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Beth

Senior Project Paper

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Last year while I was back in Cape Town visiting my dad, I heard about a non profit organisation called the butterfly art project which is a kind of art school/centre. It immediately caught my attention because at the time I was working on my I-search paper which was related to art therapy. I unfortunately didn't have time to go and visit the organisation while I was there because my trip was short but I decided to reach out to them over email. I spoke to them about my senior project and have kept in touch over the course of this year. Initially I wanted to have them involved more in my project but the distance proved to be a bit tricky, as I wanted my project to be more hands on. In the end I decided that I was going to have to take a more personal approach to it, although I would still keep this wonderful organisation as a main focus during my process. So for the past 6 months I have been working at curating my first personal art exhibition to raise funds for the butterfly art project.

Connecting Myself to My Project

Art has always been my way of coping with the world. Over the past couple years I have found myself living between two different worlds. My art helped me hugely during this time, as a creative outlet and way to express myself. Whenever I am faced with a

challenge or feel overwhelmed my response is always to paint. Last year I began paying more attention to how I used my art to help with stress and anxiety, and for my I-search paper I started exploring art therapy and how art was tied to our emotions. This year I wanted to continue with that theme since I had already done a lot of research last year, although I wanted my senior project to be something active rather than information based which led me to the idea of an exhibition.

I wanted to create a project that would have significant meaning to me instead of thinking of it as another school assignment when choosing the subject which is why it took me a while to actually start my project. It was really daunting reaching out to the butterfly art project at first because I still wasn't sure of the direction of my project at the time but I am glad I did at the beginning of the year as I have been able to build a connection through these emails. Although I never got to finish my project as I intended I still am grateful for the process and how I've seen myself change over the year.

Having grown up in South Africa, I know how much violence and poverty there is. Although I was very lucky to have been able to live in a relatively safe part of the country, I still grew up being very aware that there were many people less fortunate than I. I have seen the living situations of many South Africans in the townships that I have driven by many times. My heart always breaks for these children who grow up with nearly nothing. I always remember that in my childhood one of my biggest joys was brought from my art, which is why I admire the Butterfly Art project and what they are bringing to these communities.

Below are a few photos the Butterfly Art Project sent to me of some of their students and mentors working on various crafts.







The Butterfly Art Project

The Butterfly Art Project is a non profit art school/learning centre that promotes art as a way of healing from traumatic life events. The school is located in the suburbs of Cape Town and teaches students from disadvantaged communities. A lot of the students most likely have grown up in a very violent environment, have rough home lives and little money. By giving these children access to such facilities, it can help them process their trauma instead of being left to deal with it on their own which usually results in lashing out with acts of violence, drug use or gang activity. They do lots of activities

using their hands, with things like clay, which is a very grounding medium. They also do group projects to learn social skills and how to connect with their peers.

My Project in Relation to Threefold Social Order

Relating my project to Steiner's threefold social order, I find that it falls mainly into two; cultural and economic. The cultural sphere (freedom and individual creativity) is more related to the personal side of my project. In the beginning I struggled a lot with my project because I already had preconceived ideas of what it had to be. Over the first few months I worked really hard on reforming those ideas and reassuring myself that it was ok if it didn't go exactly as I envisioned it and I wasn't going to disappoint anybody with its outcome. I realised that it was my project and I had the freedom to decide if the outcome was going to be a positive journey of learning through my errors or if I was going to let my failures bring me down (worked on changing my mindset and outlook). The second area, the economic, had to do with the product of my project. I think giving is a very important thing to practice in this world and help those that might be less fortunate. An important aspect in economy in Steiner's view is circulation. In my project I don't view the circulation in the money itself but in the gesture. I wish to create a circulation of gratitude and with that a chain effect of positivity. In this project in giving I am receiving the feeling of fulfilment and gratitude for being able to work with this organisation.

