

## **Illustrated Book Project Proposal Task**

**Carys Bristowe-Davies**

### **Theme/Context**

Possible title - *I felt it go through bone.*

Within this photobook I want to explore the dual nature of metal. As a structure, metal is a man-made protector of the body, that guards our flesh through the form of armour and medical constructs - Yet, is capable of inflicting immense physical damage. I aim to investigate how the organic, human body can integrate metal into its structure—through implants and surgical procedures—while ironically rejecting natural elements like wooden splinters, which cause infection.

Though I am intimidated by being more vulnerable with my artwork, this project will be informed by my own experiences with past and upcoming reconstructive surgeries. The process of healing, the restrictions placed upon movement, and the sensations of weakness and suffocation will be my contextual basis. I want to present the juxtaposition of fragility and resilience, by highlighting how the body copes with both trauma and recovery.

Historical and medical influence -

Medieval armour and chainmail protected the body, while weapons and war wounds depict metal's destructive power. In medicine, metal is essential in creating stints, stents, X-rays, scans, needles and staples, which both restrict and heal the body. Historically, made from natural fibres like hemp, linen, and hair, sutures are now often synthetic or collagen-based, which will allow me to blend tradition with modern medical advancements. I am also interested in exploring the cinematography, aesthetics and psychological impact of David Cronenberg's 'Crash' (1996).

Materials and book design -

With regards to materials and layout, I want to explore the fusion of skin, fabric, and metal (sewn, stapled, and bound) to reflect the connection between natural and man-made elements. I want to emphasise handmade/ alternative processes, by drawing parallels from traditional medicine and craftsmanship. The book's structure will be in reference to surgical procedures and medieval craft, incorporating materials like pig skin leather as an ode to human skin and historical techniques. I am also toying with the idea of stapling pages together, where the audience/ reader must tear them apart, mimicking the pain and violence of surgery or injury. Perhaps, opening the cover of the book would require cutting or removing stitches, offering a symbolic act of liberation and healing.

## Influence

Highlight the work of a photographer who currently inspires your work. Analyse an image of theirs and explain your interest in their work. Consider style, theme, context, practical technique. (300 – 500 words)

### **Annegret Soltau - Personal Identity** (Ongoing series, beginning in 2003)



1.



2.



3.

Annegret Soltau, a German artist known for her exploration of identity, body manipulation, and feminist themes has been a huge inspiration on my work for the best part of 8 years. Her unyielding, mixed media pieces of body chunks, animal parts and data - all stitched together with thin black thread - show the inner complexities trapped within the human mind and body.

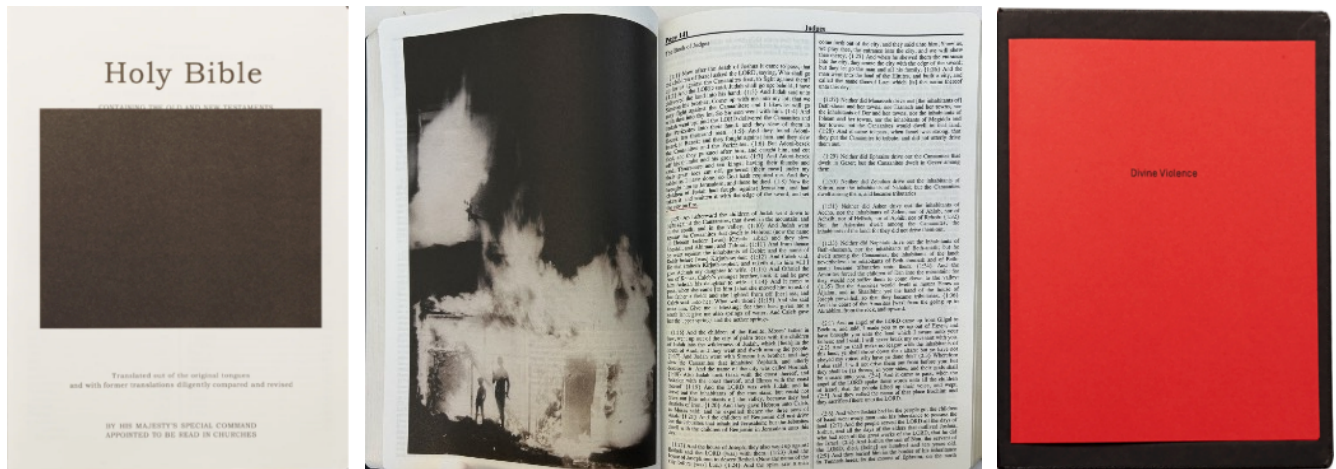
Her series "*Personal Identity*" delves into the concept of 'the self' in the digital age. In this body of work, she creates self-portraits by sewing original personal documents, such as birth certificates and SIM cards, onto photographs. This technique shows the intertwining of personal identity with digital information. Soltau has stated that the series begins with her birth certificate and has continued to progress to include everyday items like SIM and bank cards, that store aspects of one's digital self. She envisions concluding the series with a collage incorporating her death certificate, to be assembled by a surviving family member.

