

PROPOSAL FORM

ADAA6001

COREY PENN-THOMAS (2200822)

Name: Corey Penn-Thomas

Proposed name of the project: Faceless Gaze

Provide a short summary of the proposed project: (100 words)

My plan for the project is to collect pictures from publicly available sources (Google maps, live streams, online profiles, etc), showing the ease of which someone can collect information. The act of collecting and displaying it for the observation of others is done with the aim to prompt awareness for what we've become accustomed to allowing unknown observers to be able to access and record, gathering just a handful of the available data out there to confront viewers with it directly.

The project within 5 key words:

- Surveillance
- Panopticism
- Consent
- Privacy
- Image alteration

Provide a detailed description of the proposed project: (250 words)

My project will focus around the ethics of consent and privacy invasion in the modern day, done by putting myself in the role of the camera. With the mass use of camera systems promising security, becoming an expectation for ourselves to be subjected to in order to be in a public space, the questions of what happens with the collected data and the concerns over consent is always present in my mind. I've become accustomed to locating where surveillance cameras sit around buildings and am always asking myself who is or isn't actively watching what I'm doing at that moment, and what gives them the right to hold a position of anonymity in the exchange of observation. So, I plan to take up that role in this project to further expand on my previous exploration of the power dynamics and ethical concerns of collecting images of members of the public.

I will be collecting this material by watching public live streams, exploring Google maps looking for people, and going through publicly available social medias for images willingly put out into the open internet. I hope to then keep the reminder of the human action taken in order to compile these photographs by scanning in cut outs of people, eyes, or other "obvious" additions as signs of tampering with the original source. It will serve as a visual for how, once someone has the access to the data, they can manipulate it however they want.

Timeline and milestones:

01/10/2025 29/10/2025

- Collect digital images from different spaces (Google Maps, Instagram, Live streams)
- Research privacy policies for the sites I take from
- Experiment with scanning analog elements and play with their incorporation in a digital space

30/10/2025 2/12/2025

- Play with merging the digital images with each other
- Experiment with changes the contexts revolving around the images
- Create new contexts ?

26/01/2026 03/03/2026

- Experimentation with bringing images into a physical space
- Lean closer into the absurd (surrealism)
- Source more physical and digital material
- Record interactions with the work/how the work interacts with the world itself

04/03/2026 27/04/2026

- Test formatting in a physical space
- Experiment with video editing

Easter break 29/04/2026

- Refine planned work for the exhibition

04/05/2026 08/05/2026

- Installation week

Item	Cost
Scissors	£7
Magazines and newspapers	£50
Adobe Creative - Student discount	£239.88 (for a year)
Printing	£150~£250
Frames x 10	£30
TOTAL COST	~£576.88

What are the main risks and challenges to your project meeting its aims? What will you do to manage these risks? Mitigation

The primary, and most obvious, problem that my project may encounter is concerns around the ethics of consent to using people's images and likeness in my practice. While Google Maps is a publicly accessible service it has copyright rules around it that effect academic use of the street view images, so I have elected to focus on the services that won't risk a copyright issue. Research is how I will ensure to mitigate the risks of these issues, and so upon looking into it I know that Instagram has a disclaimer to anyone with a public profile that anyone can see their posts and share those posts to whoever they please. This, thankfully, aligns with how my project functions so I know it can be a reliable source of material.

Describe the developmental opportunities, experiments and processes you have undertaken, what did you get out of them, and how will you use them to support your proposed project?

My experimentation has primarily revolved around strengthening and expanding my capabilities on Photoshop, editing individual layers to match them to the exposures in other images that I'm hiding them amongst as well as my skills in using layer types (clipping, mask layers, etc) when compiling my combinations of analog and digital images. These are going to be consistently used in the future work I create for the project as my images become more elaborate and potentially surreal, knowing my way more confidently around the software I use to make the work will ensure it's done efficiently so I can reach goals of a final outcome for the exhibition in good time.

PRACTICE-BASED EXPERIMENTS

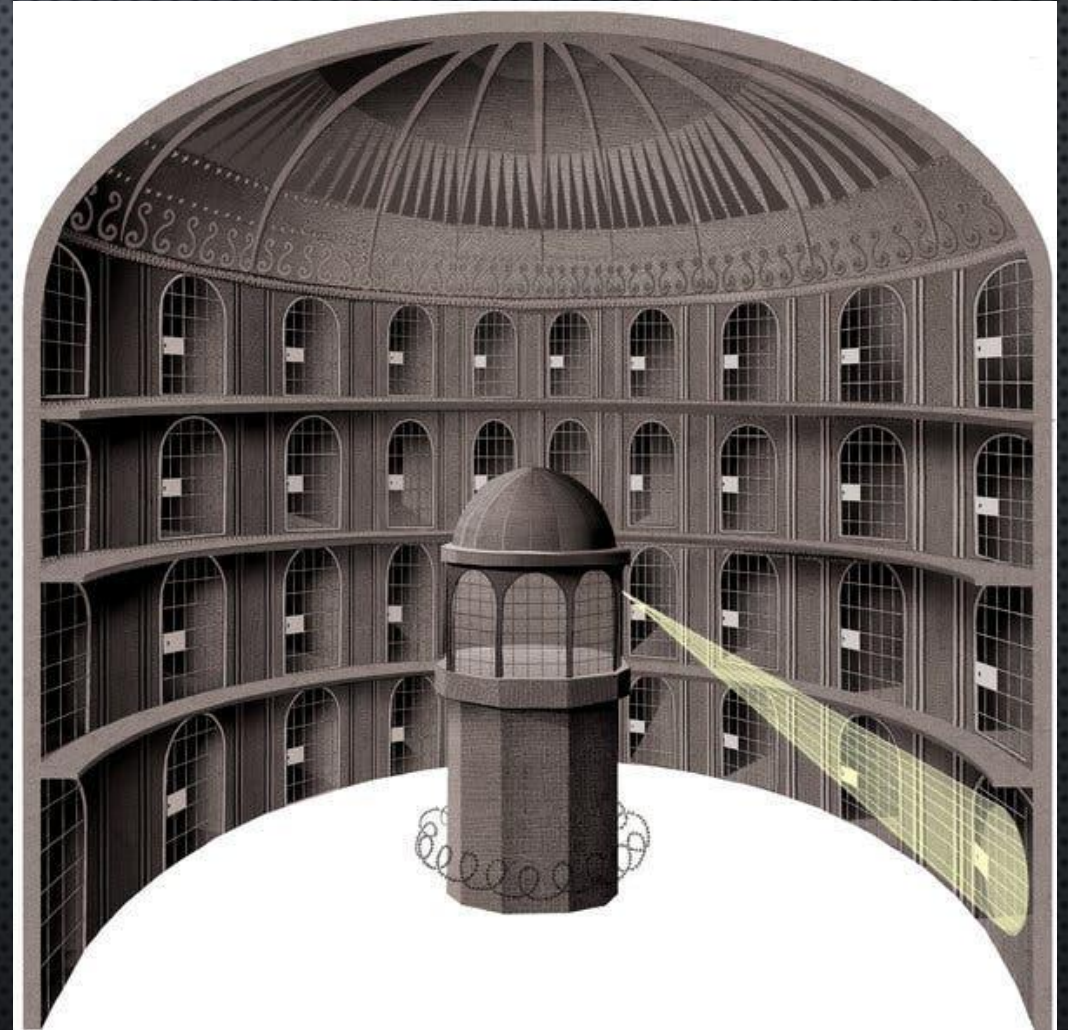
FACELESS GAZE

"It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, a long, hierarchized network..."

