

Initiating my Investigation

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Adern was at my school last year and we had the opportunity to ask her questions. I asked: "What makes a great leader?" I was curious both for my own leadership journey as a Community Captain the following year, but most importantly how she herself describes what she aims to fulfil. After she threw the question back on us, she said "yes" to all our answers, "but what I would add to that list are kindness and empathy." I think about this exchange a lot as I believe it defines what makes Jacinda different from other leaders. Males tend to dominate high-ranking leadership positions. Naturally being a female she already sticks out, but what makes her unique to the few female applicants in the field is that she doesn't try to embody stereotypically male traits, but instead exhibits and emulates traits commonly associated with females like kindness, empathy and compassion. Although she has been recognized worldwide by her actions and words of kindness, she doesn't step away from stereotypically male characteristics such as courage, strength and decisiveness - which is why, I believe, this combination makes her such a unique leader.

I have found the multitude of questions being asked to Jacinda on a regular basis regarding marriage, children and personal life both surprising and a huge reality check. Because even though she is the prime minister of a whole country in a position of huge trust, respect and authority, people are still concerned with parts of her life that would normally be deemed inappropriate to question, especially as a leader of a country. Yet in the face of constant adversity, she once stated at the UN that "As a girl, I never ever grew up believing that my gender would stand in the way of me achieving whatever I wanted to in life, I am, after all, not the first, but the third female Prime Minister of New Zealand." What I find the most inspiring about her is that she normalizes and represents a huge population of women and mothers in the workforce. **She is unapologetically female.** Not only does she defy the conservative norms of being:

Female A working mother Young and Unmarried



(3rd female NZ PM) (2nd Female PM worldwide to give birth in office) (2nd youngest NZ PM and the world's youngest female head of government)

But she has been recognized for having made significant decisions under pressure through huge key events such as the Christchurch terrorist attack and her response to COVID19.

What I understand is that her responses to the negative background voices that the public and some of the media report about her are an important part of who she is as a leader. This is displayed through the mantras she has popularized through times of need such as: "they are us" or "be kind" where she has effectively addressed the negative naysayers. By her creation and handling of these two competing voices, they textualize how she has become a role model as a young, strong, female leader in our modern and ever-evolving day. Through Jacinda's actions in big events, her qualities and characteristics, her voice and the community's commentary around her are how I am going to explore her leadership abilities and how I believe she is a role model.

Proposal

To explore how Jacinda Adern is a leader through the practices of selected overseas and New Zealand artists using pictorial and text-based imagery.

Broader Context

I started my exploration wanting to explore Jacinda's leadership journey so far. I broke down what I was most interested in exploring and portraying into questions. I researched and tried to gain a wider understanding of everything 'Jacinda' and began to start answering my questions:

What is she known for and what made her different to other leaders?

Her response in times of crisis and the normalities she's breaching.

What are the big events where she has been a part of and has been recognized for having different responses to the 'normal'?

COVID 19, Terrorist attack, White Island eruption, Waitangi Day.

What did she say in times of need?

Words of inclusivity, kindness and care and strength 'they are us' or 'Be kind'.

How do the media & public portray and speak about her?

Mixed reactions, both positive & negative^{mostly} depending on political beliefs or age.

What was the negative commentary said about her?

Majority about appearance; 'lipstick on a pig', youths; 'zip it sweetie' & sexist commentary.

Why is she so relatable?

Because she is a working mum who shares her everyday^{normal} experiences with the world.

I knew I wanted to explore her leadership but I needed to find a starting point. I wondered if I can do this through portraiture alone or if there is a stronger message that can be developed.

Tim Omakura

My initial search took me to Tim Omakura, a Candian artist who focuses on females and their relationship to identity. I found his work relevant because of the ways he portrays women in positions of strength, placed in the central focal point of the canvas. He was interested in the urban environment and used both text and pattern to share powerful messages.



OMAKURA'S PAINTINGS

Subject Study

I had many questions and ideas that I wanted to explore to understand her leadership journey. But I needed to break it down so I had more concise points to explore in-depth. I have decided to examine aspects of Jacinda's leadership by focusing on three main points unique to her. My decision is to split up each of these three aspects to be explored on an individual board, which will all come together in the final pieces as a conclusion to who she is as a leader and how she is a role model towards others through her leadership journey.

Her female characteristics	Strength in devastating events	Leadership during a pandemic
<p>The qualities that she embodies and demonstrates such as kindness and inclusivity alongside the typical male. Also what makes her different to the majority of male leaders: being young, unmarried, and a mother in the workforce, who's not afraid to speak and act her mind or have ambition.</p> <p>I also wish to explore the backlash she endures for being all of the above from the wider world.</p>	<p>Her decisive and empathetic approach following the devastating events of the Christchurch mosque shootings in 2019. This resulted in 51 deaths, many people injured and less than a month later an act was introduced into NZ to ban all semi-automatic weapons.</p>	<p>As part of the COVID19 pandemic still raging on today, Jacinda has received positive worldwide responses in the actions that her government and herself had set out. With the messages of 'Go Hard, Go Early' and being kind to one another, New Zealand has had among the lowest cases per capita in the world which has mainly been attributed to the clarity of the message coming from the government.</p>
Board 1	Board 2	Board 3

I started studying Jacinda imagery. I looked at her character through how she holds herself and her expressions in different situations and how she altered when feeling: love, sadness, empathy, strength etc. I also studied her structure, features, clothing, hairstyles and accessories through various mediums so I could understand her form and replicate it recognisably. I first used pencil so I could focus on the shapes and form before moving onto paint and colour.



