

Artist Statement by Megan Roodenrys February 2009

“Waiting For The Day”

A study of Ben Cousins by Megan Roodenrys

Oil on Linen

200 x 167cm



Why did I choose Ben Cousins?

Prior to October 2007, I had never seen nor heard of Ben Cousins, never even followed football or any sport for that matter. We were watching TV one day (October 2007) and saw the news footage of Ben being escorted by police from his car in broad daylight and made comment about how that would feel, to have your personal struggles dragged out in front of the public. And also, how so many ordinary people have found themselves in Ben's position whilst their struggle remains private.

I chose Ben because he is a person who is dealing with an addiction under such intense scrutiny, who is alone in the public domain. I have always had a great deal of respect for people that are trying to overcome addiction issues. I understand how difficult a task that is. I felt that Ben's road was made particularly difficult being under such close scrutiny. So my business partner contacted Ben's management and proposed the idea of having Ben model for me. I feel privileged that he agreed to model for me. Later, we heard that Ben was attempting to resurrect himself and his career and we followed with amazement, the media circus that surrounded his every move.

How did I decide to approach the portrait?

I was looking at the process of self-examination. A time of introspection and self-analysis; about being vulnerable and all the nerves exposed. From the start, I was interested in attempting to document working through a decision in a difficult time, perhaps in a hotel room, definitely alone. It is a complex task to represent a strong and purposeful man in a vulnerable and uncertain state, whilst still conveying a sense of his innate strength.

Within a couple of hours of arriving in Perth in late August 2008, I was sitting with Ben around the table at a boutique hotel called "8 Nicholson" in Subiaco. I asked Ben if he had any ideas of how he would like to be represented. I mentioned the concept that I had in mind and this appealed to him. He came back the next day for two separate sittings and was at ease with his body and with the fact that I was in the room observing him. Ben was a pleasure to work with, he was very respectful and I left Perth for my studio in Adelaide, really wanting to produce something amazing for myself, for him and for anybody that has ever spent a sleepless night coming to terms with themselves and any difficult decisions that they need to make.