

Start at home

Messy impasto food painting



Image
Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *The Lot*, 2006, Bowral, New South Wales, oil on canvas, 150.0 x 160.0 cm; Gift of Ben Quilty through the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors 2016. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist.

“I always remember thinking as a little, little boy how magic it was to watch Mum draw... I became an obsessive drawer. Mum and Dad would think I was in my room studying economics but I'd just have folders full of drawings...”

Ben Quilty

About the artist

Born in Sydney in 1973, Ben Quilty became an artist at a young age. His love of thick paint and bold, large-scale imagery was already evident in his year 12 artwork – as well as a compassionate engagement with social issues. In 2011 he won the prestigious Archibald Prize for his portrait of fellow painter Margaret Olley and travelled to Afghanistan as an official war artist. In 2016 he undertook a range of collaborative projects prompted by the Syrian refugee crisis. Quilty continues to challenge the conventions of painting while shining a light on the conflicts and paradoxes of contemporary life.

About the work

The Lot is one of several burger paintings created from 2006 to 2010, exploring the power of pop cultural items in the contemporary psyche. They are big and bold, with lurid colours and loose gestural mark-making. Quilty often paints with ‘the cheapest and largest palette knives in the Southern Hemisphere – cake decorating tools!’. This technique is called impasto: a thick application of paint, creating ridges and lumps of three-dimensional surface texture. The energetic, expressive marks make each burger piece as unique and character-filled as a portrait, revelling in the indulgent and visceral appeal of fast food.

Ben Quilty’s work is on display at AGSA until 2 June 2019

We would love to see your work! Ask your parent or carer to post a photo on Instagram and tag the Art Gallery of South Australia. Or you can email your photo to us at public.programs@artgallery.sa.gov.au

@agsa.adelaide #agsastart

Materials you need

- A bowl or plate of your favourite food to immortalise in your painting
- Disposable plastic knives and/or wooden popsicle sticks
- Cardboard, wooden board or stretched canvas
- Acrylic paint in red, blue, yellow and white
- SA palette or plate to mix colours
- A pencil
- Water cups and rags or paper towels

Create your own work of art

- 1 Cover your painting area and put on an apron or painting clothes.
- 2 To make your messy impasto painting, first look closely at your chosen food. What shapes, textures and colours can you see?
- 3 Now lightly sketch the basic shape of your meal with your pencil. Don't worry about detail.
- 4 Place a generous smear of each colour onto your palette.
- 5 Choose a popsicle stick or plastic knife, and start painting! See what different kinds of marks you can make by dabbing, smooching, splotching or scraping the paint. Try different textures for different areas. Be bold with your marks and don't smooth them out.
- 6 Mix up new colours as you go. You can do this on your palette, or directly onto your painting for an expressive and streaky effect.
- 7 To complete your painting, mix up a background colour to contrast with your subject matter. Try smoothing out your background to make it flatter and less expressive than your fabulous impasto food.

Take it further

What made you choose the food that you painted? What does this meal remind you of?

Is your painting appetising? Does it belong on a menu or in a cookbook? Why – or why not?

Now that you've experienced impasto painting, try skipping the pencil sketch next time and create your picture directly in paint!

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