

2020 International Baccalaureate Visual Arts

Ashley Cairncross

Family is often defined as all the descendants from a common ancestor, each connected by DNA. The pieces throughout this exhibition explore alternative definitions of family and suggest that perhaps DNA is not what binds individuals together. Growing up with divorced parents and living in a blended family my childhood was greatly shaped by my own family experiences. These pieces reflect upon my own childhood and what family means to me. My appreciation and gratitude for my ancestors and childhood experiences is emphasized through my use of old family photographs and objects from my past. The old photographs depict the lives of two important figures within my life, my great grandmother and grandmother and were altered using Photoshop functions. Objects such as my childhood blankets and teddy bear were also used to invite the audience into my past.

Beginning with *Nurture*, painted in a pop art style strongly influenced by Andy Warhol, using hookers green and naples yellow the audience is invited to explore the connection between a mother and child. The colors used provide the audience with a sense of happiness, safety and protection, all emotions felt from the love of a mother. This pop art style was continued into the larger acrylic painting *Bloodline* to further my investigation into my own family history, instead using black and white to symbolize the time period in which the old family photograph was taken. As the viewer continues through the space, they encounter found object assemblage sculpture. Significant in both *Stamps through time* and *Baby* the incorporation of found objects invites the audience into my own life.

Envelopes collected from my home during my family's time in coronavirus lockdown were important within my work *Stamps through time* as they are representative of the items that entered my home from the outside world. Within *Baby* various patterned and textured baby wraps from my past have been used to sew a quilt, which was then displayed

on my childhood bassinet. These found objects create a meaningful addition to the intent of each artwork.

Vibrant colours progress through artwork compositions specifically within the piece 'support', which employs six different bright colours in order to represent the six members of my blended family. Through these bright colours the work explores the role each figure plays in the support of the family dynamic and one another. In contrast to these bright colours various black and white lino prints have also developed. Clean and crisp linework within these lino's, in connection with the use of black and white emphasises the strength of family connections and childhood memories.

The exhibition has been hung in a traditional manner with the two-dimensional works at eye level on 7 white boards, which allows the audience to view these works closely and with no distracting colours and objects surrounding. The various three-dimensional works were displayed on white plinths at varying eye levels. Larger three-dimensional works such as *Baby* were displayed on large low plinths to allow the audience to view more of the work. Smaller works such as *My home* were placed on small plinths at a higher level, although they still allowed the viewer to see above the work. Overall works exploring a similar intent were placed within the same area of my exhibition, such as *My home* and *Neighbourhood lights*, which both consider the connections within the walls of a family home and utilise the medium of paper cuttings with installed lights.

Throughout this exhibition I have explored what it means to be a family and have come to deeper understandings and reflections of my own family life and childhood memories. Although my works explore my own life experiences, I hope the audience can also reflect upon their own journey and how family is significant to them.

Chloe Hoover

This exhibition, comprised of 7 white boards, centralises its focus on the act of social observation, exploring the ways in which we engage within our environments; public and private. Juxtaposing the private living spaces and city structures these pieces investigate the un-observed aspects of human lifestyle, breaking down the contrasts in the way we act in different locations.

Throughout the Victorian quarantine, which continues from its beginning in March 2020, I was confronted with the importance of my home environment, noticing the significance of how my surroundings impact my everyday life. The exhibition first invites audience to reflect upon the way they interact within their private environments. Beginning with the sculptures, *Chill Out* and *Closed for Business*, installed at the traditional height of 155cm, the complex blue patterns drawn in ceramic pen are highlighted. This invites viewers to reflect on the importance of their home environments, heightened throughout quarantine. The audience interact with *Chill Out*, a found object fridge covered with patterns and post-cards, symbolising the shared experiences of comfort eating as a coping mechanism. Postcards are offered to viewers, inviting them to write about their experiences in Covid-19 and magnet them onto the fridge, ultimately creating shared connection and acceptance of its impacts.

The exhibition is arranged to present a narrative, juxtaposing the way we interact within our private and public lives. As the audience move forward, the exhibition focuses on our public lives within urban city landscapes. The repeated symbol of the square and circle is presented within *Vertigo* and *Segregated Connection*, which both explore social segregation as a result of urbanisation. The square represents the cubic landscape found in urban environments and the circle symbolises the infinite opportunity for freedom and connection. In *Vertigo*, this symbol is repeated 236 times to reflect the urban sprawl and is placed next to *Segregated Connection* to empower its colourful abstract landscape.

