

Francois

John Muzuri

The title of my artwork is 'François', meaning 'free man' and it is an oil painting on canvas (50.8cm x 76.2cm), with a wooden frame. Art has always been an interest of mine since I was a child. Growing up, I didn't have paper or pencils in my home country, so I used to draw on the floor with a stick. When I was in school, I was always drawing something when in class, even when the teacher was teaching. Even though I was constantly drawing, I felt like there was something missing, as if I wanted something more or different. That's when I began to experiment with various artwork and drawing styles. I eventually came across portrait painting. A portrait is a painting or photograph of a person that emphasises the face and its expressions. The focus of all of my drawings has always been on the face and people's expressions; this was something I was somewhat familiar with, but I knew nothing about painting. I wanted to learn how to paint portraits in a realistic way to advance my artistic practice.

My portrait was inspired by Fabiano Millani, a well-known artist known for his hyperrealistic portraits created using oil paint. I made this portrait to show how far my expertise has come when I initially began. I chose to paint a portrait of my brother, using a reference photograph I took, since he understands me the best of all our family members and we share a love of art, which relates back to my concept of childhood and being free to create art in Australia, as I was previously restricted in my home country. The goal was to create a realistic portrait in which personal expression and feelings could be felt and observed. My brother appears serious in this portrait, though also calm and still. A picture that can instantly affect a person's mood the same way my brother's art spiked something in me and led me to love art. I want people to have the same experience with my art and feel that sense of calm.

To create a sophisticated image, I carefully considered using bold and contrasting colours that complement each other effectively. I experimented with numerous mediums, including painting, printmaking, and drawing, to decide which would be the most successful. For example, I practised blending, using linseed oil to dilute my oil paints, and using a variety of brushes to create both blended and organic brush strokes. During my art research, I came across Jack Coulter, who is well-known for his paintings and their visceral intensity. He used abstraction to experiment with various colour combinations that give him unique patterns in his artwork. I used screen printing to employ the same approaches. I utilised different colours such as greens, burnt umber and burnt sienna, to create abstract backgrounds and obscured scenery which I choose to use to keep the portrait as the focal point, as if the background was also in focus, it would distract from the subject.