- Michael Foucault

Panopticism

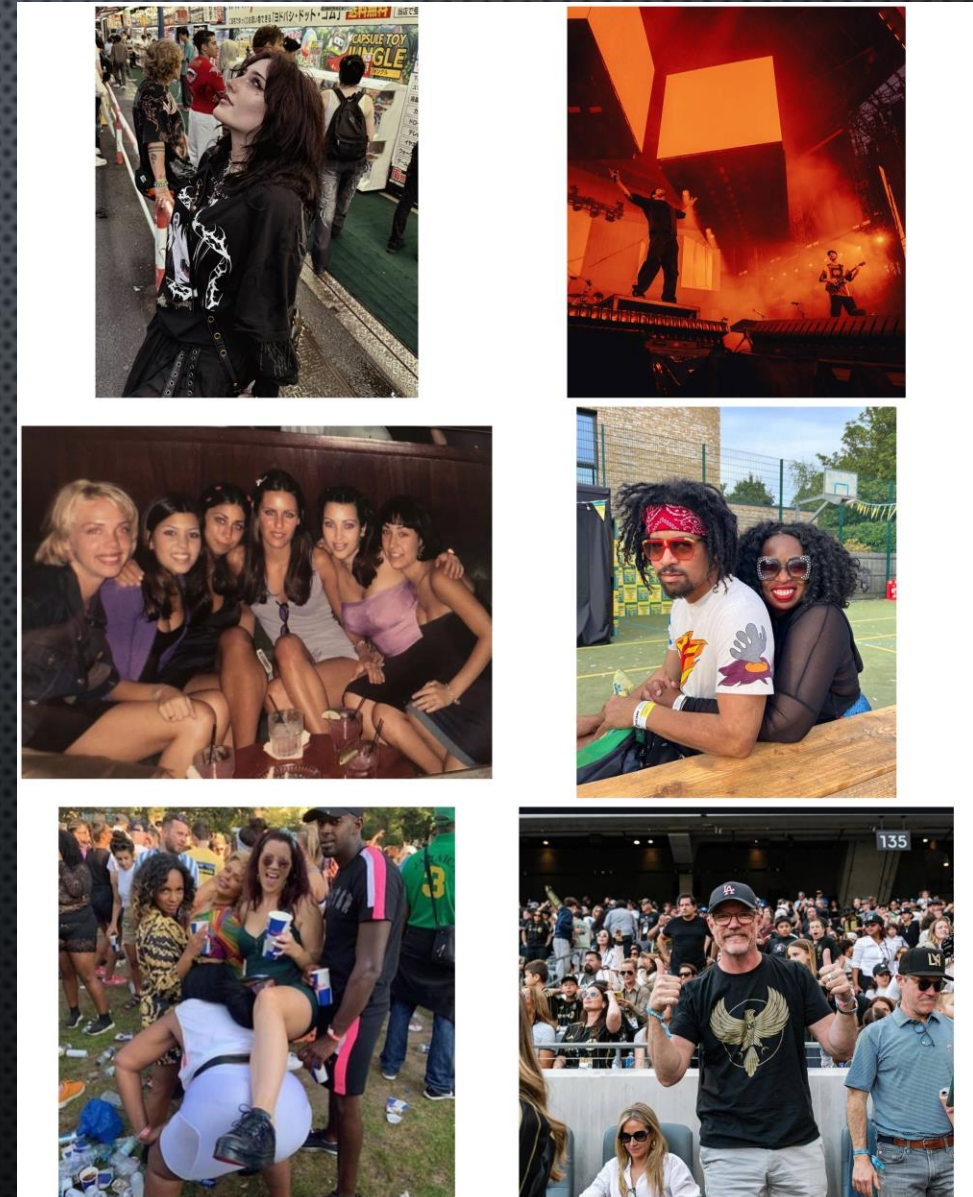
The underlying driving force for this project will be inspired by the concept of panopticism, a theory coined by Michael Foucault where he discussed the mechanisms of the power of observation as a tool for discipline and control, like that was present in Jeremy Bentham's proposed prison structure the "Panopticon" where a guard's tower sat central in the structure shining a light on open prison cells. Panopticism talks of the internalised surveillance and self-discipline than is invoked by the sense of constantly being monitored. The key parts of Foucault's discussion I will be using to influence my project is the innate weakness and vulnerability that comes with the role of being "visible". In this project I hold the power of being "invisible", a disembodied observer who comes and goes without their knowing. My goals are to demonstrate the imbalance of this dynamic through editing other people's images, memories, and likeness, however I please, leaving traces of my interventions in the pictures while never actually showing myself.



