

Practitioner's Statement

Finding Nirvana

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My ambition for my first practical was to work conceptually with the notion that it would provide a challenge as concepts aren't something physical that you can see and draw from observation. Nirvana embraced this idea so I began reading Buddhist literature and came across a concept that associates humans being trapped in an endless cycle of birth and rebirth due to attachment and desire and all the aspects of personality that keep us locked in this cycle.

The circular format of my final practical represents this cyclical nature of existence in Buddhist culture. The outer part of the circle depicts myself in various states of imperfection, which Buddhists believe keep us locked into the constant cycle of birth and rebirth. Each figure represents a different negative characteristic, referred to in Buddhist terms as 'the fires', which were developed from photos I took of myself to portray body language and facial expression, and later adapted to stronger communicate the individual characteristic of each 'fire', these being envy, ignorance, jealousy, suffering and desire.

The inner part of the circle, a self-portrait, is set back from the outer layer to represent a different dimension, or an escape from the negative characteristics that lock us into the cycle of birth and rebirth. Finally, I came to see that what I was exploring was my own nirvana and by overcoming or foreseeing the representations of my own negative personalities, it showed an escape of this cycle into another dimension, this being nirvana.

Initially the most logical artistic connection for my practical was Buddhist Mandalas which are a significant and integral part of Buddhist culture. 'Mandala' in ancient Sanskrit language means circle. These circular and geometrically composed artworks were traditionally created from sand, used by Buddhist monks to assist in meditation guide people towards enlightenment. Sand mandalas also link back to the concepts of birth and rebirth as upon creation they are destroyed, swept into jars and poured into flowing water to release it back into nature. This represents the impermanent and temporary nature of life. I learnt to appreciate the importance of Mandalas in Buddhist culture but realised I wanted to produce something less symbolic and geometric than a Mandala.

Illustrative artist Gabriel Moreno was a significant influence in the style of my work. I have carried through the distinctive characteristics of Moreno's work into mine, in particular the use of positive and negative shapes used extensively by Moreno to define surreal subject matters into his line work. I have taken the use of positive and negative shapes further by using stencil cut techniques to fuse the upper layer with the bottom layer in my final practical. To combine the figure drawings on the outer layer of the circle I employed Moreno's technique of using realistic tonal line work and his clever way of using flowing lines, which feature predominantly in the hair, to bind an array of images together as one. The Medias I used were a range of Hb - 8B graphite pencils, 8B lumograph pencil and white Derwent pencil, to convey my own ideas taking inspiration from elements of Gabriel Moreno's work.