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New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship Visual Arts 2025

93306 Painting

OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR





PROPOSAL

My folio boards explore the concept of **time** through the **transience** of the **present moment**. I chose pansies as a recurring motif as I was charmed by their expressive faces and illusory sentience, as well as their symbolism for **thought** and **remembrance**, being derived from the French word 'pensée'.

Initially I focused on painting pansies repeatedly to bring attention to their overlooked complexities, such as the textures, veins, and shifts in colour that often go unnoticed. I wanted to focus on these small, ordinary flowers, then transition to human faces, to emphasise the similarities between us and nature.

I use the pansy's short blooming period as a metaphor for the present, which is **ephemeral** yet pulsing with **vitality**. The fragility of pansies reflect the human condition, including the temporality of relationships, memories, and being alive, and how everything alive is united by death. As my ideas developed, I began to layer remnants of the past around a suspended present, as I tried to capture the **quiet beauty** found in **impermanence**.

Stylistic Approach:

Blues, greens, purples, and yellows,
Saturated, fluid drips of paint, intense colours, unpredictable streaks, dynamic patterns, pigments bleeding and blending,
Empty space, negative space, crowded space,
Transparency, grounds showing through; through flowers, faces, hair, leaves, clothing...

I am obsessed with the formal properties of painting. The way paint layers, the surface that I can create through dripping, tension, fluidity, or positive and negative space. For me the **process of painting is the most important part**. I am a perfectionist; I constantly question the way my works are made.
The concept IS the surface.

It was important for me to keep visible the unrestrained fluidity of the grounds, particularly as my boards progressed, to create rich layers with different textures and colours, to allude to the depths of our memories. I also began using negative space and shadows, which became more prominent on my last boards, with my final paintings being an amalgamation of the previous ones. I was inspired by Amy Dury's use of saturated, dripping backgrounds, and Kehinde Wiley's layered florals.

I have also been consistently motivated by the contemplative and introspective expressions in Hope Gangloff's artworks, and the luminous way she paints skin. Her style reminds me of Van Gogh's self portraits, with the expressive brushstrokes, striking colours, and abundance of melancholic blue.



Pensée, and preserving memories:

In Victorian England, pansies meant 'I'm thinking about you'. Likewise, in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Ophelia says, "there is pansies, that's for thoughts", which was used to represent the deep, unspoken emotions that she was experiencing after her father's death.

This led to pansies becoming a symbol for memory and loss; pressed pansies were placed in lockets or journals as preserved memories, and instead of decaying, they keep their vibrant colours as time passed.



The Present, a flow of experience:

**"Why don't you paint a pansy's life cycle?
What about growth and decay?"**

I think it is funny (and a bit exasperating) that so many people have told me to do this so many times, because I would hear it at least once a week, and struggle to produce an explicit answer.

THEORETICALLY, this idea of inevitable decay follows the natural progression of time as a linear quantity, that allows us to predict a pansy's decline since time (allegedly) moves at a constant rate. Although this was appealing in a full circle, ouroboros form, I wanted to explore time differently by accentuating the present (the foundation of the present is the past, so memories are also involved) over the predicted future.

This made me explore the concept of psychological time, and also the static time theory, which I have tried to convey in the layers of my final pieces [page 7].

PERSONALLY, I am interested in *this* moment of time - my current feelings, surroundings, friends, fears, of *right now*, this year. There is no certainty of what will happen to my pansies after they bloom [page 7], like how there is no certainty of what I will be doing next year or the year after, or how my life will be different when I leave high school and start university. Pansies don't bloom for long, since they are annuals, so they complete their life cycle, including flowering, setting seeds and dying off, within one year; similarly, after a while, my life won't be like this again, with the same people or art style, or favourite artists or poems or books...

Those moments were fleeting, so I wanted my boards to be a time capsule of this fragment of my life. As Oscar Wilde wrote, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "Some things are more precious because they don't last long".

Inspiration, from my favourite books:

**"Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?"**

- Mary Oliver, *The Summer Day*

"It was my first big chance, but here I was, sitting back and letting it run through my fingers like so much water."

- Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

"They startled me with their crimson faces, massed one upon the other in incredible profusion, showing no leaf, no twig, nothing but the slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic, unlike any rhododendron plant I had seen before."

- Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*



In my paintings, the pansies are blooming all at once, almost overwhelmingly, demanding our attention. I was inspired by the anthropomorphism of rhododendrons in *Rebecca*, and the potential for flowers to evoke fear, from their human-like qualities and the sheer abundance of them [page 2].

This inspired the metamorphosis of pansies to people, due to their profuse human-ness, which their limited physical forms could not contain. I wanted the pansies' blooms to reflect the urgency of the present, to be so powerful that they don't reach the later stage of their usual life cycle when they begin to wilt. I wanted to convey that the present outweighs the other worries we might have, such as overthinking past memories or fearing the future. The permanent bloom also accentuates the brevity of a pansy's real and short blooming period, mirroring the transience of ourselves.