Images from livestreams



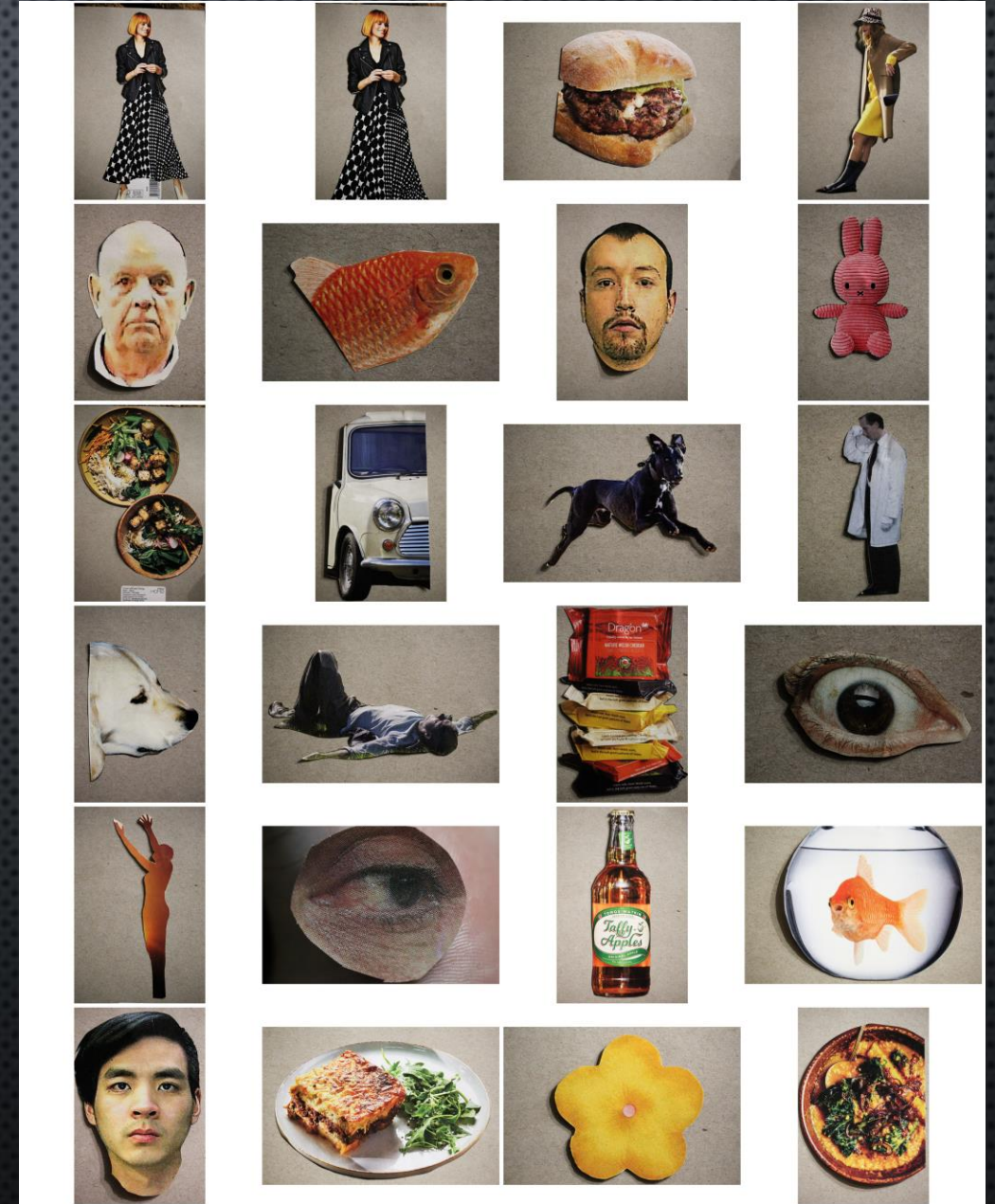
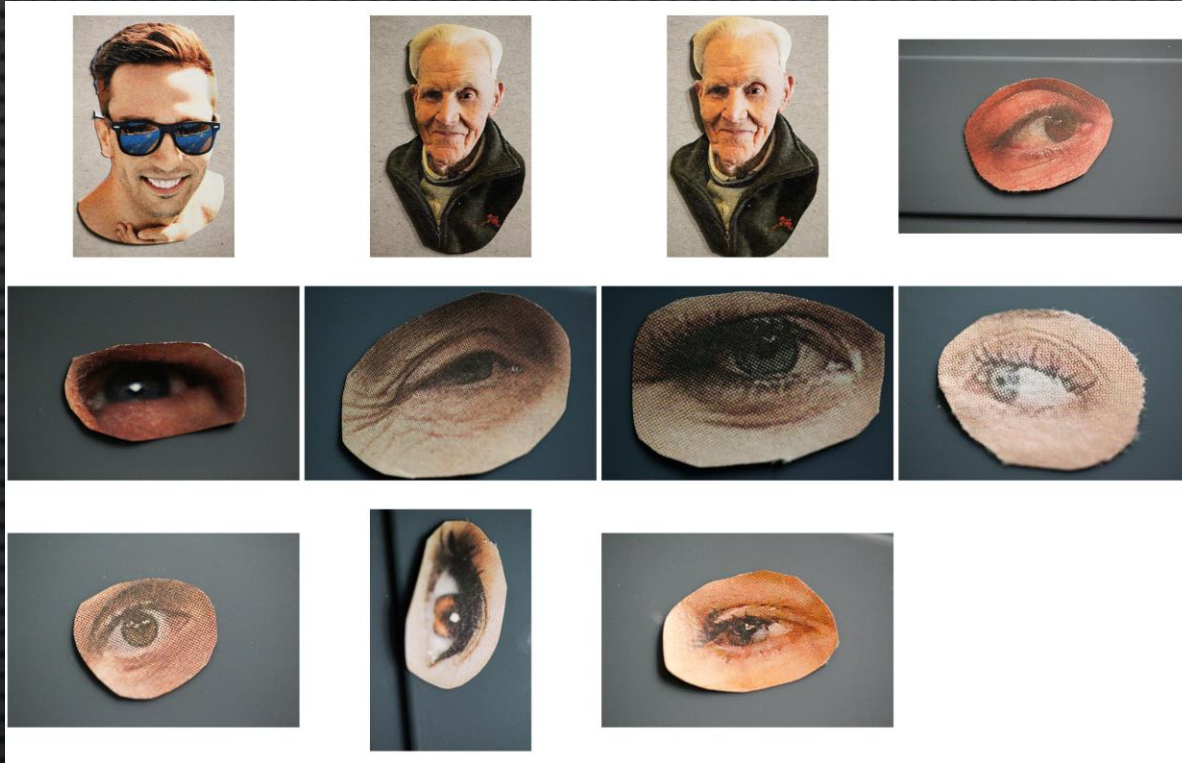
Images from Instagram



