



Mental
Health
+
Gaming
Awareness
Commission

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The Brief



"Everybody has mental health. Some people have good mental health; others sometimes suffer from poor mental health. Whatever experience you have with mental health, there are things that can make you feel better. For some people, that may be seeing family and friends, exercising, reading a book, or gaming.

If you think gaming helps you with your mental health, then this commission is for you. Maybe you find that talking to friends through gaming helps you keep positive. Perhaps exploring magical worlds or solving puzzles helps to focus your mind away from the negative things that get you down. If you can think of reasons why gaming has improved your mental health, we would love to hear from you!"

Things to consider from the brief

- * Do I include my own experience with mental health?
- * Do I re-tell someone else's experience with mental health? or multiple people?
- * What medium will I use to present my piece?
- * How big should I make the piece?
- * What style should I present my piece in?
- * Should I include characters from my favourite games?
- * What theme should I portray?

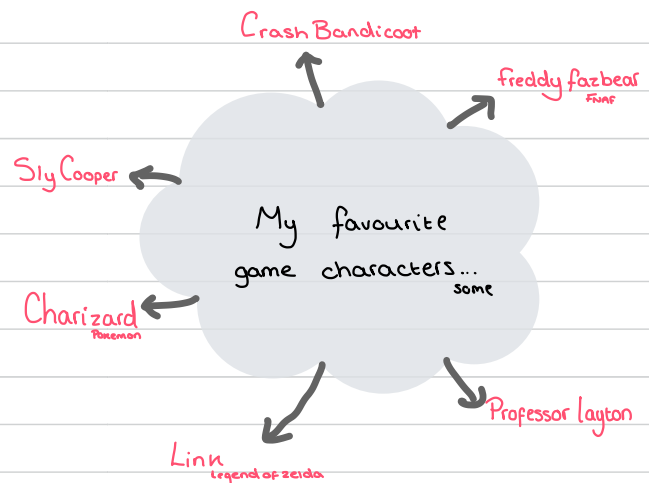
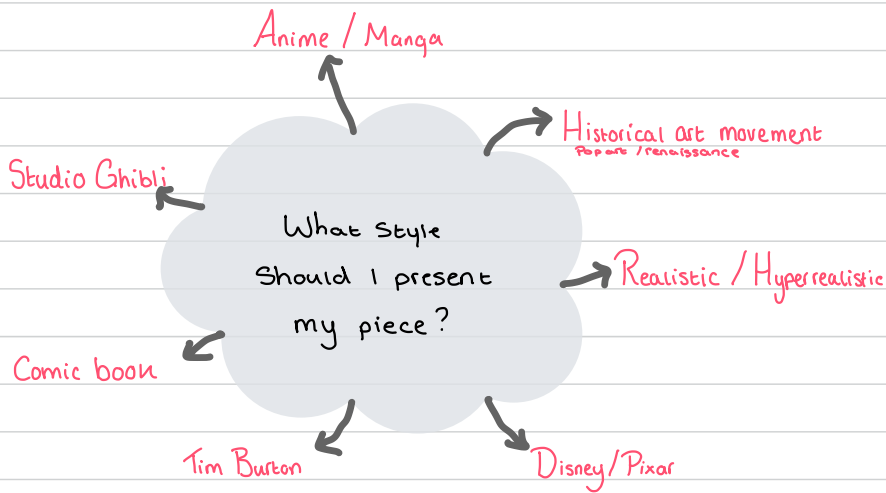
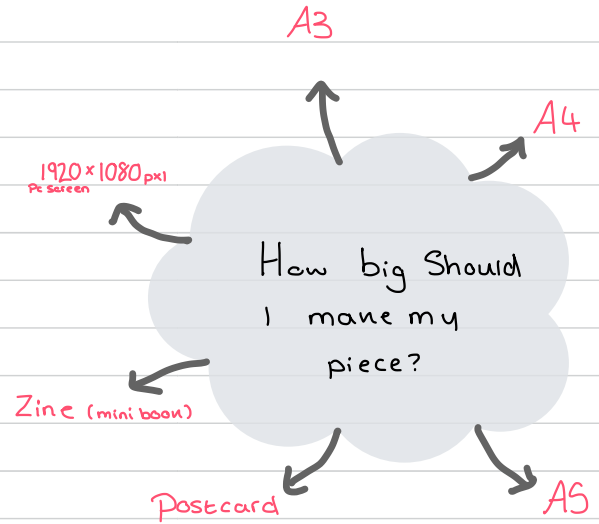
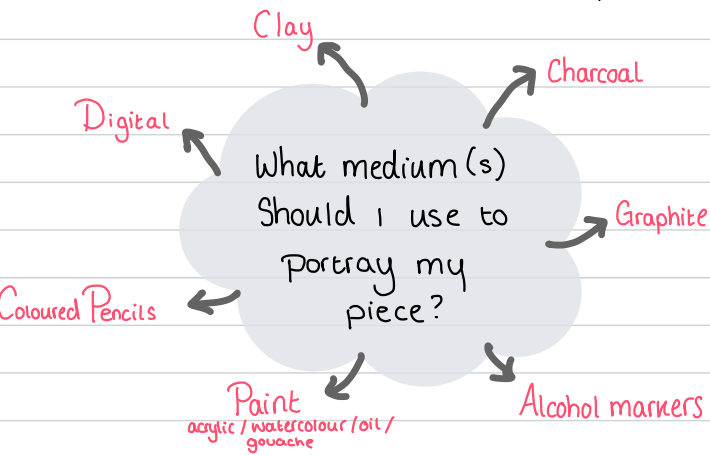
Deadline + Final Showcase

Artwork Completion
+
Hand in date : Monday 14th March
2022

Art Event
+
Venue : Saturday 19th March @ Good Game
2022 Cafe

Brainstorming

On this page I have brainstormed answers from my questions that I asked myself on the previous page. This will help me when forming my ideas and my final piece.



First Set of Ideas

Here I have included my first initial design ideas. Shown is a brief description of the design, additional notes of things to reconsider/change, as well as a checkbox of ones I will develop.

IDEA 1

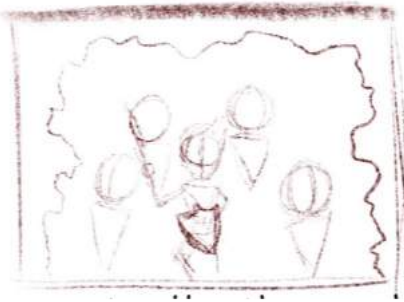


Myself surrounded by my favourite characters, whilst im playing on the Switch.

