

An Ode to Amy.

How does the artwork created reflect symbolism in order to bring a greater sense of meaning and significance, particularly when in comparison to ancient funerary and grieving practices?

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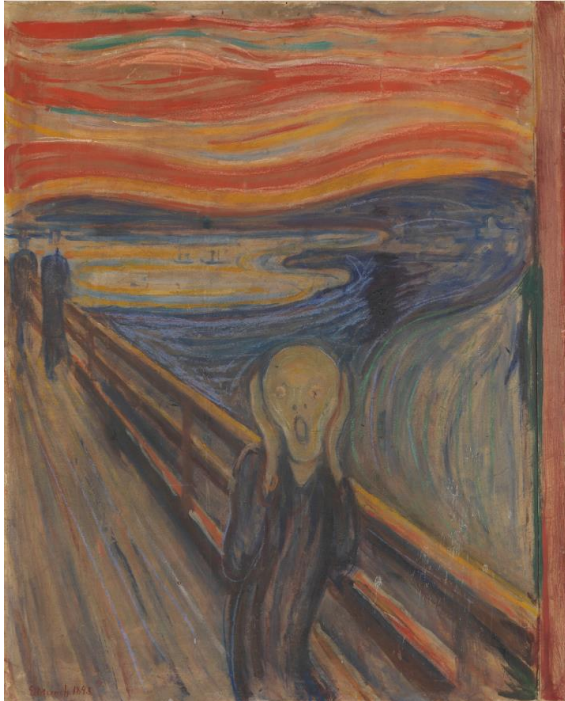


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Summary

The aim of this thesis is to provide evidence, general theories, historic practices and modern definitions, both individually and combined, to support the symbolism contained in the multiple factors of a recent obituary/ homage style art piece. This piece was produced by myself over the past four months, from June to November of 2024. It is a multi-media piece with 5 components that correlate to me, my grief, the person it is about through different sources of symbolism. The symbolism in this piece is paramount to its definition and significance to death and funerary rituals. Which is why it is relevant to provide evidence and theories toward the significance of the symbolistic properties, throughout international, ancient and modern practices. There are three main signifiers presented in my art piece titled “Lachrymatory”; each will be discussed and divided into three chapters, including examples of a similar use of symbolism in other artworks or historic ritualistic practices. Lastly, providing an image analysis at the end of this body of writing using my own photograph, to aid in presenting and explaining directly where these points of symbolism lay within the artwork, how they overlap, how they correlate with each other artistically and how they can be used as a combined entity.

Introduction

I titled my artwork “Lachrymatory” which is defined as “relating to or prompting tears.” ([Etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com), 2024) I chose this as my title because of the mournful process while creating it, as well as being able to highlight my friends name (whom the piece is about) within the word/ title itself. The creation of this piece was initially catalysed by the premature death of my best friend, 10 days before her 23rd birthday, on September 19th, 2023. The three main signifiers touched upon in this thesis are as follows: vermilion cinnabar materials in ancient burial practices, lachrymatory practices, the theories and (possible lack of) evidence surrounding them, symbolism of sunflowers in life and death; in adjunction with colour symbolism, particularly yellow. I will be discussing each of these factors in conjunction and separately, to expose their deeper connotations when combined as well as singularly. Furthermore, I will be discussing how these topics are reflected in the piece I have created, why and what they were

influenced by. Finally, how these topics and my art correlate to theories, ancient practices and information about their significance culturally. Whilst being compared to historical events and other notable artworks from well-known or unknown artists through history.

