



MARGIE HOULSTON

This book goes alongside my 'Self-Destruction' major art project for the final year degree show;
Off The Wall, 2016.

The book will take you through the research and development behind this project and reflect on my self-development
as an artist.

CONTENTS

6-7	INTRODUCTION	
8	TIME STRUCTURE	
9	STUDIO SPACE	
10	<u>ARTIST RESEARCH</u>	
11	<u>PORTRAIT ARTISTS</u>	<u>DEVELOPMENT</u> 32-34
	12 CHUCK CLOSE	BLACK PAINT 35
13	MICHAEL SYDNEY MOORE	SPILT INK 36
	14 FRANCOISE NIELLY	ERASED 37
	15 DOUGLAS MCDUGALL	OIL PAINTING 38-39
	16 MARC QUINN	SMUDGED 40-41
	17 VINCE LOW	ERASE ALL 42
		SCRIBBLE 43
		CHARCOAL DRAWINGS 44-45
		SCRUNCHED PAPER 46-47
	19 <u>VIDEO</u>	VISUALISATION 48-49
20	BARBARA KRUGER	
	21 BILL VIOLA	PREVIOUS WORK 50-51
	22 ANDY WARHOL	
23	MARINA ABRAMOVIC	SELF-OBSESSED 52
		SELF-DEVELOPMENT 53
25	<u>DESTRUCTIVE ART</u>	
	26 HEATHER BENNING	SELF-REVIEW 54-55
	27 MICHAEL LANDY	
28	VALERIE HELGARTY	
	29 CESAR BIOJO	
		THANK YOU 57
30-31	TOBY ALLEN	

FAQ ~~INTRODUCTION~~

Why are you destroying your artwork?

Have you ever stared at something for so long you now hate every detail of it? I can't decide if I'm talking about looking at a painting, a sculpture or a mirror but I do this a lot. I wanted to physically destroy something I've created. In the past I have thrown away paintings I no longer liked, not attended life drawing lessons because I was afraid I wouldn't be good at it and gave up on painting as I felt they weren't good enough. I already wanted to destroy my art; therefore it made sense to me to make destroying my art the artwork.

Won't it upset you to ruin your own paintings?

Maybe, but that's the point; the act of self-destruction. I'm creating something that I could potentially love and then I'm the one that's taking that away.

Why self-portraits?

Originally I was planning on doing something that I hadn't done before, that I could take my time on and create in fine detail such as a landscape painting. However, I felt the idea of self-destruction worked best with using me. I tend to use *myself* a lot in my work mainly because I feel it is relevant to what I'm speaking about. I will talk more about this in this book.

Self-Destruction

[self-di-struhk-*shuh* n]

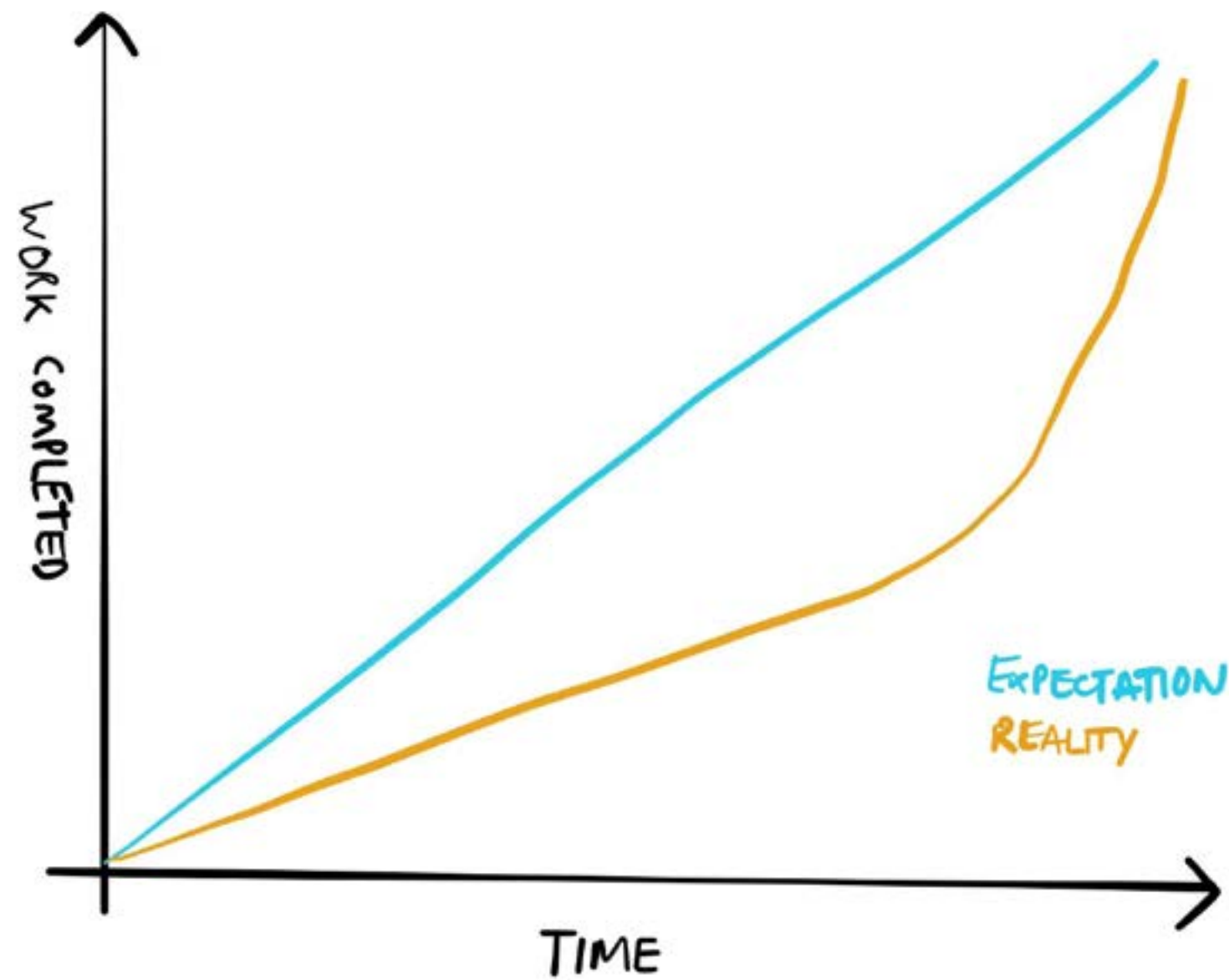
n. the destruction or ruination of oneself or one's life.

Example: 'She was afraid of not being enough; not good enough, not smart enough, not pretty enough. So she fell through the acts of self-destruction. Passively allowing opportunities to pass by, not valuing her worth, sabotaging relationships, avoiding social interactions, hiding her emotions and refusing help until soon she was a shell of herself. And the damage was done.'

'Self-destruction is like the ultimate paradox it's a way of stalling you in your comfort zone while making you feel intensely, miserably uncomfortable.' - (Anon)

TIME STRUCTURE

The way I would ideally work compared to how I actually work are two very different things. I wanted to be more organised with my time management this final semester, however like usual it took me quite a while before getting into my work. I knew I wanted to paint for my project and I haven't painted since first semester of first year, due to my fear that I wasn't a good enough painter (especially at university level). This meant I needed to time manage myself efficiently, because I knew I wouldn't be able to produce a painting in the last minute, like the way I could with a photograph. Unfortunately, I haven't stuck to my original time table and as a consequence rushing to get everything finished in time.



STUDIO SPACE



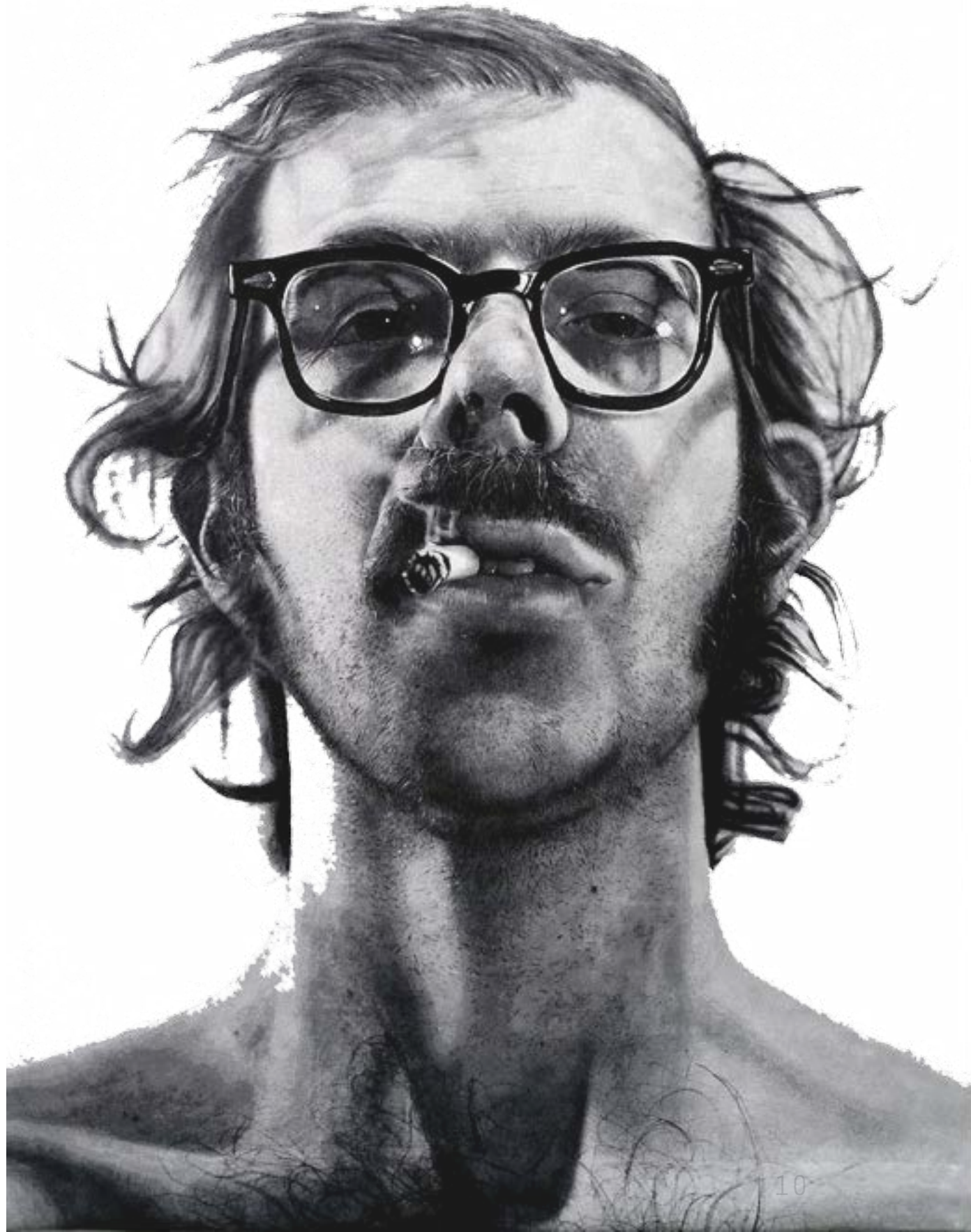
During my time at Brookes I have rarely used the studio space offered for the fine art students. This wasn't a deliberate act of protest, but more a refusal to leave my safety blanket and comfort zone. I just so happened to work better within my own space. This was especially the case when I started working with digital media; I didn't necessarily need a physical space anymore. However, this final semester I knew I wanted to get back into portraiture and work with scale. Therefore, I knew I needed to create a workable area for me to focus on my painting. Although, I wanted to be comfortable, I still wanted to create a contrast between work and home. Therefore, I made a space specifically for painting which allowed me to associate that part of the room as work space.

