

# Art Practice

By Christine Fleming

# Artist's Statement by Christine Fleming

I look at camouflage. Camouflage is about concealment, adaptation & protection – essential for the survival of all living things. The octopus uses its' chromatic skin cells to mimic different textures and surroundings so that it can evade predators. Predators use camouflage for hunting their prey – the cheetah uses its spots to imitate shadow and its coat to blend in with the grass. My practice is created using mixed media because they are connected to my memory of touching an object and relating to an aspect of an animal, then using the material I see as relevant.

I look at the science of camouflage, biological phenomena that allow things to blend in and change... and survive. We are all vulnerable; we all need to hide, sometimes with stealth, sometimes in plain sight. I gained a lot of my understanding and knowledge from Sir David Attenborough. When I was watching Planet Earth 2, I was inspired by seeing the octopus blending in with its surroundings, which made me think of abstracting this viewpoint further to create new worlds.

Covid has had a significant impact on my practice because we have all been shut in and hidden from loved ones leading to the lives we once lived being hidden away; just like camouflage, we are all hidden away for our protection.

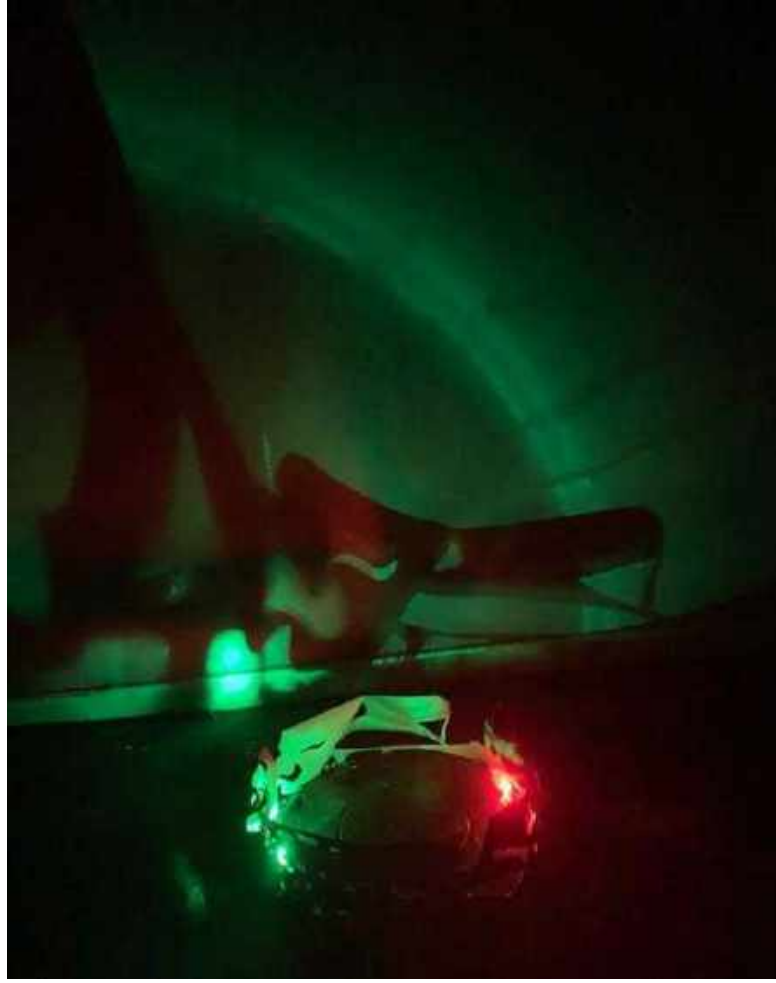
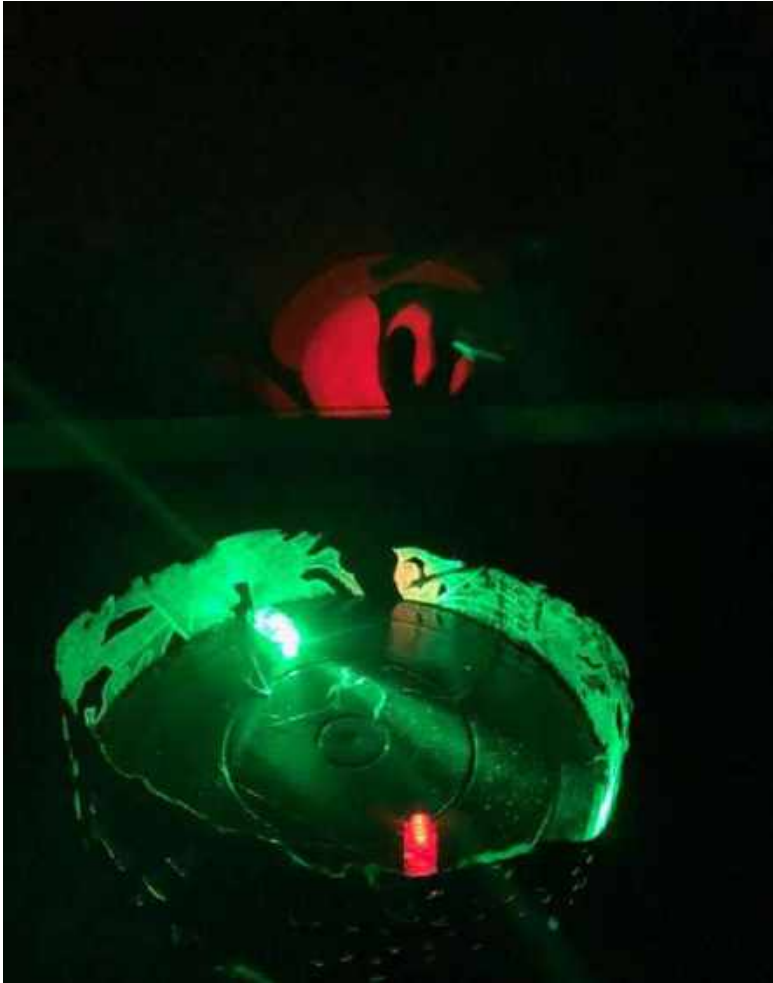
I have a notebook. It is everything. It contains my thoughts and my ideas, letting them mix, gel & grow. It recreates and then creates. It is organic, as my subject matter, slowly revealing ways forward. My ideas evolve through notation & drawing. I record, collect and consider recycling information to give form to my thoughts. I make things out of nothing but my knowledge and imagination, combine known fact through contained material and invention to create new worlds. This is a way to survive.

My material use is also a form of survival, using what I can find to make work, scavenging & collecting, recycling, reshaping & repurposing, making the most of what is around me to feed my ideas and impulses; through this process, the disregarded survives, its life extended, and my process becomes a microcosm of what is required for broader environmental survival.

My personal life has impacted my practice because I have had hearing problems, which meant I felt isolated from others, like I was not there because the sound was invisible to me. Another thing that has impacted my practice was my mum's mental health illnesses; this influenced my work because this has led me to see art as a safe haven. Art became my very own sanctuary.

In the future, I hope to bring my work to an installation space with the videos in a dark lit room and the paintings and drawings in a well-lit room, so it seems as though the audience is fading away just like the subjects I saw. I want viewers to feel like they have entered a new world that symbolises the dangers surrounding us in a new and innovative way: like when people say is there something, I want that to be people's expressions and statements. So, overall, I see my art as a defence mechanism in my life that will see me through many of my problems because I see camouflage as a shield that will aid me in creating new worlds.

The questions I would like my artwork to answer are where people have noticed their lives' hidden elements of their lives? Because in every aspect of life, there is something that is kept secret or hidden, and camouflage is just one example.



Links to my Videos:

[A run with a Soldier 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUSw08_fexA) :[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUSw08\\_fexA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUSw08_fexA) (13/10/2020)

[A Run with a Soldier 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOGMGzdISFQ) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOGMGzdISFQ> (13/10/2020)

[A Run With A Soldier 3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2xJpDrZmsE): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2xJpDrZmsE> (13/10/2020)

[A Run with a Soldier 4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4libxTmiMXc): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4libxTmiMXc> (13/10/2020)

[A Run With A Soldier 5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7f_SGW2JCc): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7f\\_SGW2JCc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7f_SGW2JCc) (13/10/2020)

*A Run with a Soldier 1, 2*

*30 x 10 x 5 cm*

*Ink, spray paint, chalk pastels.*

This represents the running of the soldier as a defence from the opposition. The uniform is used to blend in with the grass and bushes to protect them from the opposite side. I will use paper to represent the fragility because camouflage protects species from death, and paper can be destroyed easily. The piece will be spray-painted black to make the artwork on the inside stand out for the video like a film reel. I used ink to represent camouflage by making the lines as thin as possible to make them appear as though they are fading away. The oil pastels represent the mud that the soldiers have to run through because chalk pastels tend to stick to you like mud from personal experience with oil pastels; they tend to end up all over you.

