

Exhibition 1.0 - Exordium

Part One: Planning

To begin the process of creating my exhibition piece, I'll look at my ideas and themes that I want to focus on.

I want to explore themes such as gender and sexuality– (femininity, masculinity, gender nonconformity) class, religion, childhood– (growing up as a girl, the expectations from young girls) changes in the body– (physical changes, hormonal changes, societal changes and expectations), personal experiences with gender and growing up, confusion, body image issues, photos from childhood, nostalgia, women in the family–(their experiences growing up), changes from different time periods, women's rights, protest, community, politics, legislation, objectification etc.

I have always been interested in the photos from my childhood, my mother's childhood and grandmother's childhood. As most of my family members are women, I have been interested in viewing the differences and similarities between our upbringings. I have also been journaling my memories from my childhood, reflecting on things such as my conflicting feelings on my own gender from a young age and my detachment from my peers growing up due to my neurological differences as well as my sexuality.

Exhibition 1.0

difference between
the male and female
gaze, female
objectification in art
and importance of
feminism.

Experiences
during childhood:
friends, family,
hobbies,
struggles etc.

journaling
memories and
stories told in
family, family
history and
traumas.

legislation, protest and rights

intersectionality

the male gaze

the female gaze

objectification

Feminism

gender non conformity

Sexuality

femininity/masculinity

lesbianism

romance

decentering men

female sexuality

exploring femininity and
masculinity, the dynamic
between the two, gender
non conformity,
complicated feelings with
gender, being feminine and
non binary.

experience and
isolation discovering
sexuality, women's
experience with
sexuality and the
treatment that
comes with it.

childhood

family photographs

memories

Nostalgia + experiences

growing up

journals

family

family dynamics

family trauma

family anecdotes

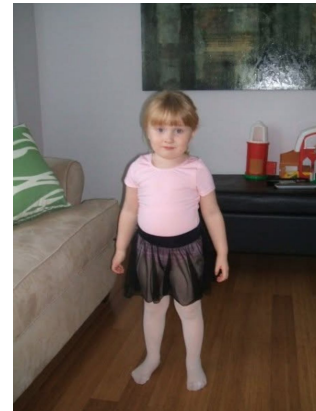
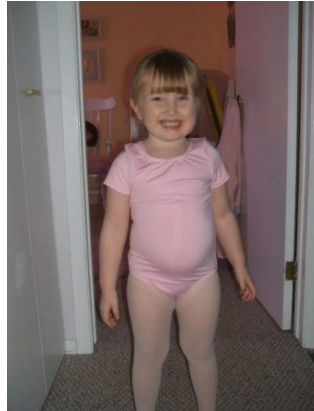
previous generations

Planning - Journalling

Entry 1: *Ballet*

“Growing up, I always had a difficult time making friends and fitting in in school. My earliest memories are from when I was put in ballet classes at the ages of around 3-4. I remember it being the first time I recognised the differences between myself and the other girls in my class. A lot of them were a little bit older than me which explained the differences, however, I still remember feeling uncomfortable in myself and somewhat insecure for maybe the first time in my life. I was also a terrible dancer (as most children would be at 3). I struggled to pick up any of the moves and my coordination and motor skills were not very good; they still aren’t the best. My ballet costume was uncomfortable sensorily and it hugged my round tummy which I didn’t care about at first, until I joined my class. I was also very shy at this age so I did not talk to any of the other girls in my class.”

I have collected images from this period of time. I will most likely use these images as points of reference in my drawings.





I grew up with three sisters, we were all very close. Our sisterhood has always been very important to me. This photo shows me and my younger sister together.



Here is a photo of me, my father and my older sister. Many of my early childhood photos feature my dad until around the age of six– when he left. Many of my childhood photos do not feature my mother.





Entry 2: *Friends*

“At the age of 9 I had my first real friendship group – 3 girls. I was a lot quieter than all of them and a lot more sensitive too. I remember crying often over very insignificant things, often believing people were trying to pull tricks on me even when they weren’t. I didn’t really enjoyed school too much and would try to avoid going frequently. I struggled a lot to concentrate and only ever wanted to draw during class time. My favourite days were fridays because we were able to have an hour in the afternoon to do whatever we wanted, like crafts and sports. Though, I never played sports, mostly because I was bad at them but also because of my self image related problems. I started wearing makeup at around 9 and I was almost unable to go out without wearing a little bit. Even when going to the shops I would want to put on powder and mascara. By then my friendship group had also started thinking about boys... I even had a ‘Boyfriend’ (heavy quotation marks). He was one of my closest friends and we did what all friends did; played games, engaged in our shared hobbies, passed notes etc. Once we were around 10 or 11, after days at school, my friends and I would hang out. Instead of playing outside we discovered the internet. Here, we could interact with anyone anywhere. We would join video chatting websites and talk to people for hours, some of them being decent, others not so much. This is when I think I experienced true objectification for one of the first times from young boys and even grown men.”

