

Advanced Creative Enquiry

Project Proposal & Portfolio of Experimentation

Depression and Dementia

By

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The Aim

If you asked random people to describe dementia, most would say dementia is linked to memory loss.

I am looking at ways to produce an exhibition piece around this

Looking at the work of Michael Bach and Franchesca Woodman in particular, who have been plagued with depression for much of his life. I am going to try to replicate his ghostly images with studio shots and outdoor photography. I am also looking at the possibility of using video, using the same ghostly style, where family will walk along a lane. These will be in full detail in the distance and then disappear as they get closer to the camera.

If I had to describe my Project in five words, they would be:

Emotional

Personal

Thoughtful

Moody

Abstract

Timeline and Milestones

START DATE	END DATE	ACTIVITY OR TASK DETAIL
01/10/25	06/10	Buy materials for cyanotype printing and alternative 35mm and 120mm film (high silver content).
6/10	12/10	Start practicing with cyanotype.
13/10	19/10	Shoot with digital and 35mm film, using continuous lighting in studio. Practice with acetates on cyanotypes
20/10	26/10	Develop film and start making prints. – 35mmm film failed.
27/10	2/11	ill
3/11	9/11	ill
10/11	16/11	Shoot outdoor video and images – SSD card corrupted and lost everything taken
17/11	23/11	Reshoot outdoor video and photos
24/11	31/11	Editing video files and merging files on photoshop
1/12	7/12	Editing video files and merging files on photoshop continued
8/12	13/13	Editing video files and merging files on photoshop continued
15/05/2026		Swansea Exhibition Opening

Costs and budget for Project

[illegible]

Description of the proposed Project

To look at various artists that have used photography as therapy in relation to depression and dementia. This from the aspect of looking after loved ones or for themselves. I am looking into this theme due to my own personal experience of looking after someone with dementia and my own struggles with depression.

I will be looking at the work of Michael Bach, Franchesca Woodman and Norma Cordova for inspiration around how they photographed the subject and I will try to emulate these practices within my own work.

I am looking at experimenting with high silver content 35mm film as well as cyanotype (standard or alternative), salt paper printing, platinum printing, gumoil, silver gelatine and anthotype as well as visual manipulation and distortion in Lightroom and Photoshop.

I am looking at taking photographs of myself and family both in the studio and outside, in different settings. I will also go down the video route. At the present I am looking at using a block of images 3x3 or 4x4 in a square with spacing between, but this is not set in stone and may evolve as my work evolves.

At present I am unsure of the mounting and the finish of the images.

Photographers who inspire me, regarding this project are Michael Bach and Franchesca Woodman. Both photographers have produced eerie images. Bach 's images look to me like he is diminishing himself away from existence, where Woodman's image to me look like she is trying to portray images that tell a story of loosing oneself to madness.

Woodman used 35mm film and dark room processes and Bach used digital manipulation. I have myself have tried to emulate some of these which will follow shortly.

Michael Bach





Franchesca
Woodman



Norma Cordovaln



Developmental opportunities, experiments and processes

I tried cyanotype for the first time using acetates , as well as liquid photo emulsion, both with limited initial results, however I will continue to try with these processes.

I have undertaken photography with digital, as well as 35mm (WASHI Fluorographic x-ray film) and 120 film (Rollei Retro 400s), both Black and White. The digital imagery has performed very well but I have had limited success with the films. I followed the developing times and chemical volumes to the letter, but both films failed to develop, leaving blank film?

I made a video and digital photos like Michael Bach's ghostly images, both of which have surpassed my expectations. I have never used Premier Pro previously and learnt a lot with the support of lecturers and photographic technicians in its use. The same can be said about the inner workings of Photoshop, which to date are far beyond my comprehension, I have enjoyed learning the more in-depth workings of these software editing tools.

Risks and Challenges

There have been a number of challenges to the project. This has included moving home, which means I lacked a PC and had to purely rely on University equipment. Which is fine but travelling in every day has been difficult due to the amount of work that my new property requires. So prioritizing time has been very challenging.

In addition to this my health has caused many problems this semester, my Diabetes has played up making me feel unwell constantly, as well as my depression due to worries around my memory. This has led to major motivation issues.

Getting family members together to take photographs has been exhausting, as they all have busy lives.

Other challenges include difficulty using more advanced Photoshop techniques as well as having to learn new skills using Premier Pro, this learning curve is okay, but it is the additional time taken to do this as well which has caused issues.

Additional challenges were the new printers not printing acetates correctly, and leaving marks on them, making them unusable. IT have had numerous tickets and since the start of the semester, but the issue still has not been fixed.

Risks and challenges continued

A further issue was that when developing my 35mm and 110mm specialist film, I lost the images and left the film 'clean and empty'. I am still unsure how this happened as I checked and double checked all measurements stated in the developing book and sheet and well as all the times required.

Another problem has been equipment failures and unexpected film failures. I have had two SSD cards corrupt and images lost, this is not only expensive but also frustrating losing images you cannot necessarily reproduce, not to mention wasted time.

As for risks, I looked into processes and chemicals involved in making images disappear. Following a few tests and extensive research it seems there are two main ways of undertaking this, however, both would leave chemicals on the paper, which with COSHH regulations make it difficult to undertake.