Hello



Goodbye

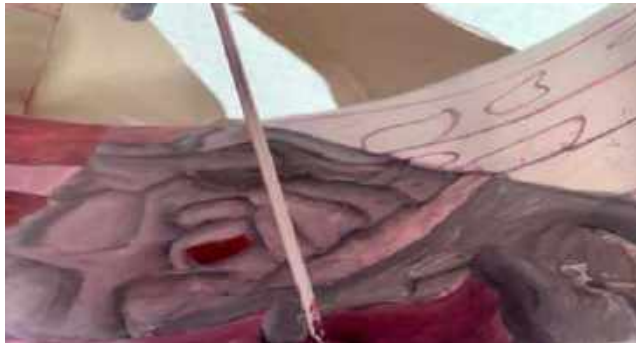
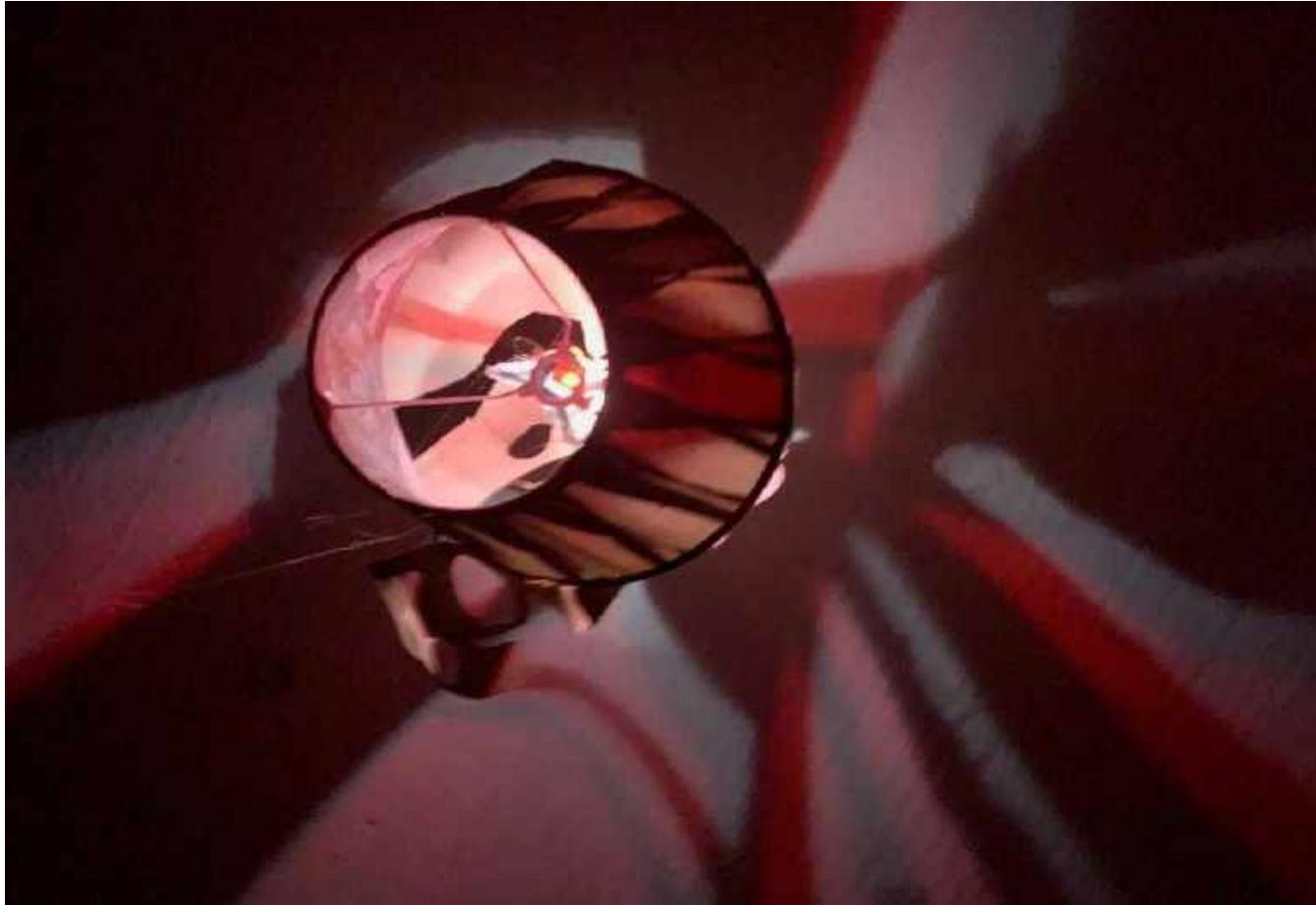
*Hello Goodbye*

*Tipex, Oil Pastels, Mirror, Fine Liner, Paper*

*13cm W 9 cm H*

This shows the soldier using his camouflage in a battle of defence. This is a further development of a run with a soldier. The fine liner represents the slowly fading away process of Mimicry. The oil pastels echo the mud the soldier has to run through to survive because mud sticks to you like oil pastels. By using the material and gardening, I must acknowledge that the oil pastels stick to you like mud because it's a waxy crumbly texture like oil pastels. The mirror shows that we should remember we also use camouflage. The tipex represents the uniform texture because tipex is a very smooth liquid, just like the feel of cotton clothing from personal experience of helping wash clothes and spilling tipex over my hands. The paper mimics the smoothness of the clothes, which contain camouflage which the soldier uses to avoid the opposition.







Video of: A Hidden Survival



*A Hidden Survival*

*44 inches W X 44 Inches H*

*Acrylic Paint, Fine Liner, Pencil, Lamp Shade*

This is a further development of a run with a soldier and represents the soldier using their surroundings to avoid being noticed by the opposition by using their uniform to blend in with bushes, hedges, grass, trees and mud. The shapes in the top section come from a watercolour study abstraction. The paper symbolises the fragility of camouflage because it's a life or death situation. I have painted and did the drawings on the inside to represent the mimicry's point to hide. The fine liner echoes the slowly fading away process of camouflage. When I applied the acrylic, I saw the similarities between this material and being in a war situation because it dries very quickly. In the war, you have to be constantly on the move



*Fading into the Background*  
*Hot Glue, Flash Lights*  
*11 ft wide by 15ft long*