Brief list of ideas:

- transience of the present and life in general
- depth of and continuance through memories
- thoughts, contemplation, introspection
- static and psychological time
- intensity/power of the present

PEOPLE AND FLOWERS

Human Touch:

I decided to start with this sketch of the moment *just before* the flower is picked - it is still alive at this instant, but as soon as time starts again, it will die. This foreshadows the suspended time that I capture the blooming pansies in, where they are currently at their optimal, most vivacious forms, but thereafter can only begin to decay.

I wanted the start of my boards to have this uneasy and deceptively alluring atmosphere, like the instant you knock a glass of water over and it doesn't shatter, but is in the process of falling and you can predict the outcome already (it is only a matter of time).

But why all this tension? Well, in addition to the absurd amount of anxiety I associate with the word 'time' [page 8], I think it is concerning how much we don't pay attention to the present unless something forces us to. Particularly small weed-like pansies like this one, are rarely noticed until they are picked.



Flowers and Femininity, in Rebecca:

Flowers in literature have often been used for symbolism of female characters, for qualities traditionally attributed to femininity, such as fragility, beauty, innocence, and grace, or alternatively, in modern literature, strength, autonomy, sexuality, and the tensions of social expectations. Lighter coloured flowers have connotations of innocence and purity, whereas bolder colours have undertones of passion and evil, evoking more intense emotions and even fear.

In *Rebecca*, there are two female characters that encapsulate the extremities of the stereotypes regarding femininity.

Salmon, White, Gold Azaleas:

The narrator in *Rebecca* is a naive, innocent, and controllable young woman, who blindly marries and obeys her husband, Mr de Winter (who murdered his last wife). The flowers symbolising her are light coloured azaleas, which are confined in a small garden, representing her youth and inferiority, particularly in contrast to Rebecca, the late Mrs de Winter.



Blood Red Rhododendrons:

Directly contrasting the narrator, Rebecca, is associated with the untamed, formidable blood red rhododendrons, that creep on the walls of the house, pierce through the windows, and is in abundance in the gardens. They are described with violence and sensuality, often intrusively imposing in on the narrator, preventing her from feeling at ease in her house.

It is interesting how Rebecca is portrayed near the end of the novel, when Mr de Winter justifies his murder of Rebecca with her promiscuity; the narrator, with her unquestioning devotion to traditional gender roles, believes her to be evil. She objectifies herself and Rebecca into one dimensional, misogynistic stereotypes of 'good' and 'evil', following their respective colours and flowers. She refuses to acknowledge that women can be both at once, and is blind to the complexities of femininity.



Femininity in literature is often tied with youth and beauty, which are traits that will eventually fade. The azaleas, as the narrator, are delicate and pure, but will eventually stop flowering. However, the rhododendrons, symbolising a more mature and complex character, lives on through the narrator's mind. Rebecca was never alive, but the imprints of her existence is inextricably tied to the house where the narrator lives. This challenges the idea of impermanence, as the rhododendrons are in perpetual bloom, and cannot be swayed by the passage of time.

MORE FLOWERS...

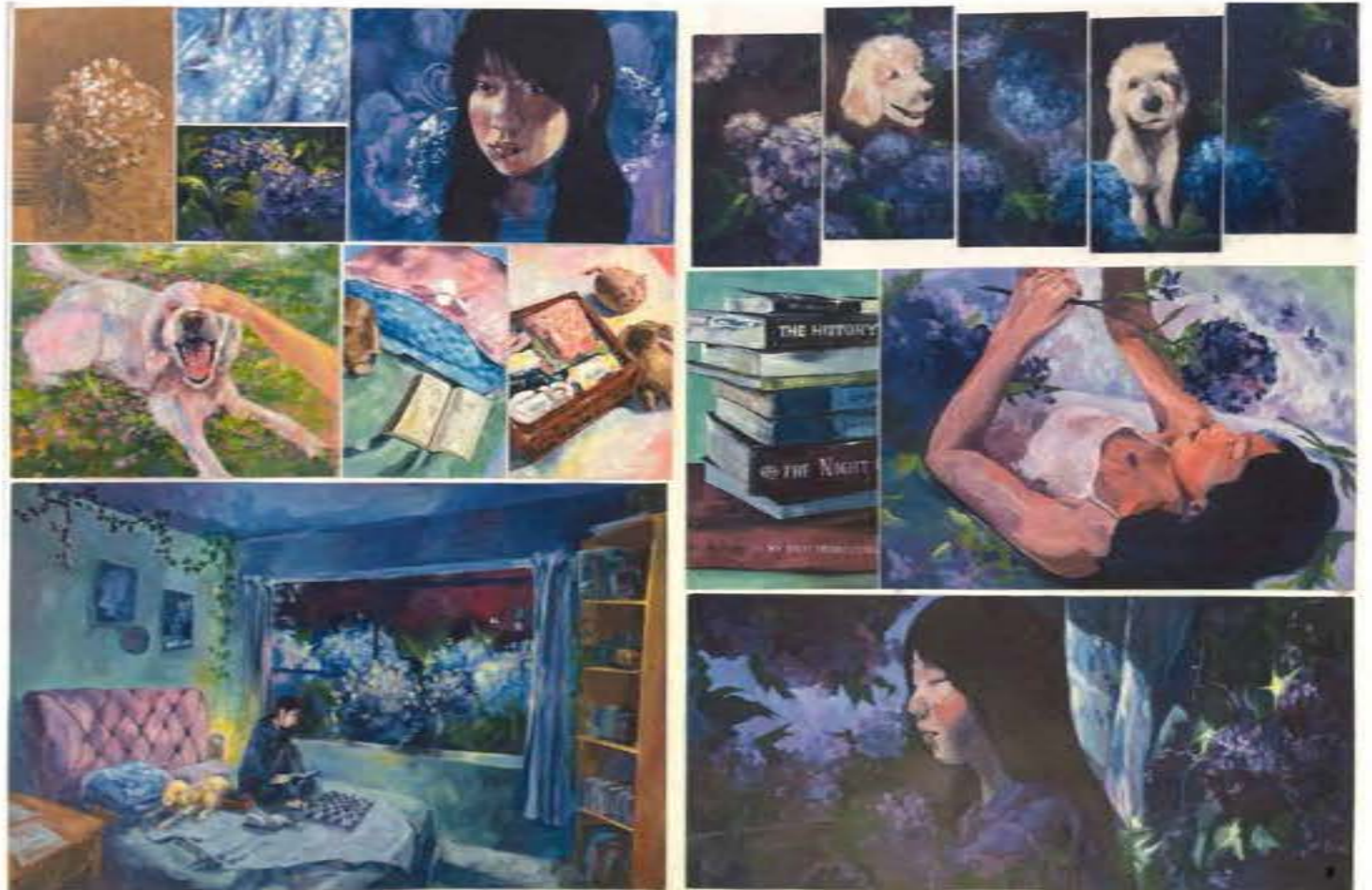
I love flowers so much that I've painted them in my folios for NCEA level 1 and 2, in addition to level 3.



