

Me, Gran and Da

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With the end of school drawing closer, bringing the certainty of unknown, I chose to focus my final artwork on another point in my life when I experienced change. This final painting depicts me as a child sat with my great-grandparents, with direct reference to a photograph taken by my dad. I look back at my early childhood with fondness, growing up in Darwin surrounded by extended family, however having gotten older and moved away, I have developed by own sense of identity and beliefs, some of which contradict those of my family members who grew up in more conservative environments. The aim of this portrait is to look back on and assess my own internal conflict, of simultaneously wanting to return to the naiveté of youth and the understanding that I cannot and that this change is ultimately for good and necessary.

I wanted to evoke the emotions, which I associate with my memories of childhood through the use of expressive, saturated colour, bringing the figures and surrounding environment to life and off of the canvas in a visual representation of Darwin's ever-present heat. The direct lighting conditions in this particular photo allowed for me to highlight details of facial expressions and introduce elements of contrast in the central figures, establishing focus. Both warm and cool shades are implemented all throughout the painting to maintain contrast, however I chose to separate the people in the painting from the green background to establish them as the primary feature. The surrounding environment and elements are included as a way of reconstructing my memories of the places which I associate this side of my family with, my great-grandparents caravan and boat reliably present in the background whenever I would visit them.

The portrait's composition was an important aspect in representing the emotive concepts behind the work, and as such I attempted as much as possible to refer back to the original image when blocking in the main shapes and forms. The visual style of the portrait, although focused on realism, allows for a looser interpretation of certain shapes and lines to unify and introduce movement into the still image. When developing the portrait, I referred to the works of Alice Neel, whose expressionistic application of line and colour influenced my work. Her portraits held a similar emotional charge to what I was attempting to convey, having often painted friends and family in casual environments. I believe that I was not only successful in portraying the intended emotional ideas, but also in creating a visually effective and quality painting, and that the process behind the work allowed me to develop my artistic skills and abilities.

At a larger scale, this painting is not only a portrayal of my childhood, but a reflection on the evolution of identity. This idea mainly presented itself in the process by which I created the work, reflecting on the changes which separated me from this past version of myself that I was painting. Symbolically, this concept is represented as the original photo is from the perspective of my current self, I am now able to look back on myself and others from a new perspective and in the process have developed new interpersonal understanding.