

## *In the Hands of Others*

### **Ingrid Tinney**

I knew that I wanted to produce something relatable and vulnerable with a powerful message, exploring different themes, mediums and purposes. All my life I have taken a preference to the darker, macabre subjects in relation to the visual arts and aesthetics. My fascination seeps into my own artistic style, evident in my piece "In the Hands of Others". The body of work consists of an oil painting and two clay sculptures to tell the narrative of something personal, but also so universal. Through these pieces I wanted to express the feeling of worthlessness.

It is common for many people, especially young people to struggle with their mental health, sense of identity and purpose. If you were to ask somebody who they were, what makes you, "you", I don't believe many would have a confident answer. It is very easy to ignore our character when we are surrounded by so many outlets and distractions, specifically other people. Attachment becomes a holiday for the minds of those who want an escape from their reality. Idolisation of the people in our lives who we admire greatly and love, brings a sense of comfort as we are so caught up and joined to their lives, we begin to forget our own. Such obsession leads to dependency, relying on attention for validation and confirmation that YOU are worthy enough.

As this is so personal to me it felt only right that I used myself as the subject in the painting, capturing, and turning pain into power. You can see in the painting that I have my hand placed on my chest, with the other reaching out towards the sculpture in front of it. The chest where the hand is placed is hollow and dark, for my heart is in the hand of the sculpture piece. As said in my title, "In the Hands of Others", I have captured how it feels to be dependent on others, to place our worth in the palms of another. I chose this depiction as it symbolises the vulnerability people put themselves under, using the heart as it is a centre of life. The hand in the painting reaching out is desperately trying to regain what they gave away because they don't want to suffer anymore.

I made the decision to encapsulate this subject through different artworks to embody the hardship of attempting to pick up your pieces and recover who you are, evident in the placement and separate media. The blood was a feature I decided to include to reflect on the agony and create that link to allow viewers to know that the heart belongs to the hollowed chest. Around the chest you can see hints of decay, this serves the purpose in visually fulfilling the expression of falling apart, and crumbling.

In order of creation I began my process by researching famous artists in the two medias in my work. I have always admired the qualities of Renaissance art and knew that I wanted to incorporate similar attributes into my painting. My main focus and source of inspiration was Michelangelo Caravaggio and sculptor Johnson Tsang. Caravaggio's ability to depict such serious tones through the arrangement of body, clothing and lighting was highly impactful in the design process of my painting, specifically when taking my photo. His work guided me into the stylisation of my costume and how it was displayed. A second painter, Nicola Samori, had influenced my eerie, cool toned portrait and helped provide structure in the deterioration of human flesh.

Johnson Tsang's work consists of Surreal sculptures, altering body parts and playing

around with flexibility. Looking at Tsang's creations assisted me to understand the construction and anatomy of body parts, specifically the hand. The sculptural pieces were both built separately as it would simplify the hollowing out process for when they get fired in the kiln. This was inconvenient as I had planned for the heart to be wedged in between the fingers, getting squeezed. If it were wedged, then it could not be separated into two individual pieces so I decided that the fingers would gently grasp it. My aim was to achieve a realistic look to the best of my ability, combined with a slight textural roughness delivered by a wooden skewer to ingrain the linings, wrinkles and creases. The touch of blood was a last-minute addition as I felt that the sculpture was bland and dull. I wanted to create a visual connection between the painting and the clay sculpture so by both pieces having blood on their hands, this would allow viewers to better correlate the relationship and significance between the two. I wanted to avoid paint jobs on the sculpture as I didn't want the viscosity of the paint to cover and fill the engravings of the hand or heart, diminishing its texture.

My painting required endless problem solving as I tackled many complications. My approach with painting is exceedingly disorganised and chaotic. I started off with the face, applying in layers, gradually adding more depth and detail. I approached an issue with my brushes as I couldn't seem to achieve a smooth finish. Out of frustration I resorted to using my fingers to apply and replace the duty of a brush. I found the results to be exceedingly more reliable as well as more efficient, relying on my fingers for most of the smoothing out. I find difficulty in maintaining pure focus to one area at a time, resulting in me leaping from section to section. Strangely enough, the most challenging component of the oil painting was completing the lips. There is no room for error when it comes to features of the face as the face is the focal point of the painting. It took many attempts of layering to finish satisfied, But I discovered that blocking in colours and allowing it to dry before making more changes would be my best effort. Around halfway through my painting I felt like going with my original choice in a bare background with lighting from one corner to the other would bring unwanted emphasis as the subject does not take up enough space on the canvas. I decided to position myself (The subject) in front of a diamond shaped glass window, referencing from a window at my home, showing complexity and elegance.

This piece relies heavily on personal expression; on an experience that many people can relate to. I hope that by viewing my work people may feel a sense of comfort if they find themselves understanding the piece on an emotional level and connecting with it. Simultaneously I want people to feel uneasy as they look at the broken girl and what has become of her.

Working on this piece has taught me that it's okay to use whatever method suits me best and that I shouldn't force myself to follow guidelines that don't work for me. This piece has also helped me come to realise the gravity in personal relevance as it grounds my decision making and allows me to think adeptly to what is and isn't pertinent. My visual aesthetic, though always dark, has evolved due to the influence of the Renaissance period as my painting has dedicated a large focus to the lace cloth that the subject is wrapped in, as well as the makeup, strategically shaped by regency cosmetics.

In closing I am very satisfied with the way I have delivered this subject through art. The

intricacy of the painting was a very enjoyable experience as I had never given so much time to a piece before. Sculpting a life size heart was satisfying, carving out the veins and disguising airways to the centre of the heart through the valves. All in all I would claim that my body of work is a success in communicating my ideas and visually achieving my intended aesthetic.