In my level 1 board, I had just begun to paint flowers (and was heavily inspired by Monet's water lilies).

In my level 2 boards, I decided to paint hydrangeas because I saw them everywhere around my house, and was impressed by their abundance. This inspired the two larger paintings at the bottom of my boards, where I wanted to play with scale, to create the same awe and fascination I felt when seeing those large bushes of hydrangea, overflowing on the sidewalk, trying to take over whatever was in its way.

I have carried a similar idea to my level 3 boards, about nature being restrained, and having the power and energy to overcome their physical limitations, to increase in size, and transform to something greater, with more autonomy. This works to put emphasis on what we, as humans, take for granted, such as consciousness, the ability to change, and other usual qualities, such as the ability to walk and talk, and even to move around; we are not as limited as we sometimes may think.



Style in SKIN:

HOPE GANGLOFF

Hope Gangloff is known for her vivid portraiture, which have a cool blue undertone and are usually outlined with a shade of dark blue or red, in sharp contrast with the light yellows and pinks of the skin. Before discovering her on instagram, I had used limited colours for portraiture, without thinking about incorporating the entire colour wheel.



Gangloff uses acrylic paint, expressive brushstrokes, and a lot of blue. She captures her models in contemplative poses in their seemingly mundane routines, yet makes it interesting through the emotion in the eyes and nuances in their expressions.

These two are my favourite paintings of hers; both figures are deep in thought, and appear to be waiting for something. It is quiet and introspective, yet striking, from the intense, cool blue that works so well with the pop of colour from the red lips.

The skin contains blues, greens, purples, pinks, yellows, and oranges; essentially every colour there is. I liked how lively and luminous this made her faces, so I practiced seeing the different shades in my own reference photos, and exaggerating the contrasting colours. To keep the skin clean, I limited myself to these colours: benzimidazolone yellow, quinacridone magenta, phthalo blue, titan buff, and titanium white. I like to make 'black' for the eyes with the yellow, magenta, and blue, and use teal for the shadows and salmon pink for the cheeks.

Another key element of her work is maintaining visibility of the ground, so I needed to layer cautiously. The different colours also couldn't be blended on the canvas, and I often had complementary colours next to each other; if the painting became too murky, I needed to restart on a new piece of card altogether, instead of layering over it, because of how transparent I wanted the skin to be (a lot of struggle over this...).

The Blue Outline:

I consistently used a blue outline for my face, so it grew to represent the human part of the painting. When I outlined the pansy heads with blue, it indicated the convergence of flowers and people, where the pansies became more life-like and formidable, to develop into human faces in the rest of the two boards.



I exaggerated the angles to make the pansies talk and whisper amongst each other, and stare at us, as if waiting for something to happen.

I wanted the transition from pansies to faces to be subtle, so it is initially unclear where the pansy 'heads' went after this painting.



VINCENT VAN GOGH

Van Gogh's *Starry Night* was the first painting I had ever painted, and it made me fall in love with acrylics. Since then, my paintings have been predominantly blue, due to his influence, and (attempt to) follow a similar dynamic style, with visible brushstrokes and bold colours.



Words cannot express how much I love and grew up with Van Gogh's paintings...

His distinctive contrast of yellow ochre and prussian/cobalt blue intensifies each colour and creates a sense of energy and emotional tension. The thick, gestural strokes, along with the contrasting tonal values (a dark vignette around the tree, the darker background) guides the viewer to the centre of the paintings, where there is again a dramatic contrast between the tonal values, of the tree and eyes, which stand out because of the lighter surroundings.

