Student Name: Sarah Grounds

P Number: 2005771

Programme of Study: Documentary Photography and Visual Activism

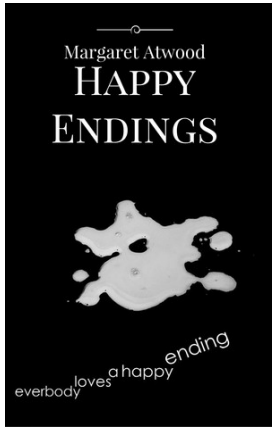
Module: M4X01603

Lecturer’s Name: Ryan Moule, Paul Duerinckx, Sian Addicott


MOTHER
&
CHILD
A VISUAL DIARY

READING AND RESEARCH

We were given 8 short stories to read. All with differing themes. We had to read them with a view of creating three to five images in reaction to one or more them.



HAPPY ENDINGS

MARGARET ATWOOD

RELATIONSHIPS

EXPECTATIONS RELIANCE

LOVE INEQUALITY

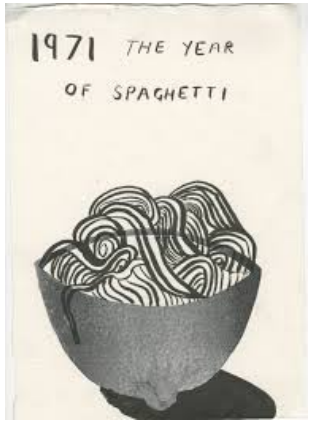


THE COMPANY OF WOLVES

ANGELA CARTER

WEREWOLVES VIOLENCE ABUSE

MISLEADING EMPOWERED



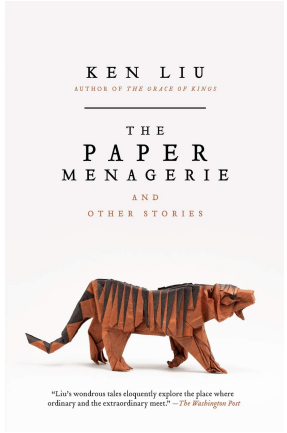
THE YEAR OF SPAGHETTI

HARUKI MURAKAMI

CEREMONY ISOLATION

MEDITATION REPETITION

INTRUSION SPAGHETTI



THE PAPER MENAGERIE

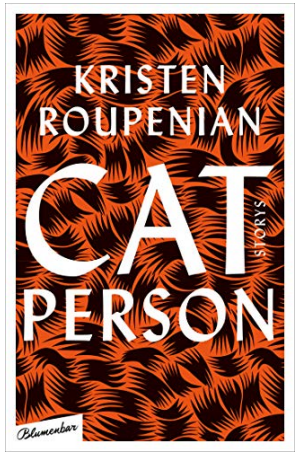
KEN LIU

SHAME IDENTITY CHILDHOOD

LOVE MAGIC ORIGAMI

READING AND RESEARCH cont.

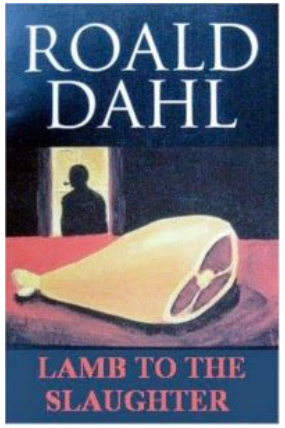
After reading each story I wrote down keywords for the story, read analysis of the story by two people and read two articles about each writer. This really helped me to understand and collate how I felt about each story.



CAT PERSON

KRISTEN ROUPENIAN

SUBMISSION FALSE IMPRESSIONS FOULISH BAD SEX AGE



LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

ROALD DAHL

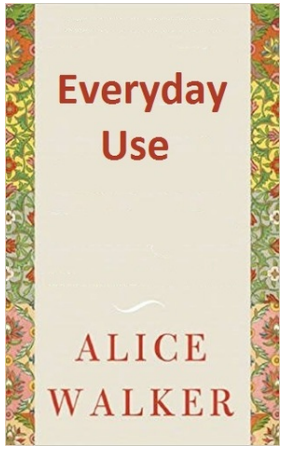
PRETENCE LOVE PREGNANT PSYCHOTIC DEVOTION MEAT



THE HANDSOMEST DROWNED MAN IN THE WORLD

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

COMMUNITY EMPATHY ACCEPTING WONDER SIMPLE



EVERYDAY USE

ALICE WALKER

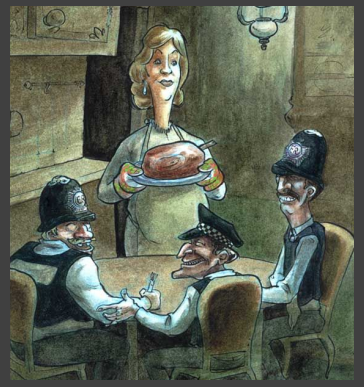
HERITAGE EDUCATION SHAME CULTURAL QUILT HOME

IDEAS

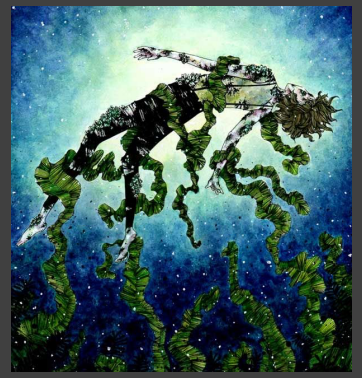
Four stories stood out to me….



The Year of Spaghetti- I really enjoyed this story, I loved how Murakami explored those moments of isolation we all go through in life. There was a strong synergy with ceremony and religion. A modern society that has lost it's religious meaning and so puts meaning and ritual into other things, maybe more mundane, simple things. I viewed the main character like a monk who had removed himself to a top of a mountain to meditate for a year.
I had an idea for a video for this story which I was very excited about. I was taking inspiration from French dark comedy for the video, like Delicatessen. But done in Stop Motion. The video idea was all I had though and I feel I am not quite ready to make such a complicated video.



Lamb to the Slaughter- This was a wonderful story. In my research afterwards I was shocked to find that no one seemed to mention the fact she was 6 months pregnant, which I feel is actually very important to the story. I know each time I have been pregnant, I have entered a very innocent and simple way of thinking. For me Dahl represented this beautifully and makes the story much more believable for me.
I had an idea for some kitsch 1950s, high saturation shots for this, again with a dark comedy theme. I feel that my final work though, does touch on this story as well as the story I choose. As a symbol of the bond of love between the Mother and her unborn child.