The Start of My Journey

When it comes to projects I have the tendency to move very quickly and end up leaving a lot of them unfinished. I get bored halfway through and end up moving onto something new. Sometimes months later I pick them up again or decide I don't like them anymore and turn them into something new (especially true for paintings). That's just how I work; fast paced or not at all. I get impatient when I don't see results quickly or if things don't look like they are turning out how I expect, which I have discovered can be slightly problematic when I am working on a long term project that won't necessarily be finished overnight. This year with my senior project I have worked a lot on trying to slow my process down and be more organised.

When I started my project I left it very open ended and preferred it that way (I wasn't committed to one thing and it could change anytime). Although it was nice at first I later realised that this openness of my project was causing me more stress because I knew I would have to have a solid 'product' at the end. Up until that point I had just been starting random paintings in hopes that it would all come tighter later. I found very quickly that my usual unorganised way of working wasn't allowing me to move forward. I had initially played with the idea of having a set theme in my paintings, but in the end I decided against it as it put a lot of stress and pressure on me which at one point resulted in me not painting at all. I decided that along as I was having fun in the process it was ok if it wasn't exactly perfect. I would say though that all the paintings do relate to each other on some level, as they are a picture of my growth as a person and artist over this year, but the images themselves are relatively separate.

A Turning Point

When I think back to the main turning point in my project in which it started to take on more form I remember a certain day in particular. Sometime around the beginning of December I decided to collect all the work I'd done so far (in terms of my paintings) and lay them on my carpet. Finding that there was no order, theme or continuity at all I was a bit despondent about the direction of my project. I thought about switching my project at that point but realised it might be too late. On that particular day my mom had a friend over (I didn't know her very well except that she was also south African). I ended up talking to her for a while about my project and showed her my work, which she helped me organise better, showing me it wasn't so much of a mess after all. Eventually in our conversation she offered to help mentor me in the process. After that we started meeting weekly to go over my progress and set tasks for myself in the next week. I got a notebook and started writing down all my thoughts and to do lists. I found that writing my thought process and actions out helped me move forward as well as track my progress which made me feel like I was accomplishing something each week. Lucinda (my mentor) has been a huge help during my process. At first I didn't think I needed a mentor, not because I didn't want one but because I just didn't think one would be helpful in my project. I realised though that even if I didn't need a mentor for my project in the sense of needing someone to learn from, it was really nice to have someone to just talk to who wanted to listen and help. It definitely helped me collect my thoughts each week so I could set clear goals for the future.

Painting and my process

Over the course of my project I have completed about 6 bigger - medium sized oil paintings, countless ink paintings/sketches and a few smaller oils/acrylics. Before this year I mostly worked in acrylics and watercolours but for my project I started experimenting more in oils. I have found that it is actually a medium I prefer over all others in painting. Most of my painting are on pieces of board or cardstock I find lying around my house. I really paint on anything I can find so all my bases vary.

My process when creating a new piece can vary depending on the medium but its usually pretty similar unless I am using ink. The hardest part for me is deciding what I want to paint. For some reason I never stop to think before I start a painting whether I can actually paint the thing I am aiming for. I never evaluate the difficulty of a piece until I am about halfway through and maybe realise I was being a bit too ambitious. That way I never limit myself or set boundaries if I assume I can do something until I am proved otherwise. I always tell myself there is no harm in trying.

I nearly always paint from life or a photograph that I have taken. My art form my imagination is very different to that from references (this can be seen in my ink paintings). Once I have decided what photograph I want to paint, I then decided how I want it to sit on my 'canvas', whether I want to distort certain features, change the colour, or add a background. When starting a new painting if it is in oil or acrylic I always sketch my idea out first. If I am intending to use a canvas or piece of board I will always make my drawing on a similar sized piece of paper first and then transfer it on once I am happy with it. I don't usually grid my drawings although I did for my piece

'blue' because it was a close-up portrait. I mostly freehand the outline using my photo for reference. Once I am happy with it and have added shading I transfer it to my canvas and continue to add more shading in places that might have lost some. Once I am done with the drawing I start painting. There isn't much to say about painting a piece, you just do it. Depending onto medium I might need to go over places with a few different coats. I always paint the subject of the painting first and add the in background after. When I paint using ink though, my process is a bit different. I work very fast paced, I don't use any reference photos and I use lots of water. I like to make these ink pieces in-between working on bigger paintings for a change now and then.