The symbolism of the staircase progresses from *Segregated Connection* forwards into *Revolution* a collection of 50 double-sided prints, formed into pinwheels which stand in

glass jars on-top of a white plinth. Behind, 4 photos from their documentation as a site specific installation at the beach create a seamless background, installing the viewer into the natural landscape of the sea. The staircase etching, a symbol of urbanisation, is contrasted with the playfulness of the ocean and of pinwheels. This installation is faced towards the window, engaging with the natural outside world, an opportunity for freedom away from the confines of urbanisation.

The vibrant colours of red, blue and black progress through each of the artworks. The bold colours place their significance at the heart of my life as a student, studying with these three coloured pens. Illusion-based patterns progresses towards the two-dimensional drawings, all drawn with ball point pen. These pieces move back to reflect upon the significance of our home environment in our private lives. Two scenes are depicted, a bathroom in *Self-Contained Illusion*, and a kitchen in *Got The Blues*. The obscure and complex scene invites audience to reflect on their actions in privacy. *Got The Blues* is located on a white board, highlighting the complex patterns within, advancing upon the monochromatic blue patterns utilised in *Objectification*. The monochromatic blue patterns within these artwork's intend to portray the illusions we often project in our lives, habitually hiding our true selves. The two dimensional works are placed so that their centre is at eye level, 150cm from the ground, which immerses the viewer as central to the pieces. *Self-Contained Illusion* is the only piece which sits by its self on an easel to flow red and black from *Chill Out*, *Three Faced* and *Segregated Connection*.

The observations and depictions of two contrasting lifestyles, at home and in the city oppose each-other within the corridor of opposing boards, engaging viewers to reflect on the way they simultaneously interact with both. Viewers are empowered to present a true expression of themselves, which is not separated in different environment's. Finally, the viewer arrives at the double-exposed photographs in *Detour* which contrasts the human urge to move forward with the traffic of life, with the necessity to slow down and reflect on who we truly are.

Martha Sands

This exhibition expresses how I perceive my world to be reflected and greatly enhanced by nature. Through realistic depictions of animals and their natural environments based entirely on my own photographs, this collection subtly illustrates the qualities, experiences and relationships that define who I am today, with a focus on messages of love and hope.

To give this exhibition a bright and comforting atmosphere, works are hung on white boards in an open space with large windows to supply natural light. Opening with a large, hyper realistic portrait of a young orang utan positioned at the entrance of the exhibition space, the audience is pulled in and confronted with the stare of a gentle giant. Titled *Masa Bersama* meaning 'shared time' in Malay, viewers are invited to stop and consider their close biological and psychological connection to this incredibly intelligent animal. Inspired by my travels to Borneo, Malaysia, and a heart-warming encounter shared with this individual, the portrait is imbued with a calm curiosity which reflects both my personality and the temperament of orang utans, thus drawing deeper connections between humankind and apekind. This exhibition centrepiece is the result of over 100 hours of painting.

With the style of my exhibition established, the audience is then led towards a selection of other traditional artworks hung at a uniform 150cm to guide the eye. A gradient is created from *Masa Bersama* as the overall brightness of the works increases. Large areas of white space given by the boards creates contrast, particularly with my oil paintings *Divine Nature* and *Nomadic Guardian*. Inspired by the old oil painting masters such as William Turner and Albert Bierstadt, these works rely on dramatic lighting and depth to communicate the beauty and expansiveness of the landscapes they depict, reflecting the spiritual connection between humans and natural, wild environments. Between these larger works are small pencil drawings which help to diversify the exhibition and rest the viewer's eyes. The drawings *Baby Steps* and *Tough and Tender* are double matte board framing which draw focus into the centre of the pieces, highlighting the innocence of the baby animals featured.

The oil painting *Brothers Under the Sun* depicting my older brothers as lions employs a warm aesthetic to match the savannah setting, accentuate their regality, and highlight their loving bond. This piece introduces stronger themes of family connection to my work, which I develop further in the following section of my exhibition.

