

## *Yet the Pain Remains* **Monet Burzacott**

"Sit up straight" was a constant in my childhood, and despite my efforts, my posture would remain hunched and twisted. Hands pressing into my shoulder blades, pushing them together to force a straightened appearance. It wasn't until early 2021 that I was diagnosed with Scoliosis (sideways curvature of the spine) and Kyphosis (rounding of the upper back). This put all the hours of stretching and straining into perspective.

I began my major by considering how these conditions have impacted me. Due to the imbalance of my pelvis, pain in my right hip is almost constant, fluctuating in intensity. My Kyphosis, however, causes the hunch; my spine is forever unable to be stretched out. There is no cure for the conditions, and while strengthening the muscles surrounding the spine can assist in supporting it, the pain will never entirely go away.

I contemplated the best way to express this to the viewer. I decided early on that the spine in the work would appear straight, with two long spear-like needles pressing through it where the pain stems from. Additionally, the background assists in conveying these messages. The marsh landscape, specifically the water, represents 'drowning in pain,' indicating the overwhelming nature of the conditions. The sunset is the world moving to the next day, yet the skeleton remains suspended by pain and unable to free itself.

To develop my piece, I studied the works of Leonardo Da Vinci and his mastery of anatomy, with a focus on how he studied each individual section of the body. Boc Su Jung's unique interpretation of the human psyche and how to utilise that in his works to evoke the desired emotions. William Blake's unusual and highly visually loud works inspired my positioning and lack of direct sense for the piece. While Henri Matisse's stylised brush strokes and subtle colour changes in earlier works encouraged my freedom escaping the need for perfect smooth transition.

My decision for the size of the canvas was something I debated heavily on. The skeleton is almost to scale of my own. By achieving this resemblance, it grounds the painting into reality further, as a realistically-sized skeleton. The skull was intentionally excluded from the piece to avoid being a distraction. Humans look to the face for emotional context, and this is no different for art.

The composition changed drastically from the original concept. The marsh, sky and pegs were still present; however, the skeleton was smaller and partially submerged, much like a downed bird. This was eventually scrapped as the larger presence on the canvas better represented the emotional turmoil of being stuck in an unmoveable position. Often, I will be stretching and can feel the knot of Kyphosis resisting, like a knuckle that needs to crack, and there is nothing that can be done.

My final *Yet The Pain Remains* represents the reality of chronic pain and how it will affect me for the rest of my life.