

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***I Have a Face***

Elizabeth Kalfas

"I Have a Face" is a body of work of two graphite drawings of children inspired by young victims of the Holocaust. The towering scale and overwhelming detail of the children's enlarged heads challenge the viewer with the narratives contained within them. The awful undertones of the Holocaust motifs contained within a child's frame emit a contradiction of innocence. My piece was first inspired by Pat Perry, who juxtaposes the human silhouette with chaotically contrasted urban and natural imagery. Initially, when trialling Perry's work, I collaged an array of glaring holocaust symbols such as barbed wire, searchlights and watch towers inside a child's profiled silhouette. However, I felt that the Holocaust was made blatant in these trials and questioned whether I desired the Holocaust connotations in my piece to be subtle or confronting.

I then discovered artist Stefan Zsaisits, who creates disproportionate portraits of children whose bloated heads morph into scrawled objects and scenes inspired by nightmares. The lost identity of Zsaisits' illustrated children, whose faces were perverted and erased by the wild sketches that consumed them, related to my concept of the innocence stolen by the Holocaust. Upon trialling his work with a deceptively peaceful gas chamber scene contained in a child's face I realised that my concept could be initially subtle yet disturbingly confronting upon the viewer's close contemplation.

Perry's work inspired me to utilize fine detail, intense monotone contrasts and varying tonal values. However, the balance of detail between the portraits was vital in order for them to embody the concept effectively. I was able to achieve this by employing a range of graphite shades between H and 8B and fine mechanical pencils to apply fine detail whilst unifying the elaborate scenery and clothing. Both Perry and artist Stefan Zsaisits inspired me to utilize a child's frame to contain heavily detailed panoramas of a concentration camp and gas chamber.

It became important to me that the Holocaust connotations take a moment to register with the viewer in order to create a shocking effect that communicates my passion for Holocaust education. Whilst completing the painstaking detail of my piece, I realised that it was extremely difficult to try and emit the pain and suffering of a child in the holocaust as I did not experience it myself. I soon realised that it was nearly impossible to 'paint a picture' of what it might have been like- the number of *6 million Jews* murdered is utterly incomprehensible. Thus, my concept transformed from specifically expressing the loss of innocence caused by the Holocaust into recognizing the need for thorough education regarding the highly complex topic. The depth of detail and distanced perspective used invites the viewer to look closer, and is reminiscent of the level of understanding I believe needs to be taught about the Holocaust in order for one to 'give a face' to the victim of such atrocities. Therefore, "I Have a Face" is about ensuring that the stories of the Holocaust are never forgotten.