SOME OF MY INITIAL DRAWING SKETCHES

Colour & Mood

I explored how colour affects mood and how it can express leadership, strength and vulnerability.

I studied the colours that Jacinda herself wore and how she created her own appearance. I found that she wears a variety of natural earthy colours in particular blues, greens, burgundy and orange. She tended to wear colours that reflected the mood of the circumstance. For example, during the terrorist attack, she donned sombre colours with the rest of the country in support and empathy, whereas during the ongoing COVID19 response Jacinda has been seen to wear both darker business-like tones. I decided that a selected colour palette of this variation would reflect my subject matter as the audience would associate the colours with what the population have and continue to see on their TV screens and newspapers daily.



JACINDA DURING COVID RESPONSE

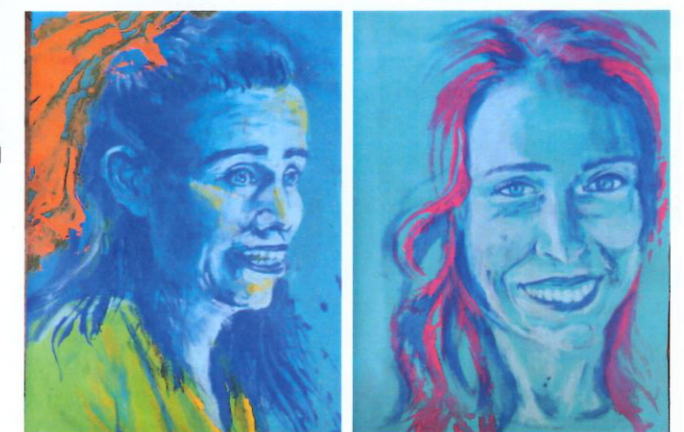
JACINDA AT AL NOOR MOSQUE



OMAKURA'S PAINTINGS

When studying Okamura I identified that he uses bold colours with an array of rich tones. He focuses on high-contrast backgrounds vs foregrounds that brought attention and focus to the figures. He also uses controlled amounts of gold to give the presence of angelicity and strength to his characters. For the portraiture, I decided to use a rich mixture of earthen tones Jacinda wears alongside Okamura colours with dashes of gold to symbolise a Madonna-like Jacinda.

My study showed me the importance of how many colours can affect and transform the mood. For example, when I was studying Jacinda I worked with a variety of expressive colours in order to loosen up. I found this experiment gave me the opposite effect of intentional mood because my pieces portrayed Jacinda in a child-like manner with no urgency, seriousness or feeling.



MY OWN COLOUR PAINTING EXPLORATIONS/EXPERIMENTS



Political Artists

I went on to explore Political artists because of how they use their aesthetic abilities to portray the impact of political issues. Upon research, I discovered various ways political artists tended to praise or criticize a subject.



FAIREY'S HOPE MY OWN INTERPRETATION

Shepard Fairey

I discovered Fairey and his 'Hope' campaign for Barack Obama in 2008. I was interested in the physical placement of the portrait and the way the words intersected with the figure. I liked the way he portrayed Obama in a position of strength and authority which I wanted to carry across while still retaining Jacinda's visible femininity. I decided to use his piece to help influence one of the key traits I wanted to get across in my board on female characteristics - kindness. Through this I discovered text as a means to convey a message as Fairey did with 'Hope.' I am interested in further exploring a textual component that can play a part in my art to help reinforce Jacinda's messages and delve into how she is a leader.

Banksy

I was drawn to Banksy's work through the tangible feelings that they emote: anger, despair and innocence. I wondered how I could make the audience feel emotions through various portrayals of Jacinda. Banksy also recently demonstrated how famous paintings can be 'reused' to make contemporary statements. He recreated a Monet painting by adding various rubbish under a bridge as a comment on the lack of respect we have for our environment. I thought it was intriguing to see current artists reusing historic artworks and that the public not only applauded his decisions but that the painting was expected to sell to up to five million dollars. This was of great influence on how I could reuse other famous paintings to make contemporary statements of my own.



BANKSY'S MONET INTERPRETATION

OMAKURA'S PAINTING

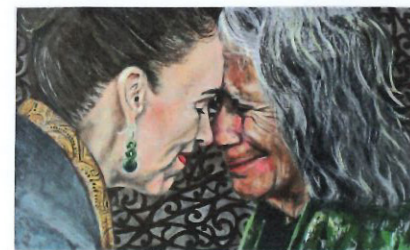


Tim Omakura

Omakura became one of my focal artists as I studied portraiture and saw how realism could help to convey recognisability and emotion, which were really important features to my board. Omakura also introduced pattern work. He used patterns to represent cultures and diversity - I wished to do the same with both Maori culture (of which Jacinda represents as head of New Zealand) and also Islamic culture referring to the terrorist attacks. I looked into what patterns best represented these two cultures and came up with two simple and recognizable patterns: one of an Islamic geometric tile and a second of a Maori koru. I made them into stencils with the initial idea of repeating them throughout the board representing an interconnectedness. However, as my board progressed, patterns became less relevant as the figures and text took shape and dominance. Omakura's work was heavily influenced by text, most commonly in the form of graffiti and stencils. I played with different ways to create graffiti but found it really challenging to create what tends to be a large art form with spray cans down into a smaller scale. I found that paint pens were an interesting alternative because they are highly pigmented colours with an excess of ink which I could use to my advantage. Although graffiti did not feature heavily throughout my board because it represented the opposite of controlled phrases repeated on a regular basis. Upon my research into my community and its relationship with graffiti, I found it became a great medium to represent insults as the writing emoted an angry feeling.