NOTES!! Due to the mass amount of characters I wanted to include for this piece, I believe it will be difficult to execute this piece in time.



IDEA 2

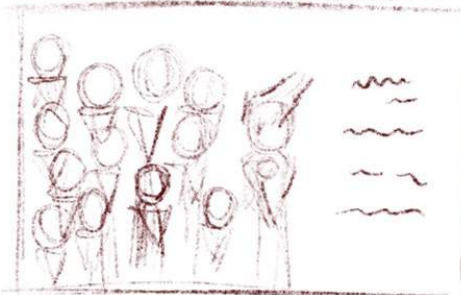


4 of my favourite characters, and I, battling away the mental health darkness.

NOTES!! Simple yet effective design. Should give me a chance to get creative with the darkness' design.



IDEA 3



A quote presented on the right. Me walking towards the writing, with my favourite characters following me.

NOTES!! Might not be a solid design idea. Definitely lacking in emotional depth. unsure on the inclusion of a quote?

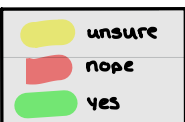


IDEA 4



Me cradling plushy or teddy versions of some of my characters. With a quote at the top.

NOTES!! Not a strong design idea but could use a revisit. I like the main design structure but unsure again on the quote. Could this be changed?



Mental Health and Awareness Posters

To help within my research, I have decided to take a look into already existing pieces of work to do with mental health. This will give me a chance to dissect the pieces to help me on my own art journey for this commission. I will take a look at the composition, the use of colour, the forms of text and the specific use of language, and overall environment the piece(s) give.



→ Subtle yet effective sentence starter. "The Sun" - Always shines. Always a start to a new day. When on it's own, a confusing opener but when read with everything else, it is heartwarming and relaxing.

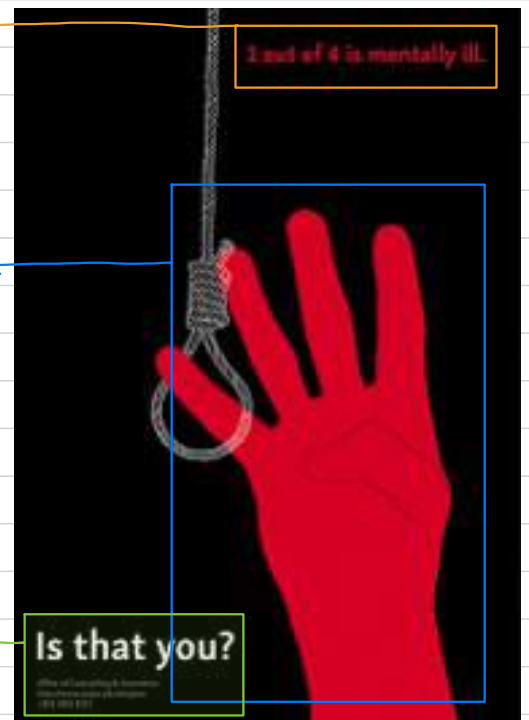
→ Sunflower. Also incorporating the subtlety of the sun. Also the shape of a cartoon sun. Following the theme throughout, brings consistency. Use of a flower shows new life and new beginnings. Symbolism shown throughout.

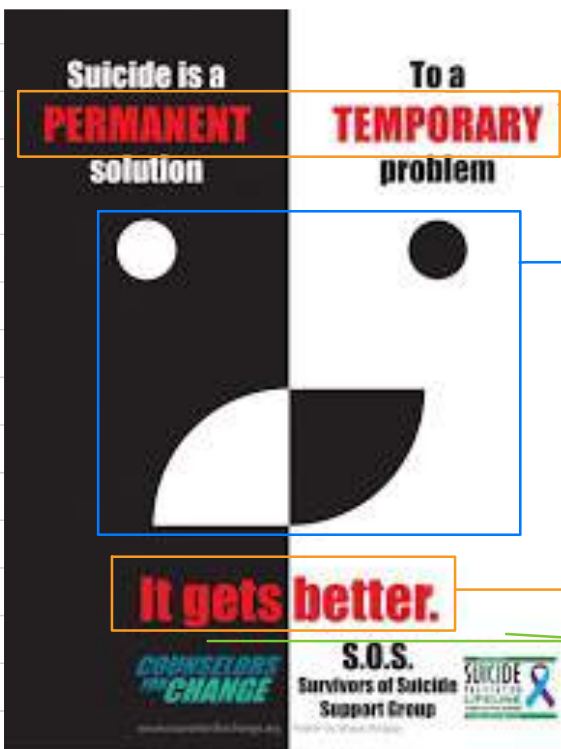
→ The use of a black background allows the bold yellows and oranges to take the forefront of the viewers eyes.

Including statistics to solidify the severity of mental health. Using simplified statistical evidence allows the reader to incorporate the statistics to their own lives, making the reaction more personal. Simple inclusion of red lettering to accommodate the image.

Striking choice of colour. Red - more commonly associated with danger, blood, love. Visual representation of the statistics as mentioned above. The inclusion of a noose showing the viewers the terrible truth and severity of mental health without help. Even with the inclusion of a noose, the poster does not show anything graphic that may make some viewers uncomfortable.

Bold question to ask but cuts straight to the point of making the viewer question themselves. Also shows help information underneath.





→ Important use of the colour red, Showing important Key words for the viewer.

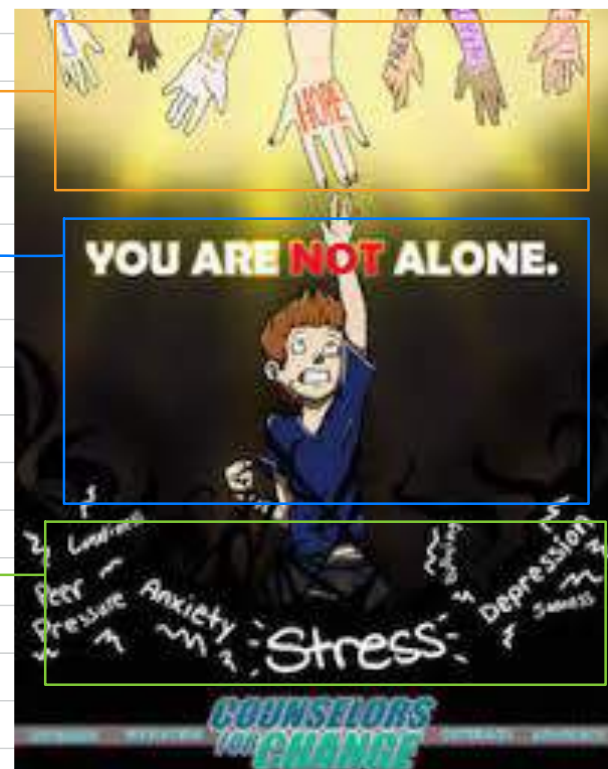
→ Simple use of imagery and subtle meanings. The use of basic shapes give the viewers a basic understanding of the emotions the company tried portraying, without the use of graphic imagery.