On the opposite wall to my traditional works is a projected film which flicks through the storyboard for a children's picture book titled *A Forever Family*, which tells the story of my little brother's journey out of the foster care system and into my family. Illustrated on Photoshop with a graphite-like brush, the storyboard has a black and white aesthetic and loose style which supports the work. The book characters, with influence from the form of Beatrix Potter, are anthropomorphised animals which embody each key figure in my brother's story. I employ a similar anthropomorphic style in the digital illustration *Family Tree*, which reflects the experience of sharing a meal with extended family through a troop of lemurs in a lush green tree. Printed AO on glossy paper, this illustration and its vivid colours capture the chaos of family gatherings.

Providing contrast to the positivity of most of my exhibition is the oil painting *Tethered Wings*, done in a more painterly style with inspiration from Australian artist Andrew Tischler. Depicting a wedge-tailed eagle stranded in a burnt tree, this piece explores the tragedy of the 2020 bushfires in Australia and the devastating effects on native wildlife populations and habitats through a dark and cool aesthetic. The strong shadows cast across the eagle's wings and the stormy sky in the background not only represent its helplessness amidst this disaster, but the restriction I have felt during the global coronavirus pandemic which has interrupted plans for the future and diminished my spirits during my last year of school. To support this, the piece is positioned on an easel isolated from my other works. However, connecting this piece to the rest of my exhibition is a bright green shoot emerging from beneath the burnt bark, symbolising that hope is returning.

Oleana Scheinberg

Lying at the core of this exhibition is the conceptual idea of fragility and vulnerability. Exploring how humans and society are delicate and unpredictable, I intended to compose my exhibition to illustrate and narrate mankind's journey to seek identity. These pieces confront and challenge the audience to see past stereotypical beliefs and values.

The inspiration behind the works was sparked from questioning what makes us human? I dare to challenge the audience's beliefs by exposing the fragility in all of us. The exhibition is purposefully arranged with six white boards, to share different stories of vulnerability. Suspended on the far window side, the audience is initially directed to two three-dimensional pieces. The first, *Ella, Veronica and Hayley* suspended from a beam against a window, highlights the bold painterly style makeup on the figures faces, inviting the audience to feel the vulnerability of these three women as the artwork comments on the fanciful standards of beauty. The vibrancy in the purple background coupled with the distorted and expressionistic make-up provides a contrast to the translucency of the material, creating a powerful yet fragile tone. To the right of this work stands knitted fibres draped from the window, similarly, catching the light. *A Temporary Bind* invites the audience to reflect on their journey through isolation as I share my experience of separation from my extended family. The varying colour, dimensions and texture, inspired by Orley Genger's *Big boss*, relate to the differences in the lock-down period and conditions between our cities.

Opposing these two works, *A self-conscious skin* suspends from two hooks against a white background. The dainty and fragile dress complements the facing works in the fading colour and sheer fabric. Both bodies of work comment on female insecurities, the viewer is able to construct a story connecting the three works together. The dress from a lace heirloom; the torn and fragile feding of the media represents my own skin and body. The fading pink hair dye conveying the insecurities and discomfort of one's body image. Following to the right, *Wounds*

Stain and Bloom and Blight are smaller scaled works. The ephemerality of the flower petals coupled with the delicacy of the bandages are examples of the fragile tone that is displayed through the exhibit. Both pieces are hanging from pins displaying a sense of weightlessness to the works. Opposite to *Wounds Stain*, it's complementary work *Wounds Stain* is shown in a grid of four by two. The separation between the two works is showing the progression from the initial, wounds forming, to the result of wounds healing. *Wounds Stain* is hung at eye level which evokes a direct visceral response as the medium blends and bleeds through the found bandages.

Vibrant, yet faded colours progress through the exhibition, bringing a quality of artificiality to the works. *Baby Gram* uses a mix of warm and cool colours to represent the development of a constantly shifting, multi-faceted identity. The artwork features baby dolls which were chosen as the subject to suggest an artificial idealised beauty, and the way we portray our identities in the on-line world. This work is placed next to *An Uncertain Smile*, a series that uses Olympian blue and Persian red as primary colours in the depiction of youth's faces. The watery application of red and blue colours onto the translucent fields supports the idea that youth are responsible and passionate about their future. This work separates 'Bloom and Blight' from *Baby Gram* all three of which portray figures at different stages of their life. From the left, *Baby Gram* shows how humans are fragile from an early age. Progressing to the right, fragility with age evolves as we move through adolescents to adulthood.