The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World- This story really moved me. The build up of concern and empathy for the dead man in the village . Starting with a fickle fancying of the handsome man by the ladies cleaning him but leading to the point where the villagers decide to become Aunts and Uncles for him, was so touching. Marquez makes a beautiful statement of how kind and caring humanity can be.
My idea for this story was landscape photos based around Tenby. At the end of the story it says how this simple seaside village becomes beautiful with colourful, painted houses and flowers in window boxes. As a way for the village to rejoice and remember the drowned man. I was going to base this idea on making the story a false history for Tenby.

KEN LIU - THE PAPER MENAGERIE

SHAME IDENTITY CHILDHOOD LOVE
MAGIC ORIGAMI MOTHER



I decided to do my work on Paper Menagerie. As a Mother I could relate to the distance between the Mother and son as he was growing up. The loss, the desire to keep the magic in your growing child's life. The language barrier that occurred between them was not just of language. But a more fundamental barrier of connection in families in Western Society. The paper origami animals represented the delicate nature of life. How his Mother kept mending his Tiger was a beautiful metaphor of how Mother's are constantly trying to 'repair' the damage to their children's lives, in their role as carers. The reference to the tradition of breathing life into the origami animals spoke to me of how a Mother breathes life into her child and so I decided that I would pursue this theme.

ANAYLISIS OF PAPER MENAGERIE LINK

KEN LIU TALKING ABOUT HIS PROCESS LINK

INSPIRATION

- Music is one of my main inspirations when I work. I have noticed that all my University projects so far have had a background theme tune. For this project, it was ‘Womb’ by Toni Childs. I will never forget when I first heard this song. I was sixteen, sat in a classroom and it blew me away. It represented music creation and connection on a whole other level to me.
- The simple beauty of the child singing to it’s Mother in the womb of the ‘Safety in my ears’ asking their Mother ‘am I safe?’ Contemplations of what they will do in their next stage of life, the excitement and the fear. Then, the beautiful birth sequence. A speeding journey through humanity, tribe, time, tradition, war, technology, love, life.
- I find music helps me express the feelings I am trying to portray as I do a shoot, So I played this as I was shooting my self portraits for the project.
- I also listened to a lot of traditional Chinese music whilst doing this project.
- I had a go at some traditional Chinese dancing as well. As I am very interested in dances from different cultures.

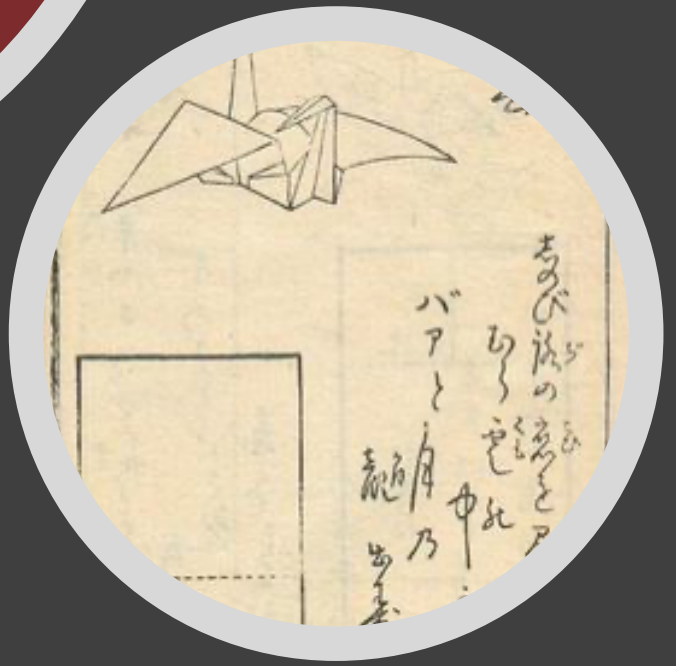
CLASSICAL CHINESE DANCE CLASS LINK



WOMB BY TONI CHILDS LINK







ORIGAMI

I decided to first research origami.

- Paper was invented in China around 105 AD IIt was bought to Japan by Monks in the sixth century. Where paper folding was only used for ceremonial purposes.“
- Origami was named in 1880. Origami comes from the Japanese words Oru (to fold) and Kami (Paper). Originally it was called Orikata (folded shapes) It is not known why it’s name was changed, maybe as it was easier for children to say.
- It is unknown where Origami originated. But it is thought that the art form, which would have been folded fabric before paper was invented, has been around for thousands of years.
- Origami was originally only a craft for the rich, as paper was so expensive. But as the cost of paper decreased, the popularity with normal people increased, as an easily accessible art form.
- Origami is weaved into a lot of traditions in Japanese life. Such as origami butterflies decorating Saki bottles at wedding receptions.

BRITANNICA ORIGAMI HISTORY LINK

ORIGAMI HISTORY LINK

ORIGAMI INSPIRATION



SIPHO MABONA

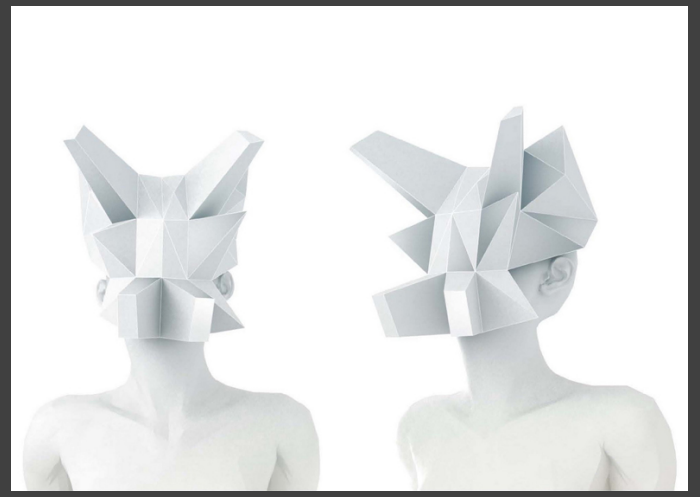
Sipho Mabona is a Swiss Origami Artist. He is the first Westerner to feature on the front cover of Japan Origami Academic Society. He creates lifesize pieces , stop motion and tutorial videos. I particularly like his work ‘The Plague‘ depicting a swarm of flying locusts made out of uncut sheets of dollar bills.