Chapter 1: Vermillion

Vermillion is a vibrant reddish orange pigment formed naturally as the mineral Mercuric Sulphide, also known as Cinnabar. Which is found globally in hydrothermal veins of fractured rocks, typically in heated environments such as volcanoes and hot springs. Cinnabar requires environments of approximately 200 degrees Celsius in order to form, due to the shallow depths in which they grow and typically situates itself alongside other minerals such as quartz, pyrite and calcite. ([Spindler, 2018](#)) [([King, n.d.](#))]

Attributable to its bright colour, cinnabar has had uses for many ancient and modern artistic practices such as cosmetics, painting, pottery, and jewellery making. Vermillion materials have also been used to treat a multitude of ailments and illnesses such as nerve tranquilisation, sedation and antibacterial/ anti-inflammatory remedies. Typically used by cultures including Chinese traditional medicines and Ayurveda. ([Zhao, Li and Wang, 2022](#))

Its extreme and varied uses will be made evident and proven throughout this written body of work. Vermillion and other raw mineral materials are commonly pulverised into powders, that can then be mixed with painting and printing mediums, such as acrylic, oil and fabric to create the perfect textures and colours for painting with. ([Winsor & Newton, 2024](#)) The discovery of cinnabars toxicity through inhalation and skin absorption, alongside the discovery of cadmium red and yellow in 1817 by a German chemist Friedrich Stromeyer (although the heavy metals used to create cadmium pigments can also be toxic, this was not conclusively discovered until 1919 with further discoveries made in the 1940s and officiated as a carcinogen by the us government in the 1960s), these discoveries had attributed to its decreased use over the last century as well as other modern non-toxic alternatives being developed ([sites.dartmouth.edu, n.d.](#)). Including acrylic and watercolour paints, man-made or non-toxic (low toxicity)

pigments, mixed to create a similar colour to that of true vermillion pigments. (Derivan Pty Ltd, 2022)

An example of a globally famous painting containing both cadmium and vermillion pigments is Edvard Munch's, *The Scream*. Created in 1893. [Figure. 1] (Munch, 1893) (ColourLex, 2018) The use of cadmium yellow particularly, became reoccurring in Munch's work and adds an eerie tone that reflects warm sunlit conditions to his paintings, merging the atmosphere, skies and foreground's highlights to create stability and tonal balance throughout the entire canvas. Within the same painting red vermillion paint was also used, again creating a luminous setting which portrayed the orange glow of a sunset when paired with the cadmium yellow. Although these colours are freshly very vivid, they are known to fade over time and even turn black, so even though the piece is very vivid in colour, it has possibly faded since it was first applied. Which produces an even darker, eerie energy unsettling the viewer slightly, becoming aware of a deeper and gloomy hidden message within it. Which is achieved by way of the faded pigments, expression of the foreground characters face and mannerisms, along with the seeming representation and embodiment of emotions such as despair, anxiety and fear. (Britannica, 2019)

The most notable ancient archaeological discoveries using vermillion cinnabar powders have been during death and funerary practices through-ought history, on an international scale; at geographical locations ranging from Spain to China and across The Americas. (Gliozzo, 2021) What makes this particularly interesting is the reoccurring, concurrent and consecutive use of the material for the same purposes, being used across every continent and during different ages through time. Multiple cultures and over time periods that had no means of contact with one another, opted to use this material in mortuary, burial, and embalming rituals, as well as the arts. Reflecting a much deeper understanding of scientific practicality and symbolism than most would give credit for.

The colour vermillion is generally associated with power, passion and plenitude. (Piktochart.com, 2024) Due to its intense, deep colour and the expense to obtain in its rawest form, typically only those in positions of power or wealth are said to have had the privilege to express themselves with it, or to be buried and embalmed with it. Alongside

the specific conditions needed for it to form, causing some to have to travel a great distance in dangerous conditions to procure it. ([Martín-Gil et al., 1995](#))