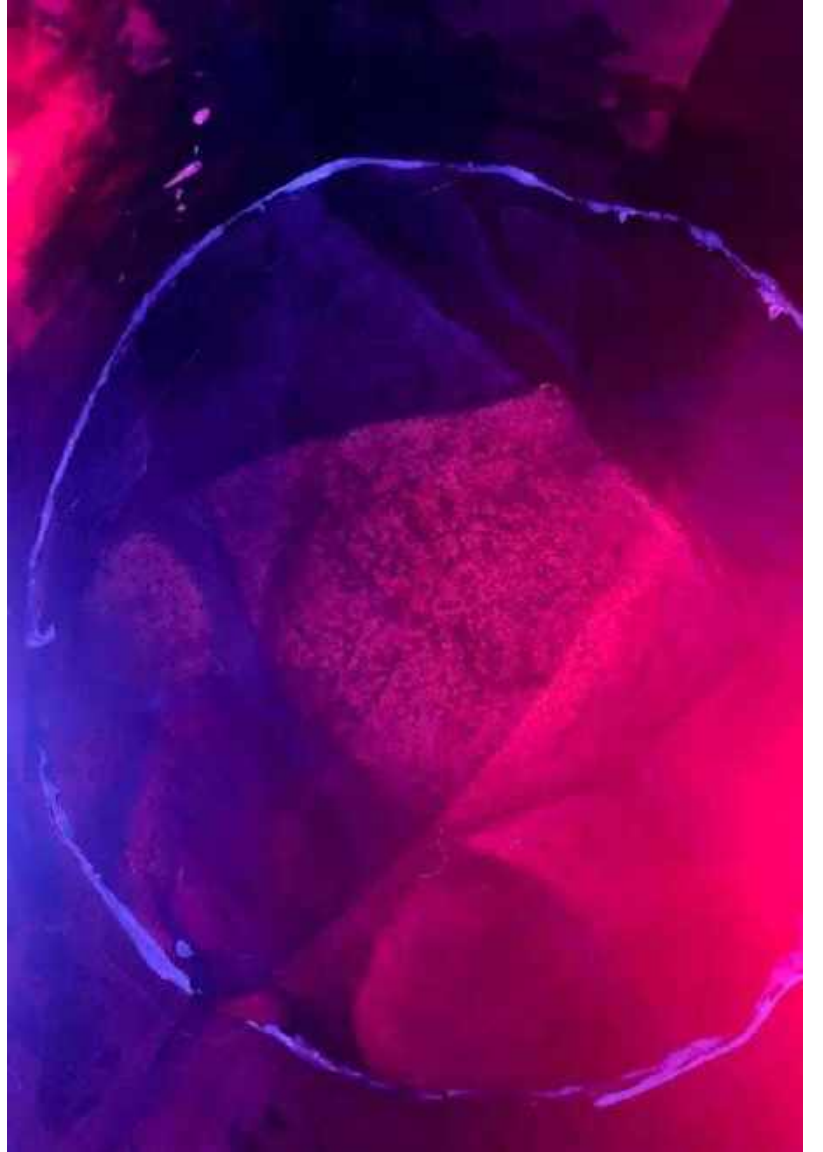
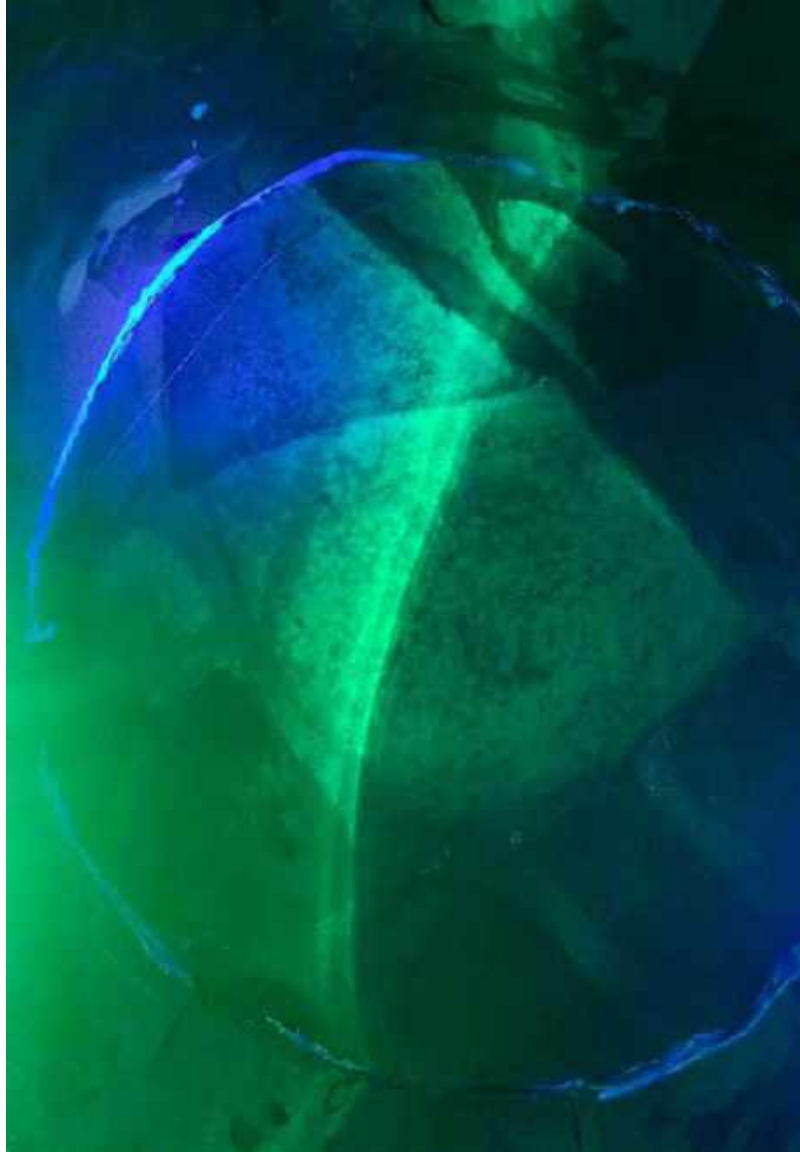
The plan for this was to have three sculpture in different sizes made of hot glue. To represent the cuttlefish's skin because it has skin cells called chromatophores, which they use to blend in with other surfaces and surroundings. I will shine a light through them and have them hanging. This will represent what cuttlefish do when using camouflage, and they blend in with their surroundings.



## *I'm going to Disappear. A4 Photoshop*

This is based on people trying to blend in with their natural environment, either in the army or in the fashion world. In the military, it's for protection against the opposite side.









I Can Mimic and Swim 2. Video.  
(16) Untitled 1 - YouTube

*I Can Mimic and Swim*

*55 w x 23 inches*

*Chalk Pastels, paper*

This will be a further development of fading into the background. This will represent the cuttlefish blending into the environment because the cuttlefish uses chromatophores to blend in with different textures and surroundings. The chalk pastels represent the smoothness of the water, which I have acknowledged in life through memories of touching the water at Ayr beach and going for showers tend to have a smooth feel just like the water. The paper represents the fragility of camouflage; it is a survival method where the prey uses it to avoid predators, and the predator uses it to capture a meal.









A Fade Into the Line 3  
(video)

[\(198\) Fade into the Line 24](#)  
[- YouTube](#)

"Fade into the Line 1, 2, 3"

Paper, ink, oil pastels

210x297mm

The paper represents the butterfly wing's fragility because a butterfly once flew onto my hand, and I can remember how fragile it felt because it felt light and like it was going to blow away. I will have them hanging to represent the butterfly in flight mode. The outside of the piece will represent wood. After all, the butterfly uses the lines in its wings to blend in with the lines of the tree. There will also be drawings on the inside to represent the hiding part of the camouflage. The oil pastels represent the softness of the butterflies wings, which I know from experience the touch of a butterfly landing on me. The ink is supposed to represent the thinness of the lines because the ink is a thin material that makes me think of the thin lines on the leaves and the tree bark. Overall, it shows the slowly fading away process from big to small.





*My Identity Remains a Secret*

*8ft Long 8ft High*

*Oil Pastels, Plastic, String, Paper*

The mask represents another form of hiding for a human in a way it's like camouflage because a mask has many meanings and is a way of changing your identity for a few hours. The background comes from a fade into the line study drawing (abstraction), which will reference camouflage as the mask has disappeared into the environment.





*Have You Spotted me Yet*

*Woven, Canvas, Plastic, Oil Pastels, Wallpaper, Photoshop*

*8ftW x 8ft H*

This piece references the overuse of camouflage in the fashion industry. I use to feel isolated in the world because of my hearing problems when I was younger, which meant sound was invisible to me. The oil pastels reference The softness of the fabric used for some clothes in the fashion world. The mask is used to show how I felt with my hearing my problems when I was younger: invisible to the world. The wallpaper references that camouflage is about blending in with your surroundings. Used Photoshop for the complete disappearing act.







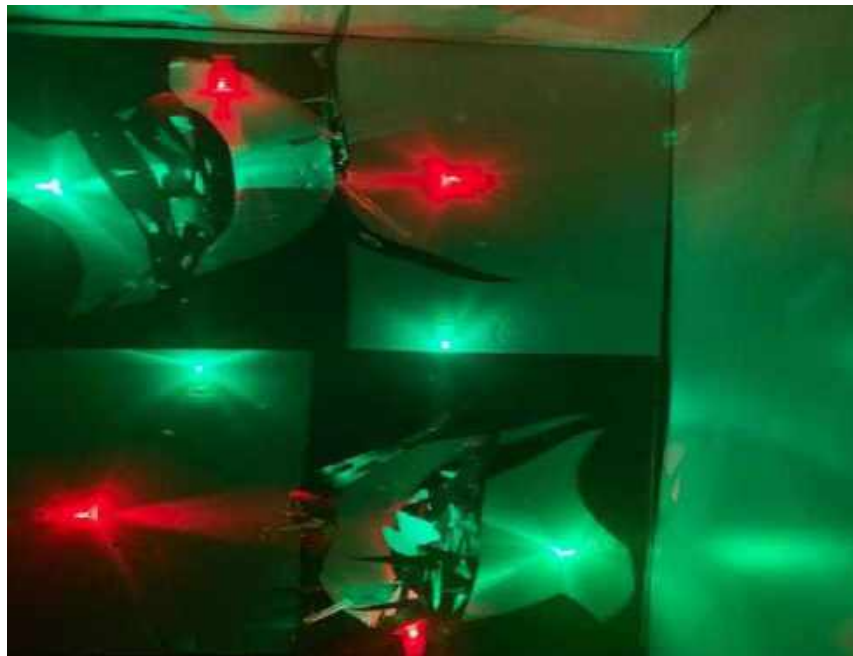
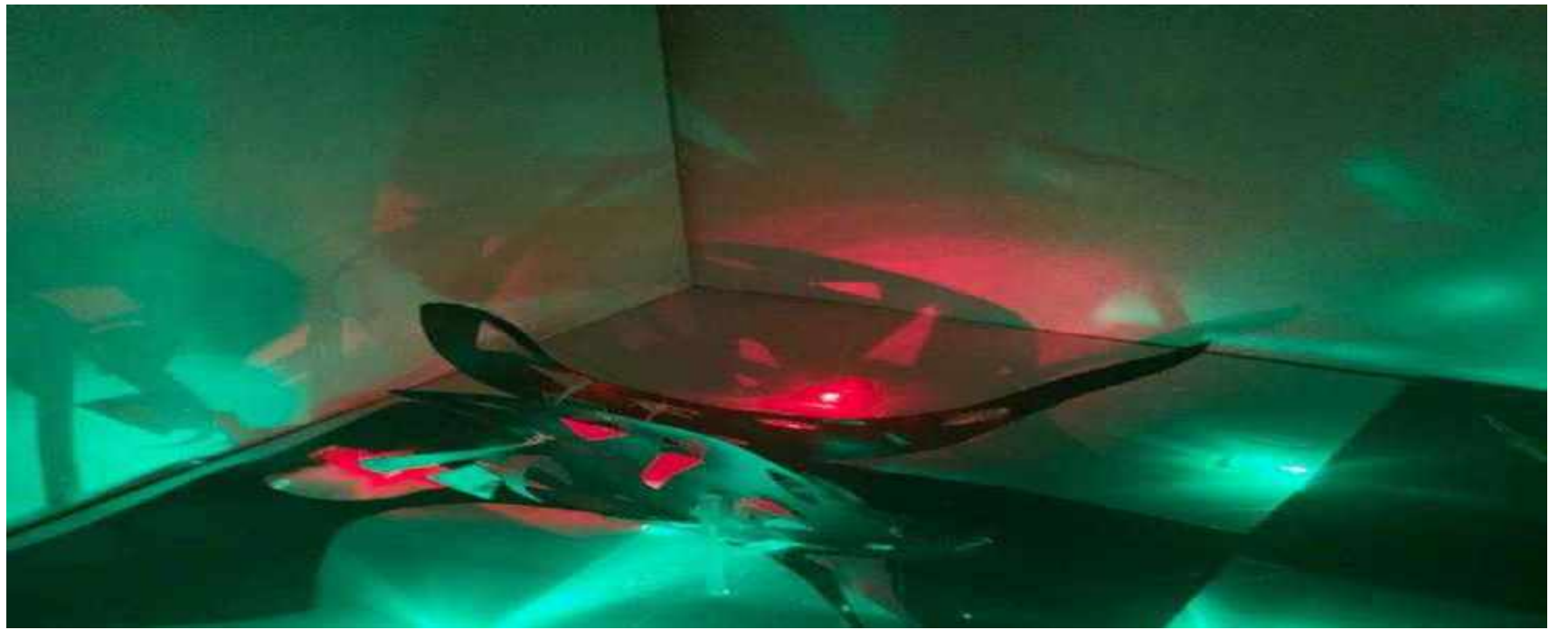