THE PLAGUE INSTALLATION LINK

3Gatti ARCHITECTURE STUDIO





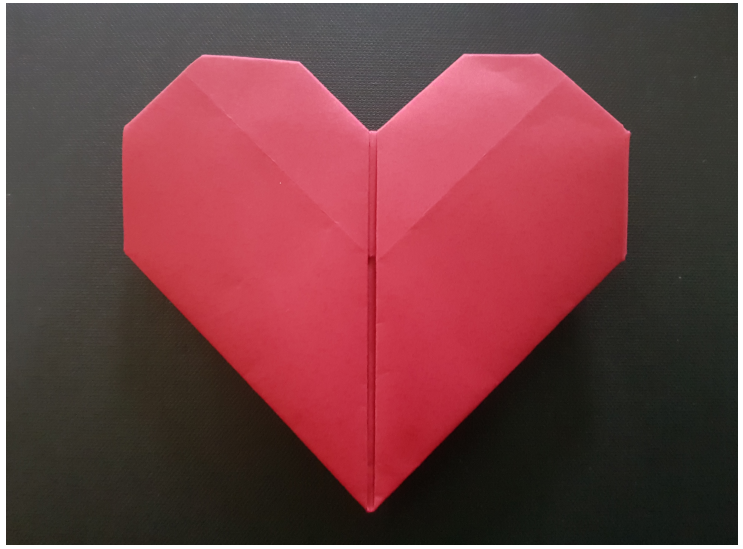


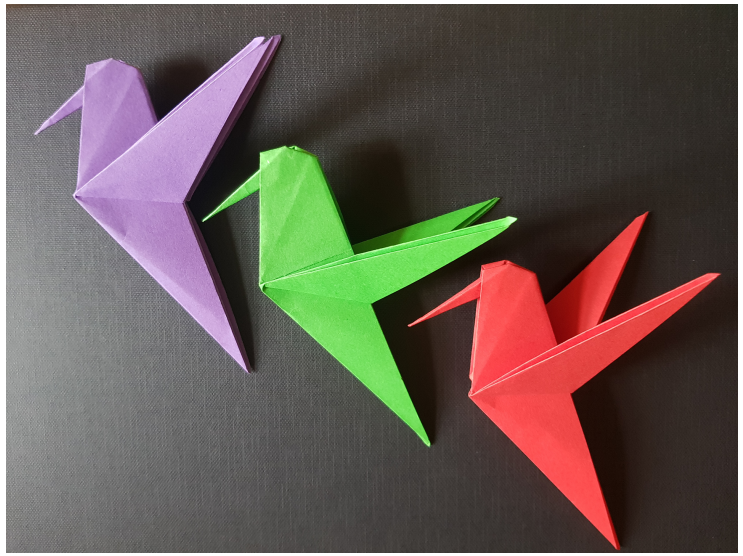
These masks were designed by 3Gatti Architecture Studio. They were inspired with the idea whilst they were designing a shop in Shanghai. The concept was to create paper origami masks for the mannequins that could be changed often at low cost but with a high visual impact.

I absolutely love these, they look like futuristic torture devices. I see in them a statement about how we are getting lost in technology.

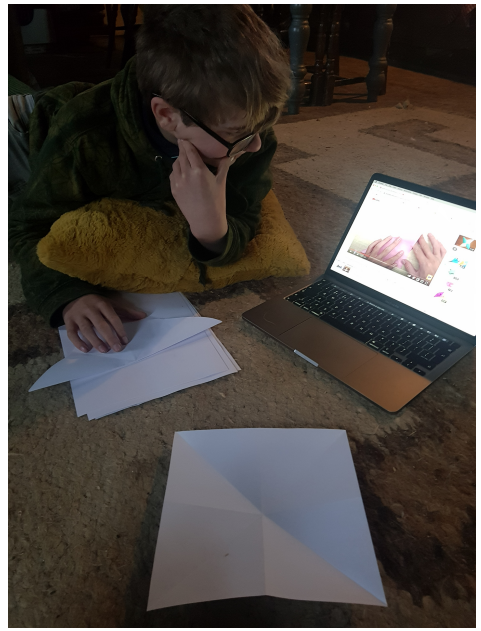
I am already very excited by the idea of mono colour shoots, with painted bodies and walls . Now I want to experiment with origami masks too.

3GATTI LINK







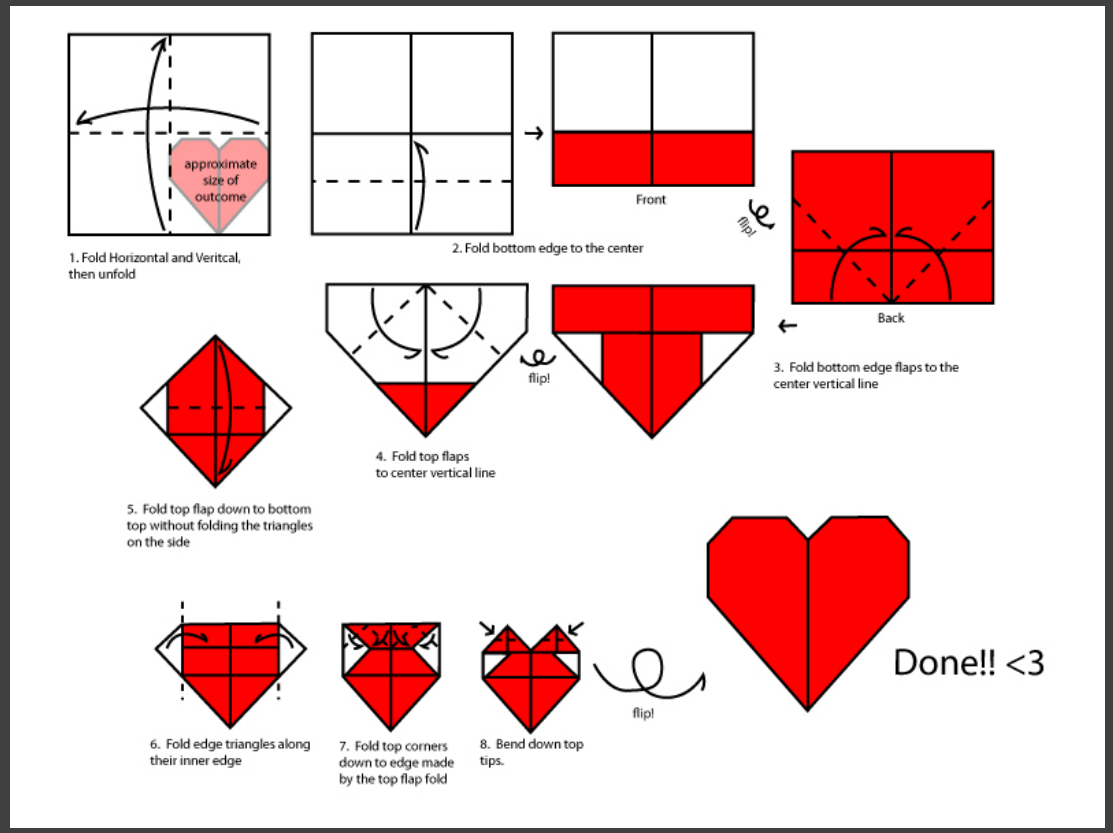


[ORIGAMI HUMMINGBIRD TUTORIAL LINK]

ORIGAMI PRACTICE

I decided that I wanted to use origami in the work, as it is so important to the story. So my son and I did many Youtube video tutorials. For my photos I decided to make a heart and a bird representation of each of my children. Choosing each child a colour that I felt represented them.

