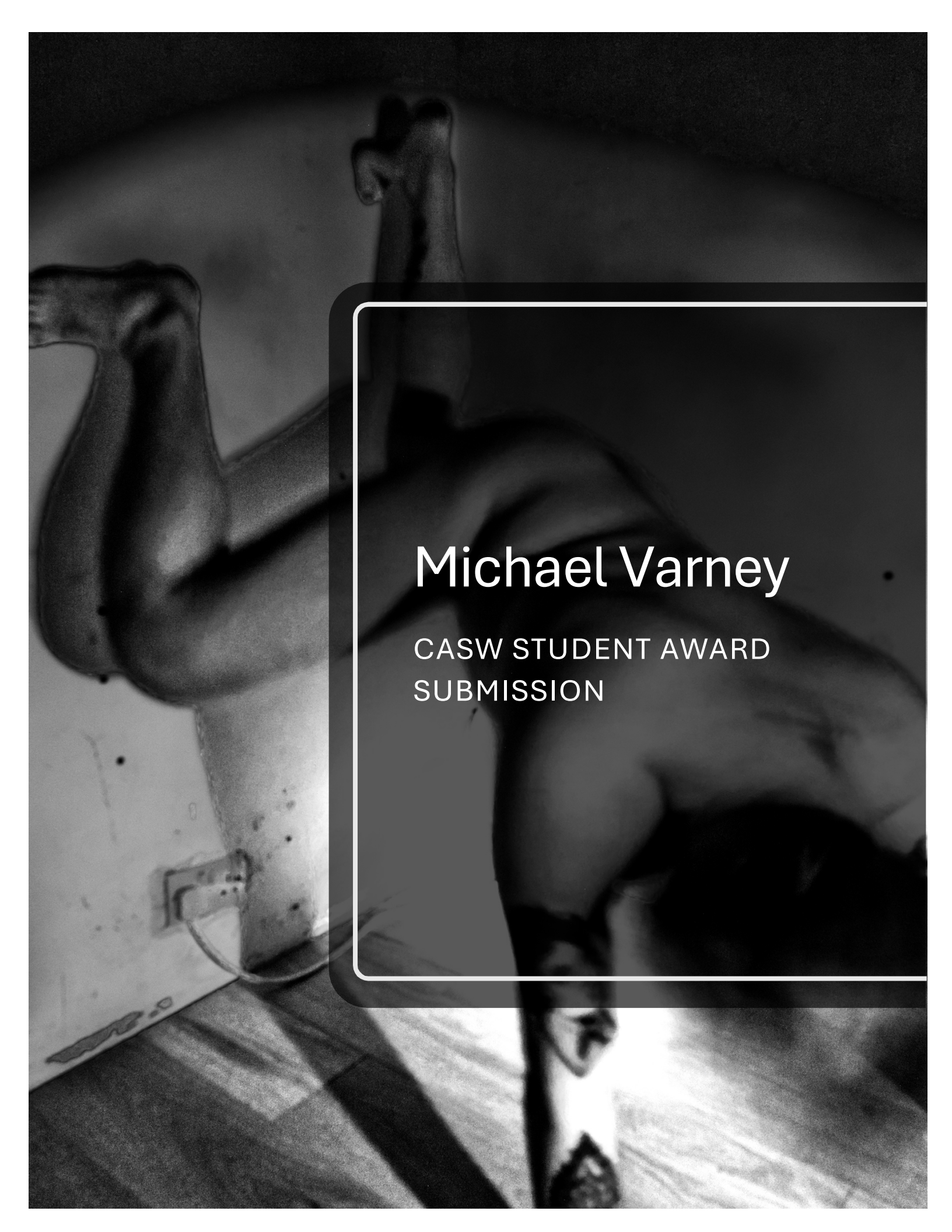




Michael Varney

CASW STUDENT AWARD
SUBMISSION

Exhibition Statement

My work has recently shifted focus to the subject of inner conflict. We all have a darkness within us and the relationship between this darkness is of importance and shouldn't be ignored.