→ Another use of monochrome backgrounds. Much like the other posters this helps with the text, but more importantly to help with the graphic in the middle.

Interesting use of illustration to show physical help to the main character in the poster. The inclusion of language and phrases throughout represent communication. Another thing to note on is the beam of light indicating hope and freedom when you seek help.

Main illustration for the poster. Strong use of character design, showing natural emotion and depth. Simple illustration with the use of cell shading, this makes the poster viewer friendly and age appropriate for younger audiences. Another use of red in the text to show importance to a word.

Submerged in darkness lies phrases, feelings and worries of a person with mental health problems. This successfully involves the audience to consider all that has been said to them, and all that has gone through their minds.



Mental Health Art

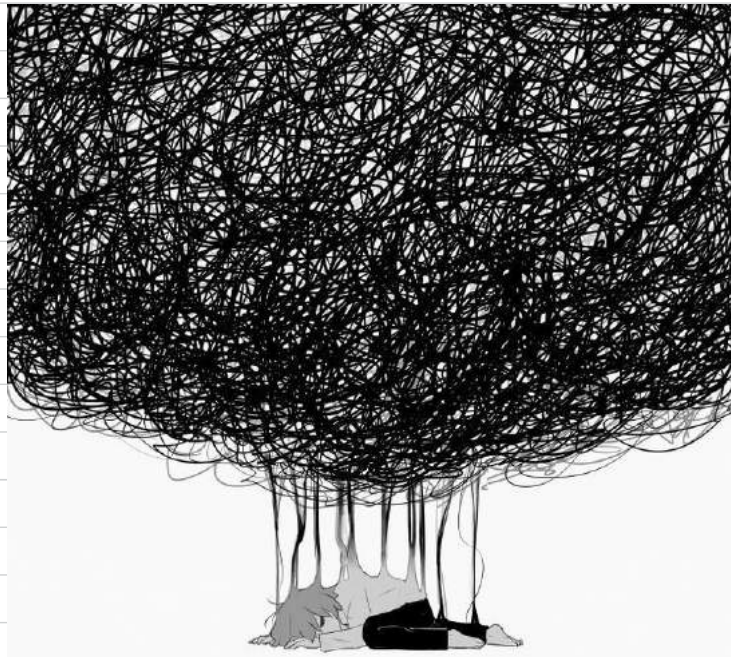
In this section, I wanted to focus on already existing art I found on Pinterest. Like the previous page, I will dissect features from the piece that make it an effective composition to help me with my own design. Instead of picking specific sections of the illustration to discuss, I will give a main overview of the entire piece as a whole.



At a first glance your eyes are instantly drawn towards the main piece of text that spreads across the whole illustration, "All in your head." This takes the forefront of the audience's thoughts and own personal feelings. The thoughts that would be raised makes the audience focus on the explosion of phrases and words, to see if anything they have lingering in their head; matches anything shown. Sadly for me the figure herself is the last aspect of the illustration I focus on. I understand having the model allows the growth of the other illustrative aspects however, I feel like that section is lacking in emotional strength. If the figure had more emotion/expression then the entire illustration would be stronger.

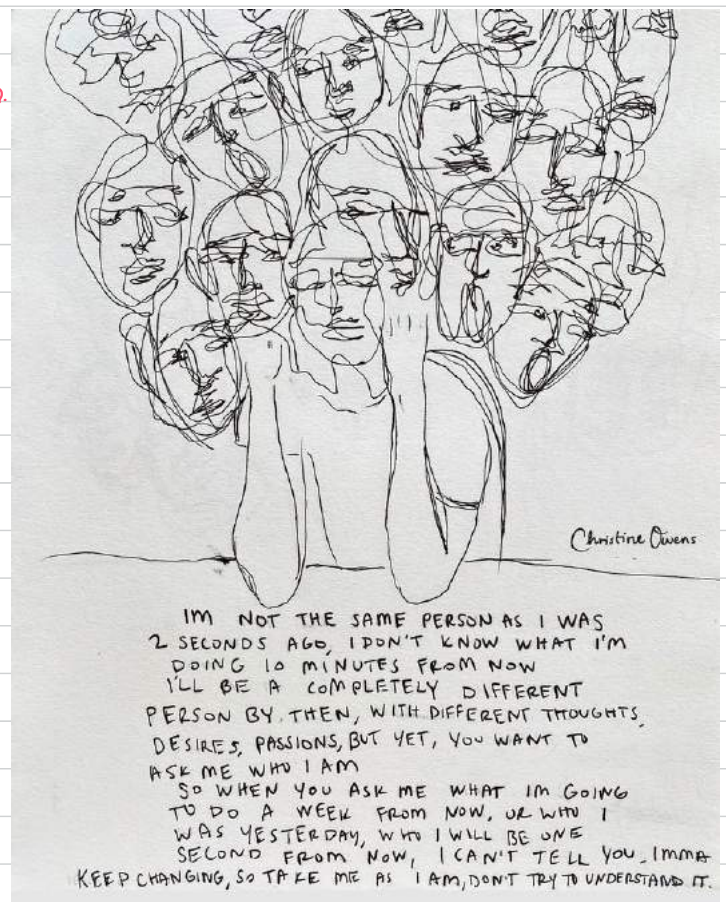
This piece screams emotion! To have such a simple design and show so much pain, makes this a very powerful illustration. You are instantly met with the illustration's main figure. A strong standing human, minimal clothing but enough to have questions. A band of the person's gender across the eyes but showing tears dripping down a still face. The most heart-breaking aspect of this piece is the ominous hands lurking into the frame, painting the human pink. After much thought and processing, the piece is clearly depicting a trans male (a man who was assigned female at birth), being showered in pink to mask who the person truly is. I honestly have no issues or changes to make this piece better.





