

ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine

The Book Paradox

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The Book Paradox was created as part of my studies in creative arts and health at the University of Tasmania. I was encouraged to work mostly within only one medium, and I chose paper. This inspired me to create something with repurposed materials both out of my own curiosity, and from a sustainability viewpoint. It began with gathering a sense of the capacities and limitations of different types of paper that I already had. My curiosities led to twisting, curling, pleating, scrunching, sewing, ripping, layering, and rolling. Through this process of experiential play, I was able to allow for the unexpected to emerge, which birthed an idea in me to use an old book as a canvas which became the foundation. As I opened the pages, I noticed the aliveness of my relationship with them; their scent, texture, tapestry of knowledge, and wisdom held within. I felt strongly connected to the story of the paper I was holding within my fingertips, and their relation to the trees as its source. Tending to this relation of the trees and paper, I constructed a tree. It contrasted the delicate tissue paper blossoms with fragments of old branches which highlighted where paper begins its process of becoming, and the trees begin their process of dying.

I find this artwork to be an expression of my voice, and in how I situate myself within this relationship of the trees and the paper. I am a consumer. I make a choice to buy books. For me, it is this sentimental feeling of cosying up in my blanket with a cup of tea in one hand, and a book in the other. As I slowly attend to the weight within my palm from the book, the solidness of the binding, and the flick of the pages, I reminisce of something deep and restorative that I haven't been able to replicate with digital readers. The consequences of this being that the trees are sacrificed to indulge my desires to experience a book in its flesh.

In sharing this artwork, I acknowledge that although this is created sustainably, a moral conflict is present. Through the process of creating the Book Paradox, I noticed how the art was speaking of my broader experiences of conflict, implicit biases, privileges, and the paradoxes we encounter as part of being human (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Book Paradox, 35cm x 33cm, Sculpture

About the Author

Susannah Morrison is a final year student in the Masters of Therapeutic Arts at the MIECAT Institute in Melbourne, Australia. She is also an alumna from the Diploma of Creative Arts and Health from the University of Tasmania, Australia. Susannah is passionate about therapeutic arts and surrendering to the process that art offers in being an agent for wisdom, acceptance, and healing. She has recently served as a member for the Creative Arts and Health Course Advisory Committee for the University of Tasmania. She also offers creative arts experiences to various community agencies, and social and emotional learning therapy through her business Functional Skills Focus, located in Kaurna Country in Adelaide, South Australia.

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