Trish - Surviving the Night

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Fragility: *"The quality of being easily broken or damaged"*

Vulnerability: *"The exposure to the possibility of attack or harm, either physically or emotionally"*

I started the year with a conceptual focus on 'Fragility' and identified subjects to express this concept. Influenced by photorealist, Chris Summer, I initially explored the structural fragility of individual feathers. Concurrently, Seth Clarke's unique collage process combined recycled paper, wood, and drawing, prompting reflection on the fragmentation and tactility of decaying, built structures. I was attracted to the inherent beauty of disintegration and abandonment within his artworks, conveying human transience. Additionally, Liz Y Ahmet's linear scribbled portraits expressed the fragility of the human condition and resonated with my expressive, tonal aesthetic. Applying her drawing technique in a portrait of a young Ukrainian soldier engendered consideration into the definitions of 'fragility' and 'vulnerability' in relation to portraiture.

My Visual Study, as an investigation into my personal aesthetic, identified the importance of expressive media and dark tonality for capturing the human condition and dystopia. Key artist Adam Riches' addition/subtraction painting process extended my technical development, allowing me to achieve a balance between expressive media application and realism. Godwin Bradbeer's unique style resonated strongly with my technical and conceptual intentions for this painting. His contemplative drawings capture the human essence, imbued with existentialism and melancholy, appealing to my personal aesthetic.

Subsequently, an extensive investigation was undertaken to identify a subject. Locating the work of photographer, Lee Jeffries, was a significant turning point. Jefferies' black-and-white portraits of homeless people were extended by details of his personal connection with each subject and the dehumanisation of individuals whose society has shunned them. From his 'homeless' portfolio, I selected Trish, the quintessential example of vulnerability on the street; a woman exploited by unforgiving society. Jeffries explains "[Trish] understands what she is doing, the life she is living. She understands the choices she makes; she just cannot see a way out". I identified a strong conceptual connection between Bradbeer's portraits and Trish's hunched pose, featuring a downcast facial expression. Women have a heightened vulnerability on the streets, with approximately 54,000 Australian women experiencing homelessness each night.

Equipped with proficient technical and conceptual understanding, my final work has successfully achieved my artistic intention and appeals to my personal aesthetic. Trish as my subject provided invaluable source material with her emotive facial expression drawing viewers into the composition and sustaining their engagement. The creases of her closed eyes and tense mouth allude to fear of the outside world, accompanied by defensive posture and off-centre head placement, recalling Bradbeer's works. Her apparent nakedness represents her exploitation and a hidden darker narrative. I implemented greater tonal contrast into the composition, introducing a beam of light into the background to propose hope as well as alluding to dawn after "surviving the night". For Trish and others suffering similar circumstances as the "invisible members" of society, I implore viewers to "see the person, not the homeless person… see the humanity".