

The B Trilogy

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Dogs are more than man's best friend; they are soulmates, family, and to me, a source of immeasurable inspiration. Having always been fascinated by animals and their unique personalities, growing up with dogs allowed me to understand these creatures on an emotional level, as each dog offers a different perspective of life. I decided to create a body of work about dogs and their importance to me using mixed media in a portrait layout. I chose to represent my family's three dogs, past and present, as each one of them is incredibly important to me. The name of the piece, 'The B Trilogy', refers to their names; Busta, Barney, and Bowie, all three of which were male Australian Cattle Dogs. With the sudden and unexpected loss of my beloved Barney, this piece served me as a vessel of my otherwise indescribable emotions and aided me in expressing my grief about the situation. The piece also helped me to accept our newest puppy Bowie, and quickly rid my thoughts of resentment I initially held against him because of the situation. As all three of my dogs have had contrasting personalities, my body of work aimed to capture each of them as realistically as I could. My piece consists of three A3 wooden canvases with acrylic paint under Prismacolor pencil.

The starting point for each portrait was deciding which photos captured their personalities the best. As their individuality is the focus of their portraits, it was necessary to compare different photos to determine which pose would represent them best. After choosing their final poses, I drew each dog's outline and features to transfer onto clear sheets to project onto my canvases. Since I struggle with drawing on a larger scale, I projected the sketches outlines onto the canvases with a projector to avoid distorting or warping their features. Next, I used acrylic paint to block in the colour for the base, and aimed for as little detail as possible as the paint was simply acting as a colour base. I used a variety of techniques for the bases that I explored in my folio, using a paintbrush to achieve wet on wet layering, dry brushing, scumbling, dabbing, and longer strokes. I took care in ensuring the paint strokes were in a similar direction to the of the fur, which I replicated with colour pencil over the top. I created realism by adding Prismacolor pencil, as the fine hairs and ability to create depth further the natural appearance. A technique that profoundly influenced my work was following the general rule that dark colours push a feature back, and lighter ones bring it forward. The technique was essential in forming the depth I captured in the final portraits, just as the way in which the colours in the fur were layered is. It's particularly crucial in maintaining the fur's movement in the piece and hence, the realism.

Influences on my work included the style of realism, and my dogs' personalities. The art movement imbued throughout my folio is realism, as its ability to depict a natural appearance suited the dogs' genuine characters. As Australian Cattle Dogs are an icon of Australian culture, this history is often associated with being harsh and unfiltered, so I wanted to convey the same rawness that the outback represents through each portrait. Realism helped me achieve this effect, portraying these themes through the natural appearance, so it's the art style I chose.

The artists I studied within my folio were Cass and Brie, Chris McClelland, Boris Schmitz, Patrycja Proszynska, and Julie Brunn. Each of these artists contributed to my folio in a

different way, inspiring me to adopt either a technique or medium they use, or a style they incorporate. I started by analysing Cass and Brie's unique photo realistic style, and found the distinction between similar-coloured features against the fur must be highlighted with a contrasting colour in order to recognise the different areas. This was especially necessary within my piece with Barney's ears and eyes. Cass and Brie also focus on the direction of the animal's fur, harnessing the movement of hairs to create depth within the piece. It was emulating their work that I discovered the difference this technique makes. I employed this technique in my own artwork, and found it created the biggest difference in my ability to express the portraits realistically. Exploring Chris McClelland's technique of a coloured focal point, contrasted against a monochrome, graphite background inspired me to take a mixed media approach. I wanted to produce the same detailed, hyper realistic style that McClelland exudes, and when recreating a piece of his, I found the way to create this realism was through pencil. By closely studying both Cass and Brie and Chris McClelland's techniques, I noticed a complete transformation of my own skills in achieving realism. In observing their art and how they form that appearance, I realised using pencil to create depth was the key to both of their hyper realistic styles. Opposingly, Boris Schmitz strays far away from realism, opting for single-line portraits with pronounced expressions to highlight the individuality of his subjects. I was influenced by his ability to create personality with a singular line, and his technique helped me practice gaining personality by changing the composition of facial features such as eyes and mouths. When defining Barney's eye lines, Schmitz's technique was especially helpful in realising how a single line can determine the entire facial expression. Alternatively, Patrycja Proszynska continued the natural style with her technique of painting with acrylic on a wooded canvas. She inspired me to employ a natural wooden background for my piece, with a realistic subject. While experimenting with wood during her recreations, I found the texture of the wood very easy and fun to paint on, as it was smooth and did not absorb paint like paper and linen canvases do. Likewise, using Julie Brunn's technique of a palette knife, and the exploration of using acrylic paint in a different way, helped me decide on the mixed media approach. By experimenting with acrylic while testing Brunn's style, I realised achieving the same solid colour with pencil would not give the same effect as a painted base as its rigid form facilitated more detail to be layered upon it.

The intention behind the composition of the piece is that because Bowie is a puppy, and our current dog, he should express a more rambunctious, defiant expression to that of the two older dogs to his left. I decided on laying the portraits out in the chronological order that we had them, from left to right, so Busta is on the far left, Barney in the middle, and Bowie is on the right. Busta and Barney are both portrayed in similar poses, and I did this to emphasize that they are different to Bowie, demonstrating their mature but equally goofy personalities. I believe my piece was successful as it captures their personalities accurately and expresses my individual connection with all three of the dogs. By having an in-depth look at the artists I studied in my folio, I was able to build upon my skills to correctly represent them using my chosen art style of realism.

I encountered significant issues when trying to emphasise the length of Barney's snout. Due to the position of his mouth and the fact he was facing front-on, I struggled to achieve the necessary depth around the base of his snout. I resorted to darkening the area, and this successfully pushed it back. Another issue that arose was trying to find coloured pencils that matched Busta's paint colour, as they were too yellow compared to his orange undercoat. Similarly, I found that some of the harsh lines I created with the

paint on his portrait were particularly hard to blend with the pencil. Ultimately, I turned to wax pencils to cover abnormally dark lines, such as Busta's neckline. Furthermore, when adding final details to each portrait, normal white pencil was no longer layering, leaving the reflections in the eyes dull and unnoticeable. By using a white wax pencil however, I managed to brighten the highlights, producing a clear, accented focal point.

This body of work reflects my appreciation for dogs and an understanding of their personalities, through the use of various techniques and mixed creative media, with a focus on the style of realism. The intended meaning behind my piece is heavily influenced by my love of the natural world and those in my family. By living in such a close proximity to dogs, it helps me appreciate their individuality. The relationship humans have with dogs has always enthralled me, and by creating this piece I have been able to better understand the attraction of such a close and loyal connection. By examining this relationship in my art, I was able to use this piece as a means of self-discovery, both artistically and emotionally.