Moving Forward

Once I started keeping track of my work and setting weekly goals my project moved much faster. By the beginning of January I had most of my bigger paintings finished with a few still needing touch ups. During December after winter break I started meeting weekly with Caryn Stone, who was helping me plan the more logistical aspects of my exhibition. We began planning out how the exhibition would be held, when, and where. One problem we ran into though was the donation process. Because the organisation is overseas and the money was going to be converted into rand from dollars I was going to have to use an online donation page that they referred to me. I realised that this would make it tricky if people wanted to donate in cash. I talked to Caryn a lot about this and decided to plan it more in detail as the time of the exhibition got closer.

By the beginning of February I was still looking for a space to have my exhibition in. I had contacted a few places but unfortunately they were all booked pretty far in advance. I decided to book Sophia hall then as a backup incase I couldn't find a place at all. Luckily I made a connection with a Summerfield parent who offered her studio as my exhibition space. I went with lucinda to visit the space and it was absolutely perfect. The lighting was great, she said I could rearrange it however I liked and was more than happy to help. I confirmed a date with her was planning on going back a couple weeks before the exhibition to begin planning the layout.

Towards the end of February all I had left to do was the framing, getting postcards from the butterfly art project and food donations from a couple stores for the actual event. All of these I was in the middle of finishing when the coronavirus began to get more serious. I couldn't get the postcards in the way I had planned and currently all of my pieces are still unframed as I didn't have the chance to go to a framing place before quarantine. Those were some of the last loose ends to completing my project.

Conclusion

Although my project didn't have the ending I expected, I now understand what people mean to when they say its really about the journey and process. I have learnt so much from this journey and from my mistakes and mishaps along the way. I am so grateful to have had this amazing learning experience in my senior year. I am also especially grateful to all the people who helped me along the way - my mom, Lucinda, Caryn and The Butterfly Art Project. I think what I will remember most is the connection I developed with these people doing this year. In terms of my exhibition I will still

possibly be trying to find a way to do an online fundraiser and showcase my work on the side in some way. Im still looking into it and it may take a while to figure out but I would like to try put some use to my work in some way if I can.

Appendix

Below are all the pieces I intended on displaying in my exhibition.

