

Mum

Hannibal Coates

My painting titled '*Mum*' is an oil on canvas with silver leaf (153 x 100 cm) featuring my Mother whilst pregnant with me. I have always been fascinated with tonally realistic oil portrait painting and the practice of visually decorative shapes within artists' works. I investigated and was influenced by prominent South Australian artist, Robert Hannaford as well as Austrian artist, Gustav Klimt. His *Golden Phase* and the Art Nouveau movement proved inspirational. His use of gold leaf added a surreal element to his paintings, contrasting to the lighter tones in skin complexions of his subjects.

For the figure of my mother, I used Winsor and Newton Artisan Water Mixable Oil Paints. I believed that keeping the figure true to the photograph would retain the connection between a mother and her unborn child. I used ½, 8 and 12 size flat brushes for the initial stage of blocking in colour. I also employed 2, 8 and 12 size filbert brushes while executing the face, neck, hair and hands. The flat brushes allowed me to easily apply large amounts of paint to general areas of the composition like the dress. The filbert brushes allowed good coverage and the ability to perform more detailed work on the more intricate areas. I focused on keeping the skin tones true to the photograph, applying very little paint to the brush mixed with some water during the detailing process.

My decision to employ a pink hue in my artwork's background followed my desire to express Mum's character. The colour pink is associated with themes of compassion, nurture and love. It relates to un-conditional love and the understanding that a mother has with her son.

My stylised rose patterned background that I produced in a gestural manner relates to Klimt's Byzantine-inspired abstract patterns. I was largely inspired by Keith Haring's 'Untitled (Bill T. Jones)' artworks for how to compose my subject matter with a decorative pattern.

Mum's fascination to paint flowers as a career artist is symbolised by her immersion within the roses. I chose to paint the roses in shades of blue, which are associated with calmness, faith and confidence – all associated traits with Mum. To keep the artwork from becoming static, I employed some tints of warm magenta and violet to the roses.

My idea to utilise decorative leaf was influenced by Klimt's obsession to exploit the equality of fine and decorative art in order to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art). The addition of the leaf would create a unique and aesthetically pleasing layer to my artwork creating a

distinction amongst other paintings. My intentions for applying gold leaf eventually changed to silver leaf, which is associated with equilibrium and stability within feminine power. It also symbolises respectability, courteousness, responsibility, patience and determination. These are all traits that my Mother embodies.

I am extremely pleased with the outcome of my artwork. I feel I have achieved my desired effect of showcasing Mum's true character in a style inspired primarily by artists; Gustav Klimt, Robert HannaFord and Keith Haring.