

## *Queen Balling*

### **Carmela Scalzi**

My practical work was inspired by 'queen balling.' This is when worker bees kill their queen. They approach her aggressively, one by one, until she is clustered tightly by bees, forming a ball. This causes her body temperature to rise, resulting in her overheating and dying. The bees do this when they no longer have use for their queen, or if another queen attempts to join the hive and is accepted. When learning about this, I made a connection with human behaviour and relationships. Even though the queen bee plays a vital role in the hive, she is eventually disposed of. This can be seen as a metaphor for human relationships as people can mean so much to one another but eventually be replaced. Another connection with human relationships is the group following the lead of an individual to ostracise a member.

Bees became my subject and queen balling my concept. I explored numerous stylistic options with reference to artists whose subject matter is bees. I created charcoal drawings of bees as a Folio work referencing April Coppini. Using an addition and subtraction technique I developed an understanding of how she creates the impression of bees in flight. I also researched Matt Willey who creates large scale murals and installations of bees as "a metaphor for us all." Willey's work represents that humanity's connections with the natural world are deeper than we realise. He simultaneously aims to educate people on the importance of bees and how they are a vital part of the global farming industry by raising awareness about the current struggles honeybees face as their population continues to decline. His mission to paint 50,000 bees around the world signifies the number of bees needed to sustain a healthy hive.

Although I explored drawing and illustration in my Folio works, painting is my preference. The strongest technical links in my work were made with Deidre-But Husaim's tiny bee paintings. But-Husaim aims to capture the mysterious patterns of bees in flight. She aims to inspire individuals to appreciate the importance of bees in the environment.

My paintings represent queen balling through the circular placement of canvases and wooden panels. Bees painted in different sizes create the impression of them flying in from the distance. The queen bee is central to the compositional arrangement and is motionless in contrast to the worker bees. This implies that the queen has no choice but to accept her fate. She is surrounded by darkness, emphasising the danger she is in. But-Husaim's influence is evident in the painting of the bees' wings which suggest motion. My work uses queen balling as a powerful analogy for the worst of human relationships.

My painting skills have developed and refined in the process of achieving my preferred aesthetic. I am pleased with this outcome which successfully communicates my concept and visualises my subject.