

Connection

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My work started as an idea to explore how different art mediums can portray the beauty of human connection. Seeing how two figures can intertwine to create form and shape visually interested me. I took this theme and started to explore how other artists have interpreted it through their own mediums and art styles. My first focus was on human form and I began to study and sketch the anatomical body. Through charcoal I was interested in finding a balance between light and shadow that highlight aspects of human form. The muscles, tendons and bones create a human landscape that is an incredible experience to sketch. I took the techniques I learnt and decided to do a large charcoal drawing of two figures embracing. I photographed by good friends that I felt portrayed the emotion I wanted to capture in my drawing. This drawing features only a small part of their pose. I closed up on the face with closed eyes and arms that are linked together. Through a use of dark and light tones, their hair shows a wispy and soft nature that ties into the theme highlighting the beautiful delicate emotional connection that reads on the faces.

I took a lot of inspiration from Auguste Rodin who is known for his classical sculptures that study the human form. His work enhances the human form by twisting and contorting it into shapes that represent an emotional state. As the first modern sculptor, Rodin inspired my work to replicate his delicate but powerful way of portraying the human experience. From this study, I decided to explore how to replicate this theme and style while pivoting it towards the study of two people. I focused on connection in a literal sense and used clay to merge body parts together. The way that the limbs of the figures intertwined created beautiful shapes and highlighted negative space. For my first sculpture I decided to incorporate the anatomical technique of Rodin but assimilate my theme of connection and relationships. For this piece I photographed two figures with one embracing the other from behind. I took this shape and adapted it to fit my theme and ideas. The sculpture from the front looks like a singular figure until, underneath the second set of arms come through. The body underneath is being shielded and protected from exposure. I wanted to portray the protection that we feel from secure relationships that become a safe space where we cannot be seen or judged. To highlight this, I emphasised the natural features of the main body. The dips in the collar bones and the deep hollows under the shoulder blades create a defined and sharp persona that armours the person underneath.

I looked at other artists such as David Olivera and his wire sculptures as well as Alberto Giacometti to explore how they use line and shape distortion to portray the human figure. A large inspiration for my second sculpture was Henry Moore whose semi abstract figures pushed me to explore the boundaries of typical anatomy. His figures feature many rounded shapes and merged limbs that flow from one to another, lacking the definition of sharp lines. From this I experimented a more abstract style that portrayed the figures but also encapsulated more conceptual meaning. Through the use of merged limbs, I felt that I could highlight the visual connection and the 'together as one' theme. This inspired me to do my second sculpture that is based around the solidity of human connection and the way that two people can become one through love. I based this sculpture off my two friends that I felt had the connection I was looking for.

Through years of friendship, they felt to me as almost one person and I wanted to capture that through my artwork. The sculpture is formed around a hug that in the centre, brings their two hearts together. Their limbs wrapping around each other smooth into the form as the two figures meet to create a balanced and strong shape, holding each other. I wanted to create cracks in the surface of the figures but decided to leave it smooth. Coincidentally, after finishing this piece and firing it in the kiln, an accident occurred and a singular head of the figure cracked. While this was not planned, it almost felt like fate and I decided to incorporate this 'break' into my sculpture. With the cracks I used expanding foam to stick them back on top taking inspiration from Tim Silver who uses intention decay of his sculptures to piece it together and use it to conceptualise his deeper meaning. Just like relationships, the sculpture has an imperfection. Where one person might be broken, through the strength and support of each other it is easy to fill the gaps.

My three pieces are based on human connection. What does it mean for us? I wanted to highlight the duality of this experience. While we may falter under our own pressures and challenges, we gain strength when together. Relationships are a form of connection, healing and protection and without them we would crumble. Through my use of charcoal and clay, I intended to make my viewers feel the connection of my figures and see in that their own relationships, take a moment and reflect.