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BA Photography in The Arts

Module: ADAA5004 Personal Philosophies

Lecturer: Ryan Moule

***Rationale and context***

The title of the book *exactly what you run from you end up chasing* refers to a track of the same title from Tyler, The Creator's album *IGOR*. The lyrics include a piece of spoken word by Jerrod Carmichael:

*Exactly what you run from, you end up chasing*
*Like, you can't avoid, but just chasing it and just like trying*
*Giving it everything that you can*
*There's always an obstacle*

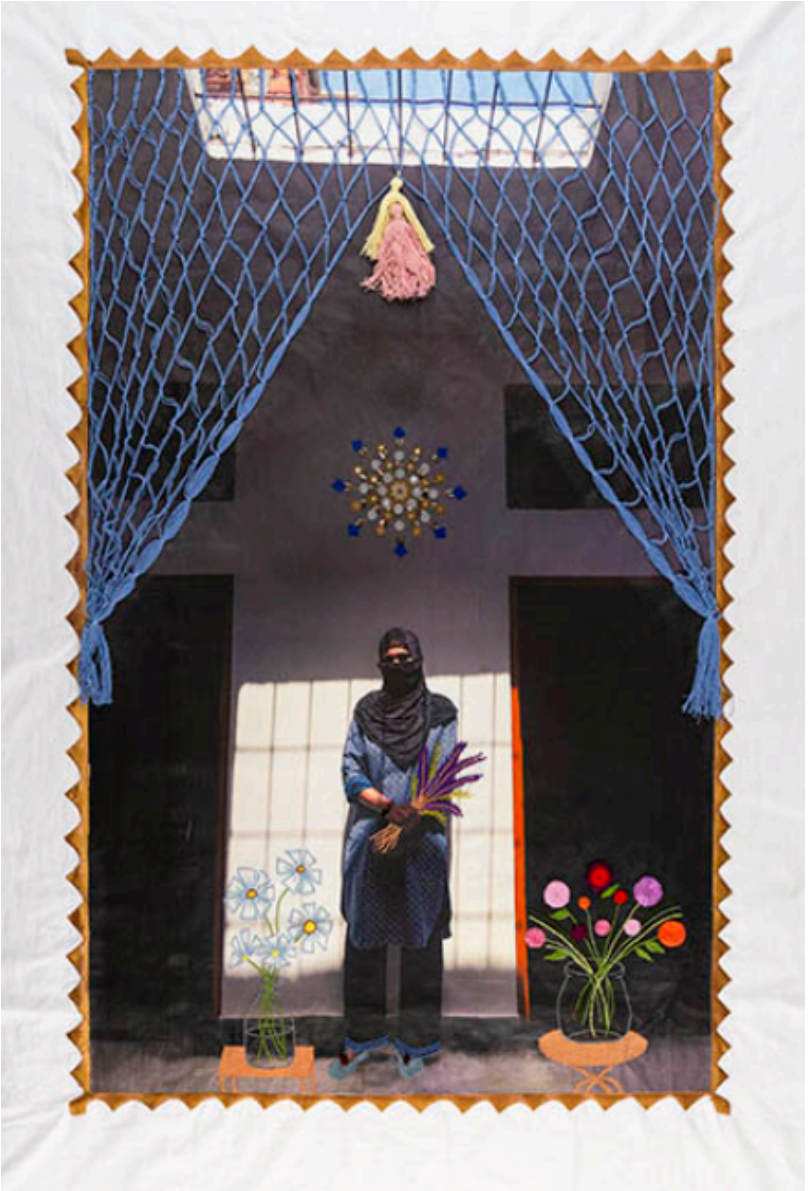
The book explores my complicated feelings about home, relationships with my home country Poland, nostalgia and pent up anger I feel as an immigrant. Even though I visit home quite often, I still feel 'different' and 'alien' there. Through a collection of 10 images taken around areas where I lived, using needle and stitch I try to 'mend' what's seemingly broken.

***Research***

Last year I was inspired by my interest in archival fashion to experiment with stitching. This initially started as making and altering clothing, where I used a Japanese method of sashiko to mend a shirt. Originally, sashiko was used by farmers and fishermen to mend broken clothing and extend their life by using a simple running stitch to strengthen the fabric.

