EPQ- ARTEFACT

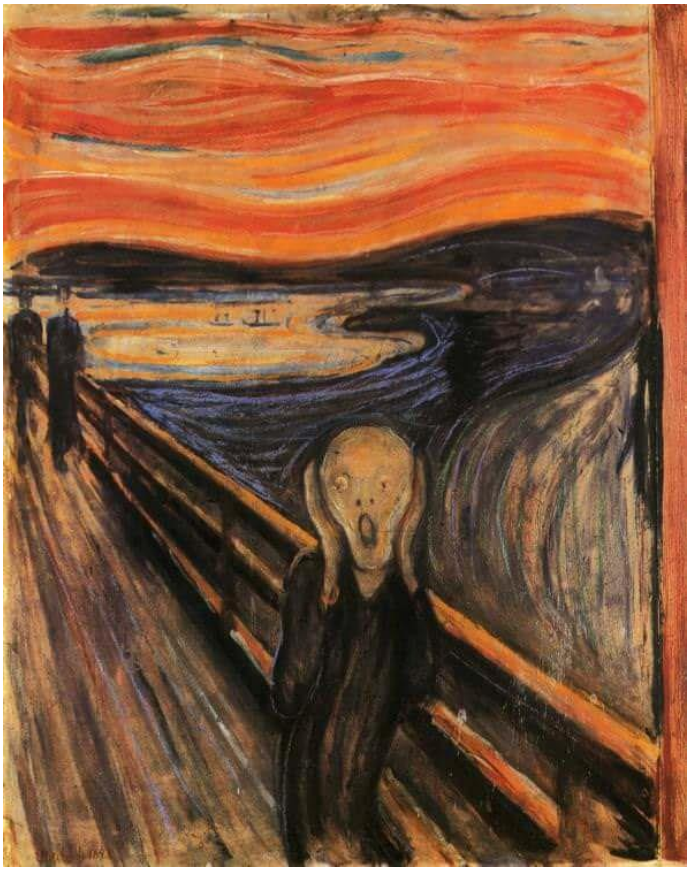
Portraying the effects of Social Anxiety Through Mixed Media Art

By Thea Eadie

I created this artwork with the goal of educating people about social anxiety and how it can affect people's lives, as well as making the viewer empathise with someone who suffers from it. I hoped to inspire people to break down the stigma surrounding social anxiety and to be open about their mental health and how they have struggled mentally. How I evaluated my art piece was by putting it up in the art room, asking questions such as 'how does this piece make you feel' and 'do you feel comfortable talking about your mental health. The context of the artwork, its originality, the intentions of the piece, the representation of the subject, the process of the art, and the art itself are usually used to evaluate and judge it. As a result, I considered these points and ensured that each aspect of the project was carefully thought through to fit the evaluation scheme. I would like to depict the following emotions in my piece to depict social anxiety: sadness, judgement, stress, anger, depression, feeling trapped, and self-consciousness. Because you avoid situations that make you uncomfortable, social anxiety can prevent you from living your life. Many symptoms of social anxiety include feeling sick, trembling, sweating, heart palpitations, a sense of constant judgement, low self-esteem, and a fear of criticism. It can have an impact on personal relationships because it makes you feel insufficient for others and can cause you to avoid certain activities (McEvoy, 2021). According to doctors, if left untreated, it can lead to drug problems, alcoholism, depression, and a low quality of life. To summarize my opening, social anxiety needs to be discussed more because it can harm things like work, school, relationships, enjoyment of life, and feeling good about oneself. (NHS, 2021). This is an important topic to write about because social anxiety is under-reported and under-treated, even though it can change someone's life more than anything else.