MY OWN PHOTOS OF GRAFFITI IN MY COMMUNITY



MY PATTERN INTERPRETATION

Feminist Artists

My search took me to feminist artists. I thought this genre would be both interesting and relevant to explore because Jacinda represents what a feminist embodies - equality. I also found that feminist artists tend to present women in positions of strength or place in society and question and use typically feminist traits in their work.



CHICAGO'S DINNER PARTY

Frida Kahlo

I was initially drawn to Kahlo's work through how she questioned femininity and roles. She depicts herself in vulnerable situations, through heartbreak, infertility and medical treatments. I was interested in the way she emotes often her sadness in these events, and shares parts of her personal life normally kept under the covers as a woman. She reminded me of instances where Jacinda shares moments of everyday life, playing with her child, home-cooked meals, moments where you see she's normal - no different than any of us. Which is why, like Frida, I believe she is so relatable and a role model to many - Juggling motherhood, and a career as a successful working woman.



KAHLO'S PAINTINGS



POPULARIZED ROSIE

Rosie The Riveter

In my search of feminist artists, I came across Rosie the Riveter who was a huge cultural icon in the second world war because she represented the working woman. I was more interested in the original Rosie because it displayed a woman in masculine clothes representing a country with confidence. Although she is from a completely different era, she was an icon of huge liberal change (women doing physical work) which related directly to Jacinda as a working mother who has huge responsibilities as Prime Minister and is a harbinger of change. I looked at how Rosie displayed a manner of strength which made me reflect on which iconography I could use to display Jacinda in a position of strength and courage while still retaining her femininity. Although I did not want to replicate the literal arm flex that Rosie is so well known for because of its lack of relevance I decided on a motif of halos which often represent religious icons. I decided to interpret the use of a halo as a being who has gained a lot of respect - a Mother Teresa like figure. Duccio created a famous painting 'Madonna and Child' painted in the 1300s and expresses the emotions of love and caring between mother and child. I decided to use this as a representation of both the love between Jacinda and her child, but also as the love, commitment, strength and care between mother and country like Rosie once illustrated.



ORIGINAL ROSIE THE RIVETER



MADONNA AND CHILD



MY INTERPRETATIONS



Feminist Text-Based Artists

Throughout my research, I began to notice how much text became a part of both political and feminist art, like with 'Hope' on Shepard Fairey's work or the gold inscriptions in Chicago's and the graffiti and stenciling in Omakuras. I found it intriguing that some of these artists had used a combination of portraiture and text to work off each and say stronger messages to the audience. I decided to lead on from my feminist artist research and find feminist artists known for their use of text within their pieces.

Barbara Kruger

When I first discovered Kruger's work I wondered how the artist could let go and put bold captions of text across their hand-painted pieces or in her case photography. I found it challenging to cover up portraits but as I experimented I realised that the captions added a bold layer of depth. I could use them as labels for identity and social commentary. However, I loved the bluntness and unapologetic impact about their overpowering size and scale - the labels are, stuck down, a part of the image reminding us that this is who she is, and there is no apology for it.



"I work with pictures and words because they have the ability to determine who we are, what we want to be and what we become." - Kruger

Shirin Neshat

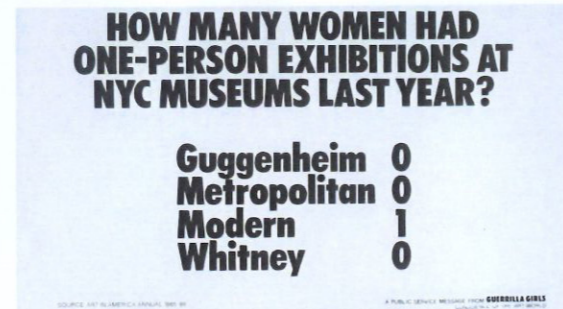
Neshat's work explores the relationship between women and the religious and cultural value systems of Islam. What interested me most in her art was the relationship between text, clothing and the body. She has a distinctive black handwritten Islamic font which she pastes across the curves and planes of the monochromatic people she photographs. In some of her work text envelopes the subject or brings attention to a particular part of the body or clothing. I found the relationship of the text really interesting because even though I don't understand the language she writes in, I can understand a sense of urgency and importance in the placement of the text. With her influence in mind, I incorporated the negative namesake given to those who 'idolise' Jacinda ('jacindamania') and used the graffiti text from Omakura to wrap the phrase in repetition around the body of Jacinda and a younger female fan. I find it sad, hypocritical even, what our society won't term a positive phrase for people appreciating a successful woman.



