

Tommy_Nelson_Progress_Report

by Tommy Nelson

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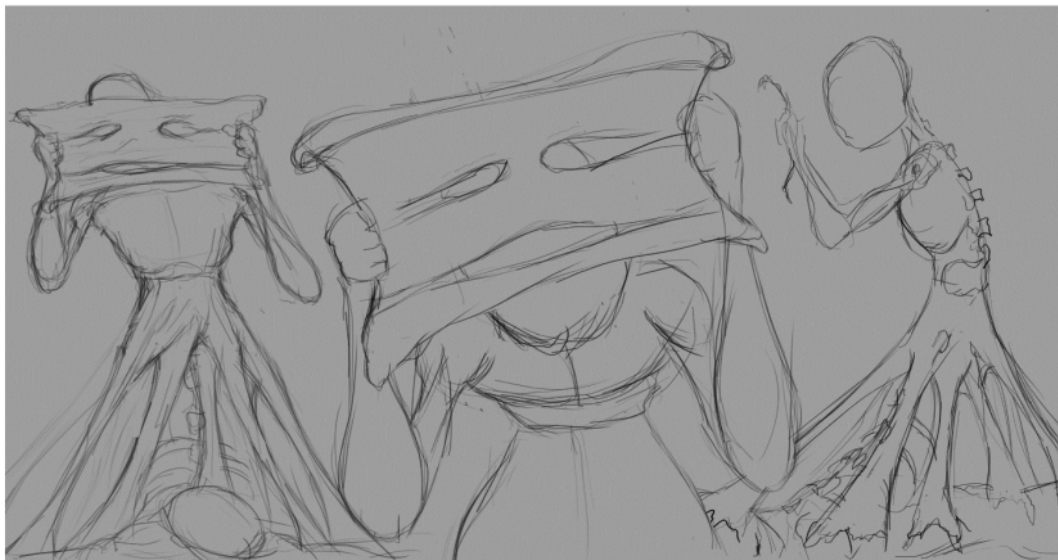
Report

For this assignment I will be creating a creature which will hopefully combine all my skills in creature design so far with the intent to push the design to the next level. An attempt to add emotion to the design will be a primary focus as well as focusing on relatable through concept and symbolism.

As I am aiming to become a creature designer in the gaming industry, thought it would be good practice to try design a creature which would fit into a certain game world. Silent Hill will be the game in which the creature design will be based off. Silent Hill is my main inspiration for creature design. The creatures within the game are very graphic and twisted but retaining many elements of human in appearance. The designs of the creatures represent certain emotions and feelings of the main protagonist within the game. This leads to all the creatures being very symbolic in their design and representing a certain emotion.

For the creature I will be designing it as if I were a protagonist within Silent Hill. I feel that this will create a stronger but more importantly a more personal design. The focus will be mental health and my experience with it especially during the current pandemic. My mental health felt like it restricted and limited me during the duration of the first lockdown. It was very harsh and unforgiving; this will hopefully be portrayed within the design.

Early Designs



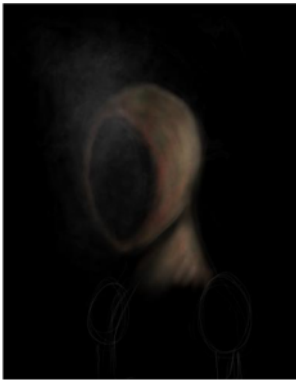
This design was showing the creature growing out and overcoming the host. Taking the identity of the host, literally. The creature would be connected by the hosts spine creating a direct link the hosts' head. This design was to show how mental health can feel like it can overwhelm you and make you not feel like yourself. Though I like this design it felt to visually messy with a lot of visual to take in. The design also felt like it was pushing away from the overall humanoid appearance I want for the design. Keeping the creature as human looking as possible will hopefully push the design and add some relatability to the creature.



From here I wanted to try a more natural approach resembling more plant and root like in appearance. There was an attempt to keep with the mental health theme with the head being a crowded cluster and releasing spores, this was to symbolize spread and influencing others. The arms were fused together to restrict the creature physically allowing the head to take a more prominent role. The body would also be rooted into the ground as roots do drawing nutrients from it but instead it draws all the negativities from the world at its current state.

Though this design seemed ok it felt lacking

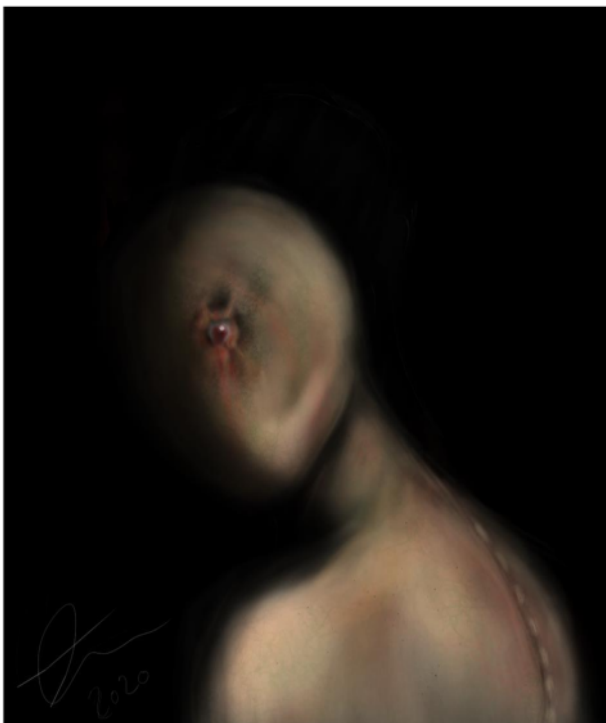
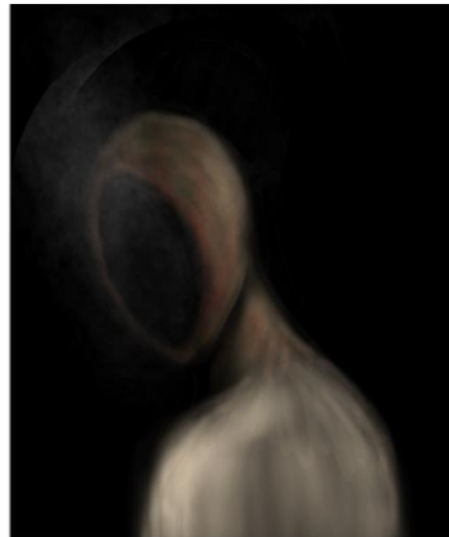
and didn't really hit the mark and strayed too far away from human in appearance.



