

HEALING THROUGH MAKING

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Healing Through Making

By

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FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DESIGN

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN



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In no particular order, the process of my entire Master's degree ended up encompassing a global pandemic, three vaccine shots, a move across the globe, change in how I view my design practice and through all of this, my family and friends continued to offer their love and support.

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To my parents

Mahmood & Nashmana

*Even in your absence Abbu, I have felt your continued encouragement.
This goes out to you.*

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KEYWORDS

Care, Self-Inquiry, Embodied practice, Material practice, Bilingualism, Phenomenological approach

ABSTRACT

My research project is a personal journey of discovery that aims to explore how communication and design can open the doors for healing and learning far beyond conventional ways. Through this intentional, often circular thinking and specific exploratory projects that make up the research, I have attempted to understand how material practice can help mitigate the effects of grief to assist in the ideas of self-care and healing. It has provided a holistic view of healing and care that recenters culture and identity integral to self-care and well-being.

Lauren Vaughan states caring for unknown others is so challenging because the farther we move from the familiar, the less control we have and the more risk of failure is. Often, we find ourselves becoming lost, unknown of what it may feel like to be in touch with ourselves while we care for others in the community. There's an under-appreciation for understanding ourselves and that reflective element that I believe is critical to being a designer who can help, listen or even create or formulate work with stakeholders in all fields.

Holistic care is described as behaviour that recognizes a person as a whole and acknowledges the interdependence among their biological, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects. (Morgan S, Yoder, 2012)

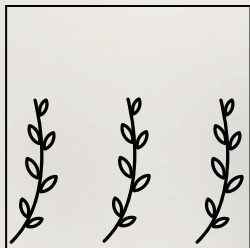
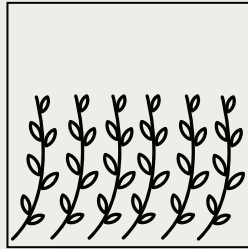
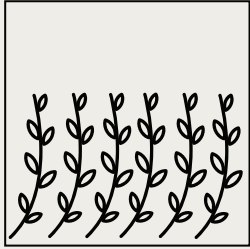
Self care - looking after your needs on a daily basis and in times of crisis to maintain a positive emotional, psychological and physiological resilience and wellbeing. (Royal Australian College of physicians)

The research uses an experiential (phenomenological) approach which allows contemplation on the experience of practice to create a conceptual work for mitigating grief through material practice. The material practice finds meaning and value in the cultural capital.

I use auto-ethnography because it requires the researcher or designer first to question themselves and their place in the world. Schouwengerg and Kaethler, authors of the auto-ethnographic turn in design, contrast with historical processes in ethnography and design that look outward first. This approach, however, closely tethers research with creative personal expression. They state, "forging deeply intimate objects that research and communicate personal sentiments, traumas, fears, obsessions, hopes, fascinations, passions, and more."

As we recuperate from the pandemic, it is essential to share and have conversations about how to continue engaging with the self and others.

I write this thesis to serve as both a guide and an invitation for my fellow design researchers - an invitation to dedicate ourselves to facing the realities of life with care, explore how best to heal and commit to ourselves as a community by using creative healing centred design techniques to move forward.



The fact that I
am writing to you
in English
already falsifies what I
wanted to tell you.
My subject:
how to explain to you that I
don't belong to English
though I belong nowhere else
if not here in English

-

Gustavo Perez Firmat

CONTEXT & FRAMING

How are you feeling today?

آج آپ کیسا محسوس کر رہی ہو

Every day I would answer this question with a new word in Urdu, but in actuality, all of these words I used are synonyms for grief and pain I felt.

In English,

I am fine,

but in Urdu,

I am

افسوردا

Afsoorda - sad

حیران

Hairaan- astonished

غمگین

Ghamgheen-mournful

Baybas - helpless

بے بس

Gabrahat- anxiety

گھبراہٹ

Malal- melancholy

ملال

All words are listed in the same order .

For detailed meanings refer to glossary

As Covid 19 unfolds with new variants every six months, communities hope to build new normal. Simultaneously, we are individually and collectively dealing with the tremendous grief and loss that came with Covid. The experience of loss is one of the most formidable things we can face. It may involve losing a loved one, a pet, a job, a routine, a home or anything that has left us. The most unfortunate thing about the Covid 19 pandemic is the amount of loss that many of us need to process. How we react to loss is called grief.

Grief can affect our emotions, thoughts, behaviour, creativity and even how we feel physically. The way every person experiences grief is very different.

CONTEXT & FRAMING

Grief is a normal and natural process after a loss but can be very painful to work through. It is an unavoidable part of the human experience, but there is such thing as healthy mourning. Dr. Susan Kavalier Adler views mourning as an opportunity for personal growth and states mourning can bring many forms depending on the person and even vary among different cultures. Common mourning forms include crying, expressing grief through art or writing, or through rituals and religious practices. It can be expressed individually, as a family and even as a community. Adler states, "When you open up mourning from the deep core of the self, it is extremely healing, and people can become more authentic and express themselves more sincerely. They become more compassionate human beings and can become more compassionate toward themselves, not just others.

Since the outbreak of deadly COVID 19, my life and everyone's life have changed in every imaginable aspect. Firstly it exposed the inadequacies of our health care systems globally. Especially in my country, Pakistan, no one had thought about how to deal with pandemic and how to continue the work social workers were doing. This has compelled leaders to explore new alternatives in providing care. Old ways are now being examined with vigilance. Since the start of Covid, we, social workers, have been piloting new and innovative ways to provide care for individuals and communities. It is an ongoing process and a struggle for all the stakeholders involved.

I suffered a tremendous loss, I lost my father due to Covid, and within the next few months, I lost two more immediate family members. Nothing made sense, and I felt emotionally crippled and exhausted. Every act I carried out was a struggle.

CONTEXT & FRAMING

However, all of this allowed me to sit with my emotions and observe myself and my family. Each of us had a different approach to navigating this challenging time and had our own support ecosystem. At this time, I was trying to understand what types of support systems are available around us, and in the past few months, I have jumped from one to another.

When you go through a traumatic event, small or big, you look around yourself for support and that support can look and come in different ways for everyone. However, most institutional support is not designed to last the duration of an average person's healing journey because of various external or personal factors. For me, "the self- CARE stood out the most."