Just like the previous piece, this one is also very captivating and swimming with emotion. No colour present in this piece. Unsure if the use of colour is necessary to make the piece stronger. A singular figure laying on the floor in a fetal position. Showing me vulnerability and loneliness. Seeping out of the figure I believe is darkness/emotion/depression. The crazy nature of the illness makes it visually understandable and natural. The chaos of the lines is exactly how depression is with the mind and body. No need for the use of writing or quotes as the illustration speaks for itself.

Another chaotic print, with similarities to the above illustration. Both have so much passion and hurt that it can sometimes leave the viewer feeling uncomfortable when being faced with it. Unlike the illustration above this print has a staggering amount of text to supply a narrative to what the piece entails. In short the print wants whomever is reading to go off of face value with what you see and with what people see in themselves. This could be interpreting anxiety or low self esteem. Depression may also be a part of the print's bigger mental expression. Away from the narrative the illustration is strangely fluid with its continuous linear showing basic expressions in each face. Most importantly the main face holds very little expression, which is interesting as you would expect it to be the main focal point of the piece. Instead the narrative takes centre stage. Personally I'm not a big fan of this style of work as it is too chaotic for my liking.



Mental Illnesses

Below I have decided to research the top 9 mental illnesses. I want to add a brief description on what they entail, to understand more on how it affects a person. This will help me figure out which mental health problem I want to focus on for my final piece.

Source: www.mind.org.uk

Anger Anger is a normal, healthy emotion which we might experience when we feel: attacked / deceived / frustrated / invalidated. Anger can help us identify things that are hurting us / motivate us to make change / help us defend ourselves in dangerous situations. Some people do not understand how to control and healthily express their anger, which can impact their mental and physical health. Anger becomes a problem when it harms you or others.

Anxiety + Panic Attacks Anxiety is the feeling we get when we are worried / tense / afraid. This is more common with things that are happening to us or things that could happen in the future. Like anger, anxiety is a natural human response, especially when we feel threatened. It can be a thought, feeling and physical emotion. Anxiety can become a problem if it impacts your ability to live life as fully as you want to.

Bipolar disorder Bipolar disorder is a mental health problem that mainly affects your mood. You will likely experience manic or hypomanic episodes (feeling high), depressive episodes (feeling low), psychotic symptoms (during manic or depressive episodes).

Depression Depression is a low mood that lasts for a very long time, and affects your everyday life. At its lowest form depression can mean being in low spirits however, at its most severe, depression can be life-threatening as it can make you suicidal.

Eating Problems An eating problem occurs when any relationship with food is difficult. Anyone can experience eating problems, regardless of age, gender, weight or background. Having eating problems can affect how you feel or behave. The way you eat, and how you think about food, may be one of the most noticeable effects.

OCD Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) has two main parts: obsessions and compulsions. Obsessions are unwelcome thoughts, images, urges, worries or doubts that repeatedly appear in your mind. Compulsions are repetitive activities that you do to reduce anxiety. Sometimes these obsessions and compulsions take over your day-to-day life making it really difficult.

PTSD Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health problem that you may develop after experiencing traumatic events. This could result in feeling numb or having trouble sleeping.

Self harm Self harm is where you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. After self-harming you may feel a short-term sense of release but won't help with long term relief.

Stress We may encounter feelings of stress when we are placed in situations or events that put pressure on us or our reaction to being placed under pressure. This could leave you in a poor state which can affect your daily lifestyle.

Colour Panels

After all of my research I have found that there are 4 main colours that tend to represent emotions or mental illnesses. Blue is associated with sadness/depression but also purity. Yellow represents happiness but also vulnerability. Purple is associated with power but could also show grief. Finally red being the colour of love and danger. Each colour has a ying and a yang to itself, this makes it more interesting to the viewer to interpret what they desire out of the piece. These colours could be used to accent a piece given if they are used sparingly and effectively. Colour can be used in a piece to accent a situation or area. There can also be monochrome (black+white) choices instead.

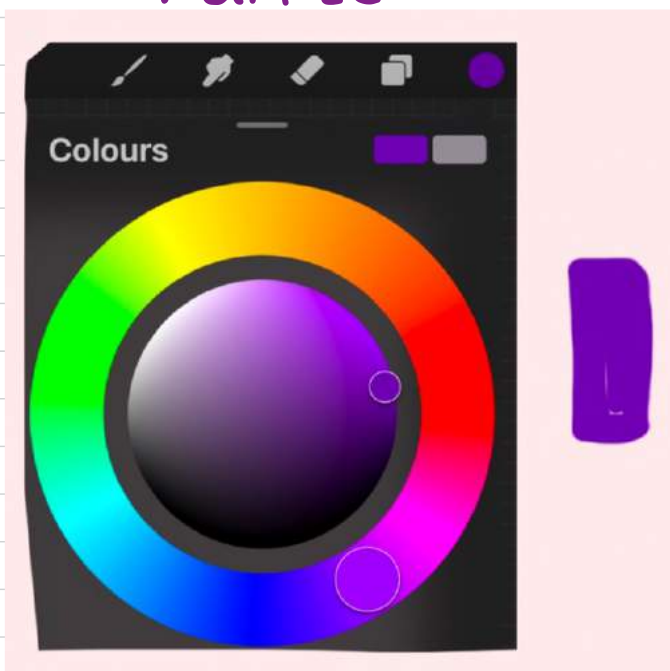
Blue



Yellow



Purple

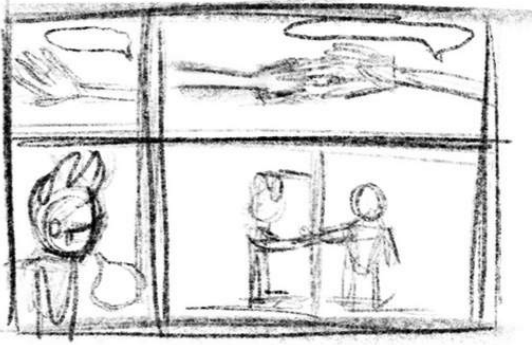


Red



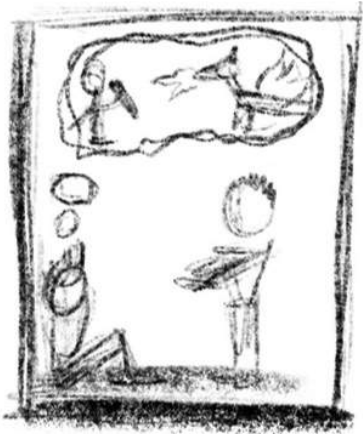
New Ideas

Here are a bunch of new ideas I have created following all of the research and art analyses.



