Edith

Oil on canvas

70 x 50 cm

2020

This is a portrait of Edith. She is my eldest daughter.

In 2018, the Principal of her primary school offered her a challenge – to organise a group of her friends to replicate Sadako Sasaki's mission to fold 1000 paper cranes. Edith and her friends rose to the challenge, inundating the Principals office with crates filled with cranes. Further, their study and growing appreciation for Sadako's story led them write a play about her life, which they performed for the school. The Australian chapter of the Sri Chinmoy Peace Runners heard of the children's work and they were so impressed, they awarded the children a Torch-Bearer Award.

In 2019, Edith became increasingly ill over 4 months. The right hand side of her face became swollen and painful and she could barely open her mouth to eat or talk. Finally a combination of doctors, dentists, radiographers and university professors figured out what was wrong. A rare, chronic bone infection had been eating away at the right hand side of her skull, turning it to honeycomb. What followed was repeated courses the strongest antibiotics doctors could prescribe over the counter for as long as it took for the infection to recede.

This painting was difficult. It still is. It started after the Peace Medal was awarded and was meant to be a private celebration of that moment; an attempt to capture the happiness. It was completed after Edith had recovered and subsequently became something else – there is a parent's worry and hope to find a cure, but also child's humble spirit to overcome.