

## *My Anxious Mind*

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With no clear idea what I wanted to do, I created lists and mind maps to narrow down my ideas, settling on mental health, having realised how bad my anxiety had become due to the stresses of year 12.

This led me looking at artists who focus on mental health. An amazing digital artist, Destiny Blue created stunning symbolic pieces based around her own mental health battle. She represented anxiety as spikes coming out of the skin while surrounded by fragile balloons. My interpretation was the catastrophic effects anxiety can have on relationships. I felt a connection with this artist as her images reminded me of my own issues. I also formed the idea of creating sketches from inkblot artist Shawn Coss and his detailed representations of mental illnesses in ink.

There was a very personal meaning to this piece because I struggle with an anxiety disorder. The stresses of year 12 have illuminated my anxiety and made it difficult for me and those around me. People don't understand why I can't just ignore my anxiety or don't understand what it's about. I created this piece to visually bring out the worst things about my anxiety in hopes that my loved ones may understand a little more.

I painted a realistic colour self-portrait surrounded by simplified black and white images highlighting some of the harmful issues that impact my anxiety. This was done to show people that I am still me and I am more than my anxiety. My inspiration for creating a realistic portrait came from Nora Heysen. Three of the background images incorporate a colour aspect to highlight the issues most harmful to my mental health.

As this piece is so emotional, it took a lot of time to get started as I had many ideas of how it would look and be displayed going around in my head. Like my anxieties, I realised I had to contain them and narrow down the idea, putting my sketches into reality. There were also many variations of how the piece should look. These variations included size and position of the portrait. My decision was made based on how much of me I wanted to show my struggles as a suffering teenager through my body language. I wore my glasses to frame my eyes as sometimes the only way to see when someone is struggling is by looking at their eyes. By wearing my glasses, I created a focal point to draw people to look into my eyes.

The colours represent how I feel when I've had a rough day. I wanted to use acrylic to challenge myself and develop my skills in portraits in a different medium. I have previously worked with acrylics but not for a portrait in the realistic detail I was aimed for. Using a base layer of paint, layers were added to develop the detail and depth of the central figure. This helped create shadows and give the realistic effect I was trying for.

This piece helped develop my confidence and skills in blending acrylic paint on a realistic portrait. I also have a deeper understanding of my own mental health and needs. My piece engages the viewer to question their own mental health and what triggers they have. Perhaps what we see on the outside is not necessarily what is going on inside.