The method I have adapted to truly encapsulate this conflict is to photograph at will and unplanned. These stills emerge from the moments where my severe sleeping issues, depression and body dysmorphia are most felt.

My intention for this work is to bring this conflict out in the open, to shed light on the darkness I hold within. To cast out the shackles of the struggles that have kept me prisoner for the past few years. To that end, I hope that bringing these moments into a more open, vulnerable state, will bring an absolution to the issues at hand.

Portfolio

At the beginning of the MFA, I was off to a great start; within my first few weeks, I had shot photography worth of sending to nature magazines and exhibition and was elated with the output. But something was missing, a satisfaction or perhaps meaning. This is when I realized that throughout my bachelor's degree and the outside world, I was creating work for the world and for the high marks, but not for myself overall. And this is the sole reason why I was a few marks from achieving a 1st for my BA.

So, I wanted to big deep, find some answers. And it sends me down a deep hole of self-reflection and curiosity. What I awoke in the darkness was the startling truth that I did not know myself and I hadn't known myself for the past 10 years. As my now ex partner said upon our breakup 'there are demons inside of you. There is a great man down there somewhere'.

Through this I found myself focusing on the process of Artistic Transcendence with some research of Jungian Theory; for me to break past the emotional barriers that had manifested over the years and to truly look at who I am. This was not going to be an easy challenge as it made me focus on key issues I had been ignoring for years (body dysmorphia, depression).

Suffice to say, my work shifted dramatically, and I had ended up in a very different place artistically compared to the photography I was originally shooting.



Bartering, 61 x 46 cm

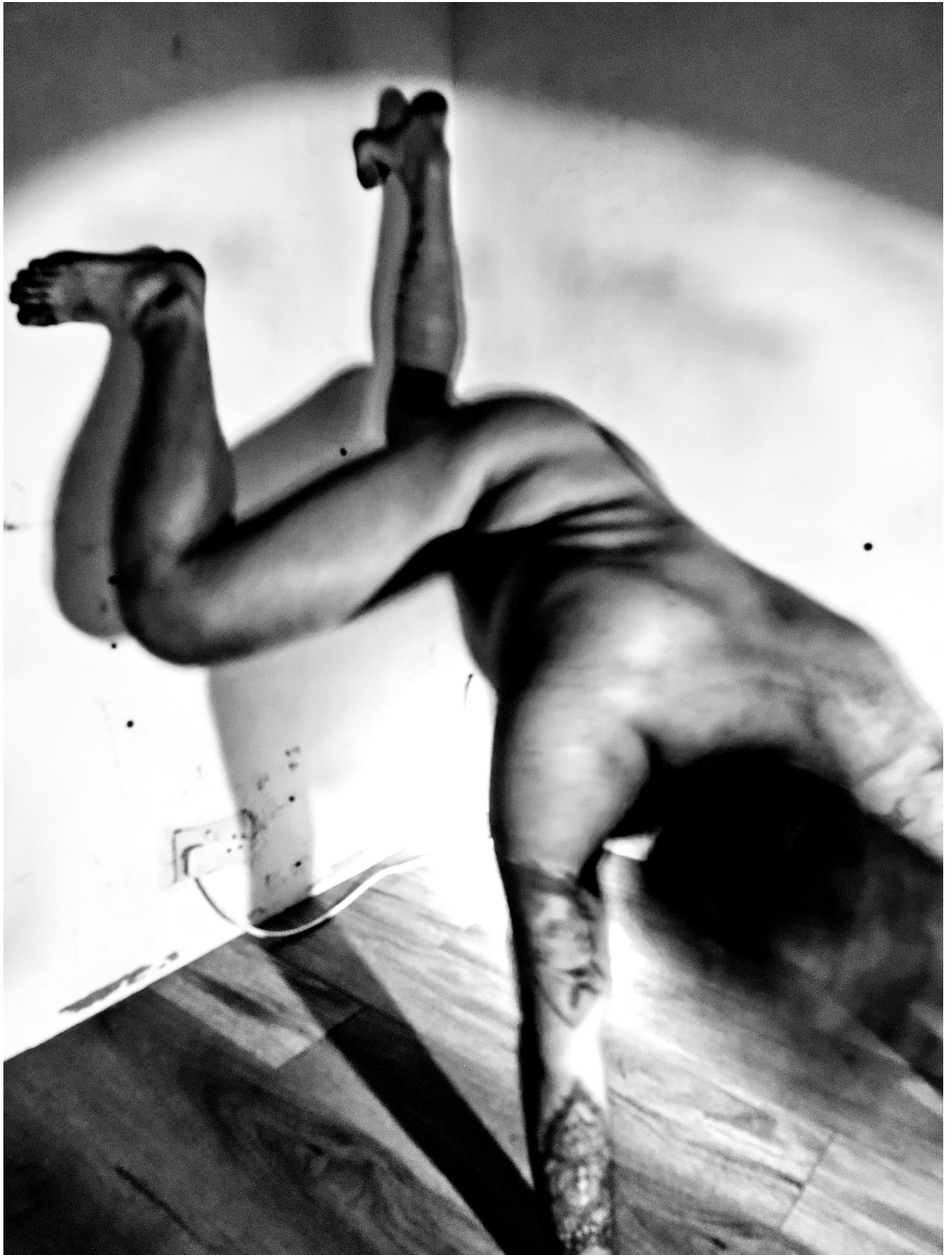
These photos come from a place where emotions are running high. In the middle of the night where sleep seems to stray – where I find myself questioning. Naked, I setup the camera, set to low shutter speeds and self-timers, letting the camera shoot. With a flashlight pointing at my body from the bed. Putting a spotlight on one of main issues (body dysmorphia), almost feels like a ritual in dispelling my fears or problems. To shine a light of the emotional darkness.