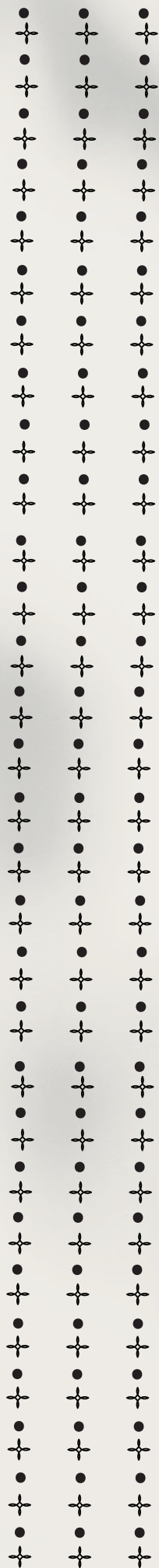
While on the other hand, my social worker self never thought about all of these things- my work just revolved around co-designing with patients and family when they all are alive. The need to become more trauma-informed as a designer, researcher, social worker, and individual is critical.

My master's research project explores how communication through narratives and design techniques opens the doors for healing and learning far beyond conventional treatments. This is now more about becoming a conscious designer recognizing the prevalence and impact of grief on people's minds, bodies and spirits. It is about supporting healing interpersonally and systematically. Loss and creativity are two intense essential parts of the human experience, and when we experience loss personally, creativity might be the best way out, states Dr shelly Carson. Perhaps the first thing to remember is that everyone can be creative." some of us express it more robustly." According to Carson, there are two types of creativity: innovative creativity and expressive creativity - innovative is best suited to problem-solving.

CONTEXT & FRAMING

In contrast, expressive can use the negative energy and channel it into creative work as a means to assist with loss or trauma. And through the course of the master's program, I explore both of the avenues in order to make a difference in my own life and of those around me.

Various projects and conversations that construct my research allowed me to understand how material practice can help mitigate the effects of grief to assist in self-care and healing. This provides a holistic view of healing that recenters culture and identity as integral parts of well-being. Each individual has a unique repository of memories, experiences, knowledge and skill, which can lead us to create something special and start a new conversation.



THE APPROACH

PHENOMENOLOGICAL The research uses an experiential framework and reflects on the experience of practice to create a conceptual framework for the approach to mitigating grief through material practice. The term phenomenology was first employed as early as the eighteenth century.

Still, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) transformed phenomenology into a significant field of inquiry and influenced numerous later philosophers. In simple terms, phenomenology is defined as an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it. The goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience—both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced. (Neubauer, B.E., Witkop, C.T. & Varpio, L. 2019) There are two kinds of phenomenology (descriptive and interpretive), each rooted in different ways of conceiving of the what and how of human experience.

D J Hobbs, the author of *Towards a Phenomenology of Values* (2021), lists six critical points (as stated below) on how to think like a phenomenologist. All these points are integral to my research practice.

- Thinking about how the mind knows reality is an age-old issue. However, solving this longstanding philosophical question may not be necessary in order to think usefully about our ordinary lives.
- Phenomenology is about how you experience the world. The goal is simple: to look only at the nature of your experience. Achieving that vantage point, however, is challenging.
- The phenomenological reduction requires rigorous attention. In order to really understand the nature of experience, you must think carefully and slowly. Doing phenomenology takes time – and focus.

THE APPROACH

- PHENOMENOLOGICAL**
- Attend to the natural attitude. What are the assumptions you make about your experience in order to go about your daily life? Those assumptions constitute your natural attitude.
 - Suspend your judgment. Now set aside your natural attitude as best you can in order to get at the essential qualities of experience unblemished by day-to-day assumptions. This act is called the epoché.
 - Examine pure consciousness. Once you've bracketed off the natural attitude, all that remains is the essence of existence. Here is where phenomenology truly begins.

CRITERIA FOR INVESTIGATION

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY As defined by Schouwenberg and Kaethler, “auto-ethnographic design” builds on theories of “relational, speculative, critical, and social design, but it differs as it rejects the act of designing on externalities. It introduces a new field of study that places the designer directly in the middle of the project rather than on the outside. In this case, auto-ethnography requires the researcher or designer first to question themselves and their place in the world. Schouwengerg and Kaethler contrast with historical processes in ethnography and design that look outward first. “This approach, however, closely tethers research with creative personal expression,” they state, “forging deeply intimate objects that research and communicate personal sentiments, traumas, fears, obsessions, hopes, fascinations, passions, and more.”

The auto-ethnographic design proposes that creative expression, too, can be considered a type of research. In addition to supporting commercial commissions or contextualizing user needs, research can also be a form of reflection and creative generation, which is an essential component of my research.

“We considered design a practice of cultural critique,” writes Schouwenberg while discussing the curriculum she developed on auto-ethnography in design. “We stressed the importance of designers formulating their own agendas and ideals and of basing theses on personal interests and artistic talents.” They prioritize the designer’s intuition as a creative force within the design process. It is not merely a retelling of personal narratives, but it also involves carefully organized research design and systematically collected and analyzed.

CRITERIA FOR INVESTIGATION

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY Autoethnography gives me space to explore personal topics, emotions and culture through internal conversations. Self-reflective and contemplative dialogue promotes material exploration.

It is only through dialogue that meaning is created and generates meaningful understanding. Dialogue is one of the tools that I like to use in all my design work; it is a form of creative thinking that enriches research. These contemplations take shape in an illustration, a poem, a short paragraph, a letter, an audio recording or stitching because thoughts running through our heads are a lot more varied than we might consider them. It does not have any particular sequence; dialogue can occur at the start, middle, or end of the process.

CRITERIA FOR INVESTIGATION

BI-LINGUAL EXPRESSION AND IT'S IMPLICIT NUANCES

Any language cannot be learned and admired without historical, social and emotional context. It can not be appreciated without some hope of it shaping imaginary futures in our minds. I have had such a convoluted relationship with both English and Urdu during the research. English is the language in which I communicate my research, while Urdu is the language I process my thoughts and make meaning of that research. I use bilingualism to mediate the spaces that one language cannot conjure. It is in these uncomfortable spaces I find meaning.

Yoojin Grace Wuertz, a South Korean American author, elegantly writes, “Bilingualism strikes me as a kind of synesthesia instead of seeing colours associated with letters and words. Instead of hearing melodies, I hear with language the play and echo of another language—the option to say it differently and live it differently. Language is not only a means of communication or description. It’s a framework in which we process existence.”

I believe Urdu is a language one has to fall in love with. It takes time, and the evolving connection works on its own terms, often enjoying the language’s presence in quiet reflection and silence amongst lyrical exchanges. One can learn the alphabet ا ب پ (Alif, be, pe), but it takes time and patience to be able to take the alphabet and produce poetry. One can learn the notes, but it takes time to be able to translate the notes into musical intimacy.

