

## **Creative Response Rationale:**

“The Denial” This painting is a recreation of “The Scream” by Edvard Munch. Munch described his painting as his experience of walking along a road when he heard an “infinite scream that went through nature.” In the foreground, Munch covers his ears in horror to block the sound. This is a very popular painting to recreate, but is typically done humorously, replacing the figure of Munch with characters from popular culture. I came into this course being frustrated with and questioning why people around me are apathetic to widespread violence, asking: “why aren’t they screaming?” This course has brought me to realize my own complacency and arrogance, which is why I chose to do a self-portrait of myself looking away from violence, in a state of denial.

The iPhone and headphones are reminders of the distractions and pit-falls that keep me in denial, including the promises of modernity and the fear of pain and shame should I “unplug” from these distractions and face the shit. At first glance, my painting is a twist on Munch’s that pokes at technology’s grip on our attention, but looking closer reveals what I am blocking out. The elements in the background that I am blocking out represent the genocide, extraction, and dispossession that modernity requires. I chose to paint an open-pit mine, as throughout this course I sat with the reality of how my family’s wealth has been amassed from the colonial violence of industrial mining, and how that has been the central to my modern privileges, while others like Ninawa risk their lives in resistance. Surrounding are clear cuts where red dresses are hanging, symbolizing MMIWG2S and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The red dresses hanging on three crosses is an expression of my acknowledgment of having been raised within the church, and my complicity in its violence. The police helicopters above are symbolic of the tools that suppress any attempts at resistance to colonial power. I used the colour red throughout to show how my existence is entangled with violence in a settler colonial society and a world connected by imperialism.

This piece is a reminder to be accountable for the violence that I and my ancestors have inflicted, and the responsibility that flows from that. I came into this course very disconnected from what my emotions and gut have been trying to tell me. This painting is my expression of the grief, pain, and despair that I have felt in facing my complicity and complacency in violence and unsustainability. However, I chose to depict myself in a state of denial and complacency – rather than a state of resistance and sobriety – as a reminder to continue facing the shit despite the pain, which is necessary for facilitating the death of modernity and building something new. Overall, this painting is a reminder for me that I have been invited in this course to disinvest from modernity, to face the violence, and to take responsibility and be a good ancestor to all relations. There is red painted into some elements (my clothing, the smoke, etc.) that I was unable to capture in the photo of the painting.