I also am obsessed with the cool yellow of the star on the left, and how it stands out against the warmer background.



TONE using Teal:

JOHN SINGER SARGENT

John Singer Sargent (1856 – 1925) used bold brushstrokes that were loose and confident. He practiced the 'sight-size' method, a technique where the eye needs to see both the canvas and the reference picture in one glance, so they appear the same size. This made it easier to flick his eyes between the subject and painting for accurately capturing shape, proportions, and colours. I found this extremely useful to lay out the structure of the face with the basic tones before going in with details.

Advice from Sargent:

"Stand back -- get well away -- and you will realize the great danger there is over overstating a tone. Keep the thing as a whole in your mind. Tones so subtle as not to be detected on close acquaintance can only be adjusted by this means."

"If you begin with the middle-tone and work up from it toward the darks so that you deal last with your highest lights and darkest darks, you avoid false accents."

Practicing form and tone, using a thick 6B pencil and 5 then 10 minute timer



Posing and COMPOSITION:

AMY DURY

Amy Dury is a contemporary figure and portrait artist based in the UK, who uses oils to create atmospheric paintings, with layered memories and evocative brushwork. She combines realism with occasional abstraction, often using negative space and contrasting colours, or washy, transparent drips in the background.



When my art teacher showed me this painting, I had been in a huge art block and didn't know how to progress - as soon as I saw this, I realised that I could also work with dripping paints and making my paintings have a more watery, fragile look, which would go well with the way I paint skin. I think this painting was the most influential and important to me for my boards this year, because it helped develop my style to stray away from the solidity of board 1, and explore the delicate, almost glass-like effects I could create with drips of dilute paint.

At this point I had also been out of ideas for poses, and once again this painting pulled me out of my lethargy, and I did a similar pose as the crouching figure. I altered mine to have my hands gripping on to each other, and my body slightly off balance, to give the painting more tension, especially with my eyes looking at the viewer directly.

I also loved the transparency of the entire figure - this introduced me to the idea of 'layered memory', which I would explore further in my later pieces.



In this painting, I merged the pansies and the figure for the first time, through a nexus near the position of my heart, where the leaves grew out from behind and through/over my dress. I liked being able to see the streaks of the ground through the fabric, instead of painting the fabric realistically like earlier.

I think the composition was successful - the figure wasn't central enough so I added more leaves on the right side, to balance it out. I followed a triangular shape with the leaves, and also left triangular shapes in the corners of the painting, which I think made the composition more geometrical and satisfying to look at.

ALPHONSE MUCHA

Alphonse Mucha was a Czech painter, illustrator, and graphic artist who lived in Paris during the Art Nouveau period. His posters were distinctly stylised, with elegant, fluid poses, and detailed floral embellishments.



To decide on a layout for my last board, both of my art teachers suggested Mucha's long, vertical planes, with the focus on a flowy figure near the centre.

I liked how graceful, idealised, and simple the form of the body is, and how interesting it made the composition even if the florals did not exist. The form is more static than dynamic, yet it still shows movement; a soft, slow movement from breathing, and the natural flow of the body.

By my last board I had exhausted every forward angle of my face, so I sighed in relief when I saw this artwork, with this pose that I never would have thought of myself. I liked that it included the back and hand, because I wanted plenty of skin to layer the pansy leaves on - I even flipped my dress the other way round to show more of my back.

KEHINDE WILEY

Kehinde Wiley combines realistic and bold, large-scale portraits of contemporary African-American subjects with intricately floral wallpaper-like backgrounds. He uses flamboyant colours and paints skin that stands out, to explore themes of identity and power, to resist stereotypes of Western art by using empowering black models in confident, dignified poses.



I discovered Wiley's art from seeing the Obama portrait, and when I went onto his website, this painting caught my eye instantly. Firstly, I love the different shades of green, and the harmony between the colours. I also love the way the 2D wallpaper-like background grows over the figures, giving a strange sense of depth, which I used in my final pieces.

The most valuable inspiration I got from this painting is the composition and the different directions the figures are looking. The figures are placed in a triangular shape, with two on one side and the closest one to us on the other. I found that this composition drew the viewer's eyes in, to alternate between each face, and travel in a loop around the faces and legs. I really liked the effect of the triangular format of the faces, so I recreated a similar composition with my friends, where instead of the 2:1 ratio being separated on the left and right, I divided it horizontally, to be up and down. I also put the single figure at the front, and for more variation, I divided the direction of their eyes vertically, so that the two figures on the left are looking to the right, and the opposite for the figure on the right.

p.s. One of my photography-student friends helped me with the arrangement - I had a vision, but she could actually direct them to stand in the right places

ELLA BREWER AND TIFFANY SINGH



Ms Brewer is an art teacher at my school, who does beautiful pressings of pansies for backgrounds in Buddhist art. This artwork is in collaboration with Tiffany Singh, and is intended to speak to human connection and our connection to Mother Earth.

She uses real pansies, as an 'offering to honour our binding connection to nature', and in addition, to acknowledge the medicinal, healing properties of plants.

