

Joie de Vivre (Joy of Living)

Jesse Harris

My practical series, *Joie de Vivre (Joy of Living)*, consists of two acrylic paintings on 40cm x 50cm canvases. I endeavoured to explore the themes of family and childlike wonder by depicting myself with my dad in an old family picture, and my older sister and I in a screenshot from a video cassette tape recording.

I drew inspiration from Evert Pieters's *Feeding the Ducks*, and Edward Henry Potthast's *Girls Playing in Surf*, where I became drawn to the idea of capturing candid, spontaneous, and joyous moments between loved ones. By investigating their unique styles, I was able to unravel their techniques and apply their most effective elements to refine my own work, contributing to the construction of my own personal art style. Most notably, I attempted to encapsulate Potthast's use of composition to create dynamic movement and a focus on the loving connection between family and friends. Additionally, Pieter's use of complementary colours to create contrast was appealing to me. However, to maintain consistency and accuracy to the original reference, I created this contrast by increasing the vibrancy and saturation of the colours instead of completely altering the colour palette.

My first piece, depicting myself at two years old painting a mural with my father, combines the ideas of parental support with the construction of my own personality, centred around creativity. The bright tones create a nostalgic atmosphere as if the viewer themselves has gained an insight into my own childhood memories. Further, the composition containing myself approximately centred in the frame with extra space added over my head, emphasises my youth and subsequent wonderment as I navigate a large, unfamiliar world. This image is especially important to me as it depicts my first memory of falling in love with painting and my dad taught me a lot of what I know about creating art. My reference image choices were very intentional as they capture important memories in my childhood that were critical in the development of my personality.

My second piece captures my curiosity as my sister and I are gazing with inquisitiveness at an unknown object by our feet. For this piece, I was specifically inspired by Potthast's compositional designs and aesthetic scenes, centred around childlike wonder. I encountered several challenges when creating this piece particularly due to the quality of the reference image. I was inspired by a home video off a mini video cassette tape showing my sisters and I playing in the rain and decided to capture this moment by painting a screenshot of this video. However, the video quality was very poor, and I had to take certain creative liberties when details were unclear. This was a significant challenge for the faces as I could only make out shadows rather than details. To account for this, I investigated how Potthast and Pieters may have approached this issue and attempted to replicate their effective and intentional use of shadows to create the illusion of fine details. I was also unable to determine what the object that captured our attention was. I suspect that it may have been a tennis ball or some other toy, however, I decided that the mystery behind it more effectively captured the intended message.

I am altogether satisfied with my final practicals as I believe that I have successfully conveyed my intended themes of family and childlike wonder, evoking a sense of nostalgia for the viewer as they gain an insight into my formative years and their subsequent impact on my personality. Throughout my folio, I encountered several challenges due to the intricacies of the human form. However, by delving into fine details and how certain elements are constructed, I was able to strengthen my skills in a style which I previously shied away from due to its complexity. I also learned a lot about how to implement specific colours, textures, and shapes to evoke emotion when constructing entire scenes. I have learned a lot from this experience and plan to continue my artistic journey by exploring unique and challenging styles.