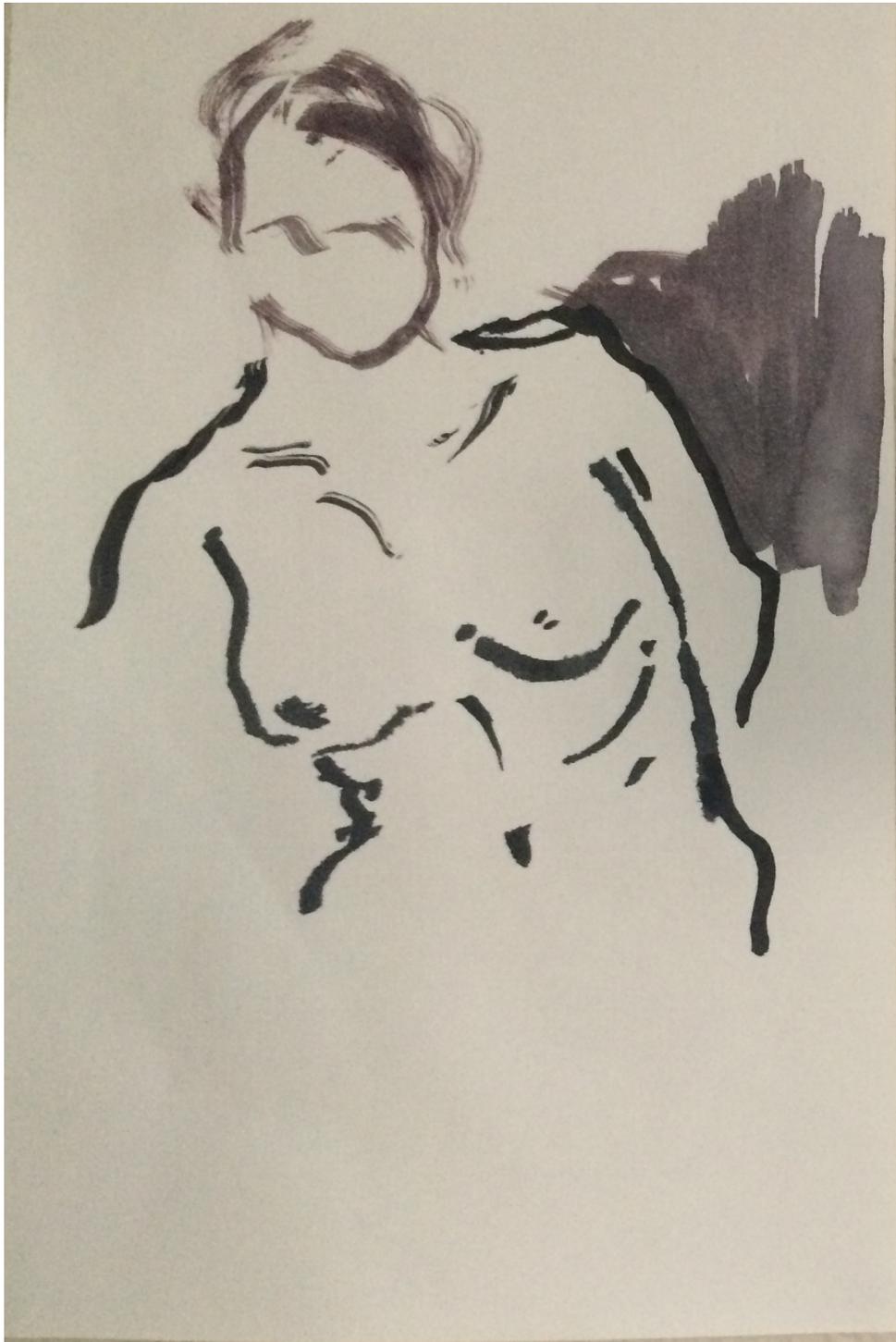
The mediums vary from ink to oil. Two pieces I have added from previous years because I felt that they fit into this body of work.



Ink figure study 1, 2020

Ink and acrylic on watercolour paper

6' x 9'



Ink figure study 2, 2020

Ink on watercolour paper

6' x 9'



Painting Myself Painting Myself (a self portrait), 2020

Ink on watercolour paper

9' x 12'



