

What Will It Bee

Emmy Haslett

This isn't just a dirty white box. This is a beehive. Inside the hive is a frame. I encourage you to take off the lid and carefully interact with the frame inside.

This double-sided modified version of a bee frame symbolises the two sides of a story, a story in which I believe Australians have a choice to make. One that will hopefully promote understanding and awareness regarding the bee industry. The story that I wish to convey with my piece is the potential introduction of Varroa mite into Australia. Varroa mite is a parasite which is found in every country in the world except Australia. The mite invades beehives, essentially attacking and killing the bees within, resulting in the death of the hive and promoting an abundance of technical difficulties for beekeepers and farmers alike.

I was greatly inspired by my family farm for this piece. We grow citrus, almonds, wine grapes and stone fruit. After distinguishing that I wanted to explore an issue related to our farm, I recognised that the use of bees for the pollination of fruit is what tied all of the individual varieties that we commercially grow together. Further research concluded that the almond industry has been recognised as the fastest growing agricultural industry in Australia. For this reason, I decided that my practical work would focus solely on the Almond industry.

I was greatly influenced by a variety of unique artists throughout the designing of the piece, namely Ladislav Hanka, Matthew Willey, Patrycja Proszynska and Noel Badges Pugh all of whom expressed a different style and have somehow shaped the way in which the final product was formed. Ladislav Hanka is a Czech Artist based in America and I was greatly influenced by a particular exhibition of his named *The Great Wall of Bees*, 2014 as it inspired me to incorporate an actual beehive frame into my art as well as using honeycomb as a realistic and diverse feature. Instead of using real honeycomb, I included a wax honeycomb sheet that is actually used in real hives as a template for bees to build their honeycomb off of. Matthew Willey is a mural artist who travels all over the world promoting bee awareness. I appreciated his use of bright colours and the realistic approach he took when illustrating the bees. I incorporated his realistic approach into my art when illustrating the almond blossoms, nuts, leaves and Varroa mite. Patrycja Proszynska uses acrylic to paint realistic animals on circles of wood. The idea of painting on wood instead of a canvas diverted me on yet another unique path and influenced the outcome of my piece for the better, promoting a rustic and natural 'feel'.

It was exciting to watch all of the individual layers of this piece come together. The bright and dark colours on opposite sides are complementary to the colour of the wood. There are a large range of uniquely textured materials such as the wood, wax template, dead bees, almonds, unfertilised nuts and acrylic panels all of which add complexity and detail to the piece. I found all the features to be very symbolic and realistic which is important as the issue of Varroa mite is a real topic and the truth behind the damage they can cause to an entire industry is as confronting as the dead bees.

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