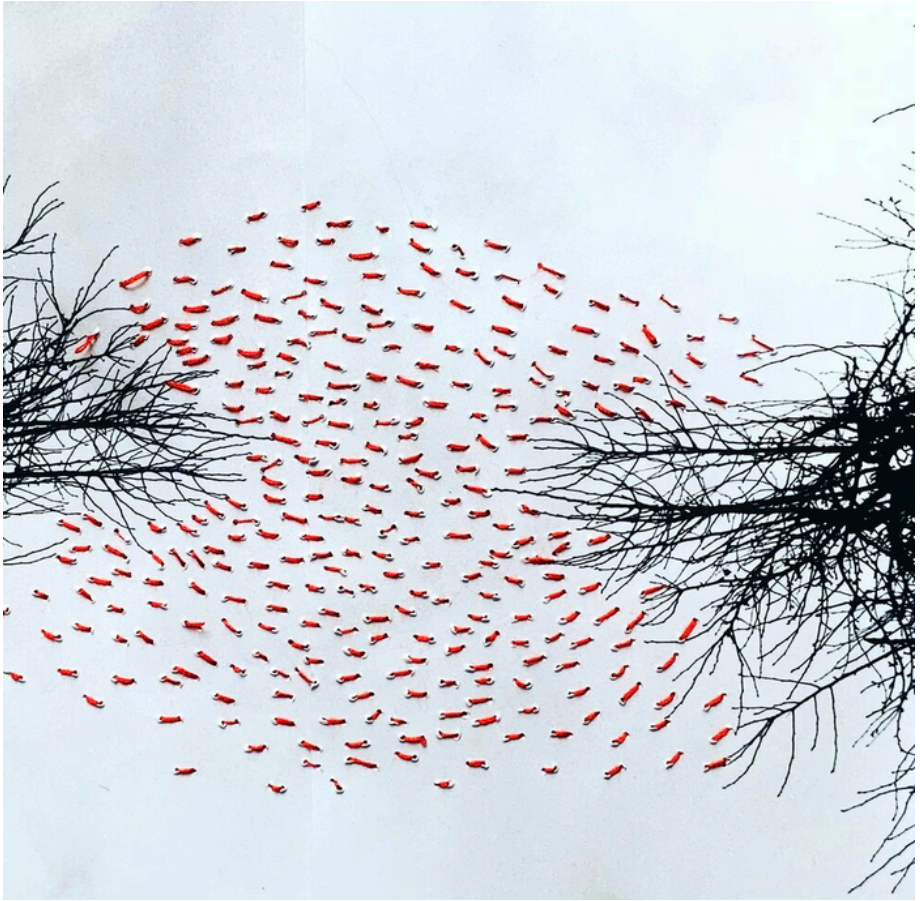
Another inspiration was my mother's sewing practice. Ever since I remember, she engaged in sewing to create everyday objects from scrap, but also as an artistic practice as a hobby.

In my research, I have looked at a variety of artists working in both textiles and photography. My starting point was an interview with Spandita Malik as seen in the British Journal of Photography. Her work combines embroidery and photography to bring into light a very serious problem in India - misogyny and violence against women. This was important for me to consider due to the weighty subject matter and creating visual stories with the style of stitching.



Spandita Malik, *Nari* (2020)

