

Practitioner's Statement

Captives

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My final piece is my response to the social and ethical debate of Euthanasia, initially inspired by journalist Nikki Gemmells' thought provoking articles, followed by several documentaries and many conversations with family and friends about the highly controversial and subjective topic. I began by broadening my understanding of the debate; researching many different published ideas from pro-life and pro-euthanasia advocates, which assisted me in the initiation of visual thinking and helped me to clarify my own points of view. My artistic intentions, subsequently, were to communicate that keeping someone (a sufferer of terminal illness) alive against their will is theoretically the same as a hostage being held against their will.

In order to express my Pro-Euthanasia ideas I needed to establish a subject matter that would clearly portray my beliefs with a strong and direct message, as well as be easily understood or interpreted by the audience. I researched Expressionism, hoping to find inspiration from representing feelings and strong emotions in a visual way, like the linocuts and oil paintings produced by the German-expressionists. I also investigated art that depicted death; "The Death of Marat" by Jaques Louis Davies was one such painting I found very confronting and macabre which led to me to exploring less literal ways of getting my ideas across.

Media experiments began with color pencil drawings, then black and white oil painting, and finally charcoal. I had little to no experience in using charcoal so I researched techniques and experimented finding that charcoal offered the most controllable tonal range and realistic effect.

The artist that offered me the most inspiration was contemporary artist, Ellie Noir. Her charcoal studies are what influenced my decision to use charcoal. I liked the moody, emotive atmosphere she created in her work "Nautilus" featuring a whippet curled up in a form that replicated the form of a nautilus shell. Her smooth and high-contrast use of tone created the dramatic and striking effect I was looking for and I could visualise how my black and white photos would translate onto paper.

My conceptualisation gravitated towards representing the idea in a symbolic way. I decided in the conceptual drawing stage to express my idea using hands as my subject matter. One of my original ideas was to have just one set of hands tied with medical PVC drip cord with cannulas and needle injected into the wrist. I sought constructive criticism and the opinions of teachers, friends and peers and I questioned them about the intentions of my draft sketches and photoshoots. This process helped me establish how to best get my idea across. I decided to contrast the initial idea with a second set of hands, tied with rope to help convey the meaning and to hopefully get people questioning & thinking about my intentions. The hands on the left are symbolic of an individual held against their will, a hostage, fearing for their life, whilst the hands on the right symbolise a terminally ill patient, threatened with being kept alive and having to continue to battle their debilitating, terminal illness. The hands positioned behind the backs indicates that both individuals are trapped, held captive in their respective situations.

I hope that my final piece instills a sense of injustice concerning the rights of the terminally ill or aged. At present medical professionals hands are tied with the current AMA [Australian Medical Association] Hippocratic Oath and laws that state that they cannot euthanize a suffering patient.