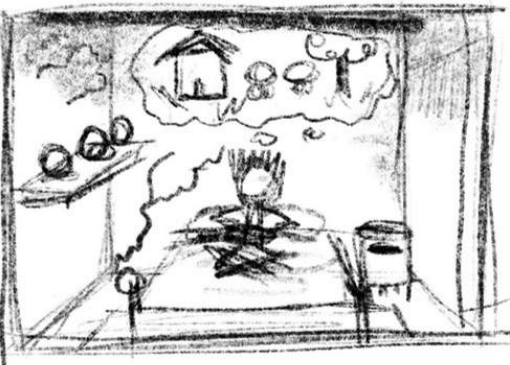
A video game character presenting their hand to the person (their arm is in colour). The person is crying and scared (they are in black + white). The human reaches to hold the hand of the character (fingertips slowly gain colour). A side view of a door with the human on the left and character on the right (black + white left / colour right).

IDEA
5



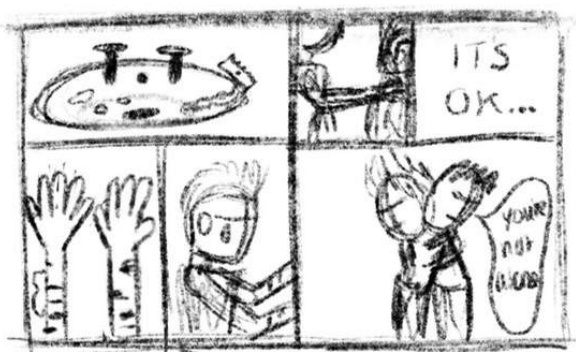
Child being verbally abused by an adult. Child crying on the floor. Then imagining their abuser as a fire breathing dragon and then as a knight in shining armour, protecting themselves.

IDEA
6



A person sat in a damp and dirty room; which is cracking and breaking around them, playing on a console. Above them is a thought bubble showing them playing Animal Crossing, in front of their new home in game.

IDEA
7



Another comic book panel showing events of a person self-harming in the bathroom. The person is crying but feels a hand on their shoulder. Their favourite game character is consoling them, telling them they are not alone and that it's ok.

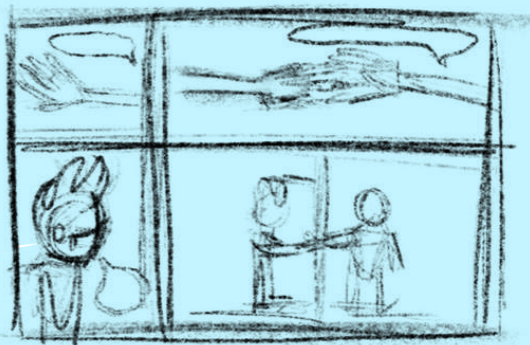
IDEA
8

Final Piece Process

After much thought and research, I have decided to base my final piece on idea 5. I believe out of the 8 ideas I produced, idea 5 is the strongest. It shows a significant presentation style, a clear depiction of social anxiety or anxiety as a whole and so it fits the brief on how gaming helps with mental health. Idea 1 was the idea I pitched to The Sprout's/Promo Cymru team when entering for this work however looking at that idea, it does not present any mental health awareness. If idea 1 presented more on the awareness front, I would feel inclined to create that illustration. I am however really excited to make idea 5 a reality.

Disclaimer! Idea 5 could only be possible with the help of my eldest sister. She helped me come up with ideas that finally led me to this one. Thanks Charlene 😊

Before I create the final illustration I do need to refine some missing details. Let's recap on the idea...



A video game character presenting their hand to the person (their arm is in colour). The person is crying and scared (they are in black + white). The human reaches to hold the hand of the character (fingertips slowly gain colour). A side view of a door with the human on the left and character on the right (black + white left / colour right).

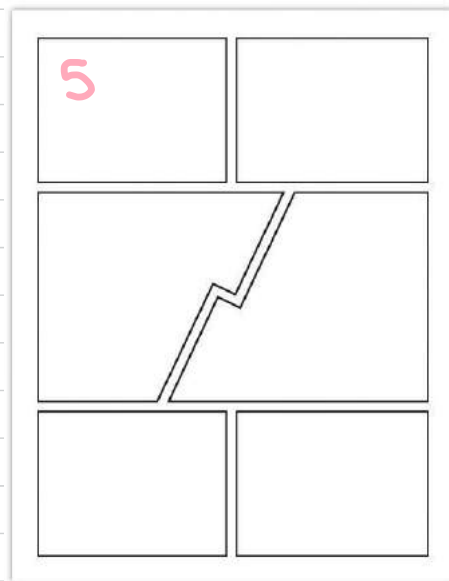
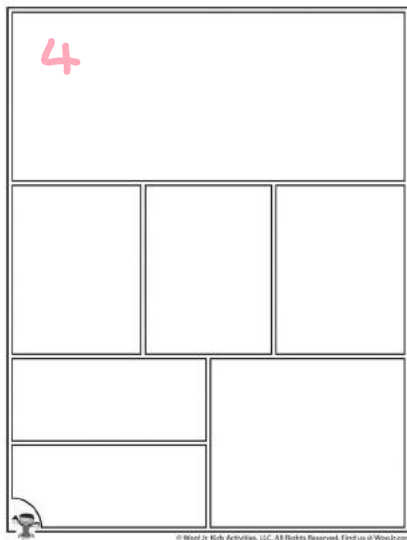
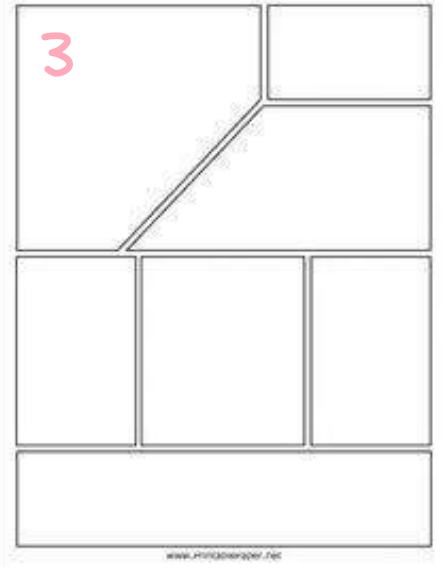
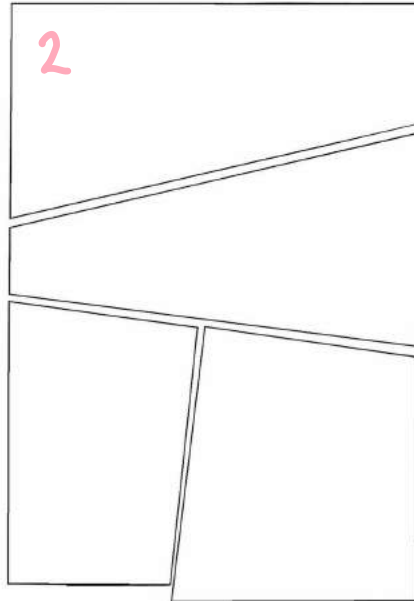
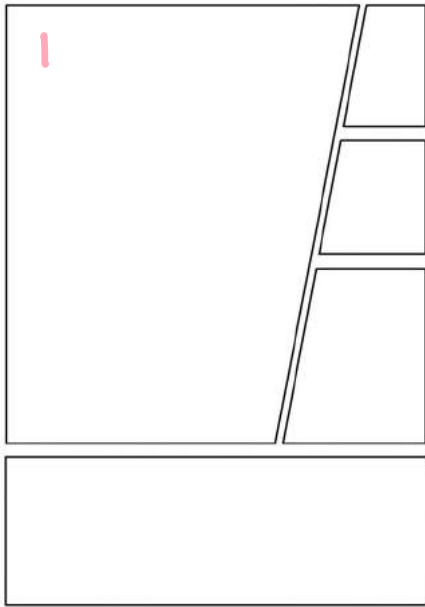
IDEA
5