I am drawn to the natural, organic colours from the pansies, and how the yellow is consistent throughout the artwork, uniting the purples, blues, and greens. If I had the resource of this many pansies I would definitely explore this technique, because it creates such an authentic and fragile pattern. I also like the delicacy of each pansy, and how well the patterns are transferred onto paper, for each pansy to maintain their individual, unique expressions.

STYLE AND TECHNIQUES

My paintings and the inspiration:



My first time trying to incorporate colours that 'weren't there', which taught me which type of shadows to paint purple instead of teal, or pink instead of blue. I gained some intuition to see the lighting of the reference photo in different colours.

This is painted in a different style to all my other faces, because I was figuring out how to keep the transparency while adding layers. After hours working on this, I was about to give up from how thick the paint was becoming, and out of desperation I used a brush to paint open medium over the entire thing to thin it down - and this was the result. (I liked it!) I tried doing this process again, but it was so winding and complex that I needed to find a new way to paint skin.



This was the new way!! (The process is shown below.)

Instead of using a flat brush, I used a round one, to add more texture and model the form of the face, so it has more depth than the first one. I like both of these faces, but I stuck with this because the method was more systematic, and the results more consistent.

By the end of board three I could finally (quickly and more confidently) dissect skin into its constituent colours! My friends commented on how 3D and skin-like it looked, even though the colours were not 'realistic' at all.

Using the sight-size method:



On my desk, arm distance away, squinting and figuring out which parts looked off. I needed to keep my wrist loose and step away once in a while, to avoid straying from the bigger picture, or adding false accents.

This really helped to increase the speed of my painting, because I could get things right more.

After many failed paintings I figured out a method that worked:

1. A cool, dark outline for the edges (not eyes or mouth), thicker where it is darker
2. Block in shadows/the darkest parts with teal
3. Block in the highlights with a very pale yellow
4. Mix together the teal and yellow to transition between the two colours (don't mix on the painting!)
5. When semi-dry, add the cheeks with different shades of salmon pink
6. Paint the eyes and lips at the end (I used an old brush and some water to rub off some of the blue ground from the lips to give it more depth, and make the centre have a lighter, ombre effect)

COLOUR THEORY



This was originally meant to be yellow, but the paint was so transparent and the ground so strong that the yellow on my palette turned out green. I did end up liking it a lot though!

For the faces below though I wanted them to be yellower, so I added 3 layers of the exact same yellow (benzimidazolone yellow medium, titan buff, and a bit of quinacridone magenta and phthalo blue (red shade)), for a more opaque, rich gold colour. The blush on the cheeks are actually brown, and the yellow is a swamp green!! It was surprising how much a tiny bit of magenta can show on the painting, when I couldn't even see it on the palette. The tone of the skin was so dark that brown looked orange. Likewise, the paint of the lips were almost black on my palette, and it was a velvety maroon/pink when next to the dark green (thanks to the titan buff!). These are my favourite face-paintings because of how fun the process was, and how much I learnt from them!



The STRUGGLE of painting faces...



This was the most infuriating face to paint on my entire three boards. I don't even have the reference anymore because I deleted it out of relief after I finished this.

I painted this *one* face *five* times - I couldn't get the tonal modelling right in this angle, because of how weirdly my cheek extended from the nose, so I either looked very old, or if I flattened it out, it would look uncanny, like AI. Somehow the colours were also off, and I made the outlines too dark too. I rubbed out (with a cloth and water) the face so many times that the card started going furry, and I painted it on another piece of card (middle one), which was way too opaque, so I went back to my first card, gessoed it, and finally painted it tolerably. From the 4th to 5th image, I spent a lot of time adjusting the features to make it look like me.

LAYERS OF TIME

My Own Pansies, and an emotional imprint:

At the start of the year, once I was fixed on painting pansies, I knew that I needed a bunch of reference photos, so I went to Bunnings and bought my own pot of them. It was surprisingly cheap - only \$7.99 for the yellow ones that I got. It was blooming like a large dandelion, and seeing some buds still growing, I was convinced that I could make them thrive. That night, I took around a hundred photos of those pansies, and then went to my grandparents for the weekend. I had watered them, placed them with the other plants on the balcony, and followed all the instructions online to care for them well. I was going to take more photos during the day, away from the artificial light of my bedroom.

So of course, when I came back, the pansies were gone. The lush leaves and erect, green stems were brown, and I couldn't even recognise the plant - it was stale and wrinkled, with the remaining parts that were still attached drooping down like wet tissue paper.

I ended up using a few of the reference photos I took, the three yellow ones at the top of board one, plus one that I didn't have space for. The rest of my references are from the pansies at the Wintergarden, or occasionally pinterst if there is a good one. Oh, and my pansies died because of aphids. It got devoured by those little beasts.



I decided to bring these yellow pansies back in my last board, because I still remember the utter disbelief and disappointment I felt when I saw the skeleton of it that day. Even for plants that are known to be resilient, they die pretty easily.

At least they are alive in my paintings...



Time, psychological and static:

Psychological time is a subjective feeling which is related to the temporal experiences. It differs from clock time because it is non-linear and dependent on the nature of events occurring within a time period.