The first step I took when it came to the creation of my artefact was picking my title. I had nine essay ideas that were all very vague and completely unrelated to one another. After a lot of consideration, I decided to produce a piece of artwork to do with a specific mental illness which mostly affects teenagers, social anxiety. On the topic of social anxiety and art, I intended to

research various pieces of art using various techniques, done by different artists and saw which ones were most appropriate for my subject matter. I made a sketchbook to experiment with different media and to research different artists, which helped me order and structure my research and ideas for the final product. From doing some research about different artists, I learnt how I can display different emotions in my piece by using different components to my art such as: using symbolism, using colour psychology to display different emotions (such as the colour black being associated with sadness (Cherry, 2017)), composition, size, media and even using text or not. Taking into consideration all artists I did research on, I was most inspired and impacted by the works 'The Scream' by Edvard Munch, Sinthia Cousineau's art on social anxiety, 'Mind Vomit' by Saira- Jayne Jones, and Scarlett Raven's collection 'One in four'.



'The Scream' (1893) by Edvard Munch

'The Scream' (1893) by Edvard Munch, depicts a figure with a distorted face with an open mouth, whilst his hands cupping his face in agony. The painting mainly represents anxiety and dread, while feeling isolated and trapped due to the surrealist landscape suggesting a sense of chaos and dread. I took inspiration from Munch due to the various techniques he used to portray the sense of anxiety. The distortion and expression of the face helps give the painting a sense of anxiety, while suggesting an overwhelming sense of dread and horror. When picking what facial expression I was going to make my figure have in my artwork, I thought this painting's expression would link most to the title of my artefact, creating a powerful and unsettling image for the viewer. The figure in the painting appears to be screaming, but there seems to be no sound or anyone coming to help, creating a sense of loneliness, as if the figure is crying for help but no one seems to be listening. This reflects on social anxiety, as when you are struggling you may not feel heard and may feel as if you have 'unwanted invisibility [which] can erode self-esteem and self-confidence'

((Raypole, 2021). I also took inspiration from the colour of this painting, the huge contrast between the intense oranges and reds in the background and then the figure in the foregrounds ghostly grey/green colour palette, adds to the sense of unease in the painting. This relates back to the colour psychology 'grey does carry some negative connotations, particularly when it comes to depression and loss' (Ferreira, 2018), so when picking the colour for my painting I picked a very muted colour palette to create a sense of lifelessness and dullness in the painting.



Part of Sinthia Cousineau's collection 'Art & Social Anxiety'

Sinthia Cousineau's works on social anxiety really inspired me, not only with her paintings but with her own personal battle with social anxiety. She has experienced it for over 10 years, resulting in negative life experiences relating to bullying, anxiety, and self-esteem issues (Cousineau, 2015). I admired her story and took into consideration how her experiences made her feel: 'terrified of negative judgement', 'heart racing', 'sweating', 'shaking, isolated, 'surrounded by darkness' and felt 'the highest degree of pain' (Cousineau, 2015), and tried to collaborate this into my artwork. She describes facing social anxiety as 'surrounded by darkness', therefore I decided to the background of my painting in black to create this feeling. According to the psychology press, 2009, The fundamental of psychology, black was associated with the feeling's sadness, anger, depression, and fear (MW, 2009), therefore I feel as if it would be fitting for my artwork.co



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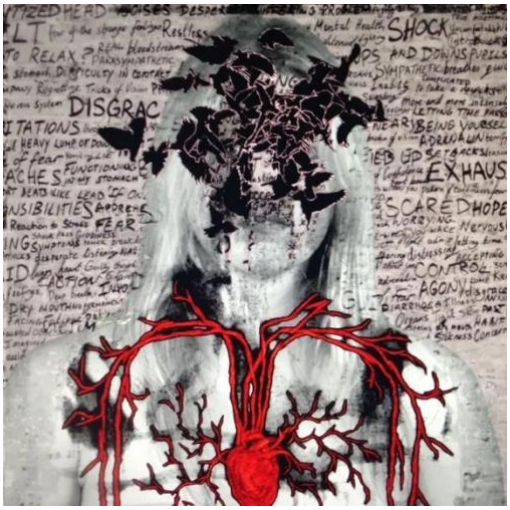
'Mind Vomit' by Saira- Jayne Jones portrays anxiety in a chaotic and vivid way. The painting depicts a complex composition with a figure in the central foreground, appearing to be exploding whilst spewing out a mass of different coloured, jumbled shapes. I took inspiration from Jones, as I admired the composition and disorganization of the painting. The vibrant colour, swirling lines and irregular explosive shapes create a sense of intense energy, making an overwhelming feeling of nervousness and agitation often associated with anxiety. The composition is completely claustrophobic and chaotic, reflecting on disorganized thoughts in one's mind who is accompanied with anxiety. Another reason why I was inspired by the works of Jones was because she had the