Entry 3: *Mamgu*

“I would often go to my grandmothers (mamgu) house, especially during summer or after school hours while my mum worked. She is a very traditional woman and raised us very traditionally; sent outdoors, dressed femininely, engaging in activities like reading, drawing etc. She would tell us about how she was raised differently from us, and never skipped on telling us how spoiled we were. Everyday we followed the same routine, she would bathe us, wash our faces with a cloth, dress us in outfits she had picked out for us, prepare us breakfast and then take us for a walk. She would often take credit for our creativity and curiosity, claiming it came from her influence. To her, we were like her little dolls. Once we had gotten older, into our preteens, we of course changed and developed new interests. I don't think she enjoyed this very much.

My mother and grandmother have quite a strained relationship, they have never really gotten along very well. Growing up, I would listen to my grandmother talk about my mother negatively, criticising her every action. When my mother was 15 she was kicked out of my grandmothers house and had to live self sufficiently from then on, experiencing extreme poverty until her early 20's. I had always believed my grandmother was a caring woman, self proclaimed 'spiritualist', until I was old enough to realise that she had very little care for anybody she deemed unworthy; her love was always conditional.”

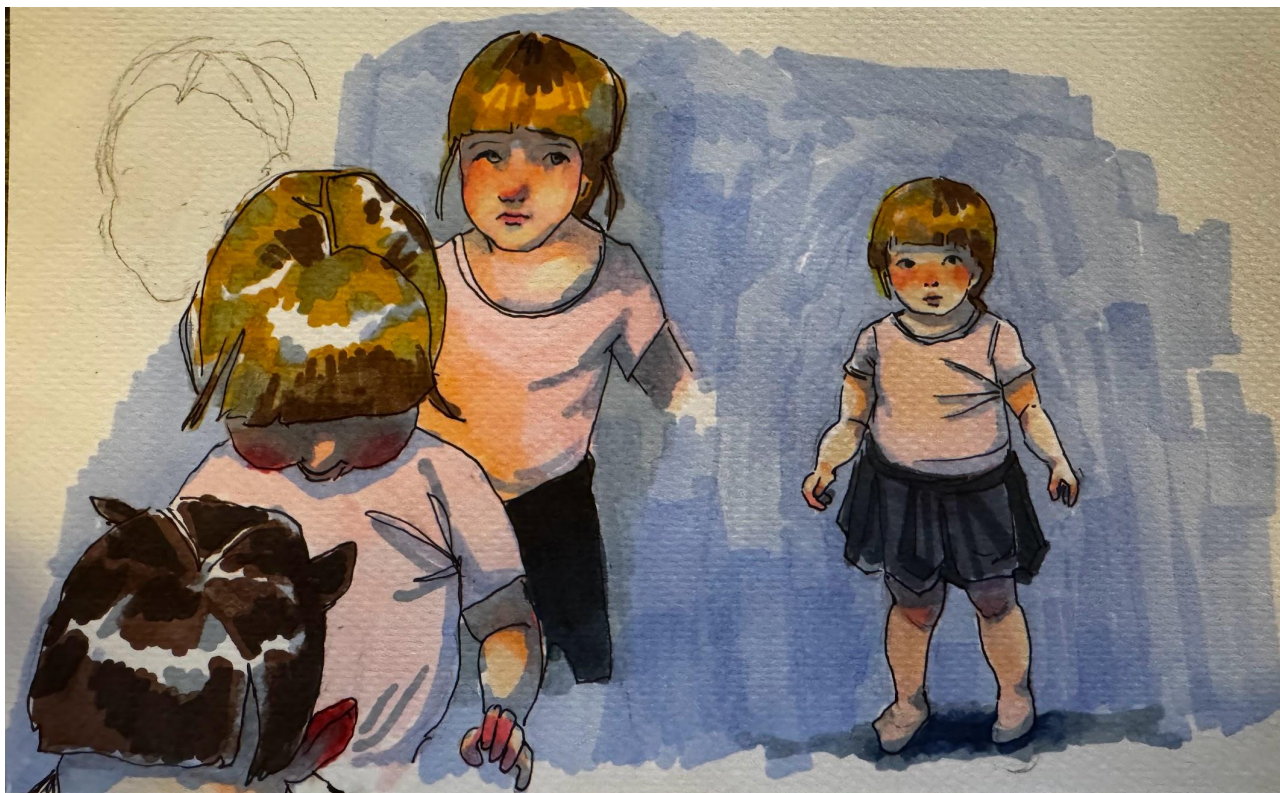




My younger sisters and I.