[ORIGAMI HEART TUTORIAL LINK]





AI - LOVE

- 'Mom looked at him. "If I say 'love,' I feel here." She pointed to her lips. "If I say 'ai,' I feel here." She put her hand over her heart.'



愛

Love



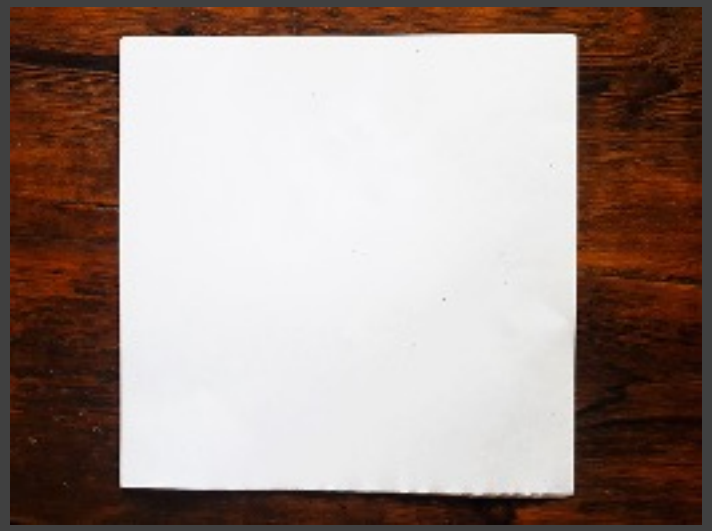
[CHINESE STROKE ORDER TOOL LINK]

CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

In discussion in a Tutorial about my work, it was decided that adding words to the origami I was making would be a good idea. Especially as the Mother in the story writes in the origami to her son. I decided to continue with the Love theme and learnt to paint the Chinese Character for Love/Ai. My son is learning Chinese at University and sent me links to online guides on how to form the characters.

STOP MOTION PRACTICE

I decided to make some simple Stop Motion clips, to help me visualise what the Calligraphy and Origami would look like in Stop Motion.
I tried the videos with my hands showing and without







I wanted to create a video where the Chinese Character love is painted, it is folded into a bird, the Mother breathes life into it and then the bird flies away. None of these ideas quite worked though in the video. I think I am just not experienced enough to make the video I wanted to. But I really liked the bird so decided to pursue that idea.

PRESS HERE FOR LINK TO VIDEOS



SHADOW PUPPETS

- As I was doing my research into Origami, I saw a lot of images of Chinese Shadow Puppets. Which I find very visually exciting. This obviously sat at the back of my mind for later.
- I decided to do some of my ideas in a shoot, so I could see what it was looking like. It was a very dark day, so I used a light. I moved it around and noticed that at a certain angle a pronounced shadow appeared on the wall behind me. So my first idea started to come together.



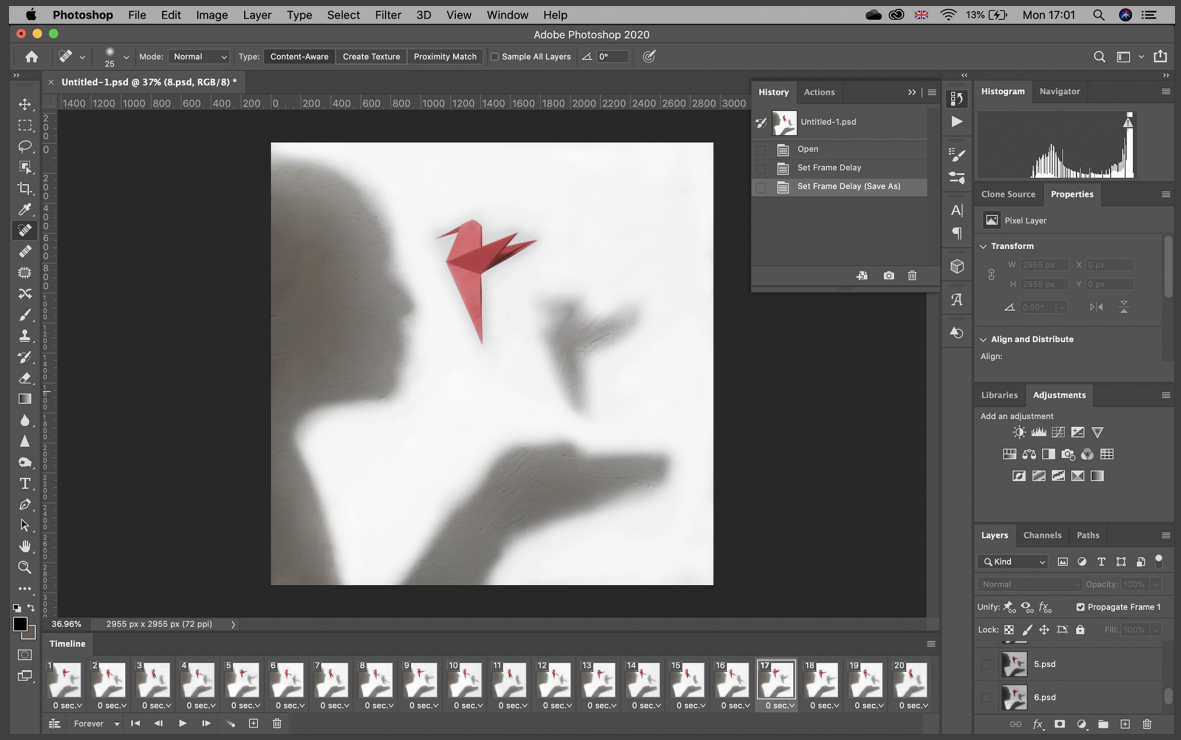
STOP MOTION IDEA

My light is not very strong, so I had to stand very close to the wall to get the shadow. This meant I had a lot of editing to do to the image in Photoshop to get rid of the real me and leave just my shadow. In my first attempt I felt my head moved too much.





To stop my head moving so much, I had to paste the same shadow and hand onto each shot. And then I cropped and edited out myself.



I'm sure if I had spent longer thinking about it, I would have found a quicker way to do this, as it was very time consuming and the result was still not as still as I would have liked.
The video comprises 20 frames.







