

Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch

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Preface

The completed dissertation that you are about to read is entitled *Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch*. With this title, I explore the emotion of fear and our need for connection in order to overcome it and move forward. Writing this dissertation consolidated all of my energy and focus specifically on completing what has been a personal form of discovery and achievement.

From the start of October 2016 until March 2018, my research developed my own artistic practice in sculpture, line drawing and understanding materials.

This process has helped me to overcome overwhelming situations of fear and the unknown, becoming a form of therapy towards self discovery and generating connections with others; in turn I hope it has helped those others to reflect this, encouraging their own discussions or silent acknowledgments in understanding this concept.

All this work led to an exhibition and subsequent dissertation; but this would not have been possible without the support and help with looking after my daughter, from friends and family. I send my deepest appreciation and gratitude to you all.

Special thanks to a dear friend who has always been a listening ear to whatever grumble I may have, yet offers a refuge where I can let off steam but gain clarity using our aquarian language, thank you.

To my husband, thank you for your support, help and for believing in me.

Do ~~Not~~ Enter and read this dissertation and Do ~~Not~~ Touch on the things you want to run away from. Confront them with vulnerability, but allow yourself the courage to overcome the fear that stops you from progressing.

Danielle Wetton

Essex, March 2018.

Abstract

Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch, is an invitation to the viewer to enter the exhibition area and to interact physically with all the components of my installation. By this physical act of involvement, it highlights the questions of fear, vulnerability, courage and connection in relation to my personal history and my developing practice in art.

I put these ideas into context, by looking at artists and thinkers whose work and life have been particularly useful and influential in the progression of my own work. Examining my own artistic development and its relationship to my previous careers in the healthcare profession, allowed me to investigate the feelings provoked alongside the materials I chose when producing art pieces.

By condensing all this information, a narrative account of the installation presented in May 2017 will be discussed with analysis of the public's response to it, and the pivotal role this had in understanding fear.

I will end with some proposals for future research/practice.

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Introduction

In this thesis I will discuss the starting point of my investigations, outlining the sculptures I started to make in the first instance. My proposal was heavily influenced by my professional background in healthcare. It initially aimed to incorporate medical supplies from this area to create an art piece from the topics of life and death; focusing around abnormalities and defects. This however, seemed to hinder my progression, leading me to explore artists, exhibitions, galleries and book readings further.

From this, examination on my influences will be looked at and reflected upon throughout.

The use of recycled objects will be investigated, as this is a reoccurring trait to many of my art pieces produced and holds a general theme within my work.

The chapter 'Awakening' is a turning point where one sculpture incidentally became a self portrait and in the following chapter there is a discussion on finalizing ideas and materials prior to exhibition.

I will then review the process I went through in making my installation, and reflect on the comments and interactions of the public in relation to the art space.

A reflective chapter on my artistic practice and personal development within this written piece, consolidates my understanding of fear and vulnerability, to move forward with courage being able to connect with others.

Finally, a conclusion will summarize all these points and the process that enabled the completion of this dissertation, interpreting the subject of fear and understanding the layers involved to move forward in a positive way.

So, what is fear? This can be defined as "an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm" (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2018); something that is frightening whether imagined or real (Dictionary.com, 2018).

To allow the reader a deeper understanding in to the flow for this thesis, I believe it is important to reveal a little personal history and professional background, to develop the overall picture in relation to this research.

When I reflect back on my childhood, a lot of the time I only remember being alone with my own thoughts in a very imaginative world. Only now do I recognize that this imaginative world was masking a reality that was far from happy. I don't recall having quality family time with my mother, father and brother, unless it was at a pub. My brother and I would always be outside playing with an endless supply of Orangina to keep us quiet, whilst my father continued his addiction to alcohol. This particular male figure abused my mother in every way possible.

I was the granddaughter promised to my father's father before he passed away, as there were only brothers in my father's family. I was spoilt and was seen to do no wrong. My brother was neglected from our father's attention and love, and was never seen as good enough. My mother at the time had given up her career, to work behind the scenes of my father's business and be the dutiful housewife.

My father committed adultery on numerous occasions, chain smoked, yet had everything anyone could wish for; he had the children, loving wife, family home and successful business. Unfortunately he was burdened by his self destructive and narcissistic behaviour, leaving everyone else with either a sour taste or damaged.

There was plenty of violence that erupted within my early childhood towards my mother, a lot that was witnessed by both his children. When a last violent episode arose that could have very easily resulted in my mother dying, she at this point knew her marriage had finished. We moved from the house I loved and settled in a council property with very different demographics. My brother and I had to adapt quickly to the change we were faced with, forging the role of a mother figure to my brother at times when my mother's upset would flow out of control. My resentment grew as I could not bare to see her crying all the time. Possessing high morales at a young age, I believed that a mother should be stronger than that. Every family member coped with the situation differently and I was no exception.

As a child I found a natural form of therapy that gave me the comfort I longed for daily, drawing. I would wake very early in the morning, I must have only been about 6 (one of my earliest memories) transcribing the Beatrix Potter books, trying to get the detail perfect. I remember completing a calendar with many different animals for each month and proudly handing it to my mother for praise, only for her to tell me that not all months started on a Monday nor had the same amount of days in a month.

I found Disney films to be a form of escapism. This has heavily influenced my ideas on how life should be and was a form of nurture growing up, as I knew what I was witnessing at home was not how things should be.

These ideas became very much embedded into my morals and sense of being, when I saw what I thought was weakness I shut off. I don't like playing a victim as ultimately where do you go from there? I would rather take myself through the mental struggle and come out on the other side feeling accomplished, albeit incurring some damage along the way. Stripping someone of a solid foundation at a young age does not come without a scratch, but I would never like to look back and regret not doing something, or not having the courage to leave from something that was making me unhappy. After seeing this with my mother I took an intimate vow to learn from her mistakes and not make them mine.

I wanted to be a high achiever at school and make my family proud, but the career paths that I did want to know more about seemed to have a lack of information; or rather the people I went to did not know. I began to believe it was an unattainable wish to be successful in what I loved doing and settled for a career in healthcare, telling myself that this was what I was meant to do. I had many breakdowns before waking up, and deciding it was ok to not want to conform to the stable job that my heart was not in. However, through this journey the skills, knowledge and information that I have obtained are priceless and have never regretted going through such a process.

My first professional job that I qualified from was nursing. I enjoyed it sometimes, but the politics took away my confidence in standing up for myself in what I believed to be the right thing. I later specialized in chemotherapy, but had doubts if it was where I wanted to stay for the rest of my professional career. After my maternity leave I decided to try a different avenue and opted for a change in to the realms of

midwifery. This had always been an area of great interest to me, but personally vowed that I would not do this unless I had been through childbirth myself. Converting from a nurse to a midwife is an 18 month programme and it was the most exhausting course I had ever done physically and mentally. Whilst qualifying as a midwife I knew in my last 6 months that I did not want to pursue this career. I simply did not want to be a midwife enough nor compromise seeing my child grow up. So I took up a post working as a nurse in a general outpatients department, but again I moved, wanting to specialize in oncology research. This specialist area helps care for those in a curative and terminal setting, using drugs that are trial based.

Even though I have not stayed in the healthcare profession, my experience with birth and death have given me humble insights to human nature, understanding the fragile shells that we exist in and the personalities of individuals; alongside diverse cultures in a very concentrated area of treatment and delivery.

People's abilities to adapt in situations, with strength that is so often under appreciated, always amazed me. Why do we only at the beginning or the end see the truth and wonder of what it is to be human; to create, to love and finally leave?

Physical contact like the touch of a hand for me speaks more volume than many words, and is a huge gateway to connection.

Once I decided to break away from nursing and midwifery permanently, I found a huge sense of relief and looked forward to new ventures. However, I had a heartbreaking dilemma on not being able to fall pregnant again. Even though having a daughter has been and continues to be a blessing, to not be able to conceive again there after has marked a deep sadness that I have tried to hide from the rest of the world. In addition to this, the prospect of emigrating to Japan, due to my husband's work commitments, only elevated emotions of turmoil and overwhelming anxiety, being torn away from everything that had been familiar and perhaps even habit.

During difficult times I often find logic and calm when revisiting my inspirational books for spiritual guidance, as it sometimes helps me when visualizing another angle to a situation. Kling and Ellis (2009,

p241), discuss in their book *The Compass*, that dwelling on the past and future should not be thought of in this way, but feeling the freedom to do so; thus appreciating the present to build dreams and prosper. In other words, my past and future seemed more important to me than my present moment in time.