Drawing book study of ballerinas.

Entry 4: *Dinus Island*

“My mamgu was born on Dinus Island, in a barn. She was extremely premature and has to be fed milk with a pipette. She wasn’t supposed to survive – but she did. Their nanny helped birth her and then nursed her while her mother recovered. She was the only daughter out of four children, and the youngest.

Growing up my mamgu told me she never cried, not even as a baby. I don’t know how true that is.

Once she reached adulthood she began studying the arts and even became an art teacher. During this time she travelled around Europe and Africa where she met many other artists, such as Salvador Dali. She then married my Grandfather, he was a businessman who engaged in some sketchy practices which did not help her feel secure especially with two young children who she had to take care of. They eventually divorced and he lost custody of my mother and her brother.

When my mum was eleven, my mamgu told her that she had ruined her life.”

I believe my mamgu’s true dream in life was to become a successful artist, not a mother. However, the expectations for women at the time, especially in her small town, stopped her from achieving this.





My Mamgu, Age 8-9

Entry 5: *Mum*

“My mother has not always been the greatest, and for a long time I blamed her. Even now things are not perfect. She never experienced motherly love so how was she supposed to express that to her own children? My Mum told me a story from her childhood. When she was fifteen, she had a group of friends, two boys and one girl. They were spending time together in her bedroom, My Mamgu came in to the room, and in an act to embarrass my mother said:

“Typical Sarah, Always bringing boys to the bedroom.”

This could be explained as a difference in generations, as many people from older generations are excused when saying things like this since it was a ‘different time’. However, knowing my Mamgu, she deliberately says these things to bring other people down, especially women. My mamgu has a very clear preference towards boys and men. My male cousins are treated as angels, never to lift a finger. My step-father is praised for the manual work my mother also does. She has a classic case of internalised misogyny.

I will never forget the day she body shamed my younger sister when she was 5 years old, telling her she needs to eat less fatty foods since she looks chubby. Or when she told my Mum that I must be a predator because I hold my girlfriends hand publically. It always pains me when I think about this, that the little baby born prematurely on Dinus Island, who also played and giggled and did everything that all children do, grew up to be so hateful.”

Collecting these photos and journaling family anecdotes and my thoughts has really helped with inspiring me.





Part 2: Research and finding references.

Paula Rego

Paula Rego has been an inspiration to me for many years, Rego was the first artist I went to to research for my exhibition piece. Art that inspires me most are ones that ignite conversation and can be viewed as controversial or uncomfortable. Paula Rego's work does that, many of her pieces are uncomfortable to look at as they depict very serious topics, especially when they focus on themes of abortion and violence against women. Feminist work shouldn't owe anyone palatability, which is what I look to achieve.

What strikes me most in Paula Rego's work is the expressions, body language and use of objects and clothing. Using objects to almost 'set the scene' and convey certain emotions and messages. For example, in photo 1 (*Obedience and Defiance*), the foldable chairs prop her legs open, similar to medical equipment they might use in hospitals for birthing or abortions to hold legs apart. This painting, like many of Rego's, represents abortions. Particularly, at-home abortions, which forces women who need to have abortions to perform one on themselves, which creates huge risks to their health and can very often lead to complications.



Ana Mendieta

Ana Mendieta was an artist who focused on using her body and the natural environment around her to express feelings on identity, loss and being rooted and connected to the earth. She worked with performance, sculpture, painting and video. Mendieta was born in Cuba but came to the U.S. as a young child. The feelings on having been torn away from her own country significantly influenced her work.

She created a series of works entitled “Siluetas” where she created shapes with her body in sand, mud, grass, fire, and blood. Her work reflected her love and sense of belonging in nature. Her work also addressed the subject of the female body, not as something to be sexualised but as something powerful, sacred, and natural. Her work has been perceived as almost ritualistic and spiritual as she referenced Cuban religion and culture heavily. Much of her work was not intended to last very long, similar to how people and other things in nature come and go.

I was previously familiar with Ana Mendieta, however I have never taken inspiration from her work until now. I found her silhouettes particularly grabbed my attention and I wanted to include something similar to my work.



Shani Rhys James.

Shani Rhys James is a Welsh artist known for her powerful paintings which often depict women, including herself. Described as “arguably one of the most exciting and successful painters of her generation” her work is incredibly bold, emotional, and full of strong colours such as deep reds and black. She typically paints scenes from everyday life such as kitchens, bedrooms and flowers but with a dramatised feel. Her art often explores feelings of loneliness, frustration and strength especially from a woman’s point of view. Even the most simple scenes are deep and personal which is what I enjoy most with her work; she mixes real-life details with imaginative aspects to show what’s going on inside of one’s mind.