ARTIST RESEARCH CHUCK CLOSE
PORTRAITURE MICHAEL SYDNEY
MOORE ARTIST RESEARCH FRANCOISE
NIELLY PORTRAITURE DOUGLAS
MCDOUGALL ARTIST RESEARCH MARC
QUINN PORTRAITURE VINCE LOW
ARTIST RESEARCH CHUCK CLOSE
PORTRAITURE MICHAEL SYDNEY
MOORE ARTIST RESEARCH FRANCOISE
NIELLY PORTRAITURE DOUGLAS
MCDOUGALL ARTIST RESEARCH MARC
QUINN PORTRAITURE VINCE LOW
ARTIST RESEARCH CHUCK CLOSE
PORTRAITURE MICHAEL SYDNEY MOORE
ARTIST RESEARCH FRANCOISE NIELLY

PORTRAIT ARTISTS

CHUCK CLOSE

Chuck Close works on an extremely large scale with portraits more than double the size of a full grown man. He creates photorealistic portraits which hold intense amount of detail. The use of scale in Close's work is significant as it contrasts between realism and fantasy –the unhuman, giant, enormousness of the hyper realistic



portrait faces.

By working on a larger scale, it allows for great detail within the portrait. I would like to work on a larger scale (not as large as Close) to allow myself to work in finer detail. The scale of a piece could also correlate to the amount of time spent on a piece. The duration of his work usually takes four months for one completed portrait.

I like the idea of investing a lot of time within a piece of work as it shows commitment, effort and loyalty to your own practice. I want to create a piece of a large scale and therefore time consuming and integrate both the quality and quantity of time. This would mean when I then destroy my artwork, it is felt as a loss or waste of time. I want to show how something that could take weeks, months or even years to create can be taken away in seconds.

MICHAEL SYDNEY MOORE

I stumbled across Michael Sydney Moore, a 24 year old Londoner, on Instagram and was in awe with his photo-like painting style. Similar to Chuck Close, Moore creates hyper realistic oil portrait paintings but on a smaller (yet still considerably large) scale. Moore usually works with older model subjects who contain considerable amounts of character in their facial features and portrays their emotions with every brush stroke. If it wasn't for his unfinished documentation of his portraits the final images could easily be mistaken for photography.

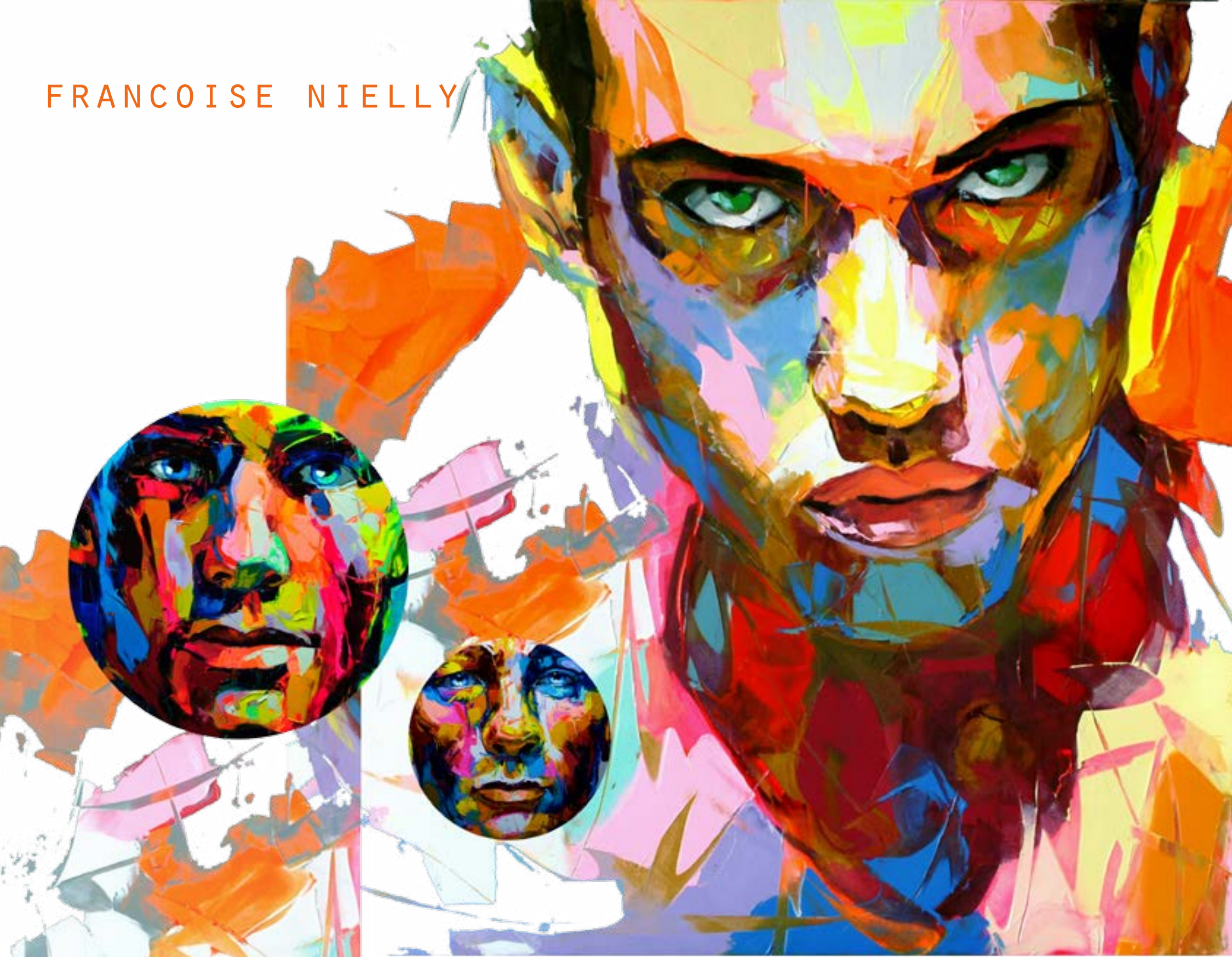
Moore documents his work in progress which gives a sense of 'behind the scenes'. I also feel like it builds a relationship between the artist and the viewer; it isn't just an amazing art piece but an amazing artist behind it. And with a painting you can't quite believe isn't a photograph, suddenly is believable through proof.

I'm interested in this idea of documentation. I feel it would be necessary for me to have some kind of record of my art work before its destruction. I originally wanted to only document the destruction of the art piece however I feel the documentation of the creative process is just as important with my work.