Ego death, 46 x 61 cm



Disavowed, 61 x 46 cm



rut, 61 x 46 cm

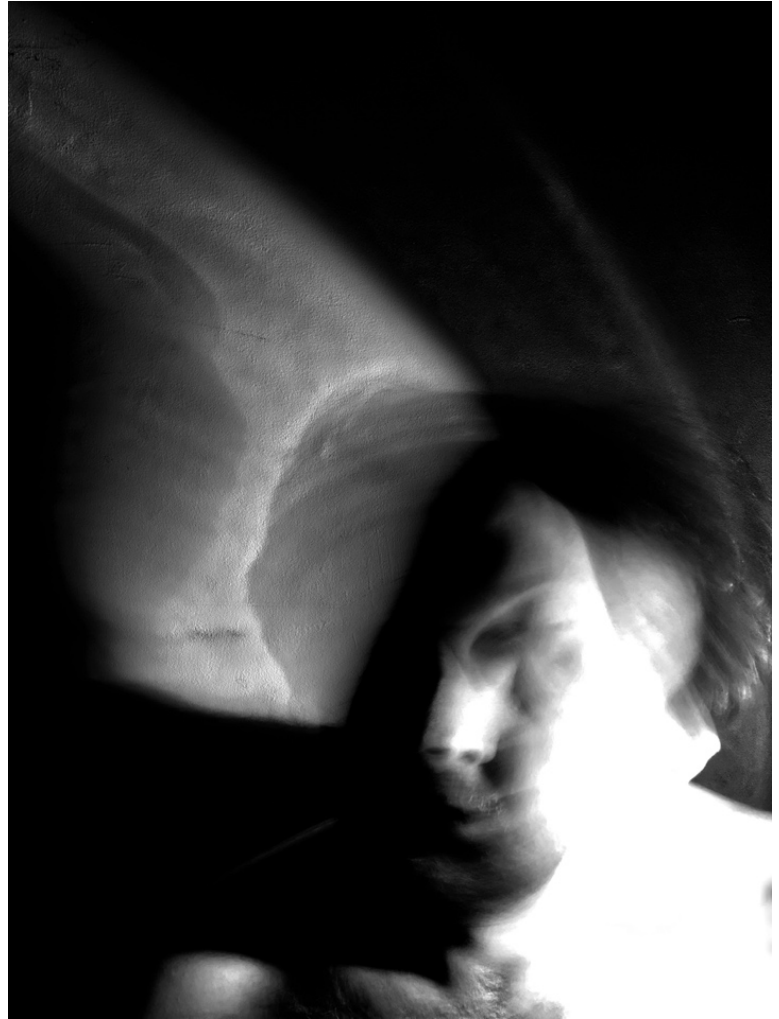


Left Behind, 46 x 61 cm

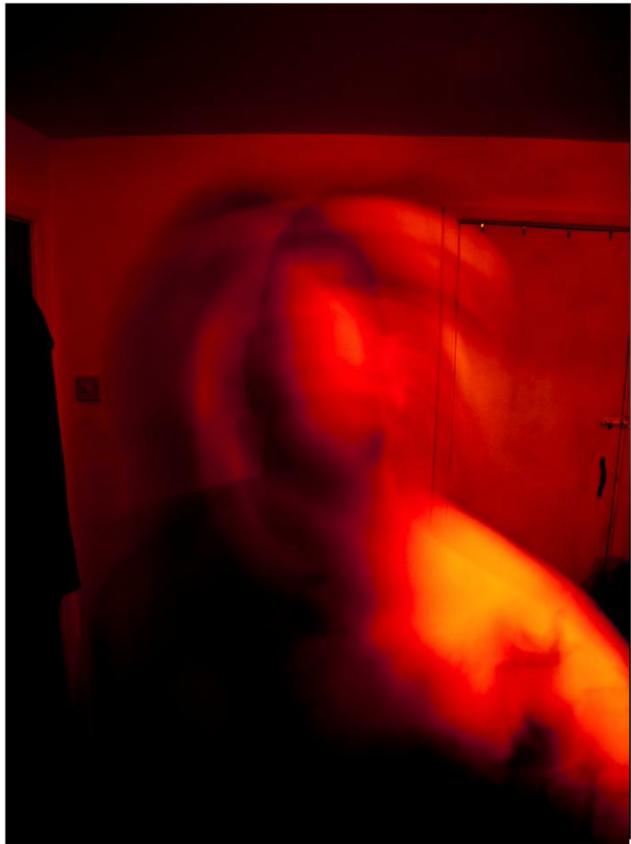


Installed Works (School of Art, Aberystwyth)

Secondary / Preparatory Works



These two works didn't make the final cut or the exhibition wall as I felt that they didn't add anything further to the overall message/theme. The rest of these shots are shots taken over the semester. *The next page is a slide from my portfolio which was ultimately the precursor for the final focus of the exhibition work.*



Brief Comments

This project overall, leads into my personal issues of Inner Conflict, Identify Issues and being stuck in the past or my own shadow. In a way, this project is helping in its own way with my dealing with these issues, almost like a form of therapy.

I like how this isn't perfectly in focus due to me crawling. Makes it feel other worldly/ethereal.

Originally, I was going to be using bandages, but I found the mask to be more useful for expressions. The mask has transformed the expressions I thought would be different into more unidentifiable looks. Something unknown to me but familiar.

The 4 shots from this shoot I found to be most impactful and stood out overall due to the poses/framing and expressions.

Title

A face (to face the pain)

