

Milayla

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The main focus of this practical was too symbolically express the cruelty killer whales are facing in captivity. This was initiated by the studying of various artists, some of which are Kevin Steav, Guy Harvey, Robert Brown and Ferdinand Bauer. All these artists, experimented with zoological and botanical illustration styles and techniques. Their use of the natural world as inspiration created thought-provoking study. A direction for my practical was unclear until the viewing of the documentary "Black Fish". The plight of this film was an orca called Tillicum who was of strong influence through my work as it exposed many confronting issues regarding, the inhumane enclosure sizes, lack of environmental enrichment, and the anguished cries of whale calves forcibly separated from distressed mothers, by SeaWorld's stated policy.

These media sources, conservation acts and zoological artists led me to a new personal identification, where passion for marine conservation took hold resulting in the desire to create a practical that is not only visually appealing but withholds a strong underlining social and political message. Through further research I discovered PETA'S Bathtub Quote, this became my primary source of inspiration.

"SeaWorld's confinement of Orcas (Killer Whales), once could swim up to 100 miles a day in the wild, now trapped in tanks that, to them, are the size of a bathtub".¹

This quote solidified my idea, fashioning a painting that contains a killer whale in a bathtub. The symbolism of this is to address the sickeningly small enclosures, captive killer whales are confined too. Surrounding the bathtub, are multiple water puddles, splashes and droplets resembling the whale's frightful movements and longing to escape from his enclosure. The whale painted in this piece has a collapsed dorsal fin, this is because a majority of captive whales in SeaWorld Orlando Florida have sustained this injury. Experts believe it is a result of inadequate enclosure size as they have no space to swim freely and are fed an unnatural diet such as thawed dead fish². Significant thought was applied to the background selection and scale of this painting as planning and composition trials resulted in a subtle 'Forget-Me-Not-Blue' textured background with its large scale provokes unease amongst the viewer. The emptiness of this background would not only be suitable because of its amplification of the whale, allowing it to be the central focus, but emphasising the uncertainty of their species future.

¹ DailyMail,PETA,2015,<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2844466/Nude-female-PETA-protesters-painted-like-orcas-bathtub-New-York-oppose-SeaWorld-s-Thanksgiving-Day-Parade-float.html>,2017

² Seaworldofhurt,pg1,2016,<https://www.seaworldofhurt.com/features/8-reasons-orcas-dont-belong-seaworld/>,2017

A semi abstract painting method was used, highlighting the distorted and almost childlike immaturity that the trainers perceive their whales to be. To accommodate for the constricting black, white and grey colour scheme needed, additional shadows were added to the bottom white segments of the whale. Here depth was created without losing the whales distinct contrasting white patterns. The choice of an old fashion claw bath was due to the notion that the method of SeaWorld's Orcas confinement is an outdated concept.

The important conservational issue raised in this painting cannot be ignored. It is believed this painting addresses such issues with an equal balance of sorrow, strength and hope. The name Milayla was finally chosen for its Tagalog meaning, "Free, Freedom" which is the true hope for this species.