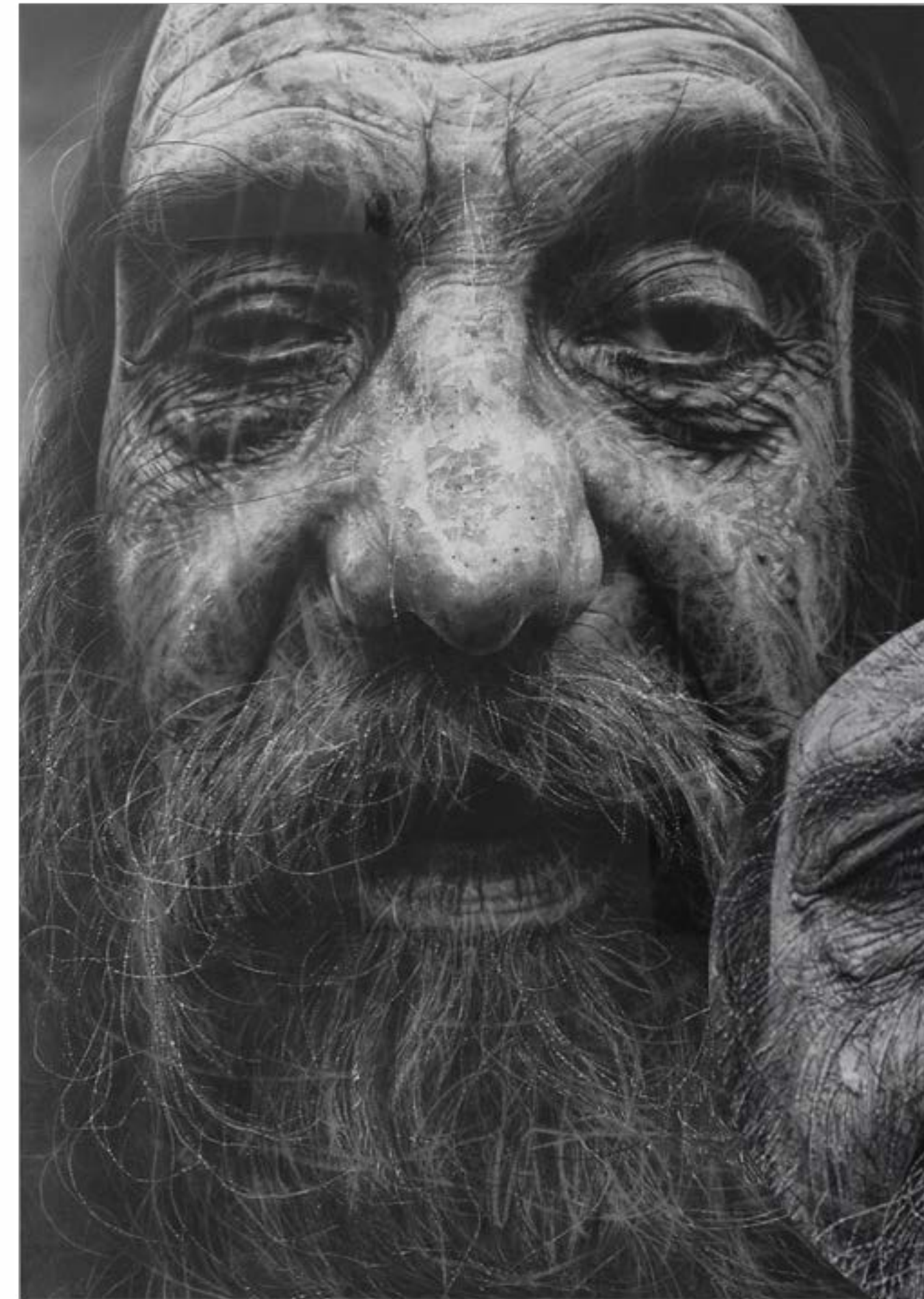
instagram: michael Sydney Moore

FRANCOISE NIELLY



Francoise Nielly works with bright colours and uses thick brush strokes to create her colourful portraits. I thought about using bright colours in my work because they evoke happiness, life and energy. Saying this, the portrait images appear to stare intently at the viewer in a way that contrasts with the bright, exuberance of the colours. You would expect the subject of the painting to be smiling, yet instead we have stern faces. I like this dissimilarity, as the colours could represent the fake happy mask that someone may present to the world.

DOUGLAS MCDOUGALL

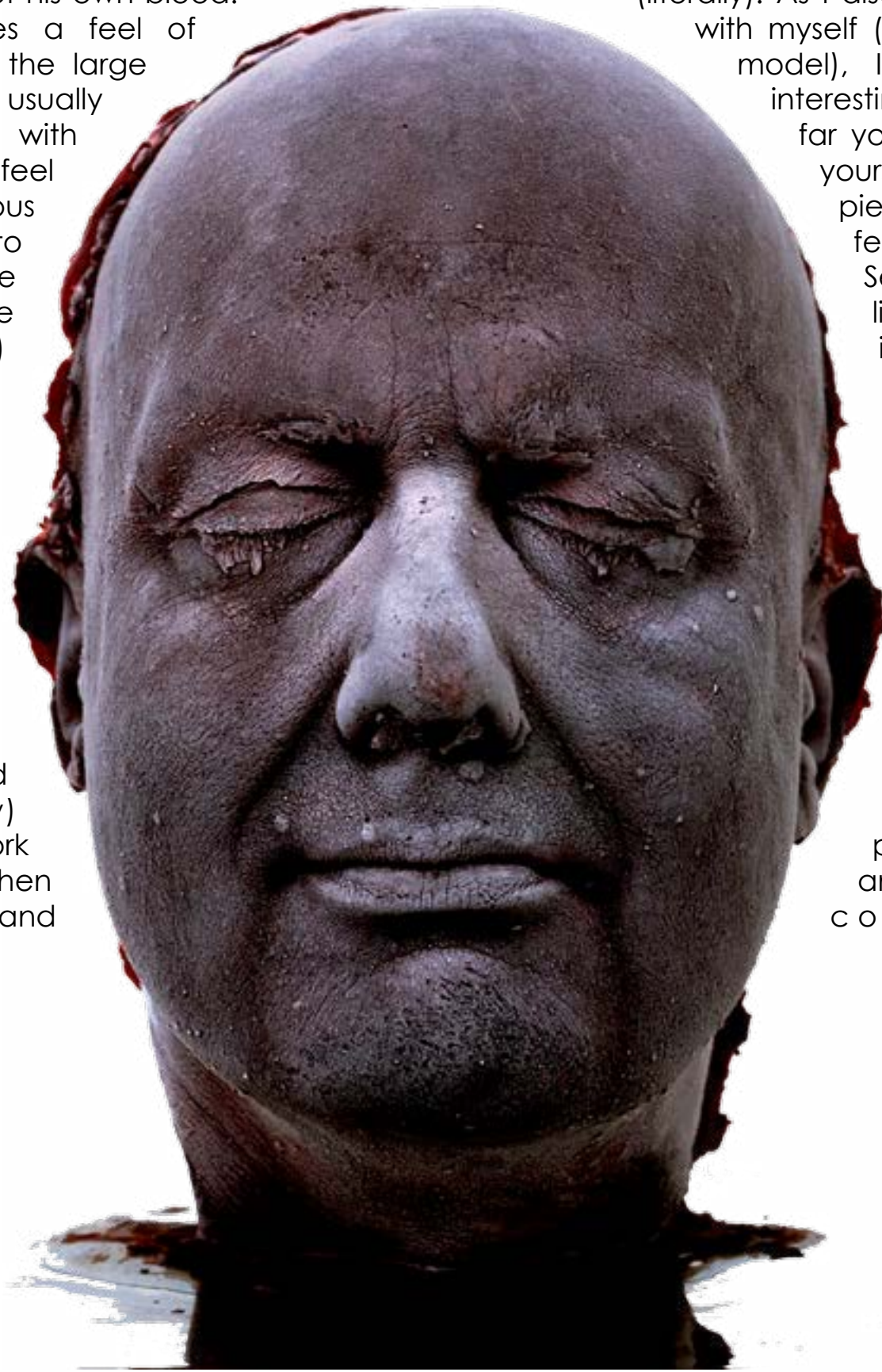


Whilst researching and developing my project, I realised I wanted to create portraits in different mediums (not just using paints). This led me to look at different styles of portraiture. This is when I stumbled across Douglas McDougall, an artist who creates intensely detailed charcoal drawings. I have never used charcoal before and quickly realised the extent of McDougall's outrageously brilliant detail in his portraits. I love the natural black, grey and white colours charcoal portraits produce, and the contrast of that with Francoise Nielly's colourful work.

MARC QUINN

Marc Quinn is famously known for his 'Self' (1991 – 2006) sculpture piece made from nine pints of his own blood.

The piece gives a feel of unease due to the large quantity. We usually associate blood with life and death. I feel it adds religious connotations to the piece; the idea of sacrifice (the loss of blood) and playing on the belief of immortality (freezing the piece to last forever). I believe there is a contrast between completely pouring yourself (literally and metaphorically) into your work and life and then containing and

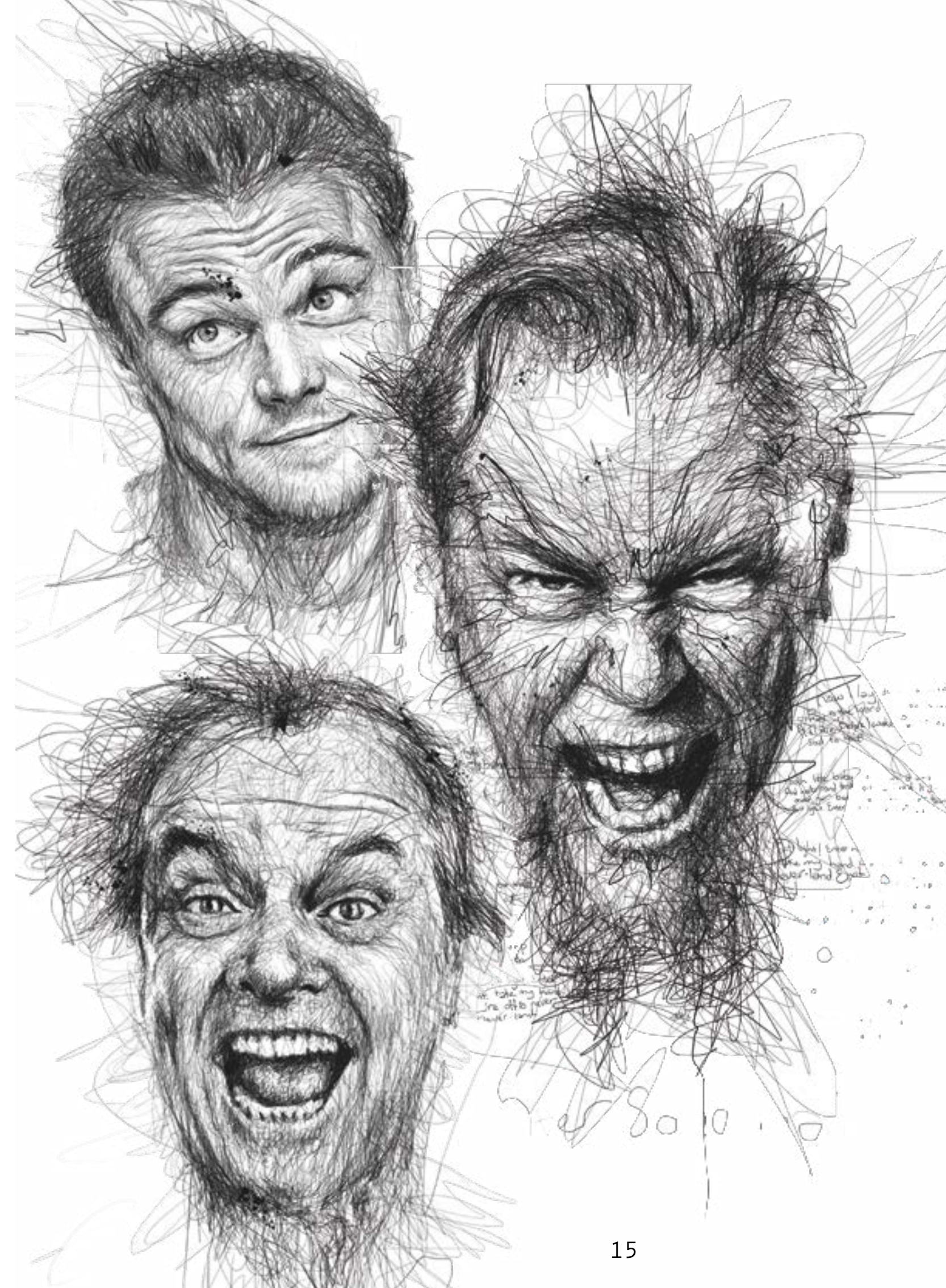


restricting yourself. I really warmed to this piece as Quinn's art work is him (literally). As I also like to work with myself (as the topic/model), I felt it was interesting on how far you could take yourself into a piece of work. I feel that Quinn's Self could be linked with the idea of self-destruction, the use of blood could relate to suicide or self-harming which are acts of self-destruction taken to the most tragic, physical and extreme conclusion.