Towards the end of my exhibition, the final works comment on the vulnerability felt in more recent times through the pandemic. The two works, similar in the use of washed browns, oranges and figurative distortion, invite the audience to view different forms and perspectives of the one message about isolation. Inspired by Fiona McMonagle's gestural pieces, both *Floating in Isolation* and *Faceless Collective* advance from the watercolour techniques in the other portraiture works.

Bridget Valder

"I rebel; therefore, I exist" - Albert Camus

This exhibition expresses the ephemerality of individuals by capturing a state of chaos. I decipher Absurdism's understandings, applying them to modern experiences and context in exploring the reality of how we perceive life and how this impacts society. Absurdist philosophy poses that human existence is, despite great effort, insignificant and purposeless. It states there are three individual responses to understanding the absurd: suicide - the inability to cope with purposelessness; religion - a 'philosophical suicide' by submission of autonomous thought and lifestyle; or being an 'Absurd Hero'. An 'Absurd Hero' accepts we are without purpose and finds sanctuary in understanding this futility, allowing them to live boundlessly.

My exhibition combines lino-prints, illustrations, collages, and painting with an organic, grungy aesthetic drawn from street artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. I also introduced the naivety of artists like Jean Dubuffet in collage and sketch-book style sections referencing old-fashioned comics or childlike doodles, a nod to the youthful freedom we feel before succumbing to the expectations of ourselves and others. I incorporated architectural and industrial elements, referencing the concept of an 'urban landscape' which involves desolation associated with moral degradation, much like Cyberpunk which challenges technological advancement through a dystopian portrayal. These themes, addressed in *Essence of Greed*, challenge consumerist ideals and address straying values as people seek non-existent meaning, concepts also reflected in choice materials; corrugated iron, spray paint, and newspaper.

The use of iron in *Fragments* and *A Matter of Time* draws from the dilapidated, urban settings depicted in *No Refunds*, *Tap on*, *Tap off*, *Pit Stop* and *4:00pm Sunday* - continuing the urban landscape aesthetic across the pieces. Simultaneously, rusting displays the inevitable degradation of all things, a material strong yet evanescent.

Spray paint/graffiti signifies the corruption seeming increasingly prominent in the physical and the rebellion that exists in the absurd. The physical concept of vandalism links to immorality which has, historically, been heightened with or resulting in advancement - economically, technologically, and societally. Meanwhile, graffiti in youth culture is a sign of defiance and living freely - much like the Absurd Hero fights ephemerality, becoming unrestrained.

Newspaper in *Essence of Greed*, *Cacophony*, and *Fragments* symbolises consumerism and capitalist societal ideals overrunning the modern world, a commentary on the corruption and suffering that arise from greed. This prioritisation and need for advancement benefitting largely the upper classes is part of the desire to resist the absurd and construct a legacy when arguably our purposelessness should leave our existences invisible.

Representing conflicting pathways and attempts to find purpose, I incorporated arrows, signs, and road iconography. These symbols, typography, and patterns in the lino-prints and illustrations enhance the busy atmosphere sustained throughout my exhibition. Incorporated in all my works are faces, minimally lined, unidentifiable figures. This comments on how our identity and actions are rendered meaningless as we are consumed by life's gravity.

My pieces are hung traditionally, at 150cm - standard eye height, exhibited across eight, white boards. *A Matter of Time* is displayed on an easel, enclosing the small space, creating an isolated atmosphere in which the audience lingers, overwhelmed by the intense detail in the pieces, mimicking the challenge of facing the absurd and embracing life. *Cacophony* and *Essence of Greed*, the largest, most crowded works, are placed opposite each other in the space's centre - compressing the audience between them. I dispersed the disordered, and enclosed, allowing pieces *Fragments*, *Cacophony*, and *Essence of Greed*, collaging no places of calm and contrasting the more literal lino-prints and illustrated works depicting symbolic settings and place. The works' rustic style contrasts with the minimalism of the exhibition space, making my works appear partially out of place, also enhancing their discordance and prominence.