Public Instagram pictures

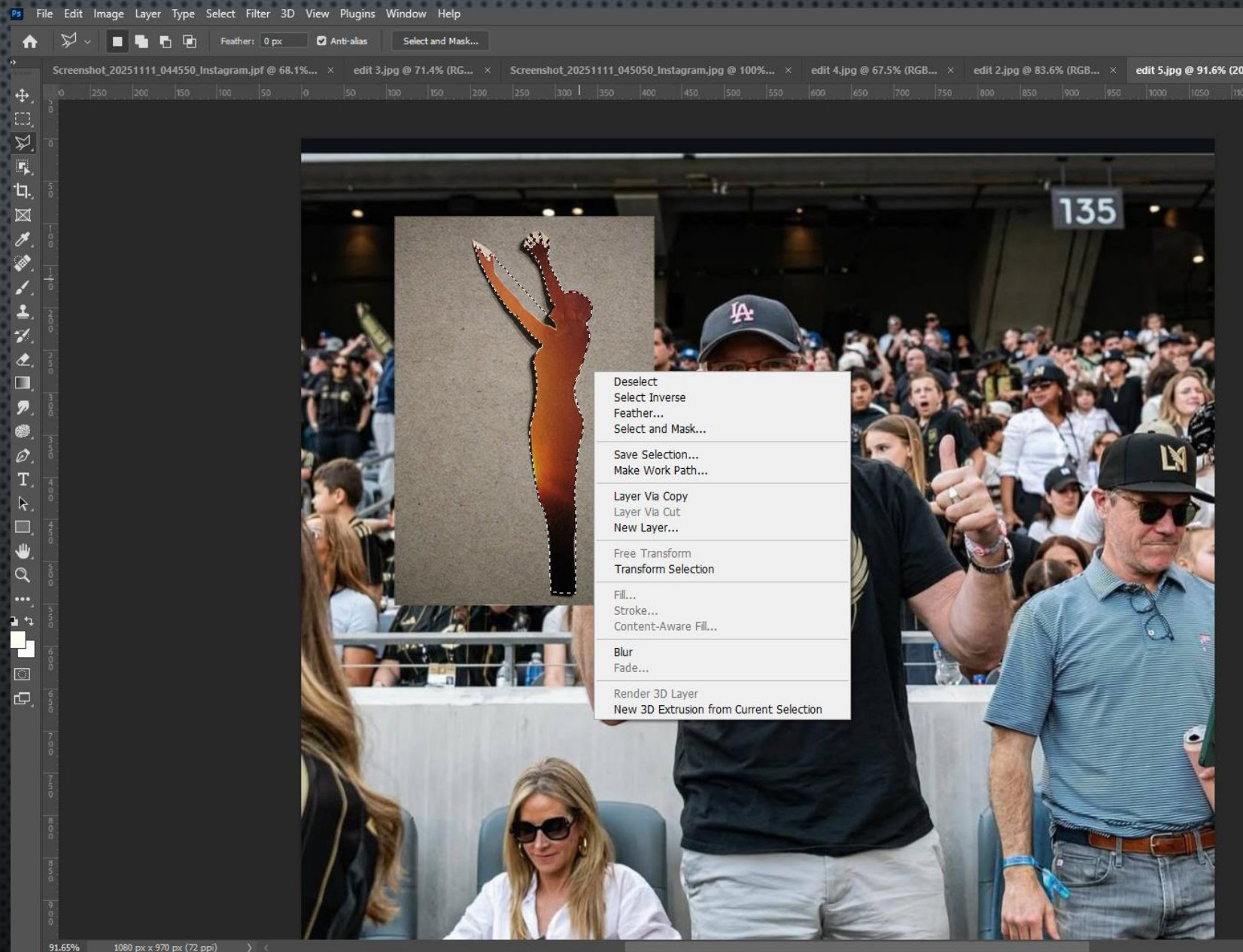


Magazine and newspaper clippings



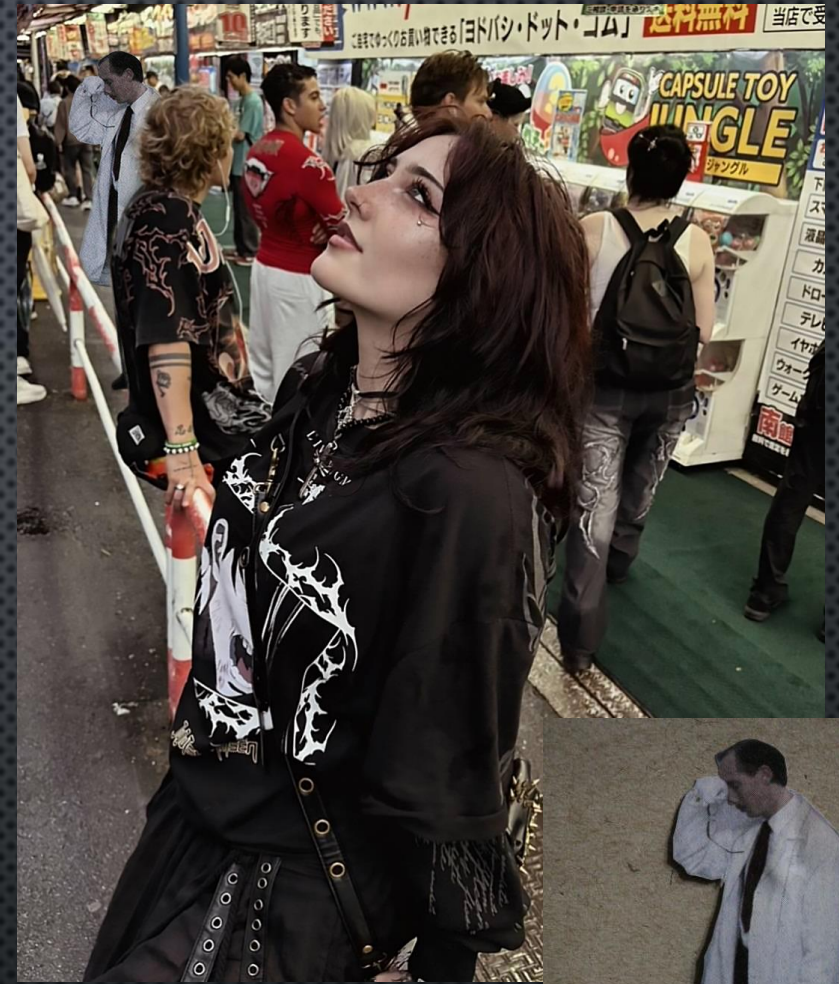


I lasso and cut out the clipping within photoshop, then find a desired location for the change (ie. Background, a face, foreground). Then I change the brightness to match the lighting, blur and sharpen to match the quality of the image, and then erase anything that would be blocking the way if the picture had been there in reality (here being the railings)





The goal isn't to necessarily hide the edits I make. While these examples do blend into the original image well, my alterations are to explore how it's my judgement on what happens to the data when in my possession, fully within the legal rights of the platforms and media being in a public eye



As the Watcher, the immediate associations are naturally related to eyes and observation, as the power of control and discipline exerted in the Panopticon revolved around the constant state of monitoring while unable to perceive where it came from. My method of representing this in my art here is done with the cut outs of other people's eyes, a physical insertion of my gaze and the gaze of those within the image. The sight is disturbing, one eye fixed to the viewer to create another level of perception with who's consuming the work, and attention drawn to peer-to-peer surveillance that often goes understated when talking about the theories of panopticism. It's one amongst a few of my working methods on trying to present my themes to an audience and getting them to pause and engage with the work and discussion the project is striving to provide a platform for.