VINCE LOW

Vince Low is a Malaysian artist who creates fun celebrity scribble doodles. I wanted to be able to create something that is quick but still hold enough detail. I really enjoy how playful Low's work is and the characters he's created (especially with the use of celebrity figures, which we are already fascinated by). I want to create scribble drawings within my work to then destroy.

My reasoning is that they are quick to produce and it could be great for me to experiment with different ways to destroy my work. My main concern with this project is how long it will take me to get out of my fear of starting. The idea of painting again terrifies me, therefore it would be sensible of me to produce something that doesn't need to be hyper realistic, and then proceed to destroy.



ARTIST RESEARCH BARBARA KRUGER
VIDEO BILL VIOLA ARTIST RESEARCH
ANDY WARHOL VIDEO MARINA
ABRAMOVIC ARTIST RESEARCH
BARBARA KRUGER VIDEO BILL VIOLA
ARTIST RESEARCH ANDY WARHOL
VIDEO MARINA ABRAMOVIC ARTIST
RESEARCH BARBARA KRUGER VIDEO
BILL VIOLA ARTIST RESEARCH
ANDY WARHOL VIDEO MARINA
ABRAMOVIC ARTIST RESEARCH
BARBARA KRUGER VIDEO BILL VIOLA
ARTIST RESEARCH ANDY WARHOL
VIDEO MARINA ABRAMOVIC ARTIST
RESEARCH BARBARA KRUGER VIDEO

VIDEO



I first fell in love with Barbara Kruger's work during my visit to her exhibition in Modern Art Oxford, 2014. One of the main pieces that stayed with me was her four projection screen videos that inhabited the whole space. I like the notion of having to choose what screen to look at. The video's interacted and the transition between them was beautifully choreographed. The videos were of conversations people were having with subtitles of what they were actually thinking. Cinema screen size projection of each video meant you had to constantly turn your head/ body to keep up with the conversation. The projections would then transition; slide to the next wall changing between people and different situations.



As a novice to video art, I was only introduced to Bill Viola's work through suggestions of research with my tutors. But after this introduction I found myself falling in love with his work. His work is so beautiful and accurately choreographed, it appears so natural. I like the use of the four videos, as they are different yet they also work well with each other. As I may use videos for my final piece, I want the different mediums to compliment one another, in way that appears natural.



I recently visited the Andy Warhol exhibition in the Ashmolean and fell in love with his video piece 'Screen Tests'. Warhol had a handful of volunteers, many of whom were popular icons; from models to other artists. These silent videos have the participant staring into the screen for a considerable amount of time, varying from 2-5 minutes. I really enjoyed this piece because of the different ways the volunteers reacted to being scrutinised under the lens for such a considerable amount of time. I was extremely interested in how Edie Sedgwick (a model) stood perfectly still for the whole duration, barely blinking. Whilst others were so uncomfortable they would fidget and even speak to someone off screen. I really enjoyed these portrait videos. I liked how they were presented on two screens in the Ashmolean exhibit and looping round the different videos. However, I also like the idea of them all being presented on their own screens to show the varying times and the comparable discomfort.



I wanted to mention Marina Abramovic (not that I need to justify why; she and her work are amazing) because of the use of documentation when it comes to her performance art. Her opinion is that the performance itself is the piece and documentation is just that –documentation. She believes that the real documentation of her work is the audience's reaction and the stories they tell about their experience. I have created performance art in the past, however I've only considered the use of documentation as the piece. For a while I didn't acknowledge the fact my work was even performance art because of my use of documenting. I feel that Abramovic's view is valid however; the use of documentation is beneficial. My artwork lends itself to being documented and for this project the idea of recording my creation process feels necessary.

ARTIST RESEARCH HEATHER BENNING
DESTRUCTION MICHAEL LANDY ART-
IST RESEARCH VALERIE HERGARTY
DESTRUCTION CESAR BIOJO ART-
IST RESEARCH ARTIST RESEARCH
HEATHER BENNING DESTRUCTION
MICHAEL LANDY ARTIST RESEARCH
VALERIE HERGARTY DESTRUCTION
CESAR BIOJO ARTIST RESEARCH
ARTIST RESEARCH HEATHER BENNING
DESTRUCTION MICHAEL LANDY ART-
IST RESEARCH VALERIE HERGARTY
DESTRUCTION CESAR BIOJO ART-
IST RESEARCH ARTIST RESEARCH
HEATHER BENNING DESTRUCTION

DESTRUCTIVE ART



Heather Benning created a life sized dollhouse in an abandoned house in a deserted area. The creation of this installation took a considerable amount of time, in fact years of construction. It was therefore shocking that after it was exhibited, Benning (just a few months after) burned the dollhouse down. Her reasoning behind it was that she never saw the piece as permanent. This idea of burning something because it is no longer relevant can be interpreted as self-destructive behaviour.



I feel like Michael Landy's Breakdown piece is important to look at (especially for me with this project). This piece is Landy's reaction to our consumeristic society. He catalogues all his possessions and then proceeds to destroy them, after doing so he is left with no possessions or materialistic things. This is an extremely organised way of destructing, that it almost seems psychotic. The idea of leaving yourself with nothing to your name appears crazy, yet that is essentially the point Landy is suggesting. We would assume we would be lost without our iPhones however we are just conforming to consumerism.



Whilst searching destructive art, I came across Valerie Hergarty who creates colour and beautiful scenic paintings, which she then goes on to burn and destroy. She then displays and exhibits the destroyed paintings. She also incorporates nature into her work with tree branches being an integral part of the art piece. There is something oddly beautiful about the destroyed art Hergarty creates here. For this project, I definitely want to destroy my art with fire.



instagram: cesarbiojo

I stumbled across Cesar Biojo on Instagram and was instantly awed with his destroyed portraits. His style intrigued me. The way he completes a nude canvas and then smears oil paints over it with a pallet knife is very expressive. Whilst the styles of these paintings are similarly realist, contemporary, abstract and expressionist, the meaning behind each can be interpreted very differently. For example a digital, angular smear could represent the frustrations of technology shown upon ones face. Alternatively the areas covered could be more significant. The paint over the eyes is similar to a blind fold; either the subject in the portrait is hiding something or something is being hid from the subject.

I would like to do a similar smear on one of my self-portraits to represent the internal struggle, confusion and frustration I feel as I attempt to confront my mental health issues.

TOBY ALLEN CREATES MONSTER ILLUSTRATION PERSONIFYING
DIFFERENT MENTAL DISORDERS.



ANXIETY

Anxiety is something I am extremely affected by. It is the most bizarre emotion to either consume you. I get this heightened feeling whenever I'm in the university building or more specifically whenever I'm approaching the Richard Hamilton Building. I couldn't explain exactly why this happens. But my main guess would be fear. I'm in constant fear that I'm not good enough, that I'm not capable. I'm afraid of other people's opinion, in fear that they would agree with me. This anxiety and fear stops me from doing the things I not only need to do, but also the things I want and enjoy. However, anxiety reminds me that I care.

SOCIAL ANXIETY

In addition to my anxiety, I have social anxiety within that category. I get afraid that I am too loud or too quiet, that I am both boring and annoying, that I have nothing to offer in an intellectual conversation and have nothing I'm passionate enough about to hold a decent conversation. I get anxious when meeting new people as I don't know what they will think of me. I feel like I have to play pretend and never fully allow myself to become friends with people in fear that they will not like the real me.