CRITERIA FOR INVESTIGATION

BI-LINGUAL EXPRESSION AND IT'S IMPLICIT NUANCES

Words floating in ink

A talisman is any object that is imbued with protective powers, and all cultures have manifestations of such objects. In the world of Islam, they bear Qur'anic inscriptions. Muslims believe that an object that is inscribed with the word God (Allah) will protect the person who reads, touches, or sees it, and that the word of God has the power to ward off evil. The surface of a talismanic object can be covered with prayers, signs, numbers, and decorative motifs, and the object is carried in a pocket, or rolled and placed in an amulet case; some talismans are worn as clothing. (Yasmine Al-Saleh, 2010)



Figure 2- Hand embroidery Taveez, 2021

Calligraphy was probably the first art form I was exposed to inside my house, from having Arabic Quranic calligraphy hanging in every hallway and room of our house, to a talismanic component in the form of a taweez necklace around my neck, to carrying a written piece of it in my wallet for safety. Over the years, it became a part of me, something that provided me with a sense of comfort and protection.

In some regions of Pakistan, teaching Urdu calligraphy to kids as an Islamic art form is considered as important as learning how to write in any language. Ustaads- Masters of calligraphy would go house to house teaching children how to write with ink and bamboo pen, spending hours perfecting one stroke while simultaneously teaching (Sabar) patience and calmness. Calligraphy predominantly means to transmit a text wrapped in a decorative form. Objects from different regions vary in the use of calligraphy in their design. An entire word can give the impression of a random brushstroke, or a single letter can develop into a decorative element - which stands alone. Not every person or, as a matter of fact, Muslim can not decipher the meaning; it is hidden and sacred.

My elder brother was privileged enough to learn from an Ustaad. Still, by the time I came of age, we moved to a metropolitan city, where learning an art form like calligraphy wasn't of utmost importance. Still, occasionally I would use the bamboo pen and ink to write, but my strokes were never perfect, and I eventually stopped.

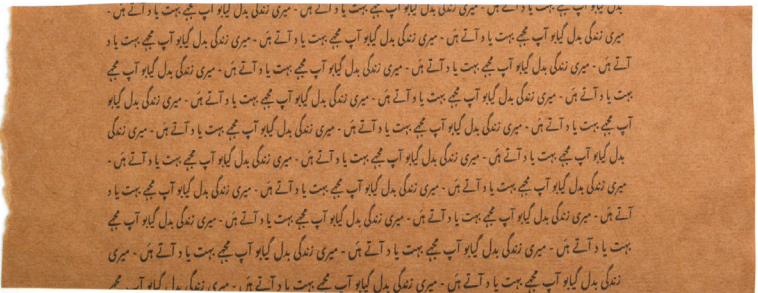
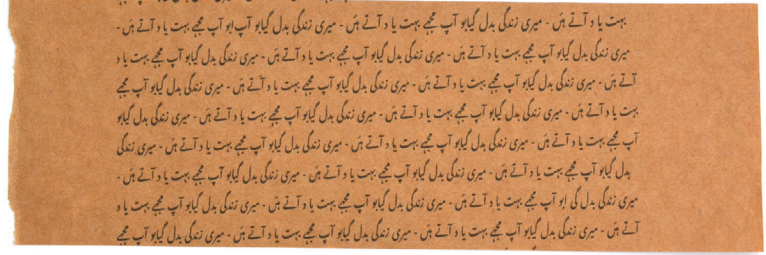
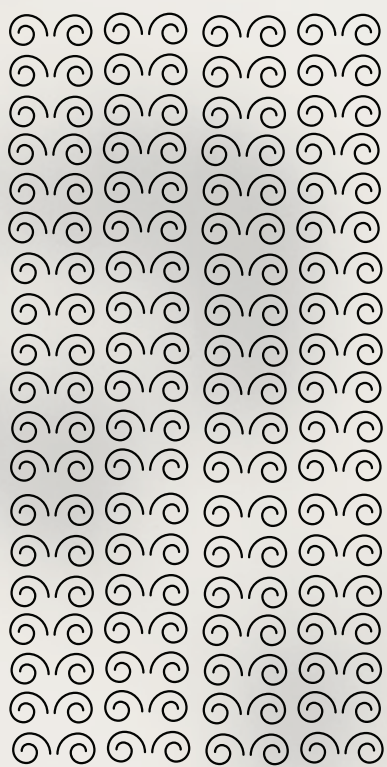


Figure 3 - Urdu hand written letter, 2021

*I mixed my tears and my
Hope and used it as ink
I wrote to you*

When the chaos inside me settled down, I found my way back to words in the form of poetry. Poetry is both a new Knowledge and an art. Urdu poetry has a nuanced layer of meanings and depth. I started reading Urdu poetry to understand my state of mind. I would occasionally share phrases of poetry with my bilingual friends and ask them about their reflections and then have in-depth discussions. It was interesting to see how every individual interpreted the exact phrase differently.

I employ the calligraphy method to write poetry and text in Urdu and incorporate those narratives into my creative practice, which assist me in visualizing and making.



MAKING AND MATERIAL EXPLORATION

This part of my design research derives from my passion for making. Allowing myself to interrogate and make the material embodiments of grief, love and care by exploring the emotional potency of artifacts in our lives and the relationship between the material artifacts and people they interact with.

Through the photographs and their accompanying stories. Through textiles - the blanket that lulled one to sleep and offered warmth, the stained table cloth which witnessed many dinners, the letters and postcards that have weathered decades in the rusty wooden box.

Now artifacts are also digital through the selfies, texts, videos, designed and curated social media posts and emails in ever-growing inboxes. The digital, analogue and real worlds leave indelible traces of the moments we have lived and offer space for quite a reflection.

*Figure 4- Hand crochet Muslim prayer cap,
2020*



MAKING AND MATERIAL EXPLORATION

ILLUSTRATIONS

The way I visualize

Figure 5- Digital Illustration- I am not alone, overlay on tea stained paper - 2020



To visualize my narratives and writings, I drifted towards illustration, it allowed me to tell complex narratives in an aesthetically appealing way, it gave me the power to connect with the audience and draw them into my experience, while simultaneously allowing them to create their own narratives through those illustrations. The illustration style that I use is line art it comprises of minimal lines and negative space to create a design. Featuring smooth, curved lines inspired by geometric shapes, human faces, flowers and other natural elements, it builds the narrative in a simple yet abstract way.

My illustration process does not have a fixed route, sometimes I start with drawing on paper or directly on my Wacom in digital software (Adobe illustrator and photoshop) to draw, enhance, refine or extend the hand-drawn scribbles.

My professor and supervisor, Sophie Guar, said in one of my studio critiques. "Illustration is one kind of making that allows many interpretive options. Their outcomes are often surprising and unexpected, and the response to it is sensuous and immediate."



