MEET THE ARTIST

Lily May Kellahan

About Your Artwork

What motivated you to produce your artwork?

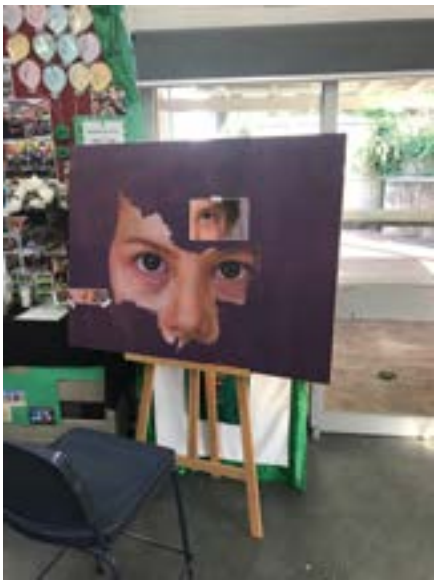
When I started my first painting, I had the idea that my piece would be about 'age' and the way that we treat and respond to people of certain ages; and that my second painting would be the polar opposite of my first. I wanted a very young and a very old person side by side, with features close up and intimate. By the time it came around to planning and creating my second piece, the Black Lives Matter movement was circulating in the media, and I was at a loss as to how to play my part. Outraged by the racial prejudice here in Australia against our First Nations people, I decided that shifting my artwork's focus was what I needed to do. Hate and prejudice is ultimately a learned behaviour, and creating these works, I hope, may have brought more light to this issue. I'd like to add that I am a white person, and I do not wish to speak for any First Nations people, but I feel lending my artistic voice to the issue is the least I could do as a person who benefits from the systemic racism of our society.

How did your artwork evolve during the artmaking process?

At first, my idea was quite in the air, and didn't have a clear direction, but I knew I wanted to focus on portraiture. I had taken a series of photographs of my initial subject matter, and when I showed my art teacher the photographs, we both agreed that we liked the more focused and intimate images, that captured the character in her eyes the most. For the second painting, I was originally planning on having a dark grey background, similar to the image I was working from, but then decided, with the persuasion of my art teachers, that it would be a better idea to leave the background as a red. Keeping it red meant it would be more eye-catching, and that it would bring more unity to the work, due to the analogous hues of the face.

Which artist/s had the greatest influence on your work and why?

The artist that had the greatest influence on my works from the start of the artmaking process, would be Austrian-Irish artist Gottfried Helnwein. He creates phenomenal large-scale pieces that are extremely expressive and emotional. The idea for my work was actually sparked from seeing one of his paintings!



> **"If you are painting a topic close to home, you are reflecting on that topic during the art making process, and inspiration to develop your ideas and consolidate your piece comes from this reflectiveness."**

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How did you arrive at your choice of art medium and materials?

I've always felt the most confident working with oil on wood. Aiming to be as comfortable as possible whilst producing these large scale paintings is what got me through, as I was working with a material and a medium that I knew and loved. I chose this because I am a person that tends to stress themselves out more than necessary, but If I had the chance to accomplish these works in a less time restricted and stressful environment (such as Year 12), I would have enjoyed experimenting with different materials and media. I think I would have loved to paint on found objects rather than a wooden board. I would have chosen symbolic objects to add layers of depth and meaning to my works, but nonetheless, something other than traditional wood board.

What advice would you give Art students and Visual Art teachers who are keen to exhibit works in shows like Pulse Perspectives?

The biggest piece of advice that I would give the students undertaking Visual Art as a subject, is to push boundaries, and not be afraid to explore any medium, any colour and any style! Whatever you do decide to work with, make sure that you are using your creativity in a productive way. Feeling passionate about the topic you are crafting your piece on is not just going to show up in the finished product of your piece, but you are also going to want to keep pushing with finishing whatever it is you have planned to make and display at exhibitions like *Pulse Perspectives*. If you are painting a topic close to home, you are reflecting on that topic during the art making process, and inspiration to develop your ideas and consolidate your piece comes from this reflectiveness.

