

Salvation

Ebonie Moulton

Portraiture has been a strong part of my developing artistic practice. Captivated by the human brain and how the organ works has always been a strong interest of mine. It's ability to control our body and reactions to certain feelings has always been an area of personal interest. The human mind is the control center of all emotions and thoughts, which are sometimes out of our control. I have suffered with these uncontrollable thoughts since my younger adolescent years. Worrier and overthinker is a constant battle triggered during high school when small worries began to consume my everyday lifestyle. In 2017, I was diagnosed with a general anxiety disorder, panic disorder and body dysmorphia, the three combined became an overwhelming battle I've been fighting ever since. It is my experiences with these disorders and the relationship between them and my interest in the brain that inspired my conceptual idea of anxiety attacks for my final piece. My goal was to seek a connection between myself and others who are suffering similar to what I go through.

Portraiture is a wide - ranging artistic genre to choose from, however throughout my research process I became intrigued by the modern contemporary artists, such as Kim Buck, Clara Lieu and Greg Dunn, with each of my works having the same influence. Buck influenced my understanding of expression and how it can be portrayed through body language and media choices. Enabling me to look deeper into my body's reaction during an anxiety attack and how my physical expression impacts my facial expression. Her use of black and white relates to my own in thought of how to portray a dark intimate message. Lieu also developed my understanding of conveying emotion. Expressions of pain influenced my decision-making process and how I could portray emotion within myself in my final piece. Dunn inspired my link between the human brain and anxiety, it was my interest in his conceptual meaning of the brain's responses that enabled me to develop a concept which explores anxiety on a much deeper level. The connection between the brain and anxiety is what inspired me to create a series of portraits expressing the stages of an anxiety attack in relation to my personal experiences.

Planning stages throughout the artworks enabled a depth in research across a variety of possible media choices for my final piece, such as graphite, progressio, impasto, charcoal and ink. Drawing has always been a coping mechanism for my anxiety, quite often I would find myself drawing my feelings onto paper. Every time I drew, a sense of freedom would enter my mind, the thoughts I found difficult to describe were expressed and visualised for people to see on paper, rather than me opening up. This helped me build a relationship with the voices in my head, understanding how they make me feel. My concept is one that focuses on part of me I find difficult talking about, therefore I ensured each component of my final piece, had relevance to anxiety in order for viewers to truly understand the pain those with anxiety suffer. I chose to combine graphite and progressio to intensify the darkness of the media in relation to the darkness of the feelings associated with anxiety.

Wood is a material that is heavy and raw. The incorporation of wooden panels as the surface for the self-portraits symbolises the rawness of the feelings associated with anxiety and how heavy these emotions can feel. The wooden panels stained in yellow ink signify a relationship between this colour and the stimulating responses it creates inside the brain. Yellow relates to the colour which resonates with the left, logical side of the brain, stimulating our mental faculties and creating mental agility and perception. Yellow can also stimulate feelings of anxiety, which produces due to its fast-moving pace from our eyes to the brain, causing us to feel agitated and anxious. It also has a tendency to make us more mentally analytical and critical of ourselves, proving to be related to ego and our sense of self-

worth. The relationship between yellow, anxiety and the brain inspired me to incorporate the colour into my final piece.

These self-portraits signify the four stages of an anxiety attack. Portrait one represents 'panic', the emotion that initiates an attack. Portrait two displays combat of internal voices mirrored screaming back at myself, portraying the feeling of a constant war with my true self and the version that constantly brings me down. Portrait three depicts the stage of pain that comes with a constant voice in my mind telling me negative thoughts, I become emotional and breakdown, this portrait expresses the pain and sadness of the battle taking place in my mind. During an anxiety attack I lose control of my body. My heart beats rapidly, my chest aches as I lose my breath gasping for air, my entire body shakes, I become nauseous and lightheaded. After feeling this all at once my body is exhausted, my fourth and final portrait represents the stage of exhaustion that comes after what feels like forever is over.

Artwork title 'Salvation', refers to the understanding of saving and protecting yourself, therefore fitting. 'Salvation' resonates with understanding myself and inner strengths and how the only person who is able to 'save me' from anxiety is myself. Anxiety is a battle that I often hide and find difficult to open up about. I have many support networks and people who try to help me, however there is only one person who has the ability to control my emotions and calm me down, and that is myself, I am my own salvation. This title idea was inspired by Tash Sultana's song, Salvation, Tash is a music artist I mentioned in folio, who's influence of music helps calm my panic.

Throughout the artmaking process, developments in various ways of how one can acquire and express skills or represent themselves and their struggles through realistic portraiture that has a large impact on my life.