

Familiar Faces

Issy Chow

Familiar Faces is a three-part series: one of my sister, one of my brother and one of myself. These silhouetted portraits each act as a poignant symbol of personal identity as they represent the unique traits of each subject, serving as a visual signature of the memories and experiences that have shaped us.

My source of inspiration stemmed from a visit to AGSA to witness the Frida and Diego: Love and Revolution Exhibition. It was in the Gallery's Education Studio that I was introduced to the work of the Artist in Residence, Alice Lindstrom. Her detailed, whimsical paper-cutting motifs became pivotal in developing my practical. Wanting to understand more about paper-cutting, I stumbled upon the artist Elsa Mora. Mora embodies mystical and organic elements in her intricate paper-cut silhouettes. Looking at Lindstrom's and Mora's work side by side, I could draw strong similarities between the two, and that paper-cutting was reliant on clean, intentional lines, strong contrasts of positive and negative shapes and impactful colour palettes.

The preliminary idea for creating this artwork was situated around my desire to experiment with a completely unfamiliar medium. I wanted to push myself creatively and see what I could produce when pushed outside of my artistic boundaries. As I tried to understand the paper-cutting art form, I experimented with various cutting techniques, paper types and textures/colours. I decided to feature my siblings in my final as they have been constant figures in my life who have deeply impacted the person I am today. The idea that siblings are often among the few people who remain constant throughout a person's life, with whom you share a treasure trove of memories from childhood and beyond, personally resonated with me. The admiration and appreciation for my brother and sister stems from the countless shared journeys, and it is through experiences that we truly grow. The scenes within each of the silhouettes provide the viewer with a visual window into the minds and identities of my siblings and I.

For instance, including butterflies and birds in my sister's portrait wonderfully portrays her voyage through adolescence, while the silhouette of her wildly swinging from the tree denotes her free spirit.

In order to portray the connection between myself and my siblings, I manipulated the colour scheme to create balance and relation between the pieces. The progression of the blue in the portraits gets darker as it reaches my brother's portrait, as this symbolises the process of maturation from childhood to adulthood. Similarly, positioning the side profiles to the right illustrates us looking into the future. It beautifully mimics how, throughout our childhood, we always aspired to be like each other and copied each other in the hope of growing up to possess similar qualities.

The aim of my practical was, through utilising paper cutting techniques, to produce an intricate and unique display of artworks conveying my siblings. My final refined pieces are titled "Familiar Faces", suitably alluding to some of the most significant people in my life, my siblings, who continue to assert their sense of self and be authentically themselves.