If you are stressed about not knowing what to make, or not knowing what you are passionate enough about to put into a physical medium - look around! Even if it's something that doesn't directly challenge or affect you, researching something- anything that sparks your interest can inspire you to be creative, and, to want to bring attention to or make a comment on that certain something. I would say the same thing to teachers, reinforce this idea of putting passion into art. Talk about current events and social injustice, even things that make you, as a person, inspired, mad, or excited! When your students see that art can be so much more than it's technicality, and that it gives them an opportunity to express their true emotions and their stance on the world, they will want to be able to use their artistic voice.

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About The Arts

Why do you think art and creativity are important in times of uncertainty and change?

We, as people, desire to have a voice in this world, and to have this voice be heard. An artistic and creative voice is just as good as a member of parliament's voice, or a protestor's voice. If your art is good, people have to step back and look at it, without knowing the initial meaning and then come to a realisation as to what the message of your artwork is; or what comment you were trying to make on society: to me, that is the loudest voice of all. Art and creativity in general, not only allow us to channel our inner thoughts and feelings about the world and our human condition, but they are also a medium for others to resonate with those thoughts and feelings and realise that they are not alone in thinking that way.

In what ways do you think art influences how you feel about yourself and how you connect with others?

Art, and engaging in any creative practice, enables us to enter a state of reflectiveness. Painting, creating or playing music for me may be frustrating sometimes, but once I know what I'm doing and feel as though the thought in my head is coming to fruition, there is a sense of accomplishment and 'flow'. This can be meditative and allow time for reflection. This is how art influences me and how I feel about myself. Art allows me to connect with others, as the mere act of talking about an artwork- whether it be someone else's, or my own with another person, can allow me to expand my level of thought, and can even allow me to dig deeper into issues. Seeing another person's perspective on something can broaden your scope of thought immensely, and allow you to understand how other people see the world.

What career path are you embarking on and has the arts impacted your choice?

I am currently in my first year of a Bachelor of Creative Arts at Curtin University. Honestly, a career in the arts feels uncertain and scary, as it doesn't necessarily guarantee you a 9-5 job and a stable salary; but a love for the arts, for being creative, and expressing your self and your voice, in a way that YOU want to and a way that you feel comfortable doing, isn't something I want to shy away from. In fact, I shouldn't even use the word 'comfortable' in describing a career in the arts. The truth of the matter is that it shouldn't be comfortable. I think artists should be pushing boundaries and comfort zones every day, to see what happens, and to possibly inspire others. Having artistic freedom in high school has allowed me to understand that there is 'comfort' in the uncomfortable, and that art is a viable career path.

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How can AGWA support young people to engage with art?

More exposure! There are so many young artists creating art, and whether it be 'good' or 'bad', it is still art. If AGWA could assist in dismantling the idea that art needs to be what is traditionally 'good' to get into galleries like itself, we can challenge the norms of traditional viewpoints of art, and start addressing the fact that art is there to make a comment, not just as visual pleasure. Displaying art from young artists that may not be deemed as 'visually appealing', can relieve the stress that is put on so many artists with so much potential.

Share something that inspires your art practice.

I chose a David Bowie song, because he reminds us all that it's cool to be one of a kind, and that normality is bland and overdone. He reminds me that I need to keep thinking outside of the box, and as mentioned before, to keep 'pushing boundaries' in my art practice. This song 'Life on Mars' is one of my favourites, as it is so far-fetched, yet so relatable at the same time, and that is what I'd like for people to eventually say when they talk about my art in the future.

