

**Consciously Awake** is an exhibition which features artworks by Hayley Jones created during the Corona virus lockdown.

Prior to the lockdown Hayley's art practice specialised in the digital manipulation of photographs, with the aim of portraying the essence of an individual, using celebrities as her muse.

I was fascinated by Carl Jung's theory of the Archetypes of personality. Which I used to categorise roles people portray throughout their lives. But after reading Judith Butlers '*Gender Trouble*', I began to believe that it is not just actors who play roles, everyone is continually performing their identity, it is a construct they formulate based upon their upbringing and world views. My aim as an artist was to portray the energy people radiate, which is buried beneath the façade of their constructed identity.

Then lockdown happened, various personal situations saw my family life and mental health thrown up in the air. I could not support family members I did not live with and everything just felt really out of control. I have been using celebrities as my subject matter for the last two years, they are icons, but they suddenly felt so distant, so irrelevant. The combination of the pandemic and family events brought sharply into focus what was really important in my life and saw subsequent changes to my art practice.

This initially began by looking at artists whose practices were spiritual in nature and who were creating artworks around subjects for which words fail to describe, in particular Dineo Seshee Bopape, Bill Viola and Grayson Perry were a great source of inspiration for my work.

Lockdown meant that nobody was meant to leave the house, so all contact, all life outside of my house appeared on some sort of rectangular screen, be that a phone or Tv. This led to creation of *The Highs and Lows of Living in a Box* series. I started to photograph little things I noticed through a cardboard box. At a time when we were supposed to be social distancing, I craved proximity. I found that taking the time to slow down and take these photographs through a cardboard box brought me little moments of peace at a time I felt that I was spinning out of control. This practice became more of a visual diary, displayed in a graph like nature, the height at which the photograph is hung depicting the mood I felt when taking the image. No longer trying to escape the humdrum of everyday life, I intended on capturing every beautiful moment.

I began to attach narratives to the images, such as the triptych of images called *Living in a Box*, which has a particular focus on insects as a metaphor. The first image is of a bumble bee, symbolic of how we as humans were busily going about our business, focusing on work. The second image is of a fly, which represents the fly in the ointment for when we are all put into

lockdown. Lastly, the third image has a big yellow flower, to represent focusing on the positives, but if you look closely you see all of the tiny little insects trying to overtake the flower, which are symbolic of all of the problems and worries that our mind has been trying to contend with.

This exhibition culminates in a triptych of the family members I have been locked down with. The Essence of Family triptych contains energy portraits of my husband, daughter and son. To recreate the energy each of my family members project, I combine up to eight different software's, so that the focus is not on the method of production. I blur and layer the original image to take the emphasis away from the face, allowing the viewer to focus on the colours and patterns of energy that are radiating off the individual.

When it came to the decision of how to display The Essence of Family, I was inspired by the '*San Giovenale Triptych*', (1422, Masaccio). The Triptych imbues the artwork with the sense of majesty and importance that is associated with religious icons. This allows me to elevate the importance of appreciating those we consider family and serves as a reminder to not take those you love for granted.