In retrospect of my prior research, I have also found my own correlation between the colour that vermilion produces and the colour of fresh blood, this may not be the (main) reason vermilion is used in circumstances surrounding death but could possibly be a subconscious or coincidental decision made by the user. I have attempted to portray this theory further, by dripping vermilion coloured wax over the bottles that hang off the back/ bottom of the canvas, pursuing a replication of blood dripping and tears falling. There are other colours that replicate the deep reds of blood more closely, however the consistency and naturality of continuing with vermilion made it perfect for this piece and became a further reasoning for including it in a homage artwork for the recently deceased. The deep-rooted links to the use of vermilion in death, burial and funerary practices are what mainly causes it to become relevant to the artwork I have created. The topic of the artwork itself is entirely based off symbolism in death and grief, so I thought it was of greatest importance to include this pigment in the piece, considering how many circumstances vermilion has been used in that directly correlate to the topic of death. What I discovered during my research while creating this piece was that The Red Queen of Palenque Mexico had her tomb walls decorated with pulverised cinnabar powder, acting as a magnificent background to her additional bodily shrines. Placed on the body itself, were various stones and shells carefully curated for masks, necklaces and headdresses. This included light jade and shell beads and a funerary mask with obsidian stones replicating eyes. ([Pillsbury, 2018](#)) ([History, 2018](#))

The processes and effort that went into these burials are truly an artform in themselves, with the creators never to be known. From the distance travelled to obtain the materials, to providing time for crafting items from the raw materials, then placing them on, or around the deceased after the body started to degrade, the bones being washed and treated. Thereafter, the remains being placed in the sarcophagus. This provides circumstantial evidence which supports a theory of maximum effort in a short period of time being set aside by multiple peoples, after the death of their queen. Alongside the fact she had been buried with a pair of sacrificed humans, one male having been

decapitated and one female having her heart removed antemortem. The estimated time of the sacrifice taking place between 650-660AD. (Hayworth , 2015)

Discovering this specific archaeological topic is what led to me to start creating the background of the canvas, in my opinion the vibrant colour of vermillion paint by itself, would have clashed too much with a bright sunflower (if painted with fully vivid yellow pigments) in the foreground, so I also added swatches of black (another colour that is heavily associated with death) amalgamated in with the vermillion. I did not want to have a standard pattern of stripes or spots as the background as I wanted a lack of conformity in the painting. I applied the acrylic paint with a silicone spatula in thick layers, this created a blanket of paint onto the canvas with slight depth and texture. The only negative being that this method of application took slightly longer to dry than a thinner layer, which made it susceptible to accidental smudging or fingerprints when moving the canvas. The time this paint took to dry in thick layers, is partially why I chose acrylic paint instead of oil, as oil would take even longer to dry and creates a greater chance of smudging the piece, especially when adding further layers to the back and foreground. Including all touch ups or finer details in the final stages of completion.

In conclusion to this chapter, the representation of death and mourning is presented fairly using vermillion and black pigments on the canvas and wax. However, this is only completely evident and understood when understanding the cultural and historical facts, circumstances and the significance surrounding it. Subconsciously, I do believe that there's an obvious morbid connotation to the work overall without any additional knowledge of the piece and its context, through the use of dark colours and wilting flowers, although one may not understand just why immediately. Especially when only looking at it with no (or any additional) context such as a descriptor or short summary of the piece. As stated previously, the use of vermillion could have sub conscious correlations with fresh blood, passion and love. While black can be used to represent the dark unknown happenings of the afterlife and absence of light that comes from a being that is postmortem. With all these combining factors I do believe this is the best combination of colours for this piece that I could have chosen, particularly for the background. If not for the vermillion colour's significance in death, I would have most likely chosen a solid black background with a probable lack of depth, texture or pattern.

I would have chosen black alone because it is the most associated colour with death, grief, mourning and funerary practices in modern day western cultures.

Chapter 2: Symbolism of the sunflower

The sunflower (*Helianthus*) is a bright yellow (and occasionally orange or red) plant that blooms from June to the end of September in the northern hemisphere, or September to November in the southern hemisphere (during the summer months). ([Qiu et al., 2024](#)) ([Büntgen et al., 2022](#)) Some species of sunflower can grow up to 4 meters tall, depending on the type of sunflower and the conditions in which they are planted in, there are 67 different species globally. ([Virginia, 2022](#)) Sunflowers are commonly used to symbolise optimistic outlooks, happiness and warmth. Not only do they replicate a common image of the sun in art and imagery, both typically being depicted as a large and brightly coloured object with long stems protruding from the centre, but sunflowers do tend to move themselves in the direction of the sun when physically possible. This is an occurrence known as heliotropism, other flowers such as dandelions and poppies can also portray this characteristic. ([West Coast Seeds, 2020](#)) ([M. Serrano et al., 2018](#)) ([TheSeedCollection, 2021](#))

