

‘We are more than the sum of our parts - YOU MATTER‘

Introduction

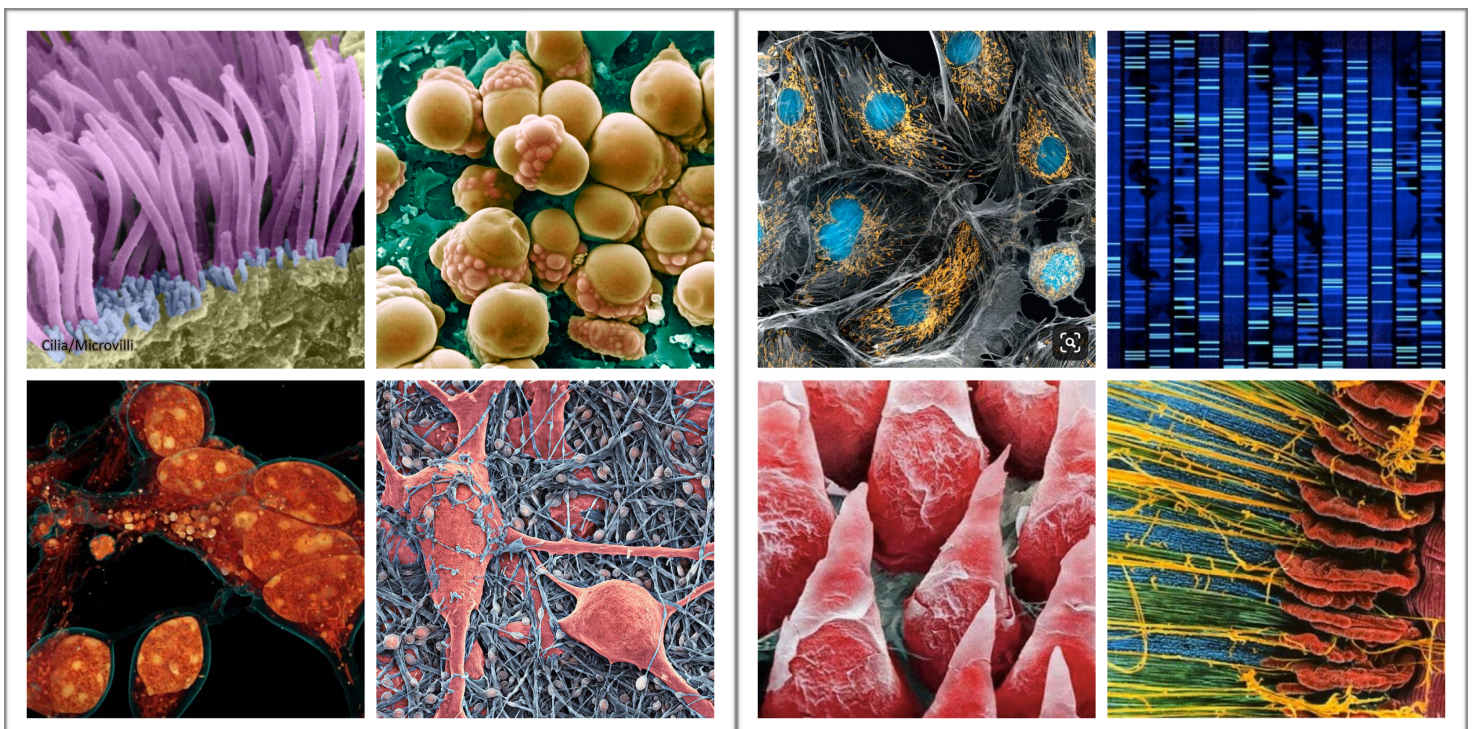
I am an abstract artist excited by the vast dimensions and intricate minutiae that I see in nature. Delighting in the juxtaposition between order and chaos; extravagant, visceral gestural marks layered with patterned precision.