I admire the colour decisions in her work, the boldness is something I would like to achieve in my own. The faces Shani Rhys James are expressive even without making very extreme facial expressions, this is something I also strive to replicate as her portraits are extremely captivating. None of the figures are painted to be perfect or beautiful, they feel incredibly real, raw and emotional.



Mission Gallery

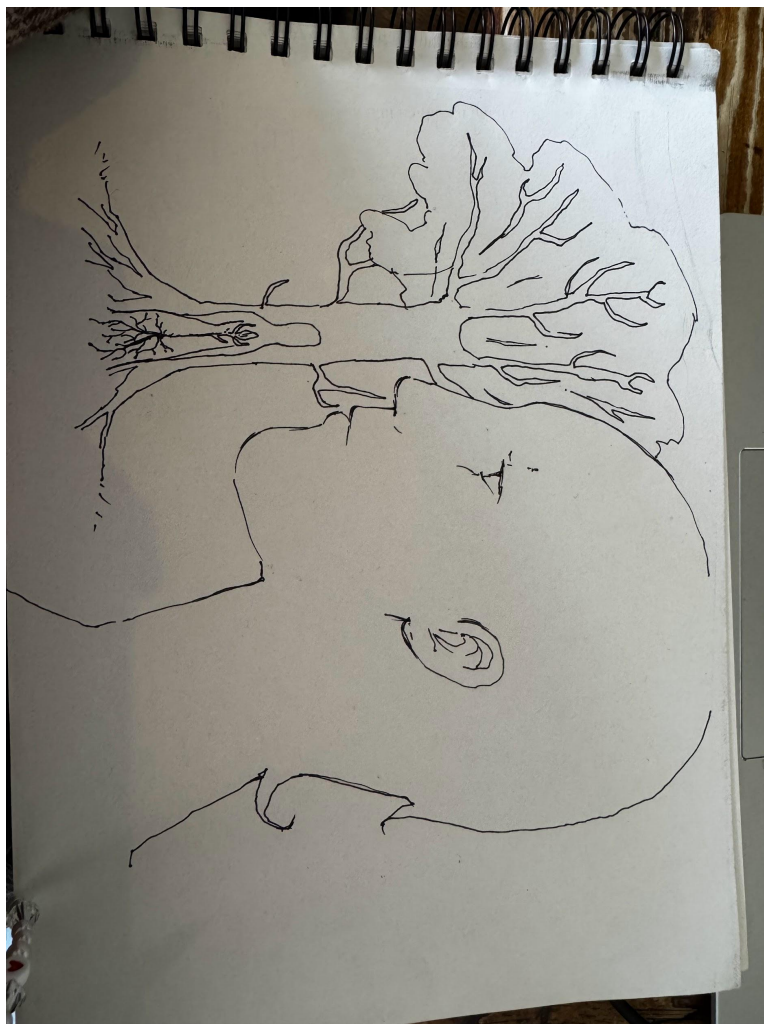
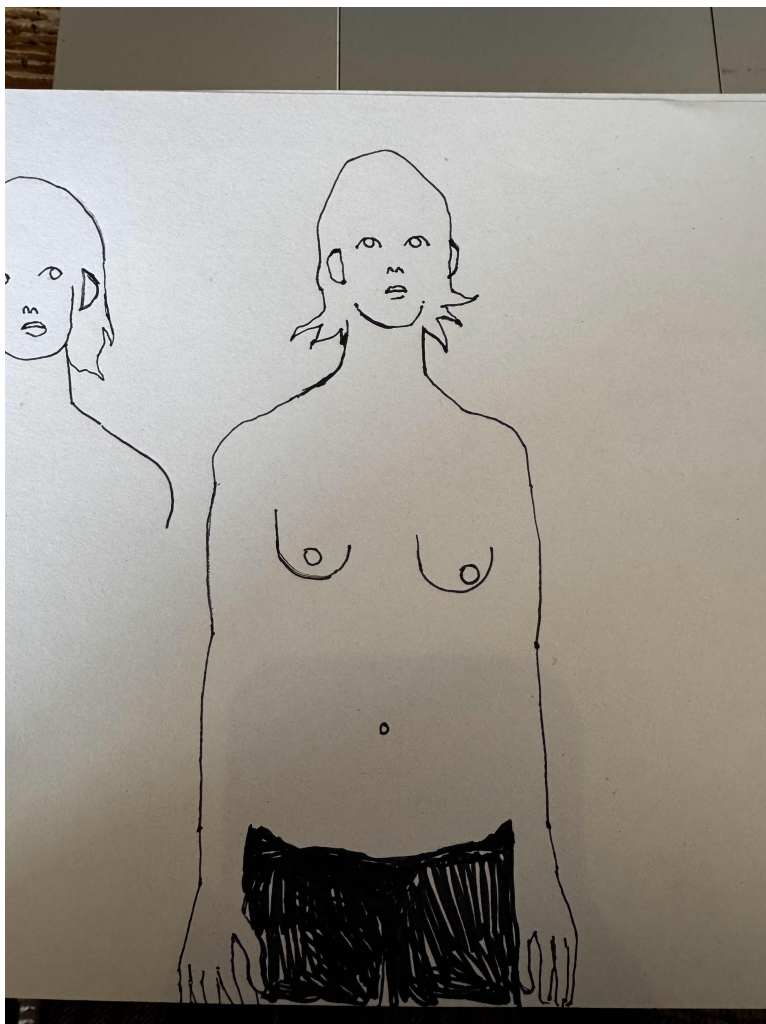
For a lecture we went to Mission Gallery to view Sue Williams work with Sahar Saki, a collaborative small-scale exhibition. I took a lot of inspiration from this as it shifted my view of what my exhibition could be. I found the work extremely interesting and I loved the use of scale, sound, space and photography.