Figure 6 - Line illustration- girl in nature,2021

MAKING AND MATERIAL EXPLORATION

PHOTOGRAPHY

The way I see



Figure 7- Photograph of Jhelum River by my father, 1967

I use my phone and DSLR 5200 to document my process. For audio recordings and to take photographs that act as a reference point in my making. Christina Edwards in her essay *The making of Collodion the memory- text* talks about how manipulations, of materials and moments, have always existed within photography. Making of these connections overt through the layering of processes and time becomes a mediation on the nature of photography itself. Throughout photographs history, people have created their own personal narratives. We intervene, making space for contemplation, attempting to make sense.

My love for photography can be traced back directly to my childhood. I was aware of my father taking pictures, especially when I was the subject, especially on family excursions, holidays, birthdays, outings, and other significant events deemed worthy of recording for posterity.

Seldom are the darker moments recorded. Two days before my father was put on life support, I was in the COVID ICU with him, and he was relatively doing better than before, smiling through the oxygen mask. He asked me to take a selfie. I looked at him in surprise; he gently nodded, given the situation and place. I quickly grabbed my phone and took a selfie, not knowing it would be the last picture of us together. Every time I look at the photo, it awakens within me a renewed nostalgia, that sense of both pleasure and pain. Roland Barthes wrote about these feelings in *Camera Lucida*. He talks about this pang induced by the very sight of a photograph, dubbing in the punctum- “ that prick and shock of recognition, that unique and very personal response to photographic detail that attracts and repels us at the same time.” Barthes states that “ a photograph’s punctum is that accident which pricks me(but also bruises me, is poignant to me).” This punctum is the personal connection developed with an image that reaches out and bruises you. So when it comes to translating the emotions I feel about him; naturally, I gravitated towards photography because it was a medium both of us were comfortable with and allowed me to see things differently.



Figure 8- Workshop Memories- flower and old photos, 2021

MAKING AND MATERIAL EXPLORATION

TEXTILES

The way it touches

I used a range of textile materials over the last year. The fabric became my primary medium to convey a narrative. I spent many hours in the soft shop conversing with Jen while she taught me new ways to make a textile artifact that best suits the narrative. Camille Okhio writes, "Stitch can tell a story, weave itself into a galaxy of points, moments, and memories. Needle and thread can both meet a need and delight the eye". Do Textiles possess greater emotional potency than any other material, perhaps, so I started working with it unintentionally. The physical proximity of the textile to the skin and its ability to embody individual emotion and collective experiences is incomparable.

The act of making textile is highly emotional for the maker and owner. This act of making has been gendered with women just like the act of care is. In his book -Theory of Shopping, Miller talks about how women were and are memorialized throughout female history through the products of their needles and spindles, whether plain sewing or fancy embroideries. This investment of time was vital in imbuing emotional meaning that anyone could gauge.

After the death of my father and two aunts, embroidery became a medium of silent communication between my mother and me. When silence echoed and words failed us, backstitch brought us together. The touch of textiles on the skin creates the sensation of physical comfort and its ability to give space for new memories while evoking the physical presence of the gone. The making of these artifacts acted as antidotes to my grieving self. Allowing self to immerse physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually

لائی جیات آئے قفنا لے چلی

لہنی خوشی و آئے ملہر لہنی خوشی چلے



MANIFESTATIONS - DESIGN PRACTICE

I see the nature of design as an integrative discipline, and it places itself at the intersection of several large fields, which I find very exciting. In one regard, design is a field of thinking and pure research. In another, it is a field of practice and applied research that is constantly developing.

My practice is interdisciplinary. This refers to the bringing together the knowledge and rich experiences gained from two or more disciplines into one activity. Trained as a Visual communication designer, immersed in social work.

I still remember that when I came across the term human-centred design, I assessed that inadvertently, most of my work and personal projects were related to either human problems or cultural issues in my community. While volunteering and later working as a clinical social worker for a Cancer Hospital in my city Lahore, I could feel the pain, fear, and anxiety of patients and their families. The empathy I felt for these vulnerable people further strengthened my desire to help people heal through creative immersion and visual design techniques. I had no idea how to do that nor had any guidance but everyday I was challenged.

I became a part of a team that was led by recreational therapists. I collaborated with children and teens; encouraged them to participate in activities designed to maintain and improve physical and mental health. The actions we led provided distraction and helped relieve stress and anxiety during treatment, tests, and procedures. However, being the only designer in the team I was assigned to design easy-to-understand and culturally appropriate infographics, posters and flashcards to teach children and their parents about the type of cancer and treatment process. I was asked to use Urdu typography in my design to convey the message more clearly and to connect with the larger audience. As a communication designer, I was challenged by my very own language. I felt like an outsider who had betrayed her own by having no prior design education in digital Urdu typography and visuals.

MANIFESTATIONS - DESIGN PRACTICE

Viktor Papanek talks about how design is discriminatory against major sections of the population, and the designers know very little about what people really need or want. With this lack of knowledge and understanding of the culture and specific needs, the designers and technologists (such as engineers, architects etc.) created a poorly designed infrastructure that did not fully cater to the needs and requirements of a specific society.

Pakistan has had a colonial past, since partition in 1947. The enduring legacies of colonialism also lie in how design is taught to date largely as a practice that originates in Europe consequently the students and designers are now using American or European ideas on aesthetics, use, desirability etc. While the indigenous design gets lost in translation.

Therefore sometimes, our designs are not true for the people who are not like us. We need to work on the design for the whole community. We designers shape ourselves to whatever project comes our way just like chameleons. But there are certain situations where we cannot begin to identify with the lived experiences of the people we need to communicate with just like the children in the hospital or people living in long-term care.

This is where I try to bridge the field of design as a body and social work together for other designers to see how similar both the fields are. One of the critical principles of practising social work is looking at an individual holistically, and in order to do that, we have to understand that person and their environment. This could be from very foundational aspects like family, specific circumstances and how those things shaped and developed the person over time. The same thing in design is called behavioural insights, so we can better understand why people make decisions the way they do. Behavioural insights are drawn from the human-centred design field in some prominent ways like; exploring people's needs, understanding experiences and consequences and prompting them to undertake new activities and changes.

MANIFESTATIONS - DESIGN PRACTICE

Some of the new approaches consist of co-design and participatory design activities while practicing to be more trauma-informed, leading to healing-centred engagement, etc. Eventually, it felt like I was making a difference in people's lives through design and social work but lacked my own voice. Ultimately this feeling led to my masters but little did I knew I needed to make a difference in my own life to continue this journey. After my father's death, every act I carried out was a struggle which included my design practice.

