

Excerpt from MA Final Project Journal

Looking around my studio the walls are covered, haphazardly, with family photographs that I am using to inspire my project. They help give me direction, support, and a sense of joy. The images themselves are a snapshot of time that can never be recovered, a time that is lost but a memory that will also be retained whilst I am alive. This reinforced my thoughts that the work I am doing has value and will hopefully in its own way pass on the feelings I have to my children.

It was during this reflection time and with the image of an elderly couple on my mood board that I took extra time to look at a wonderful photograph of my grandparents celebrating their Diamond wedding anniversary on a sunny August day in their garden. The intimacy of the stitched image above reminded me of the closeness my grandparents once shared and how, with the passing of time, my own parents are now very elderly.



Figure 1 Nan and Grandad on a Sunny Day

Unfortunately, my confidence with drawing people is not good so I did not feel able to make a sketch from the photograph of my grandparents. However, I did have a photograph printed onto cotton fabric of my siblings and I playing in a paddling pool in my grandparent's garden. I decided to bring the image to life with coloured threads.

The result was really pleasing and brought the image to life. Like my red shoes memory from the proposal section of the previous unit, I remembered having a 'hand me down' swimsuit which was made from red cotton. It was stitched with sheering elastic to hold its shape and I find it intriguing that I remember details such as this and how the 'bobbly' fabric felt on my skin.

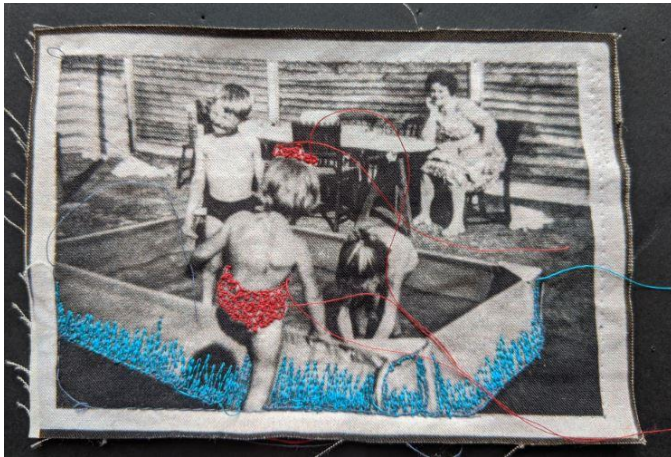


Figure 2 Photographs on Fabric with Embroidery

I embroidered the fabric photograph, once again leaving the stitching unfinished, and recreated the bobbles on my swimsuit. I particularly enjoyed doing this and that in this image, I had my back to the camera just like the elderly couple. I remember the sheer joy of playing in the paddling pool watched over by my grandparents.

Whilst embroidering the image above and thinking of the connection with my grandparents and siblings, I was reminded of how during the hot summer months my parents would often collect us from school in my father's Bedford van, and drive to a small pond in the New Forest. I vividly remember my mother laying out sandwiches on a picnic blanket whilst we splashed around with my father in giant black rubber inner tubes.



Figure 3 Similar Bedford Van

I chatted to my parents about this time in our lives and unfortunately, we could not find a photograph of the van itself. Together and with the aid of the internet we did find one that was very similar. Once I had the image, I made a sketch and began machine stitching it.



Figure 4 Bedford Van Stitching in Progress

I layered the fabrics and created an applique sample to reveal the base colours.



Figure 5 Final Stitched Bedford Van

Overall, I was quite satisfied with the outcome as it looks like a van that has had a life, it is not perfect and nor was it meant to be. I can almost see my friends and family packed inside as we head off to the pond for another summer adventure.