

Artist's Statement- Body of work- "Empowerment"

As a young woman in today's society I have been exposed to the different, both good and bad, reactions that makeup can bring forward. Therefore, I am interested in how makeup be used as a tool to bring about empowerment and improve individual's self-esteem.

I began my research on the history of makeup and body art. Discovering that body art is one of the earliest forms of ritual in human culture. The utilisation of natural mineral pigments as a tool to enhance natural beauty and to participate in religious rituals dates back 100,000 years ago. Body art's modern revolution however, came in the form of makeup in the 1920's with the rise of Hollywood icons. In this time makeup, particularly red lipstick was a symbol of freedom and independence of women. I drew inspiration from this movement to create a body of work featuring two paintings, neon lighting and a short video.

I was inspired by Gerhard Richter while creating the oil paintings as the in the first part of my work. I have always been in awe of Richter's paintings from photographs with their strong sense of composition and light. I wanted to explore the way he blurs his paintings, shifting the focus to a particular point. I have portrayed a close friend through candid photos of her looking into mirrors, applying red lipstick. Through these paintings, I am exploring beauty and makeup as a tools leading to self-acceptance.

I investigated and drew inspiration from various photographers both historical and modern, Hollywood icons, painters and makeup artists such as Juno Calypso, Nadia Lee Cohen, Diana Dors, Gianni Strino, Gerhard Richter, Malcome Leipke and Bex Lecter . Researching the cultural movements of cosmetics also provided me with a greater appreciation of how makeup and beauty routines fit into society and how they have influenced culture to such a dramatic extent. Juno Calypso is an eccentric self-portrait photographer whose strong ideals and composition inspired the photographs I took to develop into paintings. She explores the beauty rituals that she believes leads to power and self-confidence through soft pink images, often depicting the subjects peering at themselves in the mirror. I was driven to create similarly soft images using pastel light after being exposed to Juno Calypso's work. While I was initially drawn to Malcom's textural oil paintings, I decided that I wanted the subject and interesting composition to shine through rather than the medium used being the feature. As I loved the photographs so much, I wanted the paintings to be a direct realistic depiction of them, appearing more as images rather than paintings; similarly to Gianni Strino. My work aims to expose the viewer to the beauty of women and the process they go through applying makeup, and the self-love it can inspire.

The second part of my body of work complimented the portraits, depicting the same theme but through very different mediums. This section of work is centred around symbols and words rather than photography and painting, using video art and neon lighting. The neon lights I created were inspired by the commercial advertisement I was exposed to throughout Melbourne CBD. I wanted to utilise the medium as an art form, advertising a positive and uplifting message, rather than a product or service. Tracey Emin is one artist who has achieved this with huge success. I used similar cursive font to Emin as it requires the viewer to stop and look at the words in order to read them, helping them take the message in rather than skipping over its meaning. Emin wants her audience to feel the "beauty of the glow" from her neon pieces. I want to create a similar feeling through my piece, using EL wire as an effective substitute for glass neon tubing. The quote I decided to use for the neon light was "always see the good". This is adapted and shortened from a quote I found on Pinterest that

really spoke to me; “Train your mind to see the good in everything”. “Always see the good” is an ambivalent phrase feeling almost unfinished, allowing people to draw their own meaning, finishing the sentence in their mind.

Video art and the attraction it draws has always intrigued me. I was particularly inspired by ‘GIF’ artists who find meaning through extremely short clips of film, looped endlessly. Diana Pietrzak created a simple line drawing animated GIF of a rose held upright as one of its petals falls. This simple concept inspired me to explore filming the movements of roses. Roses are interpreted as the ultimate display of love, while also being associated with beauty. This makes them the perfect symbol in which to branch out my theme to self-love and finding beauty in everything. My final looped video shows a petal falling off a rose in slow motion as it is held horizontally across the screen. As roses grow and develop, they eventually drop petals, a natural part of their cycle. My image therefore, symbolises finding beauty in things that are not generically beautiful. I placed my video in a vintage television from the 90s, fitting with the vintage aesthetic of my other works.

I want viewers to draw their own conclusions from my work, however I hope they leave with a sense of the beauty that I have tried to create through contrasting and unusual mediums.

Word Count : 901