A bit like the quote Alice Morse Earle composed stating that “The clock is running. Make the most of today. Time waits for no man. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it is called the present.” (Earle, 1902).

This made me appreciate and grasp my new found opportunity of emigrating to Japan, letting go of past troubles, and wanting to become pregnant. It brings a certain amount of peace to be reminded that it might not be the right time for another child, and dwelling negatively on this, accomplishes nothing. Each day presents something new.

Starting point

Before I commence investigations and development within my practice, I usually start by dipping my hands back in to making objects. This gives me the opportunity to see what I am using, to engage and think about why I have chosen specific materials. It also lets me view my work from an outsider's perspective, to visualize what it is linking towards in my personal life or current situation. Thus giving me a starting point. I am then able to look at various artists that perhaps work in similar ways, use similar materials or even share similar starting points for their work and yet produce very different art.

I wanted to experiment with materials that I had not used before and always wanted to. Apart from using found objects, which always crept their way in to my work, I was interested in mastic, plaster, concrete and expanding foam. I began to appreciate textures, malleability and limitations to these products as well as the important factor of weight.

Concrete was quite a wet substance to use and didn't really have any interesting forms without intentional guidance. I knew from the first trial that it was too heavy, it did not hold enough commitment to form an original shape with little input from the artist. I love using materials that allow themselves the freedom of their own form, shape and structures; by formulating plans and moulds, you control how you want something to look, therefore you take away the personality of the material.

Plaster was very nice to use and I thoroughly enjoyed working with this material. However, as time progressed I knew that if I was to create a large sculpture, the weight would be too heavy to transport. By understanding this material's limitations and potential, I knew that unless the majority of the sculpture was plaster, adding 'bits' of it here and there would make it fragile and brittle - thus prone to breaking.

Mastic sealant was interesting to work with, but again, I would have needed a lot to make something satisfying from it.

Cost was an important factor when deciding upon materials, I simply could not afford to make something that was hundreds of pounds. Concrete was discounted as a material to carry forward quite early on, due

to its lack of form with no guidance, its weight and cost. My experiments with plaster and mastic sealant were also too expensive to progress with, therefore trials using expanding foam began.



Figure 1. Danielle Wetton, *Mess* (2016) Sculpture.

Figure 1 shows one of my pieces where it clearly indicates a medical influence with bodily fluids and chaotic background. I wanted to incorporate materials that were familiar to me from my professional career, however once I completed this sculpture I knew I had overdone it. This is one of the starting points that I later used as an experience in knowing when to stop, and experimenting with stopping before I felt something was finished.



Figure 2. Danielle Wetton, *Untitled* (2016) Sculpture.

Figure 2 shows again this visceral fluidity amongst found objects which could indicate the influence of surgery from my professional background.

Sometimes, materials that I have stored over years can cause limitations within the product itself. Figure 2 is a prime example, as the base was very brittle and crumbly, I found myself not imposing any changes to it as it had the risk of falling apart. It had not been opened in years of purchase and therefore lost its strength and malleability to form anything but a base. The left over pieces of wood from picture frames I had always kept for their day of purpose, unfortunately were too coordinated in their shape, cut and symmetry, giving an overall look that was too regimented and structured. I believe a more interesting sculpture could have arisen from different shapes and sizes of the same material.



Figure 3. Danielle Wetton, *Concealed Sealant* (2016) Sculpture.

In Figure 3 I wanted to use the household product mastic, I had always been curious as to how I could incorporate something like this in to an art piece. I had not really used mastic for the purpose of my work before and wanted to experiment with its boundaries and limitations, it held biomorphic properties that I found intriguing. I also had out of date herbal tablets that I wanted to involve in the piece to see what it added to the sculpture.

The curiosity that sculptures hold is probably one of its most powerful aspects, Figure 3 held some intrigue but the use of tablets made things obvious. The mastic sealant allowed itself to formulate its own shape even though it came out from a moulded tube. This contradiction is forgiving in terms of not controlling the mastic within another mould thereafter, it had the freedom to fall wherever it landed. The tablets in comparison had already been formed, but they became more interesting when I took away their moulds and scattered their contents.

It seemed the more I tried to link my proposal of life and death to my work, the less productive I became. I therefore decided that the priority was to detach myself from the subject I had started with, in order to become more conceptual and abstract; creating a foundation to achieve a deeper way of thinking.

Being aware that the work I was producing had a distinctive link to anatomy within the medical and surgical settings of healthcare, I began to see that I was fearful to let go of my past. This made me recall a Swedish artist named Annika Strom. Strom, who works in performance, text and film art (Carey, 2016), made a piece of work called *After Film* (later evolved to *The After Film trailer, 2008*). It was summarized that it is not only about failing, but poetically succumbing to an end of an era to begin a new chapter in life (Le Feuvre, 2010, pp.102-103). The artist predicted that her first feature would be a flop, and before the 2009 release of the *After Film*, friends were questioned about her supposed disappearance with her son. Some assumed she had given up her career as an artist in pursuit of something else. Le Feuvre (2010, pp.102-103) continues to suggest that her work touches on our anxieties with the fear of being judged by others as not being good enough.

Upon reflection, the idea of rejection and fear of failure in not reaching my ambitions, to me shows a less obvious self portrait. There are undertones of not being confident in my abilities to create conceptual work (Figures 1, 2 and 3), worrying about rejection if I did not succeed. I was fearful that my past professions would continue to negatively influence my artistic career, yet I clung on to using very specific materials only found in the healthcare profession. This gave obvious indications of bodily fluids, blood and the aiding equipment needed when healing.

With this in mind, I widened my scope from my initial proposal of life and death with regards to abnormalities and defects. I explored more controversial and grotesque imagery that artists had made, in order to establish what effects it gave to the viewer. I started to look at various artists such as Edward Kienholz and Louise Bourgeois, who were controversial and grotesque with some of their pieces. However, my attention veered towards artists that encapsulated a deepening emotion of fear and vulnerability.

I found an immediate connection with Mona Hatoum and the sculptures she produces. Many of her works interest me, but there was one that spoke to me more than any other, this was her *+ and –* sculpture (Figure 4). It perfectly depicted the beauty of creating and erasing. This concept that there are things we have no control over with time being a factor of how temporary we are, and amongst everything we do, became a silent chant throughout my development using different materials in the production towards my installation.

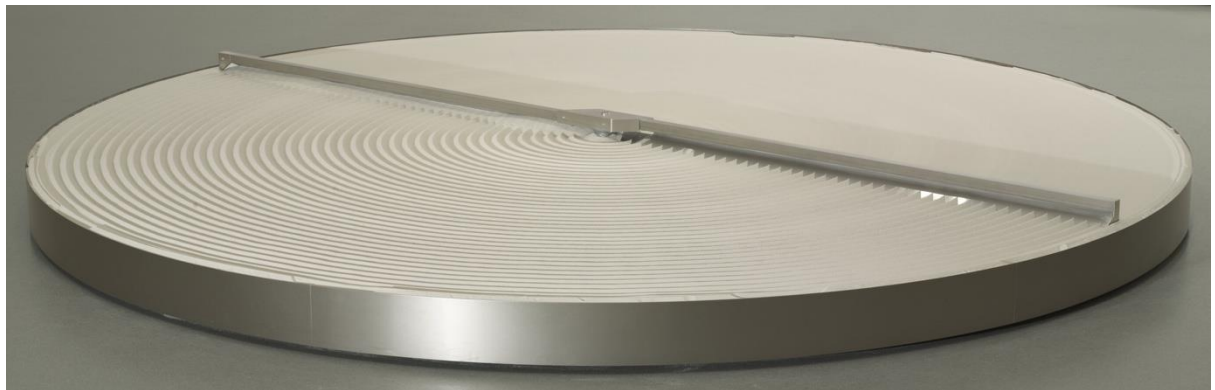


Figure 4. Mona Hatoum, *+ and –* (1994-2004) Sculpture.

Hatoum used sand, steel, aluminum and an electronic motor to produce this very poignant way in thinking about life in general. From this sculpture, my interpretation of it allowed me to reconcile and make peace with the fact that although I strive for perfection and control, there are some things I will not be able to steer to my liking nor give me the happiness I think I want. One thing is certain, the marks made may hold an imprint but the deep crevasses do not last forever. With time to heal and renew it creates an opportunity to rewrite a new chapter in one's life, and that fear and happiness are connected.