When sunflowers start to wilt and die, the perspective on their symbolism shifts to a more melancholic and despondent atmosphere. With connotations to deaths that we experience around us as humans, the beginning of colder months and a mirror image of the cycle of life along with our own impermanence. ([Flower Chimp Hong Kong, 2023](#)) Although this could also be interpreted as an opportunity for new life, when the centre of the plant sheds its seeds to regrow after the struggles of winter, during a time of year when the ground becomes softer and more habitable for many plants to regrow in the spring.

Similarly, the colour yellow has homogeneous connotations to the sunflower depending on the cultures you look at. Generally, the colour yellow is used to symbolise happiness and warmth, as this too is the perceived colour of the sun which provides us life and

warmth. (Van Braam, 2024) We are chemically predisposed to feeling happier in the sun as it causes our bodies to produce serotonin and vitamin D (chemicals released in the brain that causes better regulation of emotions and a feeling of happiness). (Nall, 2018) (Wacker and Holick, 2013) Against most colours with the same tonal value, yellow will almost always appear the brightest or most prominent amongst them and is deemed a mentally stimulating and energetic colour, that will catch your eye. In Hinduism and Buddhism, the colour yellow is used in association with the solar plexus chakra (also known as Manipura), the 3rd out of 7 in total, which is used to represent the energies of self-love, confidence, clarity, decisiveness, resilience and joy or happiness. The location of this energy in the body is above the navel. (Smith, 2007) There are some negative connotations to the colour yellow which include terms such as “yellow-bellied”, used when referring to a being who is cowardly, untrustworthy or dishonest. A prominent historic example of negative use of the colour yellow was during the Nazi reign over Western Europe, when Jewish victims were forced to wear a yellow star of David on their prisoner of war uniforms. An ironic sentiment due to their renowned favour of blonde people, with a natural and familiar shade of yellow. (Smith, 2007) (St Clair, n.d., pp.63–66) (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.)

Sunflowers have their own physical uses and shows of resilience, which have been used to aid humans in the clean-up of nuclear fallout. (Vandenbrink, 2013) On the 26th of April 1986 a devastating explosion at Chernobyl nuclear reactor 4 (located in Ukraine, near the border of Belarus), that caused the death of 30 people within the first 3 months following the accident and multiple dying from complications afterwards. (World Nuclear Association, 2024) It is known that certain plants can be used to absorb heavy metals and toxins from different environments, in a process known as phytoremediation. One of those being sunflowers, more specifically *Helianthus annuus* and *Helianthus annuus* L. Sunflowers are particularly good at absorbing radioactive elements and heavy metals such as caesium and strontium from soil and water, which are toxins that can remain reactive for years after contamination and pose a risk of damaging cells in living organisms by way of radiation poisoning, causing bone cancer, leukaemia and other cell mutations. Sunflowers are effective at removing these toxins due to their long root systems which can reach far into the depths of poisoned grounds,

accumulating and holding the toxins in the fibres and tissues of the plants roots, stems and leaves; this can then be harvested and disposed of sufficiently, treated themselves, as radioactive waste. (Alexandra de Castro, 2022) Because sunflowers are easy to grow and plant in large quantities at any one time, it becomes financially, economically and timely efficient to implement their use in situations that need to be handled immediately and effectively. Although it doesn't speed the process up by a significant fraction, it is still an environmentally friendly way of handling such disasters and allows time to be allocated to other tasks during the clean-up. Especially in circumstances where human cannot use an alternative method that needs to be done by hand. Due to the positive effects this technique had with the Chernobyl disaster; it was later used in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident located in Japan that happened 25 years after the Chernobyl incident on the 11th of March 2011. Caused by a tsunami that followed soon after an earthquake, leading to explosions at the nuclear reactor. Unfortunately, the use of sunflowers in Fukushima was not deemed effective, especially in comparison to the Chernobyl incident. (Spalding, 2021) (Sasaki et al., 2013)