The next design was to take it back to being as human as possible. Also, for this piece of work the enthesi on the color, painted style and emotion was key. For the face I hit a wall with what to do with it. There were many ideas,

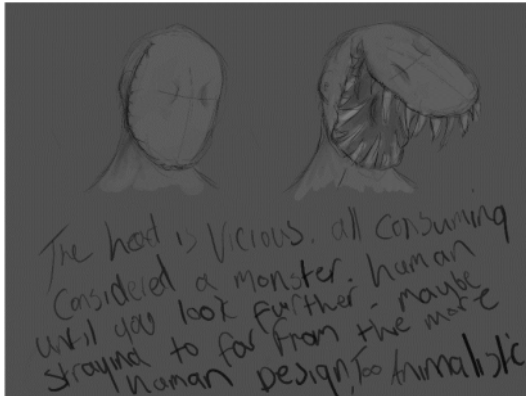
but none seemed to fit the place. The idea of having a hole in the head resembling an empty void but also lack of identity worked but felt almost lazy in design.

Smoke was added to bolster the design, the smoke represents mental burnout, like when a flame is extinguished. But still, this did not work for me. The design needed something resembling a human face with emotion. This is to hopefully amplify the emotion of the creature through the audience. The posture was changed to add a hunch over rounded back to show a secluded and exhausted pose

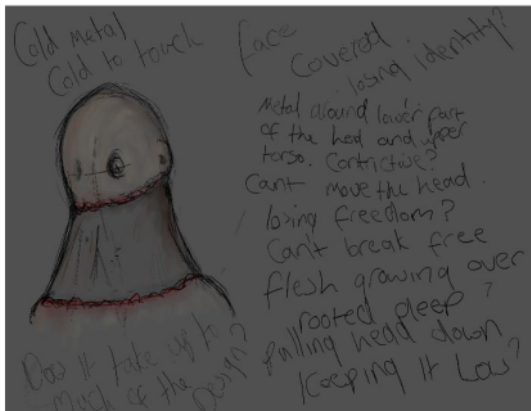


The final design of the creature I was very pleased with. For the face, the addition of an eye really helped pushed the emotion of the image and the creature. I feel that you can read a lot about what someone is really feeling through their eyes. The skin was painted uses many colors, the realization that skin is not just a couple of colors but many different really helped with the skin. The use of reds, greens and browns helped give a very fleshy, but I'll look to creature. For the eye I went for quite an intense and direct stare. This worked well. The addition of a catchlight suggested to me added so much to image as well.

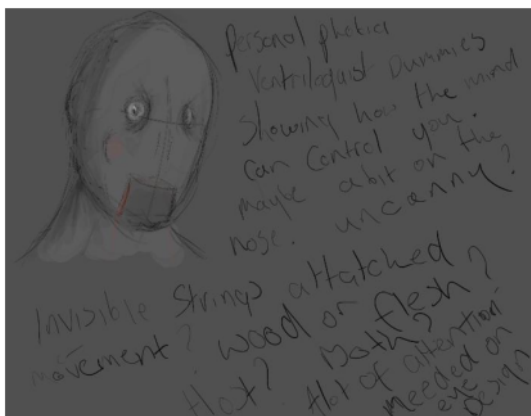
The picture above I feel worked well and acted as a base for the creature design. As this creature is to symbolize mental health, I wanted the design of the head to be the focus over all else.



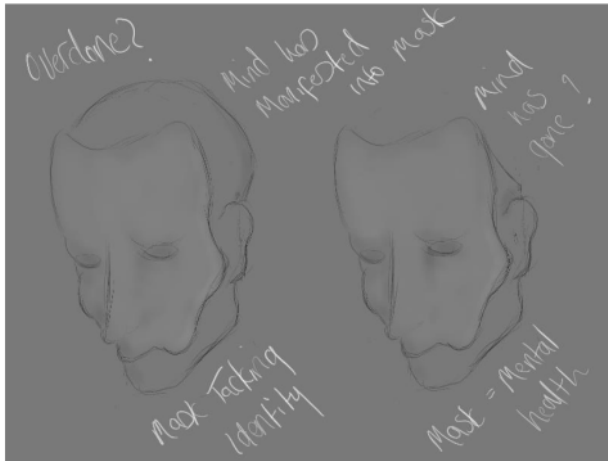
This design having it the face acting as a kind of front for this mouth hidden within was designed to show the viciousness of mental health but also what people are dealing with behind the front.



For this design I wanted to try and use materials to represent mental health. This is shown by the cold metal restricting the head. This shows it as strong and withstanding also cold with no emotion.



This final rough design I wanted to add in my own personal phobia to the design, ventriloquist dummies. I felt the uncanniness of dummies but also the fact that it is a puppet ties well into the theme. This symbolizes the control that mental health can have over a person and how it can make some people numb which is shown through the expressionless face of the dummy.



At this point in the design, I had found that I had hit a wall. So many ideas for the creature were present but with no constraint I found myself jumping from one idea to the other but making no progress. I realized I work better in a group with people who set boundaries or help me keep on track with one design. This felt like a real test but in a good way. I decided to role the idea back and pick out key points

that I found worked well. This was keeping it human whilst also adding some element of puppets to it. Adding a mask to the face concealed the real face, hiding the true emotion, but this felt overdone and quite boring.