Above is 2 versions of what I could potentially do with the live stream images. The image on the left covers the gaze of a person depicted, obscuring their face, and lends itself more to the passive surveillance in a public space. The right image however is more in spirit of my own gaze as a disembodied observer. Both options still serve to show exactly who I was observing when the picture was taken.

San Pedro Sosoltepec (Oaxaca, Mexico) May 2009



32 Alexandra Road, Swansea, Wales (November 2021)



The above are practices done using images recorded on Google Maps, and then implementing the cut outs I did into the contexts. I tried to make them more on the covert side, so that they blended and wouldn't be immediately obvious to the viewer that there was something off. However, this has made me feel that the best way to expand this project is to lean into making the edits blatantly clear. If the collaging is more obvious, purposely so, then the whole image is much easier to interpret. Even without the knowledge of the theories driving my work, any viewer will be able to glance and see that it's an image that's been tampered with. So going forward I will move away from the style of the images above.

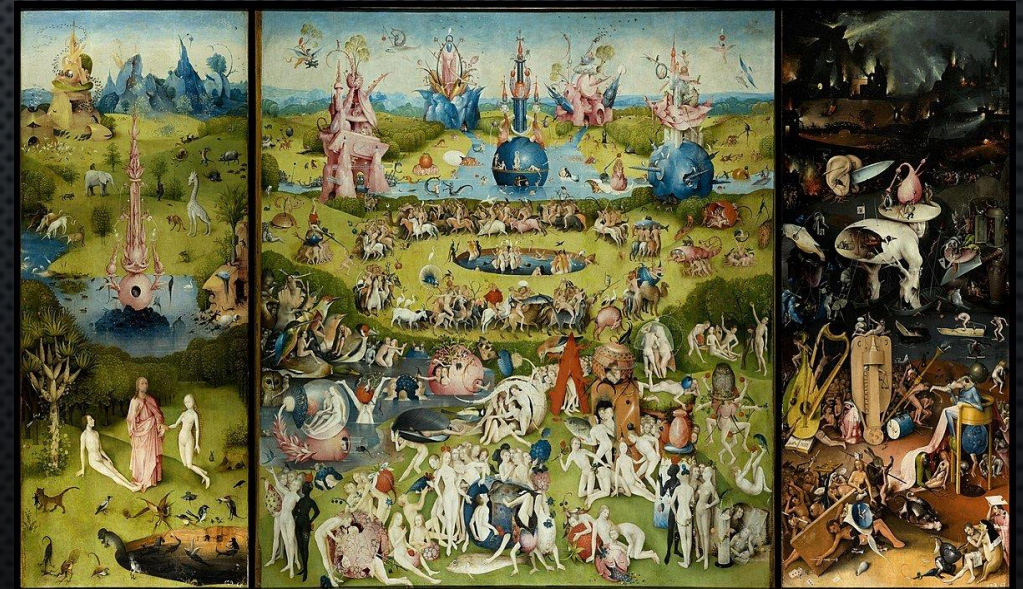
Hannah Höch

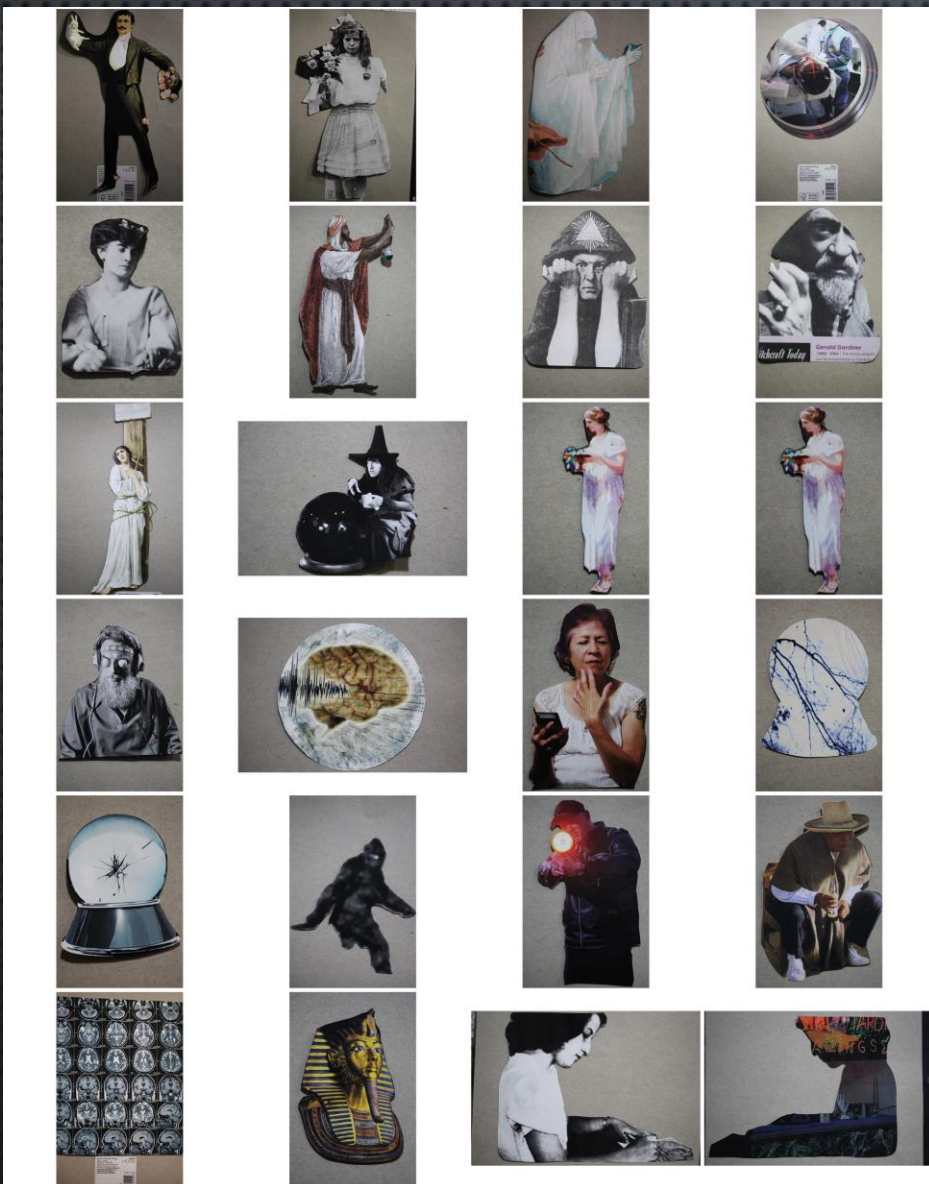
From the Dada movement, Höch's style of photo montaging shares some of the aesthetics of my current work. Her collage work fully leans into that distinguishable satire that ran through dadaism, as a critique of the media of the time, and I find that it's similar in some regards to my experimentation as I look for ways to further my project. It makes me consider the idea of opting for less discreet forms of editing, making the media I collect into some obscure amalgamations of original content and my own free will of adding/taking away elements of an image.



