

BA Fine Art: Research in Practice

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In this proposal I am going to discuss three keywords that relate and influence my practice. These three key words have an emotional and physical aspect that

connects them to my work and my life which I will further elaborate on my keywords using artists, writers and my own views. The three keywords I have chosen are inner peace, mental health and nature. These three keywords have a direct link to each other, more specifically, a link to my art practice and my life. For each keyword I will explain in depth about the link and meaning behind my choices for each keyword and specifically about how they have influenced me and while sometimes the meaning can be subtle, there is always an aspect of my work that links to one of my keywords. The aim of this research is to leave me with a question that will help me come up with a that will aid me in my dissertation research.

Keyword one: inner peace

The word inner peace can be interpreted differently by many different people, it can mean self-acceptance, forgiveness, emotional balance, etc. However, we can all agree that Inner peace is an aspect that everyone needs to have a fulfilled life. Inner peace is a calmness that can be accomplished through mind and emotion, and I believe the main aspect of inner peace comes from feelings of peacefulness

and a balance in life, despite the circumstances that are happening in life, inner peace comes from contentment, tranquility and overall acceptance.

Developing self-awareness, mindfulness, focusing on positive emotions, and using positive coping mechanisms that reduce stress. Acceptance of oneself, others and of the present life without judgement will help establish the feeling of acceptance. However, while all these positive influences and variants are the key to inner peace, having inner peace does not mean that life will become absent of negative emotions and difficult obstacles. The aim of inner peace is to help navigate the negative emotions and obstacles that life obtains with resilience.

There are many ways that people try and achieve inner peace such as meditation, yoga, personal self-reflection and being outside in nature. Pursuing inner peace can positively impact mental health and physical well-being, which can help lead to a fulfilled and happy life.

Throughout my research I realised that, unknowingly, I have found some of my inner peace. I have come to believe that inner peace becomes easier to accomplish as we grow, both physically and emotionally, with age. As people get older, life lessons are taught and embraced, and these life lessons are part of finding inner peace. Some of the most important life lessons I have personally

learnt are cutting toxic people out of my life, both friends and family. Another aspect I find that has brought me inner peace is getting out of my comfort zone, going out and spending time with my friends and family, whether that is dressing up and going out for some drinks or going out for food for birthdays, instead of only staying at home and only leaving to go to work and classes. Finally, the main worry in my life that I have overcome in recent years that has brought me peace, is leaving behind the worries of my future and learning to live in the present.

While part of my dream is to buy a house and be financially independent, I have come to the realisation that while money can make life simpler, money will not bring me the happiness that making lifelong memories will. The best quote I have heard that keeps me in the mindset of memory making is “time is more valuable than money. You can get more money but you cannot get more time” (Jim Rohn)

The way that any type of artist demonstrates inner peace is through their art works, whether that is through fine art, photography, digital design, illustration and even fashion. The one artist that comes to mind, that I think shows inner peace brilliantly through her work is Roberta Tetzner, more specifically Tetzner’s piece called *‘Inner Peace’*



Figure 1. Roberta Tetzner, *Inner Peace* (acrylic), Wychwood Art.

When I look at figure 1, I understand how it symbolizes inner peace. Figure 1 uses various shades of blue that give off a softly flowing water effect, and the various mark making techniques resemble fish swimming. Inner peace is when you are content and have a sense of fulfillment in your life, when you are finally at peace with yourself and your emotions, and I feel that nothing represents being at peace with yourself more than the sound of rippling water. The inspiration of figure 1 to “Remember a wonderful day by water ...maybe a

holiday?” (Roberta Tetzner) which links back to my feelings of being peaceful when being by water. This has a direct link to my other keywords, mental health and nature, as they all have the aim of having peace of mind. The fact that “influence of colour on emotion and mood also plays a strong role in my painting.” (Roberta Tetzner) was heavily implied in figure 1, which I believe was translated well and gave off the mood of inner peace due to the textures and the amount of soft movement that is shown and gives off peaceful and content emotions.

The way that I interpret the aspect of inner peace into my work is by creating pieces inspired by the various parts of my life that bring me happiness and inspiration around me. Some of my pieces include aspects of my life such as my family and friends, my animals, and objects from spending time with my friends. While most of my pieces are drawn or painted, I also like to capture what brings me inner peace through collected items and photographs. I feel that inner peace is a feeling that cannot be explained but is easier to be shown, through facial expressions and body language. When I look back at photos of myself from a few years ago, when I was going through personal turmoil, I can clearly see how my facial expressions have changed, my smile seems more genuine instead of fake

and even the way my body seems in photos is different, it comes across as confident and open instead of uncomfortable and sheltered.

Keyword 2: mental health

Mental health is a condition that affects “approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year” (Mind, 2017). However, while mental health is so common in the 21st century, we are still left with stigma when it comes to talking about mental health. However, the stigma surrounding mental health is not just negatively perceived by the public but also those that suffer from mental health can sometimes have negative feelings towards themselves. There are various types of mental health such as anxiety, depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, eating disorders and many more, and I fully believe that at some point in a person's life they will experience some sort of mental health issue. I believe the main issue with the spectacle of mental health is that while it is recognised across the world, the side effects of mental health are one of the main causes of negative feelings towards mental health. Side effects of mental health can range from insomnia and difficulty with concentration to suicidal thoughts and increased drug use.

