

## ***Oppression***

Annalise Toms

"Oppression" through its various layers and textures represents the severe injustices and violation of human rights experienced by the African American people during the civil rights movement. The protagonist of the piece is the "mother of the civil rights movement", Rosa Parks. She encapsulates the strength and resilience these people endured in order to rise and overcome the hardships of racism and segregation particularly through the 1950's and 1960's. The scale of the piece with its layers and textures creates a weathered background that draws the attention to intricate details of the subject. It confronts and challenges the viewer to understand and appreciate how wrongly these people were treated. The cross placed in the top right hand corner of the pieces demonstrates the outrageous activities displayed by the Christian extremist group the Ku Klux Klan. It was crucial that this was recognised as too many innocent lives were taken purely based on the colour of their skin. "Oppression" was created in order to protest and confront the cruel actions that humans have made in history that display and provoke emotions of anger and resent within the viewer.

The story of Rosa Parks is an incredibly inspiring one at that. Her courage and grounded morals allowed her the strength to go against society, against the status quo, and stand up for her people. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1955 she was riding the bus home when the bus driver asked her to move into the Negro section at the back of the bus as a causation male was complaining. She simply refused to move which lead to her arrest by Montgomery police officers for outlawing segregation on city buses. This incident sparked outrage with the African American community and influenced further the civil rights campaign and the leader Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

During the research stages of this piece, the influences from artists Banksy and Anthony Tápies helped form the final product. Banksy's courageous and confronting political messages conveyed through his art in very public places inspired and ignited the passion to express an event and a time of segregation and the freedom movement for viewers to reflect and grieve a dark stage in history. Anthony Tapiés's movement and style with layered and gently chromatic textures further influenced a deepening and decaying approach to the piece that allows the viewer's eyes to wander at the details and desire to touch and feel. Moreover the grand scale of this piece reveals the intention for the audience to be immediately confronted with the volume of the significance and meaning of the art itself.

The ultimate decision to name the piece "Oppression" was because it is a word that clearly defines that period of time. For those innocent people it was a time of oppression, it was a time of injustice and it was a time of inequality.

However it also conveys their immense strength, their resilience, their love and their courage they had as a community to "rise up", to "have a dream" and to be free from the "chains of discrimination".