My work has previously been limited to the two dimensions of paint and printmaking, but I mean to take some ambitious risks to move these ideas to the next level. I plan to explore the medium of sculpture, experimenting with materials such as clay, plaster, plastic and fabric, aiming to be less contained and controlled than in my past work.

Theme

I have chosen the title ‘We are more than the sum of our parts - you matter’, which I intend to be a reflection on what makes us who we are. Unlike George Harrison, who said “*we are just water and molecules here on a visit*”, my art aims to express that every person is one of a kind and of value.

My title uses an intensional play on the word ‘matter’, as my source material for this series will be the microscopic body matter that we’re made up of, including our DNA. A celebration of these physical building blocks: cells, molecules, genetics; also taking into account the influence our surroundings have on us, and championing the unique personality (individual passions and skill-set) that results from these things.



Artwork

The more detailed element of my work will represent our internal cellular structure, projection of a finger print will symbolise external factors (various experiences, relationships and circumstances projected onto our lives that leave their mark), then the essence of who we are (our personality and spirit) will be shown through a generous, free flowing, gestural component.



Influences include Frank Stella, Emilie Raif and Donald Martiny

Site

At the heart of this concept, is a belief that each person is unique and each person matters. So for a site I am looking to partner with people working with those who have lost their sense of self worth and identity.

Motherhood is one such area where people can feel lost in this way, I know I certainly did - existing to make other people's lives happen, with no space for a life of one's own.

However, I concluded that prison might be the ultimate place for squashing a persons sense of worth and identity. I have discovered a charity called **'Women in Prison'** who aim to

*"help women to make the changes they want in their lives, to take responsibility, **build a positive sense of themselves and stop offending**".*

What also interests me, is their reflection that the majority of women *"reach prison with a background of poverty, mental illness, addiction – often victims of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation or neglect and abuse as children – and then leave prison with their situation worse than when they arrived."* I feel that these issues relate closely to my interest in the impact of outside influences and what part they play in shaping who we are.

With regards to a site for sharing my artwork, there seem to be two options: either as part of a 'Women in Prison' conference, but the timing and venue for this would be out of my control, or a project based at one of their three Women's Centres. Beth Centre in Lambeth, is the closest and this feels the best match.



Beth Centre

A personal connection

I was significantly impacted in October 2019, when I was refused entry into America on a teaching trip. I was taken into custody, invasively searched, questioned, mugshots and fingerprints taken. It was a dehumanising, disempowering experience and a tiny glimpse into what it must feel like for these women.

I plan, where possible, to use imagery generated from me personally for this art - my own DNA and my own body matter. I have arranged to connect with the Forensic Science Department at Anglia Ruskin University for this. I will be placing myself (through my art) into these women's environment, raising the question of what factors it would take within my own 'makeup', and what shapes me, to find myself in their shoes, living their lives.

I appreciate that there is an irony in me collaborating with a Forensic Department to obtain DNA imagery to use for work, which I hope will positively influence these women, when some of them may have been arrested directly because of forensic work on their own DNA!

Questions raised by this site

Community centres in general are not very 'arty' spaces, not especially suitable for displaying art at it's best, a million miles away from the spacious white cube of a gallery (although I haven't yet visited Beth Centre). But this line of thought begs the question - what is art for, to look pretty or to bring transformation? I am hoping to make art accessible to people that may not choose to visit a 'normal' exhibition. To bring art into their world and help them genuinely engage with it, through creative workshops and by posing questions aiding interaction.

It is important that I respond to the space sensitively, allowing it to still function as needed, completing a full risk assessment with the site manager. I also want my art to fit within the architecture of the room, rather than being disconnected with its surroundings.

It's significant and symbolic that this piece will be somewhat vulnerable, at risk of theft, damage or abuse. Maybe the women will relate to this. Will I encourage touching and how long will it be in situ? These things need discussing with those running the centre.

Timescale

- I will write to Beth Centre and arrange my first visit, then work to a timeframe and programme that suits them.
- I need to begin exploring the medium of sculpture and the materials which are new to me. How this progresses will help to define the rest of my project and what is possible in the time.

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