Medium and Support

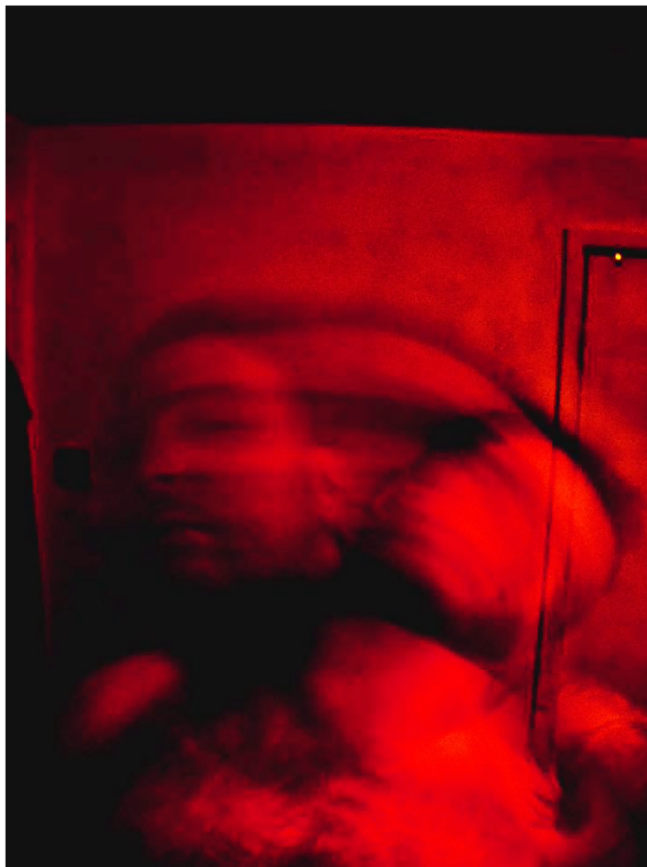
JPEG (edited from RAW)

Panasonic Lumix DC-G9

Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm

Dimensions

8x10"



Brief Comments

A look into my inner conflict with being stuck indoors due to becoming reclusive since moving away from my hometown 10 years ago. This is one of the personal issues I struggle with since the move.

