

Hope

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My practical idea came about because I observed the Aboriginal culture from the viewpoint of a non-indigenous person. It seemed that privileged people avoided first contact with indigenous people, especially if they suffered from generational trauma; the loss of indigenous land and cultural practices. I created a hyperrealistic oil painting accompanied by an audio installation. I painted Katrina Karlapina Power, an Aboriginal Kurna Elder and women's rights activist.

This motivated me to interview Katrina and understand her point of view on growing up and working with the indigenous community. It has shaped me as an artist to realise how much modern society in Australia is so invested in their nuclear family and careers, at the cost of jeopardising community and cultural values, something really important for me as a second generation Italian. So, this influenced me to dig into the roots of the Kurna Land I live on, and better understand the importance of the cultural practices indigenous people embrace, and their connection to the land. My painting's audience is meant for everyone, especially those unaware of the ongoing disassociation with indigenous culture. It broke my heart to hear how many Aboriginal babies after birth, were being passed straight to welfare, never to see their families again. It opened my eyes to see that we still have a stolen generation to this day, creating ongoing trauma for Aboriginal people.

I explored techniques of how to paint realistically, attempting to paint in very small detail, showing the pores of the skin and individual hairs. This was achieved by replicating photography of close-up human portraits, and artists who paint Aboriginal portraits such as Richard Tiejun Chao, Matt Adnate and Wayne Quilliam, who capture the lost and confused emotions in people's eyes to depict their feelings of disassociation.

I also studied different artists such as Zach Zdrade and Patricia Ariel who represent disassociation in their works through the portrayal of blurred faces and double forms. This was achieved by fragmenting and dragging the paint away from the faces. I implemented these techniques when painting the fire of Katrina's face/ headpiece. Katrina's Kurna name means "Lover of fire."

I initially struggled to portray the hyperrealistic effect, not including pores and slightly messing up the proportions of the face. Although it was less realistic than I would have liked to achieve I still captured her emotions. I was satisfied with the outcome of the fire, vibrantly arising from her headpiece. I'm also happy with the brightly pigmented aqua-blue background which complimented the subject's warm orange and brown tones. My time management with the drying process of oil paint was integral to giving me enough time to focus on the more realistic details of the face and hair.

Overall, my piece portrayed a realistic and authentic portrait of Katrina Power, incorporating fire, and expressing the disassociation and rebirth of the Aboriginal culture. Through her eyes, she conveys hope that future generations will embrace traditional practices and greater improvements will be made to uplift the indigenous community.