Risks continued

The Scientific Principle

A standard black-and-white photographic print is made by exposing silver-halide crystals on paper to light, creating a **latent image** of tiny metallic silver specks. The *developer* converts more silver halide into black metallic silver, forming the visible image. The *fixer* (typically sodium thiosulfate) then dissolves and removes all the remaining, unexposed, light-sensitive silver-halide crystals, making the image permanent and light-stable.

If you skip the fixing step, the print still contains a large amount of unexposed, light-sensitive silver halide. When this unfixed print is exposed to ambient or bright light (especially UV light like sunlight), the remaining silver halides will quickly react, causing the entire paper to turn black or very dark, effectively making the intended image disappear into a uniform, dark background.

The Process to Make an Image Disappear Quickly

1.Print and Develop: Make your darkroom print as usual (exposure to a negative in an enlarger).

2.Stop Bath: Use a stop bath to halt the development process and prevent the developer from contaminating subsequent baths.

3.Do NOT Fix: Crucially, do not put the print in the fixer solution. The fixer is what would normally make the image permanent by removing the light-sensitive material.

4.Expose to Light: Immediately place the wet, unfixed print under bright light, such as a UV lamp or direct sunlight. The light will rapidly expose all the remaining silver halides on the paper.

5.The Result: The entire surface of the paper, including the white and grey areas that initially formed the image, will rapidly darken to a dense black or dark tone. The original image will disappear into this uniform darkness within minutes, depending on the light intensity.

Alternative Method (Chemical Bleaching)

For a slightly different, controlled effect (making the image itself fade to white), you could use a **Farmer's Reducer** solution, which is a mix of potassium ferricyanide and sodium thiosulfate. This chemical mixture acts as a bleach, oxidizing the metallic silver that forms the image and then dissolving it. The image will gradually disappear from the paper entirely. This process can be more controlled than light exposure but involves using chemicals.

Experimentation

I had an idea to make disappearing images, and I wanted them to disappear within 20 seconds. My trials were undertaken on standard photopaper in the darkroom using an acetate overlay.

Three different trials undertaken:

Trials

- I. 20 secs in developer and straight into wash
- II. 20 secs in developer, 5 secs in stop bath, then to wash
- III. 20 secs in developer, 5 secs in fixer, then to wash

All left on a bright windowsill

Outcome... 3 days later all still fully visible with no signs of fading. Actually, three weeks later and no fading. I researched this further and found two alternative ways of undertaking this, both of these are on the the following slides.

My initial trial with Cyanotype, using gypsophila.

I painted the cyanotype liquid onto card, then I laid a piece of Gypsophila onto it and covered it with a piece of glass. I left the cyanotype for 24 hours in a conservatory, which produced the image opposite. As the image is a little haze, I should have taken some of the flowers off and maybe weighted the glass down so more of the plant was touching the paper.



Practice-based experiments



My work within the studio

I particularly like this image; it depicts more emotion than the others taken in the studio. For me, it depicts a rawness of isolation as it is in the corner of the room and leaves the viewer to decide if it is a thoughtful moment or one of despair/sadness.



The next two images are taken at my home in one of the outbuildings we use as a wood store. The individual in the photograph is my son Christopher. The images were taken on a canon 250D camera, which uses an APS/C sensor, that is ideal for getting great depth of field. The images were taken as RAW images using a shutter speed of 250th sec, F16 and 400 ISO, using a tripod.

Initially I took an image of the empty shed, then added Chris to it in multiple poses.

Using Photoshop I created layers and added the empty shed as well as a separate layer with Chris in it then a third layer where I erased the area where Chris was, using 35% opacity to create the finished Ghostly images, comparable to the work produced by Michael Bach

Ghost images, copying Michael Bach



The original images of Christopher in the woodshed



My attempt at copying Norma
Cordovain's picture



The ghost walk



https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/r/personal/2305923_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/Documents/chris%20ghost.mp4?csf=1&web=1&e=KhlmbY

The Echo walk



<https://uowtsd>

[my.sharepoint.com/:v:/r/personal/2305923_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/Documents/chris%20echo.mp4?csf=1&web=1&e=1r9Ckm](https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/r/personal/2305923_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/Documents/chris%20echo.mp4?csf=1&web=1&e=1r9Ckm)

Additional ideas were to create a large image, similar to image opposite and add numerous images from my past in the stretched area, along with lots of grey faded and black images. However, upon looking at AI images and images of this style on the internet, I have decided no to proceed with it as it has been overused.



Canva Unveils Free Affinity App
to Expand Market Share and
Disrupt Adobe

Using AI to depict ideas

AI is a useful tool to look at what images may look like. Using this process, it saved me the time, which would have been used to produce images that would not be what I am looking for.



AI continued – using a full view image



Continuation of ideas

Continue with experimenting with cyanotype and photo emulsion.

Using a large mirror or glass sheet, apply liquid photo emulsion and add an image. Once set break the mirror and reglue it to a board removing pieces, to create a visual image of a fragmented memory.

Enclose a large image in an old double glazed window unit and add a small smoke machine on a timer, to create an image that is clear then foggy... just like my mind.

I have bought a smoke machine, so need to practice with its use in my photography. Tried it out on the 4th December but for some reason would not work, it heated up correctly but requires a beeper to operate it, which I think is faulty. Will contact manufacturers over the weekend and look forward in testing it out soon.