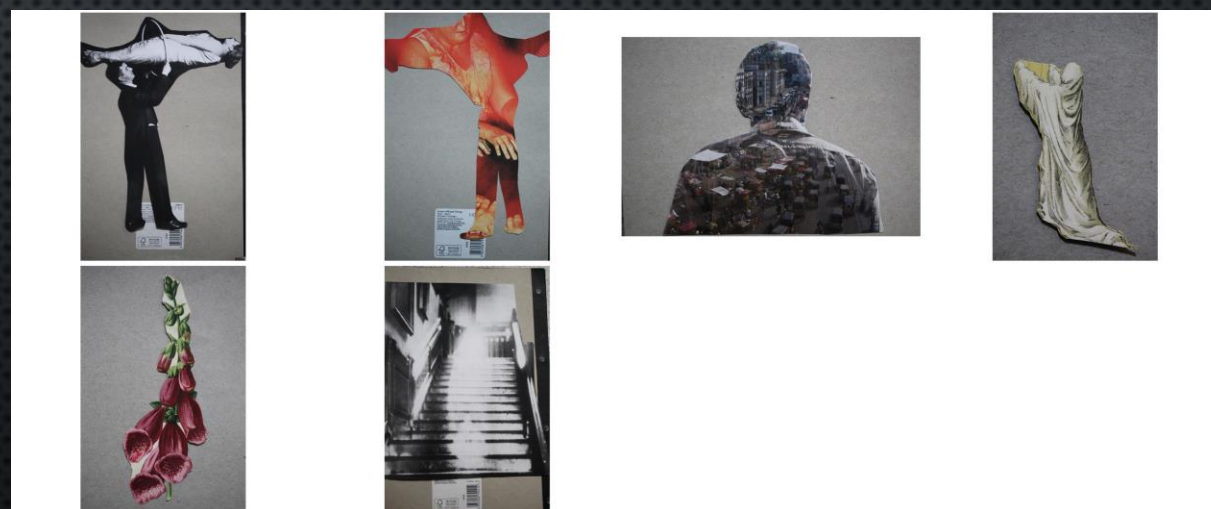
The Garden of Earthly Delights - Hieronymus Bosch

The Garden of Earthly Delights has mainly caught my attention for last image depicted in the tryptic, but the work as a whole is of interest from a generally informative angle. Bosch painted the stages of early creation, where in the 1st image Adam and Eve sit in the garden of Eden, the 2nd is then the introduction of sin into the garden where they indulge in the sin of lust, then the 3rd image is where I lay most of my interest in the abstract manner that humanity is seen to have corrupted from sinning. The biggest aspects I take away from this art that can potentially influence my own is the odd and disturbed scenarios he paints.





Set 2 of magazine cut outs



These sets of edits will focus much more on edits that don't attempt to be subtle in the slightest, and it's my initial ventures into playing around the contexts within a picture.



My first images approaching the editing from a shamelessly obvious series of edits. Initially I really enjoyed the simplicity of removing the dining table and leaving it at that, a family photo missing the key context of what they're gathered to do. I do still like this as an alternative edit hence why it's included, but in further edits I added a newspaper clipping of an eye. It served the purpose of emphasising the element of observation that is inspiring my work, and I felt it especially appropriate nestled amongst what you should normally expect to be a private family moment.