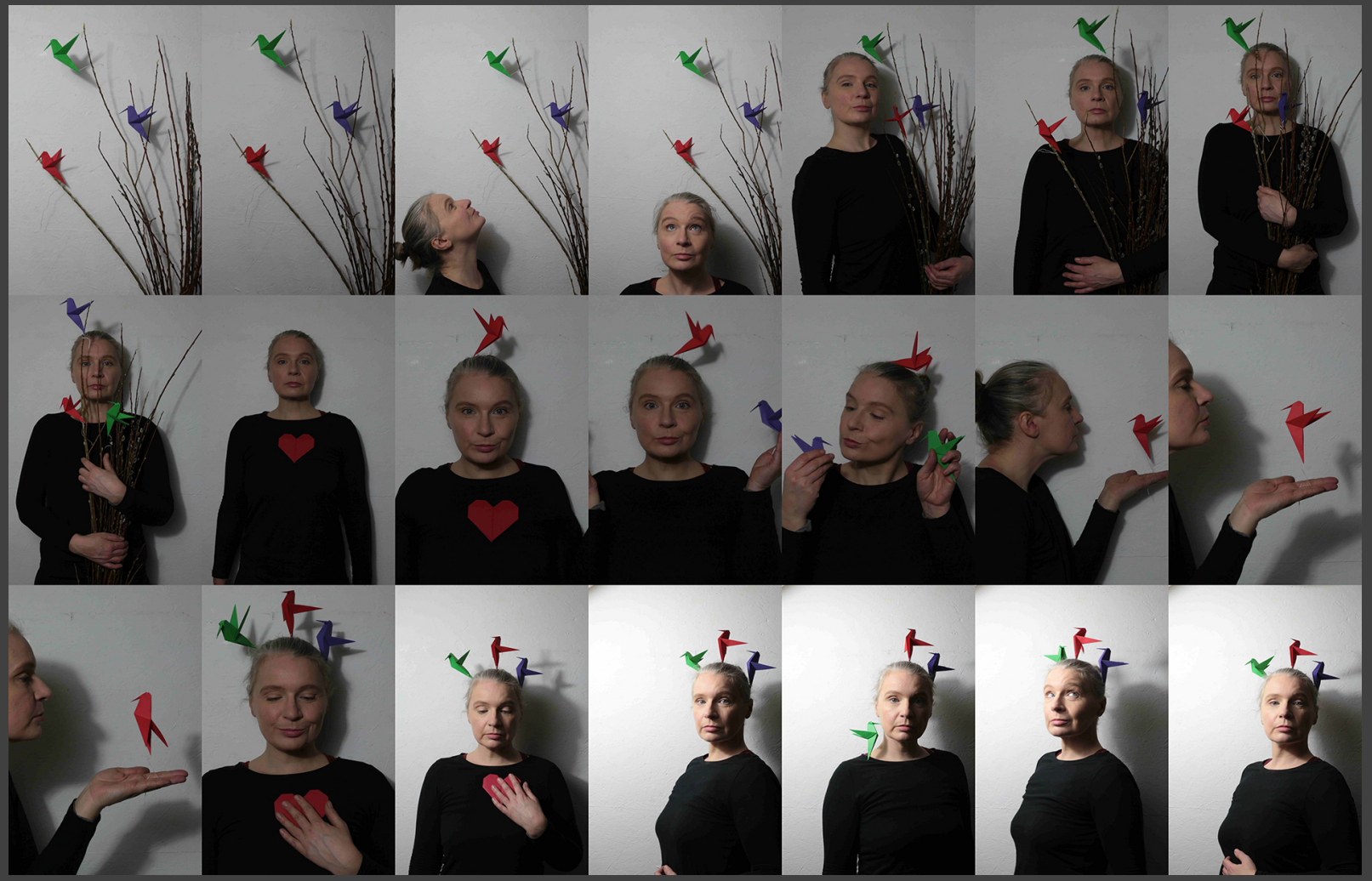
NEVER ENDING EDITS

I ended up doing about eight different edits of this video. I did a great deal of masking and revealing to edit the video. And I did end up with a video where the head was completely still. It looked completely wrong though. I realised that actually, the first video was the best visually. Not a waste of time though, as I got a lot of practice masking, patching, spot healing, painting and using dodge and burn.
With some help from Youtube tutorials.

PHOTOSHOP MASKING TUTORIAL LINK

BAD IDEAS

I did two shoots with the origami I had made so far. They were both not very good apart from The one idea for Stop Motion. I was becoming a little down that I could not think of a good idea in response to the book. Normally I get ideas immediately.













BIG BIRD

So I made a big bird!
I felt that the small representations of my children didn't quite bring across the impact that Motherhood had had on me. So I decided to go big. With no real vision of the final work, as such. But a desire to do it and see it. So I glued 70 A4 pieces of paper together and made a giant Hummingbird. I had to put willow sticks in it to reinforce the folds so it would stand up. It ended up being as big as my son, which was my goal, so I was very happy. So now what?.....

VICTORIAN PORTRITURE

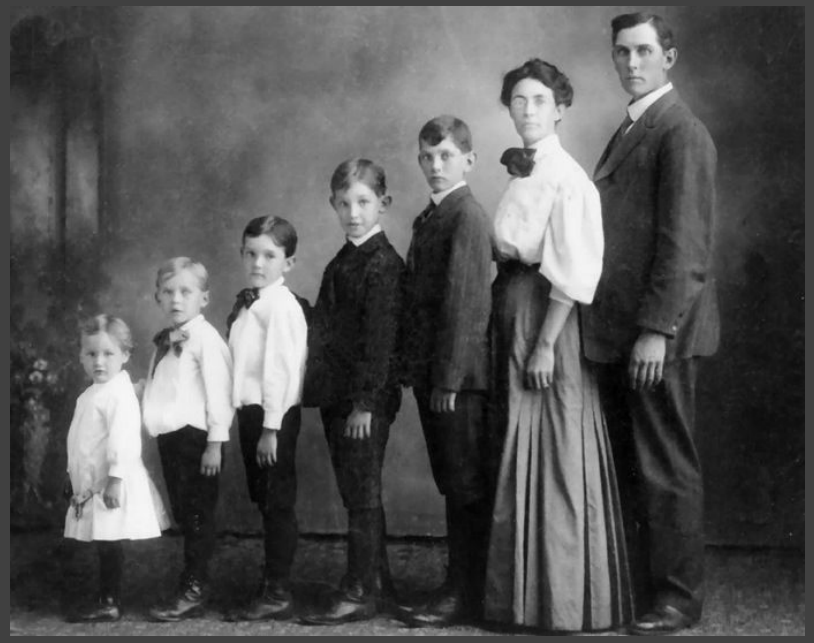
I absolutely adore old photography, especially Victorian to the 1920's. I decided to create a Victorian style family portrait with my giant bird. A Surreal but hopefully touching representation of Mother and child.





















