

YEAR 12 VISUAL ART
BODY OF WORK

Artist Statement

NAME

Lauren McConnell

TITLE

Creatures of Culture

MATERIALS

*Watercolour paint,
black ink pen, white
gel pen and gold
leaf on cold pressed
watercolour paper*

My Body of Work, a series of watercolour paintings detailed with pen and embellished with gold leaf, is intended to express the exploration of my personal hybrid cultural identity. Growing up as an Australian with Chinese and English heritage has been an ongoing journey as I have grown to engage with my cultural identity and accept it as part of who I am. Utilising traditional, native and mythic symbols associated with each culture throughout my paintings, I aim to demonstrate my acknowledgement of their inherent and unified connection to me as an individual, no matter how much I may want to focus on one over the other. I have thus strived to create three key pieces, each work focusing around one aspect of my cultural heritage. The Azure Dragon and Vermillion Bird, as two of the Four Symbols in Chinese celestial mythology, represent the greater distance between myself and my Chinese culture. A mix of mythical and real imagery within my portrayal of the unicorn and lion from the United Kingdom royal coat of arms embodies the closer sense of identification that I have with English cultural customs, whilst the Australian painting, depicting two native species, the red-tailed black cockatoo and common tree snake, displays my innate connection to my country of birth. I have also utilised three specific species of butterfly: the Orchard Swallowtail, the Chinese Peacock and the Red Admiral, each native to Australia, Asia and the United Kingdom respectively. The butterflies are a recurring presence across all three of my paintings, emphasising the perennial nature of my hybrid cultural identity. In addition to these symbolic overlaps, I have also incorporated lotus flowers, roses and eucalyptus leaves across two paintings each. Eucalyptus leaves are present in the Chinese work, roses in the Australian and lotus flowers in the British influenced painting. Thus these aspects of flora, juxtaposing against a foreign setting, portray the everlasting interconnectedness of these three cultural influences on the construction of my individual identity