MY INTERPRETATIONS SHIRIN'S PIECE

Guerilla Girls

I liked the way Guerilla Girls stuck with a minimal font selection to highlight the importance of the words - often written in bold to highlight a message. I used a similar font to write 'WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO' in my piece above to add tension between figure and text like how some of their pieces featured guerrillas and females. As I moved on from the Guerilla Girls opened a new door in the use of text as a singular subject matter. Although some of their pieces featured portraits I found the works of art that just had text and stats the most powerful and confronting.



A GUERRILLAS GIRL PIECE

I was inspired by the way that from the text alone the audience could come to their own conclusion about the subject beneath. I want to explore how I can use text as a more domineering feature to get messages across.



A GUERRILLA'S GIRL PIECE

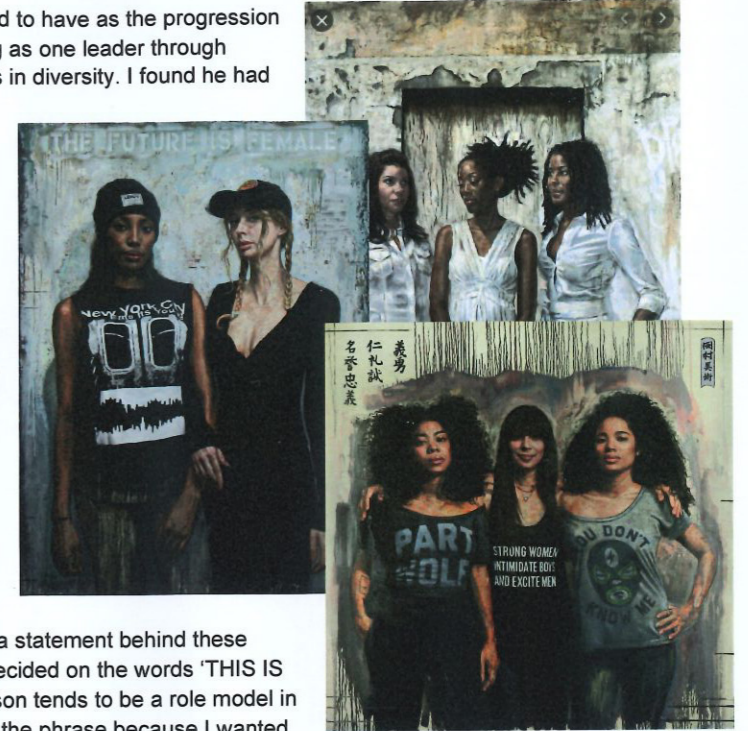
The Three Jacinda's

Throughout my exploration, I initially wanted to explore three key elements in Jacinda's leadership journey. I found this was a really good way to stay on track and break up what I felt were the most important ideas and messages to portray. I discovered, however, that when I began to put the portfolio together my journey did not feel grounded or have a sense of togetherness which I needed to have as the progression includes one person going through numerous events but acting as one leader through different means. I looked into how Omakura displayed oneness in diversity. I found he had created a series of portraits featuring three women often positioned or linked together to show unity.

I determined to follow this idea, but instead, the three subjects were Jacinda. Each figure representing an individual phase in the journey; when Jacinda met the queen, representing New Zealand and its culture as well as being a pregnant working woman; Jacinda wearing an expression of solace and steel and wearing a hijab in support of the terrorist attack; and finally Jacinda during the ongoing COVID19 response, holding a folder representing a strong plan with an expression of concern and steadfast strength.

I decided to place this piece in the middle of my portfolio to hold the pieces together from the inside out. I felt that this painting really met the need for a grounding focal point, as an interconnected triptych.

My attention then turned to the background. I wanted to make a statement behind these three strong, powerful women about her combined actions. I decided on the words 'THIS IS LEAD HER SHIP.' I chose this because to be a leader the person tends to be a role model in the field they are in. The pronoun was an important addition to the phrase because I wanted to draw attention to the uniqueness of a female in this position.



OMAKURA'S PAINTINGS



MY INTERPRETATIONS

Text Exploration

The use of text as a subject matter became a huge part of my art, as I discovered different ways to use it effectively for meaning. I decided to explore various ways text was used around my school, community and home. To pay attention to the colours, fonts, placement, sizing and its effect or purpose in the choices made by the designers or artists.



SIGNS AROUND MY SCHOOL

I went on to look at how text was used in everyday objects. Like logos, brands, newspapers, campaign handouts and cultural objects. I find it interesting that in this day and age text defines so much of what teenagers buy and wear. A Nike or Apple brand would have insured your popularity at school in Intermediate. It's interesting how a line of text or a slogan can be so powerful in marketing. Like how the words that Jacinda has coined have reappeared, resonated and are known all around the world. In terms of the text I used in my work from everyday objects, I played with newspapers. It was an interesting media to explore because every few days I was getting new material as campaigns drew closer as well as through the various events she was in.

I found many uses of text through numerous signs around the school. The majority were mostly in black and white in bold text font. They tended to be signs of caution or instructions. I was interested in the pure simplicity of these creations - possibly down to making them readable or laziness! Although the fonts did not have any direct links to my art I did experiment creating stencils using Arial bold but the outcome wasn't aesthetic and held no meaning.



