

City life Church: Anonymous #700,000

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My final artwork, inspired by the stained-glass windows which adorn cathedrals and churches all over the world, focuses on the relationship between belief and identity, in particular the thoughts and opinions surrounding sexuality and gender. Surprisingly, gay conversion therapy is still linked to a number of Pentecostal churches across Australia, using unorthodox techniques in an attempt to change one's sexual orientation; something which is indefinitely unchangeable. Upon watching a feature on gay conversion therapy on *60 Minutes*, I was inspired to explore the conflict of religion and sexual identity.

My practical takes on the form of single narrow window frame, measuring at 50cm x 140cm. Thrifted from an antique store, the wooden frame was remodelled to feature a modernised stained glass window. The window depicts a young boy, his body contoured with a thermal imaging effect, reaching for his pierced heart, which is embellished with golden rays. The works of Leonardo Da Vinci heavily inspired much of my practical; my piece nodded to the compositional effects of Biblical Renaissance art, as well to the idea that Da Vinci was gay himself. I wanted to take the theme of "religion", and flip the meaning; while many of Da Vinci's pieces seek to celebrate God and the heavens, my work aims to reveal the potential flaws in particular religious' systems. CityLife Church is a multi-site, Pentecostal megachurch located in Melbourne. Upon Googling the church, their website tagline says, "*CityLife Church ... are passionate about friends, family, life, following Jesus and making a positive difference in our world.*" However, digging deeper, I discovered that these churches condone sending their members to gay conversion camps; 700,000 people in Australia and abroad having been sent to these camps. This window is a metaphor for church's like CityLife. Like the biblical figures imprinted in church windows, forever bound by welding and glass – I wanted to imagine how it would feel to be a child condemned by their church's beliefs, as though their identity is trapped, their story etched forever in glass. The idea of having "anonymous" in the title strips away the humanness from the figure in the window.

In order to achieve my resolved outcome, much of my folio experimentation was focused on creating my desired image using photography and Photoshop. My initial intentions were to use stained glass or a laser cut acrylic alternative; but, I knew I would be able to achieve greater depth in my imagery using digital technologies. While the final outcome pays homage to a traditional church window, the positioning of the young male figure draws inspiration from Del Kathryn Barton's photographic series of her son, *Eye Land of Kell*. The image of the young boy stands centre of the photo, with a floral halo encompassing the child. Often we see images of adults standing so candidly in front of the camera, but the idea of a young child brings about a sense of vulnerability. My portrait is an original photograph I chose to apply the thermal imaging to represent the idea of heat: the heat and warmth of the human heart and how fragile and open it can be. Behind the printed Perspex, I have incorporated a light box, mimicking natural outdoor light. Additionally, another lighting feature was integrated behind the light box. It is a halo of golden orange light, positioned directly behind the pierced heart. The halo projects a warm glow, further emphasising the message behind the artwork.

While some may consider this piece to be portrait in nature, it lends itself however, to installation – it invites the audience to observe and interact with the artwork, to have their senses altered and transformed – even while the issue may be confronting and exposing. #