

## *Living with OCD*

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My final body of work embodies the reality of living with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), which stemmed from personal relatability and fascination with the concept of constantly living in an obsessive-compulsive state of mind, unable to break away from disordered desires. Although recognition of the need to put mental health first, and seek professional attention, has improved within society, I believe that OCD is not recognised enough. Commonly repeated phrases "That's so OCD" or "Everyone's a bit OCD" should not be normalised. The reality of living with this detrimental mental health disorder is far worse than it is advertised on Social Media platforms, which only shed light on false realities and sickly romanticised scenarios. My first oil painting 'Trapped' visually depicts an image of a face being strangled by a rope. The painting aims to symbolically communicate the reality of feeling mentally trapped in emotional exhaustion.

It conveys the subject in a toxic mindset of unescapable obsessive-compulsive sequences, falling into a state of anxiety or depression. My depiction of the exaggerated, strangled portrait was inspired by photographer and photoshop-manipulating artist Andre Tyurin. His unique interpretation of juxtaposing surrealist imagination in a realistic state was employed to communicate an uncomfortable emotion from his audience where they could tap into their unconscious. Similarly, I was inspired to explore this concept in my own work. The application of realistic and detailed painting techniques was highly important in successfully communicating the anguish and torment of the subject through the exaggeration of three-dimensional form. I decided to overlay edited audio recordings as an additional, experiential aspect of viewing the works.

The recordings relate to the situations of each painting to manipulate an emotional connection and response from the audience. The audio paired with 'Trapped' consists of a man breathing intensely, causing the viewer to focus on their own breathing and connect on a deeper, more relatable level with the painting. To symbolically connect further with my chosen theme of OCD, I decided to align the background of three of my final pieces together with rectangular bathroom wall tiles. In part, the simplicity of the background was a stylistic choice, allowing the focus to be on the detailed subjects of the foreground. However, the tiles also hold a symbolic reference to the fact that the majority of individuals will experience their obsessive compulsions whilst in a bathroom setting. The obsessive-compulsive hand-washing disorder is where the mind believes that the germs are so dangerous to one's life that to calm any anxiety, obsessive handwashing procedures should be enforced for long periods of time.

This OCD symptom is what my next oil painting, 'Obsessive Hand Washing', is inspired by. It was crucial to correctly illustrate the effect of a flipped perspective through water reflections, depicting an individual about to wash their hands. This unique perspective communicated a realistic impression of depth to present a dramatic composition. I decided to pair audio of a running tap and hand washing to convey this perspective to the audience further, intentionally manipulating a shift in the audience's perception of the situation. The repetitive use of grey throughout the water reflections and bathroom tiles portrays the feeling of balance, an element also emphasised through proportionately detailed line work in the aligned tiles.

Negative connotations are also associated with the extensive use of the colour grey such as depression, which is a symptom of OCD, followed by loss: loss of control in the body, becoming controlled by compulsions. The thick texture and rich pigment in the oil paints assisted in suggesting the three-dimensional depth and realism of the figure.

The rhythm was communicated through the black line spreading out to a light grey, encouraging ominous energy from the repetitive bathroom wall tiles. I was inspired to develop my third final piece 'Uncomfortable Hands' from the works of artist Denis Ryan. Ryan's works were a huge inspiration towards the development of my final pieces as his entire creative brand focused on illustrating his life living with OCD. I was particularly inspired by his painting 'Mellow Yellow', which illustrates uncomfortable hands wrapped together in a fixed, tight position.

In contrast, I decided to make this painting more personal to my own struggles whilst still relating to the topic of hands. The movement in this painting resembles the visual perspective of holding up the nails in a fixed position, subconsciously encouraging the audience to do the same. The audio of intensified nail picking furthermore encourages the audience to place themselves in this uncomfortable perspective. The employment of the bold colour red, finely utilised around the little nails on the hands, illustrates the blood that is shed from the skin ripping. Symbolically it signifies the pain caused by the violent suffering, both physically and mentally. The contrast in colour creates a subtle focal point, drawing the viewer's eyes to the centre of the painting due to the bright contrast from the surrounding colours. The uncomfortable imagery and audio encourages the audience to feel, touch and compare their own nails.

My fourth final piece, 'I Can't Stop Shaking', is influenced by oil painter Alex Garant and makeup artist Mimi Choi. Garant develops mind tripping double illusion portraits, specifically double eye illusions. The repetitive facial patterns encourage rhythm within my painting, creating a shaking movement as though the young girl is anxiously screaming or crying. The audio reinforces this as it is taken from her experience of a panic attack. Panic attacks, anxiety and fearful shaking are common OCD symptoms and characteristics due to the overwhelming compulsive thoughts attacking the mental space all at once. The extensive manipulation of thick to fine line work forms the shape of the face as it appears as two faces, yet are only one. Mimi Choi similarly employs double illusion face techniques to emotionally connect and influence an uncomfortable or uneasy response from her audience. Choi juxtaposes imaginative ideas and contrasts them to realistic faces to emphasise a concept. 'Trapped', 'Obsessive Hand Washing', 'I Can't Stop Shaking' and 'Uncomfortable Hands' emphasise the reality of living with OCD.

Together they challenge the viewer to place themselves in the perspective of these paintings as they listen to the audio and reflect on their preconceived ideas of OCD, developing a new perspective. It is my hope, that in viewing this work, the audience might develop compassion and a sense of advocacy for OCD as a valid mental illness that needs more awareness.