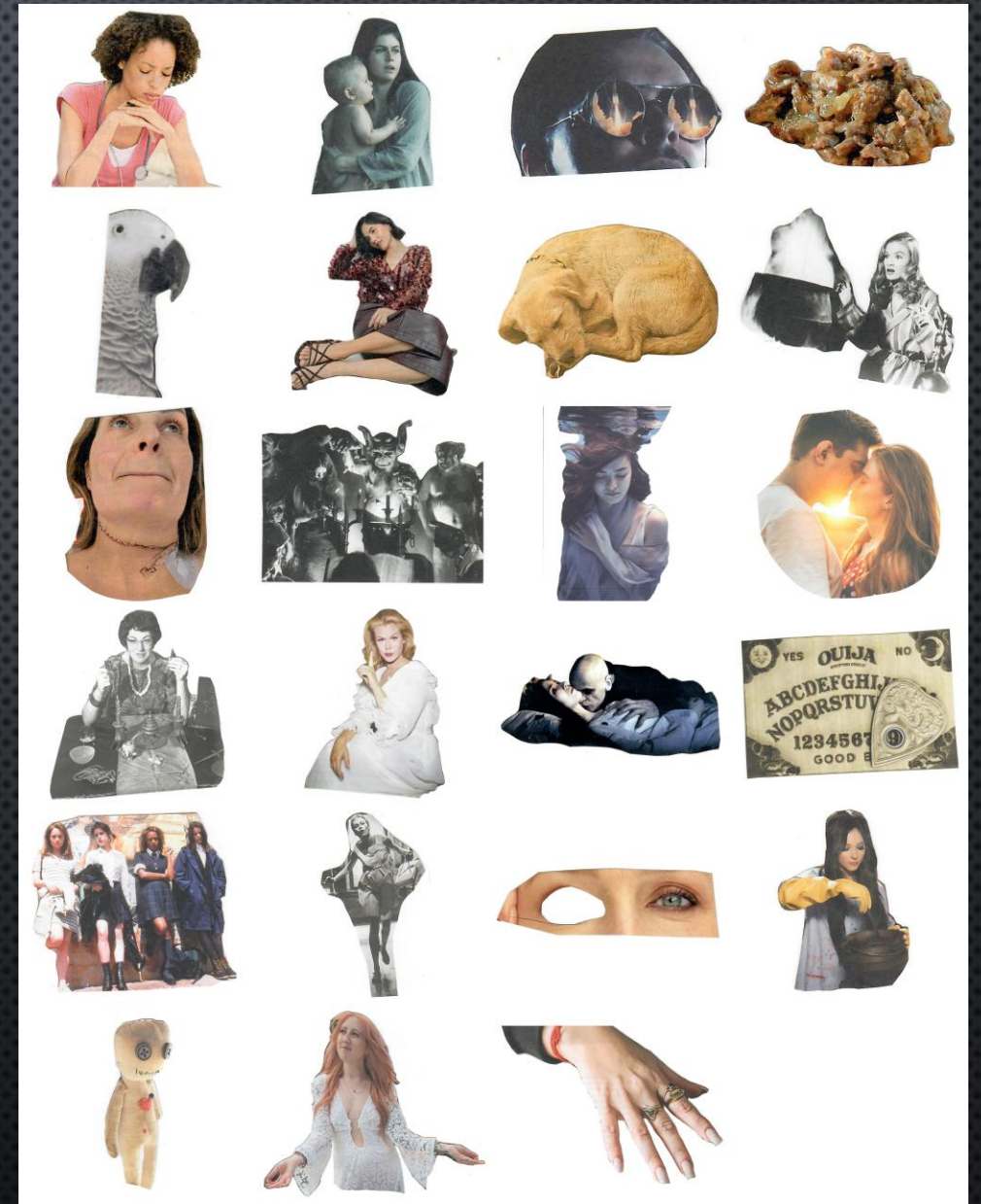
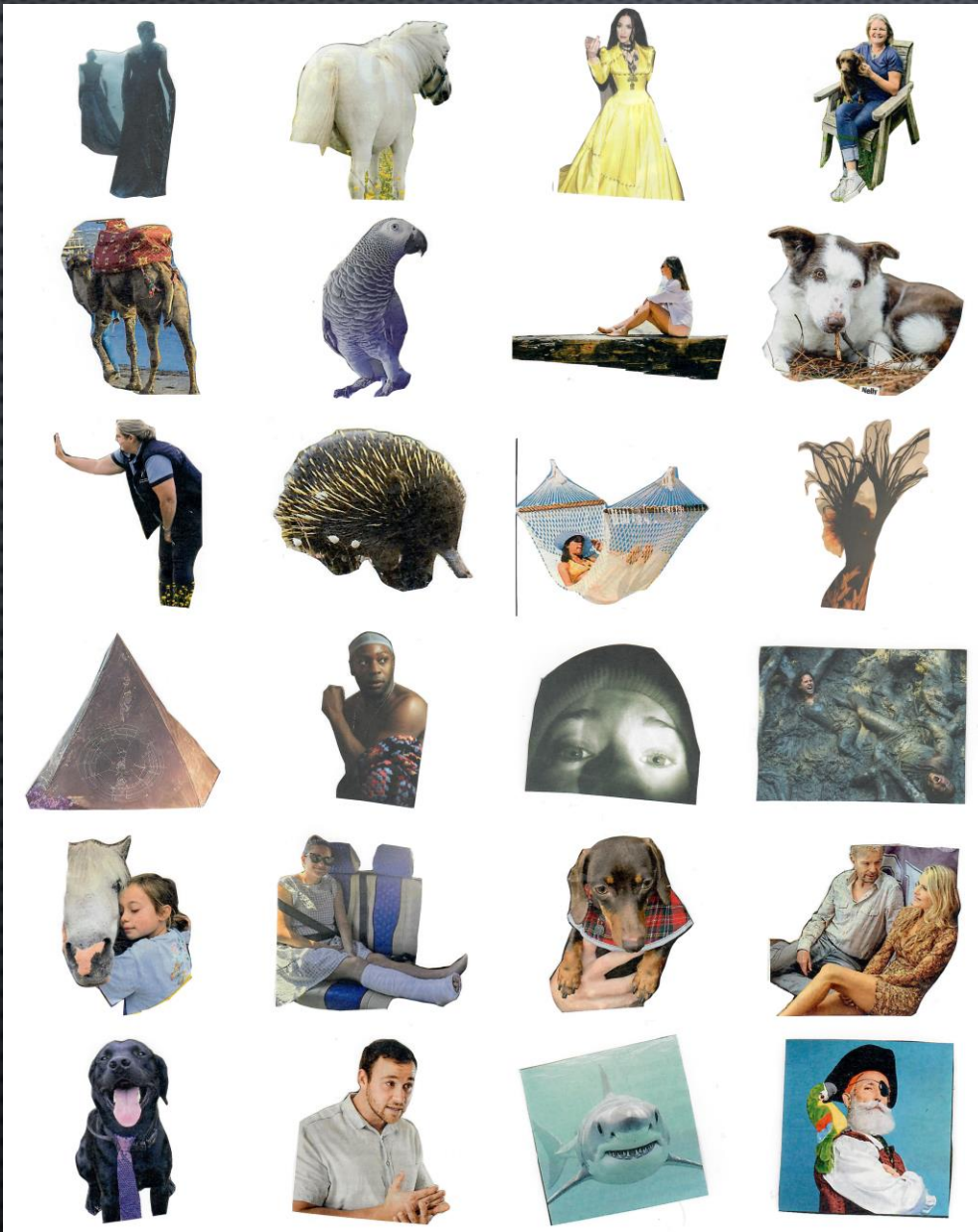
It's undeniably invasive and has no intentions of hiding the presence of myself and my intrusion, while still retaining the nonsensical nature of changing the context for why they're all sat together.



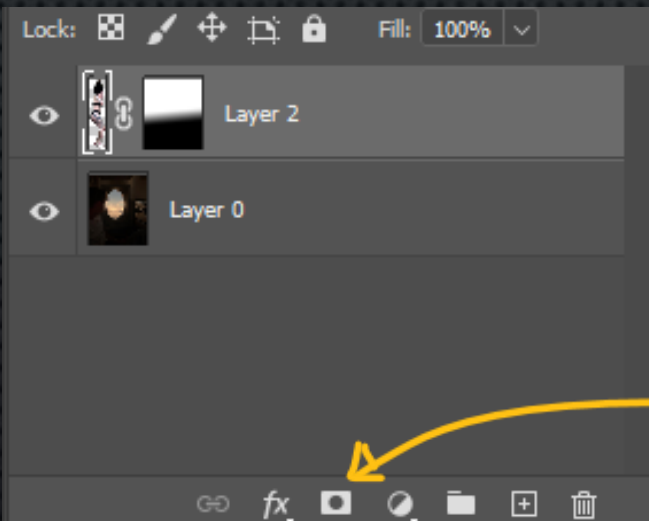


This exploration into a different style of editing has left me very confident in how this should be more of what my project becomes. There doesn't need to necessarily be any rhyme or reason for why I make edits that I do, it still aligns with my driving influence of demonstrating that I can do what I please with the images I have access to, and that there's an innate power imbalance to them being 'visible' and myself being 'invisible' (relating to the "Watcher" and the "Watched" roles). Their likeness and their actions are subject to the whims I have as an artist. I can remain unseen while swapping faces, overlaying eyes on their identity, or imposing people who were never there into their recorded memories.

