

Beware of the Dogs

Emma Tunstall

'Beware of the Dogs,' I produced a series of three large lino prints on Japanese mulberry paper. I first gained an interest in lino printing several years ago and since then it has become my favourite medium to work in. I have always enjoyed this medium as I find the carving satisfying and the results rewarding. My prints depict the journey of a young girl growing up. This story was inspired by my own experiences, as well as the experiences and stories of women around me. My artwork explores the concepts of motherhood and female empowerment. My work was heavily inspired by Barbara Hanrahan and Stanley Donwood, specifically the floral patterns and arrangement of their compositions as the whole space is used and the texture in the background is treated with as much importance as the bold line work. I was also inspired by Scandinavian Folk Art.

The concept of my artwork was influenced by musicians Stella Donnelly and Courtney Barnett, as well as the band IDLES, as they're music often approaches issues in society. I think my three pieces worked effectively as a series in regards to symmetry and balance created by the negative space in the background of the outer pieces, which compliments the more graphic and bold elements in the middle piece. The similar compositions of the outer pieces frame the centre print, making it the focal point as the prominence of black makes it stand out. There is consistency within the style of the series, with the same floral patterns appearing in all three prints. These patterns convey homeliness and comfort in oneself. I also incorporated this pattern to represent the women in my work owning their femininity and becoming more empowered and confident, despite the fact that women are often only seen for their looks and behaviours. There is also consistency through the organic linework and flat composition. I chose a flat composition to achieve a folk-art look and to compliment the Scandinavian-inspired patterns. To me, Scandinavian Folk Art has a really comforting and homely look which I wanted to incorporate into my own prints. These patterns also reminded me of my mother, as she likes Scandinavian art and it's often displayed in our home.

My linos were only printed in black, as I like the classic look of one colour and one layer of ink. I printed on Japanese mulberry paper, which I really liked as it was delicate, had raw, handmade edges and texture, and had an off-white colouring that gave my prints a traditional look. All three prints also have texture, created by the 'messy' carved lines appearing in many areas. For the first print, I produced the image of a mother and child to depict motherhood, and how parents protect their children. The mother's hair flows organically and encapsulates both figures, representing her protection of her daughter. The mother's dress features a feminine, floral pattern, and her hair flows extravagantly, creating the image of a woman who has found herself and is content.

This is juxtaposed with the straight hair and plain clothing of the young girl in her arms. The second print depicts the daughter on her own. She is slightly older, and surrounded by wolves, which symbolise her struggles. The girl's facial features depict sadness, exhaustion and defeat, with downturned lips, dark eyes and gaunt cheeks. I wanted my piece to be open to interpretation, so that women could view this image and relate it to their own personal experiences. For example, the wolves could be a symbol for beauty standards and how society is constantly telling us what we should and shouldn't do with our bodies to be accepted and respected as women.

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The wolves could also represent men, and how we often feel threatened by them due to prevalence of misogyny, rape culture, etc. This could also be a representation of feelings such as anxiety, worry, doubt or depression, which are all feelings that can have a severe impact on a person's mental health. The moon in the print is incorporated to represent a dark time in the woman's life. The third print shows the young girl, now grown up, with bones at her feet. The bones are of the wolves in the previous print, and represent the woman overcoming her struggles.

The figure is now pictured similarly to the mother in the first print, empowered, content and comfortable. I carved the bones much more aggressively to achieve jagged lines which are juxtaposed amongst the organic lines of the floral patterns and flowing hair. Overall, I am extremely proud of the work I have created. I devoted a lot of time and care into my work, and I believe that is clear throughout the story and meaning behind my work. In the past, the largest print I had done was A4 size, so producing three significantly larger prints was a major challenge for me. I feel like my personal style has developed significantly over the past few years, and that is prominent throughout these pieces. I hope my work resonates with the women who view it and makes them feel empowered and strong.