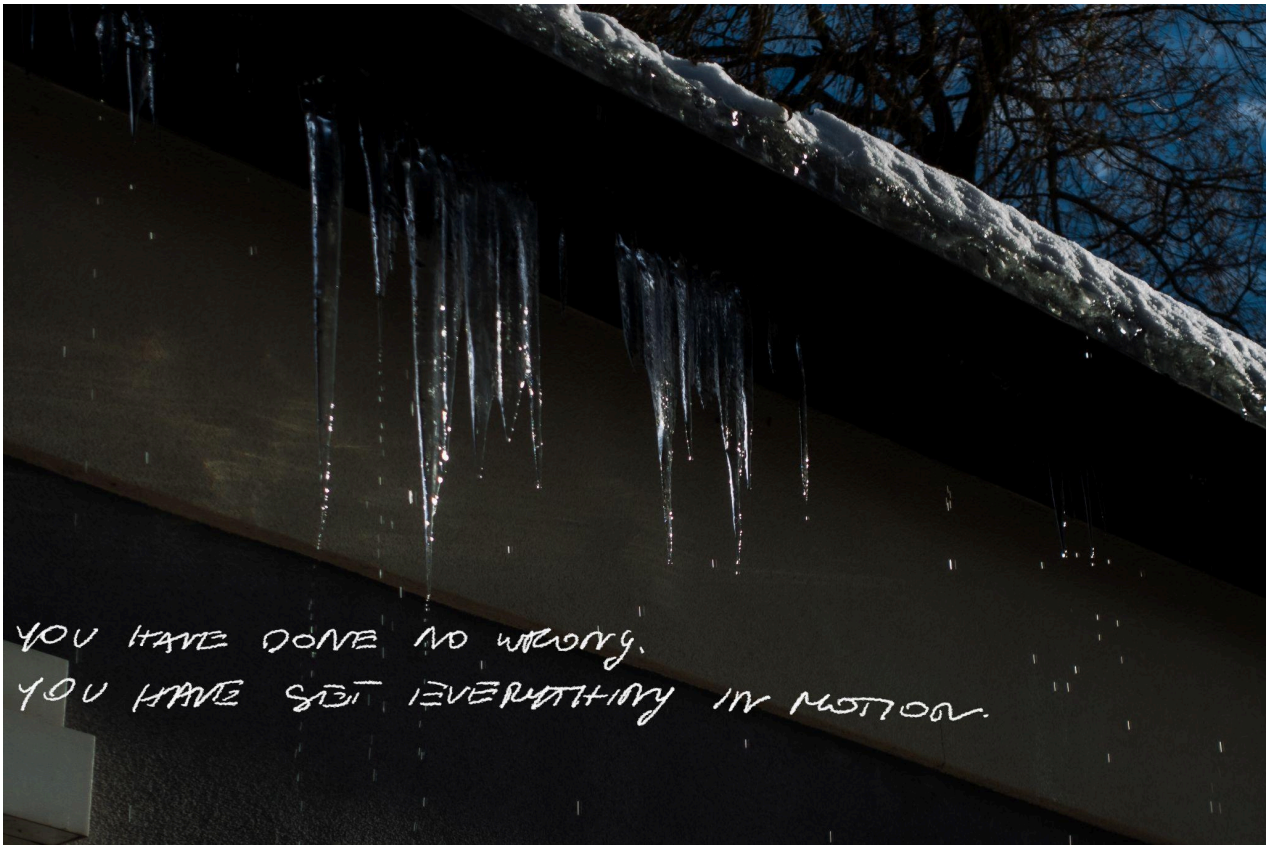
Next, I looked at Kim Gisoo’s art practice, who is a Korean artist living and working in Germany. Gisoo’s works re-imagines connections, real or surreal, by bringing images together using yarn.



Kim Gisoo, as seen on their website.

I also read Cas Holmes' book *Stitch Stories: Personal places, spaces and traced in textile art* as a means of further exploring the practical side of this project. In her book, Holmes explores connections with nature, both through imagery and tools used, such as fabric, natural dyes and thread, and how this translates to expressing emotions, documenting historical events and family history.

