

Practitioner's Statement

Love in War

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My home country, Afghanistan, is a country of war. Since I was very young my father always talked about the situation of war in our country. Afghanistan has long been used as a battleground for wars by larger external powers. Many Afghan girls and women who have been affected by war, are attempting to escape forced marriage or violent abuse by committing suicide or disfiguring themselves through burning. In addition to women and girls, war and oppression have dire consequences on children and men. I have always been physically here in Australia, at home, work and school but mentally far away, in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Wherever there is conflict, wherever humans are killed for no reason, wherever children are beheaded and wherever there is poverty and hunger. Mentally I am in the war zones.

Consequently, I decided to express my emotions about warfare and oppression, not only in Afghanistan but everywhere. Through my body of work, I have attempted to express my thoughts of love in war.

The artist, who had the most impact on my work, was Käthe Kollwitz. During her lifetime, she produced many anti-war posters such as *Never Again War*, *Hunger* and *The Proletariat*. In her new studio she began work on a series of lithographs that dealt with the impact of the First World War on women. I was particularly influenced by her art work *Widow II*. This was the most effective creation for me. It represents a woman and her baby lying in a heap, perhaps dead from starvation in war; yet presenting love between a mother and her baby.

Nonetheless, the idea for my first pieces came from photographer, Yakov Khalip, who had many impressive photos of wars, which some being relevant to my project. His war photographs were a significant contribution to the heritage of Soviet press photography. One of his well-known photos, '1943', portrays a Russian soldier who is playing the violin in a war zone, was my greatest inspiration for the first pieces of my final.

Using the Violin as a Symbol of Love in War

Symbols of love take us on a great ride of expressing ourselves and our deep emotions. For me, the violin is not only an instrument of elegance, but also a symbol of love and friendship. Playing the violin in a war zone brings grace and kindness, especially to children, who have been affected by war. Hence, I developed my idea of playing the violin in a war zone by taking over 60 photos of myself playing the violin with a sad face, representing the face of war.

Finding a War Zone as the Background for the First Final Piece

Probably, finding a war zone as a background for my photos was the most challenging part of my endeavours. I already had many pictures of war zone, mostly damaged buildings, from online sources. These provided me with great perspectives about how to set up a war zone as background.

After spending an extensive time finding damaged buildings to show the idea of war zone, I found a demolition site near *Morialta Conservation Park*. After taking many photos from

different parts of the building, I began to develop my ideas by printing background photos and pasting photos of myself on the backgrounds, creating a collage.