

'OK son, just remember to have fun out there today. And if you lose, I'll kill you!'- Homer Simpson.



Failure has been entwined in my life from a young age. I remember being unable to jump the stepping stones to cross the river whilst out walking with my family, this happened many times and that fear of failing, of falling into the water, developed into an intense anxiety.

I am now 30 years old, and I can cross rivers quite easily. And using the stepping stones as a metaphor this time, it is quite possible that I have gotten to this point through determination and grit, one step at a time. However, there is still a constant dull ache within me, and only recently I have accepted the fear I have of not succeeding. A powerfully contradicting sensation, which swings from ego to doubt like a heavy pendulum. I do not want to be vulnerable and disgraced yet I share this fear with an undeniable confidence in my art work. This leads to confusion and, the pendulum swing, which is exhausting and irritating.

I have always felt insecure about my persona; how I carry myself, how I look, how I speak. Of course those feelings will bleed into the art I create. My work explores mental health and how it affects me directly. I am incredibly open about my struggles with mental illness, I believe it is important for us to talk about these issues confidently in safe spaces in our community.

It is only the past few years that I have embraced failure within my artistic practice. Some of the best pieces of work I have ever created, have come from failing whilst attempting something else. It is exciting and fresh and inspiring to accept that this is part of life. If I run with it, and mold it to a shape I am comfortable with then it can be an asset, rather than a curse.

It is imperative that as an artist we experiment with ideas, and of course that brings the risk of failure!

The below work, entitled 'Polaroid' was an exploration into morality and increasing failures. The image multiplies, my face becoming part of the next polaroid and so on. I am holding myself holding myself. It also signifies self-protection; I am protective of my failure. I can tell you all that I feel lack of self-worth, but please don't repeat to me that I *am* failing, I will become hurt and saddened. As the image reproduces, my face becomes blurred, I am now almost non-existent, something I dream of regularly, to blend into the shadows and not be looked upon.

However, I won't last forever, but perhaps these images will. It is a shot in time, capturing a moment, almost like the cycles of my emotion, over and over again, the cycle will transmit signals; depression, joy, anxiety. And I will capture them like little ships in bottles on a shelf. This helps me get ready for the next wave of melancholia, or of happiness.



Polaroid (2018 Lizz Brady)

I will always remember reading the Samuel Beckett quote '*Try again. Fail again. Fail better.*' And its impact on me as I developed my practice. 'Fail better'. It just has this air of mystique around it. Like it was secretly, mischievously even, with face hidden behind hands, proclaiming that it was alright. That it was ok to not succeed.

When I was at university, someone told me that as an artist, it was better to not get a first class honours degree. They said, following the rules wasn't what art was about, and if you got a first, it meant you followed the guidelines too closely. I sort of understood, I wanted to be a rebel, (I still do incidentally.) In the end I got a 2:1 and was secretly proud of this slight under achievement.

Since graduating I have taken risks creatively, experimenting with new ambitious ideas and I am excited for 2020 when my most adventurous work will hopefully come to fruition. Of course, these ideas could fail, they may not work as they do inside my head. But what is the alternative? To focus on stale, stagnant ideas and never push myself. Like I said, I want to be a rebel, I want to be a freak, I want to push boundaries and create fascinating work that is looked upon with awe.

Failure is hard work, it can destroy a person, it certainly tries to demolish my mind. But if you can force yourself through those self-doubting moments, if you can shelter yourself from that storm, the other side is lush and warm. It is exciting and inspiring, and learning to accept failure as part of the creative process is liberating.

*'Through exploration into emotional atrocities, my work continues to create apprehension and psychological isolation, through a repetitive pull between rejection, **failure** and hope.'* – Lizz Brady.