At this time, I was trying to understand what types of support systems are available around us, and in the past thirteen months, I have jumped from one to another. When you go through a traumatic event, small or big, you look around yourself for support and that support can look and come in different ways for everyone. However, most institutional support is not designed to last the duration of an average person's healing journey because of various external or personal factors. For me, "the self- CARE stood out the most." While on the other hand, my social worker self never thought about all of these things. The need for me to have more individual agency and become informed as a designer, researcher, social worker, and individual has become very important.

THE IDEA OF CARE IN DESIGN

Witnessing is an essential way that knowledge is passed on and remembered. Simply through observing our elders and rituals carried out by them. We offer recognition and affirmation of another's struggles, achievements, even their existence. We do this just by holding space and absorbing. Care in my culture has a collective approach rather than an individualist approach. Through caring actions and rituals, we heal individual parts of ourselves.

To achieve healing and to care, we can't move ahead without defining self-care. And nevertheless, according to western knowledge - the Royal Australian College of physicians states self-care involves "looking after your needs on a daily basis and in times of crisis to maintain a positive emotional, psychological and physiological resilience and wellbeing'. Self-care involves being aware of and being connected to yourself- Dr. Pete Smith, a co-chair of Self Care Forum, said: We aim to embed it (self-care) into everyone's everyday life, making it a life-long habit and culture.



Figure 10- Video still - The act of witnessing traditions- 2020

To understand the care in the context of culture and design and form my understanding of it. Contingent with our evolving understanding of design and its ability to contribute to society's aspects is evolving continuously. The catalyst for this project is the challenges of our time. In her book "Designing Cultures of Care," Laurene Vaughan discusses the intersectionality between design and care through the framework of culture. Recently, there has been increasing interest in this area of research. Still, most publications frame care as a context of design and social practices, particularly in the health and age care sector. Moving forward, the author talks about the importance of understanding culture as the dynamic variant and that we can expand our perception of care and how we design with care.

THE IDEA OF CARE IN DESIGN



Figure 11- Video still - The act of witnessing traditions- 2020

Moreover, the author Vaughan quotes Bernard Weicht where he questions the intersubjectivity of care. Care is broken down into various interesting themes it is temporal, gendered, cultural. It involves our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual selves, which are all part of a healing process. All of these were evident in my project.

How we see the practice of care depends on whether it is a personal disposition or a professional practice (like doctors, nurses, social workers and researchers working in health). Until very recently, my personal and professional practice of providing care was very different. "Caring for unknown others is so challenging because the farther we move from the familiar, the less control we have and the more risk of failure there is" (2010, p.684)³. In this way, the role of imagination becomes pivotal—not only to facilitate empathy to drive care but also empathy with those we know little about so that we can enact care.

During the summer semester, my work with residents living in long-term care allowed me to observe myself as a design researcher and realize the need to become more trauma-informed not only for the people we are working with but also for ourselves. Sometimes your work can bring feelings and emotions that you are not genuinely ready for or well equipped to handle in that given time. This propelled me to shift my thinking.

Recently, we have increased awareness of Trauma in our society, and it also comes with many misconceptions. Most of us only think about Trauma as the capital T -Trauma which includes war, natural disasters and severe abuse. Our day-to-day lives are filled with more minor traumas that need to be processed, like bullying, death, and the aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the data shows it will have a lasting effect.

THE IDEA OF CARE IN DESIGN

The simplest definition of Trauma would be anything that is significant and has an impact on you. Over here, I will quote a definition by Dr. Gabor Maté; a Hungarian-Canadian physician “Trauma is what happens inside of you due to a traumatic event. It is a loss of connection to oneself and to the present moment.”

Several discussions are transpiring because of COVID 19 about how we need to be more trauma-informed. Many sources exist that can help us navigate and start thinking about trauma-informed design and applying them. It is hard to look out for or care for other people or understand them if we don't understand ourselves.

Rachel Dietkus, brains behind social workers who design and most importantly a Social Worker and Design Researcher, on one of the episodes, “Strong Feelings,” podcast talks about how it is not heavily prevalent in design education and or even in design practice, to look out for oneself. We are constantly doing something for others, so we want to understand what does the client want? What do they maybe need? I think there's an under-appreciation for understanding ourselves and that reflective element that I believe is critical to being a designer who is able to help, listen or even work with others in all fields.

LANGUAGE: THE CHRONICLE OF WORDS



Figure 12- Himmat, meaning emotional strength, 2020

Finding yourself immersed in a language is always an epiphany, even if finding the Alfaz (words) to express your inner reality can be excruciating. I am trilingual; my mother and father tongue is Punjabi. Pakistan's national language is Urdu. The official conduct language is English because of colonialism, and I learned Arabic for religious reasons. I grew up speaking and writing Urdu; in fact, the first Urdu words I said at the age of two were buum and dunn. I called my father buum while the actual word was Abbu which translates to dad and dunn, meaning water, according to two-year-old Maleeka. Buum made me feel safe, and dunn made me feel calmer, but by the time I turned four, I learned a new word, balailo (yellow), and I loved it. Eventually, my kindergarten teacher told me balailo was not the right way to pronounce it, so balailo made me feel anxious. In my teenage years, I became proficient in writing and speaking English and left the ghost of balailo behind.

Until I found myself sitting on a dark yellow couch in my therapist's clinic in Canada two months after my father's death, I almost immediately confronted the encumbrance of language. While I can talk easily and tell all sorts of stories, I quickly realized how difficult it was to feel my feelings profoundly and simultaneously convey them to someone else in English and not in Urdu.

I was asked to talk about the most intimate, grievous, or confusing moments I spent in isolation and hospital leading to his death. At that moment, I found myself with a choice; I could relive the entire traumatic experience and allow myself to feel what I had felt back then or tell coherently what had transpired without getting in touch with my emotions, and that's what I did. Precisely because my capability to translate my feelings into English was limited.

LANGUAGE: THE CHRONICLE OF WORDS

Van der Kolk states that “neuroscience research has shown that we possess two distinct forms of self-awareness: one that keeps track of the self across time and one that registers the self in the present moment. The first is our autobiographical self, which creates connections among experiences and assembles into a coherent story. This system is rooted in language. Our narratives change with the telling, as our perspectives change and as we incorporate new input.

The other systems, moment-to-moment self-awareness, are based primarily on physical sensations, but if we feel safe and are not rushed, we can find words to communicate that experience as well.” (Van der Kolk, 2014).

To exercise self-care, finding a way to communicate my emotions and experiences through a visual language guided by Urdu became an essential part of my design practice.