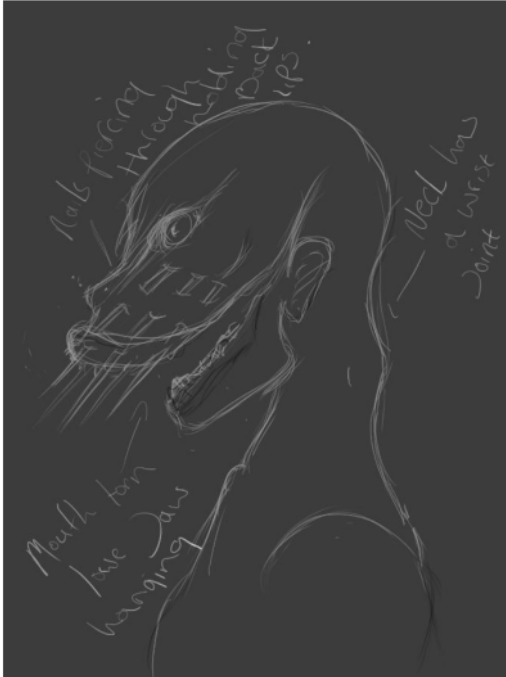


Building on the idea I wanted to add something a bit different to the design whilst keeping the mask. Having a hand to make up the rest of the head with the neck resembling a wrist worked I felt worked well and added like a being-controlled feel to the design. The fingers looked ok, Practice is needing on drawing them, but they did not

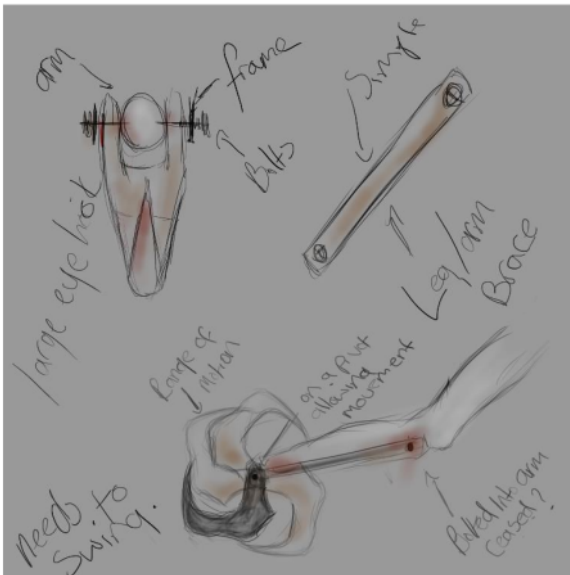
seem to work but the wrist neck seemed like it was just subtle enough whilst adding a crook into the neck to try and push the posture of the neck and head. The wrist represents the hand and the control over the head but without being too on the nose with the design.

This worked well but there was one major problem with it to me. It bored me, tremendously. The realization kicked in that I had no limits to this design, where I felt that this was a crutch, I thought this was my chance to

design something with no limits why am I playing it so safe? The design was created work in a Silent Hill game, my main inspiration and what would be my dream job. The design needed more gore, stronger visuals and more horror.



So, I combine all these ideas so far to create a humanoid creature with the mouth split and the jaw hanging. The upper port of the head elongated and stretched out. The mouth resembling that of a puppet. The face distorted and losing identity, that feeling that you are not yourself. The spikes through the mouth were added to keep in the idea of cold metal but to also add some danger to the design. I wanted to attempt to add in that feeling that you would not want to touch them, to bring some sharpness to the design. The neck wrist remained as it is like a hand has hold of the head controlling it. The head will be constantly flicking form left right to show how constant mental health can be.



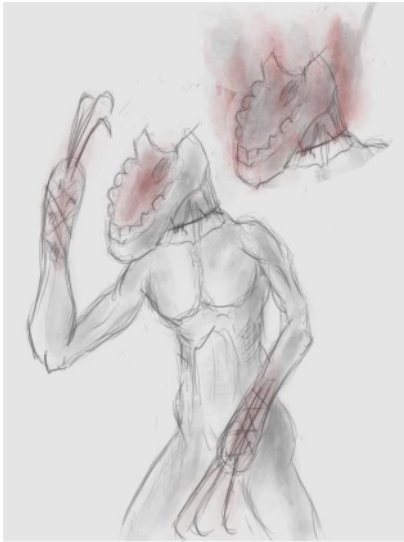
The arm would contain a hook which will be constantly swung by the creature, once again further pushing the consistency of mental health. The hook also symbolizes how mental health can hook into you. Though I am far from mechanically minded I tried to create a makeshift hook weapon out of real objects. The frame will be off a brace, specifically a leg brace. This idea came from seeing my dad's leg brace and the overall look to it. The hook will be a large eye hook that has been crudely sharpened. This hook has a

weighty appearance and looks sturdy which can show the weight of mental health and the weight of carrying it with you. The frame would be bolted into the arm with the hook on a pivot at the front of the arm. The skin around the bolts will be swollen as a result of metal hypersensitivity, this is where the body has an allergic reaction to metal on or within the body. Adding this will add some more body horror to the design.



For the body I wanted to try and push it to a more graphic appearance and concept. Looking back at an old design where the body was fused by the spine with a host, I thought would push the horror tremendously of the creature. This shows the creature is spawned from the host, connected directly to the brain.

A key element missing from the monster is the name. For the name I wanted something that sounded quite mysterious. For this I chose Minerva. Minerva was a Roman goddess who symbolized meaning things from wisdom to medicine and even war. Minerva also comes from the word means mind in Latin. So having the name Minerva the focus is from the war element and the goddess and meaning for mind in Latin creating War against the mind.



Re-working the design to try and finalize it, this was the outcome. Though it differs from the other designs I feel that it maintains just enough level of "human" which I feel is key to this design. The hooks help bring some intimidation to the design as well as adding some sharpness, hopefully giving off a feeling that you would be cautious near them. The body kept mostly human with heavily disfigured features such as the missing part of the upper head and the lack of hands turned to swollen stumps. The idea to almost completely remove the head plays with the idea of losing your identity or not feeling yourself, which I feel is a common feeling with those going through or have gone through a

patch of bad mental health, the design retains something that is human but takes away its facial identity. A piece of barbed wire was added around the neck, this was to add some more discomforting visuals to the creature, the idea of having smoke emitting from the barbed wire intrigued me and could pose as a standout feature. The smoke also calling back to previous designs representing a mental burn out or trying to mask the face and shroud the identity.



To try and bring life to the creature I am creating some poses to help visualizing it. Posing has never been a strong point of mine so spending some time on them seemed wise. It was interesting to see what could be done with the creature, though the bottom left pose could so with more time trying to clean up and further distinguish the pose it did provide the idea of having more erratic movement and poses hopefully allowing for more memorable animation.

3D

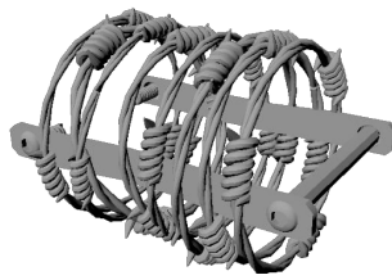
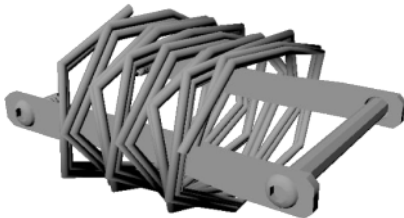
After working on the preproduction side of the project I felt that at the current state moving to 3D was a good option to try and start getting the ideas and design into a 3D space. I feel that some ideas in 2D do not translate well into 3D so it's important to do some early tests to get a feel for it.