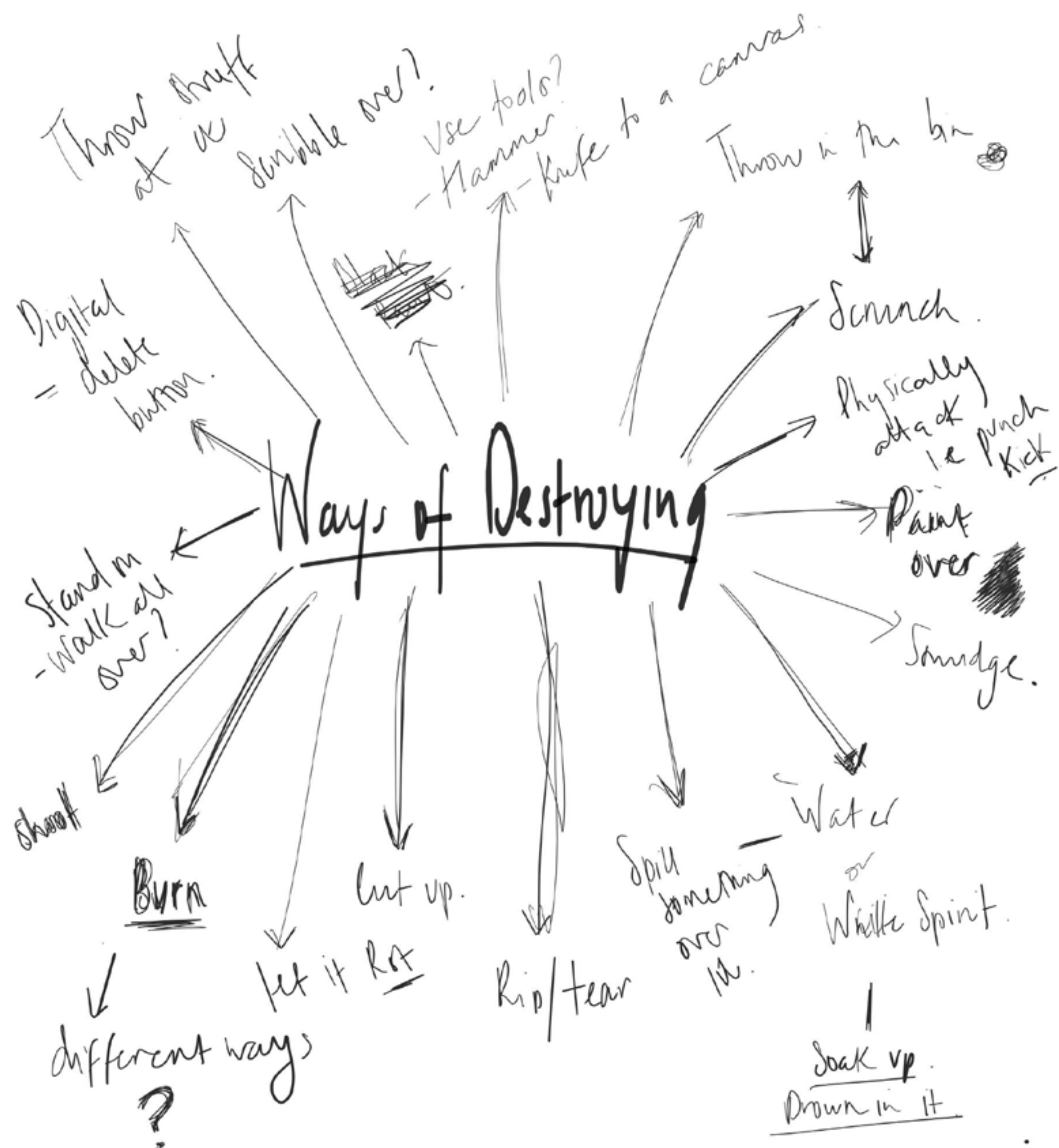
DEPRESSION

Depression is something that I have suffered with for a long time however became prominent whilst in college. During my time in university I have found myself fallen back into depressive moods and apathetic behaviour. In contrast to the fear I feel with anxiety, depression makes me feel nothing, makes me feel empty. It's the weird in-between emotion of caring so much and not caring at all. I do get incredibly sad at times and try and pretend I'm not, instead of letting myself confront what I actually feel. I am trying to understand that emotions are real and meant to be felt—even the bad moments. As long as I realise I can't always be happy; I'll recognise I can't always be sad.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER
(OCD)

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is not something I suffer with however, I felt it was necessary to add in this page, because it is a condition that involves continuous acts or rituals of self-destruction; the obsessiveness of thought combined with compulsive behaviour. I can empathise to an extent with the obsessive thought of not being good enough combined with the compulsion to through it all away.





DEVELOPEMENT

BLACK PAINT



THE FOLLOWING PAGES WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH MY DEVELOPMENT OF MY PROJECT WITH ANALYSIS AND REASONING BEHIND THE CHOICES I HAVE MADE. I WILL EMPHASISE THE DIFFERENT EXPERIMENTAL WAYS OF DESTROYING MY OWN ART; TAKING YOU THROUGH THE INITIAL STAGES OF MY IDEA TO HOW I'VE VISUALISED MY WORK BEING PRESENTED FOR THE FINAL DEGREE SHOW. THERE WILL BE REFERENCE TO THE CHALLENGES I HAVE FACED BOTH PRACTICALLY AND MENTALLY WITH THIS PROJECT. I WILL ALSO LINK TO MY PREVIOUS WORK AND COMMUNICATE THE SIMILARITIES AND THEMES THAT CONTINUE THROUGHOUT MY PRACTICE.

My initial idea of ruining my art for this project was to use black paint in a way that obliterates the whole piece. I felt like black is very symbolic; it can be seen as darkness, the shadows can suggest mystery with something hidden behind that darkness and can often hold a negative connotation, as it is usually used to represent evil in comparison to white and light colours used to symbolise 'good'.

Choosing to wear black (be it a rebellious teenager, fashion guru or business man/woman) signifies lack of emotion. For example, a female dressed in a black dress is seen as sophisticated but less approachable. Victoria Beckham ('Posh Spice') was famously known for her little black dress yet also known for her hostility and unwarm nature, in comparison to Emma Bunton ('Baby Spice') who wore lighter colours and was seen as innocent and completely friendly. Similarly, rebellious teenagers



wearing all black appear unapproachable as well as appearing emotionally 'tortured'.

Therefore I wanted to paint a colourful portrait to contrast with the black. I wanted to show how something bright and colourful can be tainted by darkness. The bright, vibrant colours are supposed to suggest a bubbly, loud and fun personality whilst the black represents depression, self-hate and low self-esteem which consequently cause self-destruction.

I have never worked with colour in this way before and was mainly experimenting with this piece and was focusing more on colour than realism in the portrait. I don't believe my knowledge of colour theory is great so therefore this piece didn't exude the vibrant colours I wanted. However, as my first piece of experimenting with destruction, I feel this piece was somewhat of a success.

SPILT INK

Whilst pondering different methods of destructing I started to wonder the reason why someone may fall into the acts of self-destruction. I found myself asking the same questions over and over; are you aware of it when you're self-destructive? Is self-destructive behaviour deliberate? Or is it learnt, accidental or conditioned? What if something awful happened to someone- would they then have justification for their self-destruction? Is there even such thing as a bad person? Or just someone who has fallen and broken? And if someone is aware they are falling into acts of self-destruction, then is their behaviour deliberate?

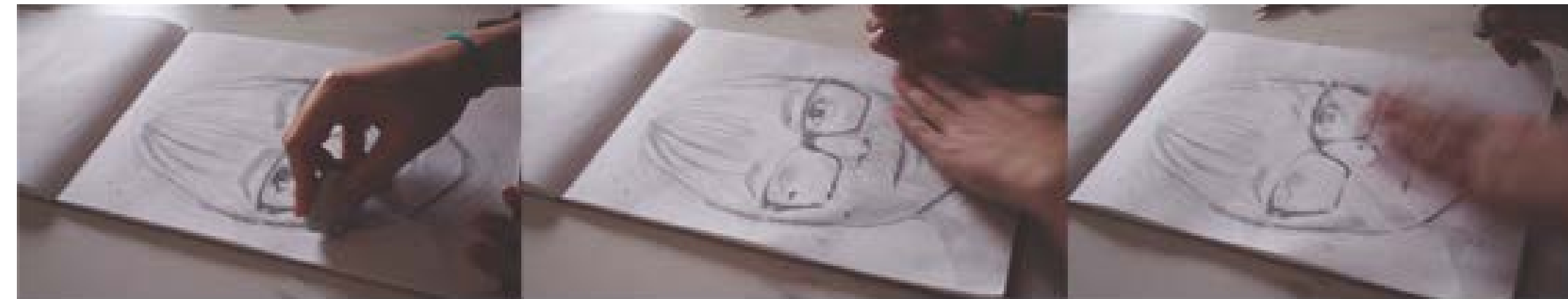
These questions played on my mind and consequently made me think of life in general. The choices people make, choices they have to face and choices avoided. ~~Shit happens~~ life happens and how we deal with it determines character. Spilling liquid over an art piece was a potential way of ruining my work. It can

be perceived as an accident or painstaking act of frustration. It suggests it could have been a mistake (even if done deliberately) and cannot be taken back. The common saying 'don't cry over spilt milk' is usually negatively aimed at someone dwelling over something that has already happened and that can no longer be altered.

In this piece I purposefully knock the ink over to create a mess over my acrylic self-portrait. It was a sudden fast movement to try and incorporate an act of frustration. I wanted it to be instant so that no amount of effort could salvage the piece. This made me think of how self-destruction is formed into people's behaviour. Is it a gradual process or does it happens all at once? I deliberately chose the colour red to symbolise blood which can be associated with self-harming -a physical act of self-destruction.



ERASER



For the beginning of the project I was set on paint being the medium I was going to use. However, I then realised I needed to show some sort of development with my idea of self-destruction, even if what I create/destroy won't be a part of the final piece. That is when I thought I would simply do a pencil drawing and then rub it out with an eraser. This simple idea got the ball rolling for the rest of my project. Although it is simple, it was effective and got the message of destruction across efficiently and effortlessly. I liked the idea of erasure and completely removing something from existence. However, as expected the rubbing out didn't completely erase the pencil drawing and I was left with a watermark.

With my spilt ink and black paint pieces I only documented the destruction of the

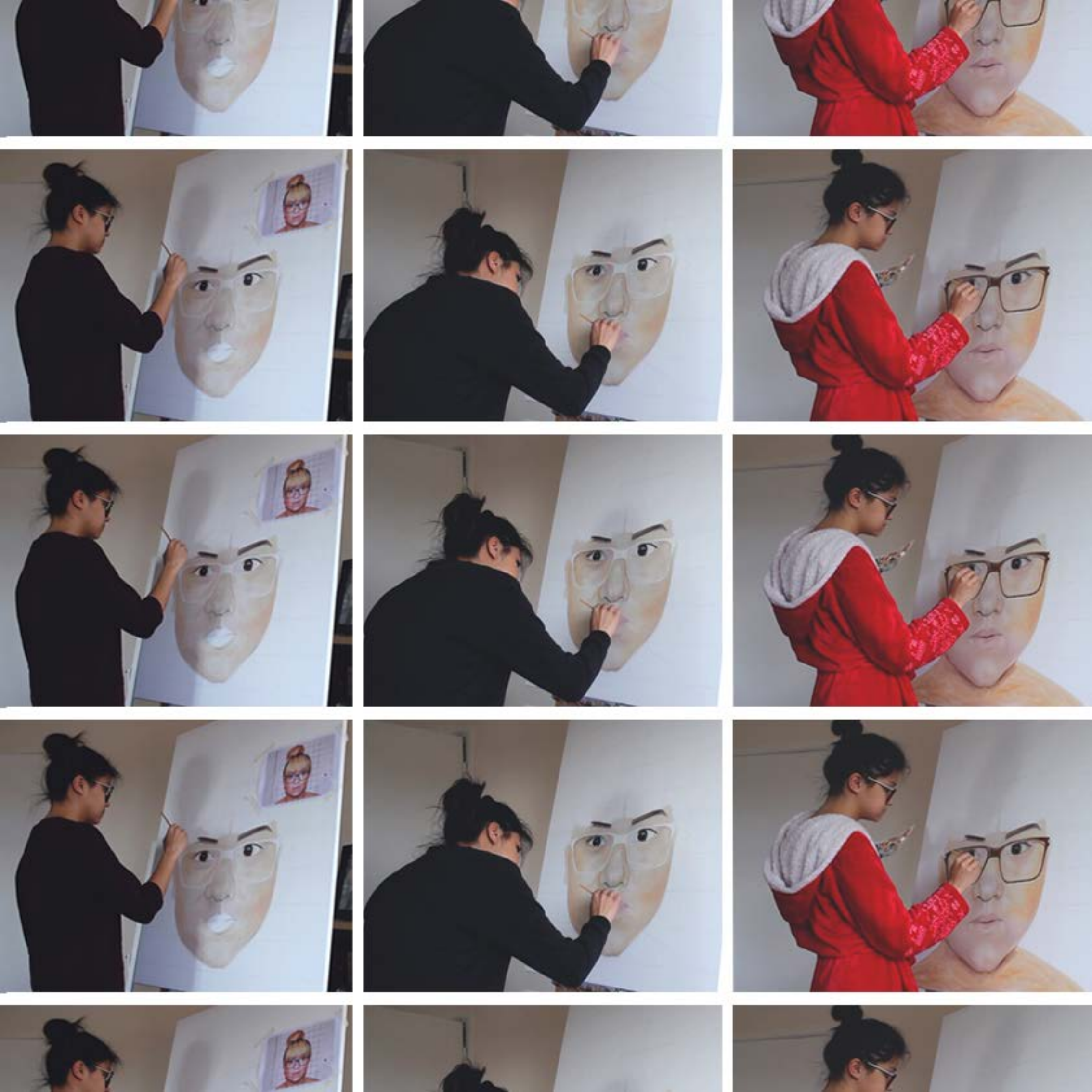
piece, whilst for the erasure drawing I knew it needed to show a time lapse of the drawing being created as well as the destruction. Subsequently, from this point onwards I document the whole process (creation and destruction).

