

A college tutor I had, said something interesting once; **“Use your mistakes, messes and failures”**.

I turned this over in my mind very slowly and with no direction for a long time, not really sure what it meant or why it caught my attention, until I started to encounter what I thought was an army of ‘mistakes, messes and failures’ invading my own work.

I pushed it aside and ignored the army whilst it waged war with my confidence and deteriorated my ability to write or paint honestly because I was always trying to mask my ‘mistakes, messes and failures’ by fumbling around with ideas and processes that are not me.

We don’t always have to present our work (or subsequently, ourselves), as seen in the flattering ‘golden hour’ lighting of the evening, it can be shown in the light of the unforgiving early morning too. When the idea has just woken up, when it is dazed and uncovered and has not decided what it is going to dress itself as yet. The story should not start at the perfected end. I wish everyone would show their humble beginnings, their bad decisions, their first drafts- because we all have them and they are just as interesting *due to* their cracks and flaws. So here are some of my ‘mistakes, messes and failures’;

I was rejected from Strathclyde University

I failed my English Literature course

I spell more words wrong than right

My point is often lost in pompous language

My writing and sketches are so messy you can’t tell what they are

I think I picked the wrong subjects in school

I failed my driving theory test 4 times

My first drafts are always completely erased and re-written.

...and the list goes on.

But from thinking about all of these things, I have made this: the only honest piece of work and true thing I have written probably since I was a child, and the only thing that is recognisably me.