During this time I decided to visit galleries in order to gain inspiration and direction, making a point of going to these places without knowing who was exhibiting. The Serpentine Gallery in London was a place that I had not travelled to before and seemed like a good starting point. It was at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery that I familiarized myself with the artist Helen Marten.

I was unaware of her work before this time, yet was astonished at how similar our works looked. The exhibition named *Drunk Brown House* (2016), was filled with trinkets of the everyday and juxtaposed with other objects to create intrigue and fascination on composition and scale. Marten had various other works presented in this exhibition, which flowed in with her distinct theme of chaos but with a sense of fragmented fluidity throughout. Figure 5 shows a photograph from the exhibition that encompasses the elements that I found to echo towards my own work. It seemed clear that some of the objects were perhaps purchased specifically for the exhibition, however it was thought provoking upon reflection towards my own work. It made me question what the difference was between her work and mine, and this became something I really had to think about. In this process I felt that when I looked at her work, although aesthetically pleasing I didn't feel it was intimately inviting, there was something instinctively cold and shut off that overshadowed it.



Figure 5. Helen Marten, *Air rights (Weatherology)* (2016) Installation.

Interpretation is individually based on what is needed conceptually from the work on display and what it gives to the individual when reflecting. I needed to understand my work and what the underlying topic was, and by deconstructing Marten's, this led me to acknowledge what I wanted mine to give - connection.

One thing I realized whilst exploring and gathering other artist information, including work processes, was the confidence it gave me; to be bold and push boundaries and to not be afraid in where my work, or I, fit in socially.



Figure 6. Danielle Wetton, *Bound by difference (sister)* (2017) Sculpture.

Figure 6 shows 3-4 months prior to exhibition, the materials I began to select and carry forward. Here I used plaster, expanding foam, white gloss paint, personal jewellery and an old canvas. The plaster as stated before, was a very nice material to use however this amounted to around 5kg in weight. Therefore, to produce something large scale I would probably need at least 50kg of plaster, which would be far too heavy to transport and lift from one place to another. This forged the opportunity for expanding foam to enter the spotlight. It appeared luxurious, with the temptation to touch alongside fascination and intrigue with a biomorphic feel. It was extremely lightweight and expanded to several times its original volume, it

looked to be the answer to what I wanted from my search of materials. I wanted to incorporate the jewellery to show off its own story, and to not conform with conventional ways of storing old sentiments. Now that materials had been decided upon, the task to plan and proceed with expanding foam illuminated itself to be one segment to the problem of how to construct. First, however, it was important to keep investigating influential artists and people; to develop my understanding of fear, as this seemed to be a reoccurring topic within my work. I needed to learn experiences from others on this subject, to be able to reflect and progress personally and in my artistic practice.

Influences

Here I have filtered an extensive search of influences, that helped guide and inspire my development towards my installation.

Predominantly when investigating, I found their work to be very motivating and inspirational, but had more admiration for their thought process and the situations they found themselves in. It was the way they coped and dealt with fear to move forward even though there was risk. The topic of fear is nothing new, but it seems that our abilities to deal with it for a better outcome can sometimes be compromised, if our minds are not open to the inevitable vulnerability. All the people I am about to discuss dealt with fear on some level, but managed to spiritually find themselves, recognizing and understanding their full potential.

Anish Kapoor

Anish Kapoor is a British sculptor, well known for his large scale and pigment sculptures, and was born in Mumbai (formally known as Bombay) 1954. Both his parents had a modernistic approach to bringing up their children, and sent them to a prestigious all boys boarding school called Doon School in Dehra Dun. In Kapoor's late teens he already sensed personal conflict with self identity and the feeling of not belonging. Kapoor went to Israel where he worked on a Kibbutz, giving him many happy memories living in a communal setting, with the feeling he was giving something back. It was here that he thought to be an engineer, but the idea was quashed when he realized maths wasn't his strong point. He settled in London to attend the Hornsey College of Art in 1973 where it was confirmed art was his love (Davis, 2018a). It is important for the reader to have the biography of the artist as it gives vital information in understanding upbringing, possible emotions linked to fear and the vulnerability Kapoor endured in order to succeed. It reassured me to know his history in relation to my personal situations that were conjuring stress and fear. Kapoor has lived in different countries and overcome the fear of moving away from everything that is familiar, this gave me assurance in my own situation of emigrating to Japan.

Of the many sculptures Kapoor has produced, his earlier works known as his pigment pieces produced in the early to mid 1980's, were extravagant in rich deep colours that undoubtedly captured many viewers' attention. It was at this point that Kapoor began to play with the perceptions of form and space (Davis, 2018b).

Smith (2015) describes Kapoor's pigment works to stimulate the ambiguity of form. Within his abstract he discusses that the perceptual disorientation Kapoor's pigment pieces induce, allows the viewer to reflect on the physicality of what is presented in front of them, the pigment being the sculpture rather than the object itself.



Figure 7. Anish Kapoor, *To Reflect an Intimate Part of the Red* (1981) Sculpture.

In Kapoor's *To Reflect an Intimate Part of the Red* (Figure 7), you could envision there to be something more than what you see. The work challenges us to question what's beneath the pigmented sculpture, if it is made of pure pigment, or being inquisitive to know what is behind the 'skin' of the coloured surface. There is desire to touch the sculpture to establish an answer, and conclude our thought process for what it is we are looking at. This curiosity is something that interests me, a form of silent interaction between the viewer and the sculpture; challenging the mind to explore further than the physicality of what is placed in front of them.

Kapoor's *Svayambh* piece (Figure 8) was one that I visited back in 2009 when it was in exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. It was certainly something that demanded your attention and was such an overwhelming scale to comprehend, that it did leave you awe stricken. Upon initial impact, the block of red wax oil based paint, did lead you to wonder the decisions for its purpose.

Rosenthal (2009, pp.44-47) depicted the meaning for the title *Svayambh* which came "from the Sanskrit for 'born by itself' or 'self-generated'". He continued to state that *Svayambh* covered form that was sculpture, movement that was performance art, colour that was painting and space that was architecture. I think in hindsight this added to the spectacle of this monstrous art work and self generated its own voice, its own sense of purpose, its identity.

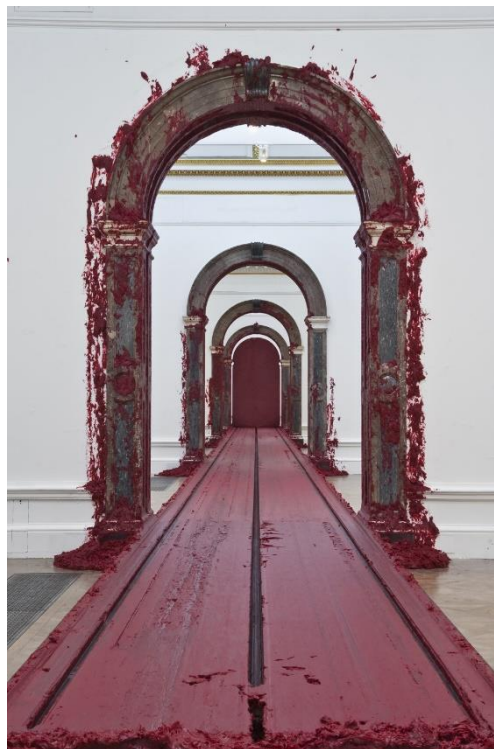


Figure 8. Anish Kapoor, *Svayambh* (2007) Sculptural installation.

In the work that I produce, my philosophy is very similar to that of Kapoor's; I like the idea that a sculpture is self forming and has a life of its own. It fascinates me conceptually in sparking new ideas and thought processes that make the impossible seem possible. Who would have thought it would be okay to allow

this particular staining material to pass through galleries in the Royal Academy of Arts? It was made possible, for the idea served a greater purpose than the pristine white walls of this historic building.

Kapoor is an artist that opened the door towards excitement, possibilities, philosophical and spiritual debate alongside scaling impact that when I first learnt about him, he engulfed all of my attention.