I enjoy the way Sue Williams uses expressions, body language and text in her art. I was inspired to work on paper after viewing this exhibition, I believe I could showcase my art much more successfully this way.









Some
sketched
ideas



My life drawing classes prepared me for my exhibition as we worked on a semi-large scale with charcoal.

Part 3: Creating the Final Piece

I knew I wanted to create a larger piece on paper, almost at a one to one scale of the average person. I usually work on canvas however I have discovered that working on paper is much more freeing for me and allows me to work with mediums that I wouldn't usually use as they don't work as well on canvas. I used charcoal to draw my plan and I pretty much went with the flow. I think when I create plans that are too structured I end up disappointed in my result, so I decided to be more spontaneous with this work. I took images from when I was a child and expanded upon them, as if I'm uncovering what goes beyond the image. These images are taken from when I went to ballet, the images are significant as they represent my first memories of expressing my femininity (wearing a tutu, ballet slippers, leotard, tights etc.) and the complicated feelings that come with that.

Historically, ballet has upheld a very demanding and toxic environment. These issues have especially harmed women. These issues include body-shaming and promoting unhealthy dieting methods which can often lead to disordered eating and excessive exercise. During my early teenage years I also developed disordered eating habits, though I wasn't in ballet, I still experienced something similar with being pressured to appear a certain way, especially with the internet being a place I often escaped to.

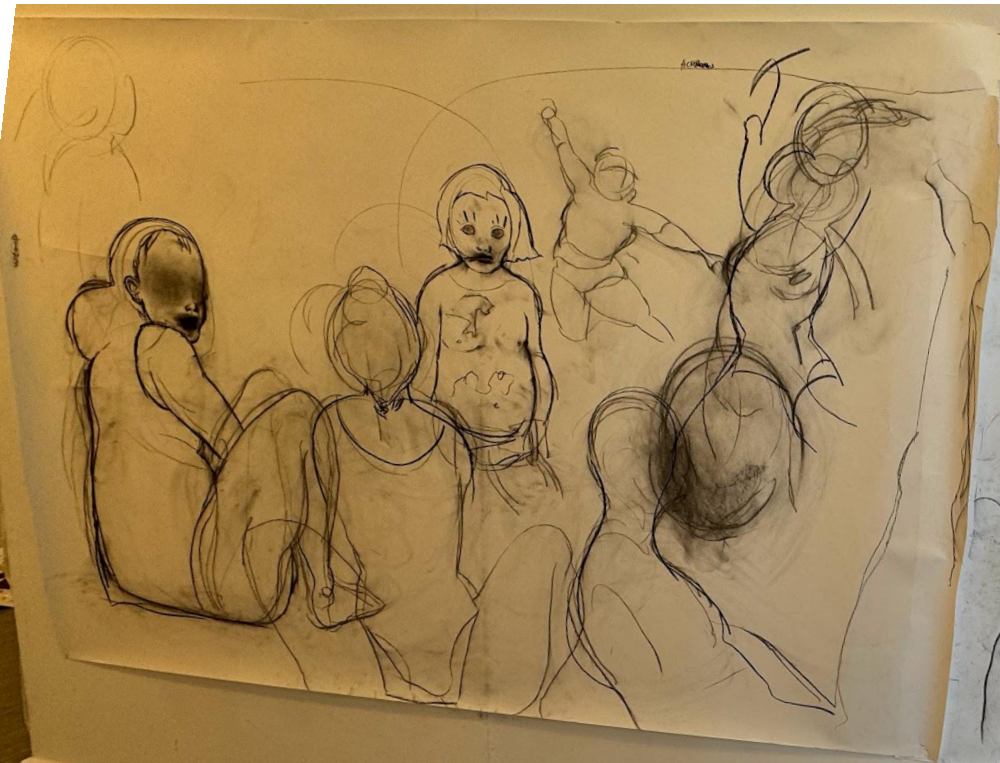




I started with about a metre of paper but I realised I wanted to work much larger so I added about 2.9 metres more. This allowed me to experiment more and expand on my drawings without worrying too much on the amount of room I have because I could always add and take away from it. I continued adding figures, I took reference from a mix of family photos, images I had collected from the internet and physical media, as well as drawings I created without reference.