THIS SIMPLE IDEA GOT THE BALL ROLLING FOR THE REST OF MY PROJECT.

Due to the hasty decision of video documenting the work being created, the visual aspects of the video are unappealing. The desk is messy; the angle of the video is awful with the leg of the tripod even in view, and the wood desk wasn't the most aesthetically pleasing. I knew from then I needed to find a suitable place to document my work in progress and therefore leaving the opportunity for the videos to be a part of the final piece. I opted for a white table space and filmed from a sideways angle instead of attempting to video from above.



first attempt



OIL PORTRAIT

Size: 100 x 80 cm
Medium: oil on canvas
Duration of creation: approx 490 minutes
Duration of destruction: 12 minutes

From the very beginning I wanted to create a portrait substantially larger than my usual choice of A4/A3. I felt with a larger scale I could get more detailed and allow me to fully analyse my face. Linking back to my research, some portrait artists work with large scale, creating high detailed paintings –scale and detail indicates how much time has been spent on a piece of work. My smaller portraits are my experimentation with destruction. However, I also wanted to work on a larger portrait, alongside my smaller self-portraits, to focus on the lengthy process of creation. The outcome was to destroy my work regardless of the amount of time spent.

The choice of oil paints was to use the typical medium for portraiture. I am not too familiar with oil (as I would normally opt for acrylic), however I felt that oil would be the most appropriate medium to use especially for creating detailed paintings.

I started this painting in Week 7, however discontinued before I got to the hair. I have never felt confident with painting hair and got to a point where I felt paralysed to continue working on the piece, in fear of destroying it too soon. I didn't want to accidentally destroy it half way through the creation, before my deliberate destruction of

the final piece at the end. I feel like this fear and avoidance is what my art piece is about.

I finally picked the paint brush back up in Week 10, where I started on the hair and background of the image. The photograph used for reference is taken from my 'She's a Nine' piece from Second Year, where I have dyed blonde hair instead of my natural dark brunette colour (which I currently have). I started the hair in the portrait similarly to the hair in the photograph, however I felt the blonde hair wasn't relevant to the piece. I don't have blonde hair now and I didn't necessarily want blonde hair for the portrait, therefore decided halfway through that I was going to paint the hair brunette. This is where problems arose and I started to learn more about the oil paints dos and don'ts. A big no-no is dark layers over thick white/light layers. With every stroke, the brush was producing a grey murky colour tone. I felt like every brush stroke thereafter was painstakingly corrupting the portrait before I had got around to actually ruining it. The whole process has been mentally challenging for me, as I have been brutally critiquing both my face and my art –leaving me emotionally and mentally exhausted.

PROCESS OF
PAINTING:
PAINT FOR A
FEW MINUTES,
DRINK A CUP
OF TEA FOR
TEN MINUTES
STARING AT THE
PORTRAIT, AND
COMPLETELY
HATE IT,
REPEAT.

SMUDGED



As the oil painting was the largest piece I was creating (and destroying), I felt it made sense for this to be the final artwork to present for the degree show. This is when I started to mind map my ideas of different ways of destroying this particular artwork. The idea of burning art felt the most effective way of completely sabotaging my piece. However, I wanted the destruction process to reflect an element of the creation process. The reason why the erasure of the pencil drawing made sense was because the destruction complimented the medium. I really wanted to destroy the piece in frustration. The point was to be extremely delicate with the creation, and for that to contrast with the sudden hateful attack of destruction.

After much discussion, it was realised that the best way for me to destroy my artwork would be for it to relate to the way I created the piece. Burning felt too organised. After looking at artists such as Cesar Biojo, the idea of smudging the oil painting felt right. The concept of the destruction complementing the medium used for creation led to further development within my project.

Once I had started on painting the

portrait, those who had seen how much effort I was putting into the work kept asking, "Will it upset you destroying this?" However, I already looked at it in hate. I couldn't say a time when I didn't want to not destroy it. When the time came to destroying, what I didn't expect was for me to get really anxious, to a point of tears. I was extremely anxious because I found myself comparing my work to Biojo's -thinking I've only got one opportunity to destroy this, I might not destroy it correctly, and what if the final product isn't aesthetically pleasing? I was afraid that by deliberately destroying my painting I would actually destroy it. This is when I realised I was half-heartedly doing this project. I didn't really want to destroy anything I just wanted to play pretend; I wanted it to look like destruction, but still look pretty.

In honesty, I used the destruction in favour of covering the part of the portrait I completely detested and thought was worth destroying -such as the grey toned hair I had applied and failed at recovering. I

had planned out the destruction to a point it was no longer organic; the anger and frustration I wanted to portray in the destructive act was now as delicate as the brush strokes I used to create the standalone portrait.

The fear and anxiety led me to smudging my art piece in such precision; this choice is one that I regret, but still feel unnerved to destroy it more. I fear the opinion of others to the point that I would rather someone see the organised, fake destruction, than the real frustration, anxiety and destruction within.



ERASE ALL

Moving along with the idea of the destruction relating to the creation, I started thinking of examples I could go for. My ideas stemmed from the previous use of erasure; the process of rubbing out a pencil drawing. I then thought of erasure in concerns with our current day –erasure within digital art. To relate to the digital age made sense to me, especially in a university environment where every student's hard drive is currently the most valuable thing in their life. The fear of the 'delete' button is every student's nightmare. That is why I wanted to create a digital piece and then proceed to 'erase all'.

I wanted to portray complete erasure; with digital art erasure would be to remove any traces, in comparison to the rubbed out pencil where you could still see the outlines of the drawing. The pencil drawings leave the essence of something once was there, whilst the digital 'erase all' button removes all evidence of said thing ever existing.

However, this wasn't and isn't the case. It feels impossible to actually delete something digitally now that the undo button is so predominant. I found that when I pressed the erase all button I could easily press undo and have it all back. Even if I continued to create something else on the same document I could continue to press undo until my image returned. Even when I completely deleted the portrait it was still in the trash folder. I had to go through a lengthy process before I felt there was no evidence of my work existing.

Saying this I really like how sudden the erasure appears, one minute you have your artwork and with one button it is gone (and with several more buttons it is completely gone). Unfortunately, in the video it was unobvious I was clicking the 'erase all' button and is difficult to get the message portrayed of self-destruction. This is why I would like to redo this piece with more emphasis on the 'erasure'.



SCRIBBLE



The main emotion I wanted to portray through all my work was frustration. I wanted to show how this emotion can cause an outburst, a physical reaction that consequently causes self-destruction. That is why I felt the simple act of just scribbling over a drawing would successfully convey destruction and frustration.

I wanted to keep to the decision of destroying via appropriate medium created, therefore to scribble over a scribble doodle made most sense to me. This was beneficial as they are quick and easy sketches to create (and destroy) and due to my struggle with getting into and staying in my creativity, this worked well for me. Saying this, I still completely and utterly ripped my quick doodle sketches to pieces (not literally but this is something I would like to do with another piece). I hated how out of proportion I drew my face.

I also wasn't enthusiastic with the way I

destroyed the scribble sketch. I wanted to portray frustration however when watching back my hand movements felt tame. I also felt that the final destroyed piece didn't look as destroyed as I would have hoped. Due to it being a scribble drawing, my scribble over the top needed to be over-the-top. Yet here was a less exaggerated scribble which didn't cause that much damage in my opinion. Nonetheless, I will have to keep and present this piece for the final show as I haven't got enough time to create a new version. Although the piece is quick to create I have more pressing things on my to-do-list that I have to prioritise.

I am trying to be more realistic with what I can and cannot achieve and although I am certain I could quickly create another scribble portrait I know that I would probably still criticise the new version and attempt to throw that away too (which is something I do a lot of the time). I needed to draw a line.

CHARCOAL DRAWINGS

Burning my artwork was something I definitely wanted to do from the beginning. The concept of burning to me is the ultimate way to remove evidence, and a way of silencing; the act of Nazi book burnings is the act of removing the voice of others. Whilst burning can be associated with evil acts which silence others, it can also be a form of raising a voice in protest, for instance the burning of bras in objection of women being conformed to wear them. However, this is still a rebellious and aggressive act. Saying that, the use of burning items isn't always aggressive in its nature, bonfires are useful for people to throw in unwanted items and memories that they no longer want to hold onto. While fire is destructive in its nature, it can also be linked to a call for help- a traditional SOS signal is to create fire, so the smoke can act as warning or message.

I had help with setting up the fire to burn my drawings as I have a slight fear of playing with fire. Nonetheless, I find the natural aesthetics of flames mesmerising and beautiful, yet I'm fully aware of how disastrously dangerous fire can be. Something so beautiful can be so dangerous.

In keeping in tune with the creation and destruction process accompanying each other, I created charcoal drawings to be burnt and wanted to create more than one to burn continually in an obsessive, repetitive way. I'm pleased with how the video turned out and how the portrait only comes in view once aflame.



