

Practitioner's Statement

Blooming Death

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Decomposition is something I've always been interested in. How things are connected and the fact that decomposition plays a big part in this process. When something dies and slowly dissolves into the ground the plants and animals take advantage of this to help create new life in the natural environment. When decomposition occurs, growth in that area is evident.

Initially I wanted to create a piece of art about how humans change over time including after death. However, after researching decomposition, I realized that death doesn't have to be a dark moment in time; beautiful things can come from deaths like forests and other living things.

The artist that greatly impacted my work was sculptor, Deb Sleeman. She came into school and conducted a bone workshop with me. I learnt joining techniques, materials to use and discussed the topic with her. She suggested I look at the work of two artists, Sue Kneebone who uses bones to create everyday objects such as guns and chandeliers, and Goya who paints dark and mysterious scenarios. Two other artists that have impacted my work are Tokushige Hideki who creates tiny delicate sculptures and pictures using mice bones to make flowers. Also Klaus Picher who photographs beautiful still life compositions of food that has started to decompose and go mouldy, Picher gave me the idea to bury fabric and see the effect. The delicate silk and thin cotton fabrics began to decompose forming holes that created a kind of "lace", which is a Victorian symbol of mourning and used to celebrate death as well.

My artwork is based around death being a positive thing and not necessarily negative. The bone structure I made represents a flower which is a symbol of the celebration of death. At funerals in Victorian times funeral floral art reached its peak. I used roses as my background, as a blooming rose flower shows beauty can come from unexpected things such as a thorn bush.

I used a limited colour palette when painting the floral background, deciding to use only magenta and viridian green to create a whole range of colours that I tinted with white. I decided to keep the natural colours of the bones and sand to reflect the idea that decomposition is a natural thing and also I see the bones as objects of beauty.

My creative thinking skills have improved a lot and by research and looking to the work of other practitioners, I have changed my ideas many times before resolving my concept. I realized that my problem solving skills are good, for example when making the flower I had more left rib bones than right and they tilt at different directions so I had to work out a way to join them successfully.

I realised that I can make a beautiful thing out of objects and a subject people find repulsive or confronting.