

Stage 2 Visual Arts

Practitioner's Statement

"Hold Your Breath"

Upon commencing my Practical I wanted to focus on the theme of domestic violence and mental illness, to create an extremely controversial and confrontational self-portrait. Aspects of this are personally relevant as I have been diagnosed with depression. I wanted to relate this to the reoccurrence of domestic violence in society, where I aimed to raise awareness. I explored artists such as Dale Grimshaw and Francis Bacon who produced artworks which had similarities to my ideas for my artwork, where they expressed emotional disturbance through their stylised and expressive monochromatic colouring and broken lines to enhance the perception of a fractured mind. I endeavoured to relate my personal experiences of depression with that of a domestic violence victim, in a confronting and violent portrayal of the subject through employing convergence, where multi-directional lines frame and create disarray in the portrait and the external dark colours reflect confinement. This contrasts with the light skin tone which is symbolic of purity and innocence. Bruises are employed as an external symbol of mental pain and to allude further to domestic violence, where they are featured in violent colours such as scarlet and crimson to confront the audience emotionally by adding semi-realism to an otherwise overly stylised piece.

Overall, I think my portrait titled "Hold Your Breath" is extremely successful in conveying the intended message, as it intentionally provokes conversations surrounding the violence depicted on myself as the subject. This reveals the pain, entrapment and anguish experienced by domestic violence victims and depression sufferers. Despite this, I do believe that I could have created a more successful piece through more realistic tones and shading. Additionally, the bruising could have been made more subtle, as although it successfully portrays bruising, it detracts from the overall composition, where the colours detract from the overall monochromatic scheme. Through experimenting with Grimshaw's techniques, I have adapted this method into my own style, where similarly, he uses a monochromatic colour scheme and extreme facial expressions to convey mental illness. Additionally, I have implemented Bacon's technique of convergence where there are frequent lines which draw the attention to the self-portrait, which further emphasise entrapment from the sgraffito box carved on the barrier surrounding the portrait.

I believe this artwork is aesthetically powerful as chaos is created from the monochromatic colour scheme, distortion, segmentation, colour contrast of the bruising and multi-directional lines, making it interesting and unique. Through this artwork, I have communicated my beliefs and values, as I have implemented my personal experiences of mental illness and created an artwork, which raises awareness on an important controversial issue. I have expressed and portrayed myself in my most vulnerable state which has challenged me and the viewers. I have developed my personal style, learning diverse and effective oil painting techniques to achieve realism through tonal blending and refined brush techniques. Overall, I have learnt the importance of provoking change and starting conversations through expressing uncomfortable and controversial issues through art.