People may spend their lives attempting to find some supposedly necessary purpose however, my exhibition challenges this self-imposed and societal expectation. I explore Absurdism's perspective on our lives; the conflict between embracing normalcy and turning to hedonism as alternative ways to cope with the truth of our mortality. I ask the audience to consider what they allow to give their life constructed purpose and urge them to challenge complacency by confronting the notion that perhaps this is an illusion constraining them.

Alia Van der Straaten

At the center of this exhibition is an exploration of the ever-changing relationship between humans and nature. Whether capturing the innate and complex beauty of the natural world, or drawing attention to contemporary environmental issues, these artworks, through narrating Melbourne environments and quintessential Australian imagery, hold a place of personal importance in my identity. Growing up in Australia, the Australian bush has been a significant part of the place I call home, and has acted as the key source of inspiration in my artworks. Overtime, however, this environment, has been relentlessly threatened by human led destruction, deforestation, pollution and rising sea levels. Additionally, my naive use of scale, rudimentary perspective, and nature-focused works have been inspired by the primitivism art movement, and Henri Rousseau specifically. Through my exhibition, I hope to illuminate the crisis that is currently faced by the place that many of us call home.

Steeped in symbolism, motifs such as the skeletal bird denote an impending toxicity in the environment, and create an ominous aura within the exhibition. Through disseminating this symbol throughout my artworks, the bird's poisoned stance and watching eye engage viewers by evoking a feeling of judgement, which confronts them to consider their role in environmental issues. Notably, this symbol begins to diminish as the exhibition progresses, relieving the tension it creates initially in the artworks. Beginning with *Merry-go-round*, I intended to challenge viewers with its direct question inspired by World War II propaganda posters, "what spin will you put on your future?" This playful question acts as a hook into the exhibition, and immediately engages the viewer's attention. Positioned on a white board alongside *Tar*, this choice functions to provoke the viewer's senses through the juxtaposition of the poster's colour with the harsh black and white lino print. The printmaking technique is critical to the conceptual and visual qualities of my artworks, as the black ink on the lino print and etchings ties together the black fineliner or glazed lines that repeat across *Utopia*, *Triffids*, *Merry-go-round* and *Worship*. *Tar* then creates harmony between the colourful artworks, *Worship* and *Merry-go-round*, whose bright colours require a dividing

monochromatic relief. Branching from the initial criticism of human destruction established in *Merry-go-round* and *Tar*, *Worship* is contrastingly inspired by the sacred relationship between humans and nature in ancient civilizations, and provides nuance in its positioning.

As viewers continue through the space, they notice the intertwining leaves that permeate across the body of works. Initially sparse in the compositions, the escalating presence of these leaves mirrors the process of the environment growing under destruction. I have utilized the neutral colours in *Urban Atlantis* to break up the large and colourful watercolour paintings, *Worship* and *Triffids*. The gas mask, which is prevalent in 4 of the artworks, alludes to the toxic pollution of the natural world, and importantly, how it is simultaneously implicating human wellbeing. An image synonymous with the Covid-19 pandemic, the mask further situates the artworks in 2020, suggesting that these environmental issues are important in the modern day.

The white plinths that are arranged at varying heights in the center of the space provide variation in the exhibition, allowing viewers to engage with the works from different angles as they act as extensions of the sculptures *Cerberus* and *Periscope*, the pipes growing out from the platform. Viewers are comforted as they progress through the space from the unnatural pinks, buttercup yellow, and colour blocking, to the cooler tones, organic forms, and natural medium of clay. The familiar Australian flora and fauna displayed in *Regrowth* and *From the Ashes* are intended to remind viewers of the calming and magical Australian bush, that many may have fond memories in.

The intimate space this exhibition is arranged in favours the detailed and complex nature of its artworks, as viewers are able to closely explore the compositions' dense line and pattern. On exiting the exhibition, viewers will notice the tension between the artworks arranged on opposing sides of the exhibition boards, *From the Ashes* directly facing *Merry-go-round* and *Tar*. Through situating the artworks in this manner, the progression from desolation and darkness to hope across the artworks is highlighted, and the viewer's exhibition experience is reconciled on an optimistic note.



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