Sunflowers in art, have been present and significant through multiple art movements and artists' works, representing topics of emotion, the passage of time and the cycle of life. An artist whose use of sunflowers that was as emotionally significant as his own emotions in his artwork was Vincent Van Gogh, the correlation between his paintings and his own mental state was prevalent through a majority, if not all his artwork, especially in his later years when he suffered a deterioration of his mental health. With many reoccurrences of sunflowers in different paintings, alongside his iconic swirling brush stroke pattern. Some of these paintings portray bright settings with joyful and peaceful auras, whereas others characterize an opposing melancholic and depressing scene. (The National Gallery, London, 2019) (Van Gogh Museum, 2020) Some examples of these contradictory placements are "Fifteen Sunflowers in a Vase" (1888) [Figure 2] (Van Gogh, 1888) and "Two Cut Sunflowers" (1887). [Figure 3] (Van Gogh, 1887) Although these pieces were only finalised one year apart, they have two very different emotive connotations visually. The first has a bright tone with a light background colour and overall founded on various shades of yellow with some green highlights. This is indicative of a bright cheerful mood and tranquil setting with good lighting. The second

image shows two severed sunflower heads, viewed up close on a dark blue background, the heads of these sunflowers are evidently deteriorating and degrading with miniscule remanence of the seeds and petals remaining, showing they had been declining for a long period of time, or rather that they had deteriorated quickly. The darker colours used in the background, along with the dark and decaying shades of the petals and plant stem provide an ambience of death, degradation and sadness. It is unclear why black and darker hues are associated with grief, loss and death but the correlation to plagues and disease such as the black death is a possible psychological reasoning. ([Britannica, 2023](#)) The colour black is in fact a lack of colour, as is death a lack of life and emptiness, leading to a possible subconscious correlations and could also be due to the way a body decays and turns dark, black and colourless the longer it is left after death without any preservative chemical or cosmetic treatment, bodies also turn to grey ash after cremation and produce black smoke in its process. Overall, a dark subject with dark colours, throughout the natural and ritualistic processes after death. There is also the long-standing tradition of wearing black to funerals through western culture, though this does differ depending on the societal normalities of your religion and/or country. ([www.woodlawn.org, n.d.](#)) ([Gallois, 2018](#))

Ultimately these examples show that it is not entirely just about the thing you are trying to portray but rather how you do it, darker colours in scenery will naturally produce a more moody or sad tone, whereas bright colours in the scenery produces a more uplifting and joyous tone. The state of the object you are painting, whether it be healthy or in decline, also has a profound significance on how the piece will be perceived by a viewer, along with their own experiences factoring into their perspective. Due to the topic of my own piece and the use of darker tones and colours, I feel this adds an eerie characteristic to my own painting, similarly to that of Van Gogh and Munch's work previously mentioned. The darker colours I used for petals and the stem reflect decay and the topic of which it is about, portraying the death it is touching upon.

While having considered all these symbolic properties of the sunflower and the colour yellow combined, I have also applied my own personal experiences and emotions to the artwork I produced. The sunflower to me, represents the person whom the artwork is dedicated to, not only being her own personal favourite flower but yellow

also having been her favourite colour (purple being mine, which I find coincidental considering they are complimentary colours, as were our personalities). This does add a deeper level of emotional attachment to the piece, as well as the pre discussed symbolism of the sunflower, the resilience they hold which is needed after losing someone that is close to you so prematurely and the colour yellow as it stands by itself, a beacon of light, warmth and usually joyous happiness.

Chapter 3: Lachrymatory Practices

The terms lachrymatory and lacrimarium are synonymous words that refer to a small container in which one captures their tears and the causation of tears.