SHOOT WITH THE BIRD

I was planning on doing this shoot outside, as I wanted a plain background. But it got very cold and on the day of my planned shoot, it felt like -8 outside. So I had to think again. I had gained a great deal of experience editing in Photoshop doing my bird stop motion video. So I felt that I was confident enough to take photos in the little space I had and edit out anything unwanted in the background. This wall is the only blank wall in my cabin. I am very excited now that I know I can do full length portraits at home.

TECH SETTINGS

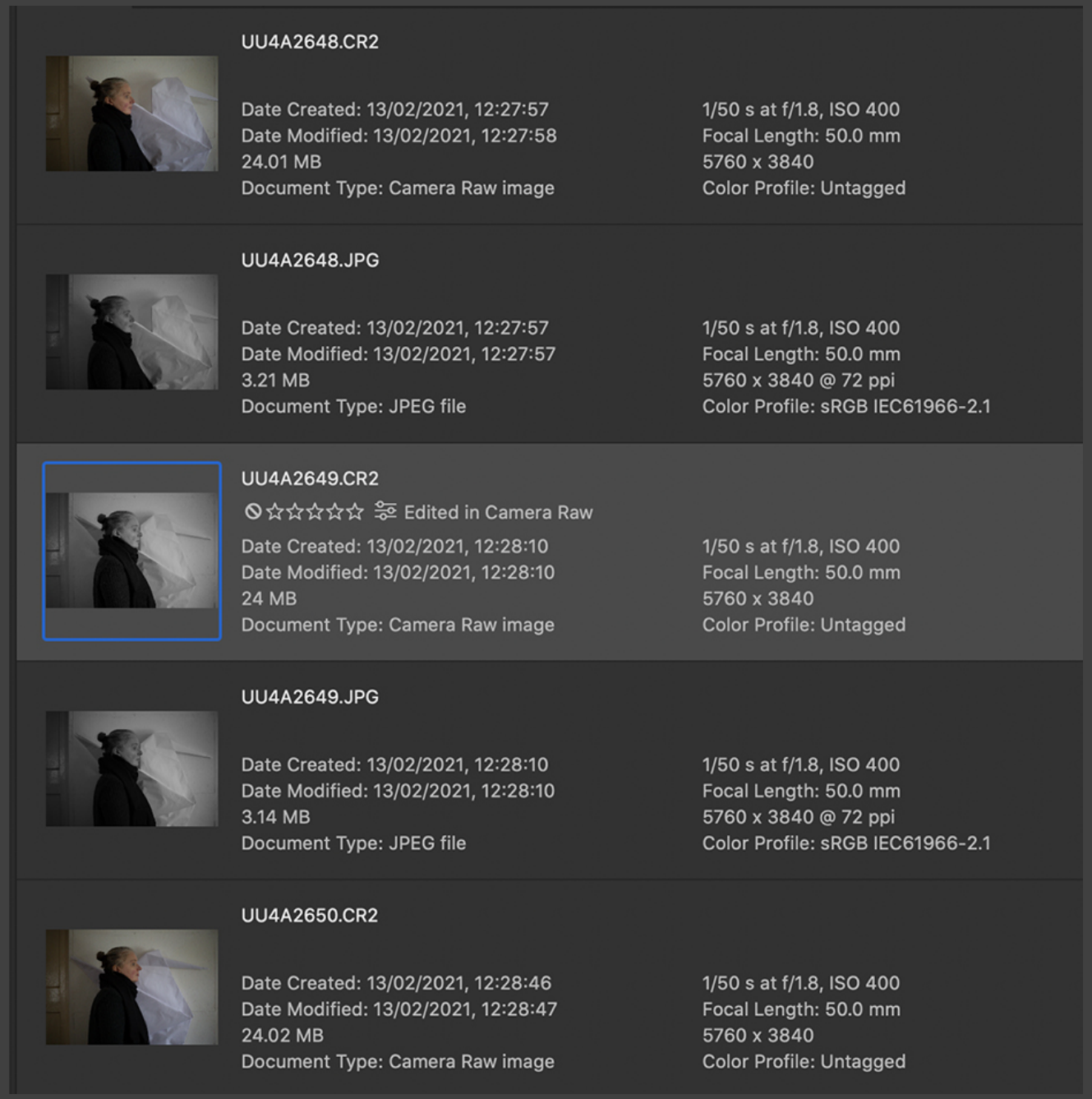
For these shoots I used the 5d Mark iii borrowed from University and my 50mm prime lens.
The camera was on a tripod and I used a wireless trigger.

It has been very dark in the day, so I was unable to use my lighting for these shoots as I live off grid. I really liked the shadows made by the natural light though. But some days it was too dark for me to shoot.

My settings on my camera were generally around
1/50, f/1.8, ISO 400

I like having my aperture very low when I shoot, which is very difficult doing full length self portraits. So my face has a little haze. I like this very much though, as it adds to the vintage feel of the shoot. I replicated the same settings for my fourth shoot, so I would get a similar feel to the photos.

I now take everything in RAW and Jpeg and all my final photos are edited from RAW.