Hook

The hardest part for me which is hard surface modelling was completed first. This one going to be the biggest obstacle as organic modeling is usually the preferred of the two. This is an incredibly weak area, so a lot of time was designated for this, I really wanted to try and improve with surface modeling.



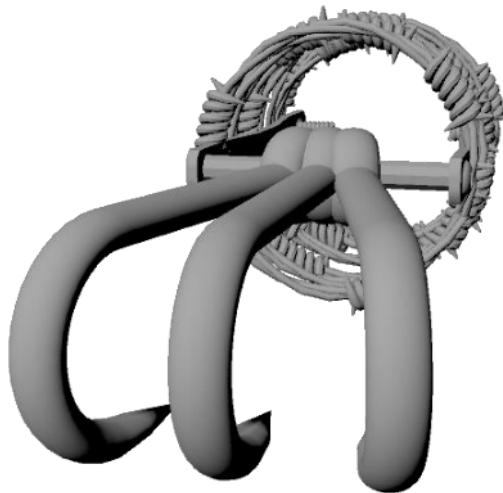
To begin with a simple frame was made to attach the hook to the arm. The design was made simple to help look like it could have been easily hand-made. The bolts will be screwed directly into the forearm.



To make the hook more visually appealing and to add some more threat to it barbed wire was added to the frame. This would hopefully make the hook look uncomfortable and painful to the wielder. To create the wire to tube were

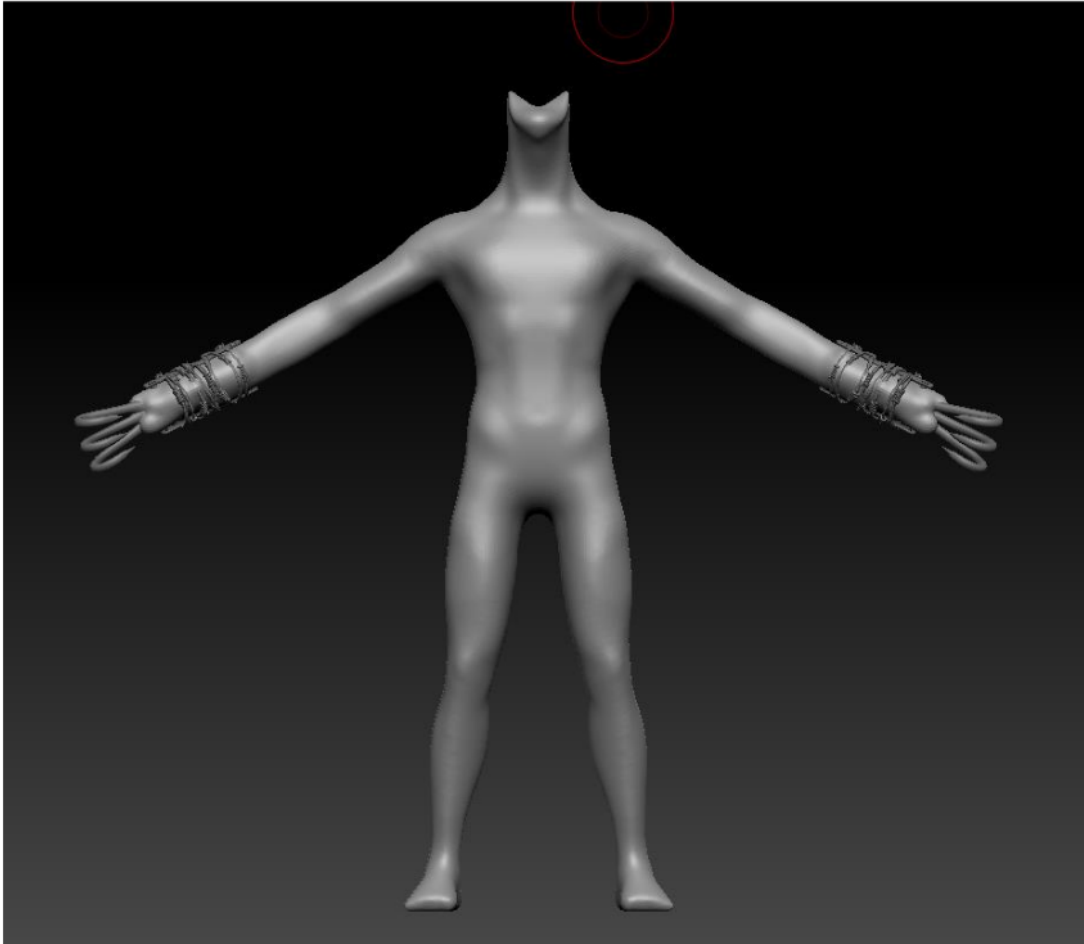
set side by side and then by using the twist function was able to twist them around each other. For the twist to work the tubes needed to follow a path, this worked fine if the path was straight but once more curves were added it started to break and deform the topology of the tubes resulting in the top left image. To solve the issue the barbed wire was separate into multiple hoops. The hoops allowed the wire the form without any deformation creating a smoother appearance. The barbs in the wire were created by using the helix model and reducing subdivision down to the desired number of twists. These were then duplicated and rotated to fit in together and create the barbs. The barbs were then added onto the wire, spaced randomly so they did not look so uniform.

The hooks proved to be the most difficult part even though I wrongly thought they would be the easiest. The difficulty was trying to create a suitable hook shape, creating the right level of thickness whilst keeping that sharp point was hard. In the end I referenced meat hooks as I thought it was fitting to the design.



Very happy with the outcome of the hook, gained knowledge in hard surface modeling which I feel will be beneficial for future work, but there is much more room for improvement but acting as a good starting point to progress especially in the area of weaponry.

The next step was creating a base for the body so it can be used for testing such things as the hook.



The body is very basic but human enough. It was adequate for the testing in its current state. The hooks looked to small here and will be changed in later stages.