I wanted to include girls and women of different ages, each representing different stages in life that I have experienced. The first group of girls (The ballerinas) being the youngest, from the ages of 3 to 6. The next group being girls putting on makeup messily, these girls would be around 8 to 11, not including the baby accompanying them who has also been drawn on with makeup. I call these girls the clowns. The last group is the young women, I call them the acrobats as they are mobile than the rest of the figures in the drawing. These women would probably be between 18 and the early 20's. They represent women contorting to fit beauty standards and experimenting with sexuality and relationships.





After I had finished the sketch I began adding colour. I started with a wash of some clay glaze I made in the ceramics department. I wanted to focus on using primary colours for this piece, so the clay glaze worked successfully to add the yellow hues that I wanted. Once I had finished with the clay wash, I started using oil pastels to add my other colours. I focused the red on the main figure on the right side, which is a self portrait. Red is not one of my favourite colours, however, I enjoy working with it because I believe as a colour it incites the widest range of emotions and feelings such as love, anger, hunger, pain, lust, hate, power, passion, and happiness, as well as many other things like blood, violence, luck, prosperity, romance and purity in some cultures. The red in my work could signify any of these things, I found it important to leave some things up to interpretation for the viewer.



I used a layering technique in this work, Starting with a charcoal sketch and sealing it with a spray sealant as charcoal smudges a lot. Once sealed I would add the clay wash until it built up to the colour I wanted. Then I added my chalk pastels and seal again. Repeating this process over until I achieved the look that I wanted. This was quite time consuming but I believe it was worth it.



I moved my drawing to where it would be exhibited and I think this space was very successful. My work fit perfectly in the space down to the cm. The natural lighting from the window and the work exhibited across from me (Fran Rushworths) also worked very well with my work I believe. Here, I wanted to finalise my work. In total, my piece took about 2 - 2.5 weeks to complete, working at around 5 hours per day, I estimate it took between 60 to 70 hours to complete. I wanted to make sure I had time to achieve everything that I wanted to and I think that I did that quite well. I worked on it until the day before exhibiting since it is quite a large piece so I had a lot to complete. This has been the largest work I have created to date.



Analysing my own work.

A lot of my choices in this piece were very deliberate. I didn't want it to be a perfect painting without any flaw. I wanted parts of the sketch to shine through and for the paper itself to be a part of the work, leaving parts of my painting blank to break things up from the colour. Each group of figures have their own narrative that is being communicated. The ballerinas looking serious and almost sad leaving/entering the scene. This portrays little girls being forced to grow up faster than boys, being treated as women far too early with their responsibilities and with the way they can be viewed. The slightly older children are playful but they are not smiling, they are experimenting with their creativity and femininity, likely copying what they see from adult women. The child in the top left squatting while menstruating, likely without realising it, or maybe without feeling shame for it. The women at the center are moving their bodies in specific ways in order to be viewed as attractive, all of them being half-clothed. The woman in the front being half dressed in her wedding attire, whether she is happy about this can be up for debate.

The largest figure being a self portrait, the red is running down the figure, like a wash of all of these emotions that are signified with red. Lastly, the figure on the left being my younger self standing almost behind the current me.







Creating the advertisement.

I volunteered to help design the poster for the exhibition with a small group of my peers. This process took a few weeks as we individually designed some posters each, then we let the rest of our course vote on some which they liked.

My posters were voted in to be part of the finalised version. We decided that the poster needed to be deep colour, with an interesting graphic on it and with a bold font.

Some criticisms of my poster is that it seemed too generic and like something you might see in a magazine rather than something to advertise an exhibition. So I took these critiques on and tried to create a more interesting poster with everyone's preferences in mind.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Swansea
College of Art
Founded 1853

FINE ART FIRST YEAR EXHIBITION **EXORDIUM**



3RD-9TH APRIL 2025
16:30-19:30
FREE ENTRY

SWANSEA COLLEGE OF ART
DYNEVOR CAMPUS
SA1 3EU



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
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SWANSEA COLLEGE OF ART
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Some other examples created by my peers.

