

## *Flying Free*

### **Ali Najafi**

The process of creating this artwork started with ideas and points of interest, one of the things that influenced me was birds. It influenced me because I feel that the structure and feather elements of birds would allow me to expand my drawing and shading skills to develop realistic drawing. This way I could represent my artwork through the quality development of my own skills. Other than this, the conceptual and symbolism aspect of my folio also needed to be focused. One of the influences was religion, culture, and personal ideology I had that inspired me to create such an artwork. I looked at my background, the people I grew up with, and the things I had experienced throughout my life. I had gone through some extensive growth and adaptations to fit into an Australian society. These ideas helped me to build a foundation around who I was and build the meaning behind my own work.

I explored many aspects of art which inspired me greatly whether that be Renaissance Art, Realism, or artists who were admirable in how they presented their work. Jan Van Eyck and Larry K. Martin are two artists from entirely different timelines, but I found a lot of similarities in their artworks, i.e., art movements Renaissance and Realism. These were the artists I came across being most interested in. Jan Van Eyck was a Renaissance artist where his artworks were inspired by cultural and religious events. His artworks influenced me to develop my own concept around religion and culture. Whereas Larry K. Martin is a realistic artist focusing on the everyday life of humans. He inspired me to present my personal connections and life experiences through my realistic drawings. Other than this, the artists inspired me to experiment with various materials, techniques, and mediums. For example, using coloured pencil and different textured paper for drawing. Despite this I was lacking the techniques to draw realistically and be able to shade without being hesitant to mess up. By analysing the works of these artists, I discovered many techniques such as hatching, Loomis method and cross-hatching. These techniques were developed which made me draw effectively and accurately.

Growing up as a kid, I always dreamed of flying freely or in other words 'being independent' in my actions and words. Following up with this idea, I came across religious concepts, cultural concepts, and personal concepts of birds. Later, I combined all these ideas into one work which resulted in creating an artwork that represents the life cycle of a bald eagle.

Furthermore, Jan Van Eyck is the artist I connected with strongly in terms of art movement of Renaissance. It is because Renaissance focuses on the cultural and religious figures and events. Therefore, inspiring me to include religious, cultural, and personal philosophy in my work.

Initially, I had the idea of birds in my mind and slowly worked around various aspects of drawings. From there on, I decided to choose a bird species that best represented the symbolic meaning behind my artwork. It was the Bald Eagle that took my attention. I found many aspects and meaning behind this bird because of its strength at the prime of its life and its vulnerability at its young and older stages of life. Disregarding the fact that bald eagles are the national animal of America, I looked at the bird in my own way and interpreted it by looking at the features of it. One of the examples is bald eagles

can fly higher than most other birds which shows their aerodynamic abilities, or as I interpreted it as one of the birds who rule the sky and are independent creatures. This interpretation is one of the symbolic meanings behind my work.

Aesthetic-wise, I mostly took inspiration from the Artist Larry K. Martin. His artworks were full of dynamic effects and realistic drawings of eagles. I analysed his artwork to look for certain aspects of his artworks, such as balance in the structure of eagle's body and most importantly the techniques used to provide texture and depth to his artworks. There were a range of techniques I had explored and mastered by analysing his artworks and implementing them in my own work. Aesthetically, this artist helped me to cover those areas where I was lacking skills-wise.

In my final work, I have five different symbols. Each symbol represents personal growth stages and the concept of religion and spirituality. As well as this, it represents my understanding of perceiving life and the mindset to keep learning. In whole, my work represents my personal growth and perspective of life considering religion and culture. The theme of my work is that life is a constant cycle of learning, adaptation, and growth.

The techniques I used were Loomis Method for drawing. I used hatching, cross hatching, circularism, dashes, blending and layering for shading techniques. After experimenting with different paper mediums, I chose to draw on Pastel paper as I found it easy to draw on and achieve the desired realistic affects due to texture and grit in the paper. Also, I found Pastel Pad paper to be easier to remove graphite at the same time as holding onto the graphite well.

The aim of my work was to allow the viewer of my work to observe the skills I have developed and meaning constructed behind my work. Therefore, I had included my own ideology, understanding, and things that influenced growing up as a kid. It was also aimed at myself since I symbolised the process of a bird's growth to my own experiences, beliefs, ideology, and from the background I come from.

I was hoping to achieve a high quality set of drawings where I have refined my drawing skills using graphite. Keeping this in mind, I came across many artworks from the artists I had researched about. After analysing their work, I had looked at the technique to try and copy their techniques and master more techniques. This way I could draw more effectively in my final work. I have gained more skills to draw realistically and have developed the work I was hoping to create realistically. As a result, after extensive development and refinement of own skills, I was able to draw realistically and shade using the various graphite mediums.