Click here to listen

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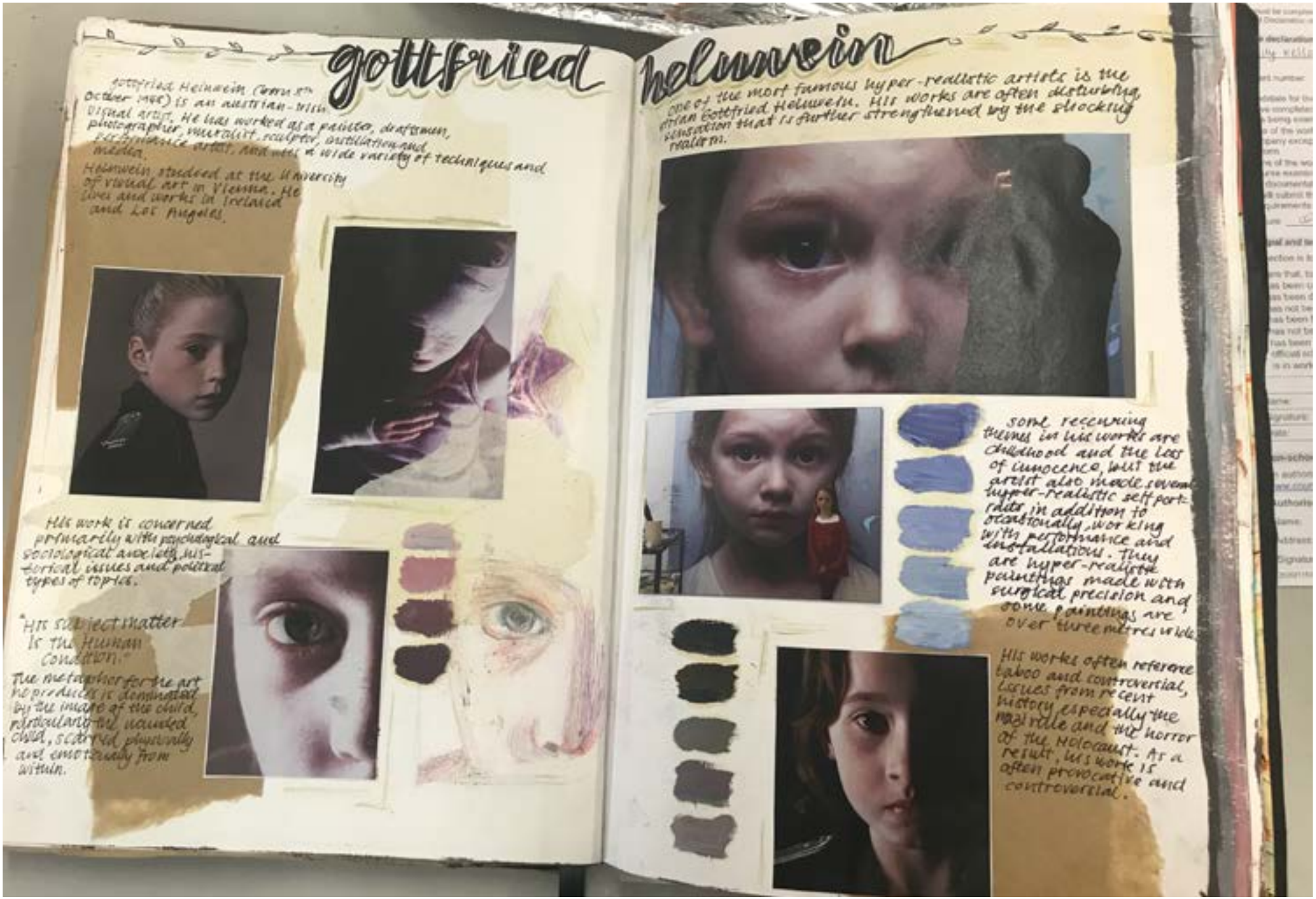
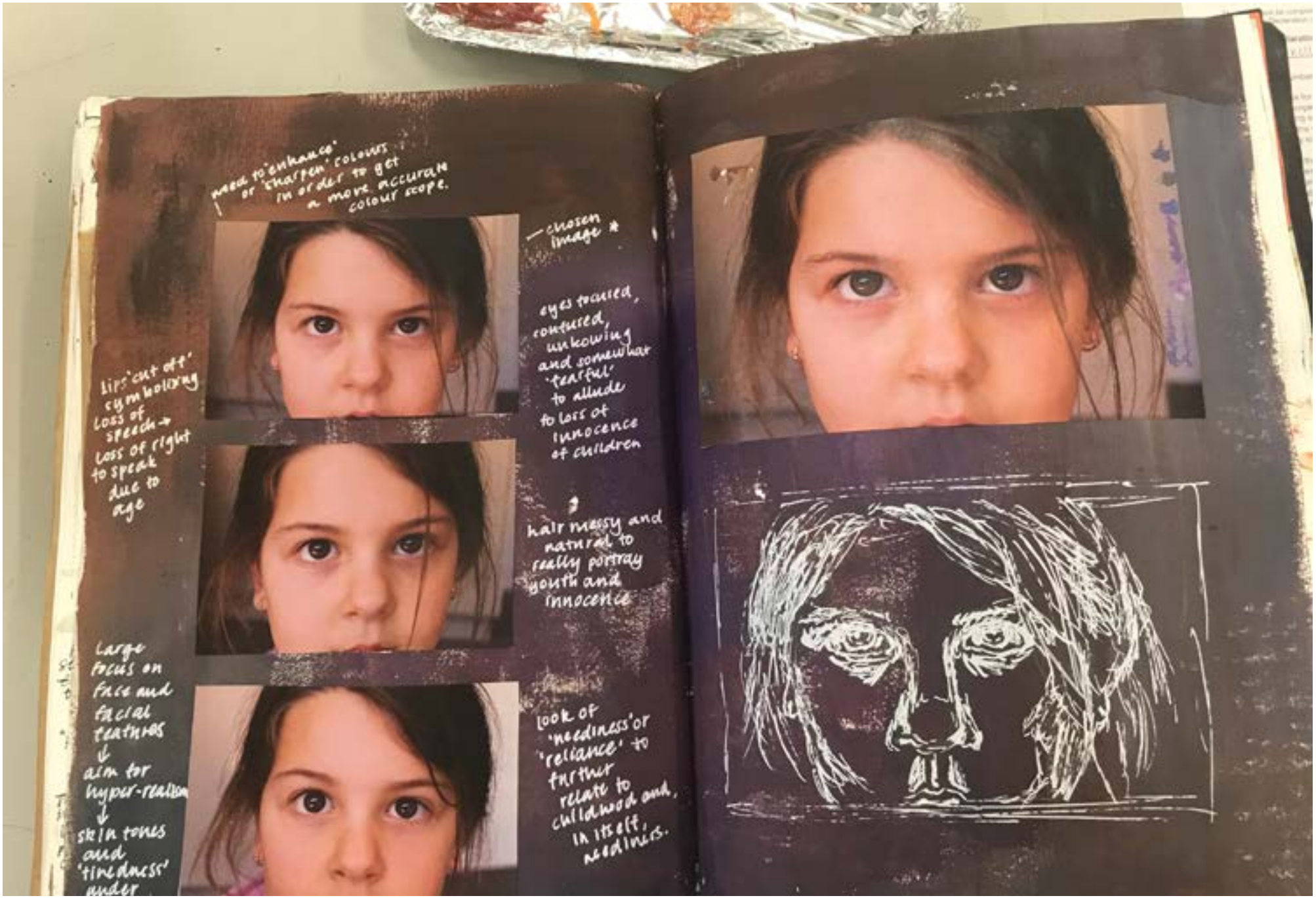
Artist Statement