The static theory of time is the idea that time is similar to space, and all of past, present, and future exist simultaneously in a four-dimensional block. In this view, the perception of time passing is an illusion, and every moment is as real and permanent as every location in space.

The concepts of psychological and static time mean that in a way, the pansies can continue blooming endlessly, because:

1. Time is an illusion
2. Time exists in a 4D block

However, clearly in reality this is not the case - we are limited to the way our consciousness deals with time, so the endless blooming isn't for us to see or experience. Our perception of reality and time passing corresponds to the pansies' way of processing time, and being conscious of these theories only accentuates our helplessness; even if time passes differently, or doesn't pass at all, it has no effect on us. So in the impermanence of time, there is permanence in its perpetuity.

I wanted to subtly capture this helplessness; I am gazing at a 'real' pansy, with the illusions of the past and the different dimensions in the background, through my dress, even in my skin and hair, but I can only see the pansy in my hand.

Shadows, imprints of the past:

Each figure has a shadow of a pansy, which I used to link back to the beginning (before the transformation to people) to show that the past is always part of the present, or alternatively, the past is the present.

To convey the depth of each layer, whether it is a shadow or the remnants of a memory (both are versions of the past), I have kept the fluidity of the ground showing, including the long streaks travelling from the top of the shadow on the left, down through the hair and leaves at the bottom. The streaks are the result of (and therefore can symbolise) time, and is continuous, free, unobstructed, and inherent, acting as the backbone of the painting. Every layer that follows is affected by the last, and as I was painting, it felt like the layers were approaching me, each figure creeping closer and closer.

With these two finals, I wanted to mess with the layers, particularly by inverting the colours of the subjects and backgrounds. In the first one, the background is green and the purple is on the figure, whereas in the second one, the colours are reversed. I also juxtaposed the complexity of the transparent layers with calm, pensive expressions and their properly painted faces, which is cohesive with the pansies in the foreground. p.s. The yellow pansies are also from the top of board one!



ANYWAY, WHY TIME?

Chess, and some context:

This was going to be my first piece. I was going to explore time through chess, not flowers. I had already spent weeks on planning for this, and finished these two paintings, along with a half-finished chess clock.

I wanted to explore time, but the pressure I felt from seeing chess pieces every day (and not playing, because I am on a break from chess this year), was too much, and I was so stressed that I painted some pansies (they are on the proposal page) and other flowers for fun... I enjoyed it so much that I knew I had to switch to flowers.



Sidenote:

The first and second photos are rhododendrons, inspired by the ones in *Rebecca*. There is a lot of red because when I got my Golden Open Acrylics at the start of the year, I was obsessed with the magenta - it was luminous and clear in the perfect way, and so saturated. I had never used paint like that, so I was on a craze in the beginning for some time.

A Brief (Traumatic...) Background:

Why am I so stressed about time? The answer is chess. I had been playing chess since I was eight, and competitive chess not long after, so worrying about time is integrated into most of my memories. Early on, I had gotten a bunch of coaches, who always reminded me of how 'time waits for no one', and had spent my late childhood being told I wasn't spending enough time on chess, which made me feel guilty, so I spent all my free time in my early teenage years, on chess.

Every single holiday I would get so stressed for the tournaments I had that I wouldn't let myself 'waste time' hanging out with my friends, or do anything to relax, because there was no time to. I conditioned my brain to associate time spent on anything other than chess as time wasted, and I would always feel guilty whenever I wasn't being productive. By this time last year, I had a deep-rooted fear of wasting time, as if time was something physical that towered over every action I took.

Just to validate the amount of pressure I was under, I have played in overseas tournaments multiple times, and was in the [redacted]. I have also placed as [redacted]. I wasn't this stressed for nothing!! And a lot of my favourite memories come from chess - it is my mindset that is the issue.

The Chess Clock:

This was my greatest fear. In competitive matches, each side gets a clock that runs during their move, and if a player's clock runs out of time, they lose the game. Within my chess circle, I was notorious for having atrocious time management - I was a slow thinker, so I would always be in time pressure, with less than a third of my opponent's time. So literally for years, my discussions with my coach would be methods of spending time wisely, saving time, managing time, until time became something I would dread to think about.

The stretching of time was the worst during a game - I had a habit of preferring to be in time pressure (having significantly less time than my opponent), because time ticked slower, and I could think properly. At the start of the game, every minute had the same weight as 1 second of when time was running out, because my brain functioned differently under stress. Since consciousness determines the relativity of time, it felt real that time was inconsistent. This extended to my everyday life, because if I was reading, or painting, and had lost track of time, I would frantically check the clock to see how many hours or just minutes had passed.

