

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Fertility***

Emma Foley

Fertility figures and statues have existed for thousands of years, and the oldest of these, The Venus of Willendorf has existed for approximately 35,000 years. They each possess a unique beauty which reflects their respective cultures, beliefs and values. This is a relatively new area of interest for me and it was not until I came across the incredibly sensitive works of Claude Heath that I became inspired by the intriguing history of fertility figures. Initially my work was strongly connected to that of psychology and human emotion, but after becoming drawn into ancient artefacts, my major work began to revolve more around rebirth and new life. From this moment on my work became increasingly conceptual in its journey.

When starting my major, I knew that I wanted to create a sensitive, linear piece that was deeply conceptual. All of these qualities I found in Moises Mahiques beautiful drawings, however, I found this style difficult to connect to my intended subject. It was not until I discovered Claude Heath's blind contour drawing of The Venus of Willendorf that I became inspired to recreate a similar subject, but with my own unique and contemporary twist. I investigated a number of ancient fertility symbols including The Dreamer of Malta, Ishtar and the Nile River Goddess, all of which have extraordinary organic shapes that I felt had the potential for producing sensitive line drawings. In order to give these figures a contemporary feel, I experimented with a number of drawing methods including, blind contour drawing, drawing from a distance and continuous line drawing. I also drew with a variety of instruments, including biro's, markers and homemade bamboo pens in order to explore line in its purest form. Each of these techniques assisted me in learning to focus on drawing what I really saw and felt about the subject matter instead of feeling obliged to replicate the image. I wanted my drawings to be a sensitive, layered response to these wonderful ancient artefacts.

In my attempts to establish a personal connection to my work, I felt it was necessary to create my own fertility doll. The doll, made out of clay, is the subject in my major piece and the voluptuous, stylised woman resembles the typical body shape of a pregnant woman. The sensitive and fluid pen drawing of this figure is double sided, representing both the front and back of the subject, ensuring to accentuate all of the figures natural curves. Drawing a fertility figure is symbolic of rebirth, not just in terms of fertility, but it also represents a rebirth of the ancient artefacts that I aimed to bring a newfound beauty to. After completing the drawing, I focused on making the work unique and dynamic by adding a symbolic three-dimensional aspect. I attached strands of cotton which are interwoven into the bottom of my piece and meander up to be part of the drawing, which are representative of both past and present beliefs joining together; the fertility figure symbolic of the past and the cotton symbolic of contemporary society. The final significant element of my major piece is a Perspex display box, which encloses both the drawing and the cotton thread, unifying both the past and the present. This ancient, yet contemporary, image's significance is still treasured in this museum-like display.

By using sensitive layers of line, and the development of a simple yet relevant meaning, I have been able to add pieces of myself as well as contemporary and past society. Finding a way to connect the many different aspects of my major proved challenging, however, I believe I have succeeded in resurrecting ancient fertility figures and giving them modern appreciation.