Smoke Effect

For the smoke it was to be emitted from a barbed wire ring around the neck. Firstly, the barbed wire ring was made as an emitter, the container was then appropriately placed around the head to manage the overall size and shape of the smoke emitter. Once the container was fitted the resolution was

increased to give it a more realistic appearance. The main attributes tweaked to give the desired smoke effect was the density and the velocity.



The density scale was reduced to remove that blocky look of the smoke. The buoyancy was increased a lot to allow the smoke to rise more and I wanted the head to be covered as quickly possible. The dissipation was increased to cause the smoke to fade away faster and more prominently at the end of edge of the container, again trying to remove the blocky

appearance. Noise was increased to add some randomness into the smoke to reduce repetition. Velocity played a very important role in creating the swirls of natural movement of smoke. This was increased by a lot to really try and push the motion.

The color of the smoke was between black and red. Black smoke was tested to as I felt it would mask the face better, but also black smoke can be associated as dangerous giving of bad fumes. This could add to the suffocating nature of mental health and could symbolize a major burn out. Red was also considered, using the idea of red symbolizing danger but also being a striking color to make the smoke pop more.



The outcome was to combine the colors and try to find a balance between the two. This creating an ominous and thick smoke.

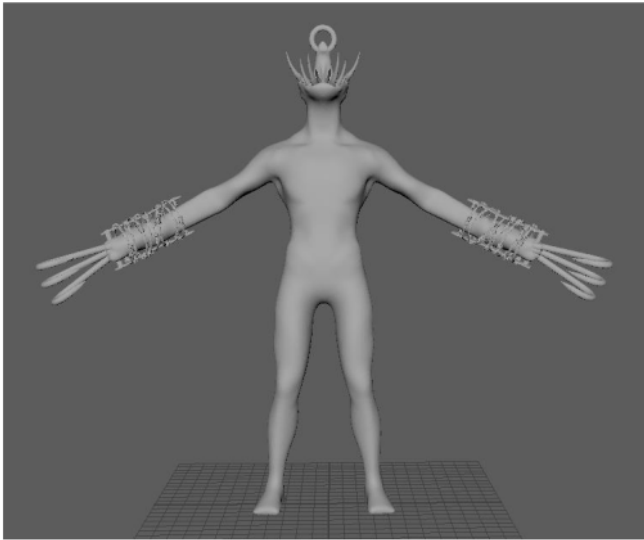


The result of the smoke was good, but I really did not feel like it added to the design. It looked more like it was just put there, the symbolism of burn out would have been great to add to the creature but overall, I do not think it worked as

well as I hoped. It was not wasted time though as it acted as a refresher with fluid effects and allowed more knowledge and understanding using the density and velocity attributes.

Rough model

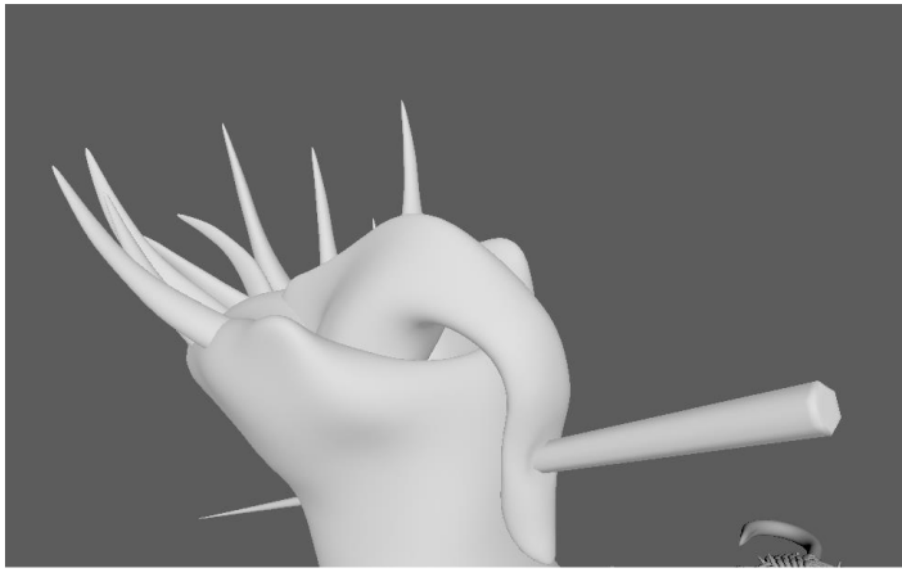
Once the smoke and hooks were completed it was time to compile the assets and start bringing the monster to life.



The image here shows the creature in its earlier stages, the body has been worked on more and the head been started. The teeth were made sharp to create a cage for the tongue, and the tongue was held up by a hoop which was going to have a frame coming off the back of the creature with hooks holding the tongue in place.

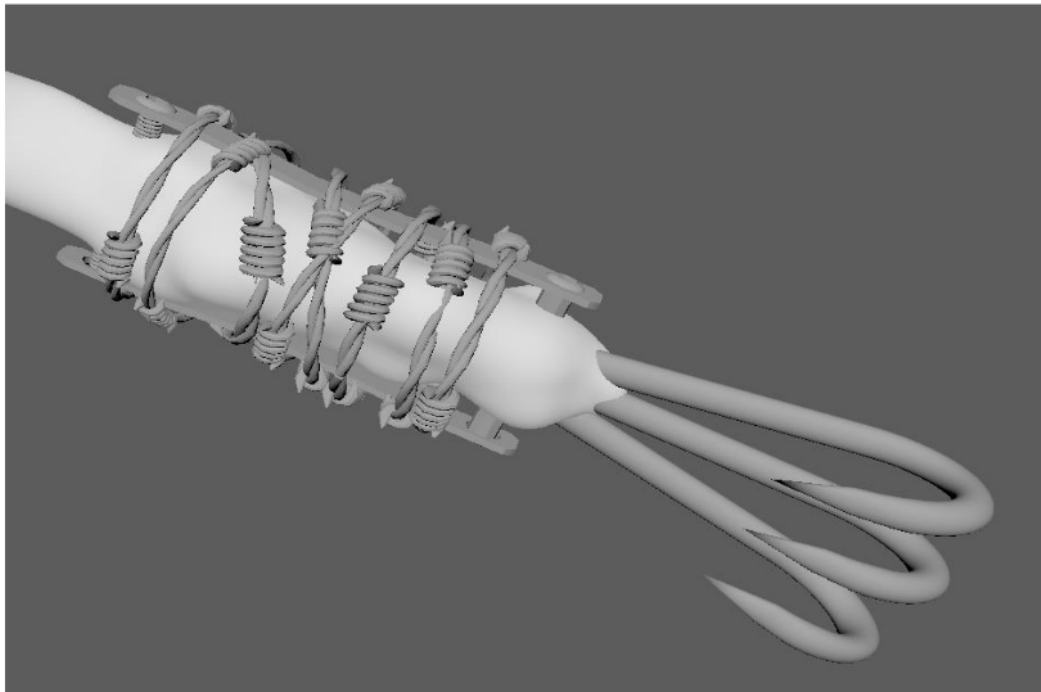
This was to represent the lack of ability to open about