Most of Kapoor's exploratory methods begin in his studio and is a place for experimentation, but he acknowledges that his intent is serious when producing work, in comparison to making art for entertainment (Kapoor, 2012). Nevertheless, his philosophy on instinctive practice and risk taking, allows him to conquer the fear of the unknown. If anything, Kapoor appears more excited to explore the unknown even with the fear of failure. As he had stated in a film upon the making of his *Marsyas* sculpture, produced for Tate Modern in the Unilever series from 2002-2003 (Figure 9), "I have an instinct that it's going to come together, I do not have a certainty that it's going to come together, that's the risk one takes" (Kapoor, 2002a). This quote from the artist has echoed in my ear during this process of making, and has been a form of comfort during the high pressured times of deadlines.

Instinctive practice is my preferred method of working when producing art, even though there is a risk that it might not work; I feel liberated and free to allow my emotions and thoughts to be conversed through my practice.

Kapoor (2002b) described the particular use of monochrome colour with his *Marsyas* piece, to be something many would have seen, but not in that way before. Light reflections and shadowing of this particular colour, gave the sculpture a temporary life of its own. True to this is what I aspired to achieve with my own installation, to produce a sculpture and an environment in a light the public had not seen before.



Figure 9. Anish Kapoor, *Marsyas* (2002-2003) Sculpture.

Robert Rauschenberg

Milton Ernest Rauschenberg (his birth name - later changed to Robert Rauschenberg) was an American painter and sculptor/installation artist, born on the 22nd October 1925 in Port Arthur, Texas. With a serious father and a devout Christian mother, career choices looked bleak in the way of creativity. He originally began training in pharmacology, until his expulsion for refusing to dissect a frog. He worked as a medical technician during World War 2 (1943-1945) and used this as an excuse to not pursue pharmacology to his parents. Rauschenberg used the money gained from this period of working to fund himself through art university, he knew he wanted to be an artist from this point. He followed Susan Weil, who would later become his wife, to Black Mountain College in North Carolina where the ignition for his thought provoking work took off. During his time there, he met other influential people like John Cage and Merce Cunningham with whom he collaborated from 1954-1964. Rauschenberg met Jasper Johns at a party in

1953, becoming partners in art and also romantically. However, their relationship ended due to their ambitious careers causing strain and tension. (Brucker, 2018).

Rauschenberg once discussed when Johns and himself could not understand why there seemed to be a need for artists to come from hurt, pain and suffering; when believing the art of creating did not denote if it was art, the public did (Rauschenberg, 1998). I agree with this and believe that anyone who is creative in provoking a reaction, good or bad in an art piece, holds the keys to being an artist. Sometimes just by viewing art, our perception of different topics can be changed and alter the way we have been conditioned to think; accelerating the drive for change.

Throughout Rauschenberg's life, he has gone through many challenges and changes, all of which had the risk of failure. Regardless of his personal circumstances, this never seemed to deter him from his passion to create. Reading his personal history gives me hope in understanding that although I will certainly face criticism in my work and personal life, the only thing that really matters is to evolve; by taking opportunities, to question answers and to govern my own direction.

I visited the Robert Rauschenberg exhibition that was held at the Tate Modern in 2016-2017, where it was the first time since his death to house a retrospective of his work through the ages, from his early pieces to his last in chronological order.

Figure 10 shows his *Charlene* piece (combine painting) produced in 1954. This was on display at the exhibition, and was the first item that really caught my attention. The involvement of everyday items that we all use, was incorporated in to a visual playground of pleasure; I found myself constantly reflecting on the detail and process.

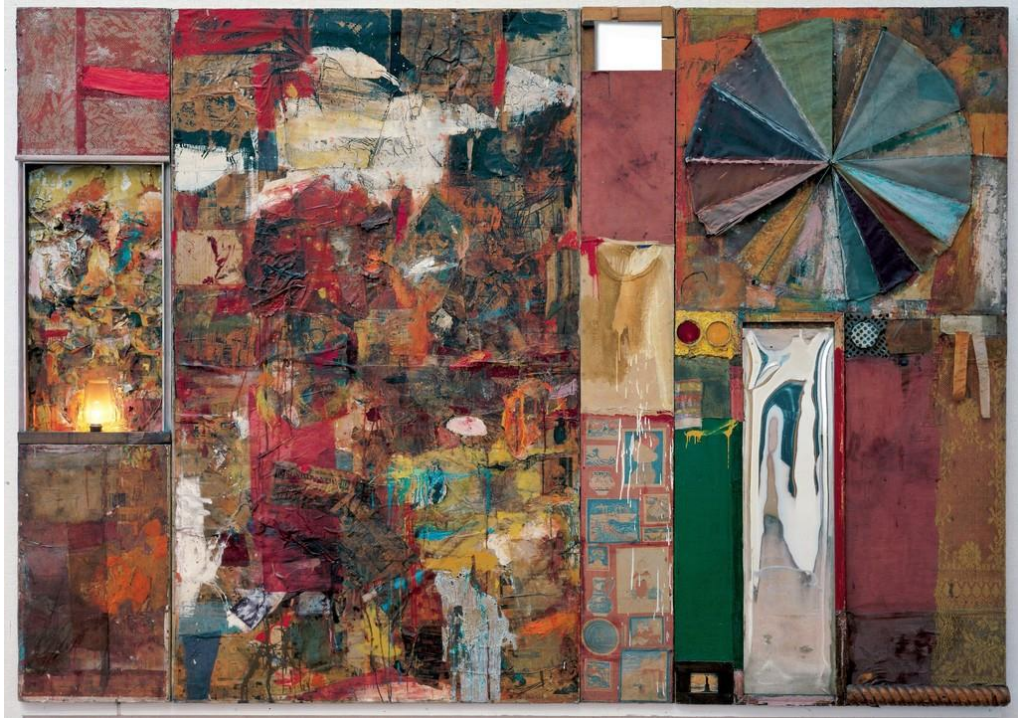


Figure 10. Robert Rauschenberg, *Charlene* (1954) Combine painting.

It was a very good exhibition to understand in depth about the artist, having the work faced in front of you alongside quotes from Rauschenberg himself and the history of his artistic movements. Rauschenberg (2018) once quoted that “I think a picture is more like the real world when it is made out of the real world”. He knew collage work had already been done, but what defined his work was the fact that he wanted individual objects in their combinations to have their own stage in their entirety. This is what I was aiming towards with my own installation piece, the centre stage of an everyday object or product to be thought of differently to its conventional purpose. His combine paintings spoke to me in such a way that built my confidence in developing my ideas, allowing the fear of possible rejection of my artwork to pass.

Scott (2017) made a film for Tate.org with a variety of artists discussing Rauschenberg; Cornelia Parker described that Rauschenberg was able to take parts from many art movements of his time, adopting ‘bits’ from each, to form a Neo-Dada movement. Wolf (2018) describes the Neo Dada movement being opposed to the idea of emotionally charged art work during the 1950’s of Abstract expressionism. He further wrote

that by incorporating performance, found objects and mass media, artists such as Rauschenberg were able to gauge the viewers' attention to look beyond narratives. Allowing them to depict their own interpretations for the work, without the bias intent from the artist. The inclusion of assemblage within my own work and the fact that I prefer the audience to make their own judgements and meanings from what they see and feel, is something that I could really connect with in response to what Rauschenberg produced. The impact of viewing his work physically and seeing it at a close range, really cemented my ideas in including found objects within my work, especially for the emotive response.

Figure 11 shows Rauschenberg's *Mud Muse* and was something that I was immediately drawn to. The performance of listening to the bubbles pop and grow in repetition gave a therapeutic quality which left me standing there for a good length of time. The colour of what he used was not bright or particularly bold, but it did stand out from his other works for perhaps being the simplest in terms of design and items involved in the visual experience. This also widened my thought process in understanding that less can indeed mean more, keeping this idea as a gentle reminder when completing my work.



Figure 11. Robert Rauschenberg, *Mud Muse* (1968-71) Installation.

One thing that amused me during a Rauschenberg (1998) interview I had watched online, was a particular answer to the question that Charlie Rose asked “What guides you?” To which Rauschenberg replied “A lack of purpose probably”, it was the perfect answer. To me it reiterated my angst during my time of personal conflict within this research dissertation, the feeling of a loss of self and purpose. This appears to be my turning point when I am able to produce work and feel a sense of freedom, being comfortable in my own skin.