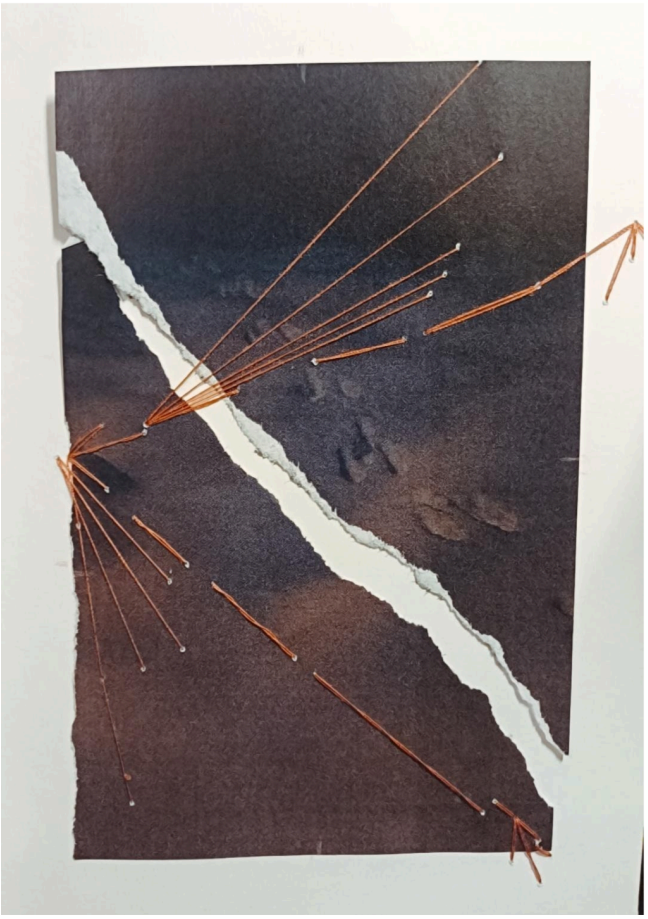
***Development***

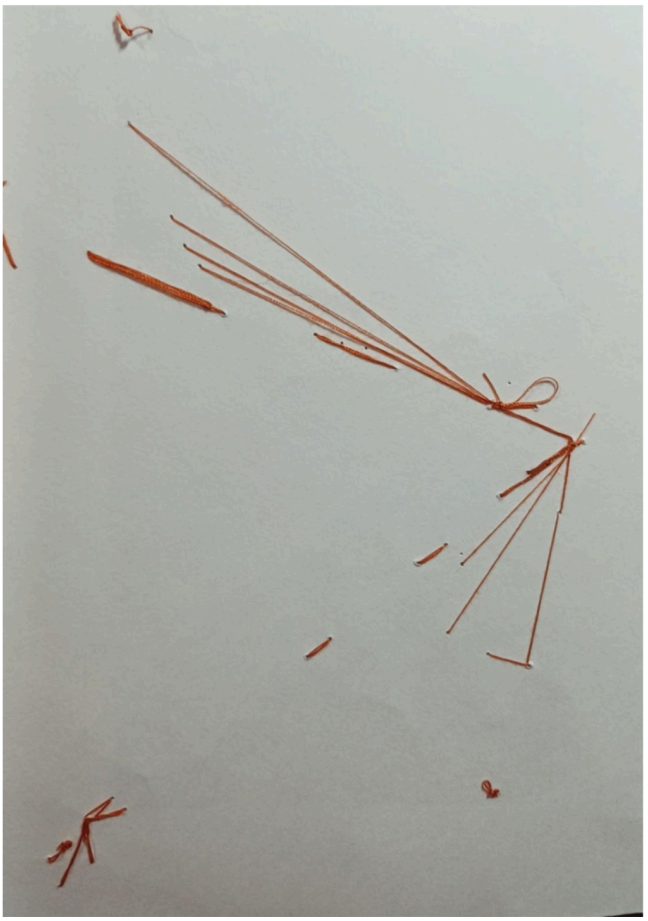



For a long time, I understood photography as a mixed media practice rather than just image-making, however I was not sure how to incorporate this into my own artistic practice.

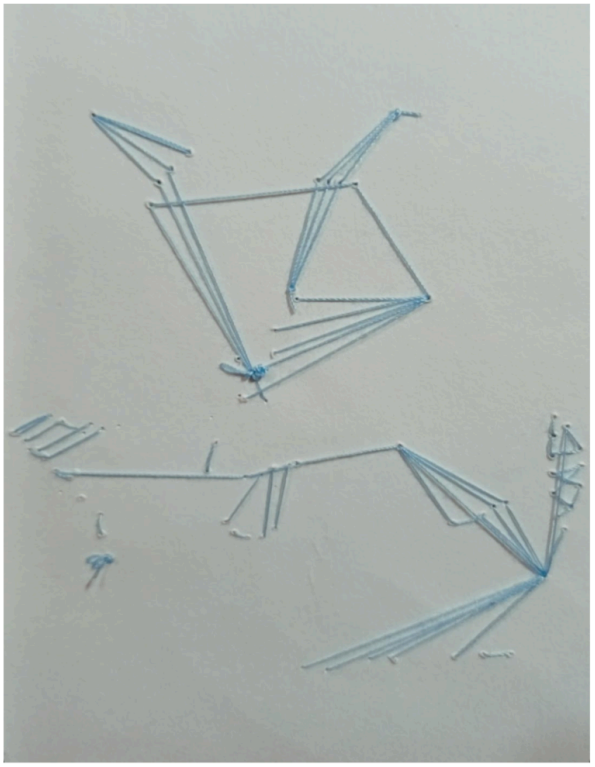
Coming from a fine art background, I tried painting and writing over images as a hobby, however this still felt incomplete.

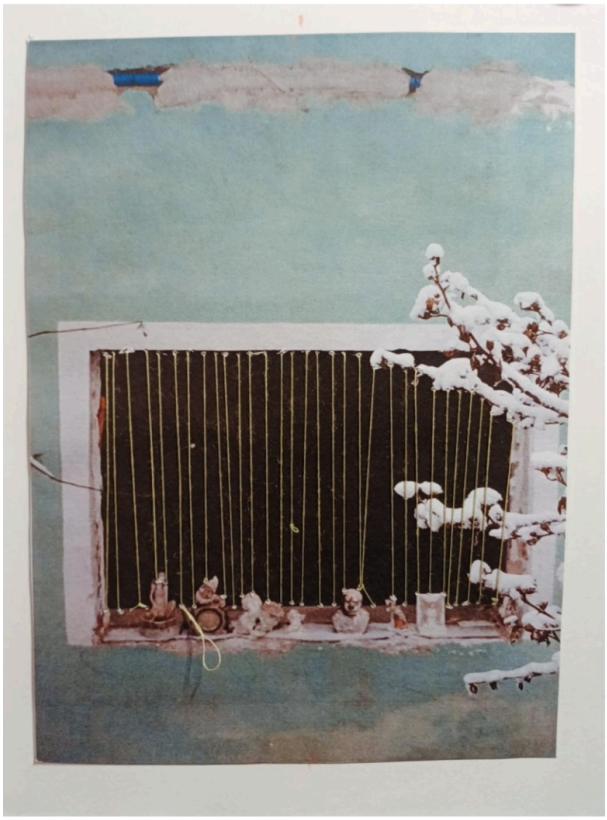
I experimented with writing over images, both digitally and with an acrylic pen, however this felt too polished. Following a tutorial with Estefani Bouza, I felt inclined to try a different approach, as she had suggested doing something I would not do usually. I decided to tear one of the images and stitch it back together.