Figure 13- You are not Alone , 2020



THE BODY IS THE BRIDGE

“The theory of the body is, implicitly, a theory of perception. We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it in virtue of it always being with us and of the fact that we are our body. In the same way, we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body and in so far as we perceive the world through our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception.”
(Merleau-Ponty & Smith, 1962)

Care is an approach to morality that is essential to human existence—so basic, I will argue, that our bodies are built for care, we crave to be taken care of—and therefore can be woven into traditional theories. Care is a way of being in the world that the habits and behaviours of our body facilitate. Care consists of practices that can be developed or allowed to atrophy.

In Urdu, there is an elder saying, “you haven’t felt it yet, but your body already has” Now that I think it is true, your body starts signalling and showing signs before you can process the reason emotionally. This might look like weight gain or unexpected weight loss, trouble breathing, anxiety tremors, chest pain, difficulty with memory, eye twitching or even upset stomach like the one you get before exams. Our bodies signal us, but we are not in touch with ourselves.

Inside the fabric of your skin and bones, inside the organs and fibres of matter that make you, is a nonverbal language of understanding and communication always available to you. This is the language of sensation.

THE BODY IS THE BRIDGE

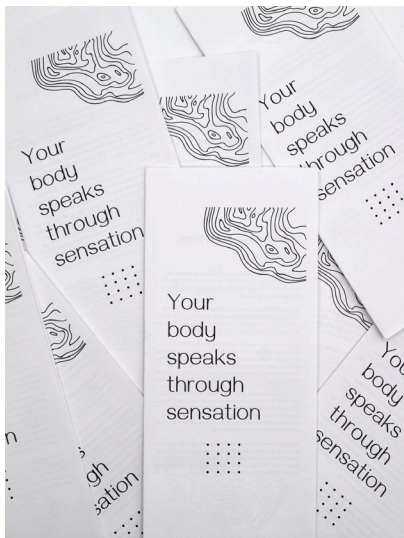


Figure 14- Your body speaks through sensation brochure, 2021

Sensations are your body's way of communicating the unseen inside yourself directly to you. In his book *Waking the Tiger*, Peter Levine, a clinical psychologist, writes, "sensations are the language of the reptilian brain." Meaning they are the nonverbal language of your inner world, offering clues to your real-time felt experiences and patterns of reactivity.

Your experience of sensation is personal and unique and tells you that you are truly alive. Sensations are how your inner world speaks to you. Awareness of them brings your insides into your conscious awareness.

I designed a simple grounding activity in the form of a brochure for my cohort and other Emily Carr community members. This activity was intended for individuals to take what they sense internally and put it onto paper. A few minutes would be spent to get a tune in to their sensory world and then draw what arises.

Then, they were instructed to pick one of those sensations and draw that sensation onto the brochure. They could draw, for example, what numbness feels like, without worrying at all about what the picture will look like; the goal was merely to allow them to translate what they felt inside onto paper, where they could see it. This activity did not have a time or a place limit; people were allowed to take this activity brochure home, to the forest, to the car, to the office, to anywhere they felt comfortable doing it.

However, I did have an open invite for everyone who did the activity to stop by my studio for some tea and conversation about their experience of the activity or anything on their minds. Over two months, I was able to have beautiful deep conversations with many. I feel like this was only possible because the other person did not feel pressured to do the activity in a given time - it gave them space they needed to get in touch with their inner selves and sensations. And this is precisely what I had hoped for.



EMBODIED PRACTICES IN ACTION

DINNER FOR ONE

We come to care about the world through observation over time. Details change gradually, and suddenly our orientation is different, and matters connect in new ways. Part of saying with the trouble (Haraway, 2017) is to notice these transitions and appreciate them as clues to ourself in evolution and our world in its becoming.

In this project- I set out to combine writing and making together. I allowed my reflective writing to guide the making of each artifact. I never realized the power of sitting together and sharing food and stories before Covid happened- not only in my personal life but also in my work setting also.

It was my first chance to speak to the people living in long-term care since the pandemic's beginning. For the past several months, people living in long-term care have been confined to their rooms with limited congregate dining, activities and in-person visits. Most of them lack exercise, direct sunlight and fresh air and an average level of social interaction. They have had limited access to mental health, therapeutic and well-being services at times. The psychological stress of social isolation can be very jarring for these individuals, even those acclimated to some degree of pre-existing social isolation.

Reflecting on the conversations I had with the residents and how they missed sitting together as a group to eat and share stories with each other- dinner time was the time of the day they would look forward to as they got to see everyone. It's an excellent opportunity to make new friends also because the change in the LTC is so quick. But now they can't do this, which has left them feeling extremely isolated.

To some extent, I felt isolated when my entire family from different parts of the world gathered on zoom to honour my father and all the ancestors who had passed away. All of us changed glances in zoom square boxes, wanting to hug each other as we exchanged looks, while some of us showed each other our dasterkhans full of food but not being able to share with each other.

ہمارے کھانے کا کمرہ
کیا صرف ایک کمرے سے زیادہ ہے؟
جہاں ہم بیٹھنے کے لیے جمع ہوتے ہیں۔
اور جمع کرانے کے لیے موجودگی

• ہمارے کھانے کی میز گول
ہمیں زیادہ سے زیادہ پابند بناتا ہے۔
جہاں ہر ایک کی اپنی نشست ہے۔
جب کہ ہم کھانے کے لیے بیٹھتے ہیں۔

• ہم سب ایک دوسرے کا انتظار کرتے ہیں۔
ایک دوسرے کا احترام اور خیال رکھیں
یہ ایک میز سے زیادہ ہے جسے ہم کھانے کے لیے استعمال کرتے
ہیں۔
یا ٹوسٹ ہائٹا اور کچھ شراب پینا

• میز کے ارد گرد ہم آمنے سامنے جمع ہوتے ہیں۔
ایک خاندان محبت کے ساتھ اس قدر فضل کے ساتھ شامل
ہوا۔
ہماری آنکھیں گلے لگتی ہیں اور گلے لگاتی ہیں۔
اور ہماری تمام پریشانیاں ہم وہاں رکھتے ہیں۔

• وہاں ہم بحث کرتے اور بتاتے ہیں۔
کوئی مجبور کرنے نہیں جاتا
ہم صرف وہی پھینک دیتے ہیں جو ہماری گہرائی میں
ہے۔
اور پھر میز سے ہم جھاڑو دیتے ہیں۔

• شاندار رات کے کھانے اور شاندار میٹھے کے ساتھ
ریلیف کھانے کی میز پر زور دینے کا انتظار کر رہا ہے۔
جہاں ہم اجتماع کے لیے آتے ہیں۔
جہاں ہم اپنے مسائل لے کر آتے ہیں۔

• ماں کے جادوئی ہاتھوں کے لمس سے
اور پیارے والدین جو سمجھتے ہیں۔
ہمارے کھانے کی میز لکڑی سے بنی میز سے زیادہ ہے۔
جہاں ہم کھانا بانٹنے کے لیے بیٹھتے ہیں۔

• لیکن ایک میز جہاں ہم لطف اندوز ہونے کے لیے بیٹھتے
ہیں۔

خوشی سے جڑے خاندان کی محبت

DINNER FOR ONE

My grandmother sitting in Lahore, having no idea how zoom works, started to recite a few verses of the Quran to bless the deceased, the food and everyone who was present virtually. Sounds a bit funny now that I am writing about it. All of us took turns and talked about our favourite memories of my father - there were a lot of laughs and some tears. At that very moment, all of us were together but we were not. I wrote a poem to narrate my sentiments, this was the first time I was comfortable to talk about my emotions in front of my family and later to my peers and professors while presenting the work in my studio class.

