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In my journey as a photographer, I always strived to try everything, from mixed media photography, document photography, creating stages or showing raw reality. As I matured, I am more interested in telling stories through images, combining poetry and photography, and I definitely grew more open to self-exploration. The pandemic provided me with time for self-reflection, moving countries allowed me to discover a new culture and see other people's views on life.

Working on the Photographic Practices module, as well as experiencing moving into adulthood, I identified three driving pieces of research crucial to my work:

- themes of mental health and various emotions that come with being diagnosed as mentally ill,
- queer intimacy,
- using technology in the creative process.

The Poetic Image and sensuality

I've always been close to painting, as I practically grew up attending studio painting sessions. I take plenty of inspiration from painters, ranging all the way from classical, to modern illustration. Henrik Uldalen's pieces particularly speak to me, as they are an epitome of great light work, and show how volatile and fragile human body is.

Fig 1 – *Advent,* Uldalen Henrik, 2019

Succubus is a triptych on women's love, body and sexuality. The work matches the title with how dark and underexposed it is, focusing on body lines, lighting and sensuality of the image. My partner, who is the subject matter, is a Christian and a lesbian, for many years struggling with confidence in who she is, in relationship to faith. A succubus, an evil and "dirty" creature, meets with a symbol of Christian cross, thus creating a conflict between these two – and space for embracing both sides of oneself. I want to give a platform for expression not only to a person I am close to, but also to women who just like her, do not fit into classical imagery of a pure, holy woman, who were demonised for their sexuality.

The Collaborative Image and mental health

This project involved switching roles – my partner stood behind the camera and had me pose for pictures. My involvement in the shooting process was minimal and allowed us to focus on themes and emotions instead of the technical side of photography.

We collaborated with themes of music videos and lyrics, especially with *Criminal* by Taemin, a Korean singer and dancer. *Criminal* dives deep into the concept of Stockholm syndrome, something particularly close to me. Being diagnosed and living with a post-traumatic stress disorder, I cannot imagine not showing it in my art, all sides of it – the anger, the immense sadness, denials of past reality. I believe it is under represented and often times stigmatized.

Fig 2 – *Want Concept Signature Film,* Lee Taemin, 2019

The titles of the project include *stages of grief*, as described by Kübler-Ross in her 1970 book *On Death and Dying,* which are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. I chose to rearrange these stages to fit my own experience with coping with grief after a traumatic experience. The colour red is also important to the overall meaning, as it symbolises anger and danger.

The Networked Image and technology in the creative workflow

With the rise and expanse of digital photography, and with it remote controlling, I wonder how far can the concept of authorship be pushed. In this project, I controlled my camera only via my phone and the app dedicated for my camera, call Ol.Share. With it, I was able to adjust all settings and take pictures without touching the trigger once. If I was barely in contact with my tool, can the result be called my work, or does it belong to technology and AI involved in the process?

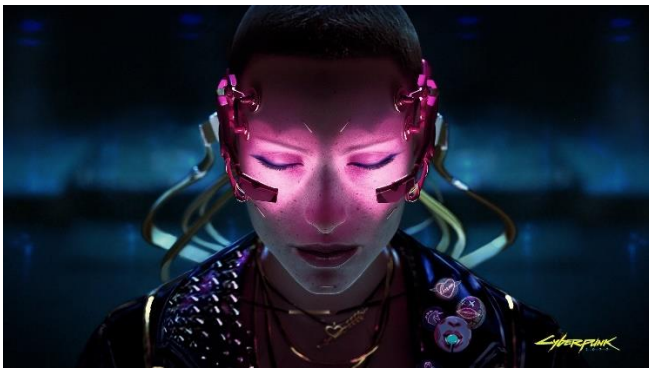

Fig 3 – Cyberpunk 2077, CDR (2020)

The *in dangerous doses* series explores human interaction with technology. I wanted to portray a Cyberpunk-like aesthetic and combine it with being dependent on gaming. Playing videogames can bring good into human life as much as it can take away from it. Studies show that not only adolescents, but also adults suffer from gaming addiction, struggle with mood and sleep disturbances (Nazmus, 2017). After some time, I believe there to be no feeling of reward from repeating the same obsessive pattern – only emptiness.

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List of figures

1. Uldalen Henrik *Advent (2019)* https://www.henrikaau.com/
2. Lee Taemin, *Want Concept Signature Film (2019)* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXA5qe31FNw&ab_channel=SMTOWN
3. CD Project Red, *Cyberpunk 2077 game (*2020)