Before the move, I was extremely sociable and was never home. Which is a stark contrast to now. I sometimes feel like I'm fighting with my own thoughts due to this. These images have a heavy influence from Franchesa Woodman's work but I in my own style.

Whilst editing this shoot, whether it was the Leica color science or the exposure editing, the reds became more pronounced. I found this fitted the mood even more.

Title

Shadow boxing

Medium and Support

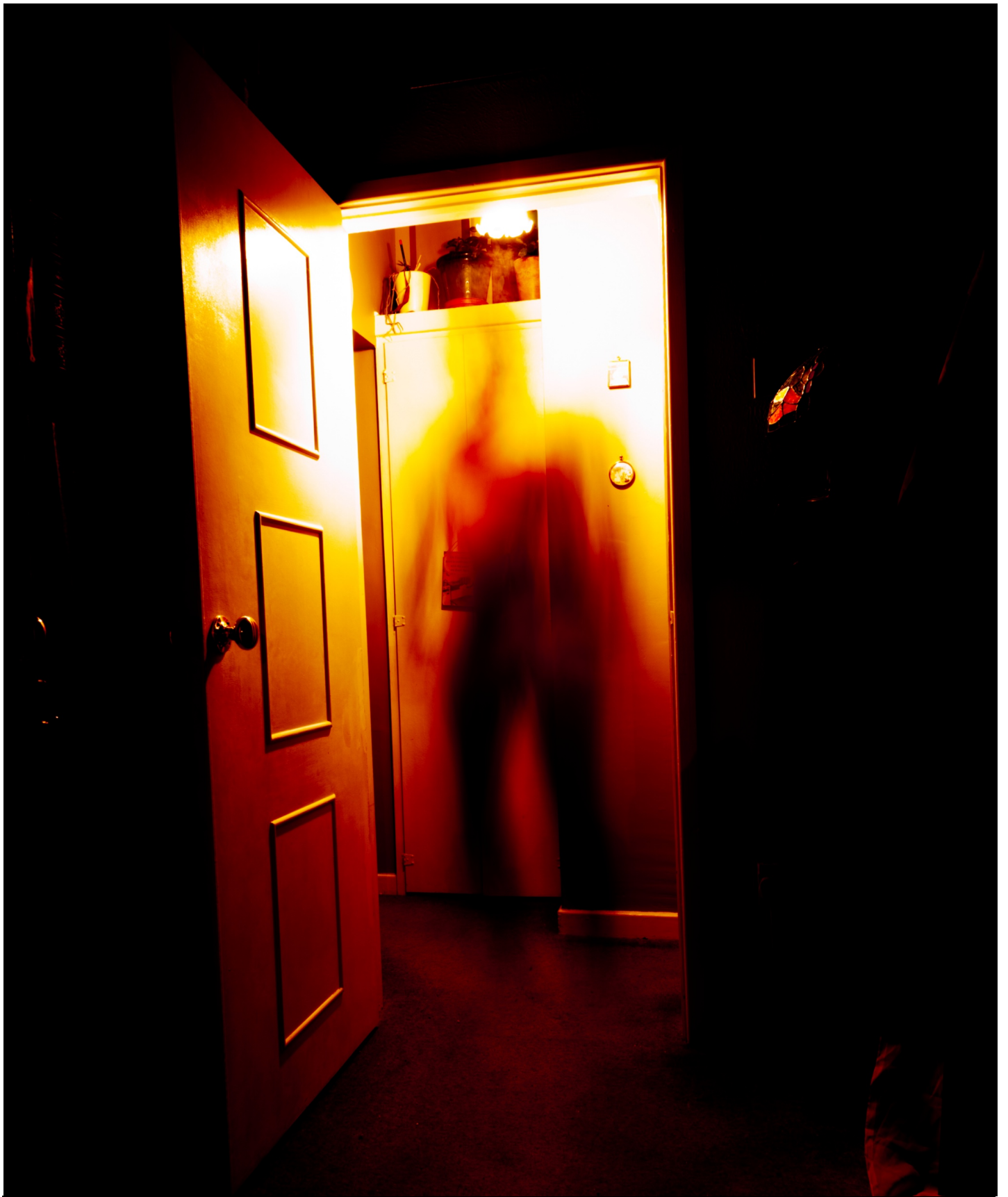
JPEG (edited from RAW)