First things first I need to research what comic book layout is best suited for the final piece. This means how many windows to use, style of speech bubbles, and style of drawing. After that I need to figure out which character to use to help our protagonist. This means I need to make a list of potential candidates and rule out any that do not work, for whatever reason. Finally I need to consider the colour palette for the entire piece. I will need to thumbnail potential palettes on a new refined thumbnail to see which colours will be used in the final illustration.

All of these questions will be answered throughout my final piece process.

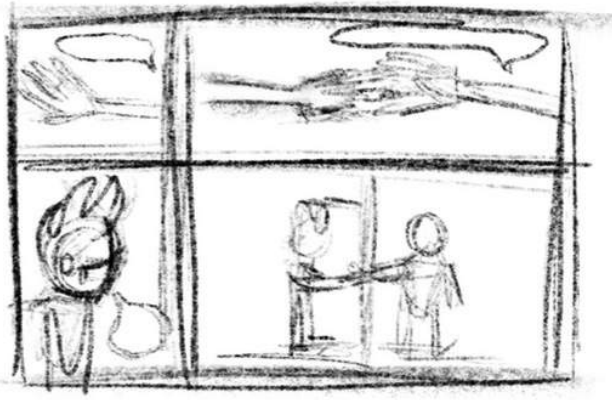
Comic Book Layouts

Below I have collected a selection of comic book layouts. The following layouts will act as a guide to help me create my own layout ready for my final illustration. These images were sourced from Pinterest and so all credit goes to the original source.



Looking at my selection I really like the giant corner panel design in layout number 1. I believe it will present a clean design for my last panel. I enjoy the simplicity of design number 2 as it leaves a lot of room to be creative with the design. Number 3 + 4 both have too many panels to be able to make a cohesive design. Design number 5 has a lot of action in its panel design which I consider to be very playful and more expressive as a design.

After looking at these panels, I am going to design my own and see which one I like the most for my final illustration.

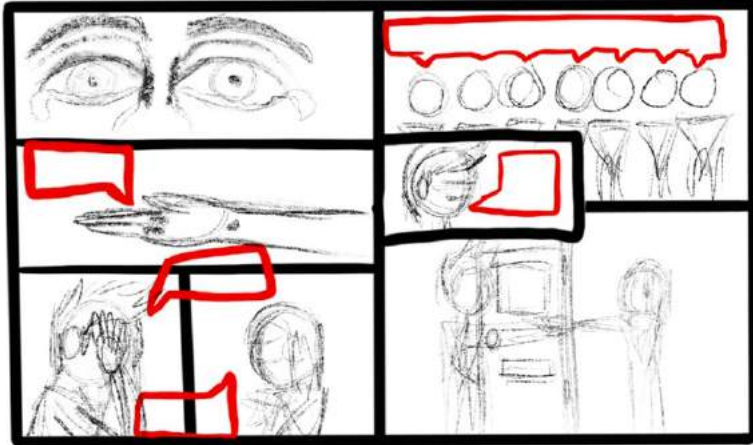


Looking at my thumbnail sketch I can see that there aren't enough panels to express my design clearly and efficiently. To fix this I need to count how many panels I need overall.

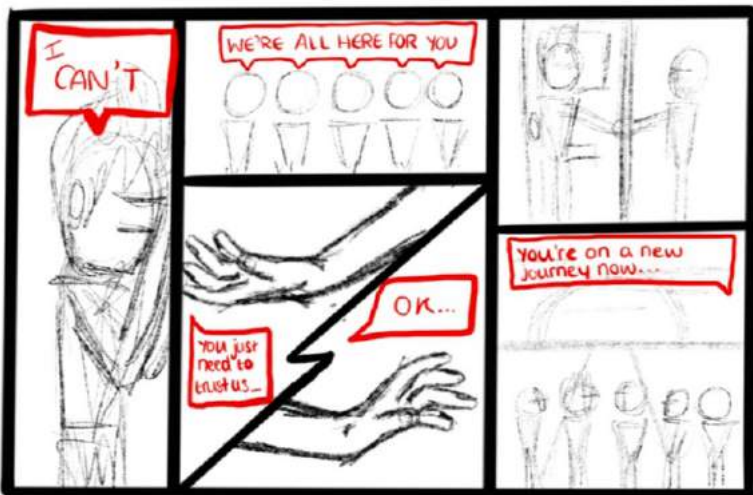
My protagonist will firstly be shown close up crying, looking terrified. A hand then comes into frame, with a speech bubble saying something along the lines of "It's ok...". The view pans back to the protagonist who is still crying, looking and speaking more hysterical saying "I can't." The video game character is then

Shown more in frame, then saying "Yes you can, we're all here for you." A view of some more characters are shown. The protagonist says "ok" whilst taking the hand of the video game character. The final scene is them at the doorway or walking towards the sunset.