VILHELM HAMMERSHOI

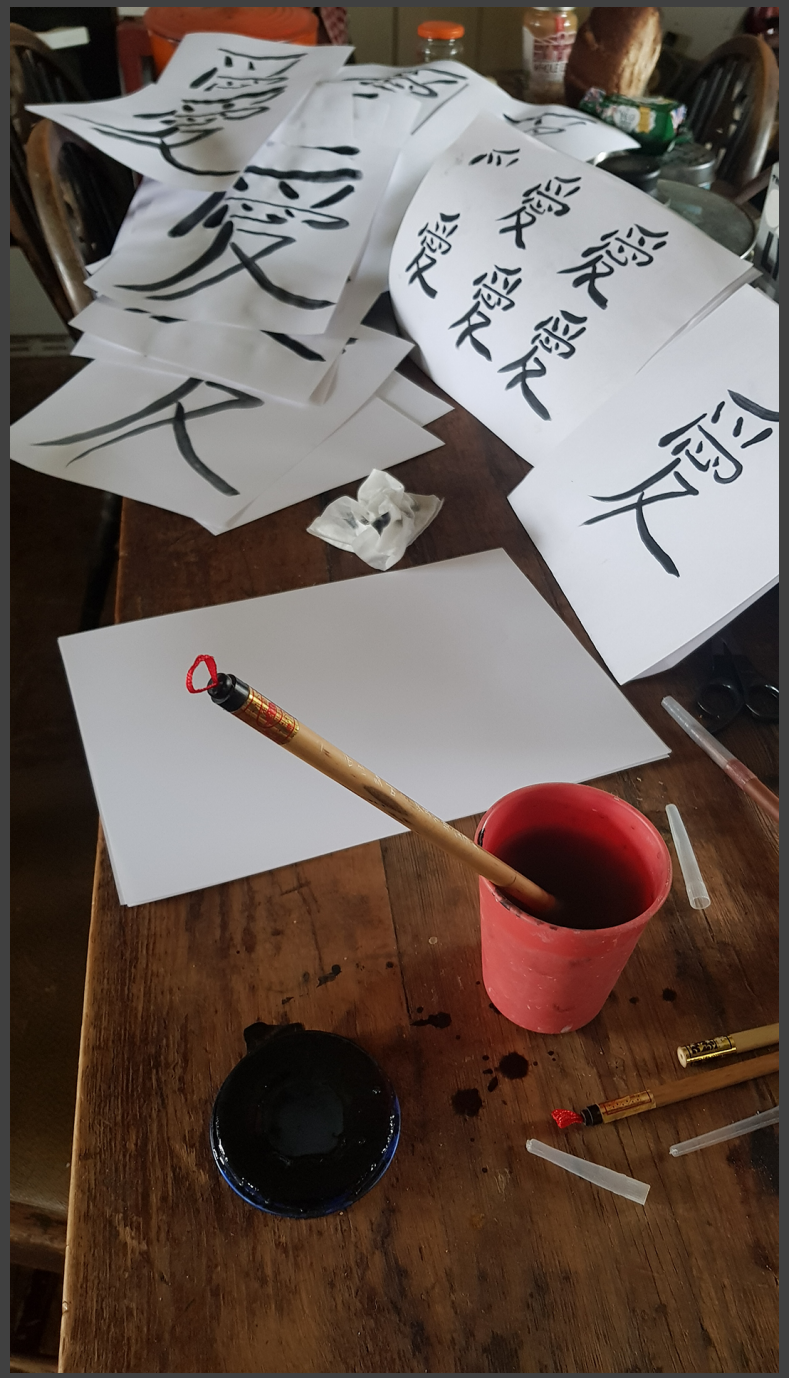
I shared the bird image on social media and a lady said it reminded her of Hammershoi's work. I had never heard of this artist, so went and investigated. I very much liked the way he used light in his paintings and how a lot of his images have their backs to the viewer, but still say so much.
I thought that maybe I could use some Chinese Calligraphy I had been doing like the paintings in his paintings.

VILHELM HAMMERSHOI LINK

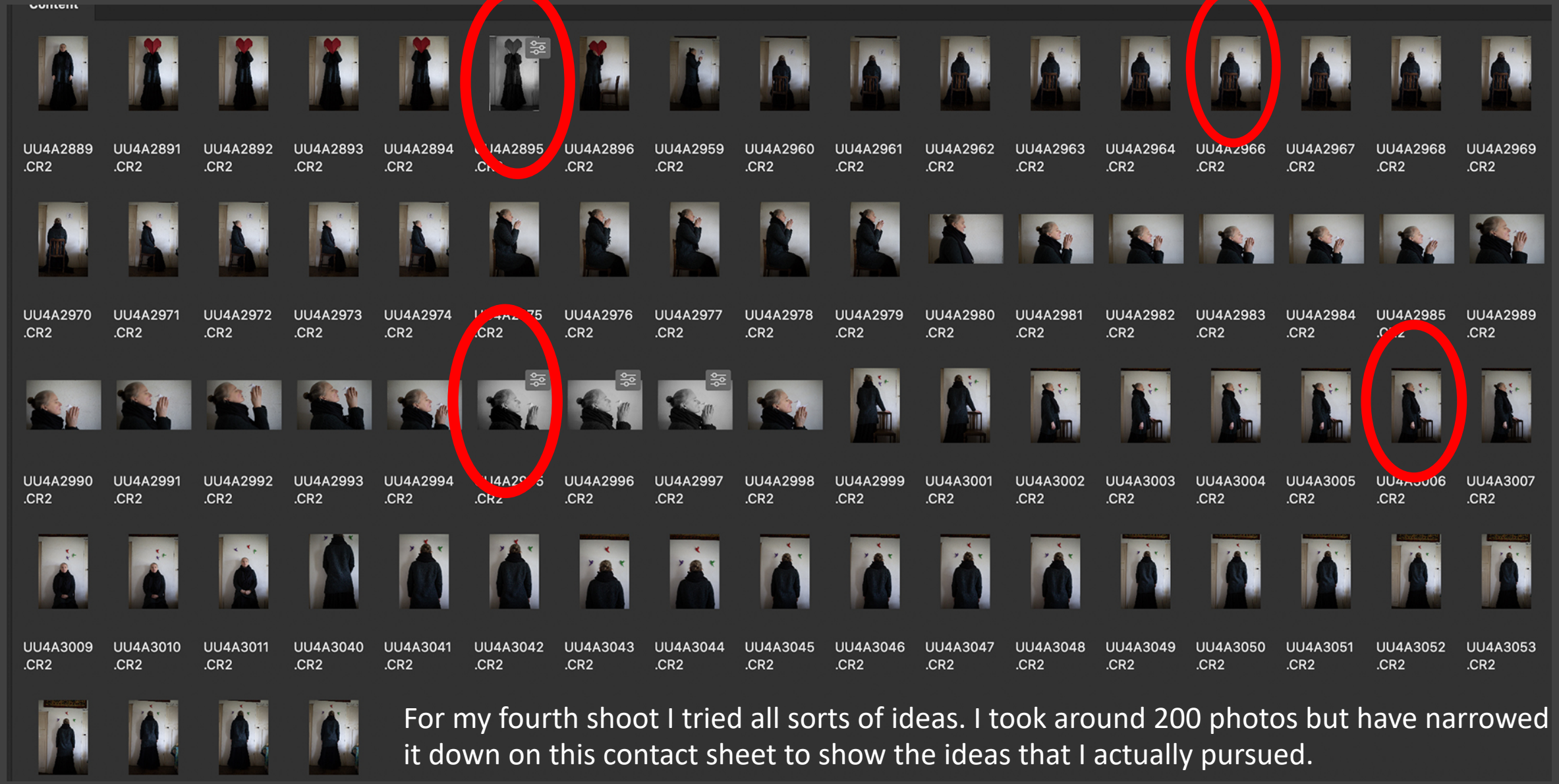
PREPARATION FOR FOURTH SHOOT

For the next shoot I needed a few props.
I made some more little origami birds, and another large heart. As my family and I had been playing with the original ones.
I also wanted my Chinese Calligraphy to be as good as possible. So I bought some second hand calligraphy brushes and did some more tutorials. I used paint rather then ink, as I had that to hand.
CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY TUTORIAL LINK