POPULAR SLOGANS



COMMON BRANDS



STENCIL ART AT SCHOOL



STENCIL FOR WOOL BAGS

I wondered if it was a representation of the tension behind these strong African American women that he tended to paint. I wonder if I can explore negative graffiti behind Jacinda to represent the tension created by the media and naysayers.

Stencils became a huge component of my work. This was because many of my artist models incorporated this feature into their work. Even though it was an especially time-consuming feature, designing, printing and cutting the stencils into plastic I found the effect that the stencils gave was really clean and professional. It was also a functional effective technique because I could test different colours and materials numerous times to discover the best combinations. Hanging on the wall above our dining table was this huge stencil number plate which my farmer grandad used to use to mark bags of wool. I found this became really helpful when experimenting with how to make both the number of deaths in the terrorist attack and the numbers within both levels and statistics during Covid.

I moved onto graffiti. I went around both the school and my community finding graffiti that people had once done. I was curious about the different fonts that people used and the reasons they decided to do them. The most popular place I found graffiti was on the back of bathroom doors. I wondered why an artist like Omakura decided to use an art form so negatively associated with vandalism, like on bathroom doors.



MORE PAINTED STENCILS IN MY COMMUNITY

GRAFFITI AT THE END OF MY ROAD



GRAFFITI AT SCHOOL

The influence of my artist models such as Omakura, Wool and Hotere lead me to use stencils all throughout my journey as I used them as a means to connect and communicate messages across my various pieces. I chose a typeface called 'Northern Army' which I used continuously because I liked how it fit into the genre of a stencil font but had unique seifs that set it apart, which I thought perfectly represented the uniqueness of Jacinda's messages.



MY OMAKURA GRAFFITI INTERPRETATION

I experimented using text based resources such as newspapers to create a textual background like how Omakura demonstrated in some of his earlier paintings. As Jacinda has been in the news a lot recently it was easy to find articles and text relating to her or events she has been in. I pasted these textual components across background planes and played with bringing various messages forwards. Although I liked the added textual elements that the newspaper brought to my pieces I did not like how it brought away from the figure and complicated the messages. With that in mind I decided that the stencils were a much more powerful method to get messages across.



MY VARIOUS TEXT SKETCHES TO WORK OUT FONT & PLACEMENT



MY PAINTINGS WITH STENCIL TEXT USE

I went on to explore Omakura's graffiti. I experimented with paint pens and how the negative commentary and how graffiti could represent different emotions - particularly anger. Although graffiti was not a very clear way to get messages across I thought the indistinctness of the graffiti molding together was an interesting effect when thinking about background chatter and the unimportance of the individual messages. I really liked the freeing feeling of scribbling graffiti across a surface without trying to keep to a font or size.



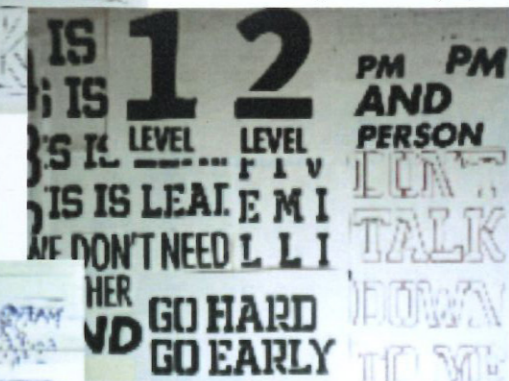
MY NEWSPAPER EXPLORATION



OMAKURA'S PAINTING



MY NEWSPAPER EXPLORATION



SOME DIGITAL FONT EXPERIMENTS



New Zealand Text Based Artists

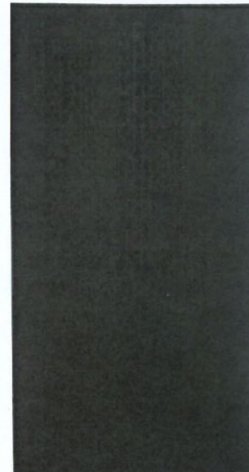
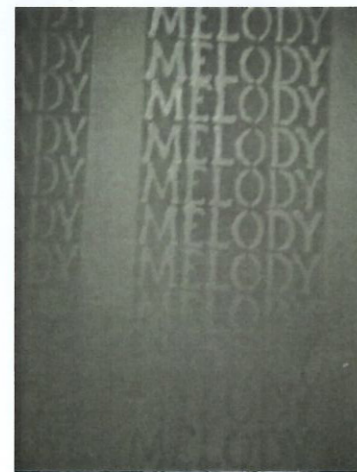
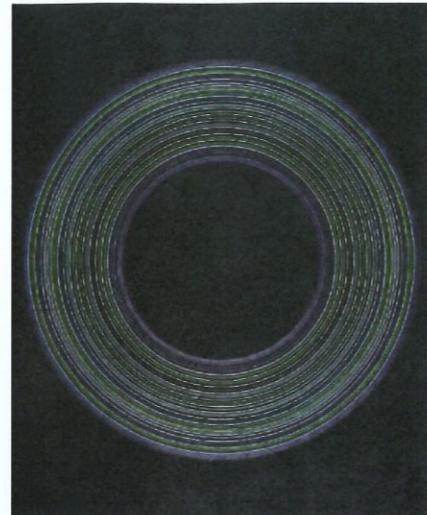
I next moved on to explore New Zealand artists. As my subject was about our country and its leadership I thought it would be a logical resting place for my exploration. I visited our national museum, Te Papa because I thought this would be a good starting place for my search as it is home to many of our country's national art. Two of the artists I was most drawn to in the exhibitions were Ralph Hotere and Colin McCahon. Both artists had extremely unique styles quite different from each other and what I had previously explored. But the similarity that they both had in common was the use of text.