Now that I've refined the idea, I can now see how many panels are needed for the illustration. I will also know that my piece will need to be A3 sized and to utilise the space more it will be a landscape orientation. With this in mind I can now start sketching comic book panels to suite my design idea.



This was my first comic book strip design layout after looking at the previous pages layouts. I live how many panels there are to show the story but I believe it is breaking away from it's cohesiveness, it seems too chaotic. The speech bubbles are also too chaotic to give it any natural structure.



For the second design attempt I kept the previous design in mind to fix in this one. Sadly I did have to limit the story to a bare minimum as it was creating too many panels. The limited panels did give me some freedom, yet order for the speech bubbles, and it made the layout clean. The last panel is a little questionable as I think it cuts too far from the previous panel but that can be tweaked.

Character List

Now that I have a layout for my illustration, I need to start considering what game characters to add into the piece. I would like to categorise all of the characters into their own sections to be able to justify my choices and reasons.

Here is a list of my favourite characters:

- Link
- Croc
- Crash Bandicoot
- Sly Cooper
- Professor Layton
- Spider-man
- Charizard
- Voltorb
- Kirby
- Aloy
- Vegeta
- Beerus
- Majin Buu
- Luigi
- Spyro
- Knuckles
- Oranguru
- Pac-Man
- Glamrock Freddy
- Cuphead / Mugman

I've decided to make the executive decision to not include any well known villains from their respected games, mainly because I have always pictured the group being heroes to help our protagonist.

Now time to start on the elimination process. The main hero who speaks to the protagonist will obviously need to be able to communicate. This leaves us with these choices:

- Sly Cooper
- Professor Layton
- Spider-man
- Aloy
- Vegeta
- Beerus
- Majin Buu
- Luigi
- Spyro
- Knuckles
- Glamrock Freddy
- Cuphead / Mugman

I have decided to consider only characters who can create full sentences, not just one-liners or noises. This doesn't completely eliminate these characters, they will just be considered for the group participation instead.

To continue with the elimination process, I would like to remove characters who were first featured in something other than a video game first. This being movies, comic-books, mangas etc. This means removing these characters from the roster:

- Spider-man
- Vegeta
- Beerus
- Majin Buu

This will eliminate any confusion or argument on their involvement in the video game franchise.

Whilst doing this process I also considered the characters who have minimal speech to see if they fit into that category but none of them have that issue.

With my personal life having a small hindrance on my production time frame, I will need to consider a character who won't take up too much time/effort to draw. This will mean the removal of these characters:

- Aloy
- Spyro
- Glamrock Freddy

This will also mean removing these characters from the group participation:

- Charizard
- Oranguru

I decided to not remove Link from the list due to his many artistic projections in his games. I will be able to choose a more simplistic version to best suit my final piece.

This only leaves these characters left for my protagonist's saviour:

- Sly Cooper
- Luigi
- Professor Layton
- Cuphead/Mugman
- Knuckles

Out of these final characters only two grab my attention:

- Sly Cooper
- Professor Layton

Both present themselves differently in the ways they are drawn and styled.



Sly Cooper

- Minimal use of colour.
- Cell shading which will be simple to recreate.
- Interesting body shape to recreate, could be good as a silhouette.



Professor Layton

- No shading which makes the character more separate to the protagonist.
- A human which could make it more appealing and more inclusive.
- Simple colour palette, easy to recreate.

I believe that Professor Layton would be the best fit for my protagonist's hero due to him being a more relatable character to represent a person's friend or family member, as well as showing a realistic sense of compassion to the protagonist.

With my character's main hero chosen, these following characters will be used for the group selection instead. I will be choosing some characters from the original list (the characters who don't speak) just to give the selection more variety:

• Link



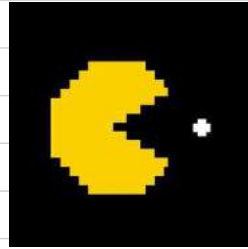
• Sly Cooper



• Kirby



• Pac-man



• Cuphead / Mugman



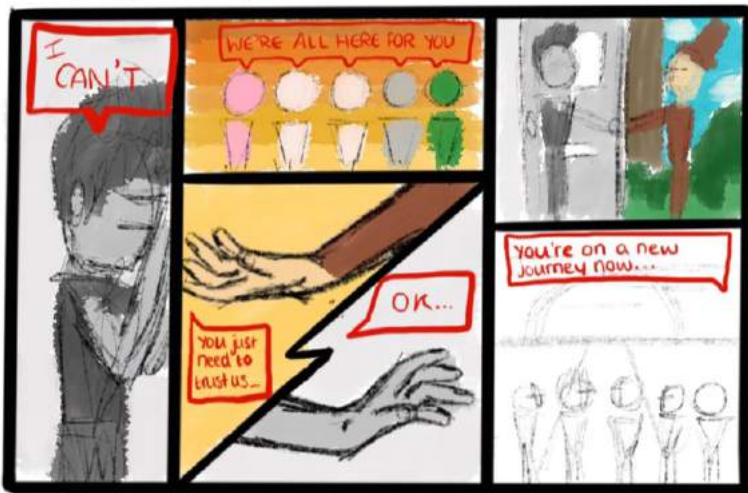
All of these characters have a simple design to them but they are obviously not the same. What I feel would be best is to re-design each character in a style that is simple and yet recognisable. Cell shading will be my go-to method to create depth to each member. This will make my base colouring "blocky" but clean. I believe having each character in their own style will make the piece too random and less cohesive.

With all of the characters now finalised, I can now start concentrating on the coloured thumbnails.

Coloured Thumbnails

Throughout my new design idea I have had a certain thought about the colouring process. I had the specific idea of using monochrome to enhance my protagonist's "isolation" and to visually represent anxiety, specifically social anxiety to the fullest.

For the rest of the piece I have been contemplating on what colours to use or what backgrounds to create for my protagonist to enter.



At first I thought about a sunset. Adding in those warm oranges and yellows but after using them in my thumbnail it doesn't look as inviting.

The use of the oranges makes the background look like it's on fire or at least burning. A sense of doom or apocalyptic, which is by far the last thing I want to portray for this piece.

So...



Instead of using the oranges, I decided to just go with natural blues and greens.

This definitely makes the piece more inviting and welcoming (which is what I wanted in the first place). With this, the gradual colour change of the protagonist will show more and thus having more of an impact on the viewers and the awareness.