Panasonic Lumix DC-G9

Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm

Dimensions

8 x 10 "







These shots are candid style shots showcasing the struggles mentioned in the statement. Sometimes you feel glued to the bed, unable to move due to circumstance. Sometimes It can be easier in the dark but how does one react when the light finally shines?

The use of fixed lighting from light the house fixtures gave a nice direction to this shot, and the pose doesn't feel forced – hence the inclusion. The others are based around the dysmorphia.





The masked being or the one forgotten in time. The past self that is now a husk.

During the portfolio module at the start of the MFA, the task of making preparatory works was our focus. To that end, I was in one of the worst states of my depression regarding my identity and the intense sleep

problems that arose. The 'masked being' was born from fixating on the past, the part of me that was left behind. These are the portfolio slides from this module. In the exhibition 1 module which follows on from the portfolio module, I saw that phase as a masked off approach towards the being.



Brief Comments

To introduce the project, it wouldn't be cohesive without some background of myself as an artist/photographer. For years, apart from a brief few moments, I was finding it difficult to output or create work that truly resonated with myself. Through a moment of transcendence, I have landed myself on a topic and theme that is personal to me, and I wish to share through photography and film.

For many years now I have found myself unrecognizable when I look into the mirror and fixated on the past whilst being constantly stuck in a loop of feelings of abandonment by others and my own mistakes. This project is focusing on the archetypes (Jungian terms) that have sprouted up in my mind (the old me) which is stuck and fighting to be set free from the Shadow. I feel like I have lost the old me or piece of myself that I am now fighting to realize again.

Title

Whispers at 4am p.1

Medium and Support

JPEG (edited from RAW)

Panasonic Lumix DC-G9

Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm

Dimensions

8x10"



Brief Comments

This led to the birth of the archetype named the masked/banded being, or how I view the part of me that I have lost over time due to neglect. The masked being represents the past trapping my identity in its fabric. With the current me screaming to be let go. The expressions that appeared feel raw and unplanned.

This shoot was going to be shot on 120mm film, but I couldn't afford that method at the time, and I only had three weeks left – this will be replicated in 120mm eventually in a studio setting. These could be seen as a digital equivalent of what is yet to come in January onwards. But due to the quality of the expressions, I found them fit to be included in the main submission.