Ink figure study 3, 2020

Ink on watercolour paper

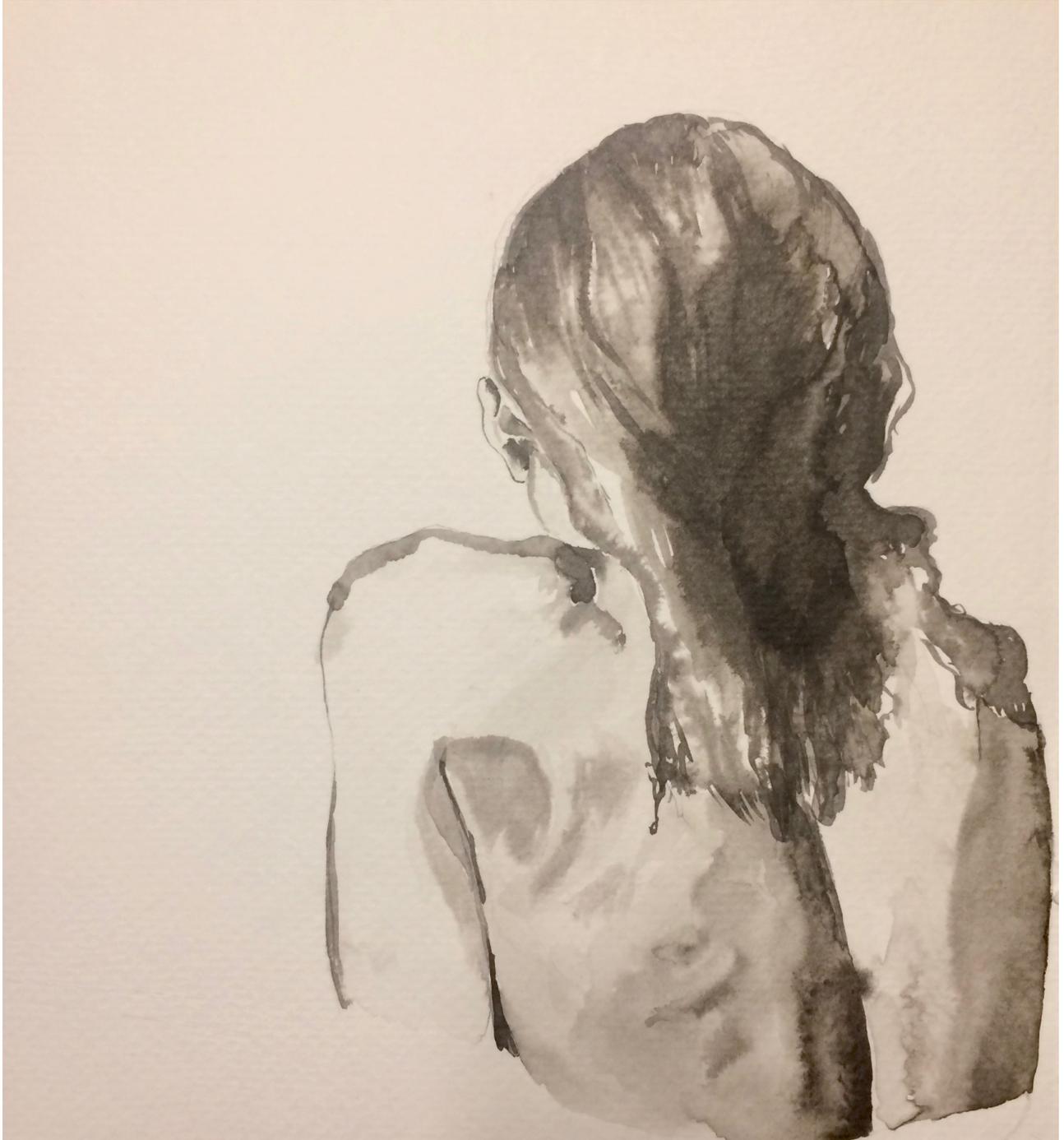
9' x 12'



