

Animals of the mind

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In the initial stages of developing my major piece, I was drawn to sculpting as a means of exploring how to encapsulate emotions and feelings through art. My year 12 was marked specifically by personal struggles with mental health that significantly impacted my academics, social life, and my overall well-being. In search of an outlet, I turned to art as a form of expression, channeling my experiences into two sculptures that represent the emotional battles I faced: Anxiety and Depression.

I began investigating different ways in which I could portray my concept in a more impactful and emotive way. I decided to look further beyond human figures and instead animal forms. Animals, I discovered, possess a captivating and mysterious quality that allows viewers to connect with and empathise more profoundly. This approach challenged the stereotypical depiction of mental health struggles as simply portraying a sad, tired individual.

During my exploration of how to represent these concepts, I came across pandas as a symbol for depression. Pandas, like humans, often isolate themselves and restrict their movements during such times. This inspired my first sculpture, featuring a panda laid on a rock, with its legs bound by chain, symbolizing the feeling of being unable to rise from bed during a depressive episode. A piece of bamboo in its line of sight represents motivation so close yet frustratingly out of reach.

For the sculpture depicting anxiety, I turned to the fox also symbolically. Foxes, naturally timid creatures, tend to flee rather than confront situations, aligning with the concept. However with anxiety there is fear constantly; like a cage hanging over you. To underscore the feeling of entrapment, I sculpted a cage from wood, pipes, and a metal basket to hang over the fox, which conveys the anxiety-induced unease and fear mirrored in the fox's expression and stance within the cage.

Both sculptures, while anatomically accurate to their animal subjects, feature enlarged eyes to accentuate the emotions they represent, still highlighting the emotions of a human.

Further the texture of the pieces played a pivotal role in conveying my concept. After researching various techniques, I drew inspiration from Beth Cavener's work, which features a wave-like texture. I adopted a similar technique to underscore the body's movements and emotions, purposefully employing a contrast between smooth and rough textures to authentically capture the depth of the emotions, drawing viewers deeper into my creation.

Overall, I am happy with both of my pieces. I am extremely pleased with the anatomy of both subjects' bodies and how I have manipulated them to express the emotions intended as well as the expression of the eyes. I feel I have achieved my desired effect of showcasing my concept in a style primarily inspired by artist Beth Cavener.