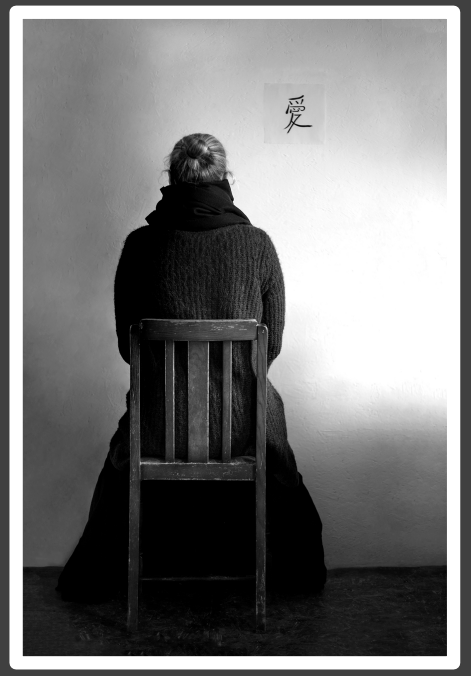
FOURTH SHOOT CONTACT SHEET



For my fourth shoot I tried all sorts of ideas. I took around 200 photos but have narrowed it down on this contact sheet to show the ideas that I actually pursued.

VISUAL OUTCOMES OF SHOOTS 3 & 4





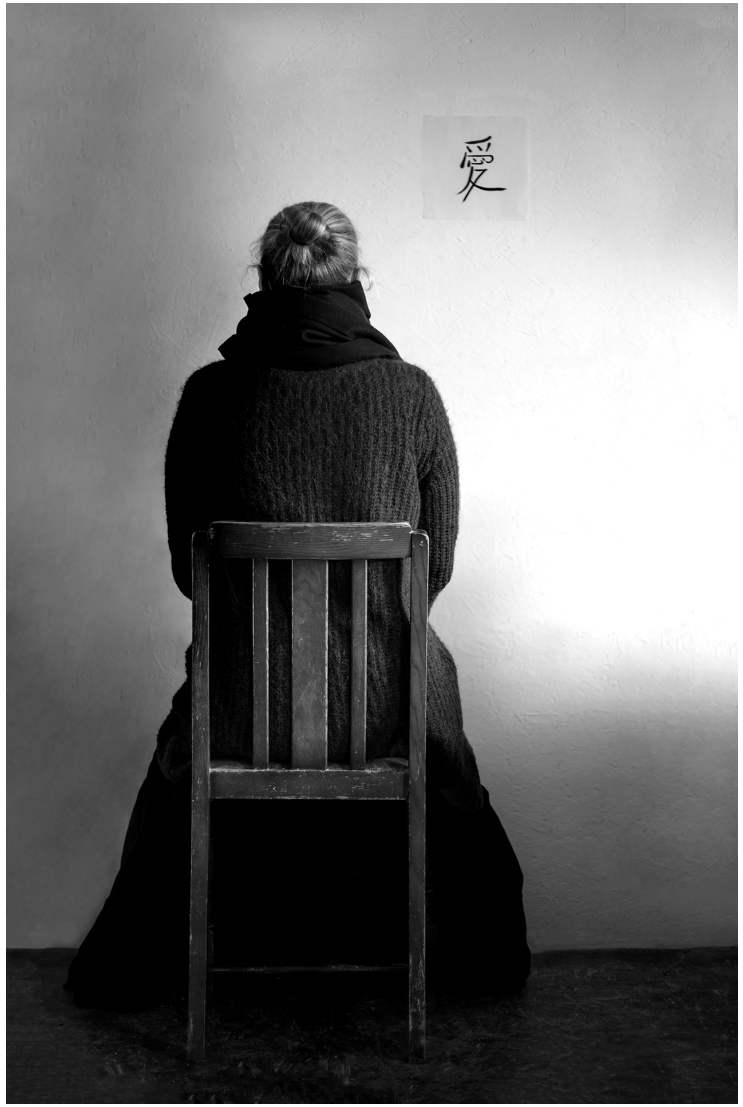
















1st EDIT

These are the final three photos that I choose to use in my assignment. But when I presented them in our group critique it was said a few times that actually, all the editing I had done to the background was not needed and may even make the images lose something.

I often create images without actually realising the importance of everything in the image. I then realise when I go to crop an image that the thing I thought was in the way, is actually creating balance in the image. So I started all over again with the edits for these three images.

2nd EDIT





Not all my shots were this wonky! I decided in my new edit that I still wanted to create a background with clean, simple lines. My World is very messy and unfinished, so it actually took a lot of editing to create something very simple. I am happy with both outcomes, so was unsure which to submit. In the end I choose to submit the ones with doors as I feel that the doors somehow give the images a more Oriental feel.

CONCLUSION

I found this assignment the hardest for me so far. I think due to the outer circumstances of lockdown and not the assignment itself. I spent a lot of time submerging myself in Chinese culture, trying to inspire myself.
I found exploring origami and calligraphy very interesting and enjoyable and am planning on continuing both. Especially as my son is studying Chinese and learning calligraphy too.
This assignment has also vastly improved my Photoshop skills.
I decided to base this work on the relationship between a Mother and child. The story really spoke to me as a Mother. I have had moments of distance with my children, which I think is a natural growing process. I found it very sad that, in the story, the boy never returned emotionally to his Mother while she was still alive. I personally would have been heart broken. With two older children, I have experienced that departure and then the return.

I'll Catch You If You Fall

I created my Stop Motion video from my first proper shoot. It is titled ' I'll Catch You If You Fall' as I think that is my role as a Mother. To let my children be free but to be there, in case they need me. When I created this I sent it to both my older children.
I was lost for quite a while after making the video, of what to add to the work. I created a lot of very disappointing images and I was very relieved when I realised I had found my idea.

Mother and Child

'Mother and Child' speaks of the enormous impact that having a child had on me. I realised, looking at my first child that first night, that I had never done anything this important in my life before. Everything before was insubstantial and empty, compared to this.

Mother's Love

'Mother's Love' is a work about a Mother's sacrifice. How her first thought is no longer of herself. I have my back to the camera to symbolise this. On the wall by me is the Chinese Character for love.

Fly Home

'Fly Home' Is an image I created to show the freedom my children have to go out into the World. Knowing that they will always have the safety of home and love to return to.
In all three images I tried to have an aura of quiet strength, pride and love. I think the Victorian portrait style enhances this. Leaving the doors in echoes this rigid conformity but with the potential for something different, something through the doors.
I am very happy with my images. I especially like the fact that there is a hint of Surrealism in the work. I have not done work like that for a while. I really enjoy playing with and merging things that maybe shouldn't go together in my images. It has encouraged me to try and be a little more playful with my work in the future.