Flowing, 2020

Ink and watercolour on watercolour paper

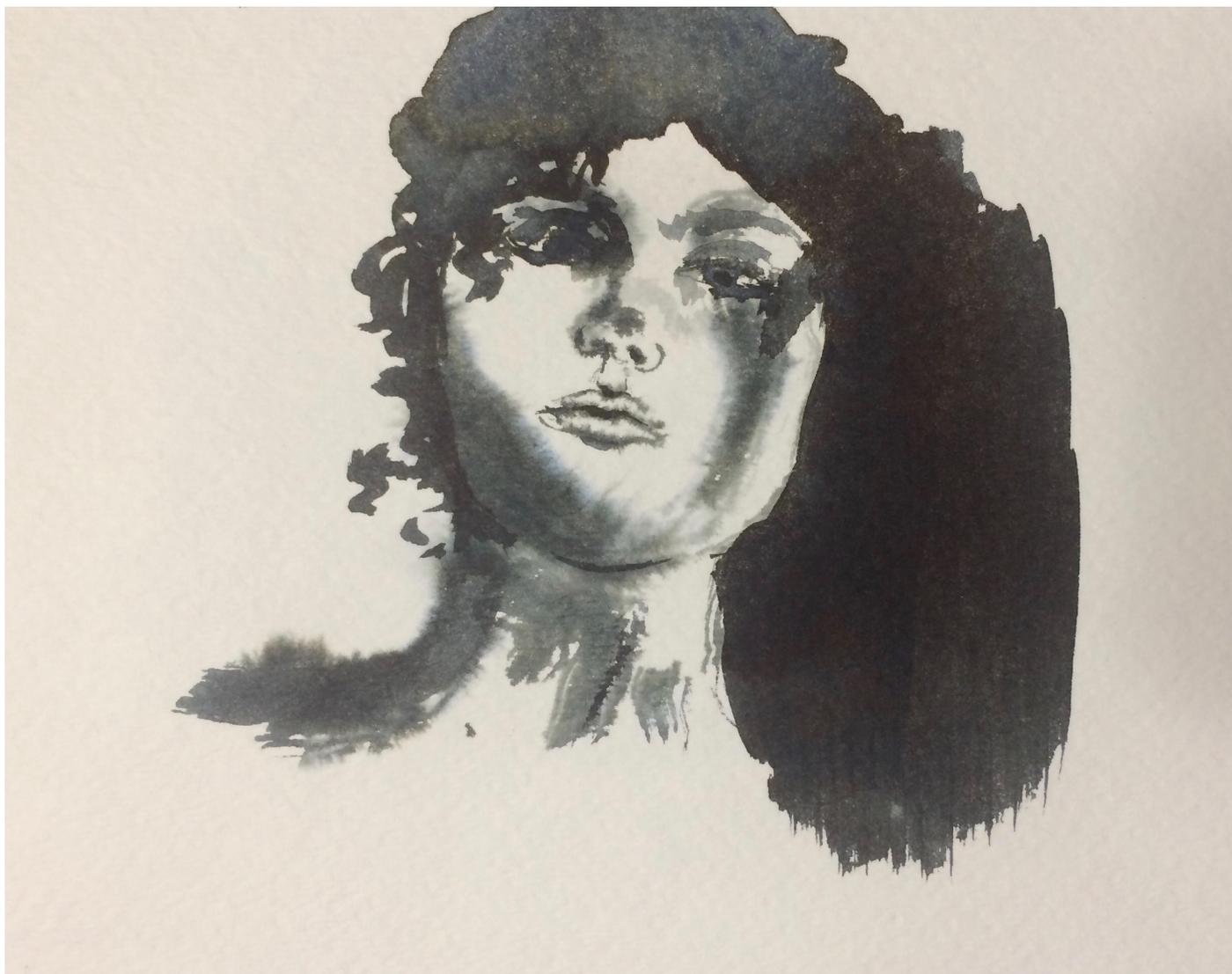
8' x 7'



Wet hair, 2019

Ink on watercolour paper

8.5' x 9'





Night things, 2019

Ink and watercolour on watercolour paper

3' x 5'