3rd set of
cut outs



I experimented with some techniques in photoshop for this to better edit the images I was collaging together, as well as being the start of my testing with combining digital images together and whether that could offer me more versatility than purely using cutouts. I found that digital pictures can be just as easily fit into their new context, this woman here edited to be jumping down through the clouds and watched by an aeroplane passenger.



Added a clipping mask to be able to use the gradient tool for clean opacity changing

Another method of editing I wanted to experiment with is using purely the pre-existing elements inside the same image. This included textures, such as the bottom left image where I took the sides of vinyl casings to replace her face, as well as merging and copying other faces in frame like the bottom right where his cats replaced their face. It's an interesting way of taking what is familiar and at home in the original media and reassigning a role for it within the picture. It also works well inside the image for not clashing with the surrounding composition, because it's been sourced from the same place.



Interacting with the image already there has added another degree of playfulness to my approach in this work. Like the images in the bottom right the landscape was amusingly similar to the pose the woman is making so I felt it compositionally interesting to turn her into the landscape being photographed, one edit being much more obvious than the other. The image in the bottom left, while including magazine clippings that interacted with the digital image well on their own, included the texture of a log already in the fire as what the woman was sitting on as a way to make it feel as though it's all meant to be there. The latter isn't very absurd, it more focuses on the playful approach to the work.



A subtler edit, where her pose replaced the landscape of the screen



Maayan Sophia Weisstub

Using a variety of mediums Weisstub's work is of interest to me for her fascinating way of playing with images and perception. Often she combines images and videos to each other that have zero relation to each other but by how she frames them they reinvent how you look at them. Another thing heavily present in her work is the physicality of it, like squeezing a fruit with the cut out of an eye over it in order to make it appear like it's crying.

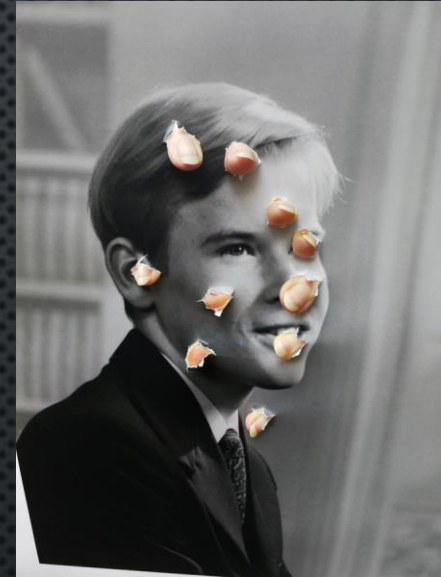
The works make me consider how I could potentially bring my images into a physical space, change their context with my hands in a tangible space that goes beyond the screen.

It has the ability to help get my point across about the control I have over other people's information if I bring it into a space that everyone who may see my work can recognise the impacts of: real life.



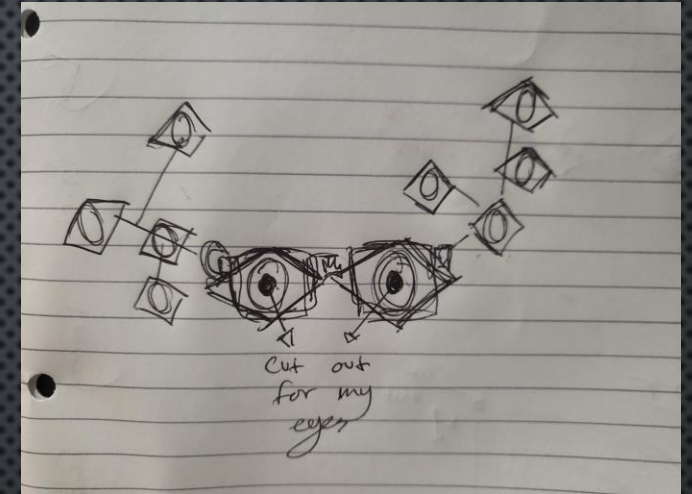
Jonny Briggs

Briggs' work, similarly to Weisstub's, bring a physicality to still image that has caught my interest. A common trend in his work is how a canvas isn't a barrier for the art itself, rather he uses it as an extension of the work he's showing. Often his art breaks out of frames, and while that is something in itself to consider the example below even holds that same canvas breaking approach but in a digital format. The edit of the man's eyes is what expands the image past the original's dimensions and it plays with the photo in a humorous or (depending on the viewer) off-putting way. I can see his approaches to bringing a new angle of life to an image, both physical and digital, informing my formatting going forwards.



Combining the clippings into my surroundings

In the spirit of initially testing how I can combine my work with my physical surroundings, I have looked to what is closest around me in my daily life. The most obvious method of my daily observation is the glasses I wear every day, though thinking more on it I also realised how often I use the peep hole in my door to watch flat mates walk back and forth. It's my own local method of surveillance, unseen but still watching who comes and goes from the kitchen. To explore these thoughts I used the magazine cuttings of eyes I had to represent myself, without myself actually being present. Both of these things are what enable me to take on my role as Watcher, so should obviously be considered in the scope of what my project could include as it moves forward. An idea that comes to mind is potentially fashioning a pair of glasses with multiple branching cut out eyes. The lenses could either have similar cut outs with gaps for the wearer to see through, or potentially words cut up from a magazine to read a reassuring sentiment such "It's confidential", "It's just us", etc etc, but those are ideas I can refine as I go on



The link below is a short video demonstration of the point of view looking through my peep hole, fixed with one of my magazine cut outs.

<https://youtu.be/CPtcimY70nQ>



My first trial of leaning heavily into the more absurd angle for my project with the material gathered so far. Removing the contexts of whatever might have been happening in those images/cut outs and combining them into an insect like extension.

Within an exhibition this would be the type of work that could potentially break out of a frame of some kind. Or, it could potentially be printed as multiple vinyl prints that I layer over each other, but in either instance it would be visually interesting amongst the other works.



Another way I want to experiment with the distortion of images is extending images beyond their original border. There was something mesmerizing about someone laid in water when flipped to be in suspension, and from there I wanted to expand the area she was suspended over. Extending the limbs to be odd lengths creates visual interest, as though she's holding onto the sides of the frame in order to keep herself from falling.

The next steps for this project will be playing with the absurd more, specifically in how I play with imagery in a physical space like Briggs and Weisstub do, as well as stretching the limits of how odd I can make images like the one on the right (for example, editing the water to go further and further, as well as the woman's limbs). How can I better convey the control I possess over images to my audience? What is the best way to show the power in having free will over other people's documented lives? This is what I will explore as the project continues, aiming to bring the work into the world in a more physical way. I believe that seeing an amalgamation of images, or a video of myself interacting with other people's likeness, will get my perspective across much more effectively than staying solely digital.