## *I Remain Unseen 2*

*Spray-paint, Fine liner pen, Tipex, Oil Pastels, Canvases*

*16cm H, 12 cm W*

The two canvases glued to each other represent what camouflage is for hiding. It will be dispended from the centre of the room to make it look like it's flying. It will be spray-painted for a smooth and shiny surface that will represent the butterfly's wing because I can remember when I was younger the sun shining on a butterfly. It is glistening, and the butterfly uses the lines in its wings to blend in with the leaves or tree bark lines, and the running lines will represent these tree lines. Ink echoes the thin lines of the leaves and tree bark because the butterfly uses these for mimicry, and ink is a thin liquidated material that makes me of the lines on the tree bark never ending just going all the way around the tree the leaves. The oil pastels represent the waxy texture of the leaves which butterflies blend into by using their wings to blend in. I remember the waxy surface of the leaves from gardening with my grandparents. This is a further development of fade into the line.

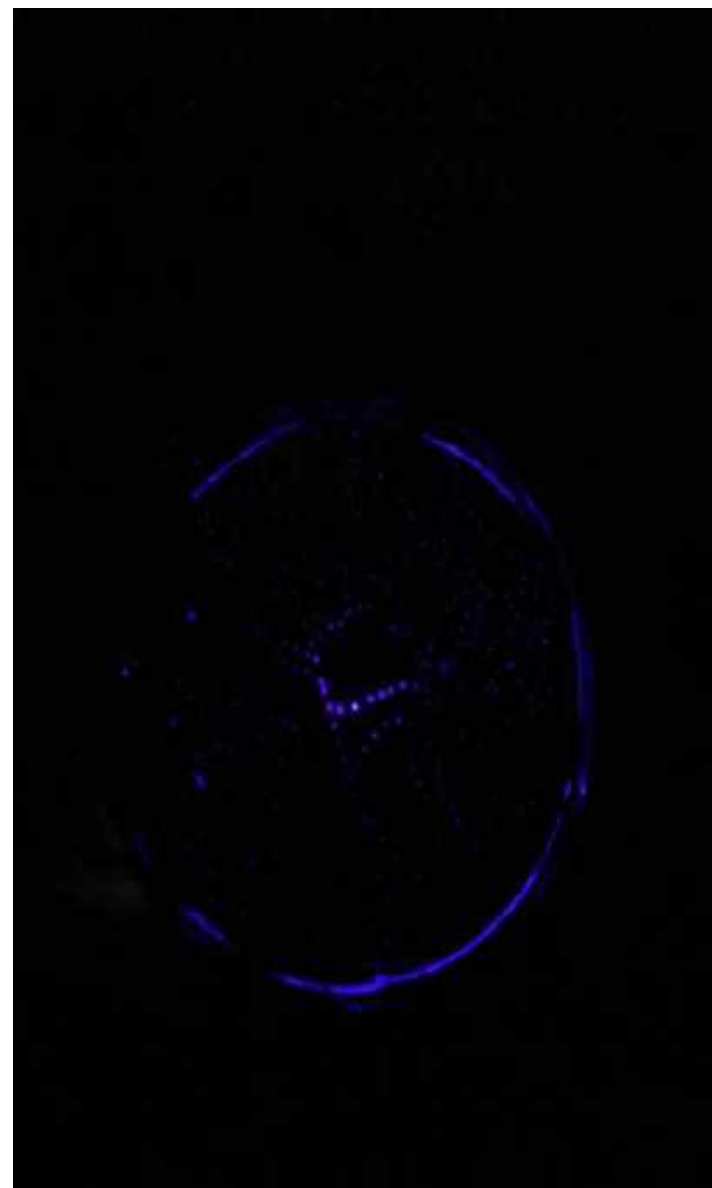
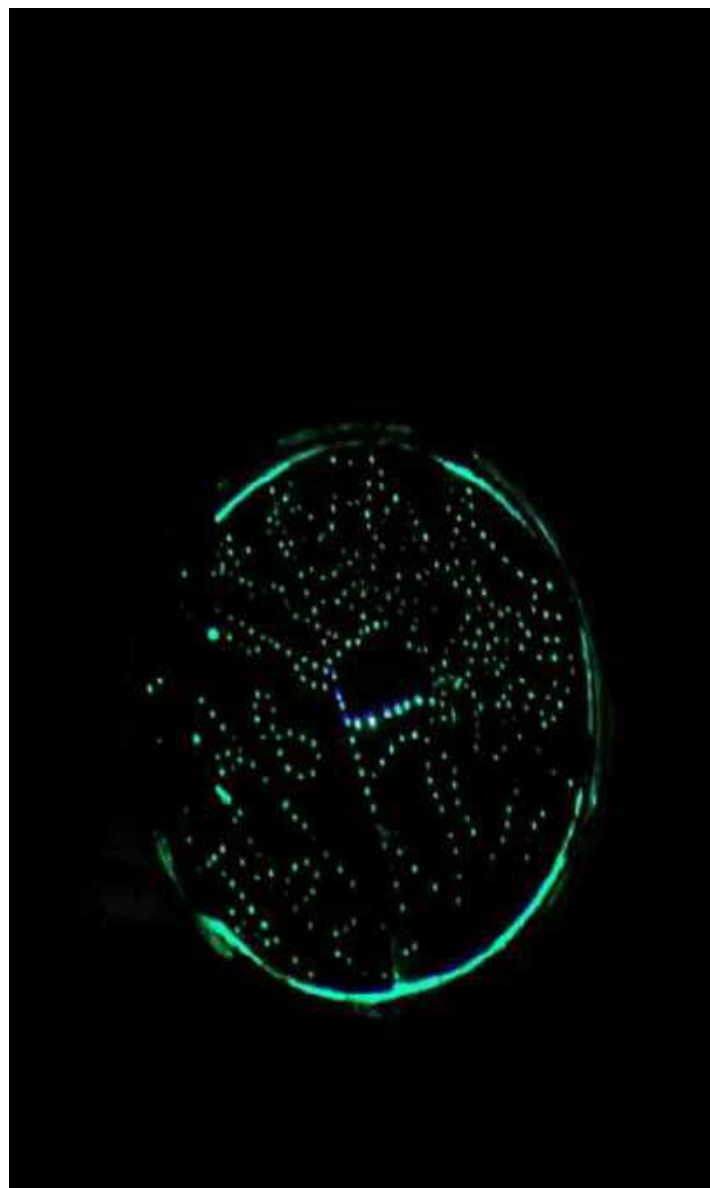
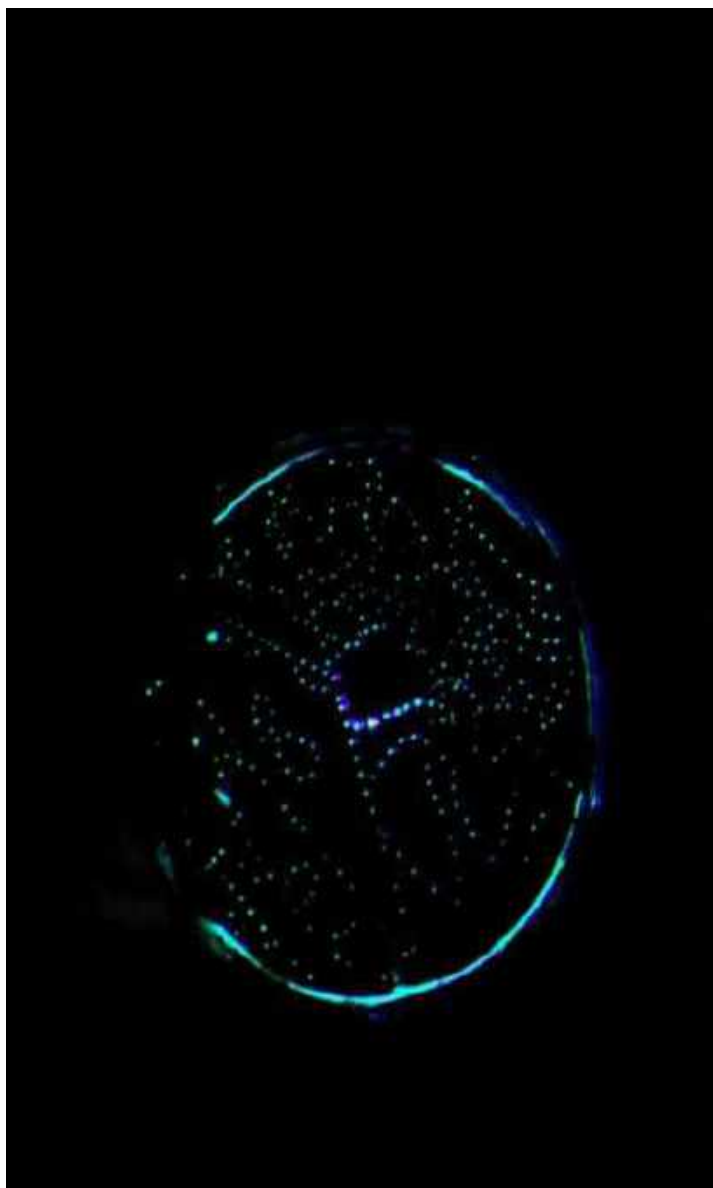