EXORDIUM

1ST YEARS EXHIBITION

TUESDAY 3RD APRIL

DOORS OPEN AT 16:30-19:30
DYNEFOR CAMPUS, SWANSEA COLLEGE OF
ART

FEATURING ARTISTS:

ABBIE THOMAS
ADAM MAYHEW
ANYA THORPE
BECCA SHANNON
BROOKE DUFF
DARREN PALMER
DELYTH PETTERS JONES
ELOSIE UZZELL
EM DORION
EMMA MOSES
EMMA SCOTT
EVE SLATTER

FRAN RUSHWORTH
H CARRO
HARRY CLEGG
JEMIMA ROWLAND
KIRRA-LEIGH WILLIAMS
LOUSIE CARRUTHERS
LUCY ROBERTS
NAOMI DAVIES
SAFFRON HARRISON
STEVE BALSAMO
TARA-LEA EVANS
TRINITY FULLER

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:
SUE WILLIAMS
ALEX CUNICAN
ADAM SHALLER
HOLLY SINGESSY
LYNDON DAVIES

1ST YEARS EXHIBITION

Free cocktails
included!
free entry

EXORDIUM

TUESDAY
3RD APRIL 2025

DOORS OPEN
16:30-19:30
UWTSD Swansea
college of art,
Dynefor campus.
SA1 3EU



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

the work in progress *EXORDIUM* show

Fine art 1st year exhibition
DOORS OPEN 16:30-19:30

Swansea College of Art
Dynevor Campus
SA1 3EU

Thursday 3rd April
FREE ENTRY

1ST YEARS FINE ART PRESENTS:

WORK IN PROGRESS SHOW

EXORDIUM

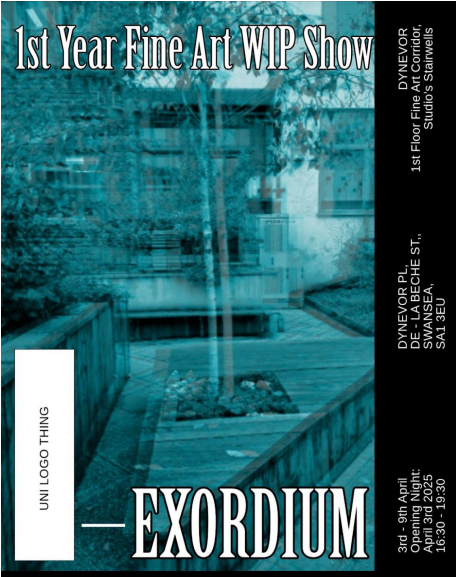
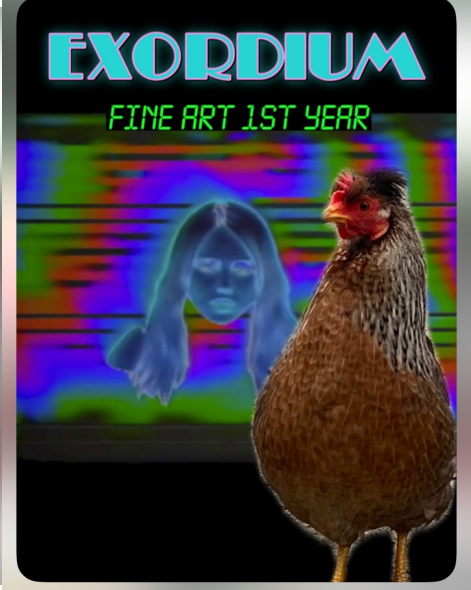
UWTSD DYNEVOR CAMPUS,
SWANSEA COLLEGE OF ART
SA1 3EU