SCRUNCHED

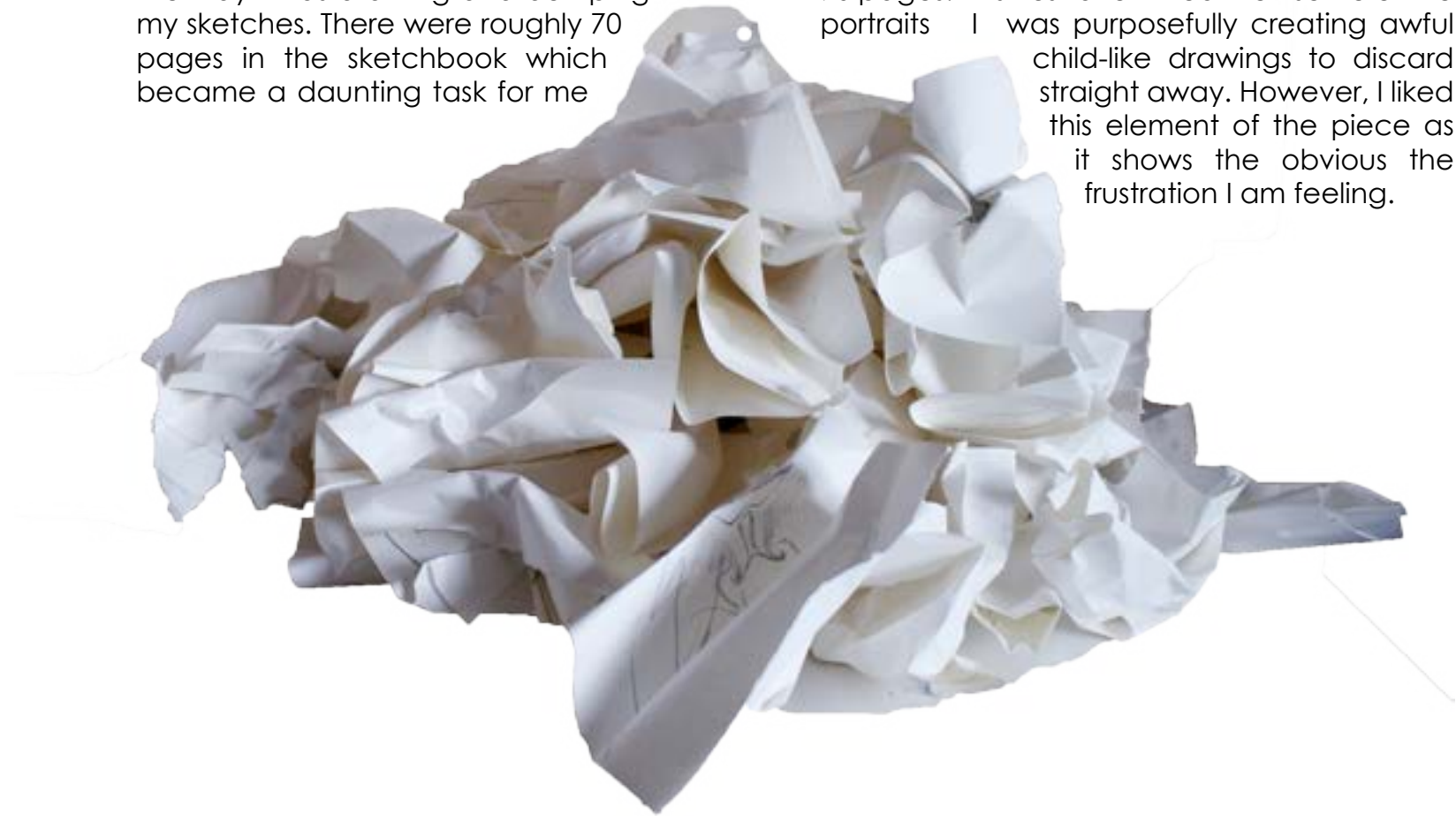
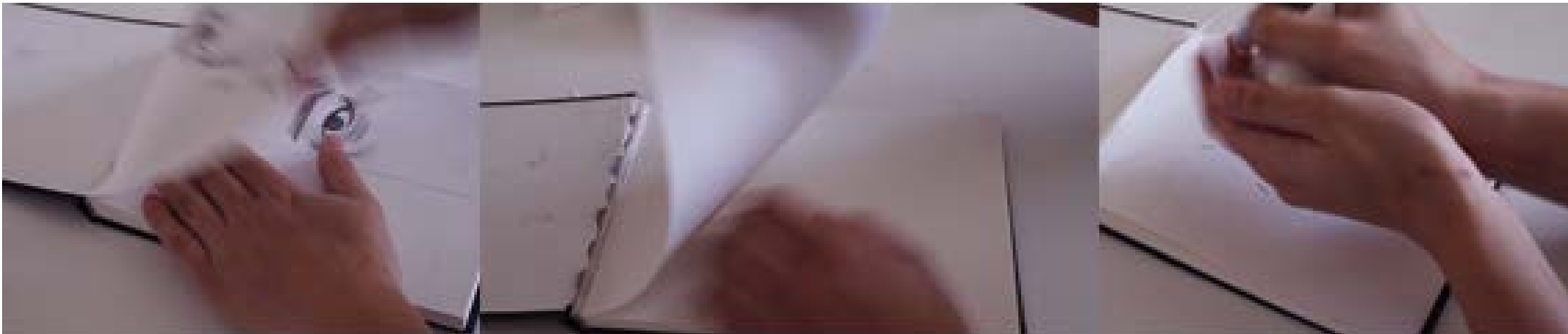
As I have previously mentioned in my introduction, in the past (and recent past at that) I have thrown away art work I haven't liked due to constant scrutiny. While I was focusing on all the different ideas to create the visualisation of destruction, I overlooked the very motion I do constantly –disposal. This is when I decided to pick up one of the many sketchbooks I own (one that I've purchased but been too afraid to actually sketch in) and sketch all the way through the book -cover to cover- discarding the drawing as soon as I wasn't happy with it. This meant some were in much more detail and others were simply a line thrown away before it could be formed into anything.

Similarly to the charcoal drawings and burnings there was an obsessive, repetitiveness about the way I was drawing and dumping my sketches. There were roughly 70 pages in the sketchbook which became a daunting task for me

to get through the whole thing. This quickly became a challenge for me to do as I was both harshly criticising my face, my artistic ability and even my hands when re-watching the videos.

I created two videos; one of me drawing and discarding of the sketches off screen and the other was throwing the discarded paper on screen. I did this by videoing in the same spot whilst watching the video of myself sketching then throwing away, and so thrown the scrap paper at a similar time. I later edited both the videos to sync up. However, if I had access to two cameras I would have filmed them both simultaneously.

This was a very challenging process for me staring at my own face non- stop for 70 pages. This frustration meant on some of the portraits I was purposefully creating awful child-like drawings to discard straight away. However, I liked this element of the piece as it shows the obvious the frustration I am feeling.