Title

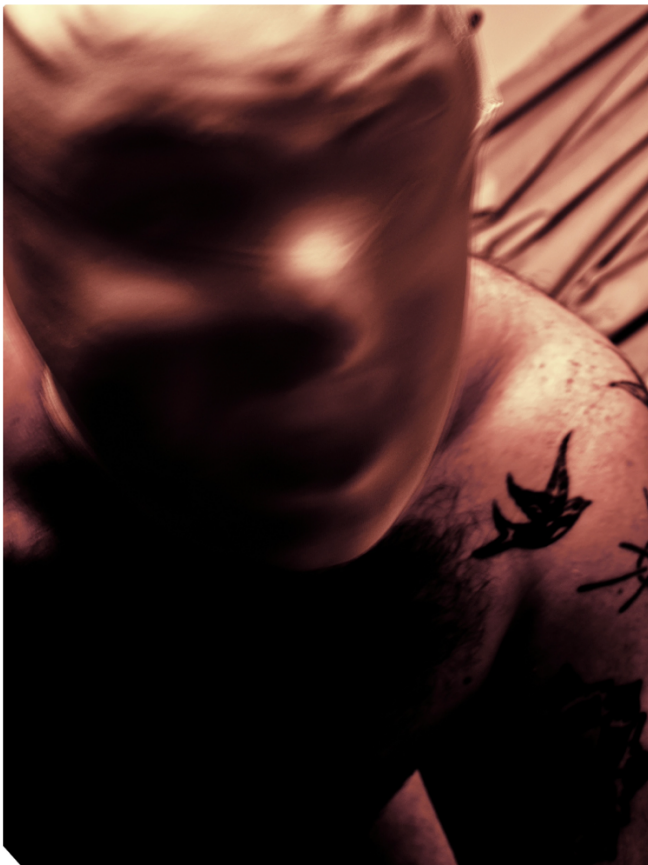
Whispers at 4am p.2

Medium and Support

JPEG (edited from RAW)
Panasonic Lumix DC-G9
Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm

Dimensions

8x10"



Brief Comments

I found this shot to be very expressive; I surprise myself in the ways I can see myself in this viewing format. Its disturbing what came out but provoking to me. The muted color pallet I have gone for is also effective I found due to it making it feel clinical and void of color but not B&W.

This shot is arguably the best out of the 3 selected due to the subtle prolonged exposure and head jerking movement. It was a surprise too find this on the camera. The biggest thing I have learnt is that the upstaged shoots create the best results.

Title

Whispers at 4am p.3

Medium and Support

JPEG (edited from RAW)
Panasonic Lumix DC-G9
Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm

Dimensions

8x10"

**Brief Comments**

Not perfectly in focus due to motion but this adds to the eeriness.

Title

Whispers at 4am p.4

Medium and Support

JPEG (edited from RAW)

Panasonic Lumix DC-G9

Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm

Dimensions

8x10"

**Brief Comments**

Stills from a trial of an unplanned performance in front of the camera. I have found that the stills work just as well as the video.

I discovered that capturing stills from video is more effective than planning shoots or burst shoots from a DSLR/mirrorless. This allows me to scrub through the timelines of the footage and find expressions that stand out to me the most.

I'm not sure what the fascination with the collages is and where it is coming from, but I find they speak more words than one I have found

Link to video: .

https://prifysgolaber-my.sharepoint.com/:v/g/personal/miv7_aber_ac_uk/!QAEXOWFde0yRbuEa7KBou8xATh9RSXnLRhIYNSx7brqtDA?e=S5Szbh

Title

null

Medium and Support

Lumix DC-G9

Leica 12-60mm

MP4 / JPEG Collage

Dimensions

Digital Film Strip

4 x 4 (x6)



Self Portrait, 46 x 61 cm

Where the theme began. By being unafraid of performing with my physicality.
Learning to let go of my fears. My own Transcendence.