Ralph Hotere

I was drawn to Hotere's circles, the precise evenness made out of multiple colours to create an almost shape. I wanted to explore his circles but found it very challenging to repeat. Getting the exact evenness of the circles was crucial to the appearance but found almost impossible to replicate. I first tried using a compass attaching various drawing materials to get different colours and thicknesses but due to the different sizes and tape slipping that idea fell flat. I then went on a search around my house for circular objects. In order to achieve Hotere's look I needed nearly more than 30 circles each a few millimeters bigger than the last. I found this process quite enjoyable as I watched colours bounce off one another to complement or contrast the circle before. I found that the effect that the final look gave was a focal point on Jacinda's mouth as if I could hear the words coming out. It was interesting to learn how just one shape repeated many times can transform an entire space.



MY INTERPRETATION RAIPH HOTERES 'BLACK PAINTING'



MY PHOTOS OF HOTERES PAINTINGS AT TE PAPA

What I loved most about Hotere's work was the subtleness of his text and linear work. How he managed to make his art disappear and come into view with very sparse tones. I wanted to recreate his unique text using Jacinda's face and body as the background. I experimented with different media as to what was the most effective to achieve subtlety. I found that although I liked how the gold pen gave off a shimmer and went in a different direction to Hotere's work using a simple graffiti pencil in various shade densities had the most subtle effect. I blacked out the majority of the background and left a panel down the middle so Jacinda was recognizable but not dominating the image. When I applied the pencil through the stencil I created, I found I achieved a similar subtle effect to where the text melted into the clothing but shone in the background.



MY TESTING OF DIFFERENT MEDIAS/MATERIALS TO ACHIEVE SUBTLENESS



HOTERES 'RED ON BLACK' MY PHOTO

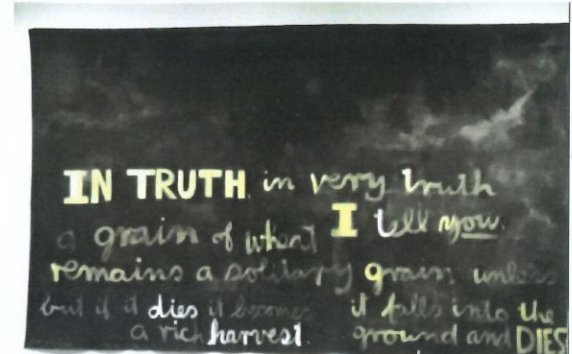


MY HOTERE INFLUANCE PIECE

Colin McCahon

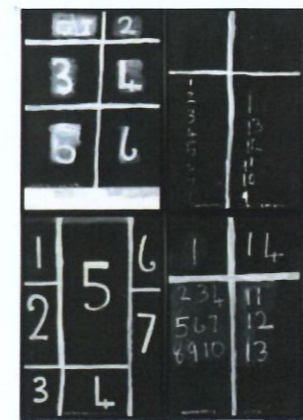
As my study developed, Colin McCahon was able to present a solution for me. Text became a huge component of how I understood and portrayed Jacinda's leadership. Although her face, her presence, her actions and events she influenced were all big parts of who she is as a leader, the messages, the words and her mantras became the most significant part of Jacinda being a role model. In Te Papa I discovered pieces by McCahon dominated entirely by text.

When I delved further into his artistic career I discovered the 'Teacher Aid' and 'I AM' series. McCahon engaged people with big questions about life, faith and place. Some of his most powerful, influential and controversial pieces focused around just the singular use of text or numbers. His I AM pieces were huge paintings with massive capital letters, featuring scribbled calligraphy surrounding the statement. The words have been brushed on rapidly, reinforcing the urgency of the message. Whereas the capital letters held the focal of the piece, uneven and painted in gradient, two-metre-high architectural letters that changed the direction of my work. Each of the three letters held huge depth which further reinforced the importance of this message. These words blew me away. The momental words left no doubt as to their meaning. The removal of image and colour was what I wanted to pursue. I decided to use his piece to influence my final painting.



MY PHOTO OF A McCAHON PIECE IN TE PAPA

The I AM painting looks deceptively simple but the range in tone and huge hard-edged letters were extremely challenging to experiment with. I also found it hard to free up and paint cursive letters with urgency, so I really struggled to complete my final piece. But I felt that the fundamental message



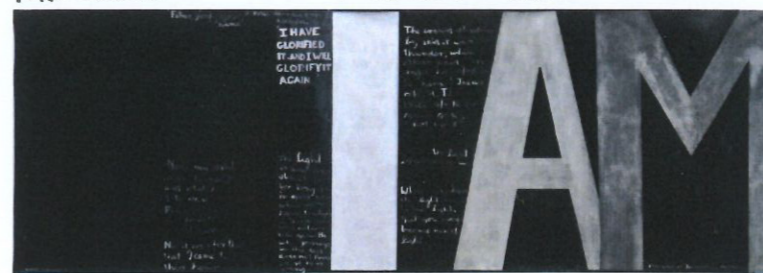
McCAHON 'TEACHER AID SERIES'



MY INTERPRETATION WITH COVID STATS

of Jacinda's leadership is based on a foundation of kindness and strength. She shows a strong inner core but is flexible enough to spontaneously adapt to new circumstances. Through this exploration, I have learnt that there are so many ways to explore leadership qualities through painting. However, until I started the exploration journey I couldn't see a clear vision of what I wanted to say.

