

Stage 2 Visual Art

Assessment type 2: Practical

Practitioners statement 1: *Under Pressure*

Word Count: 507

“*Under Pressure*” was based on the theme of identity, chosen for the purpose of visually illustrating my individuality and personal identity. I reflected on all aspects of my life, exploring my passions, skills, social attributes and my overall character. My final concept utilised symbolic objects to depict who I am as an individual and clarify my overall perception of life through one portrait. Exploration of Surrealism, beauty and perception greatly assisted the final formation. The Surrealist feel illustrated the complexity of individual identity, as it is a skewed topic which can be perceived in various ways.

The use of acrylics and water-mixable oils were mainly inspired by artists Ruth Speer, Megan Howland and Brianna Reagan who utilised various painting techniques to effectively create realistic portraits through building layers and developing tones. I implemented these techniques and was able to develop rich realism. Speer influenced my use of correct proportions and facial muscle structure, whilst Howland and Regan inspired my final soft but vibrant palette and portrait/background mediums.

My Practical is deeply symbolic. All aspects represent my identity. The main focal point is the self-portrait, accompanied goldfishes, parrots, and a mandala. Immersed in water, I am surrounded by the liquid that gives me life and yet, can take it away the moment I inhale it. This symbolically illustrated society’s pressure. It provided me with a place where I can either flourish or suffocate in if I sensitise myself to its expectations.

The gold-leaf covered goldfish swimming within the subject’s hair were utilised as a representation of wealth, prosperity and freedom which I endeavour to obtain as I struggle to find happiness within my overly protected life. The fins of the fish are drawn using henna patterns to represent my cultural Afghan background through a laced composition inspired by artist Brianna Reagan’s aesthetic goldfish painting. One of the fish covering one of my eyes to denote the meaning of ‘you only know what I want you to know’. The mandala was also used to symbolise my harmonious character and life that is limitless and vast. The torn-out chest, influenced by Christyanne Statinowsky, represented the life that breathes inside of me. Being underwater also represented the hardships of my life weighing me down beneath the water’s surface, and the desire to hold my breath to metaphorically keep my dreams and hopes inside. The Sun Conure parrots (which I owned as a child) symbolised truth-telling and speaking from the centre of the heart. This embodied the meanings of honesty, wisdom and power of our inner mind.

A beautiful royal blue background represented water, with silver leaf sprinkled throughout illustrating bubbles to exemplify underwater.

“*Under Pressure*” was not necessarily aimed at a certain demographic. It is an allegorical piece, whereby it is free for interpretation by the viewer and can be perceived through many different lenses.

My final Practical was a highly time-consuming painting which I am really proud of. Overall it was successful with the various painting techniques and skills gained from the exploration of artists to explore my own identity.