([Etymonline.com, 2024](#)) ([Dictionary.com, 2023](#)) They are believed to be used for the act of one collecting their tears of grief, typically being a smaller vessel made from glass or various ceramic materials, with thin necks. ([Oed.com, 2024](#)) The words themselves are derived from the Latin word for tears (Lacrima). ([Collinsdictionary.com, 2024](#)) Earlier derivatives of these words generally refer to the act of one crying or the body producing tears, rather than the act of collecting those tears, which developed through theories caused by various tomb, burial and funerary discoveries over time. The glands located above the eyeballs which produce tears, lubricate and clean your eyes throughout the day, are named the lacrimal glands. ([Cancer.gov, 2024](#)) ([Machiele, Lopez and Czyz, 2020](#))

The first recorded evidence still available today of the word being used in this context, was in 1658 by author and physician Sir Thomas Browne writing “No lamps, included Liquors, Lachrymatories, or Tearbottles attended these rurall Urnes.” “Some finde sepulchral Vessels of Oyles and Aromaticall Liquors attended noble Ossuaries.”.

([Browne, 2005, p.21](#)) Referring to a variety of burial urns found in multiple locations across historic periods, including some Greek and Roman mythological sites, stories and references, the inserted references of locations are as follows “Buxton... Tarmouth Caster... the Homericall Urne of Patroclus”. ([Browne, 2005, p.21](#)) In these pages contain the circumstances surrounding these urns, how they came to be, and their presentations when being found are described. The term lachrymatory during the mid-

1600s at the time that this text was originally written, would have referred to a general “small, slender glass vessel”, rather than correlating directly to the production, causes or collection of tears themselves. ([Etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com), 2017) This is evident through the context of his writings. Sir Browne is explaining how no special additives or offerings were evidently available in burial sites of those who are not deemed to be ‘noble’ peoples. Rather that they were generally reserved for the ossuary of those that are deemed to be ‘noble’ peoples. There is direct reference to both lachrymatories and tear bottles as two separate entities in this text, which could be considered clear use of the practice that required ‘tear bottles’ alongside smaller vessels for other uses such as perfumes, dating back to the mid-1600s. Although, over the last 400 years the meanings of these two words have been redefined and have become mostly synonymous with one another. This book was written to explore the philosophy and inevitability of death, ancient burial practices and mythological stories surrounding it. The author reflects the impermanence of (human) life and the desire to create a permanent preservation of the body within objects such as urns and burial grounds. How this need or want to preserve a person is contradictory to the very nature of being alive and human, due to our (frequently deemed as) affliction to impermanence. It is also providing evidence toward the use of tear collection dating back to at least 400 years ago.

The common belief surrounding this practice is that tears of grief were collected as shows of dedication and the level of which one has mourned the dead, to be buried along with the deceased or passed around at funerals in a show of dedication and loyalty to those that once lived, once the tears had evaporated the mourning period is over, some found possible evidence of this practice dates back to the roman era. ([steven, 2021](#)) Other examples that originated during the Victorian era, a time period in which there is clear evidence of a fascination with death and an afterlife, in (what is now deemed as odd) practices surrounding the departed including post-mortem photography. A practice where the dead would be photographed, typically in their caskets or propped upright with poles and positioned with the rest of the family for a final family portrait. Another tradition exercised by the Victorians, before photography became widely accessible to every class, included keeping locks of hair from the deceased, which then later evolved into and included using the hair and/ or teeth of the

deceased to create jewellery and other memorabilia such as broches to remember their dead by. ([Szostek, 2018](#)) ([Tate, 2017](#)) ([Marilyn A. Mendoza, 2018](#)) ([steven, 2021](#))