Rauschenberg (1998) also stated that he felt there was a lot of wasted time being consumed and worried with fear, and that it should be channeled towards positive action – recognizing that it is something we have adopted during our lives, but that curiosity is the most powerful energy any creative person can have.

One such curiosity was his *Erased de Kooning drawing*, where he wanted to explore art further by erasing it literally with a rubber. However, he stated in a San Francisco Museum of Modern Art interview (1999) that erasing his own work didn’t make it art, therefore he sought after an artist that was well known and respected. That person was William de Kooning. Although de Kooning told Rauschenberg that he did not like the idea, he allowed him to take a piece of work (that he knew he would miss) and allow Rauschenberg to carry out what he had planned, because he understood the idea (Rauschenberg, 1999). Rauschenberg was fearful of rejection by de Kooning, but he felt so strongly that his courage helped him to succeed.

All Rauschenberg’s works have mostly been instinctive and not preempted, which holds a lot of similarity to my own practice. His thought processes when producing work have been very influential, helping to guide and grow confidence within myself and in my work.

Marina Abramović

Marina Abramović is a performance artist and still produces work today. She was born in 1946 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia and with her brother had a more privileged upbringing, due to her parent’s prominent positions within the Communist government. Though her living accommodation growing up was something of a luxury in those days, in hindsight Abramović feels it was a horrible place. For the first six

years she was brought up by her grandmother, and there was immense tension and violence between her parents which ended in separation. Abramović was physically abused by her mother and aunt, so growing up she appeared to search for a way to break free from the constraints of strict curfews and communist ideals (Abramovic, 2016, pp.2-7). Her performance work pushes the boundaries of the physical body, and mentally exercises our thought process of fear and endurance.

In her earlier years of performance art she met Ulay, a German born artist, in Amsterdam 1975. They became partners in their work and love life, travelling around the world in their caravan almost always penniless continuing their quest to produce art (Gershman, 2018).

Abramović has had a lot of personal struggles with love from others and towards herself, this seemed to go on throughout the years, which when reading her biography gave a sense of turmoil. Abramović knew things were changing when Ulay would reach his limits and not complete performances. There were reasons behind these of course, but his constant infidelity was also another sign that things were coming to an end. So they both agreed to walk from either end on the Great Wall of China and meet in the middle. This was accomplished, but Abramovic realized this was their last performance and a closing of a chapter in her life; especially when she found out he had impregnated his translator on the journey and wanted to be with her (Abramovic, 2016, p.189).

Abramovic's inner strength is something quite admirable, from her strict upbringing in her family life whilst under Tito's government, the artist always sought for curiosity and exploration in every sense of the word; but avoided political art as she was more interested in finding herself and connecting with people.

When reading her biography, I felt a connection with the difficulties she faced in childhood. Although her childhood was different to mine, there were similarities with stress as a child, a broken family and the wanting of love and connection. This deepened my emotional response to her works and allowed me to appreciate why she did such controversial pieces, breaking down the emotion of fear and showing us that we can endure and overcome obstacles in life, to lead a more fulfilled one.

Figure 12 shows one of her well known pieces of performance art *Rhythm O*, a six hour performance at Studio Morra in Naples, 1974. It is where she arranged 72 objects on a table (from a feather to a gun) and gave permission for the public to use these items, in which ever way they wanted to on her. It was incredibly risky, yet Abramović completed this performance even with such vulnerability.



Figure 12. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm O* (1974) Performance.

Pins were stuck in the artist alongside being stripped and cut, but the next morning people who came to the performance apologized for their actions, not understanding what had possessed them to do such things. For Abramović the answer was simple, they were engaging and participating with the artist in a performance, which was the success she wanted. The only part of a performance piece that can not be predicted is if the audience will interact or not. This is why she uses every ounce of her energy, physically and mentally, to learn the answers to her questions by keeping the viewers' attention.

Figure 13 is an image of Abramović and Ulay performing *Rest Energy* (1980) which dabbled with life and death and being able to face this fear; confronting and overcoming physical and mental exhaustion. It was a piece that demanded the utmost trust between one another and probably would not have been possible if it was not for their close relationship.



Figure 13. Ulay/Marina Abramović, *Rest Energy* (1980) Performance.

This performance lasted 4 minutes and 20 seconds but as Abramović (2016, p.117) stated it “felt like an eternity”. She continued to say that the constant tension that they had to sustain against each other was a real definition of trust, even with the mini microphones illuminating the increased heart rates on one another.

The Artist is Present (Figure 14) is a later work from Abramović, and was one of the most powerful pieces of performance art I had ever seen on photograph and video footage. This tested the endurance of the artist as a human being, alongside the physical and mental strain she put herself under.



Figure 14. Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present* (2010) Performance.

Performance art had always been something that I bypassed as not relevant towards my own practice, but for some reason this time I was willing to try and understand it. I forged a new found appreciation for performance artists, because of investigations on Abramović. She appears to be a pioneer in this specialist area and her devotion to this art form is admirable. Abramović has dedicated her life to art and has not wanted any other distractions to deter her away from her love, even aborting pregnancies (Cooke, 2016). On a spiritual level, it is like she has unearthed the raw material needed to escape the confinements of fear, and what it is to be afraid in doing something most find inconceivable.

The Artist is Present was a performance that lasted 736 hours, where Abramović sat every day for 8 hours over 3 months. She designed the arrangement of having a table and chairs, but by the end took away the table as even this, she felt, was an irrelevant object in her a performance (Abramović, 2016, pp.310-319). She has made it very clear that when she commits herself to a performance, she is extremely reluctant to change anything she began with; in this instance she felt that it was not only necessary, but an evolving moment in the performance. This could be seen as narcissistic behaviour from Abramović, to have an audience come and have authorized access and to be seated opposite the famed artist. However, this is ignorant of the fact of what she is trying to achieve. To have an artist allow the viewer to enter in such an intimate and overwhelming experience, and to have undivided attention solely on each other, is something challenging even to accomplish with a family member or friend. An intense gaze in a situation like this bares a vulnerable sole, that most try and lock away to avoid hurt and pain. Abramović wanted to connect with her audience on a deep and personal level without touch or verbal communication. She wanted to experience inert energies emitted by the individuals sitting opposite her, but also by the colour dress she wore for each of the 3 months. "Blue, to calm me down; red, to give me energy; and white, for purity" (Abramović, 2016, pp.312-313).

After many years of no further contact with Ulay, she had not planned to sit opposite him on the first day of her performance. The connection they had to each other, regardless of their history, was so overwhelming that tears fell from both their faces. The appreciation and respect that Ulay had for

Abramović as an artist prevailed, and it was this defining moment (that was captured on camera) where words were not needed but love was all that was felt. This engulfing point of letting go of fear, and the vulnerability that is closely followed, allows us to understand that the strive for connection is actually the love we have for one another regardless of anything else. Abramović uses performance art to communicate this and my aim to connect the audience on a deep level in such a way, is very much influenced by her work.

Walt Disney

Walter Elias Disney was born on the 5th December 1901 in Illinois, America. At a young age he moved to a farm with his family, where he spent most of his childhood and formulated his love of drawing. After taking various courses related to art in his earlier years, in 1919 he started working for a newspaper and soon moved on to cut out animation commercials. This was where he met Ub Iwerks and where his own animation business, Laugh-O-grams, became popular very quickly. However, strains in production to evolve, alongside financial difficulties led Disney to declare bankruptcy in 1923.

In this same year, Disney persuaded his brother Roy to bring their money together to formulate the Disney Brothers' Studio, and got Iwerks to join in on his new venture with New York distributor Margaret Winkler. However, a few years later Winkler and her husband Charles Mintz took Disney's animators (apart from Iwerks who refused) in promise of better prospects, and stole the rights to *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*. Although Disney had been betrayed, he moved forward by creating Mickey Mouse with those who chose to stay loyal to him. His first two silent animations *Plane Crazy* and *Gallop in' Gaucho* failed to make distribution. But when the incorporation of sound first entered films, Disney seized this opportunity and gave his voice to Mickey Mouse, which became an instant hit in his short film *Steamboat Willie*. From this he continued further short cartoon films including *Flowers and Trees*, which was the first colour cartoon to win an Oscar. As time progressed he finally produced his full length animation film that was *Snow White* in 1937; it won 8 Oscars and balanced the books financially.