When I think of the portrayal of mental health, I think of art. Art is a way for people to portray their emotions openly with less judgment than having a public conversation about mental health, which is why i chose to add a sense of mental health to some of my art pieces. While my pieces do have a subtle connection to mental health, not all my pieces that include mental health are about my personal mental health but instead the people around me. For example, I created a piece an A4 piece that included a military inspired green background with the texture marks that are inspired by the United Kingdom flag. However, the main aspect of this was the silver dog tags that had a quote on them that read 'you will not be FORGOTTEN'. The message behind this piece is personal to me as it is related to my father. He is an army veteran for the Turkish army, he retired before I was born but I remember the lasting effects that were caused. My father had severe PTSD, when I was young my mother was open to me about my father's condition even though my father was not, and she was strict about never waking him up if he was sleeping as he would think he was being ambushed. His best friend was killed during training and my father would wear both of their dog tags as a reminder about their friendship. The words 'you will not be FORGOTTEN' are not only a recognition for the soldiers all over the world that have died in service but for

my father and his best friend, this is why I changed the known saying from, 'we will not forget' to 'You will not be forgotten'. While I have not ever experienced PTSD, I did get to experience the effect that PTSD had on my family, and how my mother had to learn both me and my sister, on how to wake up my father.

When I think of my artwork about PTSD I can relate my work to Jeremy Deller and his work about army veterans, more specifically the fact that he used World War 1 veterans as an inspiration. The work was a modern twist of a memorial that included "about 1,500 voluntary participants appearing in public spaces across the UK." (BBC, 2016). The piece was spread wide around social media and was used under the hashtag 'we are here' and each of the volunteers paid tribute to soldiers that had died by carrying "a card with the name of the soldier they represented and his age - if known - when he died." (BBC, 2016) and all the men that were represented had died during the first day of fighting of "The Battle of Somme" (BBC, 2016)

The fact that this piece is a tribute to the soldiers that had died during World War 1 was a great link to my tribute piece. I feel that while the piece was a respectful tribute to those that died, the piece was not fully inspired by the mental health struggles that the soldiers of World War 1 experienced.

However, this could be because while mental health existed during World War 1 it was more of a stigma than now. In fact, when soldiers were diagnosed with a mental health condition the treatment that they were given was nothing more than “rest and observation in convalescent hospitals in the countryside.” (Casey, 2016). Furthermore, there were some added aspects that were developed during the war period such as “talking and persuasion therapies were developed, and electro-shock therapy was also used.” (Casey, 2016). As mentioned, while mental health is still a sigma in the 21st century, they have now come a long way from World War 1. Soldiers today are now offered “counselling, residential treatment, peer support and self-help resources” (Mental Health Foundation, 2023)

Keyword 3: Nature

Nature is a direct link to my otyher keywords by comparison, I feel that being out of nature is a key aspect to finding inner peace and a great contributor to the help of mental health. Being outside in nature is a great way to improve mental health and a key aspect to finding inner peace. However not only does nature connect to my previous keywords, but nature also has a positive side

effect on aspects other than mental health and inner peace. Nature can help improve “physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones.” (University of Minnesota)

I spend a lot of time in nature as being outside calms me and takes the stress from the world away, I feel that while I can do many things to relax such as reading, listening to music and being with family and friends. However, disconnecting from modern aspects of life and emerging myself in the sounds of nature and the calming effect of being outdoors is the world's natural healer. I enjoy being in the woods, by the water, or even a long walk with just being alone and reflecting on the positive moments in life.



Figure 2. Vija Celmins, *Ocean* (dry point engraving).

The artist that I take inspiration from when it comes to nature is Vija Celmins, more specifically her work called 'ocean'. This piece is of a softly rippling ocean created using dry point engraving. The piece suggests a calm and peaceful environment that is the perfect opportunity for reflection and thinking. The fact that the piece is created with various shades of grey gives the piece depth and adds to the thought relaxation and gives me great inspiration towards my own work.

Nature is a major aspect in my artwork, I create sunset pieces, pieces of birds flying through clouds, a flower bed and even some flower bushes on a bright and sunny day. I feel that while I do not normally create pieces about my personal mental health the way that nature calms me and makes me peaceful is what I translate through my work.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay I have discussed how each keyword has inspired me and influenced my art practice. There are evident aspects of my keywords that I show through my artwork. Another aspect of my pieces that relate to my keywords is not just through the emotional aspect but the mental aspect as well, creating my pieces is a way for me to further my own inner peace and improve my mental health. However, throughout my research I have been debating that while we use art to express the aspects in our life that make us happy and is a way for us to express our emotions, do we use art to shield us from public scrutiny?

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