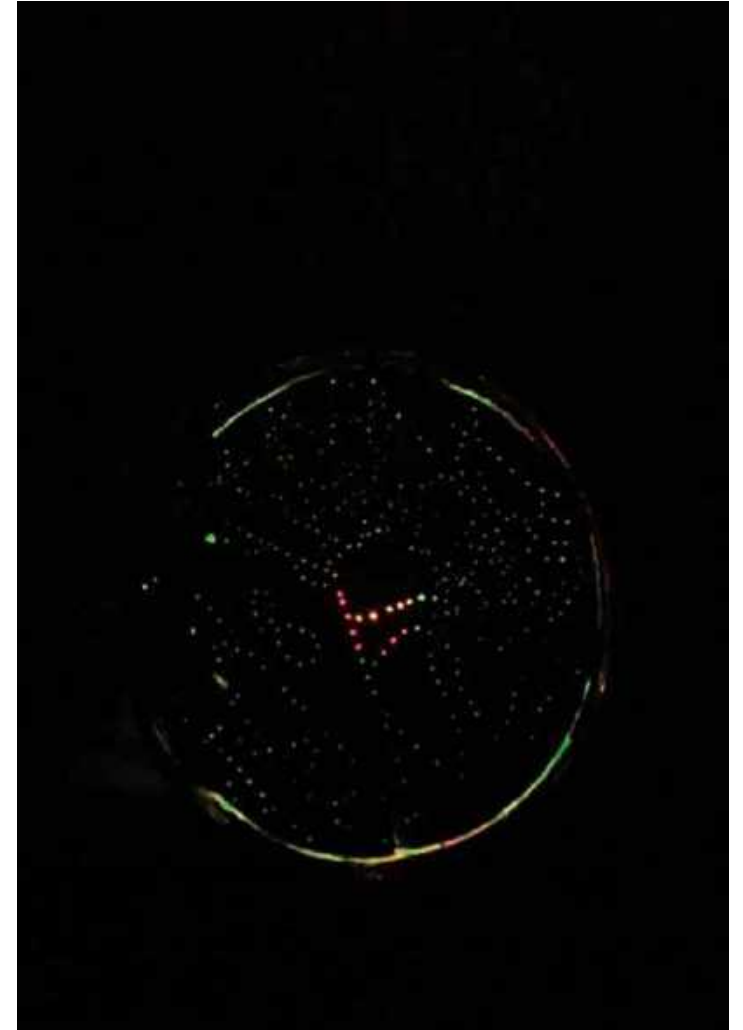
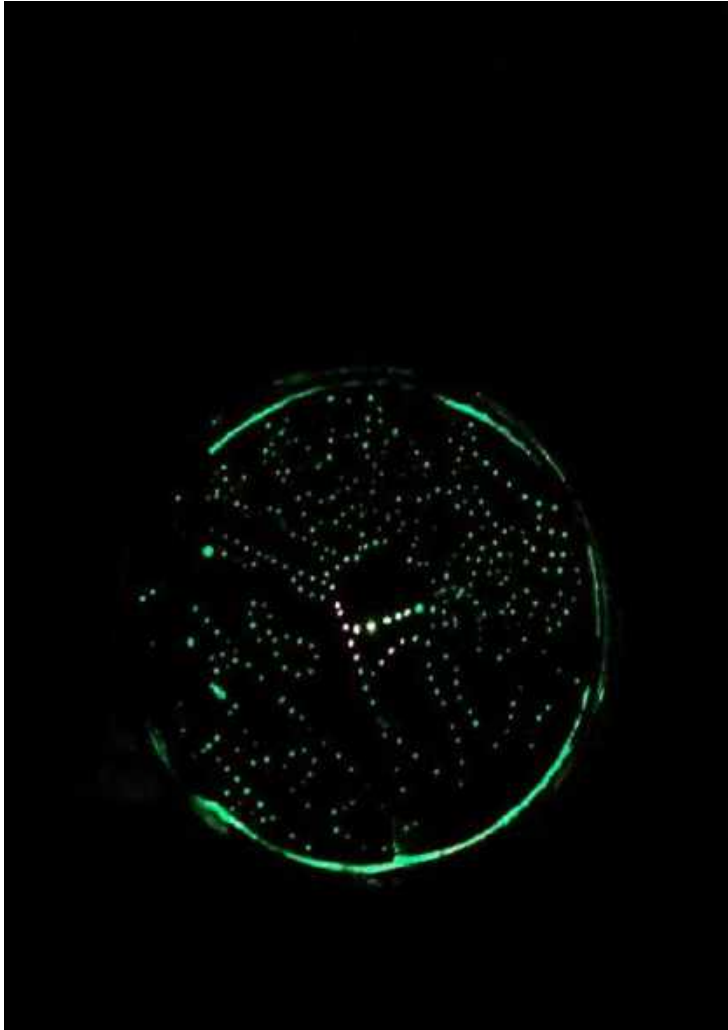
*The Shield of Mimicry*

*Paper, Acrylic Paint, Pencil, Spray Paint, Marker*

*52 x 49 cm*

This is a further development of fade into the line. It symbolises the embodiment of the butterfly blending in to avoid predators. The Paper represents the smooth texture of the leaf because the butterfly uses the lines of its wings to blend in with the lines of the leaves. I used a pen to make it appear as though it was slowly fading away. The tiny abstract shapes represent the shapes on the butterflies wings. The spray paint represents the smooth, shiny surface of the butterflies wings because once a butterfly flew onto my hands and it was that smooth and sleek that I didn't notice until I crossed the road.