Disney kept producing further full length animation films but his mind focused on theme parks, and gave most of his time to making this a reality. The last huge success in terms of film that Disney produced was his motion picture *Mary Poppins* in 1964. During all of this Disney was not financially secure throughout his time from *Steamboat Willie*, he relied heavily on his brother Roy to take responsibility for the finances and to keep the hard earned empire going. When the business became financially stable however, Disney soon found out he had terminal lung cancer and died in December 1966 at the age of 65 (Walt Disney Biography, 2018).

It is important for the reader to understand the biography of Disney alongside the pitfalls and accomplishments he had. The reason for this is because whilst developing my own work, not only did I have nostalgic history with the films produced by him and under his name, but the detail of his own personal voyage to succeed was inspiring; a notion that always mirrored through to his films.

Learning about Disney and the many set backs he had during his time, inspired and influenced me to have the courage to take the risk in not only what I was producing for my installation, but on how it would be received by the public.

As an entrepreneur he exceeded what he initially set out to do, that was to become an animator; he believed beyond his initial love of drawing to be something more powerful – a way to connect. He believed an animated film could acquire the same emotional responses equally to that of actors. He defended his belief regardless of many who did not share the same opinion and achieved his dream with *Snow White*, where many people were reduced to tears within the theatre. This proving moment where connection could be achieved through an artistic practice such as this, was a turning point in history and reiterates the importance of needing connection with one another.

Brené Brown

Brené Brown (Figure 15) is a research professor at the University of Houston, graduate college of social work in America, where she holds the Huffington endowed chair. Her research focuses on social interactions and collections of stories; to formulate a deeper meaning in understanding human needs by

way of connection. Brown waited 12 years before graduating from college; she obtained further postgraduate awards all during the time of marrying and having children (Brown, 2018). It could be seen that Brown has gone through a lengthy process to have the added benefit of wisdom and maturity, someone who has had some life experience before preaching to others. Brown was 30 years old when she initially graduated from college, and also reiterates the fact that her first book had to be self published (Brown, 2014), giving evidence of personal struggles in life.



Figure 15. Brené Brown, *Profile pictures* (2017) Photograph.

I first learnt about this person whilst completing my midwifery degree and was completely astounded by the simplicity of what she said, yet was mystified at the fact that we as humans go through such a complex and grueling process to get to a place of understanding and humility. Her work is compatible towards everyone and rings truth to so many reasons why people behave the way they do, and commit to actions because of their characteristics.

Brown has spent numerous years developing her research around empathy, vulnerability, courage and shame, releasing various books on these subjects (Brown, 2018).

Her work has inspired many people by re-educating oneself on their emotions and feelings, contributing ways to resolve issues that regularly bewilder us. We are aware of the emotional strains and struggles we have, but knowing how to deal with these situations effectively is something that everyone can relate to and want improvement on.

Brown did a talk show with Chase Jarvis back in 2014 and delved deeper in to her *Daring Greatly* book that she produced in 2012. To create a better understanding of the impact Brown had towards my work, I will give an overview of the talk she had with Jarvis.

Brown stated one of the things that shocked her the most when she was compiling her research, was when someone wrote “vulnerability is the first step to betrayal” (Brown, 2014). I understood this immediately, but was also very conflicted, as I knew that bitterness and resentment could conjure such a statement. Brown proceeded to say that we are brought up in social norms that encourage the important principle to be brave, but therefore believing vulnerability is weakness.

She continued to say that one of the major problems we have today is the conflict between being brave and vulnerable, which forms the middle ground of bravado. Often people fake being tough, are cynical, critical, and make fun of things, which is something most people can agree they have witnessed or even done. However, Brown’s research has always concluded that vulnerability in its purest form has only been used in its entirety to form courage, with no evidence to suggest anything but, therefore invalidating assumptions of weakness.

Unfortunately, she adds we live in a scarcity culture of what are we supposed to be afraid of and who is to blame. We seem to wish to have the courage to accomplish ambitions and dreams, especially when seeing others who defy the odds and succeed, making us hopeful to believe in ourselves; but in order to achieve this, we need to be truly honest with ourselves by being courageous and vulnerable – which is never easy (Brown, 2014).

Brown refers to her favorite quote from Theodore Roosevelt when he made his *Citizenship in a Republic* speech in 1910:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.” – (Roosevelt, 1910).

It can be an all consuming madness to constantly seek acceptance and be frightened of vulnerability, but the wise words that Roosevelt spoke, gives hope that we can triumph by pushing past the fear we all cower from.

The question was raised during the live chat with Jarvis of why do creatives often yearn for the acceptance of others, whose opinions ultimately do not matter. Yet those who we love and value who give us their opinions, we choose to ignore like it does not count. This was something I could definitely relate to and have found myself doing for the majority of my life so far, which is something I am aware of. I recognize that I need to break the cycle and be aware that the only opinions that matter are from people in the same profession going through similar circumstances, alongside those who I love and know care for my happiness, genuinely giving their honest thoughts. Brown (2014) clarified this point to say that there also has to be a balance, as if we stop caring what others think completely then we lose our connection with people; if we are defined by what others think we lose the courage to be vulnerable.

It appears that I was juggling vulnerability, during my research and dissertation, personally and artistically. Brown (2012, p. 32) defines vulnerability to be “uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure”.

The vulnerability I faced when producing work towards my installation, did not assure me that it would be positively received nor appreciated. This gave personal conflict as I knew what I wanted the public to feel, but could not predict this outcome. Again, in my personal life of preparing to emigrate to Japan and not being able to conceive another child; I found my vulnerability due to the fear of failure in reproduction, and letting go of what I believed to anchor my mental stability in a place I had grown up in over half my life – it was all very unsettling. It felt uncomfortable and nerve racking as I strived so hard to achieve the perfect life and childhood for my daughter, as this is not what I had growing up. Yet Brown (2012, p. 14) did state, that it is not about teaching perfection with a happy childhood that makes a young person receptive and courageous as he or she grows up, but allowing your child to witness vulnerability and understand that it is nothing to be ashamed of. Teaching very important life lessons in being able to cope with emotions that we struggle with today. Whilst we aim to preserve innocence and the happiness of a child, are we by default masking emotions that are very important in producing courage? Looking back on my childhood I am grateful for the vulnerability I faced, and understand that I can take this opportunity to teach my own child what it means to be vulnerable, by using past experiences. Being able to reflect on the fear I had in situations, and process them in the ways spoken by Brown, it bridged a gap between myself as an individual and as an artist. Fear and vulnerability have the potential to create but also hinder progression. By understanding this alongside the knowledge gained from artists' history and the work they produced, I was able to find common ground with other influential people like Brown and Disney. This gave me courage to step in to a confident place where I could let fear accompany me, but not determine who I wanted to be. Brown's work has been very influential in bridging the gap between fear and progression, my personal life and my work and why artists influence my developing practice.

Recycling

Historically through the work I've produced there has been a reoccurring element of reused objects. Below are images of my works that I have produced over several years and it is evident in each image that I have recycled objects to try and have them visualised, with their original perception of function changed in to something more exciting and thought provoking.



Figure 16. Danielle Moss, *Embrace your subconscious inner contentment* (2010) Installation.

During my foundation diploma, I wanted to tap in to connection and recycled materials even then (Figure 16). I focused slightly adjacent to my current topic of fear, to the beauty that surrounds us. Things that we do not often find attractive or tantalising connect to us on many levels, like smells of overgrown weed infested gardens, rotting furniture or old barbecues, which subconsciously bind our senses and transport

us to our own memories. The garden and sculptural part of the installation was all reused apart from the turf that was purchased.

Looking back, being poor during childhood and the hatred I had for waste has certainly impacted on the way I think about throwing items away. Part of me also feels that there is a hidden beauty that is not always seen with individual pieces, but once combined with another isolated random material, it has the potential to create something visually effective.

My mind wandered to the outdoors and the concealed treasures in my mother's overgrown garden. The wildlife it brought and the delicate hints of colour that illuminated in the sunshine, all raised the question of why do people strive for the perfect garden with weed free and structured borders? Those gardens that have furniture left to be overtaken by plants, also have their place in terms of returning to their origin or becoming homes for all different creatures. There is beauty within this opposition. This intrigued me alongside the subconscious, which enabled me to produce this small garden within an exhibition space giving authentic smells – which strongly link us to feelings and memories, in turn connecting the viewer to the installation.

I wanted to combine my use of photography, sculpture, collage and found objects juxtaposed by nature and the subconscious, to embrace all these areas in their own right and to achieve a working relationship between them.