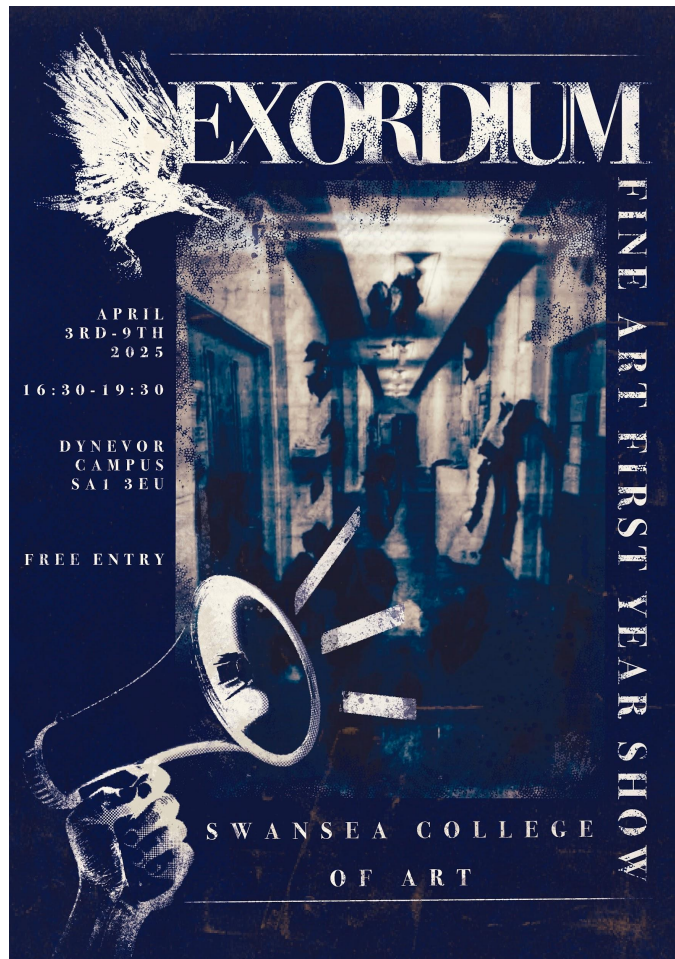
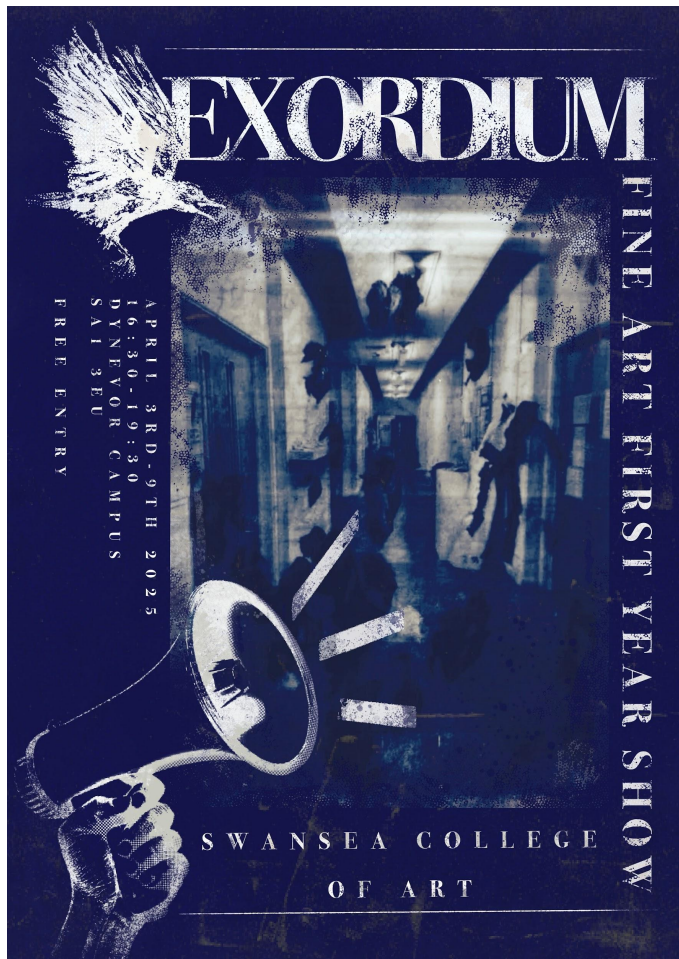
DOORS OPEN AT 4:30PM-7:30PM

FREE ENTRY AND FREE
COCKTAILS



Prifysgol Cymru
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University of Wales
Trinity Saint David





This was my second draft of the poster. It includes everything my peers said they enjoyed on the previous posters. I included Fran's bird drawing as many people liked it, but I turned it into a bold inverted design to fit with the text. I also included Trinity's print in the background because it was agreed on that it incorporated something interesting on the poster. It also fits in theme as it is of the fine art corridor.

My poster ended up being chosen as the one to use for advertising our exhibition! The second one was universally agreed on to be the one we use as it is more accessible with its text.

Being a part of this process was very enjoyable, I enjoyed being able to contribute something to the exhibition and I also enjoyed taking on people's criticisms to create something everyone liked.

Exhibition day and Reflection.

On the opening night, things went very successfully. A group of my classmates manned the bar, and the exhibition itself was extremely busy. I received a lot of feedback on my work and I think many people liked it. Overall, I am very proud of my work and my peers work.

If I could change anything I would change some parts of my piece. I frequently ran out of materials especially sealant spray, so I have to improvise and use more paper to add layering to any places I didn't like. I don't know how successful this part of my work is, however it did work well. I would have probably sealed it again and worked overtop those parts that I disliked. I also probably would add more figures, though, doing so might have caused the piece to become too cluttered.

In my next exhibition, I would allow myself even more time so that I can take my time and work with the piece without much stress. I would also incorporate more texture and pattern because I intended to do this with this piece and I enjoy working in that way.

