

Practitioner's Statement

Self-Destruction

Eleanor Hughes

My first Practical explores human impact on the environment through a mixed-media multilayered shadowbox. When configuring my ideas I sought inspiration from artists including Stephen Holding, Marumiyan, Banksy, and Julie Bender. Stephen Holding's employment of a shadowbox display was an important influence on my piece. The layering of Japanese influenced subject matter by Marumiyan inspired me to look into Japanese Traditional tattooing, helping inspire the creation of the tattoo design to adorn my figure. Banksy was significant in terms of refining my artworks message as his art is centred on protest and speaking up against ignorance and greed. The natural subject matter and utilisation of pyrography (wood-burning) as her preferred artistic technique, made Julie Bender a key influence for my piece as I liked the connection wood-burning could have with my theme.

2015 marks yet another year that has already seen the expansion of the mining industry, the continuation of unsustainable fishing practises, and an increase in land clearing and urbanisation. These factors spurred me on to centre my practical on the damage human greed and ignorance can have on the environment.

My artwork is made up of three sections; a butterfly woodburn in a biological illustration format, a male human figure outline, and a Japanese inspired tattoo design. I began my practical with the intention of making it double sided, but I chose to create a single sided multilayered artwork instead, as I believed this better amplified my message showing the passage of time. The woodburning technique on plywood, literally symbolises the destruction of the environment due to human greed and ignorance. The contour lined figure was created using maroon Liquitex Glossies enamel paint on clear Perspex. This symbolises how greed can turn people into empty, shallow beings who have lost their humanity and are only driven by selfish desire. On the opposite side of the Perspex, the third tattoo layer was also created using enamel paints. This layer represents how the greed and need to exploit our natural environment can end up consuming us as humans, through the tattoo engulfing the body and wrapping around the throat. The inclusion of Aboriginal x-ray art inspired koi fish represents hope for change as Aboriginal people believe the land owns them and they have a responsibility to care for it. Although my practical focuses on the imperfections of humanity, portraying it in a negative light, the inclusion of the phoenix is used to symbolise the hope that exists for humanity to change its ways and begin mending the damage, as the phoenix in Japanese culture represents hope and rebirth. I chose to display my artwork as a shadowbox to give the effect of a museum scientific display, with a fixed state of decay.

As we exploit and empty our earth of its natural resources we are being stripped of our humanity and responsibility for our land and the animals that inhabit it, leaving us bare and exposing us to the greed that clouds our thoughts and drives our decision-making.