

Pink Lines

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The series, *Pink Lines*, features four artworks – an acrylic self-portrait on canvas, a textile-based mixed-media tapestry, two throw pillows, and a hand-painted repurposed chair. *Pink Lines* challenges conventional conceptions of portraiture – submersing the viewer into my identity in its most complete sense, with a body of artworks forming a ‘profile’ of me. The initial thematic concepts for the series grew from my interest in sociocultural dictation of self-expression and identity, with philosophical ideologies drawn largely from Naomie Wolf’s critical commentary on feminism in the late 20th century, *The Beauty Myth* (1990).

PAINTING

Modern Women (Pink Lines) is a self-portrait predominantly inspired by the figurative painting style of contemporary Australian artist, Wendy Sharpe. Sharpe’s ‘intuitive’ approach to portraiture breathes life into her subjects through loose application of media and dynamic compositions. The acrylic paint, while applied largely with precision, draws inspiration from Sharpe in art-making process and composition, with focal points of the face emphasised through consideration of detail. Contrary to Sharpe’s methodology of media application with large paint brushes, *Modern Women (Pink Lines)* is painted with smaller brushes. The purposeful restraint in application pays homage to early Archibald Prize (1921-) artworks such as William Darge’s *Sir James Elder, KBE* (1941), where subjects were almost exclusively white men of upper-class prominence. The purple suited, long haired, hyper feminine subject confronts the audience with a philosophical dilemma – is she mocking a traditionally masculine institution of white-collared working men in the arts, or utilising her privilege as an educated 21st century young woman?

The photographic quality of the self-portrait’s composition was inspired by photographers Petra Collins and Cindy Sherman. Both artists explore the impact of social constructions on women’s body’s – in particular Collins’ spotlight on the influence of the Lolita Complex in contemporary settings. The Lolita Complex refers to the sexual attraction towards young girls, the name stemming from Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Lolita* (1955), where a middle-aged man is infatuated with a 12-year-old girl. This complex appears cross-culturally in historical and contemporary contexts, and is most notably observed in Japanese popular culture with ‘cute-erotic’ icons, for example the oversexualised school girl archetype. The juxtaposition of costume in *Modern Woman (Pink Lines)* – the black lace bra underneath the blazer – garments that typically appear in different social situations confront the audience with truths about sexualisation of women in seemingly unconnected contexts. The piercing gaze of the self-portrait challenges the viewer to look at me, my body, and my clothes – an uncomfortable and shamed practice, but a common one.

TAPESTRY

Where *Modern Women (Pink Lines)* focuses on a portrait of the exterior (and its social, cultural, and historical context), *Inner Workings (Pink Lines)* probes deeply into my personality, memories, passions, and interpersonal relationships; focusing rather on the interior. The tapestry is formed using found materials, wool, recycled clothing, dyed calico, crystal organza, cotton threads, and various other fibres.

OFFICIAL

Inner Workings (Pink Lines) sources its aesthetic and format qualities from Denise Treizeman's installation and sculptural works made from textiles and found materials in an expansive hand-crafted explosion of colour. The maximalist quality of Inner Workings (Pink Lines) works threefold; the large scale and intricate design captures the complexity of personality while simultaneously evoking a sense of overwhelm as the busy visual looms in front of the viewer, with the composition formulated using interior design principles such as space that consider the artwork itself in relation to the other pieces in the Pink Lines series.

Inner Workings (Pink Lines) was designed to hang vertically on a wall, however upon nearing completion, I determined that the artwork would dominate all other pieces in the series due to its scale. To combat this problem, the tapestry is positioned on the ground, where the other artworks are placed on top.

Through this presentation, the viewer is immersed within the installation, ensuring that the self-portrait is both a visual and physical experience.

CHAIR

Foundations (Pink Lines) is an upcycled wooden chair that acts as the 'body' of the series. Designed to be sat on, the chair invites you, the viewer into the installation – walking the fine line between intimacy and invasion between you, the viewer, and me, the subject and artist.

The graphic and 'whimsical' painting style was inspired largely by Ken Done and James Smith (The Walking Creative), contemporary artists who depict 'slice of life' Australia with bold colours and a spotlight on floral and domestic motifs. The green leaf motif, inspired by my childhood growing up in the country, visually links Foundations (Pink Lines) with the background of Modern Woman (Pink Lines), refining the cohesion of the installation.

The implementation of humour, 'Plant Booty Here', forms a relationship between the artwork and the viewer – and as such Foundations (Pink Lines) entices the viewer to pause and consider the series in its entirety.

THROW PILLOWS

In formulation of the final composition of Pink Lines, the two throw pillows titled Negative Affirmations (Pink Lines) balance the installation. The soft tactility of the cushions juxtaposed with the words 'Fake' and 'Failure' create confusion within the viewer as they are simultaneously comforted and confronted with criticism. Drawing inspiration largely from commercially available cushions plastered with shallow positivity, Negative Affirmations (Pink Lines) commentates on mental health in capitalist-centred western culture. The painted designs feature popular contemporary graphics, florals and grid patterns, in reference to the romanticisation and idealisation of hustle culture despite its detrimental impact on health.

CONCLUSION

Pink Lines is an immersive installation self-portrait that explores all facets of my identity from the external image of Modern Women (Pink Lines), to the personal experiences of Inner Workings (Pink Lines), to the 'body' of Foundations (Pink Lines), and finally to the internal dialogue of Negative Affirmations (Pink Lines).

Challenging contemporary conceptions of portraiture through the innovative use of mixed media, Pink Lines reveals intimate truths about personal and sociocultural concepts of feminism, growing up, personality, and mental illness.

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