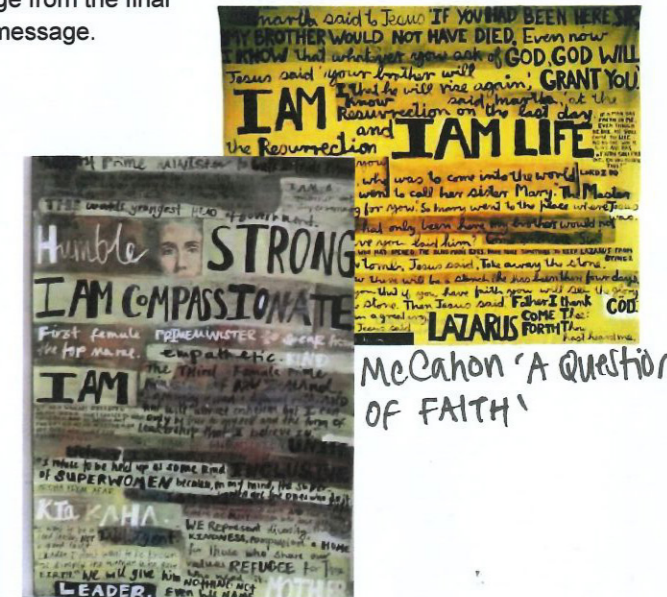
My journey has taken me into many different directions as I tried to clarify where Jacinda's strengths were and which qualities made her a role model for others. I was surprised that text became so important throughout my board but felt it provided a way to articulate her key messages. Keeping a background of young, vibrant, smiling Jacindas reminds the viewers about who she is. Overlaying her image with text made the work stronger and gave me an opportunity to develop some of the research I had done. Removing her image from the final work left her core message.



McCAHON'S 'I AM' PAINTING



MY INTERPRETATION



McCAHON 'A QUESTION OF FAITH'

MY INTERPRETATION



Conclusion & Reflection

I knew going into this project that I admired Jacinda's leadership a heck of a lot, focusing on what she does and says because she is defying past normalities. As a teenage female looking up at female leaders it is becoming easier to find females in powerful roles, (especially compared to my grandma Val's generation - she said that 'young girls only had people like the Suffragettes as role models, but that they didn't hear much about them and that they had little importance in their day-to-day lives. Womens' roles were mainly hidden in the home.') However the majority of the women that we are shown to be role models are Hollywoodized pop stars who work in the entertainment industry. Although it is super important to see women living their passions and inspiring others to do so, it is rare to see females making serious decisions about our country and futures, who are not just trusted, but chosen by millions to do so. It is refreshing to see someone that never thought gender, her relationship status, or her age would be an obstacle in what she wished to pursue. In her short 3 years of being a PM she has; normalized motherhood sharing pictures of baby food on her clothes or breastfeeding at the UN; she has set an example of how to respond to terrorist attacks, volcanic eruptions and sexist comments; she has shown to the world that you can be both young, a woman and a mother and you can make real significant change; and she has spread mantras of kindness, empathy and more. Through all her acts of normality, decisiveness, kindness, inclusivity, compassion and strength I believe she is a role model on what can be achieved despite adversity and how people should act towards one another.

Throughout my board development, text became the most important subject matter as the slogans, commentary and words that detailed Jacinda as a leader became more important than Jacinda's image herself. I found that the more I took away from the competing background noise of primarily Jacinda's face, the architecture around her, the variation in clothing she wears, the noise of the naysayers and the objects that are associated with her such as her jewelry or microphones the stronger the pieces became as the messages became clearer and more forceful. As the board developed and as I honed in and focused on text based artists - in particular McCahon and Hotere - I discovered that the scaled-back colour palettes prominent in their work also reinforced the power of the messages. When I was nearing my final pieces I too attempted to reduce my previously selected colour palette to more muted contrasting tones of monochromatic colours in order to share the significance of the messages shared. I realised that by doing this, the removal of colour, the work became so much more powerful and compelling. I think the singular message of kindness was a good place to conclude my journey.

Could Jacinda Ardern's 'politics of kindness' work in other countries?

New Zealand's prime minister has led the Labour party to its best result in 50 years. Her campaign was run on polite politics and a rejection of misinformation. Eleanor Ainge Roy looks at Jacinda Ardern's rise and what other countries can learn from it

NZ election: The people left behind in Ardern's 'kind' New Zealand



'I want the government ... to bring kindness back'

Killing coronavirus with kindness: how Kiwis are primed for goodwill during a pandemic

The Kindness Quotient

Kindness, not fear or hate - Jacinda Ardern's message to Donald Trump and the world

'Be kind' - Jacinda Ardern urges people to support one another as coronavirus alert system level rises

Julia Gillard admires Jacinda Ardern's power of kindness

Kindness and kaitiakitanga: Jacinda Ardern addresses the UN

SOME OF THE MANY HEADLINES OF JACINDA & HER MESSAGE OF KINDNESS!