mental health which I feel is a major issue today. The metal holding the tongue and the sharp teeth create an uncomfortable and cautious environment for the tongue and limiting speech. As the design progressed the idea of metal symbolizing mental health and using metal to elicit some of the effects I have experienced and from what I have heard from other people will give the metal on the body more meaning.

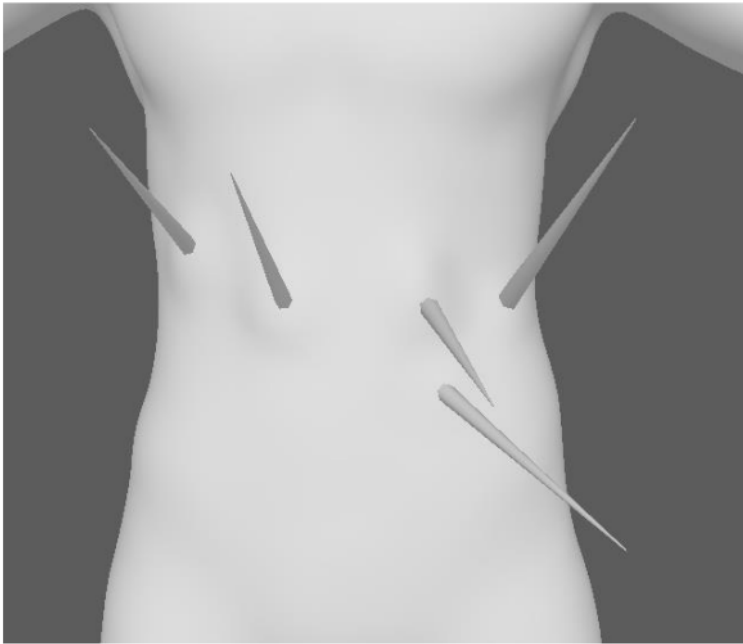


Tweaks were made to design to try and improve it. The tongue instead of being held up by chains on a large frame coming out of the back I thought was

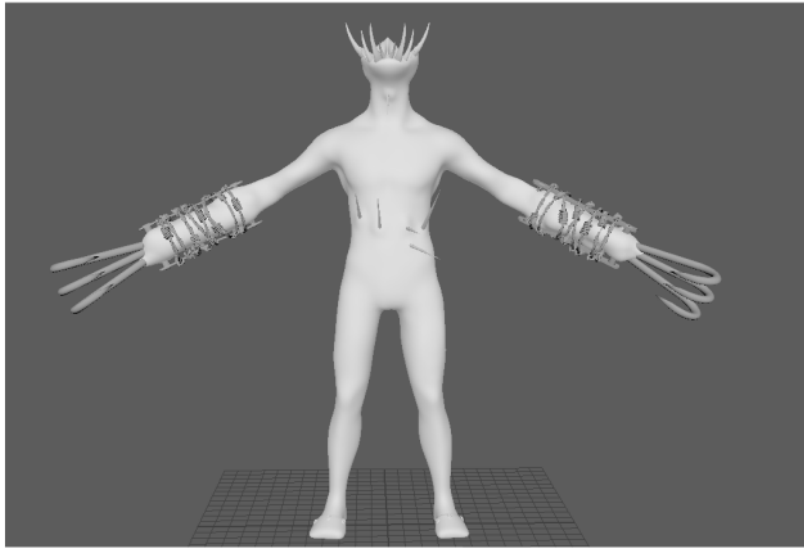
overdesigning and would be clunky in appearance. Folding the tongue back and forcing a spike through it to pin it completely debilitates the tongue and adds more points and uncomfortable shapes to the design. As well I think this would be an intriguing feature for the audience.



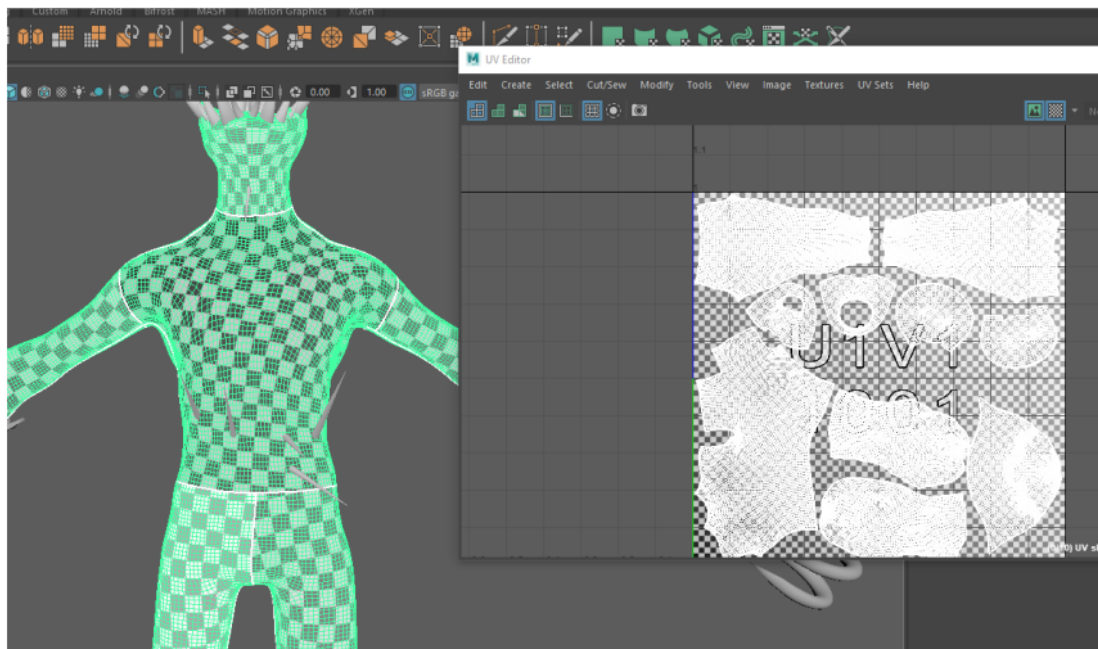
The hooks were made larger and scaled longer and look more imposing compared to the smaller variant. The flesh has been made swollen and fused to the hook. I do not want it to look comfortable for the creature. These hooks symbolize the fear people have of reaching out for help with mental health, feeling discomfort and feeling like you would affect or hurt others around you.