'Mind Vomit' by Saira-Jayne Jones

same intentions as me for her artwork. Not only was she trying to raise awareness for mental health, but also presenting art in a way that is more accessible to the average consumer, this is through her movement 'The Perspective Project'. Through creating this she 'seeks to improve mental health literacy by breaking down social stigmas' (Lo, 2022), I felt this linked into my project well as one of my intentions from the beginning was to break the stigma around social anxiety and to educate people on the subject of social anxiety and how it can effect a person's life, as well as making the viewers empathise with someone who struggles with it.

Finally, 'One in Four' by Scarlett Raven, is made up of multiple paintings, done for the Mental Health Awareness week and charity minds 70th anniversary (Hinde, 2016). The title of her piece 'One in Four' references the fact 1 in 4 people experience some sort of mental illness in their lifetime, which inspired me to do a piece on mental health as it effects so many in the world around us. Her works are highly expressive and uses a unique technique by using oil paint and digital layering, creating a layered and textured canvas. Seeing her artwork stimulated my own ideas in mixing photography and painting, creating a collaged piece. Through the use of shadow and colour contrasts in her artworks, she creates a more dramatic effect and a sense of inner turmoil, through the intense red compared to the black and white. Raven's art and description of it, conveys a sense of deep empathy for those who struggle with social anxiety, but also offer a sense of hope for those who feel isolated.



'One in four' by Scarlett Raven

My next step was coming up with my intentions for my artefact. Firstly, I wanted to educate people about social anxiety and how it can affect a person's life, and make the viewers empathize with someone who struggles with it. Another reason I wanted to make this, was because I have struggled with social anxiety in parts of my life and have learnt to come outside of my comfort zone and overcome it, making Sinthia Cousineau's story very admirable to me. I also wanted to have a greater understanding about social anxiety. In order to evaluate whether my piece of artwork fit the intentions I set; I came up with a success criteria. My first aim is to make the audience feel particular emotions, including: judgement, isolation, panic, and anxiety. (I chose these emotions as these are some of the feelings someone with social anxiety would feel, as well as this, these emotions are similar to the other artists and artworks I have studied

and have been inspired by). This will be measured by me inviting pupils and staff to view my artwork, which will be placed either in the art room or in the common room in my boarding house, and I will create a survey which using a QR code will take you to. This QR code will be placed next to my artwork. The survey will include multiple choice questions, as well as questions which may be typed, allowing a freedom for answering, creating a more real and accurate result. I have considered how my audience's own experience with mental health, age and gender will affect their interpretation of my art. I will look for evidence of trends in my survey. My second aim is that the artwork will also develop my skills and link in with a specific artist who I am inspired by. For example, Munch, Sinthia Cousineau and Scarlett Raven and the specific technical skills I will be demonstrating are: 1. Exploring different emotions exploring different angles to anxiety, 2. Making my viewer feel physical symptoms of anxiety by looking at my work and 3. Taking each part of my project into consideration- including composition, colour and how emotions are portrayed. This will be evaluated by my subject expert Mr Holmes, who I will ask questions to about my artwork. My final aim is that the artwork will draw on examples from other artists who have tried to raise awareness or de-stigmatise mental illness through their art. I have analysed a wide range of artwork and artists and included details of the artists and techniques they may use, in my sketchbook. I have shown clearly how this research has informed my own piece of art, commenting on: Colour, Media, Composition, Representation of figure, Facial expressions, Abstract or idealistic, Emotional response, Creating dramatic effect, Text or no text and scale. This again will be evaluated by my subject expert.

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