

Practitioners Statement – Claire Vaughn

Artwork Title: Containment

Media: Levitation Photography

Size: 100 x 70 cm



Sam Taylor Woods



Lissy Elle



Flora Borsi

Through the creation of *Containment* I intended to communicate how anxiety can affect an individual causing them to feel confined. I wanted my piece to physically communicate a feeling of being trapped by anxiety, being open and transparent about the implications of mental illness. I felt that this was an important topic for me to explore as mental illness is an important issue which is slowly gaining more recognition and understanding as people are beginning to appreciate the severity of the issues surrounding this topic. I decided to use levitation photography as my main technique as I felt it captures a lack of control. This technique was inspired by the photographer Sam Taylor Wood. I found the sense of suspense and visual interest created by suspended figures in her work visually compelling, and once I experimented with levitating photography I knew it would feature in the final piece. The transparent acrylic box that literally traps someone represents the pellucid front that mental illness takes, and the falling nature of the figure and containment within the confines of the box represents the total lack of control felt by sufferers.

My initial research gave me a deeper insight and understanding of anxiety, and the ways in which it can impact individuals. Having a deeper understanding helped me find artists that I felt visually and conceptually reinforced my concept. I initially explored ideas in response to artists like Flora Borsi, Agnes Cecile, Lissy Elle, Sam Taylor Wood, Alana Dee Haynes and Geraldine Georges. Through experimenting with several artists' mediums and techniques, I was able to explore and learn new techniques, as well as improving on existing ones, allowing me to find my strengths and chose the most poignant ideas to refine. As well as Sam Taylor Woods, I found that I really connected with Lissy Elle's works, as she believes that photography should be created through emotion, rather than technically. Her works have a surrealistic edge to them, as she pushes the boundaries of her images through the use of Photoshop, which was yet another influential factor towards my major. Flora Borsi was also another significant inspiration, as she was the one who inspired me to bring different objects into my piece. Borsi uses glass in her works which she lightly covers in paint, allowing for the transparency to still be present. The main focal feature of the suspense transparent box is included after ideas developed from experimenting in response to Flora Borsi.

In order for me to successfully create this work, I had to undertake several processes to ensure the best possible outcome. I constructed the 810 x 810 x 820mm acrylic box in the technology department, which was made just large enough for my model to fit into. A suitable location was then selected for the shoot, after considering several different places such as the Old Adelaide Jail, side alleyways, or a forest. I ended up deciding on Kuitpo Forest as it contrasts the sufferer's feelings – the forest is expansive representing freedom, contrasting to the isolation felt. The strong juxtaposition of this freedom in direct contrast of the containment of the box emphasised the feelings felt in when in an anxious episode, further prompting how debilitating anxiety can be. Once all of my images were taken I then began the Photoshopping process to create the illusion of levitation and made modifications to improve the overall visual qualities such as balance and contrast of tone, and emphasize the strong angular shape of the box.

The final photographic artwork successfully captures my feelings on what living with anxiety feels like. The forest representing the freedom, and broad support networks formed through relationships which is all around you, but the manmade box preventing you access and the realisation of the control and freedom around you, causing you to feel trapped in your own mind. The strong geometric shape of the manmade box helps make it a key focal point against the naturalistic back drop and further conveys the idea of isolation and loneliness. Articulating to the viewers how living with a mental illness is like being constantly constrained without the outside world noticing.