

Practitioner's Statement

## ***A Wicked Possession* and *Achieving Solace?***

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The practicals, 'A Wicked Possession' and 'Achieving Solace?' were formed through my chance introduction with the medium of encaustic; the term used for painting with hot wax. The historic medium is essentially composed of beeswax, pigment and resin to provide a long-lasting finish. Handheld heat tools were used, for example a heated encaustic stylus, iron and heat gun, to provide finer results and permanently fuse wax onto the canvas. Due to encaustic being such an unpredictable medium, creating the results I wanted originally proved very difficult. Although oil paint is the preferred medium to be paired with encaustic, acrylic was used instead to achieve quicker results. The effect I aimed to achieve involved thick layers of paint and wax, therefore using oil would have taken too long to dry. The acrylic also enabled a rough and fragmented finish when paired with the encaustic which enforces the irregular features of each practical.

The root influence of both practicals was my mother, who has in the last year been diagnosed with epilepsy. Through each of my practicals, I was able to communicate my thoughts, understanding and emotions towards her seizures.

Practical 1, 'A Wicked Possession', epitomizes my experience with my mother's seizures and how I came to view them. The title reflects the appearance of a tonic-clonic seizure, as though an evil and possessive energy is fighting to gain control of the body. The figure, composed of three different body positions, represents the array of twisted formations the body exhibits during a seizure; something of a vile dance of spasming muscles to the sound of a choking and wheezed breath. The practical is obscure, vivacious and extremely chaotic to reflect the confusion and panic of a mid-seizure situation and the haziness of my mother when she eventually regains consciousness. The figure is poised on top of a rectangular base with two dark side rails. This is symbolic for a bed frame, with the first of my mother's seizures occurring during the night. Typically in a seizure, the movements that occur are jagged and ridged. However, the curved and jumbled figure is symbolic for the passing of time and how these events have moulded together to form a new normality and almost now a part of my mother.

The second practical, 'Achieving Solace?', encompasses my reaction to the events of this year; predominately my mother's situation, but also all of the emotions experienced during the final year of school.

Although certain emotions portrayed in 'A Wicked Possession' are reflected in 'Achieving Solace?', such as uncertainty, confusion and a raw exposure of the figure and the environment surrounding, 'Achieving Solace?' conveys a degree of calmness. The scene depicts a figure slumped into the corner of a shower, boxed in by walls and yet still exposed. Through the partial wall, the viewer is able to peer through to reveal an insinuation of sadness to the figure, suggested from its positioning and the deteriorating scene surrounding.

However, as the figure is still fully exposed it presents a level of content with such emotions to the viewer. The shower is symbolic to cleansing, allowing any feelings of anxiety or hatred to be washed away, leaving behind a sense of solace. The question mark at the end of the title is added to suggest that although solace may have been achieved during the moments in the shower, negative emotions may return in future. The crumbling wall shows exposure, that this is a place where the figure feels at peace. The rest of the world is blocked out for a few moments, allowing the figure to just 'be'.

Both practicals are heavily influenced by artist Francis Bacon. I was first introduced to Bacon's thought-provoking imagery back in year nine; however it was not until this year, predominately due to my experiences with my mother, that I was truly inspired by it. To me, his figures wholeheartedly represent the human form. The fleshy tones used by Bacon to create fluid shapes convey immense movement, with his disfigured faces presenting jumbled thoughts and emotions of the mind. His figures appear to leap of the canvas and move on their own accord. These movements highly resonated with me due to my experiences, and I began to see the beauty in his human depictions and violent imagery. The colour scheme of 'A Wicked Possession' is also reflective of Bacon's works, showing bold, vibrant blocks of colour for the background and an array of fleshy tones composed in the central figure. The architectural structure of the bed frame against the contrast of the fluid figure was also inspired from Bacon's paintings, which often featured deformed figures in a structured setting.

Although 'Achieving Solace?' is also influenced by Bacon, it connects with further artists such as Brett Whiteley and Salvador Dali. The more realistic features and beige tones in the practical are inspired from Whiteley's extensive bath/bathing series, which feature cleaner lines and abstracted figures. The partial wall is derived from Dali's influence, with the practical conveying a 'dream-like state' from an everyday shower scene combined with a morphed figure and partial walls. This further shows the amalgamation between reality and the figures perception of the surrounding world. Dimensions are also questioned by the shower stream dripping onto the wall that is seemingly placed in front of the figure. The quote, "*the greatest art always returns you to the vulnerability of the human situation*" by Francis Bacon strongly connected with my mindset when my mother first began experiencing seizures. This encouraged the synthesis of violent and uncontained fleshy formations of what overall appeared as a disfigured human body. I truly believe such figures encompass the essence of the human body; portraying movement through the fluidity of their composition with outer and inner aspects of the human form seemingly jumbled together. Presenting the human form in such an exposed state enhances this considered vulnerability. Each practical has taken features identified as human and morphed them out of reality and into a dream-like, surrealistic state that leaves each image open for personal interpretation.