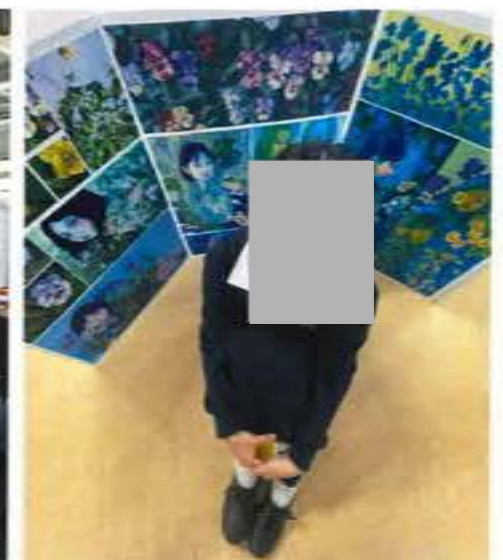
This in a way ruined my enjoyment for leisure time, and hobbies, because I would just get up and do chess instead of worrying about it while reading or sketching, because I wouldn't be able to focus anyway.

What This Means For Painting:

This year, without the pressure of tournaments and the need to study chess, I've slowly started rewiring my brain to allow myself to relax. I know it is important to avoid burnout, and more importantly to live in the present, instead of worrying about the future.

My experiences with chess is the main reason why I wanted to do portraiture, to regain some of my identity, and also slow myself down. I wanted my portraits to portray myself being comfortable with empty time, and show the amount of time I spend thinking about things, now that my life does not revolve around chess. I wanted to allow myself to just exist, and my expressions to be calming, pensive, quiet, as I am around pansies and portraits of my friends, who I feel reassured around.

With thinking time, I have also been able to reflect on myself; who I am, and want to be. I still feel guilt for not playing chess right now, because everyone else is still improving and working hard, and it feels unfair that I get to leave (most of them love chess though, like how I love art - the stress of handing my folios in doesn't make me love painting any less). But in the 'nothing' time, I realised that art is one of the most important parts of myself, that I don't think I would ever drop. Similarly, I can now spend time with my friends outside of school, without guilt!, which has allowed me to have deeper connections, which I find much more valuable than my previous priorities. My portraits are essentially of me reclaiming the freedom to use the time I have, how I want, which means being present in each moment. (ps I don't hate chess and will get back into it when I fix my mindset!!)



Past, Present,

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

If I could continue this board, I would definitely try out photography, and then combine those photos in a detailed collage, with Grey Vanderwoude as an artist model (my favourites of theirs are on the right). I would explore layering more, and perhaps even creating dreamlike, surreal illusions, by cutting up parts of the face or body, and placing them in strange locations, such as duplicated eyes or faces.

For added temporality, I think it would be interesting to incorporate real plants into the artworks. I could add a psychedelic twist by photographing a plant, then attaching a preserved version of that actual plant, hidden amongst the layers. This would also give the artwork a transient quality, because eventually the plants will wilt, and the appearance of the collage will change over time.

Another contemporary art photographer whose work interests me is Christoffer Relander (below), who does in-camera double and triple exposure shots. His work is delicate and intimately connected to nature. I love the sharp edges and the way the light filters through the leaves, which blend in seamlessly with the human features, creating a soft, golden-hour glow.

More broadly, throughout the year I have developed a liking for forest green, and have often gone on long walks in the bushes in [redacted] where I grew up. My board shifted towards green (and I have consistently painted my nails green), as I began to appreciate trees more, and all the tiny ecosystems buzzing with life. The poem *Sleeping in the Forest* by Mary Oliver is perfect in capturing the essence I want to portray through photography.

UNREALISTICALLY...

If money, space, and time weren't limitations, I would have an exhibition with huge paintings, a similar size as Monet's water lilies in Musée de l'Orangerie, except the room would be smaller, more confined, and the walls would match the colours of my painting.

I would want it to be immersive and almost intimidating, and contain more types of flowers, not only pansies. It would have multiple figures, but with more movement than my current paintings, and a wider range of skin tones, to match the different flowers.

Most Realistically...

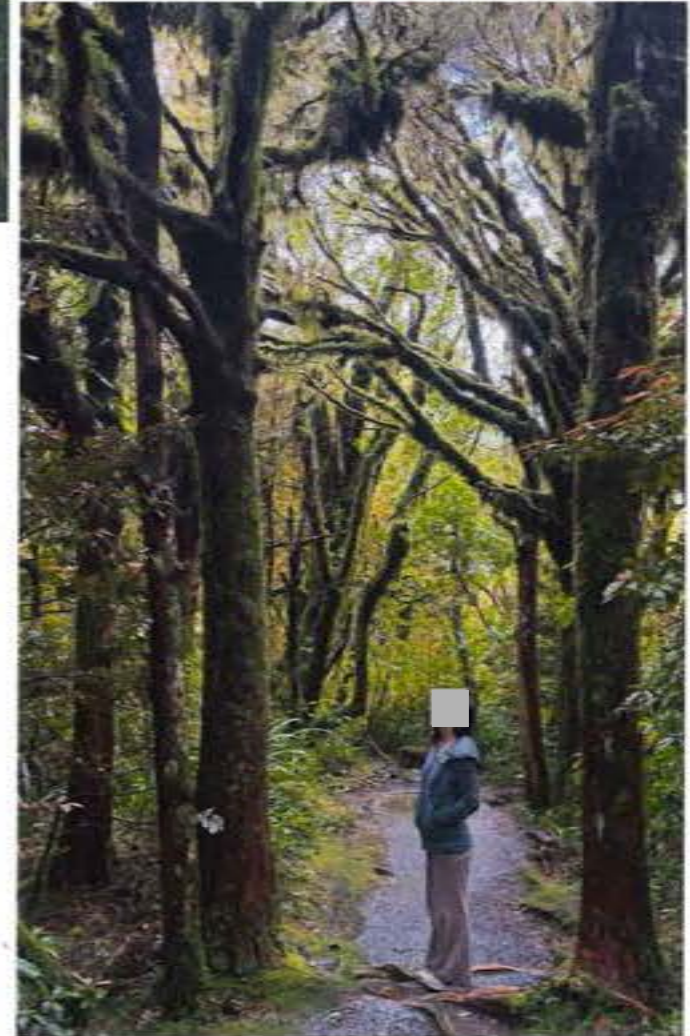
I have wanted to try out oils paints for the longest time, for the luminous and textured finish, which is difficult to achieve with acrylics (I have tried...). With oils, I can attempt to recreate some of my favourite paintings by the masters, such as Van Gogh and Sargent, or even to try impressionism, following Monet or Auguste Renoir (I love everything about *Bal du moulin de la Galette*), two painters I love but were not as relevant to my board.



