*burnout*

# Chloe Rogers

Throughout school life, high achievement both academically and athletically is rewarded with praise and trophies, disregarding all that must be sacrificed to do so. The sheer pressure placed on students to perform well in meaningless assignments and tests has personally caused me countless sleepless nights and overwhelming stress; in my efforts to reach the ever-high standards placed on me both by my parents and the school.

My artwork, titled *burnout*, aims to convey the negative effects that reliance on academic validation can have on students, referring heavily on my own personal experience as year 12 is closing. I chose to create a self-portrait with oil paints, as I felt that would reflect the message I was trying to convey in a personal and perhaps relatable manner. I was inspired by artists Regina Lyubovnaya, and Vincent Van Gogh in how they use illustrative brush strokes and amplified colour to convey emotional turmoil within their subjects. I was influenced to use similar techniques in my major work, specifically heightening the pink tones of my cheeks and forehead to convey the subjects flustered state.

In terms of composition, I chose to cover my face in the small metallic stars that are typically handed out to children starting from kindergarten for good academic behaviour. This to me represents the good grades I achieved throughout the school year, as well as the outstanding effort I put into everything. The positivity of the shiny stars is juxtaposed with the crying face of the subject, as she stares helpless, directly into the camera lens.

In preparing for my self-portrait, I first painted an undercoat of a mixture of burnt sienna and raw umber. This allowed me to create a midtone so that I was able to identify specific tints and tones of colours accurately as I laid them down. I used a projection of my reference image to ensure accuracy of the sketch and refined that further before starting painting.

I found a helpful tool for mixing the correct colour tones was printing out enlarged portions of my reference image and colour matching to that, rather than the main reference. This allowed me to get an accurate shade of colour, and ensured all colours would be mixed and ready to go before painting. This made it easier to get into the flow of the painting. I started my painting from the eyes, which proved to be a good starting point as I was able to slowly build up the skin tones around them accurately.

In choosing the background, I wanted to ensure that my face was the focal point of the painting, which is why I ended up choosing to paint a solid ivory black. This choice I feel was successful as it emphasized the luminosity and brilliance of colour, an element of the painting that was important. Furthermore, the black background also added another layer of symbolism to the composition, as black as a colour is typically symbolic of darkness and despair. Considering that stars are symbolised 'beacons of hope', representing positivity and renewal, these two elements are juxtaposed together to convey my overall message. After completing the painting, I felt the composition was unresolved, it was not communicating my ideas as succinctly as I would like it to. This is

why I added gold foiling to the edges of the gold stars directly on the subject's skin, adding another visual element to the painting, heightening interest in the symbolic reference of the stars.

First and foremost, *burnout* is a personal reflection/response to the build-up of anxiety I have felt as year 12 ends, but it is also an observation of how schools and parents place such high regard on high achievement academically: it is my belief that the pressure students feel to get high grades is unnecessarily drastic due to the long term irrelevance it has in reference to the rest of your life.