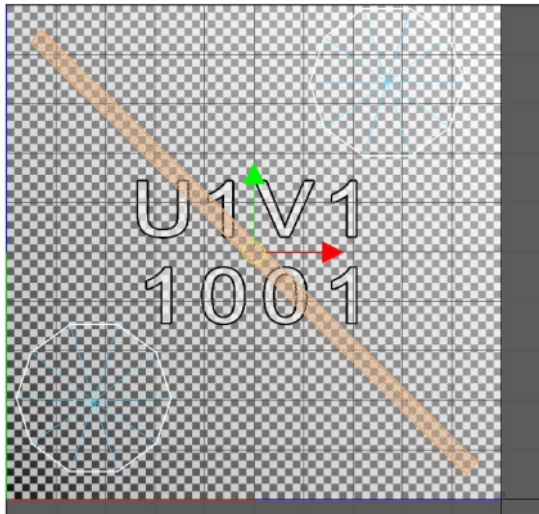
For the body I added something to symbolize something very personal to me, the feeling of anxiety. Hopefully, it is a simple addition but can carry a lot of meaning. I've always experienced anxiety at varying levels but other the lockdown due to pandemic my anxiety really did reach a whole new level. That constant feeling of worry in the pit of my stomach sometimes even holding me in place. These spikes show the discomfort and the restriction of the anxiety I experienced during that lockdown.



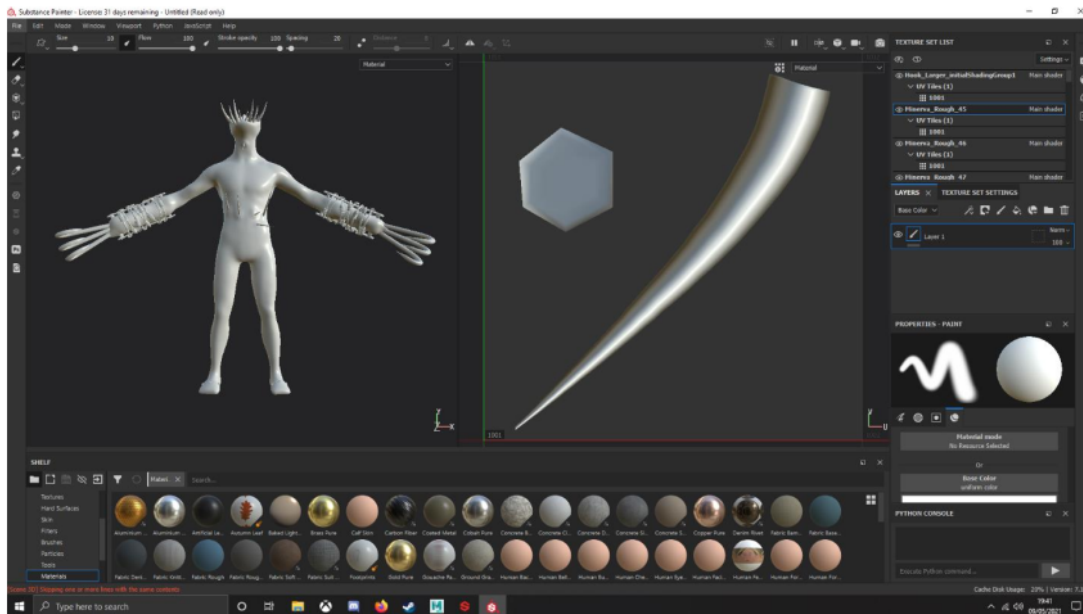
Here is the final model of the creature, next step is the UVing.



The UVing was very difficult for me but a great and essential learning experience. The model was separate into appropriate parts then individually UVed. This was done by selected the object and using the planar option in the UV editor then cutting edges on the mesh to allow the model to be



opened out. Care was taken to make sure the checkboard was even and provided a higher enough resolution for the texturing phase. After all, objects were UV unwrapped it was exported as an FBX to be imported into Substance Painter.



Using Substance Painter is great fun and feels very similar to using an editing software such as Photoshop or Krita. Using various materials allowed for very interesting effects. To be able to build layers as well allowed for a lot of freedom with the colors and materials.

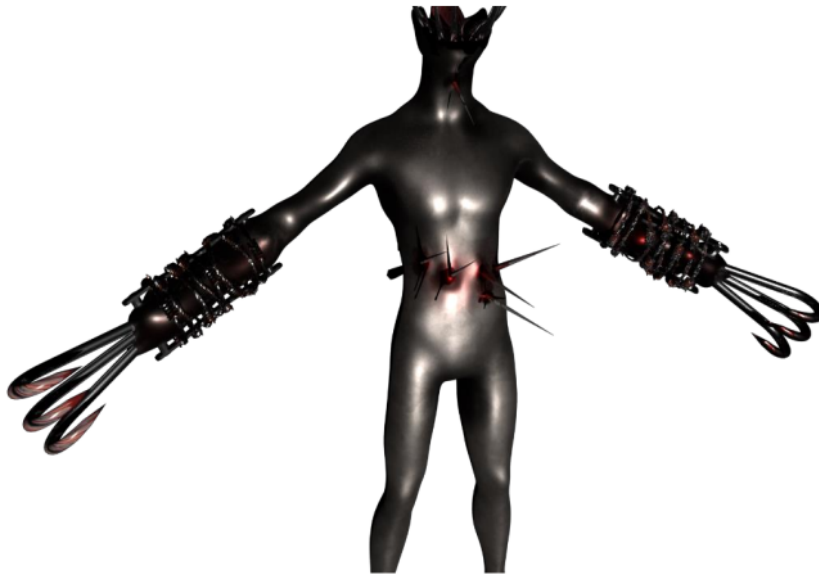
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Tommy Nelson p151351



The image to the left shows the model in its final textured state. Using dark and moody colors to try and push the dark tone of the creature. Black and rusted metal to really try and push the cold feeling of metal as well as the strip the vibrant colors of the creature. For the skin I used the knowledge gained from previous assignments regarding cave dwelling creatures, with the pigments of their skin starting to devolve and fade due to lack of sunlight. This represents the feeling of mental health feeling like a dark cloud over your head, remove the light and feeling dark.