Blending into the Crevices Video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiARA41lQAU>

Blending into the Crevices Video 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYyLM\\_vInA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYyLM_vInA0)

*Blending into the Crevices*

*210x297mm*

*Lights, spray paint, plastic, paper*

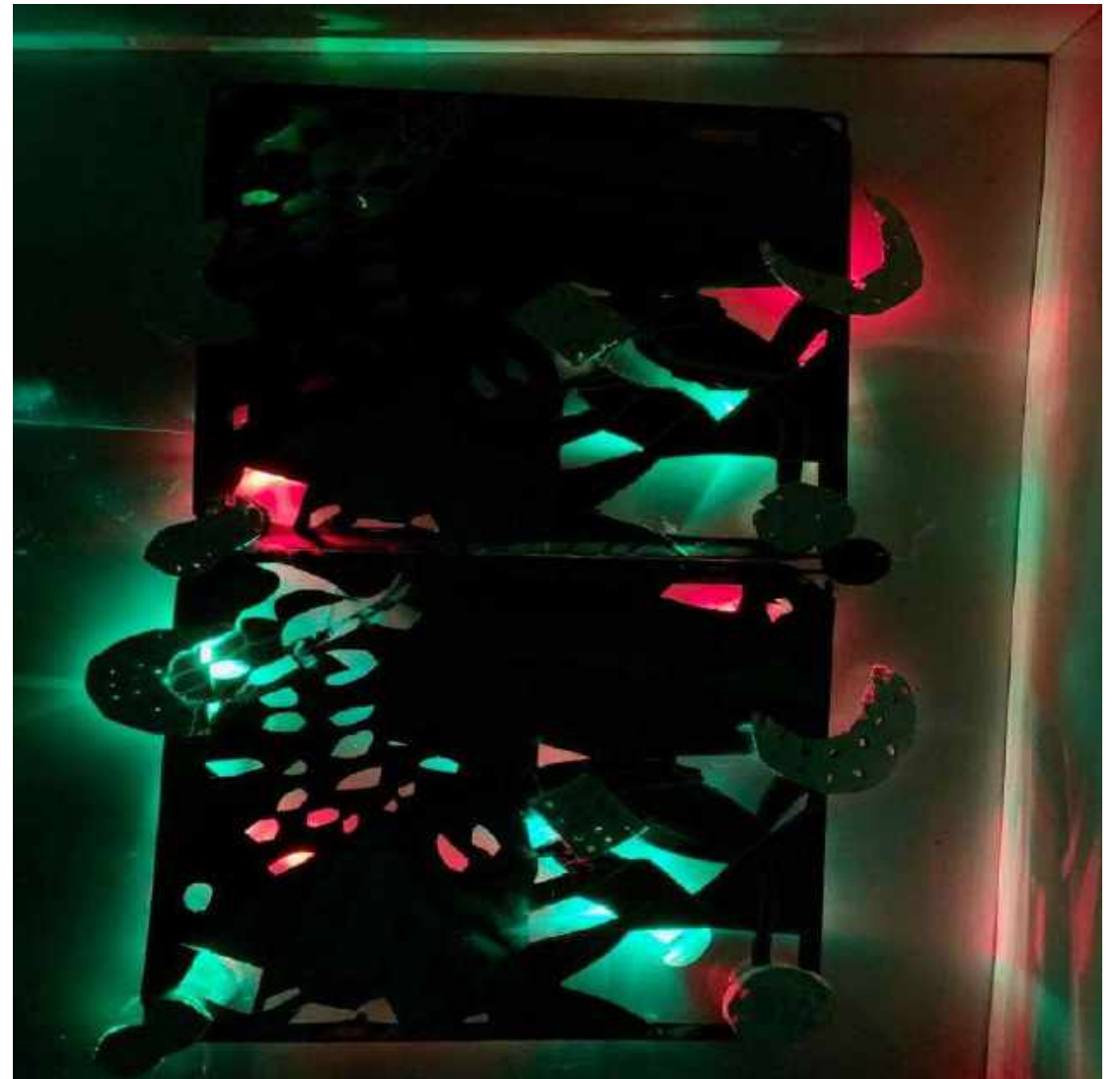
This work represents the lizard using the camouflage on its back to blend in with the cracks and crevices. They can also vividly change colour to blend in with their surroundings. The pinhole and lights represent the sunlight shining through the cracks and crevices of the rock. The paper illustrates the fragility of camouflage because it's a life or death situation and a method of survival, and there are some environments where paper can't survive. It has been spray-painted black to represent the smooth texture of a Lizards skin in your hands. I know this from previous experience; I use to own a lizard. The plastic also echoes the smoothness of the Lizards skin; as I said, I know this from prior knowledge of owning a lizard.







Goodmorning



Goodnight

*Goodmorning, Goodnight*

*Polyester, clay, Oil Pastels, Tipex, Pencil, lights*

*28cm H, 28cm W*

This piece represents the lizard using the colours on its back to blend in with the rocks. The pastels and the polyester represent the smooth surface of the leaf, which the lizard can incorporate into because it can change into any colour by using a hormone called intermedin produced by the pituitary gland. I know about the surface of a leaf because I use to help my grandparents with gardening. The holes and the tipex represent the cracks in the rocks and the sun shining through them, and the lizard mimicking this scenery. The line of the pen represents the fading away process.











Video Available at  
[\(262\) I Bet you will never find me part](#)  
[3 - YouTube](#)

*I Bet You will Never Find Me Part 1, 2,3*  
*Acrylic Paint, Ink, Charcoal, Cardboard, Paper*  
*33cm H, 16cm W*

This is a painting/ drawing with imprints of lace. The work is about the octopus using the chromatophores in its skin to blend in with different textures and surroundings to startle predators. I will use hot glue for some of the words to represent the transparency of camouflage. The acrylic paint and PVA glue will represent the softness of the water, which the octopus can blend into by using the chromatophores in its skin to blend in with different textures and surroundings. I have experience with the feeling of water through hygienic purposes. I used cardboard. After all, it reminds me of the fragility of camouflage because it is used as a defence from predators or to capture prey; it's like a request you either face death or face a meal, which in either case can go wrong with one move. The ink will represent the fluidity of the water. The circles will be inserted into the tiny slots and stick out. The circles with the holes will represent the suction pads of the octopus because the octopus uses these to stick to surfaces, and it can blend in with the different textures and surroundings. The lace pattern will represent the air bubbles that surround the octopus. The words will convey that some animals use camouflage to communicate with other animals.







*I Hide, I Strike 1, 2*

*Watercolours, Fine liner Pens, Oil Pastels, Cardboard Tubes*

*12cm H 3cm W*

This piece is a further development of I Bet You Will Never Find Me. The work is about the octopus using its chromatophore skin cells to blend in with different textures and surroundings. The holes in this piece represent the transparency of camouflage, but there is something there that has slowly faded away. The lights in this piece represent the light of the sun or moon, causing a shimmering effect on the ocean. The cardboard echoes the fragility of camouflage because its also used as a survival method. The shape itself represents the bubbles from a higher perspective, and a kelp leaf from a lower perspective like you are submerging into the water.







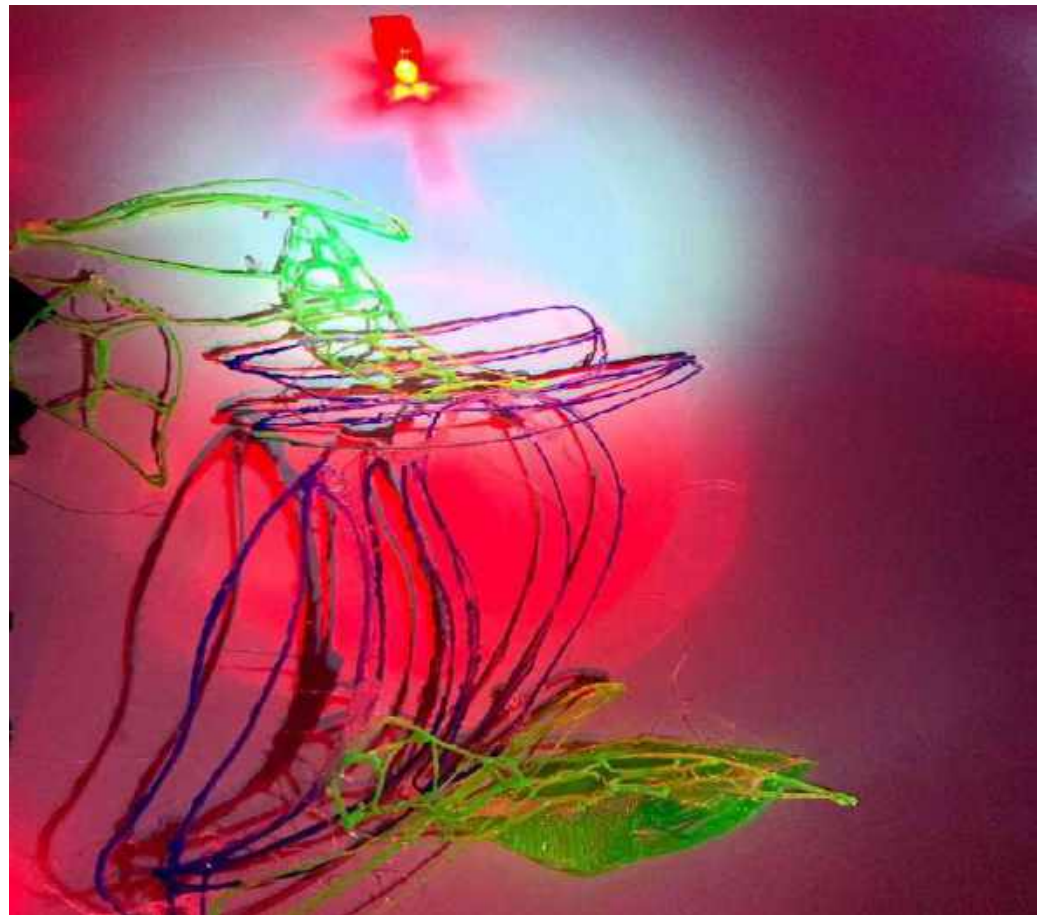


The Camouflage In- Between The Crevices Video:

[\(351\) The Camouflage, in- Between the Crevices part 3 - YouTube](#)

*The Camouflage, in-between the Crevices Part 3*  
*Acrylic Paint, Oil Pastels, Tipex, Hot Glue, Cardboard*  
*34cm W, 26cm H*

This work shows the cracks of a rock, which a lizard can use for camouflage by blending into the background using the colours on their backs. They can vividly change colour to match their environment and to avoid detection from predators. It will also represent the leaf which they also use for camouflage. There will be a tiled effect with paper to represent the scales on the lizard's skin. The acrylic paint will represent the soft surface of the leaf, which I have experience of from helping my grandparents when I was younger with gardening. The cardboard will echo the fragility of camouflage because It's a life or death situation you either can live for one more day or get eaten or miss a meal for the day. The air bubbles in the hot glue represent the raindrops on a leave which the lizard can also blend into. The oil pastels will illustrate the waxy texture of the leaf. Which I know because, as previously stated, I use to do gardening with my grandparents. The tipex will represent the shiny surface of the Lizards skin. I see the texture of the lizard's skin because I use to own a lizard.



