture and gloss when mixed with mediums. The apple and beetle were painted after the background had dried so that the pigments sat on top of the background and not blended losing the pigments vibrancy. Using oil paints and keeping attention of highlight and shadow was inspired by the artists researched in this folio such as Pieter Claesz, Jean Baptiste Simeon Chardin and Jacob Foppens Van Es.

The style of the second painting is still life and portraiture in the treatment of realism. The background is a flat colour of white on a 30 x 60cm canvas with shadowing behind the cheese knife to create depth and composition. The background used acrylic paint and was initially painted blue to achieve a cool tone for the rest of the pigments painted on top. The rest of the subject matter was painted using water-based oil paints with a medium that encourages fast drying and, flow and gloss in the paint. The whole painting was then coated in a gloss to achieve a shiny smooth finish.

Texture in the first series of paintings was achieved through buffing in dark and light pigments using various angled and sized brushes. Shadowing was displayed under the beetle and apple angle towards the left of the canvas as the light source is portraying from the right of the canvas. Shadowing created form and circularity to the apple and 3-dimensional look to the beetle. The composition straight and the tone vary from light to dark as the series goes on. The focal point in the first two paintings is the apple as the value of colour is strong and bright red. In the last painting the beetle flying away takes the focus as it is light in colour in comparison to the dark background.

Smooth round shapes and texture was achieved through consistent blending of shadows and highlight using rounded brushes and fan brushes. Shadowing was displayed on the wall behind the cheese knife to create depth and realism. The composition was off centre and angled with a drastic long background taking up most of the painting. The focal point is in the left bottom corner of the painting as it is darker than the white background and slightly contrasting.

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The periods of art researched includes impressionism, fauvism, expressionism, and rococo. Each of these time periods were researched by emulating and writing about specific artists and their work from these time periods. Each time period had their specific elements and principles that made them specific to that time period. From gathering understanding of expressionism and impressionism some of the dark tones and symbolistic features inspired my final artworks.

Problems encountered with both finals were finding the right mediums that was quick drying but also dried glossy. Another problem encountered was the placement of highlight and shadow that helps with the realism of the artworks. The overall success of the two practicals was high as they both show emotion through symbolism with still life subject matter and portraiture was also combined in the last practical, and the elements and principles used were successful.

I have developed knowledge on using new mediums and materials successfully. I have also developed a greater understanding of incorporating elements such as texture, tone, line, dimension, value, shape, highlight and shadowing. These developments are reflected in my idea refinement and finals. As an artist I have learnt how to tell stories and emotions through still life and portrait subject matter that symbolise emotions such as sadness, anger, happiness, and joy. I have also learnt to connect with society by reflecting stories and emotions that are familiar to contemporary society.

What I learnt about art is incorporating elements and principles in artworks and exploring the different styles and treatments of artworks. I also learned about materials such as water colour pencils, pastels, pen, charcoal, watercolour paint, water-based oil paint, acrylic paint and collage.