Importing the textures into Maya proved very difficult for me not having done it before. This required a lot of organization given the number of textures I had to import. But this was a key area to finally approach and learn specially to work with Arnold renderer which is my preferred renderer. Using Arnold AiStandard texture and assigning elements of the texture such as the roughness, base color and normal was great to see how it all worked and where to assign the textures.



After assigning the textures there was an issue with the texture being shiny, but by reducing the roughness and then increasing the specular on the Arnold render I was able to reduce the shininess and bring it to what it was initially intended to be.

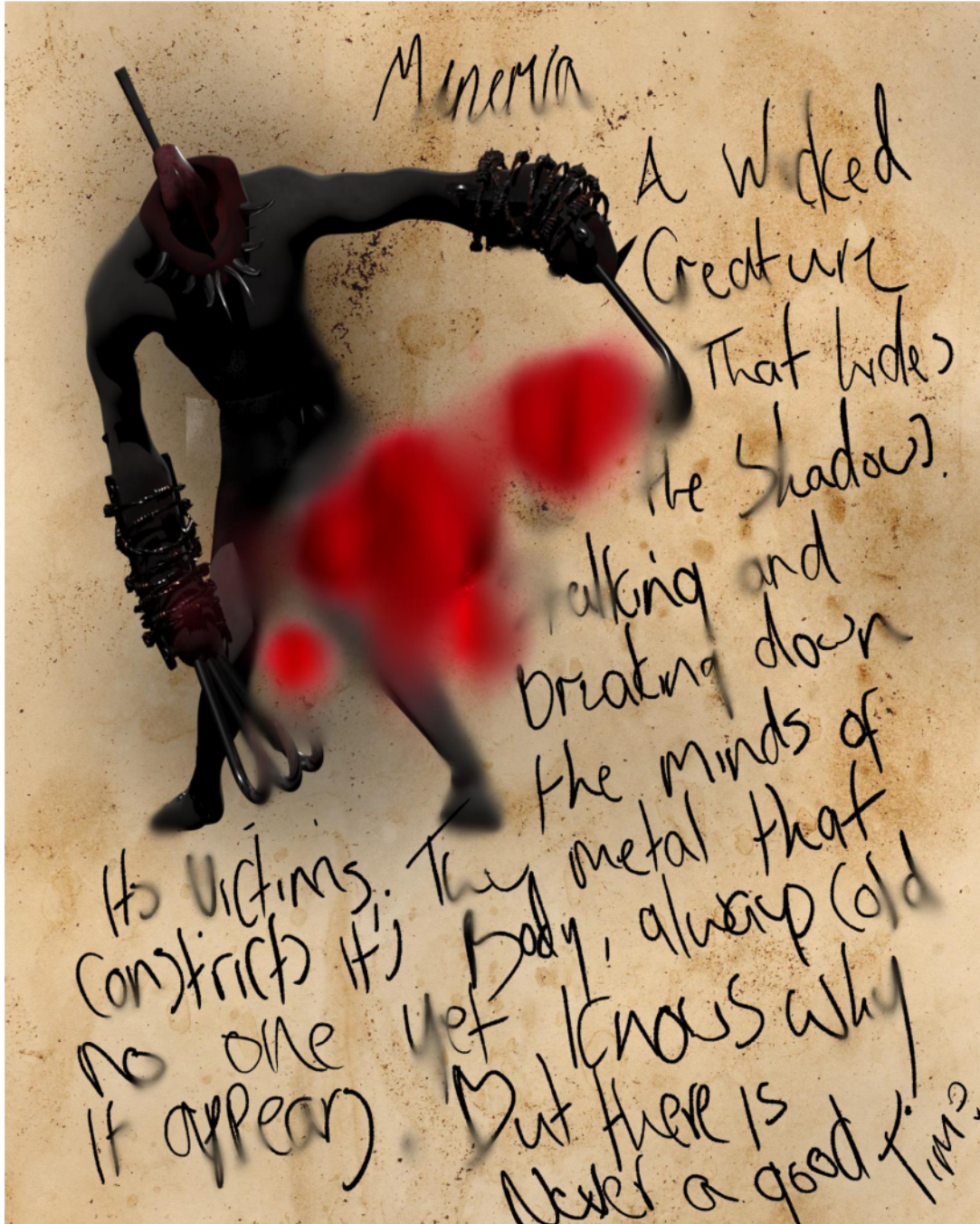


Tommy Nelson p151351

For some final touches I tried to work on my posing for the monster. This was to try and bring some more character and life to the creature. Still an area for me that needs more improvement but was great to get practice in with both 2D and 3D.



And lastly, I wanted to add some sort of journal page, I did this with the last assignment as a form of bestiary, I feel the allowed me to expand a little bit more on the creature in a creative way for the viewer.



Conclusion

Overall, I felt that this project went well, it allowed me to explore more deeper meanings into design whilst adding a personal twist which hopefully improved the overall design of the creature. Using mental health as a focus to provide an additional way to express my feelings through my artwork which was strangely therapeutic. Adding that more emotion to it I also feel strengthens the meaning.

I would like to think that my 2D has come a long way and my confidence with 2D has improved a lot, this I feel is my strongest area. Last year's focus on story telling as well also made me really try and push more story and meaning into designs which I enjoy doing very much, it allows my imagination to go wild which is great.

Another great thing doing this assignment is that it allowed me to really highlight weaker areas which really did need attention. I learnt how much my 3D was really lacking in the modelling area and I still feel is a very weak point for me and needs a lot of attention. UVing was very new to me and dealing with files organization proved a struggle. Also working solo proved problematic, I was constantly thinking of new ideas and changes to the design, but this only proved to slow down the process as usually in a group there would be boundaries. For this assignment I tried to stay back from the 2D focus to really try and improve on the 3D.

Overall, very happy with the project overall, some good points and bad points but this I feel allowed me to progress further in 2D and further in the much-needed 3D. It has also helped guide me to where I want to be in the future and that is more in 2D and story and ideas.

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