Sleeping In The Forest

I thought the earth remembered me, she took me back so tenderly, arranging her dark skirts, her pockets full of lichens and seeds. I slept as never before, a stone on the riverbed, nothing between me and the white fire of the stars but my thoughts, and they floated light as moths among the branches of the perfect trees. All night I heard the small kingdoms breathing around me, the insects, and the birds who do their work in the darkness. All night I rose and fell, as if in water, grappling with a luminous doom. By morning I had vanished at least a dozen times into something better.

Mary Oliver



Final Note:

I am so glad to have explored my theme deeper through this investigation, and gotten the chance to question my art-making and thinking processes. It feels like I know myself more holistically now, because I was able to consolidate the ideas I've had throughout the year, and organise them in a pleasing way. I have also learnt a lot through artist model research, and acquired new painting techniques, as my style developed after each new painting. And as a bonus, I can call myself a pansy expert now.

I am so happy to have taken painting this year too!! (Thank you [redacted] for convincing me to last year; I was too insecure and worried about what I wanted to do for university...) Painting has been such a big part of my life this year, and I will definitely have it stored in one of my favourite layers of my memories (thank you painting friends and teachers!).

Outstanding Scholarship

Subject: Visual Arts – Painting

Standard: 93306

Total Score: 23

Marker commentary

Thoughtful use of imagery and careful attention to detail form the foundation of this Outstanding Scholarship portfolio. The proposition is “Time through the transience of the present moment”. Aptly capturing thoughtful contemplation, the portfolio shows the candidate’s ability to explore and capitalise upon their discoveries using limited subject matter. Insightful research into pansy floriography (*pensée*) and deliberate decisions about pose, gaze and placement of the figures creates an evocative investigation where spatial arrangement and paint processes are used meaningfully to convey transience. The candidate’s approach to demonstrates focus and commitment to developing practical understanding as they refine strategies to balance representational space, pattern and design across each sequence. The portfolio demonstrates a range of practice towards understanding media, supported by carefully curated links to established practice which inform the development of paint processes and pictorial ideas. The portfolio and workbook relate strongly as dual sites of knowledge, documenting a learning journey throughout the year with evidence of concurrent exploration of content and concept in the development of the candidate’s ideas. Source imagery is authentic and is produced through exploratory drawing and photography integrated within the study both in class and at home.

Conceptually, the portfolio is well supported by inquiry that is carefully documented in the workbook. The candidate positions themselves at the centre of the project and advances the proposition by asking related questions and returning to key drivers throughout the study. Wider links to literature are considered as the candidate becomes confident in creating symbolism to communicate ideas about feminine stereotypes, the impermanence of time and cycles within nature. Quotes from wider reading provide thematic connections that inform the practice, such as “Some things are more precious because they don’t last long”.

The candidate purposefully employs colour for effect and combines imagery to communicate moments in time. On Panel 1 they set out to create “an uneasy, deceptively alluring atmosphere” where tension and anxiety are communicated in the picking of a flower, and bright petals and leaves represent the flush of life before eventual decay. Artist models are carefully selected for their relevance to idea and technique. Hope Gangloff, Vincent van Gogh, John Singer Sargent, Amy Dury, Kehinde Wiley and Alphonse Mucha provide informative and purposeful study into colour theory, paint application, composition, pose and pattern. Critical thinking, synthesis and communication are clearly demonstrated as the candidate develops and refines processes to meet the high standard they set for themselves. Trial and error, refinement towards mastery of technique and persistent attention to detail are consistent features in their drive to produce work. Shifting pictorial space as a metaphor for time is supported by varied format, delicate transparency and positive and negative motif in the second half of the portfolio. Surface, light and an assured deftness of touch create affinity and juxtaposition within component parts of each painting, encouraging the eye to move across each composition before resting on chosen focal points. When viewed in its entirety, the portfolio benefits from thoughtful consideration of layout, format and colour consistency. The candidate demonstrates a range of approaches to paint processes and technique, skilfully advancing their understanding of the potential of the medium to express their ideas.