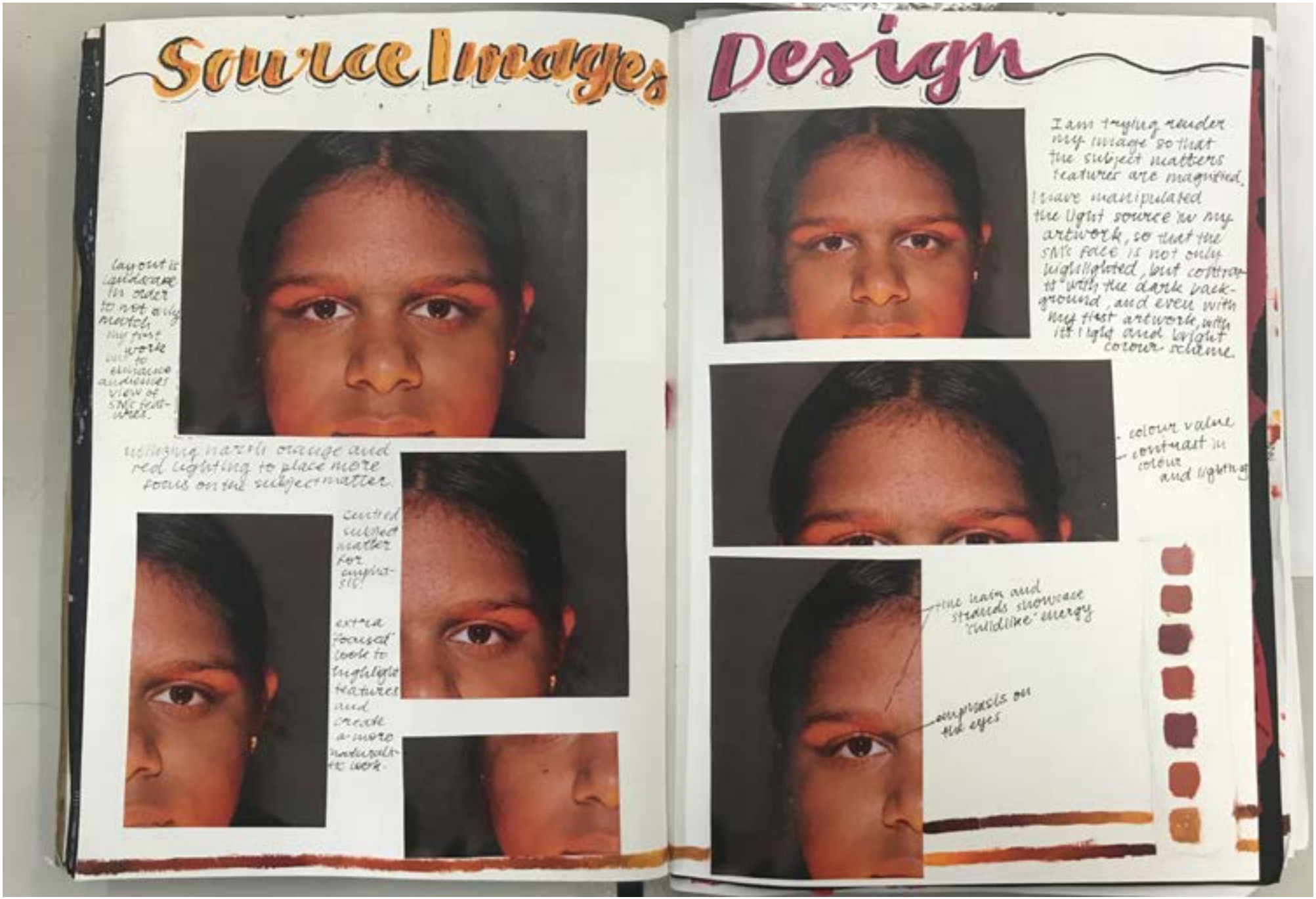
Impressionable

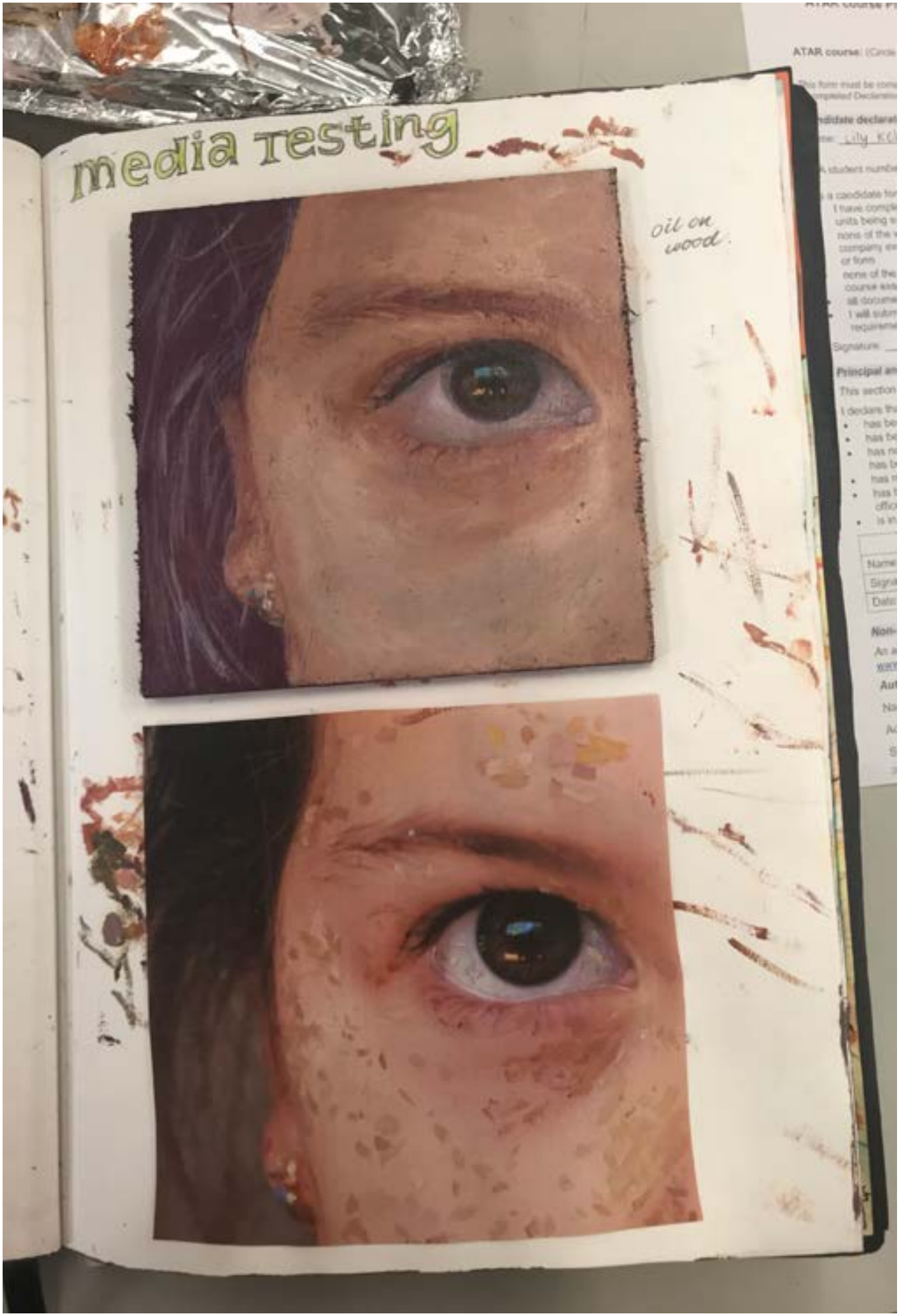
oil on MDF
two parts: 90 x 120 cm each

I have aimed to encapsulate the way in which children, from birth, through childhood, and consequently into adulthood, are the subject of racial differentiation, and in cases of minorities, forms of subjugation; owing to the outdated systems and structures throughout society, and the prejudices these create. My choice to depict children with their mouths "cut-off" at the bottom of the works was deliberate, as I intended to comment on the voicelessness of the young.


gottfried
Gottfried Helnwein (born 5th October 1948) is an austrian-irish visual artist. He has worked as a painter, draftsman, photographer, muralist, sculptor, installation and performance artist, and uses a wide variety of techniques and media.
Helnwein studied at the University of visual art in Vienna. He lives and works in Ireland and Los Angeles.
His work is concerned primarily with psychological and sociological and, lately, historical issues and political types of topics.
"His subject matter is the human condition."
The metaphor for the art he produces is dominated by the image of the child, particularly the haunted child, scarred physically and emotionally from within.
helnwein
One of the most famous hyper-realistic artists is the artian Gottfried Helnwein. His works are often disturbing, sensation that is further strengthened by the shocking realism.
some recurring themes in his works are childhood and the loss of innocence, but the artist also made several hyper-realistic self portraits, in addition to occasionally working with performance and installations. They are hyper-realistic paintings made with surgical precision and some paintings are over three metres wide.
His works often reference taboo and controversial issues from recent history especially the nazi rule and the horror of the Holocaust. As a result, his work is often provocative and controversial.


need to 'enhance' or 'sharpen' colours in order to get a more accurate colour scope.
— chosen image *
eyes teared, contured, unknowing and somewhat 'tearful' to allude to loss of innocence of children
lips 'cut off' symbolising loss of speech → loss of right to speak due to age
hair messy and natural to really portray youth and innocence
Large focus on face and facial features
↓
aim for hyper-realism
↓
skin tones and 'tiredness' under
look of 'neediness' or 'reliance' to further relate to childhood and, in itself, neediness.


Source Images
Design
I am trying render my image so that the subject matters features are magnified.
I have manipulated the light source in my artwork, so that the sitters face is not only highlighted, but contrasts with the dark background, and even with my first artwork with its light and bright colour scheme.
colour value
contrast in colour and lighting
the hair and strands showcase "guideline" energy
emphasis on the eyes


media testing
oil on wood

The Art Gallery of Western Australia

Pulse Perspectives

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

Creating, looking, experiencing art connects us to ourselves, our world and each other

act belong commit

healthway

For more ideas and resources, visit www.actbelongcommit.org.au

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