

SUMMARY

Phototherapy in Alleviating Anxiety Disorders and the Development of Self-Image /

Photography Installation “Mindscape”

My final thesis explores the usage of phototherapy as a creative method for alleviating anxiety disorders and supporting the development of a healthier self-image. Combining theoretical analysis, personal experience and practical work. Seeing how visual self-expression can be an effective alternative to traditional therapy in managing emotional well-being.

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health issues today, affecting millions worldwide. These disorders often result in persistent worry, panic attacks and weakens our ability to function daily. Based on both personal experience and academic research, the thesis argues that creative practices can provide meaningful ways to process and regulate difficult emotions. By engaging in a visual language, people may access and express feelings that are often hard to put into words.

The theoretical part of the thesis introduces the psychological foundation of anxiety and the role of identity has on shaping one's self-perception. It explores how anxiety can distort one's self-image and sense of belonging. Improving self-awareness is a helpful way to reduce anxiety symptoms. Focusing on art therapy, particularly phototherapy, a form of creative expression where self portraits can be used as a therapeutic medium. Describing the different forms of therapy - some done together with a therapist's guidance and the other ways being independent practices. Using it also as a tool for my thesis artwork. Offering alternative phototherapy ways based on British photographer Jo Spence notes from her book about phototherapy. Spence being a key figure in the development of phototherapy and reclaiming identity through self-portraits.

The personal component of the thesis being deeply rooted on my own experience throughout years. Writing about my journey through anxiety, panic attacks and my therapy, until I found my way into creating art to express my deepest feelings. Reflecting on my way through early signs of emotional struggle, the impact of perfectionism and social expectations. Discovering methods of self-care throughout years that have helped build emotional resilience. Techniques such as box breathing and the five senses grounding exercise.

The practical work is a photo installation “Mindscape”. Consisting of a large-scale black and white self-portrait as a base for the projected video and audio composition. The project is being developed over time. The process included conceptual planning, studio photography, digital editing, sound recording and video montage. The installation shows around 500 self-portraits in a stop-motion creation. Showcasing the emotional turbulence associated with anxiety, representing rapid emotional shifts and fragments of anxious thinking.

The creative process of doing the installation serves as a form of self-therapy. Exposing my vulnerable and authentic self to the public. Challenging me to let go of my perfectionism and create honest emotional reflection. Inviting the viewer not to only witness but to relate, empathize and consider their own emotional mindscape.

In conclusion the thesis demonstrates how phototherapy can support emotional healing. Understanding oneself inner turmoils and offering an expressive outlet for letting go of these emotions. Providing a model for how artistic practice can serve as both a personal coping mechanism and a catalyst for social awareness. Through theory, practice and lived experience I aim to inspire broader acceptance of creative therapies in mental health care and validate anxiety disorders.