## *It's A Disappearing Act*

*594 x 224 mm*

*Clay, Spray-paint, Fingerlights, Plastic Hot Glue, 3D Pen*

This work shows the lizard in a vulnerable position, so it uses camouflage to avoid being seen. The texture you see on some of the leaves represents the lizard's skin (scales). The clay echoes the lizard using the cracks of the rock to avoid predator by using its back to blend in with the crevices of the rocks. The spray paint and the plastic echo the smoothness of the leaf, which the lizard blends into by changing colour, which it does by creating intermedin in the pituitary gland to avoid predators or mate. I know the texture of a leaf because I use to garden with my grandparents.





*I Could Vanish Into Mid Air and No One Would Notice*

*34cm H, 9cm W*

*Chalk Pastels, Ink, Tipex, Paper*

I will use curved shapes to represent the fragility of the petals because the praying mantis can copy the appearance of a flower as a form of crypsis. This is when mimicry can become aggressive because the predator lures the prey.

I would use the chalk pastels to mimic the softness of the orchid's petals. I will use the ink to give a positive and negative look because, in nature, there is a positive and negative to everything; you can either live or die. I used paper because it's fragile and reminds me of camouflage's death and life situation because you can either have a meal for a day or have nothing to eat or escape getting eaten or be devoured. The linked areas represent the shape of the legs.



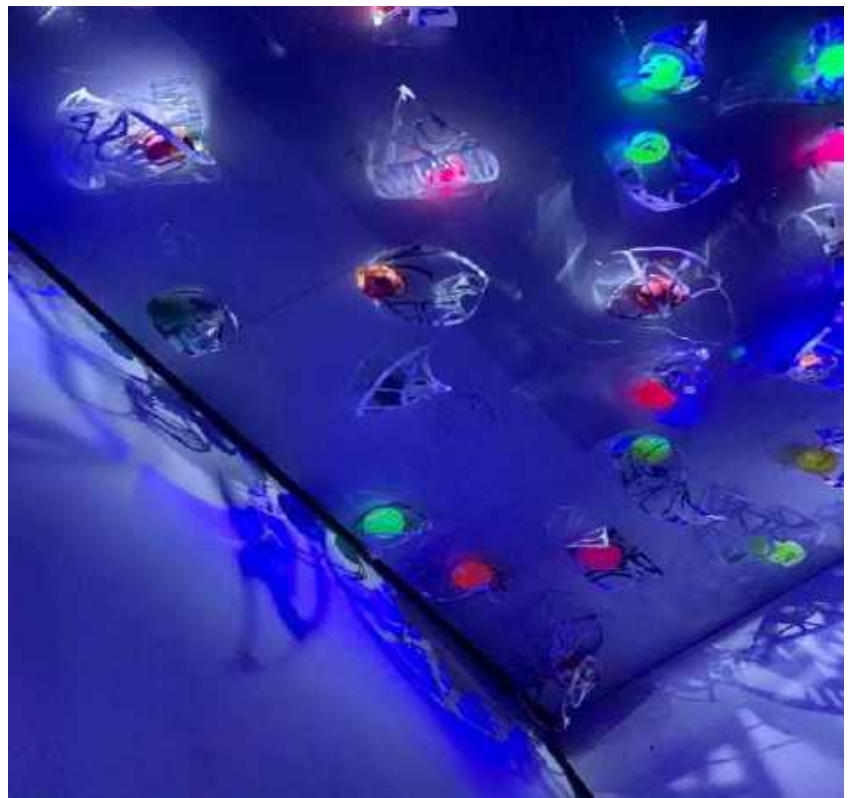
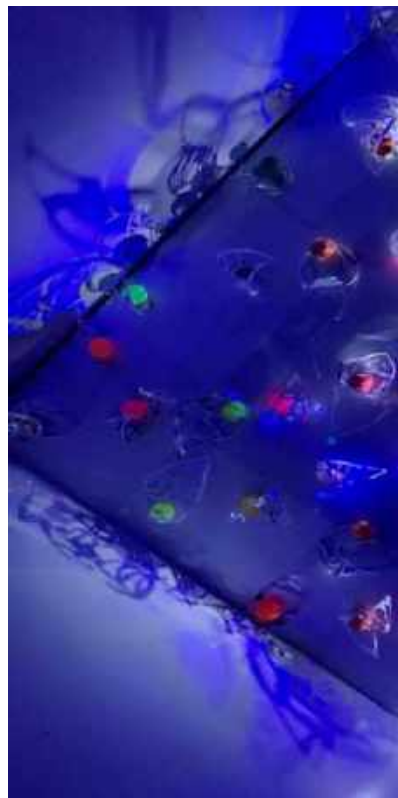
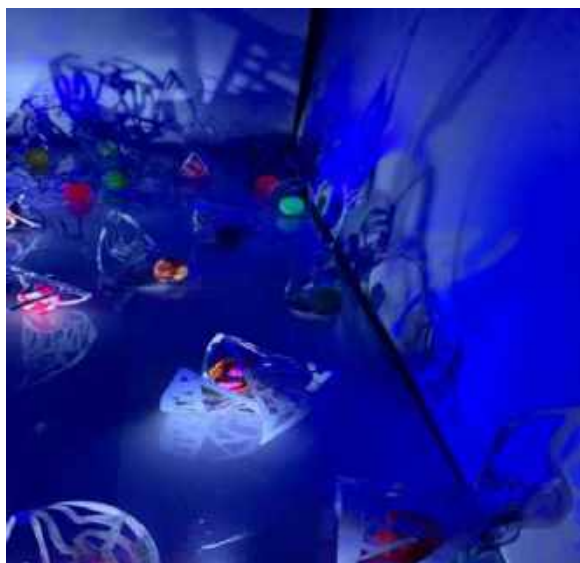
*I Lure to Eat*

*594 x 420mm*

*Dried up Acrylic Primer, Dried up Acrylic Paint*

This work represents the praying mantis using crypsis as a form of camouflage. This is when mimicry can become aggressive because they lure the prey. I used dried up acrylic primer because it was smooth like the petal's texture because the praying mantis lures the pray by mimicking the look of an orchid. I know the surface of the petals because I use to garden with my grandparent. The dried up acrylic paint makes me think of the delicacy of the petal because the acrylic paint was light and tore quickly.





*My Mother Will Always Protect Me*

*420 x 594 mm*

*Bouncy Balls, Paper, Marker, Tipex, Watercolours, Acetate*

This shows that the Quail mother will do anything to protect her young by using the unique pattern on the eggs and placing it in an area it can blend into, like bushes, soil, and shrubbery, to protect her young from predators. I have based my usage of markers on personal experience with markers and that I always end up covered in ink, so it's to represent the speckled pattern over the eggs. I used acetate to describe the fact that they blend in with soil and the soil is beneath them, and their unique design can blend in with this. I used watercolour and paper because, from personal experience, eggs tend to be fragile like paper, which can be easily destroyed. The bouncy balls represent the waxy texture of the leaf; from personal experience of planting plants with my grandparents, I can remember the feeling of the leaves.





## *The Mother of all Shields*

*42x 59.4cm*

*Acetate, Acrylic Paint, Fine Liner, Led Pencil, Cardboard*

This piece of work references that the mother quail protects her by using the eggs below her. The acetate is used as a reflective surface to echo this point. The soft texture of the paint reminds me of the egg's shell, so I used it to represent my mind process at this point. I have collage images of my mother that will always protect me from echoing the speckled pattern of the egg blending in with the soil shrubbery and bushes. I used cardboard because I see it as a fragile material that breaks easily, just like an egg, e.g. in the rain, the cardboard will fall apart. The structure is supposed to represent the nest and the roots of the bushes coming out of the ground.