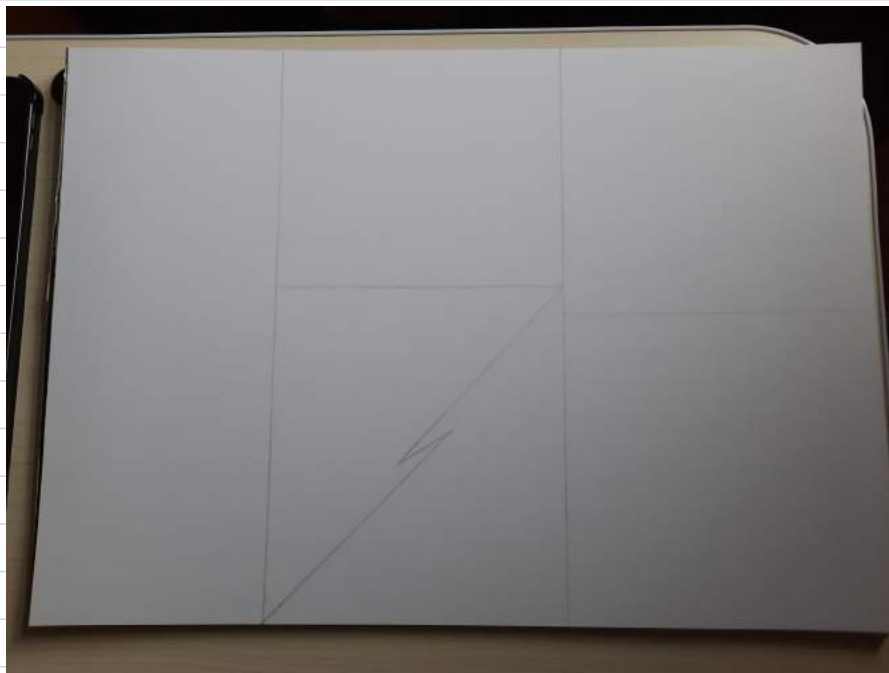
With the coloured thumbnails now in place, I can now make a start on creating my final piece.

Creating the Final Piece

We have finally reached the final steps to making this idea a reality.

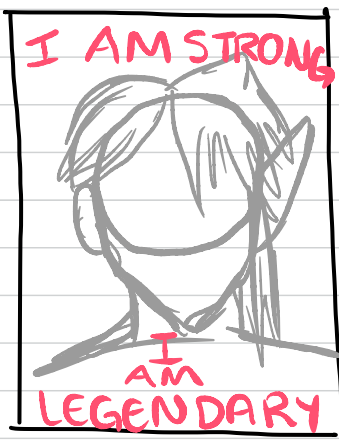
To start we have a blank piece of A3 mixed media paper...

Using a ruler and a graphite pencil I begin to introduce the comic book layout ready to start implementing my design. I won't be inking anything yet as I will be using this as a guide to the rest of my design.



During the creation of this final piece, I was sent into hospital to have my long awaited jaw surgery. This made it difficult to continue on this specific illustration because of the side effects of the medication and how physically compromised I had become. Even though I was in a difficult situation, I had made the conscious decision to change my entire final illustration. This would hopefully make the process easier and less taxing on my behalf, as well as still making an illustration for the exhibit.

NEW IDEA



I have decided to draw our protagonist front facing with one of my favourite heroes half faced. I want to present it as a clean connection between the two joining faces.

Across the top and bottom of the piece, I will also place some text with an inspirational message. Unsure if I will use the one on the thumbnail.

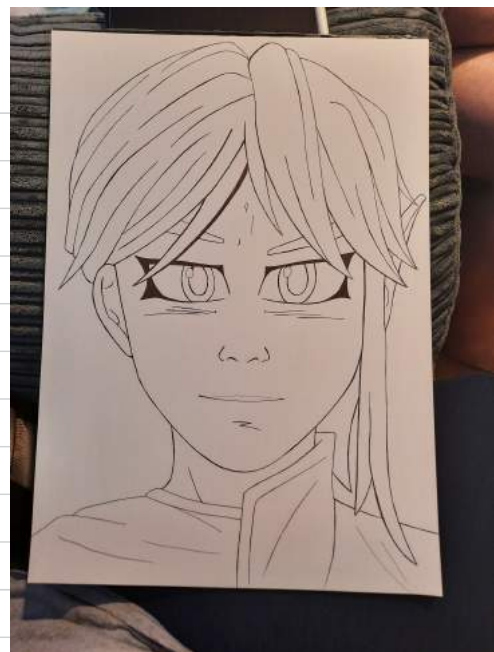
With this new idea I wanted it to convey that you can be as mighty as your favourite character. For me, my favourite is Link from The Legend of Zelda series. This is who I will use for my final illustration.

①



First sketch

④



lineart

②



Refined sketch

⑤



colour

③



sketch on paper

⑥



writing

Conclusion



The overall journey to get to this final illustration has been rocky. From changing my idea twice, to finding other artworks that were inspirational to the theme, to then going in for life changing surgery two weeks before the deadline. It has most certainly been an experience.

Personally I wasn't expecting to get chosen to participate in this event but I am beyond grateful that I was. I do wish I could have continued with my chosen idea but as life throws obstacles in the way, I had to make do with this final piece. I did however put my heart and soul into making this new design and so I hope everyone else enjoys my artwork and that it helps in any way.

What I watched during my design journey!

Here is a list of everything I watched during my design journey that helped me imagine my final piece and everything leading up to that decision.

Movies

- Ratatouille
- Cars
- Spirited Away
- From up on poppy hill
- My neighbour [↳] totoro
- Ponyo [↳]

Tv Shows

- Stella
- Garin and Stacey
- Austin and Ally
- Pokemon Indigo League
- Great Pottery throwdown
- Discovery [↳] of witches

Youtube

- Moriah Elizabeth
 - Squishy maneovers
 - thrift [↳] Store maneovers
 - Create this book 2
- Five nights at freddy's playthrough
 - no commentary
- Crash Bandicoot 1/2/3/4 playthrough - no commentary
- Breath of the wild playthrough
 - no commentary
- Croc Legend of the gobbos playthrough
 - no commentary

Due to the nature of my lifestyle, I am constantly travelling back and forth from [↳] Cardiff to Cwmbran. This allows me to gain different perspectives and ideas. All of these programmes are so different from each other that it allows me to personally place myself in different situations to help develop my ideas.