

Practitioner's Statement

## ***As beneath a green sea, I saw him drowning***

Madeleine Lilburn

"As under a green sea, I saw him drowning" explores the fear of war, in particular the horrific effect of chlorine gas. This composition captures the emotional turmoil of life in the trenches during World War 1. Inspired by the Wilfred Owen poem *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, this work is a representation of Owen's words and experiences captured in a single moment through acrylic paint and the tangible nature of thread.

Continuing to explore my visual aesthetic, I again turned to the organic nature and flexibility of thread. Unlike Kết Nối however; this composition allows thread to break free from linear lines to ultimately transform into a free flowing and seemingly uncontrollable form. Connecting with thread installation artists such as Julien Saluad, Gabriel Dawe and Chiharu Shiota, "As under a green sea, I saw him drowning" became a 2D statement about the ability of thread to encapsulate emotion. Shiota's 2015 installation, *The Key in the Hand*, guided me away from the linear lines of Kết Nối to explore the less structured, more abstract medium of thread art. An elaborate entanglement of red wool, Shiota's expansive installation created an immersive and consuming cloud that seemed to capture both the imagination and emotion of all who walked beneath it.

Combined with the entangled, digital representation of the human form in the work of Janusz Jurek's *Papilarnie* and the "free motion stitchery" of Daniela Tiger, the ideas of these artists translated into an enticing composition that was flawlessly simple, yet somewhat constricting, translating into subtle and simple uses of colour and thread

Adelaide artist, Wendy Muir, was my main artistic influence, with her series, *And so you will sledge nearly alone* which explores the Antarctic wilderness across fragile and tactile sheets of Vilene. The use of thread and machine stitching in her compositions blended into her painted and abstract works, acting to highlight her compositions. It was these techniques and qualities that drew me to the free medium of machine stitching. Historically referencing the chlorine gases eerie green glow and the graphic imagery of Owen's, *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, I was able to translate my own aesthetic representation of the timeless and much-loved poem into "As under a green sea, I saw him drowning" using Muir's techniques. The combination of acrylic paint, rayon thread and Vilene, which puckered and shifted, served to encapsulate the crouching figure, who is overcome with the eerie green representation of chlorine gas. Rayon thread creates the unnatural qualities of the gas, seeming to glow under light, giving sheen and adding another dimension to such a complex array of symbolic green colour.

Curving lines and intense dark colours enclose around the unidentified figure, visually representing Owen's words in a statement of both horror and confinement, to which so many soldiers were subjected. "As under a green sea, I saw him drowning" not only captures Owen's words, but highlights the true accounts of soldiers and his words resonate to this day. The emotional turmoil of drowning in gas turned simple thread and Owen's words into a powerful composition.