Both Urdu and English poems became the tipping point for me to design Dasterkhans and bring my peers into witnessing this ritual.

These poems are meant to have the ability to use words in which a new configuration of meaning may emerge. The emotion, experience, observation, situation, feeling and thoughts depicted in the poem must convey an impression or knowledge that had not been experienced. Such use of words is not possible without bringing in the power of imagination. The Islamic ritual and poems inspired the illustrations on dasterkhaan. The main elements are floral symbols, geometrical patterns and Kufic style calligraphy. These allowed me to narrate my experience while maintaining a certain level of secrecy.

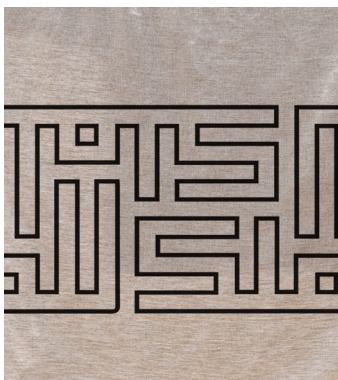


Figure 16- Dinner for one-Kufic,2021

“Kufic is the oldest form of Arabic calligraphy, dating from about 1,400 years ago. The most distinct form of Kufic is the square Kufic style, which simplifies the Arabic letters into their most basic rectangular shapes. Kufic style has much to offer, particularly to today’s designers. Though this script is evidently ancient, it is simultaneously distinctly modern. Its blocky letters were initially designed for tiling and mosaics but viewed through our modern lenses; they are reminiscent of pixel art. The basic rectangular shapes incorporate only the essential elements to distinguish between individual letters, resulting in minimal typography.”(B, 2018)

He
The spirit that left our home hollow

Now a red brick house remains
Where all of us stare at walls and share post haste glances
While interpreting ghosts of a familiar past,
Deciphering where to find kindness
Peace
صبر
حوصلہ
خوشی

In whose hearts secrets are still stored,
Where love is buried,
Now we wonder when to unbury memories
One by one
One moment a day

ویران
I wonder if this word in Urdu is suitable for this heartbreak
Will not be translated

Maybe abandoned?
But hearts still resides here.

There are ghosts by these doors.
By the windows
And in the red carpet room
Where withering pasts frequent

On Thursday, they all say
The spirits visit home.'
I ask
Where will you visit?

Where do we return when
The homes we leave
To houses become?



Figure 18, Dinner For one - Dasterkaan Kufic
Calligraphy, 2021

DINNER FOR ONE



Figure 19 - Dinner for one- Hand and dasterkhaan, 2021

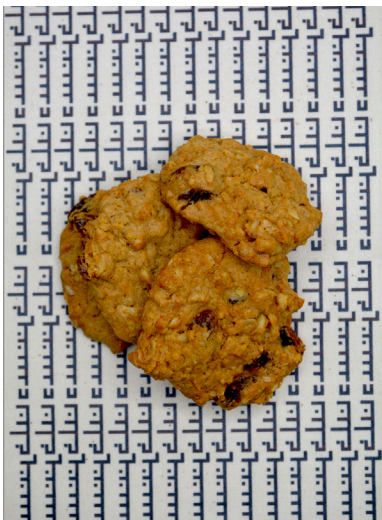


Figure 20, Dinner for one- Cookies on dasterkhaan, 2021

Over the centuries, many religions and communities have relied on symbols in the form of both narratives and images to represent realities that are difficult or impossible to express in words. These are not to be taken as literal truths but as pointers in a certain direction.(Fontana, 2019)

I digitally illustrated visuals inspired by the poem and transferred them onto Karandi - cotton muslin fabric using a heat transfer machine. First digital designs are printed on A4 size heat transfer paper. Each printed design is then placed on top of a cut fabric piece and carefully placed into an already preheated - heat transfer machine at 400 Celsius. The fabric is placed on a lower tray, and the upper tray is quickly placed on top of it - closing the machine like a sandwich maker for 40 to 80 seconds, depending on the design. As the steam comes out of the machine, signalling the design has been transferred.

The fabric is quickly removed from the bottom tray and put on a flat surface. The heat transfer paper is gently peeled off while still hot, beautifully transferring the design onto the fabric. The digital design is now a tactile artifact, an actual dasterkhaan on which food can be placed and eaten; new stories will be told and shared.



Figure 21- Dastaan- Free hand line
illustration, 2022

EMBODIED PRACTICES IN ACTION

DASTAAN

I have now understood that our bodies are home to information and experiences. Like a tapestry woven from exquisite gold thread, your life in your body is woven from your experiences, even the forgotten moments, and your learned and unknown lineage. Woven into the fabric of your body are all the positive, endearing experiences and a few that were traumatic and painful.

My body's texture also includes the cultural and ancestral threads of lived experiences passed down from previous generations in rituals, narratives and actions. All of these, by nature, create sacred space and time. Specifically, as I worked on my research and material practice during this program, the joy, knowledge, resilience, patience, and survival are present within me now as much as the places of grief, neglect, oppression and loss. This work serves as a movement and awareness - to weave all the learning and slowly patch the holes as a designer, social worker, and citizen of the world.

This series of tapestries visualize my narrative (Dastaan) of all the meaningful experiences, as discussed earlier in the paper. They can act as a guiding point for fellow designers to construct and see their research and practice through these six lenses; each dastaan is characterized by a unique symbol.



