

Identity

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The body of work I have created reflects the main concept of adolescent struggle and conformity, specifically the challenges teenage girls have with societal standards. This piece confronts themes that I, and other teenage girls can relate too, and so I have conveyed my pieces as a body of work, to emphasise the key idea of a shared struggle among girls. My body of work consists of cyanotype printing incorporating mixed media, one being on patch-worked fabric, and the other images on paper. Both pieces incorporate similar symbolic colours and stitching to reflect my own perspective into the pressures that are felt as a teen on the cusp of womanhood, finding their own identity amidst the expectations placed on them by society.

The idea of '*the human condition*' investigated in my visual study, became a catalyst for this concept and refers to commonly lived shared experiences that are unique to our emotionality as human beings, in this case the experiences of pressure and conformity among teenage girls. Artists Frida Kahlo and Vincent Van Gogh, whose portraiture often related to personal identity and the complex emotions that relate to it, were influential, among with my own personal lived experiences of growing up, from girl to womanhood.

For the first piece, I edited photographs based on a friend my own age, to represent a common female adolescent. These were printed onto fabric embedded with cyanotype chemicals and exposed to UV rays, leaving a distinctive Prussian-blue image. The piece reflects adolescent girlhood and the commonality of experience that comes with it. I also incorporated, stitching (both hand and sewing machine), markers, wax pencils, and collage, to accentuate the mood of the work. Loose hand and machine stitching, and patchwork of body parts symbolises and unravelling mind and the critical self-contemplation, whilst the Zig-zag stitching emphasises confusion felt.

Angela chambers, an artist that explores femineity and women through history and pop culture using sculpture and cyanotype inspired me with her use of the media and concepts. Chamber's work utilises cyanotype on a range of supports, including, paper, canvas, and fabric. Her pieces focus on the shared experience of womanhood. Her style is reflected in my own work through the medias of cyanotype on fabric and similar concept. Whilst Chamber's comments on womanhood, marriage and historical struggle, my work focuses more on adolescence as a female and the modern-day struggles with social media, beauty standards and conformity.

Also, David Hockney's *joiner style* photographic montages influenced the composition of the piece- additionally conveying the message through repeated images joined in seemingly chaotic order. His use of photography made interpreting and implementing a similar style of his work in my own a logical extension. I love the way his joiners encourage the viewers to analysis individual elements of a whole composition, that when a viewed in a singular format it may not seem so remarkable and this what I hoped to convey in my own constructed piece.

The format I chose to display the piece imitates the build of a blanket, this is to convey a sense of comfort and disguise through the idea of hiding behind one's insecurities.

Insecurities that are formed through unattainable societal expectations and beauty standards. The uneven shape reflects teenagers' imperfections.

Mostly monochromatic cool blues with jarring elements of bright red, influence the tone of the piece. Warm vermilion, complementary to the blue, creates contrast while the areas of the cool white are mostly subtle and work harmoniously with the blue. The harsh contrast between the red and the blue creates a sense of warning and danger, encouraging the observer to infer the impact society's expectations have on the female subject and her mental wellbeing, suggesting a negative impact.

All of the chosen images within of the subject identify differing emotions, symbolising the tumultuous relationship teenage girls have with their self and their identity. The writing directly depicts the emotions and inner monologue of a stressed teenage girl questioning herself and her identity.

In the second part of this body of work, I used the same model in poses that indicate a detached confusion as she looks away from the viewer in one narrow piece and in the larger work, she gazes directly at the audience with a slightly blank overwhelmed look. I hoped that these singular images convey a sense of confused isolation that comes from feeling like you are the only one that feels like this- a common experience of a teenage girl. My second piece flows on from my first but focusing more on a flatter surface of arches watercolour paper. Similar colour scheme and the textural qualities of rough machine and hand-stitching to further demonstrate the mental toll societal pressure have on the current generation girls on the cusp of womanhood. Using the same figure, allowed me to emphasise that she is a representation of every girl that can feel at times oppressed by our modern society.

Contemporary artists, *Anna Atkins'* and *Alix Marie's* processes of cyanotype printing, much like Chamber's, was referenced within my own work. Marie's loose application of ink to her canvas is key to my work, with the splatters and drips of cyanotype, ink and watercolour creating a sense of confusion and movement visually that reinforces the subjects state of mind. Elements of German artist *Kathe Kollwitz's* use of charcoal to express emotion, were also applied to further emphasise the expression of the main figure. Kollwitz used strong contrasting tones and linework to demonstrate emotion. In my work the mark-making of charcoal amplifies the tired, stressed expression of the subject. Through trialling not only the composition but different additions to the pieces, including stitching, charcoal, watercolour, and pastels, I formed my own personal aesthetic, that I feel allows the pieces to work cohesively as a body of work.

Overall, I believe that this body of work effectively reflects my intent, but also provided some catharsis for my personal experiences. Importantly through this I have development of my own style. The symbolic additions to my prints and well as the composition enabled me to convey the idea of the struggles of pressure society places on teenage girls and I hope that by sharing this with my peers I can offer some relatable insight.