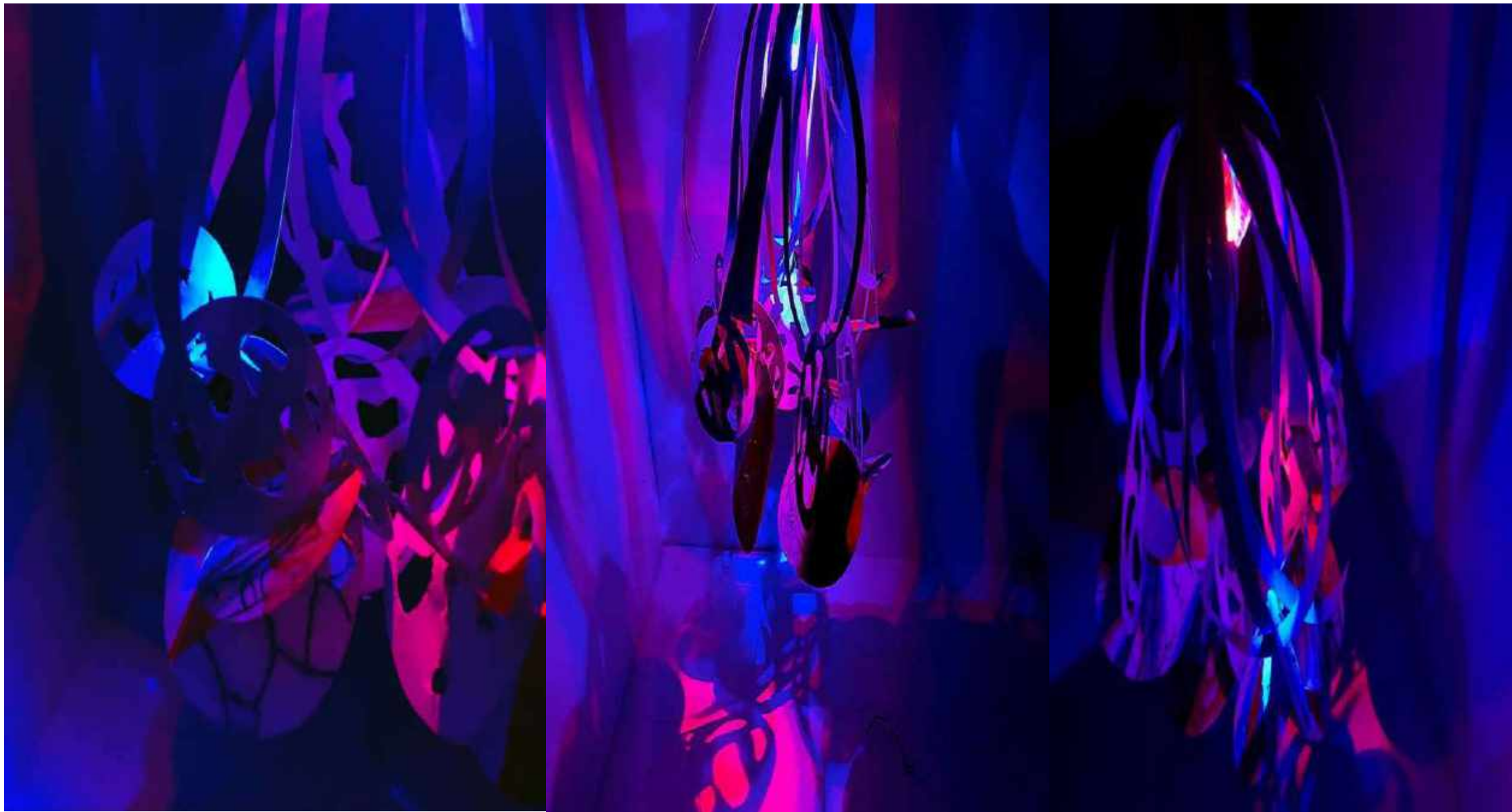


*I Fade into the Shadows*

*34cm H, 9cm W*

*Lycra, Cardboard, Spray Paint, Oil Pastels and Fine liner, Paper*

This represents the cheetah using the shadows and grass for its camouflage by using the colour and spots on its coat to capture prey. The pieces of lycra represent the marks near the cheetah's eyes which they use to blend in with shadows. The spikey paper is supposed to mimic the long grass they use to blend in with the colour coat. Cardboard, too, represents the stillness like it would use to capture prey.



## *I Spot an Entrapment*

*Charcoal, Watercolours, Adhesive Wallpaper, Paper, Lights*

*33 x 38cm*

This work is a further development of *I Fade into the Shadow*. This references the cheetah using the spots in its coat to blend in with the shadows to capture prey. The paper references the shapes on the cheetah's face mimicking the shadow aspect the cheetah uses. The adhesive wallpaper with the holes represents the spots of the cheetah. I used lights to create a shadow effect for the meaning of the work.





*My Surroundings are my Shield*

*A2*

*Acrylic Paint, Fine Line, Paper*

This work is a further development fading the background and represents the cuttlefish using its chromatophore skin cells to mimic different textures and surroundings.





## Gallery Space Model Miniature

So, you start by looking at drawings and paintings in my little gallery model space and then head into the video room. To show the submergence into darkness by disappearing. So overall, it represents the slowly fading away process. This is what camouflage is about trying to hide for survival, e.g. trying to capture the only meal you could have that day or hiding from predators.

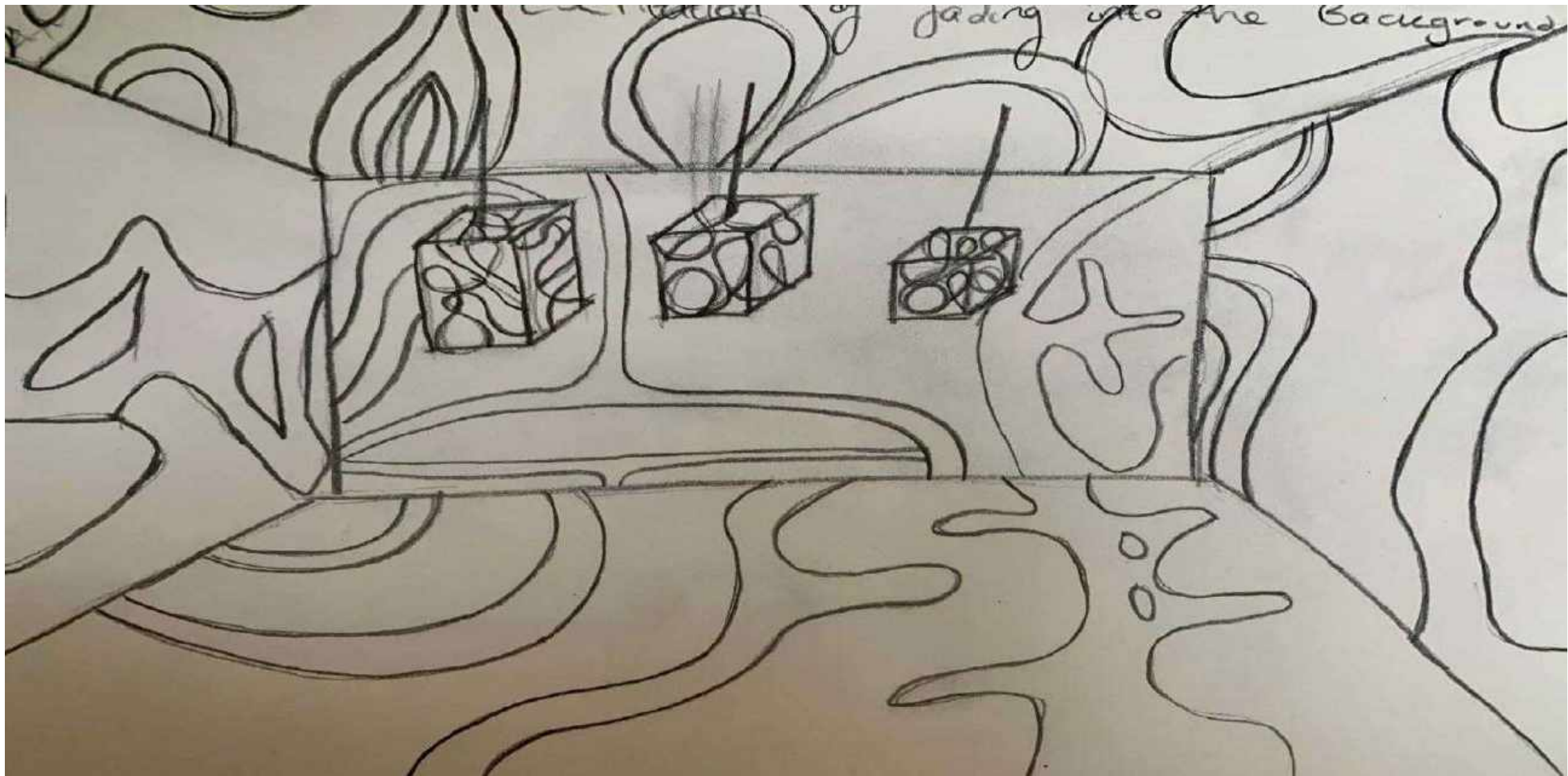




## Gallery Space Drawings

Show what I hope my work will be presented in the future.





Fading into the Background  
how my work will look in  
the future