Locks of hair from Queen Elizabeth I are still available to view at Wilton House, Wiltshire which she had gifted to Sir Philip Sidney, dating this practice back further than the Victorian period and making the lock of hair now over 400 years old. ([England Rover, 2018](#)) ([Foges, 2024](#)) ([Elizabethi.org, 2024](#)) ([B Florence, 2008](#)) ([alanjbarker, 2017](#)) ([B, Grosart and Sidney, 1873](#)) Elizabeth performed this act in a fascinating show of appreciation toward Sir Sidney who served as a soldier and courtier, alongside being a poet. Proving himself to be a mutually respected confidant to the Queen and that this practice exceeded class and even royal protocol or expectations. This lock of greying hair dates back until at least 1586 as this is the year Sir Sidney died, 17 years predeceasing the Queen who had died at 69 years old in 1603. ([Westminster Abbey, n.d.](#)) ([Royal Museums Greenwich, n.d.](#)) Some still contribute to this method of remembrance by keeping locks of hair from their furry beloved pets, along with their collars and ashes. This practice is known as memento mori, which directly translates to ‘remember you must die’ in Latin. ([Ostberg, 2023](#)) A gentle reminder and reflection of your own mortality along with remembrance of those that have already passed.

There is evidence from newspapers released during the 1800s, reflecting a possible misconception when referring to sources that mention the collection of tears during different time periods. The Victorians possibly having meant handkerchiefs rather than actual bottles to collect tears, being handed out at funerals. One source stating “a dozen new handkerchiefs to use as tear catchers for my family” and another stating “they were fluttering their lace tear catchers”. ([Wearinghistoryblog.com, 2024](#)) The comments among multiple news sources from the Victorian era through to the 1900s, may have led people to believe this practice of collecting tears was literal, as well as earlier written references, which therefore led them to doing it themselves. That people were in fact collecting and containing their tears of grief and sadness in bottles, rather than having used something to absorb them. One of the first documented cases of an invention made with the clear intention to capture tears, attempting to envelop and preserve them was in 1941 by a woman named Peggy Dunn from the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. She created a contraption that hooked over the bridge of the nose

and sat at the outer corner of each eye, acting as two miniscule buckets that would collect tears. The inspiration behind this creation is unclear. Another woman by the name of Marie De Meixedon returned to California from a trip to India in 1933 and explained/ demonstrated how to use small, thin glass phials as a receptacle for collecting and retaining tears. Something which she had claimed to have been taught about in India but provided no primary source that confirmed any cultural or historical use of this practice. The 1933 newspaper stating, “world traveler recently returned in California from India, shown with part of her collection of Hindoo tear bottles... demonstrating how these decorative, beautiful little jugs, some made of colourful onyx and others of marble, were used by the widows of India to catch their tears.”

(Wearinghistoryblog.com, 2024)

The origin of this practice is unclear and has many theories surrounding it, with no scientifically proven evidence of ancient use. Some sources state that the liquids contained in these small glass bottles found in ancient tombs consisted of offerings such as perfumes and alcohol for their journeys in the afterlife. ([Agency and KAYSERİ, 2020](#)) There is mention of collecting tears in a bottle extracted from the verse Psalms 56:8 in the Old Testament of the Bible, quoting “thou tellest my wonderings, put thou my tears in thy bottle: are they not in thy book” ([Bible Study Tools, 2014](#)) which refers to a metaphorical belief that God keeps a record of a person’s struggles and pain throughout their life in a book, not generally perceived in a literal sense but these extracts may have led people to actually retain their own tears in a bottle to take a record of their own suffering.

Overall, there is photographic evidence of people using lachrymatory’s to collect their tears physically, dating from at least the early 1900s. It is clear that this practice has been adopted within the last 100 years at a minimum but is unclear just how far this practice dates back to. There is a lot of written records to suggest the word has had more than one definition through time but has been used in a multitude of contexts, all of which at least are in reference to either the production of tears or small containers. With an assortment of sources ranging from the bible, philosophers, writers, journalists and world explorers.

Image analysis of my painting:

I have included my own annotated photograph below to provide evidence and an overall analysis of my painting. Utilizing the image in order to identify and specify the points of symbolism presented in the topics I have previously talked about throughout this essay. The arrows are numbered in correlation to the additional information provided underneath the image.

