

## *Requiem*

### **Mia Todd**

My folio and practical is a triptych titled 'Requiem' or an act of remembrance. My work is an investigation into pyrography as a technique, and developing my own aesthetic, character designs, landscapes, contexts and settings in what is combined overall as a three panel narrative. The narrative embeds the theme of remembrance in each panel, but also links to my learning pyrography as a skill used by my grandmother in her work, that I have learned as a continuation of her learning that she has shared with me.

The pyrography, drawing, textures and colour application onto wood, being a lesser seen approach to art making, helps link the craft practices with the artistic forms and expressions in the narrative. The final piece being a vignette alongside 'Cluedo'-esque clichés helps guide the audience's eyes across the painting with the help of set designs such as location becoming a fitting format for the character's death narrative. The scent and burnt wood also adds a further layer of experience to the pieces, indulging into the mystery of the scenes. Whilst the premise and the narrative is dark, the aesthetic is light-hearted, illustrative with linking styles from cartoons and anime in a combined way to develop my own characters and aesthetic scenes.

My process was multilayered, combining sketches, character design, interior and exterior landscapes and compositions as well as development of sketches and techniques in pyrography, colour theory, paint, particularly watercolour and exploration in many artist styles, aesthetics and fashion design concepts such as millinery and clothing. Characters were developed in different body shapes and sizes with particular focus on gender neutral qualities. These attributions were then also explored against supernatural, macabre dead bodies such as skeletons, zombies and ghosts. Incorporating these into complex scenes and narratives required refining my drawing techniques in preparation for effective pyrography application where the tonal scale and burning nibs combined to create the final drawings in detail, much more complex in burning than in using traditional media.

Character traits were also required and analysed against the characters context where I reviewed characteristics zombies, skeletons and ghosts have across a variety of references in animation, artforms and cartoons, including posture, body shape, personality and pose in context. This also allowed for reflection on symbolism and irony in developing the narrative elements: Where locations such as the 'The mansion interior', 'the graveyard' or 'the forest' were developed to actuate themes and ideas in unusual depiction of each character's death and piece of the narrative.

As the final work is a tricolon, I considered the relevance of frames as an additional layer. Each image is independent but also hints at a comic strip and as a whole, as a one work narrative. The final pieces were then hung in white wooden frames that allowed the pieces to look finished and allow the audience to focus onto the piece with the white guiding the eyes into the detail and narrative. Narrative complexion helped influence this decision with the level of detail in the pieces require I space where the eye could rest. The level of detail expressed through irony, living body elements such as hair, flesh, weight, clothing and gender alongside beauty and grotesque created an intrigue or curiosity in detail of each panel. Adding colour allowed for enhancing scenes such as night and day or blood on the ground which would not have been as achievable through wood burning alone.

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I experimented on numerous woods and surfaces to create and find the best effect for the pyrography underlayer, experimenting with many tools, nibs for linework and effects. Then I explored the effects of paint and colour opacity where I wanted the pyrography to be the focus, with the colours only enhancing the medium instead of the reverse. Watercolours, specifically watercolour pencils provided the desired finalised look for my overlayer allowing for subtle mood shifts and enchantments for the narrative's scenes.

I encountered challenges incorporating each medium into the final, particularly from adding colour for depicting warm, cool or night and day settings when countering the wood burning tonal range and the watercolour absorption into the wood's grains. Another was the colour theory and opacity of the colours, requiring a careful glazing dry on dry technique to build and combine layers. Initially the wet on dry technique seemed best for wood, however after analysing the interaction of the burnt linework and the watercolour paints, painting within small sections between the lines allowed the colours to become more vibrant with the linework burns to stay distinct.

The concept for the narrative is a fun murder mystery inviting the viewer into three distinct scenes where the protagonist in each is the same person but has their death's narrative presented in three different sections: The past leading to the death, the death itself and the aftermath. The scenes offer clues as to how the character has died as well as their backstory through the locations and the result. E.g., Ghost, skeleton, zombie being depicted in various inside or outside locations/ settings allowing for the viewer to look closely and engage with the work, while also allowing for interaction with the details, methods and techniques. The exhibition styled use of the ghost starting the narrative inside while the other two being in outside scenes, creates a sense of stylised unfinishedness that gives the audience the perspective of a life story suddenly cut off; queuing the viewer to look upon each panel again to try to discover the chain of events leading to the fate of the character. The purpose of the pieces is to invoke curiosity and to shed light on a dark themes through an art-style that alludes to a childhood storybook, producing a duality that writes the narrative off as a folktale or cautionary story.

Overall, with the level of detail, colours and linework, I am very happy with the final product and how it came together from a narrative standpoint as well as from an artistic one. If there was any improvements I could adjust, I would make slight adjustments to the perspective for some of the objects since they look slightly out of place, other than that the pieces came out better than expected. This art piece 'Requiem', was an experiment on pyrography, watercolour and learning the craft, which I believe I have succussed in allowing me to create a wonderful piece that invokes curiosity and wonder.