Recycled materials conjure up feelings and emotions, that are for me very important when reflecting and understanding situations and change. It is something that subconsciously I have a clear link to, and have continued by refining and developing this form of practice within my work.

There was peace and space for the mind to breath in this installation, stopping the viewer for a moment to take in the scents and see what is around us, to appreciate the hidden beauty that we pass by on a daily basis. "All living things can offer quiet comfort" (Seal, 2008, p. 19).

In my first completed year of a BA (Hons) in Fine Art, I created sculptural pieces made from old recycled polystyrene sheets (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Danielle Moss, *Fragile* (2012) Sculpture.

At the time I was in the early stages of pregnancy, feeling very low and apprehensive about my future prospects in terms of career and ambition. I broke the immaculate straight edges using scissors with no preconceived idea of how I wanted each segment to look, and used oxygen tubing to connect the polystyrene together. I did not want to use glue and this gave too much of a bond that I personally did not have with the foetus that was growing inside me at the time, yet the oxygen tubing symbolized what keeps us alive, and forms another connection to each other.

It was a self portrait of how I was feeling, showing the fragility of my state of mind alongside the emotional strains that shadow during pregnancy. It also gave a strong link towards my profession as a chemotherapy nurse and the fragility of human life, and how easily we can all break physically and mentally.

It appears that when I'm feeling the most vulnerable I make and produce an abstract self portrait unknowingly, which then becomes my 'wake up call' at that time in development.

Figure 18 shows a photograph taken when I sought peace in my mother's garden. This was during a time when I became weary amidst personal situations of nearing a decision to emigrate to Japan, and trying to become pregnant. It is here that I found old sentimental toys from mine and my brother's childhood. It gave me a nostalgic happiness, neutralising the stress I had. These toys emphasized an importance that I personally could not ignore. If they provoked feelings of happiness and calm, with many memories linked to them, it would undoubtedly spark similar feelings with the public. Incorporating them within my installation would add another dimension in how we recall our past, when reflecting on our current situations as a foundation for guidance.



Figure 18. Danielle Wetton, *Have a watermelon, or coconut – life is good* (2017) Photograph

These toys were a mixture of Disney, trinket, kinder egg surprises and McDonald's toys, that transported me back to when my responsibilities were no where near the extent of what I currently face today. They would add another layer to my installation, a link to escapism during my childhood, with the influence of Disney. The comfort of the toys presence, even though forgotten over many years, settled and distracted me from the changes I faced. My thoughts replayed many Disney films that helped guide most of my

aspirations growing up. In turn, the basic principles and morals depicted within the films (dreams, ambitions, fear, failure, accomplishment, maintaining kindness, empathy and love) started to impact me in a more prominent way, as if I was ready, matured, and willing to fail in order to succeed.

Awakening

It had not yet become apparent that during my research I would repeat another self portrait, like when I started my BA (Hons) in Fine Art.

Once I had processed what I was making, alongside the creative influences that inspired me, my curiosity led me to food and how biodegradable it is. Left over crackers had sat at the back of my cupboard unopened for more than 2 years, and it seemed ridiculous to just throw them away. I wanted to use them and immediately thought of stacking. I knew I needed some form of glue to make sure it would not fall apart the moment I took my fingers off, and used left over gravy and icing sugar to accomplish this. *The Cracker Tower* (Figure 19) was a moment I left to chance, to see what would happen over time without any form of control. It represented in hindsight the building of oneself over time to form self identity; where I came from and what I had done and accomplished, to suddenly allowing caution to the wind to potentially undo all that represented who I was. It was as though I was watching my life play out poetically in the form of something biodegradable; reassuring inner fears of the 'what if'.



Figure 19. Danielle Wetton, *The Cracker Tower* (2017) Sculpture.

I left this piece over a period of time to see how long it would take before it biodegraded back to the earth, observing the damage and breakdown it incurred.



Figure 20. Danielle Wetton, 5th January (2017) Sculpture.



Figure 21. Danielle Wetton, 9th February (2017) Sculpture.

Figures 20 and 21 document the evidential proof of how *The Cracker Tower* degraded and broke down over a period of around 2 months.

As I initially had no foresight in to how this experiment would go, I was surprised that it took as long as it did, to almost have nothing remain but a few odd bits that needed a little longer to return to soil.

Reflection on this taught me that whilst it may appear everything is falling apart, the length of time it

takes before being able to clear the desk and start again, can be a voyage of self discovery but with patience being key.

We are so used to getting everything we want, when we want it, or set against a deadline, that we obscure a life lesson and a trait that should be more of value in our quest towards our ambitions.

It was during this experiment that I awoke from my blurred vision, due to the prospect of being uprooted, not becoming pregnant, and fear of acceptance; seeing through my work the inevitability of change. With the fact that we do not have the power to control what we think we desire, but have the capability to cease opportunities to build a non conventional self.

Joe Vitale (quoted in Kling and Ellis, 2009, p. 247) made the poignant statement “My greatest success is behind what I fear to do”. It was time to push away the boundaries of fear and let the sadness of other wants sit in the background, it was time to embrace vulnerability.

Practice Prior to Exhibition

From my starting point I knew the material that I would carry forward would be expanding foam, but construction was now a priority in preparation for my installation. A structure was needed for the expanding foam to grow on, but I was also consciously aware that cost was an important factor when deciding what to use.

Figure 22 shows the great partnership of expanding foam and chicken wire. This particular mesh is inexpensive and relatively lightweight, it became the solution to construct my large scale sculptures.



Figure 22. Danielle Wetton, *Untitled* (2017) Sculpture

Though I had not used chicken wire before, and obtained many cuts from twisting wire to connect bits together, it proved to be exactly what I was looking for. The expanding foam also solidified the wire holding its shape as a finished piece. I found it visually fascinating to see the combination of both materials produce something that looked as though an organism had started growing.

Figure 23 shows one of the first large scale (A0 size) ink line drawings I had experimented with. Here I delved further in not finishing the drawing and making a mistake that was not corrected. I was testing myself to let go of these imperfections and see them for what they are – markings.



Figure 23. Danielle Wetton, *Mistake made a Mark* (2017) Ink drawing.

I continued to trial other inks (pens and felt tips), and then used water to see what smudging could do in affecting the drawing. I wanted to use Tipp-Ex alongside the ink and water, as I felt this would be a good texture to explore interesting patterns with.

Figure 24 shows just that, and even though it was untitled, it became the most interesting piece from all of my ink drawings, and the one that I referred back to when completing my line drawings for my installation.

There was something about the texture, the ink marks, and the incompleteness that made this piece more provoking than previous drawings. The viewer wants to look closely at the detail, to understand what materials were used to accomplish the overall image. It was in childhood where drawing began for me,

yet it continues to amaze me how small marks made on paper can still hold so much intrigue. The lines had a risk of failing to be attractive or interesting, the Tipp-Ex had a risk of not adding anything to the drawing, the water had a risk of dominating the detail, and the overall image could have become a mess on paper. It triumphed through these risks, I triumphed through these fears.



Figure 24. Danielle Wetton, *Untitled* (2017) Ink, Tipp-Ex and water drawing.

Installation

Before the doors opened to private view, the anticipation left my hands feeling clammy and hot. I was nervous about how my work would be received and whether the public would interact with my installation (Figure 25). At first I took a step back to observe people's reactions to it, and to see if *Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch* was followed. As I saw each person start to walk around my space and children playing with my childhood toys, it felt as though I had accomplished something; an intimate connection with other people. I stepped forward at this point, taking ownership of my installation. Individuals began to walk towards me, fear and vulnerability quickly moved on to courage, I felt ready to discuss my work with others. Whilst explaining my installation, I could overhear another saying that he hated expanding foam, and that my installation was the best thing he had seen it used for.



Figure 25. Danielle Wetton, *Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch* (2017) Sculptural Installation.

What I found most interesting was the compelling nature, that almost everyone touched the sculptures. I was captivated by what I saw with this temptation; curiosity was very much ignited. Strangers seemed to become more open to exchange ideas, communicating personal memories of their own to one another. When people would ask me “What is this about?” I would conclude that it does not have a one worded answer and has a multitude of layers that create the environment. The large scale sculptures were an idea I knew I wanted from the start; I wanted to produce something larger than I had ever done before in my artistic profession. I found many people asked me about the sculpture’s weight, as the size made it ambiguous to guess. I responded that they could be lifted and transported with the help of another person, which clarified their question.

