

Wounds of Generosity & Vessel of Perseverance

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I have always been interested and fascinated by abstract art. Especially abstract portraiture, which has been a major influence to me, as creating artwork in this style encourages explorative bravery and challenges my imagination. Artists use a variety of techniques to create abstract art, mixing traditional with more experimental mediums and techniques, and I find this fascinating. With this in mind, I wanted to bring both my love for abstract portraiture and my African culture together. Enabling me to include important aspects of my culture like hair style, fashion, and history of enslavement, into my artwork. Giving my artworks an enriched conceptual idea that is personally relevant. My two artworks, entitled *Wounds of Generosity* and *Vessel of Perseverance*, were predominantly influenced by Natasa Kekancvic for my concepts and by Miguel Leal, Pablo Picasso, and John Pauli Fauve in my use of style, techniques and mediums.

Both of my artworks were highly influenced by Kekancvic, whose own artwork is about the hidden nature of the seen and unseen, creating portraiture of colourful layered mixed medium artworks. I have also emulated similar themes of the seen and unseen and techniques within my own artworks. Over all, my two artworks encompass the journey my cultural ancestors have been on symbolising their period of enslavement and their journey from this to freedom. Both artworks depict a proud African woman with traditional hairstyles, whose torso is covered with traditional African inspired kaftans and dashiki fashion (colourful pattern fabric). I have also chosen to remove any recognisable facial feature and simply gestured facial features being inspired by Leal's portraits. This has enhanced my concept as that these two women could represent any female ancestor, which inadvertently builds on my concepts of stripping away their identity.

The first artwork I created is entitled *Wounds of Generosity*. This artwork symbolises the way my ancestors were stripped of their culture, customs and traditions. I have achieved this through removing colour, making this a black and white mixed media artwork. The use of black and white indicates and represents the time our cultures, languages, beliefs, and our aesthetic were ripped away from our people, and the lack of colour has associations with death, isolation and trauma. Within this artwork the woman has an afro and small braids along her forehead which reflects how enslaved Africans would use braids, or more commonly referred to as 'cornrows,' to hide maps which they would use to escape slavery. To create this textured effect of the braids by mixing black and white acrylic paint with impasto medium applying it with a brush in a crisscross pattern. Fauves and Pollock inspired me to explore mediums that were textured and created movement with my afro.

However, when it comes to acrylic paint, it can usually get complicated in its own way. I was able to break this barrier by experimenting with technical application before each part of my work. Through this I discovered if I used impasto medium with acrylic paint and applied it with a palette knife, I could create the illusion of a textured afro. To further enhance the illusion of a textured 3D afro, I applied a thin layer of runny paint to the lower portion of the afro, creating a glaze effect that also gave the illusion of tone. I chose the palette knife because it allowed me to layer paint gently without mixing or changing the colour while retaining the paint's natural characteristics and deep smooth texture. Within *Wounds of Generosity*, I also added subtle texture to the skin using the palette knife to scrape paint across the surface of the body, and face, gesturing where the facial features would be.

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Once this dried I also glazed the same sections of the body, creating areas that represented patterns of fabric. After letting the artwork dry, I drew different patterns on the body with black and white sharpie, and posca pens to further represent the illusion of African inspired fabric. I finished this artwork off by applying silver leafing for the earrings to create a shiny jewellery like effect.

The second artwork I created is entitled Vessel of Perseverance. This artwork differs from the first as it is colourful. This artwork represents my ancestors who have fought for our people's freedom and peace on earth. The use of colour there helps symbolise hope, happiness, new beginning, love, passion, and forgiveness. I applied and decorated the face and torso of this portrait with the same mediums and techniques I used in Wounds of Generosity, simply changing from black and white to a diverse range of colour. The afro in this artwork was also achieved the same way, however in this artwork the afro is made up of flowers with some leaves protruding from behind the hair itself. I struggled to create this flower-like hair because I had to apply the impasto paint in a circular pattern and this was hard to achieve. Something I had to overcome was how to create a flower that both looked like a flower but also gave the illusion of afro hair texture.

To overcome this challenge I had help and support from my teacher with strategies, techniques, and ways to use the palette knife to manipulate the medium. I choose to use flowers in this way as a means to symbolise renewal of life, because during enslavement that is made to cover and hide their hair, where here I have shown the African women with traditional hairstyles fully embracing her natural beauty. I also applied a layer of runny paint under this afro to create the illusion of tone again. I finished this artwork off by applying gold leafing for the earrings to create a shiny jewellery like effect.

I chose to make two artwork that have striking aesthetic qualities such as texture, through thickly applied impasto and acrylic paint and simplified abstract facial features. In choosing to create artworks that were abstract I was able to give myself the freedom to create more organic, abstract, and raw emotion-filled artworks. I've developed my own artistic style, primarily utilising acrylic paint, a palette knife, and wet on wet techniques. Throughout experimenting with different mediums and techniques, especially the leafing, I found slowing down and developing my technique further before applying them to my canvas a real benefit and I was able to refine my skill before application. Yiadom-Boakye wasn't an artist that made the research process of artists, however he continues to inspire and influence countless artists to create two artworks relevant to my culture, which I am aware of and am inspired by personally. Using acrylic paint and impasto assisted me in successfully completing large-scale paintings making it easier to work on and produce two resolved artworks that complement each other.

My choice to utilise black and white to represent the time of salvary throughout the past years and using the colourful to compliment how our ancestors fought for our languages, culture, freedom and aesthetics was highly effective. Drawing on inspiration from Leal, my intention would be to see this artwork as a large-scale mural for all to see in order to raise awareness, inspire discussions and for young women of African descent to feel pride in their ancestors and all they endured for their and my freedom and liberation.