Focussing on image 1, this self portrait of Soltau depicts a headshot of a woman with her face torn away. In the negative space created by the tear, Soltau has sewn a SIM card that cocoons the head and identity of the person. The thread, mimicking tangled spider webs, feels suffocating and uncomfortable, as through its restricting the human body and its natural function. Tying with themes of stored data, the centralised SIM card reduces the person to an object, number or code taking away their identity entirely. Despite being a faceless image, the confusion and anguish behind this image can still be felt - the pinholes and twisted thread feel almost like a map of reckless desperation.

Soltau's use of thread, collage and important documents has been very inspirational for the ideas behind this proposal. She has inspired me to use my past experiences and bodily memory in a way that is vulnerable but not cliché.

## Book Form

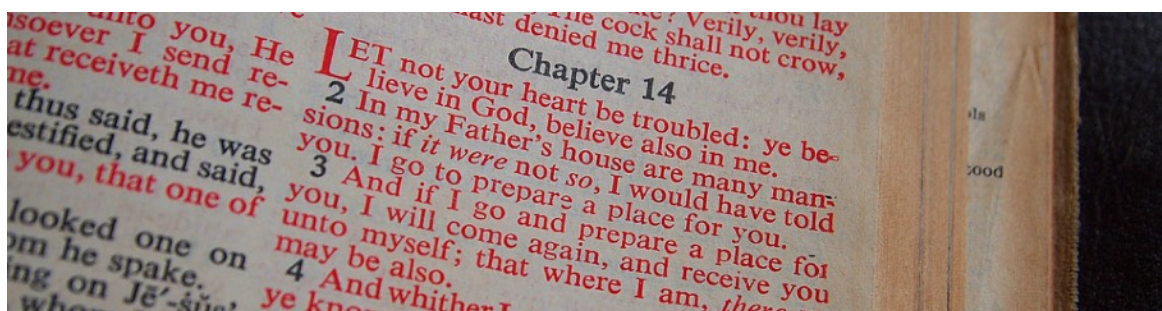
### HOLY BIBLE - ADAM BROOMBERG AND OLIVER CHANARIN (2013)



South African artists, Broomberg and Chanarin's *"Holy Bible"* is a photobook consisting of images from The Archive of Modern Conflict laid overtop a replica of a King James Bible, along side poetry and essays. Each image correlates to the text underneath, along with red underlined annotation. The book acts as a provocative, visual representation of God's catastrophic power, compared to that of modern governance and war. A large portion of the imagery used depicts violence, destruction and poverty in which the authors display a muddled stance on religion. *"We did debate whether or not to shy away from these images, but, after all, they exist within the archive and elsewhere, even if we don't like to look at them."* (Chanarin 2011, The Guardian)

An uncanny image of a burning house with visible silhouette's of a woman and child in the doorway, has been placed next to underlined text from The Book of Judges, that reads *"set the city on fire"* - I assume in reference to the nuclear family test sites used during the 1950s in America also dubbed *'Operation Doorstep'*. However, not every page within this book is so bleak, images of circus performers and acrobats are shown alongside more hopeful scripture, such as *"And it came to pass."* from 2 Samuel 15:1.

Red is used sparingly, yet effectively throughout this book. Symbolically, it is negatively associated with anger and danger, yet in South Africa it is more specifically tied with mourning - the red portion of South Africa's flag is in reference to the memory of those murdered by colonialism and apartheid. The red underlined text may also be in connection to 'Red Letter' Bibles, in which words spoken by Jesus Christ are printed in red ink.



The bible has become so synonymous with conformity and tedious self-righteousness that, to me, I view it more as an mass-produced document of sorts. As someone with no faith to

follow, it's deeply poetic and raw sensibilities are often lost on me, as though I am merely a fleeting observer of its archaic, heavy aesthetics. With that being said, I am interested in the contradiction between its pages- there is nothing more inspiring than something that feels both wrathful and hopeful, violent and peaceful or destructive yet healing . These kinds of dichotomies are what have helped me to try and embrace my past experiences within my artwork and not to shy away from showing violent realities for the sake of the audience.

This book provides a thought provoking narrative that highlights humanity's lust for power yet shows deep sensitivity for our strive for peace. Images overlaying text and graphic red colouring are aesthetic choices I am inspired by and looking to further explore and develop on within my own photobook also.

## References/ Bibliography :

### **Theme/Context**

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### **Influence**

#### **Images used:**

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