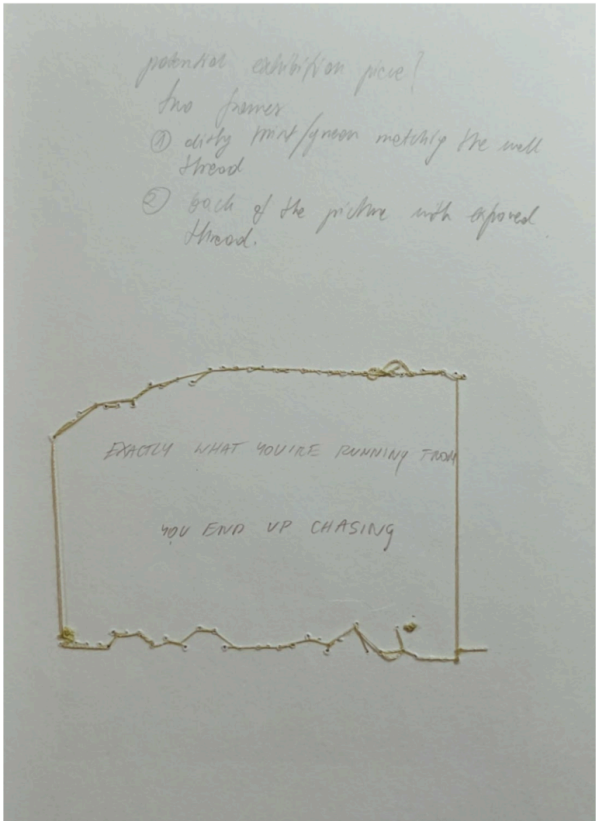




This then led to more experimentation with embroidering over images.






potential exhibition piece?
two frames
① dirty mint/green matching the wall thread
② back of the picture with exposed thread.
EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE RUNNING FROM
YOU END UP CHASING

This is also where the initial idea for the exhibition overlaps with the book project - the green print was supposed to be exhibited. I later decided against it and opted for producing a triptych independent of the book project.

As an artist coming from a background of mixed media, I've had prior experience with stitching methods and styles.

I looked at my chosen images and tried to come up with connections via patterns and shapes that would aid in visual storytelling.  My themes were centered around feelings of detachment, ghostly presences, lost belonging, therefore I tried to 'see' those concepts in my photography and translate them into stitching.

I decided to keep the images unbound, so that the viewer could see the back of the image and understand the process behind. This is also linked to the cover, which I created using tracing paper, and stitched together using a blanket stitch, giving it almost a medical feel. There is no enclosure on the cover and I decided to stitch it together with a simple suture that the viewer would have to cut to access the inside of the book.

***Methods of production vs subject matter***

In reference to the Japanese fishermen using sashiko to fix their clothing and extend its lifespan, using embroidery I aim to fix my complicated relationship with home. This also comes up where I used visual references to blood, something that ties me to my family and homeland.

***Evaluation***

For future projects like this one, I would change the thickness of paper and needles - thinner paper allows for usage of embroidery needles which are very thin. Thick paper is prone to creating fuzz at the puncture site, which can be visually unappealing. The cover itself could pose as an issue with publishing as it is not the most secure and unbound images could slide out of the cover. I would also like to experiment with the ideas around found objects, and similar to Kim Gisoo, creating flat sculptures hidden among the pages of the book.

***https://www.selvedge.org/blogs/selvedge/sashiko-and-mending***

***https://www.1854.photography/2020/09/spandita-malik-i-was-never-happy-with-a-photograph-being-a-photograph/***

***https://www.1854.photography/2020/08/issue-7898-ones-to-watch/***

***https://gisookim.de/***