swimming Pool, 2019

Ink and watercolour on paper

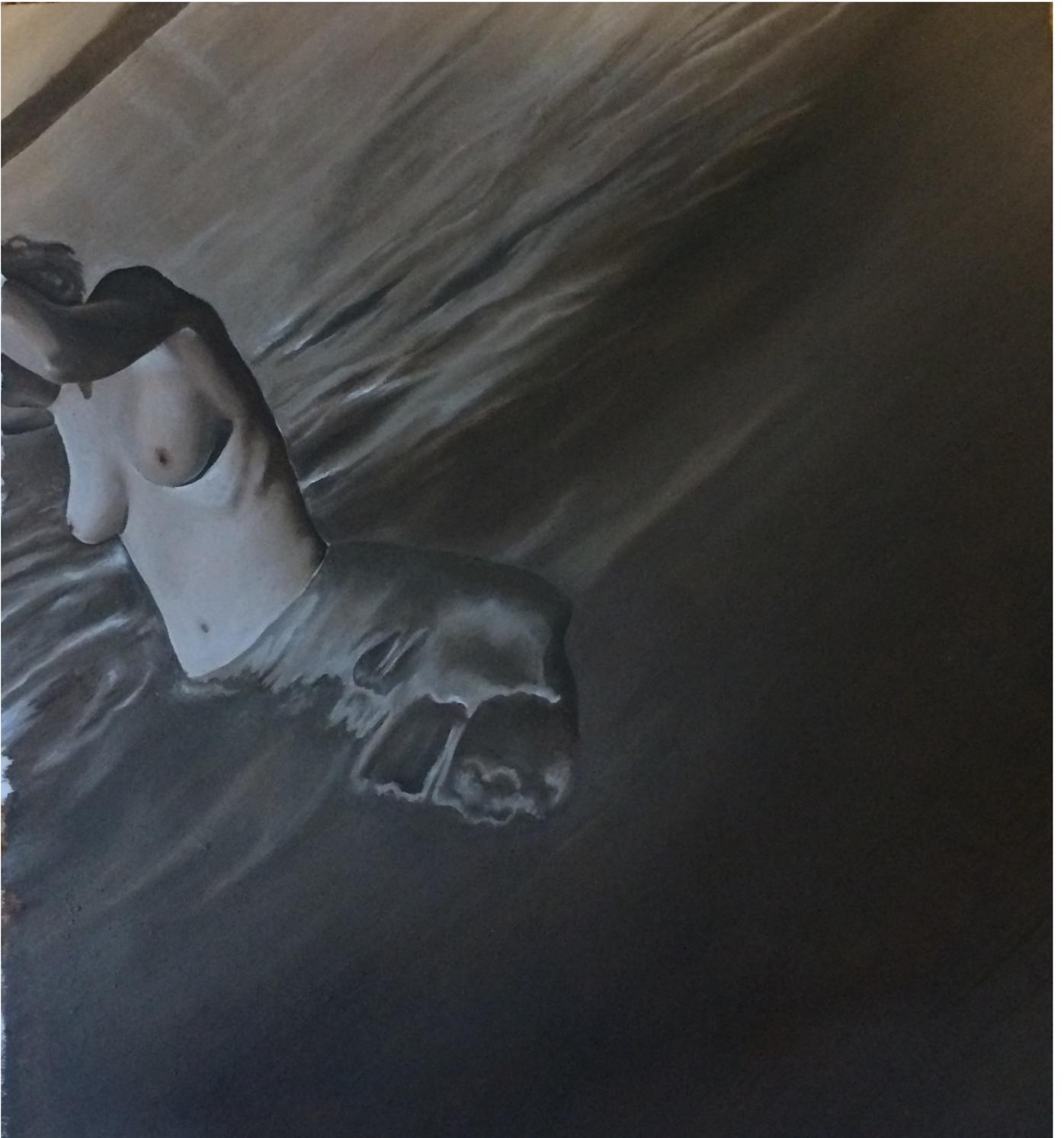
4' x 4.5'



Pumpkin Shell, 2019

Oil on aluminium

9' x 12' (image shown is cropped)



Girl Swimming, 2019

Water soluble oils on cardboard

7.5' x 8'



Self portrait, 2020

Oil on canvas

11' x 14'



Blue, 2020

Oil on wood

12' x 12'



No title, 2020

Oil on cardboard

7' x 10'



A Conversation, 2020

Watercolour with magazine clippings on cardboard

9' x 9'



Pomegranate still life, 2019

Charcoal and white pencil on brown paper

22' x 18'



Decaying flowers still life, 2018

Oil on canvas

12' x 16'



