



# Me & My Role Models, Somali Children's Painted Portraits

Facilitated by Lauryn Arnott for the Multicultural Communities Council of SA



Image: photograph of young Yussuf Ali Ahmed, standing next to his painting portraying himself following his dream, as a soccer star. Two years later, Yussuf has been selected to represent Australia in Britain, in the 2019 Australian Soccer Schools Team.

The Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation is pleased to exhibit a selection of Somalian Children's Painted Portraits facilitated by artist Lauryn Arnott on behalf of the Multicultural Communities Council of SA. Lauryn encouraged children from the local Somalian community to paint their future selves which could include a role model, a family member, a friend, a teacher, a rock star, or a sportsperson.

Many of these Somalian children are born far from their homeland in refugee camps, as a result of one of the longest wars of our century. These colourful life-size painted portraits form an extraordinary testament to the resilience of these young people. *An encounter with these portraits, offers a positive voice from a community that is*

*seldom heard, here we have an opportunity to listen closely for ourselves.*

The Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA) provides support and advocacy for all people from culturally diverse backgrounds to realise their potential as active contributors to the economic, social and cultural life of South Australia. MCCSA invited Lauryn to contribute to their 'Expressions Session' programs, designed to engage and inspire at risk youth, high school aged participants from cultural diverse backgrounds who were at risk of disengaging from school and community. The aim is to introduce expressive arts as a way to engage and connect young people to positive life influences in the local community. These portraits are from the Body Mapping program, focusing on art-making as place-making. Body Mapping is an arts-based

process for refugees to document their visual journey between two worlds –to assess where they have come from, where their families come from, and how these experiences will shape their lives?

*This project is a unique opportunity for the children to share and reflect on their journey of settlement, where they feel they fit in, to start building trust, healthy relationships with peers, but most importantly, to learn ‘cultural competency’; to navigate life between two cultures - their home culture and the dominant culture. Thus the young people recreated their own stories, as to what they wish to become, and what they can offer back to their communities. It started with a line traced around the bodies of each child, to create life size body maps. These visual stories focus on identity and migration but more importantly, in connecting with a positive role model.*

Lauryn says this arts program is driven by her sense of injustice, concerned by how we are treating our fellow human beings who have lost their homes to find refuge in peaceful countries.

Born in Zambia, Lauryn lost her home due to the violent regime in Zimbabwe. Winner of the 2006 Association of Commonwealth Universities Art Prize in the competition “A Place in the World”, she is passionate about giving people the voice to express themselves, to find positive ways to use art to humanise people fleeing from warzones.

**To see more of this work:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/Create-a-Meaningful-World-Through-Art>



Image: Children painted portraits with artist Lauryn Arnott.

The Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation (WCH Foundation) raises funds in support of the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, South Australia. The WCH Foundation is committed to ensuring that mums, children and their families have access to the very best in medical care, hospital facilities and support services at a time when they need it the most.

The WCH Foundation has developed a number of Arts in Health programs to integrate art into the life of the Hospital to improve people's health and wellbeing. We try to make the environment more 'child-friendly', making it look better and helping to make the time spent in hospital 'feel better'.

The Arts in Health program delivers a range of activities throughout the hospital across art forms such as: Visual Arts, Digital Media, Music and Performing Arts, Public Art, Literature and the Therapeutic Arts (Play Therapy, Art Therapy and Music Therapy). From providing pencils and colouring books in waiting areas, to managing Gallery spaces and art displays in the Hospital, collaborating with Hospital School on book week activities and working closely with the Play Therapy Team, the Arts in Health program delivers smiles and fun throughout the Hospital.

The WCH Foundation's Gallery program coordinates five galleries in the Hospital, providing a space away from the stresses of treatment to distract, entertain and inspire, improving the visual environment. The artworks displayed in the exhibition spaces come from a range of sources – internally from hospital staff, patients (women & children) and their families, through specific Arts in Health activities and externally from local artists and art collectives.

This exhibition was planned and exhibited on the lands of the Kurna People, we pay our respects to the Kurna Elders past and present and to the Elders of the lands this brochure reaches.

Cover image: detail of *8 Framed Portraits*



**For more information contact:**

Lauren Simeoni, Arts Officer, Arts in Health  
artsinhealth@wchfoundation.org.au | T 08 8464 7900  
55 King William Road | North Adelaide | SA 5006  
www.wchfoundation.org.au