

## Essence

### **Mahi Mehta**

The idea for my major work was inspired by a thought I had after a few years living in Australia when my grandma visited my family from our homeland of India. The thought of migrating to this country, was something of excitement; being in an environment completely different to what we were used to. I began to wonder about how much of ourselves is reflective of the surroundings we find ourselves in. After living here for many years, I thought I would depict a somewhat representation of our connections to the land that we have made over the many years.

I decided to create a mixed media piece, combining both elements of drawing and painting using charcoal and acrylic, to create both depth and contrast. When deciding on the compositional, and making a choice to include both landscapes and portraits, I felt that I could create more emotive and stoic facial expressions with the detail involved with using charcoal and I could capture the bold forms and colours of the local landscapes. I decided since I would be referencing my own imagery, that I wanted to keep that sense of realism and therefore relevance. I decided to depict my mother, father and grandmother as part of the portraits of my mum, and chose element of destinations that had become significant in our day to day lives. I thought a portrait would reflect the rawness of identity and the landscapes reflecting those changing and new connections being made, ever evolving. The layout for the final itself was also equally as important to help tell this story, and so decided to almost pair up a portrait with a particular landscape to represent the change of scenery and demeanor that comes with migration. My mother is softer in nature, more classic and traditional, my father is calm, where silence speaks volumes and a constant observer, my grandmother is a little more vivacious, nurturing. While representing growth and change, I think I had inherited each of these traits.

I wanted the final to appear as though there were links and threads between all piece of work, forming relationships between. Creating the portraits in charcoal and monochromatic, means that the viewers can focus on the emotion positions of each figure, get a real sense and true essence of each one as just like in artist Vija Celmins, using light to illustrate the intensities of high points within a drawing. I continued to refine the portraits in particular as I wanted to ensure these images remained true to who these people are. The shadows are soft, and the highlights are placed thoughtfully which I believe is the strength and something I have managed to achieve well. After researching the work of artist Georgia O'Keeffe, I discovered alternate techniques for colour matching the palette. This was difficult at times, ensuring tones were accurately mirroring the reference image as this does impact when trying to achieve dimension in the shadows and highlights.

My aesthetic as an artist has developed more towards a more realistic style as I began to draw, I tend to lean towards focusing in the linework and textures I see. It is important to create art; it is an expression of oneself and surroundings whether is it reality or imagination. The artwork I created is important as it represents a journey.....we all go to this point somehow.