

## *Imagination – a series of five scenescapes*

### **Abigail Hughes**

I have always been fascinated by mythical creatures; when I was young, my dad would tell me stories of mythical South African creatures he created called the Yugugaboo and the Hogamawart. I adored *My Little Pony*, read Sue Bentley's *Magical Animals Books* and spent my free time with my little sister imagining worlds for our stuffed animals. Imagination is a concept I am deeply familiar with and something intrinsic to the concept of art.

I named my series of landscapes *Imagination*; though a simple name, this truly encapsulates the essence of my artwork and my experimentation of so many facets of imagination. Through a series of five acrylic landscapes, I have explored the concept of *Imagination*, primarily focusing on mythical creatures in places I have been in real life, seen from afar or met in my dreams.

My first painting, *Schools and Ghouls*, details a scene from my school with key features of the school scattered around the painting. The artwork includes two friendly sheet ghosts, reminiscent of the school's bygone tradition of dressing up under sheets during Halloween, inspired by the legacy of the Fowler's ghost, a girl believed to have drowned in the old reception building's basement pool.

My second painting, *The Swell's Spell*, shows a closeup of a crashing barrel wave, with a family of turtles and two dolphins surfing on the wave. This painting demonstrates the mystery of the ocean, and even though turtles and dolphins are not mythical, like many sea creatures, they are scarcely seen in the wild and appear very foreign and alluring.

In my third painting, *Drakensberg Dreams*, I explore the *Imagination* present in my South African Heritage, as I had only visited South Africa once when I was four and have very few memories from this trip; South Africa remains like a mythical place in my mind.

My Fourth Painting, *Mountains and Mares* is an ancient idea and details the mountain's peak filled with many mythical creatures, like Mt Olympus in Greek mythology.

In my fifth painting, *Wings and Wysteria*, I explore the concept of high fantasy, painting a landscape that is fantastical and surreal, with a radiating light featuring glimpses at a dragon I named the 'Moonlit Dragon' that I designed when I was around nine.

While arranging these paintings, I made a deliberate effort to maintain a sense of randomness in the layout emphasising that dreams and thoughts exist in pure surrealism, where the boundaries between reality and fantasy become increasingly blurred.

In my artwork, I strategically used soft colours and experimentation with different lights to craft a dream-like ambience while portraying mythical creatures in broad daylight. This choice challenges preconceived fears, symbolising acceptance and inviting viewers to embrace the extraordinary within our world. Before beginning my folio, I had limited experience with painting landscapes, with most of my painting experience coming from portraiture. Starting from a lower skill level allowed me to develop my style through studying artists such as Kendell Kessler, Henry Twachtman and Jax Sheridan to develop my style. From Sheridan, I learned the seamless integration of mythical creatures with landscapes. Twachtman's influence encouraged expressive brushwork

and movement in soft landscapes, while Kessler's work taught me to incorporate delicate elements, like flowers, with an understanding of depth and distance.

Throughout this artistic journey, I have grown as an artist by honing my ability to integrate mythical creatures into landscapes while also using soft colours and surreal lighting to create dream-like atmospheres. This evolution in my artistic style has not only challenged my skills, but has also expanded my creative horizons, enabling me to convey the extraordinary within our reality.