Further Exploration

My final year's school ball was held at Te Papa this year. The dance floor was on the VOID - a big illuminated circle, an art piece made by Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere in 2006. I had been to Te Papa many times in my childhood or even earlier that year in the search of artist models and had stood on the Void. But I had never once thought to look up, until that night. When I glanced up at our hands dancing to the music I remember vividly feeling a sense of excitement and surprise when I saw an illuminated line suspended beneath a dense black circle 6 floors above us and instantly connected it to the illuminated linear circle beneath my feet. I really liked the idea that the Void was both suggestive of space and empty of materiality at the same time and that I could dance upon it but that it was also a silent place—a void. After that night, when I got home and researched I discovered that Cuthbert had said:

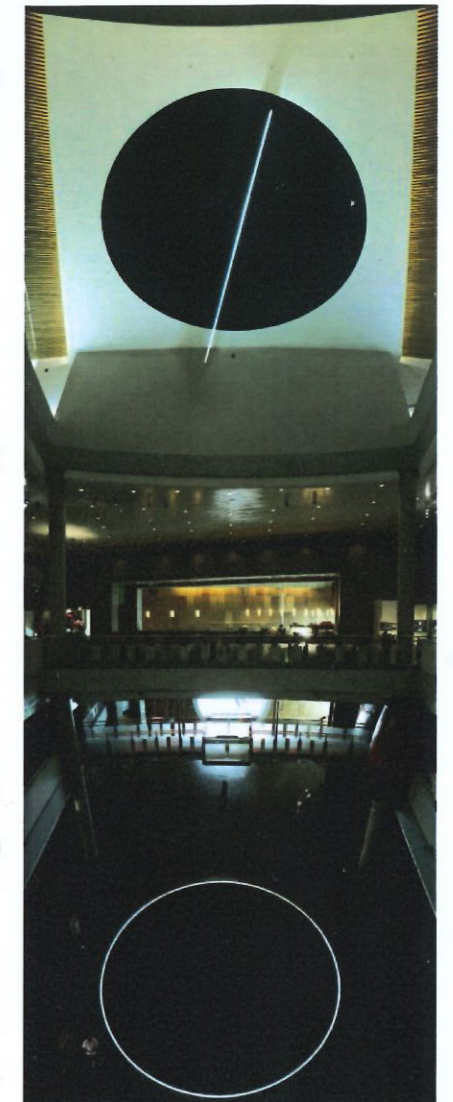
"The further you abstract something, the simpler you make it, the more engaging it becomes."

As my exploration commenced I became intrigued with the Void as I discovered that my own work had once started with an initial idea of portraiture, colour and pattern, and headed through various text types and events but had concluded with an extremely limited colour palette and limited text, heading towards less and less form, colour, subject matter and text. I wonder what would happen if I removed colour and text and for example had only a white circle. What would it express? Would it be the opposite of a Void, or something entirely different?

I decided to further explore this concept. I looked at the Conceptual Art Movement because they expressed the view that 'the essence of art is an idea.

I came across Olaf Nicola, a German conceptual artist. I was interested in the way he used a range of conceptual themes from political and cultural critiques to his inquiries into human perception. His work 'Welcome to the Tears of St Lawrence' was an invitation to watch summer meteor showers in a search for the idea of silence. His accompanying booklet (with illustrations, drawings, ideas and interviews) documents the locations of Perseids (also known as the Tears of St Lawrence), which meant that the artist didn't in fact make an art work, but used a stellar phenomenon to explore the idea of silence.

For my next work, I could explore the opposite of the Void - a white circle and write an accompanying booklet about it. It could include for example what I know about circles, what they have been used for historically and how they could represent the opposite of a void. I could include interviews with people viewing the circle to get their critique and ideas. I think it would be interesting to continue the exploration of removal to see what I am left with.



TE PAPA'S 'VOID'

WELCOME TO THE »TEARS OF ST. LAWRENCE« AN APPOINTMENT TO WATCH FALLING STARS.

IN THE EARLY HOURS AFTER MIDNIGHT, BETWEEN THE 8TH AND 13TH OF AUGUST, WATCH THE NORTHERN SKY FACING NORTH-EAST IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CONSTELLATION OF PERSEUS, WHICH YOU WILL FIND IN THE SKY AT AN ANGLE OF APPROXIMATELY 45° UP FROM THE HORIZON. LOOK OUT FOR A SHOWER OF FALLING STARS. THEY ARE THE »TEARS OF ST. LAWRENCE«.

BLICKEN SIE ZWISCHEN DEM 8. UND 13. AUGUST IN DEN STUNDEN NACH MITTERNACHT IN RICHTUNG NORDOST. DORT STEHT AM HIMMEL IN EINEM WINKEL VON ETWA 45° ZUM HORIZONT DAS STERNBILD PERSEUS. HALTEN SIE NACH EINEM STERNSCHNUPPENREGEN AUSSCHAU. DIES SIND DIE »TRÄNEN DES LAURENTIUS«.



NICOLA'S PIECE