Community wisdom



Fostering empathy and connection



Spark self reflection



Embodied practice



Material Making



Silence

DASTAAN

- Community wisdom is an aggregated base of knowledge, skill, and intuition that I gained by becoming an active part of communities.
- Fostering empathy & Connection with individuals and with more than human beings.
- Spark self-contemplation to critically view your practice and identify the gaps with compassion that require work.
- Embodied practice helps us experience personal freedom. As we improve our awareness of our body's distinct and changing sensations, we also become aware of how we are moving, thinking, behaving or is something causing us pain, strain or not serving us. Embodiment involves listening to sensation without an objective which leaves us open to discovering new healthier feelings and more comfortable possibilities.
- The material practice allowed me to inhabit space with material configurations determined by cultural parameters. Translating my varied thoughts and experiences into tactile objects.
- Grounding yourself in silence

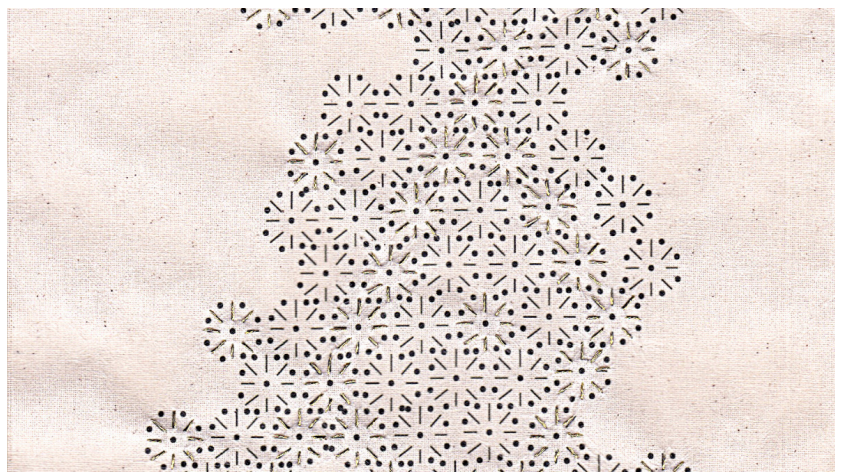


Figure 22- Dastaan- gold thread, 2022

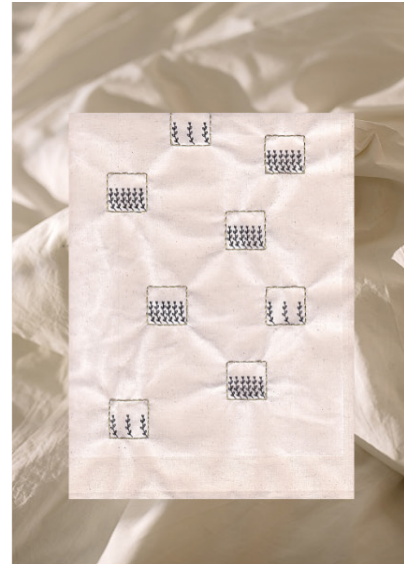


Figure 23- Dastaan- gold thread,2022



Figure 24- Dastaan- gold thread,2022

DASTAAN

The design process is similar to the project discussed earlier in this section titled “Dinner for one.” These tapestries are heat transferred on Muslin (Kharandi) Fabric. I used gold thread to do hand embroidery on top of visual tapestries and spent countless hours doing embroidery - each stitch acted as a meditative movement.

These experiences and narratives are as precious to me as gold would be to an elderly Pakistani woman. Gold is a valuable possession, an heirloom if gold is in jewellery, a prized possession that does not deteriorate over time and is protected. Joan Didion talks about how “stories are a way of understanding,” so these narratives are my way of learning, theorizing and thus knowing and working to change- our culture and ourselves. These stories awaken me to the existence and experience of others, especially those who are different from me. These narratives are gateways to understanding, and the more complex, nuanced, and multiple our stories become, the greater our experience becomes.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As far as I can see, my grief will never truly end. It may become softer overtime and more gentle, but it will undoubtedly feel sharp some days. It's simply how the absence of your loved one manifests in your heart. Some days heavy fog may return, and the next day it may recede. It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance-off of sorrow and joy. This research has allowed me higher emotional granularity and the awareness to become a conscious and thoughtful designer, social worker, friend and citizen of the world who is in tune with herself and her practice. It is critical to where I stand now.

There's always an under-appreciation for understanding ourselves and that reflective element that I believe is critical to being a designer; only then can you help, listen or even create or formulate work with others in all fields. As we recuperate from the pandemic, it is essential to share and have conversations about how we can continue engaging with the self.

It requires that we work and evolve the practice. At times, the impact and value of the practice will be evident, and other times it will be less. And just like the development of anything, we must persist, be patient with ourselves as we evolve, and know that it benefits (for ourselves and others), and it may take a lot of time.

I hope that my work will continue to enliven over time. The thinking that I have offered as a designer and social worker can be a starting point for designers to construct their own personalized tools. Which will mitigate the effect of grief and encourage the practice of self-care, which is a critical determinant of being a good practitioner and a conscious designer. May these practices move you toward your wellness and wholeness.



Figure 25- Dastaan- Line illustration,2022

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All Urdu to english meanings have been retrived from an online dictionary data base <https://www.urdupoint.com/dictionary/urdu-to-english.html>

GLOSSARY FOR URDU WORDS

Hausla - emotional courage

Hausla./ emotional courage , emotional strenght, capacity

Ghabraahat- anxiety

Ghabraahat ./ (noun, fem) . anxiety, unease, nervousness, panic

SannaaTa - a still silence

SannaaTa/ (noun, masc) / a silent stillness; can be used to describe a calm or eerie setting where there is no sound or movement.

Posheeda - concealed

Poosheeda. / concealed, hidden, kept secret; veiled

Bai-bass - helpless

Bai - bass / (adjective) . helpless, powerless, feeling of defeat

Himmat - emotional strength

Himmat (noun, fem). emotional strength - i.e that strength or firmness of mind that enables a person to encounter danger with courage or bear adversity without despondency; audacity

Parwaa - care

Parwaa (noun,fem) care [about something], concern

GLOSSARY FOR URDU WORDS

Ghamgheen- mournful

Ghamgheen. (adjective) mournful, sorrowful, full of sadness, grief stricken

Afsos - sorrow

Afsos. (noun, masc.) sorrow, regret, grief

Mayoos - despairing

Mayoos (adjective) in despair, dissatisfied, despondent, hopeless

Hairaan - Astonished

Hairaan (adjective) astonished, shocked, perplexed, amazed

Jazbaat - Emotions

Jazbaat (pl. Noun, fem.) emotions, passions, enthusiasm

Khushi - Happiness

Khushi : (Noun) Happiness , cheerful

Saabr - Patience

Saabr (Noun) patience, resilience

Malal - melancholy

Malal - (Noun) melancholy, regret, grief, sorrow / to be seized with sadness

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RESEARCH ETHICS



*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for
Research Involving Humans Course on*

*Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE). Certificate of
Completion.*

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