

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Untitled***

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My second practical and folio served as a continuation of my first, further exploring my passion for biodiversity and conservation using coloured pencil. The pieces could be considered a collection, given the close link in subject matter, colour and theme.

It has also been largely based on images I captured in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and inspired by my visits to lion and elephant conservation projects in Zimbabwe and Kwa-Cheetah breeding project at Nambithi Game Reserve in South Africa. My personal aesthetic stems from my passion for conservation and linked to my South African heritage, in this piece showing urbanization with a focus on poaching.

My work was influenced by two artists in particular, Toronto based Amy Swartz and French Henri Rousseau. Analysing Rousseau's tropical landscapes helped me develop the foliage shapes for the 'living' island in the piece, which was the most challenging element in trying to ensure the shapes and colours of leaves remained defined and textured. Swartz's collection depicting skulls and skeletons on wood was the starting point for the bulk of my concepts. I recreated one of her pieces on wood and loved the texture and blending I could achieve. Swartz thinks of wood as the 'bones of a tree', an idea which inspired my use of a pine canvas, not only for the soft texture against the solid lines of my pencil work but as a symbolic reference to the deforestation and destruction of nature my piece is themed around.

I began my folio with an idea from a bridge I saw in South Africa, which had huge concrete pillars either side encasing the road like an 'elephant's ribcage'. I used this idea and modified it by adding the spinal column and skulls representative of the impact of poaching. I used reference images and morphed the ribcage with each skull, trialling in coloured pencil and then spent extensive time in Photoshop arranging the elements and correcting perspective. The stone island was developed by altering photos I took at the Kloof Gorge in South Africa, and the shape of the living island created by digging up and photographing plant root systems at the school agriculture block. In testing, I trialled mostly the application of stains to the wooden canvas, but decided to keep it natural and let the wood speak for itself. Working on wood was an interesting experience, as it was unfamiliar to me before this prac. I enjoyed the smooth blending of colour and crisp lines that could be achieved, although the imperfections in the surface sometimes made it difficult to press colour into the grain.

The skeletal structure of the bridge evolved into a floating bridge, representative of the journey of our species, literally stepping over other species to further our own society. Creating the symmetry of the bridge was symbolic of the need for 'reflection' our society needs to undergo to reverse the damage caused by habitat destruction. Having the three islands isolated from one another was a deliberate way to show the impact of humanity, moving across each ecosystem, exploiting resources and leaving it in ruins.