

## *Family and Botanic Illustration*

### **Alana Christie**

'The Unseen' is a mixed media collage, consisting of a self-portrait in graphite, photography, acrylic painting and newspaper articles, of which were collated and manipulated using Photoshop. The theme of my confronting collage communicates the social issue of sexual assault through realism and symbolism. Initially, I intended to create my final piece in graphite because I am most comfortable with this medium. However, Njdeka Akunyili Crosby who specialises in collages, inspired me to expand my skill set.

I chose to digitalise my experimentation with paint and graphite on Photoshop like Crosby had done in her artwork - 'The Thing Around her Neck' about cultural hybridity (Russeth, 2021). Due to my previous ability to edit and rearrange images on Photoshop, I was able to do lots of experimentation to portray my theme. My theme, inspired by Ngo Rio de Paz's and Marcio Freitas's artistic protest against sexual assault, 'I'll never be silenced' (Norton, 2016). This photographic portrait, by Freitas clearly depicts this message via a red handprint, which strongly contrasts when placed across an ordinary women's face. I was particularly drawn to the power of this piece/message and the fact that it required no explanation. I went on to research the rape cases of Grace Tame and Briteny Higgins. Higgins, assaulted at parliament house and Tame, assaulted by her maths teacher from age 15.

I was then inspired to Photoshop the names and photos of these rape victims onto my art to not only spread awareness of sexual assault but to communicate those victims are not alone. Frida Kahlo's, surrealist oil painting 'Wounded Deer', communicates loss and pain (Jones, 2020). Her use of colour and symbolism inspired me to create red and black hands clutching the neck and covering the eye of my self-portrait. They symbolise brutal elements of rape crimes, being dehumanised, unseen, silenced and physically harmed as well as the longlasting trauma perpetrators inflict on their victims. Due to being inspired by the detail in Diago Fazio's graphite drawings, I drew my own face in graphite. Furthermore, the main feature of my art became a graphite drawing of myself with a blank expression.

This is where the combination of Photoshop and the fundamental elements of art came together as one work of art working exceptionally well. On Photoshop, I was able to enhance the darker values on my face to create a scary dramatic effect. I created black figures that look threatening, and a red background communicating danger. This further exacerbates the harm and intimidation of being violated. Overall, I clearly produced a powerful digital collage addressing the social issue of sexual assault. I created a final artwork that uses a minimalist colour palette whilst being symbolically bold and confronting for an audience.

I hope that my artwork can give people some comfort that they are not alone, as well as provide people with the courage to voice their experiences for themselves and for others. Through my art I hope to extinguish the stigma surrounding sexual assault and I hope to give people the power to speak out about a serious issue that has been silenced for too long.