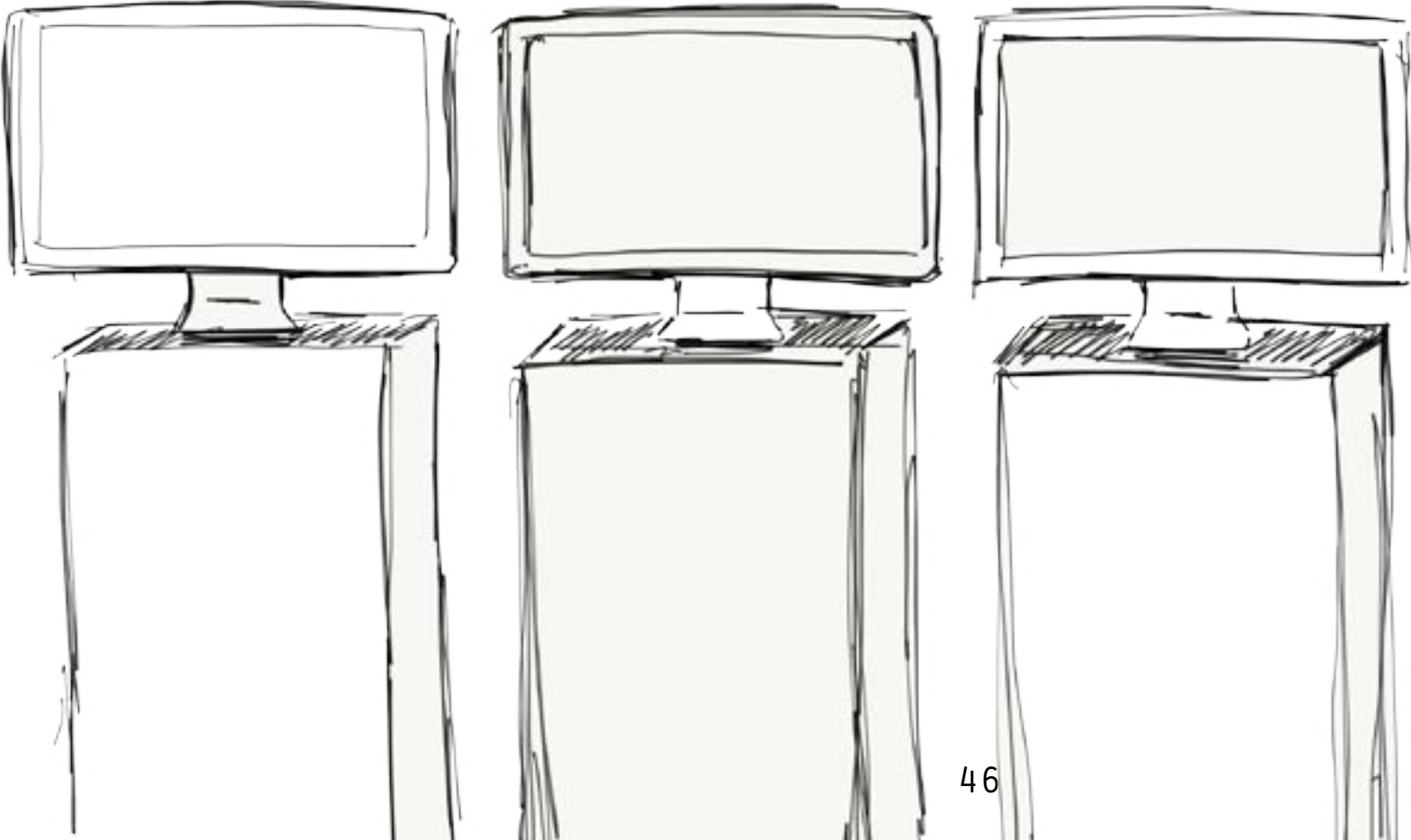


VISUALISATION

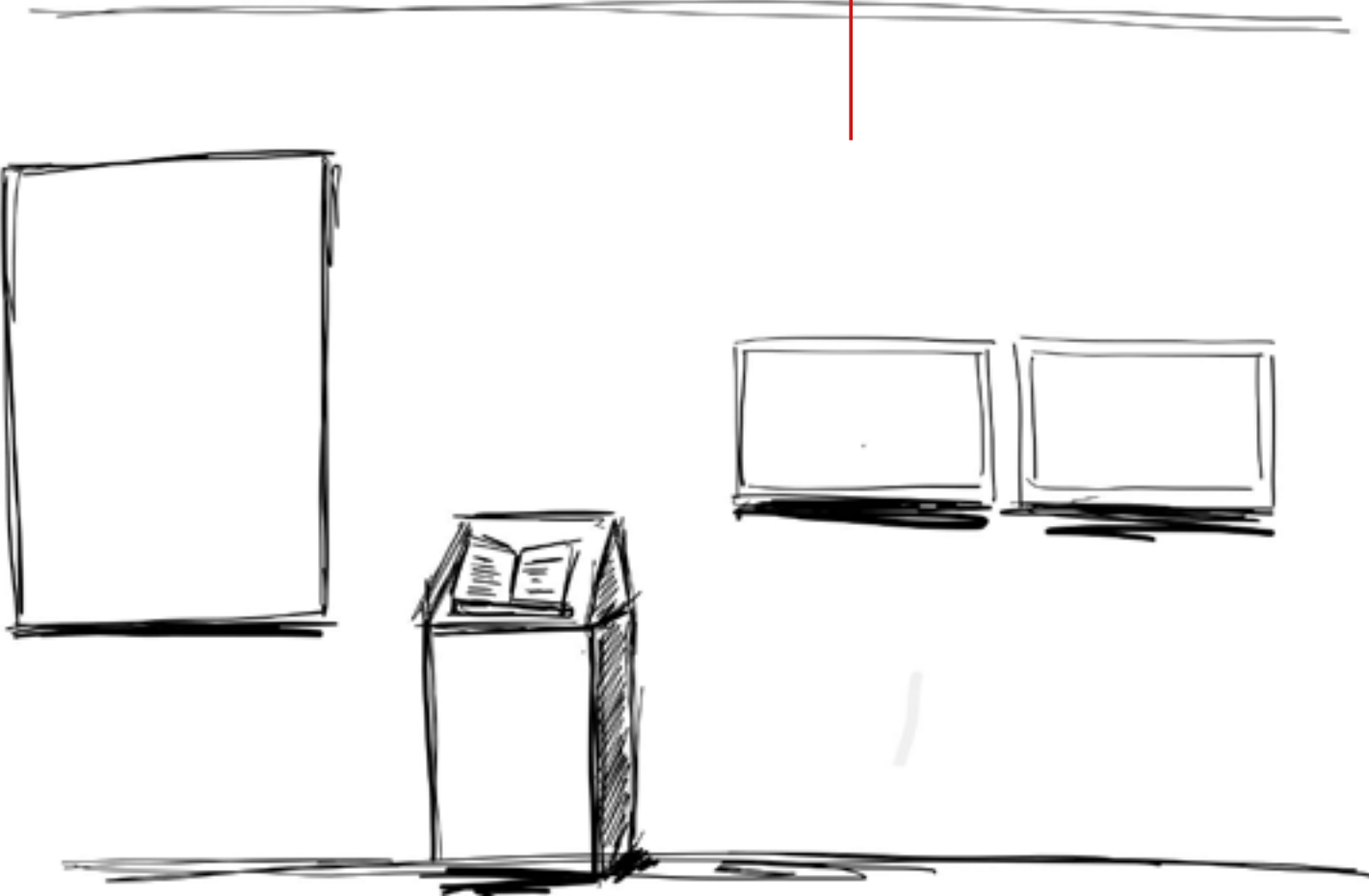
Through the creation process I have never been confident in my presentational skills when it comes to exhibiting work. Here I have had to visualise how I want my final piece to look. At first I wanted to just create a large portrait destroyed and present that for the degree show. However, as I have been documenting my work through video I started to feel like that was a major part of the artwork. The outcome of destruction isn't necessarily the art but the process of destruction is. Saying this, I had put a lot of effort into my painting and I wanted to be able to display that alongside the videos. In addition, I felt that I have put a lot of effort into this art book and I believe it complements the project in an informative way, therefore I wanted to showcase this too. I even considered presenting the smaller destroyed portraits however I overruled this as it would be too much clutter in my space. Once I had decided I wanted video, portrait and

book for the final degree show I needed to think of how it was all going to look. At first I felt three different monitors would work best, on three plinths, as three looks visually pleasing. However, when I was thinking of ways I could choreograph my different videos I felt like I was forcing the third monitor into the piece. I therefore felt it would be better to have two monitors instead; to show the creation on one screen and the destruction on the other. I then felt the screens should be presented on the wall and not on a plinth mainly for practicality as I would then need to find or build them. For my book, I realised I do need a plinth or a lectern for it to be displayed on. This panicked me as I felt I had left it too late to worry about however, I have reserved a spare lectern to use for my book that I will need to paint a fresh layer of white. For my portrait I want this simply presented on the wall in eye level.

In regards to my space I'm presenting in, it will be in a darker room so I will need to sort out lighting and communicate with the other students presenting in that room. I have not finalised this yet however I hope that the final outcome will look clean and professional.



- 1 x Portrait
- 1 x Lectern
- 1 x Workbook
- 2 x T.V monitors



SELF - OBSESSED

It wouldn't be ridiculous to think I'm narcissistic and self-obsessed with the amount of times I've used myself as the subject in my work. I have my initial self-portraits from A Level, I have attempted doing a clay sculpture of my head (which I hated and destroyed), I have put myself behind and in front of the lens, executed a week long performance art where I was dressed up to the complete nines just for university and now I'm returning back to painting self-portraiture for my self-destruction piece. However, the reason behind the constant use of me in my work is not due to vanity (well not that I'm aware of) but self-scrutiny. I don't love staring at my

face, I in contradiction hate it.

It is a really challenging process to stare at your own face for so long and study its flaws and being so fully aware and somehow immune to them. I also feel that I use myself in my work when it is necessary. When working on my 'She's a Nine' piece I felt it made sense for the subject to be me, mainly because I knew perfectly well how I wanted the piece to look and didn't feel it was required to try and direct someone when I already knew myself. I feel like I create art for myself and deal with topics that are affecting me, but with the off chance that someone can relate

to what I
have to
say.



SELF - DEVELOPMENT

Throughout this self-destructive process I have gained a better understanding of myself as an artist and therefore, I feel I have developed my practice further. From first year to now, I have gained the ability to look at art from a broader perspective and delve more into concepts and reasoning behind my art practice. I have gained my own artistic voice within my work and feel more confident with labelling myself an artist without me feeling like a fraud.

During my time in third year I drastically fell down a steep, downward spiral in regards to progress. This is when I was most self-destructive as I was excessively avoiding everything. In comparison to my successful end of second year, third year I was disastrously close to failing. I was devastated that I had let myself fall so hard especially when I know I am capable of achieving good marks. However, I now see this time as the most beneficial period of my University experience. I needed this time to fully understand my creative self and how I deal

with situations. I have learnt that I am more fragile than I think, that I need to take care of myself, and to understand my feelings matter. I shouldn't pass them off as inconvenient, as nothing. That is why I knew that I needed to be realistic with myself when coming to work on my final degree project. I knew I work better in a place where I feel safe therefore, my decision in creating a studio space in my home was ideal. It was ideal because I knew I would actually work instead of fall back into avoidant behaviour, like I have done in the past.

I believe this acknowledgement of how I work is my strongest self-development I have gained during my time at Brookes. I believe this awareness allows me to be brutally honest with myself, so much so that I can't tiptoe my way around situations. I am relieved that I have fought for myself and didn't completely give up and quit - I was just taking a breather from my own ruthless self-critique.

“CONSIDER THAT IF ARTIST EQUALS SELF, THEN WHEN (INEVITABLY) YOU MAKE FLAWED ART, YOU ARE A FLAWED PERSON, AND (WORSE YET) YOU MAKE NO ART, YOU ARE NO PERSON AT ALL.”

- ART AND FEAR.

SELF-REVIEW

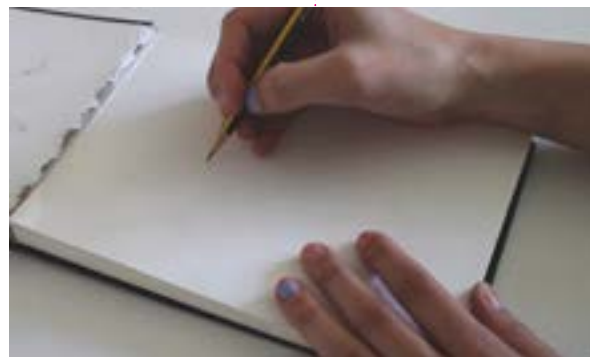
Whilst working on this project I've become more aware of how I work as an artist and creative. I work best in my home, not necessarily alone but with people I feel comfortable around. I have realised that I get completely uncomfortable when someone watches me work and worse when they make a comment (even if it's complimentary). I have realised that I don't like showing people my work in progress because if they make a constructive comment on my work I become defensive and explain 'it's not finished so leave me alone'. I also found that when working in complete isolation I struggle to get anything done unless I have already got into it and can continue on without realising I'm on my own. My ideal working space is natural light, white space and with one or two others, who I'm comfortable with, who are also working because I am easily distracted.

Through this project I have had to look at myself in so many different ways; literally

staring at an old picture of myself, staring in the mirror, at my hands in videos, my art self and my emotional self. I have constantly felt 'not good enough' and throughout this project felt self-destructive wanting to destroy the work before it was scheduled to. That is why I personally feel this work is successful as it is real for me.

I have surprised myself with how much I've cried near the end compared to how apathetic I felt towards the beginning. This project has made me realise how much I do care about university and my future. For that reason, I have to not allow my stubbornness and anxiety get in the way of me achieving what I am capable of.

The project has left me emotionally and mentally exhausted nevertheless I feel it has been a necessary part in my life as an artist and in general.





To Clair, for her patience and understanding.
To Myfanwy, for her enthusiasm and belief in me.
To my Nan, for her motivational speeches.
To Michelle, for her nonstop encouragement.
To Verrence, for always being a phone call away.
To Hannah, for keeping me calm.
To Jack, for being there, holding me and wiping away my
tears.