A Plane Ride to Nowhere, 2017

Acrylic on cardboard

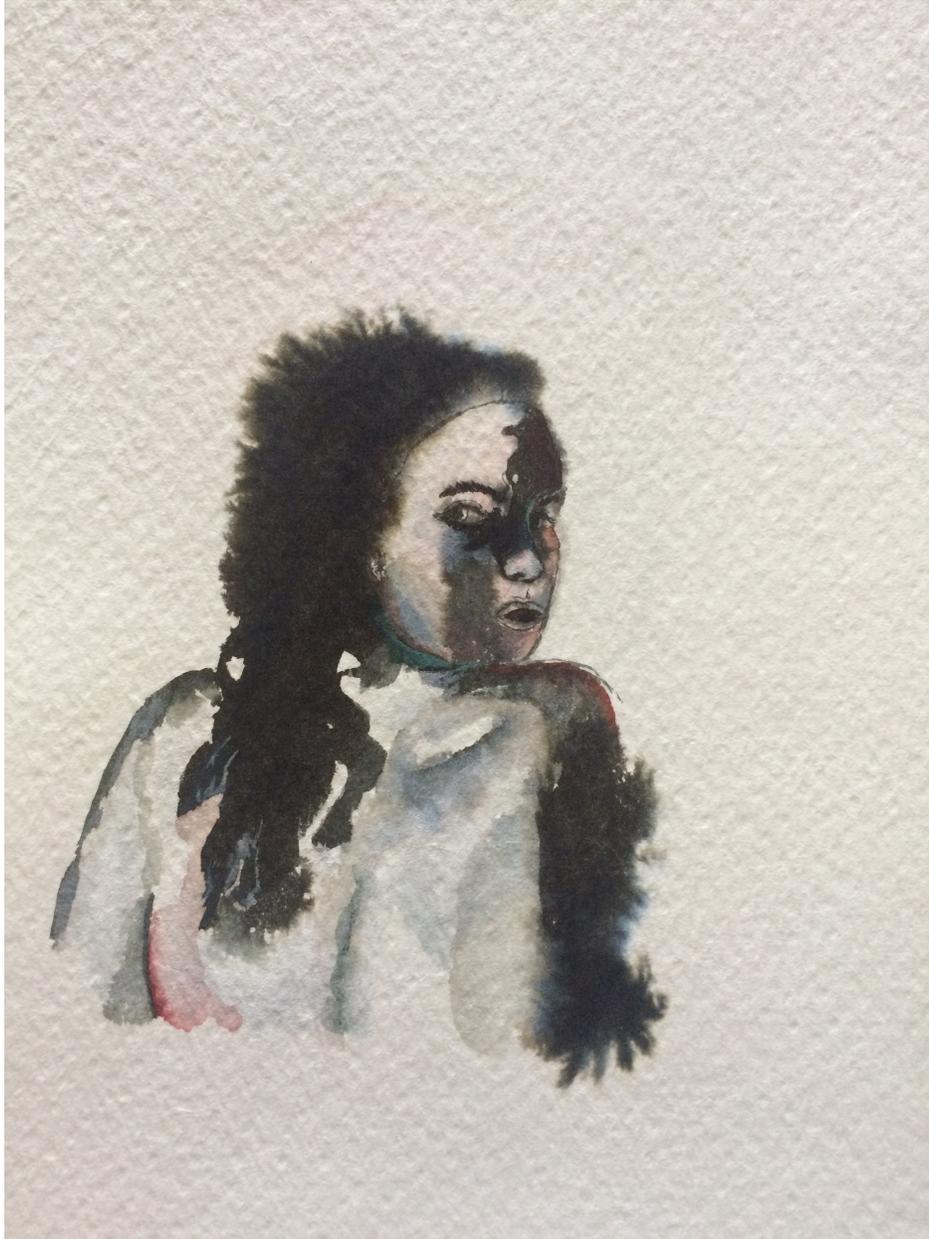
6' x 6'



Unfinished piece, 2020

Oil on wood

12' x 12'



No title, 2020

Ink and watercolour on watercolour paper

5' x 9' (image is cropped)

Bibliography

Joy, Lucinda. Project mentor. November 2019 - February 2020.

Lucinda met with me once a week over the course of my project to discuss its course and was a huge help in all areas

Stone, Caryn. Personal Interview. December 2019 - January 2020.

Caryn works in the lower school office at Summerfield Waldorf school and helps plan school fundraisers. I met with her once every few weeks to go over logistics of my exhibition and the fund-raising side of it.

De Lion, Cam. Personal interview. January 2020.

Cam is an independent artist who has had experience in show casing before. I met with him to discuss framing and my options price wise and stylistically.

The Butterfly Art Project. In contact through email.

