

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Tension***

Sophie Maher

I began my research with a focal topic around the dark arts. Intrigued by how people portray controversial and sensitive topics through art, I decided to focus on the theme of child abuse and how that affects a person growing up. Child abuse is an important issue for me as I have firsthand experience dealing with the trauma of growing up with hidden abuse. Creating a portrait work I was able to portray raw emotion and feeling like that seen in many of Jill Greenberg's photographs. My brother, the subject of my work is the same age I was when I began to understand the situation I was unwillingly placed in. reflecting my experiences on a young face allowed me to emphasise the innocence destroyed by abusers on a day to day basis.

The style of work was inspired by Kumi Yamashita and her portrait works, I created my piece through entangling over 3000 meters of coloured thread around 11,369 nails that I specifically placed, using layering to create depth and add shape to the image. Egon Schiele's style is also reflected through this work with the mixture of pinks and purples in the skin tones and the visibility of lines throughout the piece.

The style of my work creates an ideal viewing point where the boy looks clear and proportionate; this outlined area resembles the distance that is required for a child to feel safe around an abuser. Being viewed from closer, less ideal areas forms a distorted image reflecting how the brain feels when confronted unexpectedly. The accompanying video displaying the creation of the piece was because I wanted to express the amount of effort a child has to go to, to hide their emotions. I also wanted to display that sometimes the struggle shows through which is portrayed through the subtle bruising and sores located around the mouth and eye.

My work is a very impactful, powerful piece and turned out better than I could ever have hoped. After hours of work, struggling to dry spilt water and drinks, fixing broken nails and damaged wood, and joining broken thread, the only thing I would change is to use a light colour behind the threaded area and a contrasting black on the background.