Own image: Lachrymatory, 2024



1

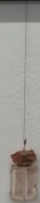
2/3



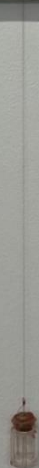
2



1



3



1. Title Image/ Lachrymatory Bottles

The title of this artwork is Lachrymatory, I included the word itself in the piece by hanging a framed print of the word within one of my line work designs, just above the sunflower painting. I found I was able to spell the name of the person whom this work is about within the title, by highlighting the letters that spell her name within the word in even divisions. I used a yellow colour to highlight the letters that spell her name, as I felt this was the most fitting, considering it was her favourite colour and ties into the colour themes of the sunflower that are mentioned throughout this essay.

The small glass bottles attached to the bottom of the canvas and suspended by a red-orange string, each hold a mixed ratio of roughly 1/3rd real tears and 2/3rd water to dilute and fill the bottles. What I found when making this piece is that the times when I wanted or needed to catch real tears in the small lachrymatory bottles, I was not able to. Grief can strike at times when you are least expecting and can be triggered by a song, a smell or even a simple happy memory. The unexpectedness making the process of capturing your genuine tears of grief very difficult as you cannot plan for when it happens, which is why I added a few drops of water into the corked bottles. Filling the capacity up of the bottles up slightly, I could have used just one bottle but wanted a minimum of three, hence why the tears were shared between bottles. Which also served a purpose of stopping the bottles moving as much when there was a draught or movement on the wall, because of the extra weight the water provided.

2. Sunflower Dot Works and Painting

The style of the sunflowers located on either side of the canvas have been a trademark in my art style for a minimum of 8 years, paired with this specific piece to make it feel more complete, true to myself and not lacking depth or substance on the sides of the canvas. I created two near identical dot work sunflowers to represent me and the deceased as a pair, unable to reconnect and being separated by the reality of death in between us. Choosing a black ink instead of yellow, to follow the theme of a lack of colour and light in my life since Amy's departure, as well as carrying the symbolic colours of death throughout all aspects of this curation.

The sunflower painted in the centre of the canvas is a representation of my friend's life and her everlasting effect on mine. The wilt in my life since she has died. I included yellow undertones to my painting as an homage to the life that was once present, but these flowers do not hold their colour for long after dying. Most of the pigments on the central sunflower are a neutral brown colour, mixed with varying shades of yellow. The frames are also painted two shades of brown that were also used in the sunflower, tying those frames into the overall piece, creating a harmonised, consistent and cohesive look throughout the overall curation. The paint I used on the frames, are the same acrylic paints used on the sunflower itself but diluted with water so that the wood grain is still visible through the layer of pigment. Avoiding a solid black colour which would fit the context of the piece, but also would have removed any depth or texture from the frames, compared to the current wooden textures that seep through the thin brown layers of pigment.

3. Vermillion Pigments

I chose to use vermillion pigments in two different locations in this piece, the background of the paintings canvas and the wax that falls around the cork of lachrymatory bottles. The acrylic swatches of vermillion pigment on my canvas act just as those used in sarcophagus' have in history, a decorative background in homage and tribute to the dead. Representing honour and love for a person who touches your heart closely. The wax at the bottom of the piece, hanging onto the small glass bottles, represents drops of fresh blood just as my grief will seemingly always feel fresh. Alongside the semi-permanent concealment of my tears of grief, encapsulating my own mourning in tiny vessels until they degrade or evaporate.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay I do believe I have been able to explain and provide sufficient evidence to support the significant symbolism presented in the artwork I have produced. There is multiple factors and layers to the curation overall, not just the

painting itself, but the surrounding framed pieces which includes the title and relating sunflower sketches. I have been able to support these elements with historical facts and theories with a range of sources; while also providing a direction to the exact points these references lay within the creation, by using a labelled photograph. I do believe the overall topic of death and mourning is represented just by looking at the work with face value, by use of specific colours, objects and presenting the departed's name within the title. However, the deeper, constant and purposeful references may have to be explained to a viewer in order to fully understand the symbolism that lays within it. Every part of the work is purposeful and thought out, with every aspect having its own significance to death and/ or my own emotional connections to mourning or the person the curation is dedicated to.

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