Time management was essential in making sure I had all the materials I needed, with enough trial attempts to change, if something did not go according to plan. My large scale sculptures needed to be completed a month prior to exhibition, allowing time to experiment with layout and positioning.

I nailed plywood on two wooden palettes, adding my chicken wire structures on top, again securing with nails. I found the expanding foam failed to latch on to the wire initially as the diameter of the structure was too big. It ended up dispersing through the holes of the mesh landing onto the base of the plywood, I needed to make a decision on how to resolve this issue. An idea to fill the base with balloons, stopped this from happening, allowing me to continue with minimal waste. During this time, I would also add the sentimental toys that I had unearthed in my mother’s garden a few months earlier – these were an important aspect as this gave the nostalgic element that I heard most people relating to, rekindling their memories.

I felt it was important to keep the colour of the expanding foam and to not tarnish it with bright colours by painting, instead I used a white gloss paint in various areas to add another dimension to it. I also kept holes within the sculpture to encourage curiosity, as when you grow up there seems to be less and less in the everyday.

I wanted to continue the wire erupting out of the sculpture to attach itself to the walls of the exhibition, to formulate itself in to line drawing – where my artistic nature first began with pencil and paper. I used ink, pen and Tipp-Ex to make these line drawings which looked liked roots to me once I had finished them, a subconscious display of feeling uprooted from everything I knew. It was interesting to listen to others associating them with lightening or even capillaries (Figure 26).



Figure 26. Danielle Wetton, *Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch* (2017) Sculptural Installation.

I also had expanding foam on the walls as it gave a less clinical feel to the installation area, and more a sense of comfort and security which was what I was after. I then added carpet to the area – it wasn't something that I had meticulously thought about in the early stages, but wanted it added for the uncomfortable jarring quality of why. The feeling of the area as you walked around the space was very different in comparison to walking on a hard floor. It created a sense of comfort and warmth that encouraged the viewer to get involved with the space, making it more inviting; this was reflected in my discussions I had with people during the exhibition.

The sculptures within this area gave a biomorphic sense of wanting to touch, establishing what it felt like physically and making sense of the process (Figure 27). I noticed people's curiosity to touch led them to

verbal communication and the sharing of ideas they felt it conjured for them, with one stating it reminded her of coral.



Figure 27. Danielle Wetton, *Do ~~Not~~ Enter, Do ~~Not~~ Touch* (2017) Sculptural Installation.

We are used to the terms 'Do Not Enter' and 'Do Not Touch' on many things throughout the everyday. These phrases can have a negative effect on people, as we can associate this with unwanted consequences. By striking through one word it immediately transforms the meaning into something positive. This particular aspect I was very interested in. The use of words has a powerful effect on what people digest for their own meaning. I reflect on negatives and how it makes me feel if I am unable to touch something or enter somewhere, more often the feeling of disappointment becomes present, and this was something that I did not want people to feel in my work. It is important to find a space that allows people freedom, when intrigue is their predominant thought; as these moments often generate ideas and evolvment.

It became very important to display my own personal message which silently reassured and settled my current state of affairs, but also connected with the audience that returning to nostalgia and allowing yourself those few minutes of being happy and inquisitive, was not a shameful act but a liberating one. The whole purpose and centre to my work revolved around bringing people together and sharing memories good and bad, in a form of therapy to confront fears and vulnerability. I knew I needed to open my own personal feelings first for my work to represent this struggle for courage. Looking at various artists and inspirational people built my confidence to rip myself away from the fear of acceptance, to progress and produce an installation that demanded its own attention.

Beck (2009, pp. 27-33) compares notions of what an exhibition is about in the sense of its purpose, using snippets from the German designer Klaus Franck's 1961 *Exhibitions* book and Swiss graphic artist Hans Neuburg's 1969 book on *Conceptions of International Exhibitions*.

They both highlighted valid points that an exhibition's primary focus is to inform and expose truths on current situations and various topics, by influencing the viewer to widen their knowledge, helping them make informed decisions that positively impact their daily living. Therefore, the whole purpose of exhibiting and displaying art work is to be able to offer another medium, to look at things differently and to explore topics that may have been forgotten, or masked by hurt or fear.

It is our duty as artists to display truths that challenge convention, perception and uncomfortable situations, to give subtle undertones of possible solutions and ways to resolve inner conflicts.

We are outspoken messengers with the courage to challenge set minds and to provoke independent thinking and reflection.

Reflection

When I was able to identify fear as being the topic for this research, my willingness to become vulnerable helped give me the courage to succeed. It was a moment that when it was fully understood, I became more holistically confident in challenges that arose during this period; it became a major turning point in how I wanted to live my life from then on. Personal history does carve you in to a certain shape that is acceptable in social norms, but learning to overcome fear allows you to change that convention to your unique self.

I can see that in times of uncertainty I produce self portraits, which is my way of digesting the situation to process it and move on from it. By learning about artists that have inspired me and furthermore influenced my practice, they have anchored me to a position where I can believe ambitions are achievable regardless of the fear of being accepted or rejected.

My memories of Disney films gave me the stability and nurture that helped shape my morals and principles, formulating a foundation that I had not realized was so deeply rooted in calming me down in times of chaos. Beyond the entertainment aspect of this brand, Disney displayed the emotion of fear in many ways and taught valuable lessons in integrity and courage alongside the ambition to succeed. Brown's work has been the bridge to link myself towards my art work, by understanding my emotions and the problems fear can cause. I have found myself referring back to her books and online videos for reminders, to remember that we can all feel overwhelmed in stressful situations, but knowing that to achieve our desires we need to make ourselves vulnerable. Fear should not dictate our decisions, and we should not see vulnerability as a frequent dodging game that ultimately we do not learn from. "The hard part about doing something new is having to let go of the old" (Pearson, 2016). This is what builds our characters and continues our thirst in curiosity and learning, and of course connection; but this can not be done without courage.

We all have the opportunity for personal progression, to influence and inspire. Realizing this, and knowing that I struggle to conform in 'social norms', has increased my drive to succeed in life. Knowing my own

capabilities is such a liberating experience, and one that I choose to fly and fail with, without comparison to others.

“All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” (Beckett, 1983).

Conclusion

The fear to move forward in life whether personal or professional, has proven to be difficult in many situations when trying to understand this emotion.

Fear can suffocate and trap you in to thinking it is safer to avoid vulnerability, by not taking risks or opportunities. Yet from this examined research, risks had to be taken in order to succeed and achieve. By doing this, confidence grows and self awareness is gained by understanding vulnerability.

Whilst we may look on in admiring influential people, the point of all of this is that it is attainable to everyone – it is not a unique trait only a few have.

The underlying current that flows through everyone is the necessity to connect to one another, and is the backbone to courage. This research has shown that once this has been understood, everyone has the potential to move forward in life and overcome the suppression of fear. Fear itself has proven to be effective in making us vulnerable as a community, but has the capability to change mind set opinions by using its definition and turning it in to something positive through action.

By analyzing the perception of fear within this thesis, it can undoubtedly hinder us mentally and reduce productivity. This does not define our future if we spend more time to holistically care for ourselves, and to delve deeper in to our emotions to understand what is preventing our progression.

It has shown that fear, vulnerability, courage and connection are all interlinked and work simultaneously together. Neither can work without the other.

If we as individuals can depict these 4 traits and become consciously aware of this process, the potential to achieve through risk of failure is a driving force to cope better with changes and challenges throughout our existence. Bravado is seen to be a temporary fix for the turmoil we face when not confronting vulnerability and bravery, which actually makes us less authentic. By embracing vulnerability and not seeing it as weakness, our opportunities become limitless.

This research has also confirmed that recycled and reused objects can indeed unearth suppressed emotions that need resolution. These objects also have the power to transport us to a memory long forgotten, to give a temporary moment of peace and reflection.

Further research in to why connection is so important for us could be looked at, in the form of allowing the viewer to partake in producing art as an alternative method in understanding. The viewer could produce a piece of art that individually shows their perspective, of why interaction with others is a necessity.

Do ~~Not~~ Enter, and Do ~~Not~~ Touch on those suppressed ambitions and ventures; life goes on regardless, it does not wait. Embrace the fear of vulnerability, build the courage to connect.

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