

The Inviolable Right to Life

Kelsea Fox

My aunt was unfortunately diagnosed with breast cancer in December 2016 which had a profound affect upon our whole family. Inspired by her struggles and triumphs I wanted to create a piece reflecting her cancer journey. I aimed to create a piece based from the perspective of a family member or friend – illustrating the disease as an observer and revealing the affects upon support people. As this topic was personal I made sure my aunt supported my concepts and that my art works would reflect her journey with positive aspects.

As my theme was based around breast cancer I wanted my concept to be symbolic of my aunt in addition to enlightening viewers about the hidden disease. For my first piece I wanted to reveal the affects breast cancer can have on the body. This concept was inspired by the painter Robert Pope, as he showed the confronting affects cancer can have on the body e.g. loss of taste, loss or gain of weight.

The small effeminate rose shaped “cells” on the breast signify the cancerous cells, creating an invasive look against the clean white torso. The body is wrapped in white fabric, inspired by Karen Kamenetzky’s use of fabric in her art, to replicate the suffocating, overwhelming knowledge of the disease. I desired to embody a clinical quality with the pristine white fabric, but create a beauty within as the material contains small, feminine flowers. The shards of white and red resin characterise the invasiveness of the chemotherapy and the cancer. Resin is a hard material which I was inspired to use by the works of Ben Young, who creates waves and landscapes out of the material. The rising forms grow rapidly and closer towards the body, reflecting the subtle, yet penetrating disease.

The body is an older woman’s figure, creating an authentic appearance. She is hollow, as my aunt has commented; “the chemo seemed to take away my identity”. The hollow figure is also inspired by works of Auguste Rodin as he embodied the emotions within hunched figures, particularly within “The Thinker”. Small “cells” of resin are scattered around a clear circular structure, seeming to fall from the cells on the woman’s breast, representing the chemotherapy eradicating dangerous cells. The small cells were inspired by the photo lithographs of Vik Muniz by creating a natural picture made of “cells”. A wire structure of a woman’s breast is also included into the piece to signify the cancers’ damage upon the body, making “holes” within individuals and identity. A further element, consisting of black resin “cells”, illustrates the “burnt” cells after chemotherapy, again inspired by the confronting images from Robert Pope.

My piece expresses both the dual aspects of breast cancer, and documents my interpretation of my aunt's arduous and life-threatening journey. I believe that I have not de-empathised aspects of her disease but rather promoted the dangers of it and how every woman must be aware of their body. The piece symbolizes breast cancer from the outside view – showing a woman's pain from the diagnosis through to chemotherapy and the road to recovery. These pieces do not discriminate against women with breast cancer but rather inspire them to check their breasts and save their lives.