

Work in Progress Portfolio Assignment

Collaboration and Professional Locations PHO740

MA in Photography- Falmouth University

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Beyond the Binary:

- Rifath's story



In this project, I bring my skills as a portrait photographer, but the real heart of it lies in letting Rifath take the lead—he shapes the story,

and I bring it to life visually, blending his raw expressions with my creative perspective,

- at the end you will help us complete it.

Rifath's journey is one of profound transformation, moving beyond societal binaries to embrace his authentic self. His story resonates deeply with me.

Acting was his first love, his first escape. On the stage, he becomes someone else—bolder, stronger, and free from the questions and fears that loomed in the shadows of his everyday life. The stage lights didn't just illuminate his performances; they shielded him from a reality he wasn't ready to face. For a while, life could be lived through the safety of a script.

But life has no script. There were moments when the weight of it all felt unbearable. Rifath told me about the day he drank a whole bottle of baby cologne. At the time, it seemed like the only way to silence the confusion and pain. It was a cry for help but also a turning point. Surviving that moment, he saw himself differently—not as weak, but as someone desperately searching for clarity and for a way to understand a world that felt overwhelming.

His first stirrings of self-discovery came during his teenage years, when he found himself drawn to the senior boys at school. Their confidence and ease captivated him, but those feelings also terrified him. They were unfamiliar, unspoken, yet undeniable. He describes those days as a swirl of emotions—curiosity, fear, and a strange kind of aliveness never felt before.

At home, he sought answers in the mirror, whispering thoughts he wasn't ready to say aloud. But when the mirror didn't respond, he turned to other objects—his calendar, the ticking wall clock—anything that wouldn't judge him, anything that might somehow offer solace. He even tried writing in a diary, pouring his heart into the pages. Yet the act of seeing his thoughts in black and white was too much to bear, and he tore the pages apart, unwilling to confront what he wasn't yet ready for.

The beach became his safe haven. Dancing by the waves, with music in his ears, he found a rhythm that drowned out the chaos in his mind. But then came the lockdown, and with it, isolation at his uncle's house in the remote east of Sri Lanka.

His phone became both a lifeline and an escape. Social media became his stage when the real one was out of reach, a place where he could perform the version he wanted others to see.

And then he found a connection that changed everything. Late-night texts and long phone calls with someone who saw him for who he truly was—not as an actor or just as another person, but as Rifath. For the first time, he felt understood and loved, and that connection became a source of strength.

Rifath now finds a sense of purpose in his work as a nurse, healing others while continuing to heal himself.

His journey came a full circle recently when he marched at his first Pride parade.

Dancing in the streets, under the rainbow flag, he felt a freedom he had never known. It wasn't a performance—it was real.

For the first time, he wasn't hiding. He was living.

Let me Become Someone
else while finding
Pieces of myself



Figure 1

பெண்கள் சாக
விரும்பவில்லை
புணர்
பெண் வலியை
பெண் வேண்டும்



Figure 2

I didn't ^{know} want to die
I didn't know
what to call it the



Figure 3

I was searching for someone in that mirror



Figure 4

ଅନ୍ତରାଳର ଅନ୍ତରାଳ
ଅନ୍ତରାଳର ଅନ୍ତରାଳ
ଅନ୍ତରାଳର ଅନ୍ତରାଳ



Figure 5

இருபாண்டலி
பிரமண கழிப்பு
பாதிவண
நல்லது.



Figure 6

நான்
விண்ணுலகைப் பார்
என்பது நினைவு மயம்
இந்த நிலைமை
என்பது நினைவு மயம்
என்பது நினைவு மயம்
என்பது நினைவு மயம்
என்பது நினைவு மயம்



Figure 7

But

My phone became
a doorway to the
world - and to
Myself.



Figure 8

അഭിനയിക്കുന്നവർ
കൂടെ കൂടെ
അഭിനയിക്കുന്നവർ
കൂടെ കൂടെ,
കൂടെ കൂടെ
കൂടെ കൂടെ
കൂടെ കൂടെ
കൂടെ കൂടെ



Figure 9

செய்யும் எனது
பாய்ச்சலி
வேண்டும் என
நான் நினைக்கிற
-எனது சினை
நான் செய்கிற
பாய்ச்சல்கள்



Figure 10

In healthy others
I found pieces
of myself.



Figure 11

A joy

I never knew I could
feel, shared
with a community
that embraced
every part of
me.



Figure 12

● Title the images, now it's your story

- **Figure 1:**

"The stage was my first escape, my sanctuary. Every line I delivered, every role I played, let me become someone else while finding pieces of myself."

- **Figure 2:**

"I didn't want to die—I just wanted the pain to stop. That small bottle held both a cry for help and a moment of clarity."

- **Figure 3:**

"I didn't know what to call it then, but the flutter in my chest whenever they walked by—it was something new, something terrifying, and something beautiful."

- **Figure 4:**

"I'd look at my reflection and speak aloud, as if saying the words would make them real. I was searching for someone in that glass—I think it was me."

- **Figure 5:**

"The days blurred into one another, yet I found myself speaking to the clock as if it could answer me. Time was my only companion."

- **Figure 6:**

"Every word I wrote felt like a truth I wasn't ready to face. Tearing those pages was easier than letting them exist."

- **Figure 7:**

"The waves and the music blended into one, carrying me far away from everything I didn't want to feel."

- **Figure 8:**

"The lockdown trapped me at my uncle's house, but my phone became a doorway to the world—and to myself."

- **Figure 9:**

"Social media was my stage, but the audience saw only what I wanted them to see. Every reel was a performance, every post like a validation."

- **Figure 10:**

"His messages lit up my phone, and suddenly, the distance between us felt like nothing. For the first time, I felt seen."

- **Figure 11:**

"Every patient's story reminded me of my own resilience. In healing others, I found pieces of myself."

- **Figure 12:**

"Dancing at Pride felt like freedom—a joy I never knew I could feel, shared with a community that embraced every part of me."