

## **Inside the Ruminating Mind: A Series of Photographs Visualizing the Anxieties of Various People in Asia Pacific College**

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### **Abstract**

In today's world, we live in a society where mental health issues such as anxiety are often present yet ignored and misunderstood. Byung-Chul Han's "The Burnout Society" labels us as the "achievement society". With the lack of mindfulness in our lives, we unknowingly develop an unhealthy state of mind, developing anxiety in the long run. Having gone through this struggle too, I aim to spread a message of hope, change, and awareness of practicing mindfulness to cope with anxiety by creating a series of photographs as my multimedia output. With the support of the Symbolic Interaction theory, visualizing the anxieties of various people through this project hopefully will help others realize that they are not alone in their struggle. The use of conceptual and cinematic photography will enable me to convey these collective ideas to further visualize these experiences into photographs. I will not further discuss mindfulness and anxiety in a deeper context. But in return, I will delve more into the creative output and process itself.

**Keywords:** anxiety, mindfulness, cinematic photography, conceptual photography, the burnout society, Symbolic Interaction theory

### **Introduction**

Back when I was in High School, I always considered myself as the average type of student. I did not have that much to offer, nor did I have much to lose. I never failed any of my classes nor did exceedingly well at it. I was just this plain old shy, closeted, lonely, introverted-self years ago. But then at some point, my father had a lot to say about my studies. He knows that I am doing fine at school, but there was something in between his words hinting that I should aim higher. Sure, my grades are satisfactory, to say the least, but it suddenly pushed me to have a goal to reach and an achievement to attain. For once, I wanted something more in my life, something more than being complacent or stagnant. It gave me a purpose.

Slowly, I took small steps as I got out of my comfort zone. It started as simple as improving my handwriting, organizing better notes, creating study habits, and getting inspiration from people I look up to. It turned my academic life around.

I was getting the hang of it. It kept on going up until I reached the point where I could not believe that I had achieved what seemed impossible for me to achieve. For once, I made it on top of the class, second to the top, specifically. It made me realize how much potential I had if I continued what I had started for myself. For once, I somehow stood out from the crowd. I could not believe that in just a year, I achieved so much. My teachers and peers started to notice me. In every contest that I was in, I became competitive. I celebrated every little achievement as if it were my biggest. Then, upon receiving the news that I was included as part of the honors class next school year left me speechless. It felt surreal that a wish that was long hidden and buried inside me just came true. It contained the best of the best students. "I could never be part of it", I said. But fate said otherwise.

Things were going as I expected. However, as soon as I entered the honors class in tenth grade, I did not realize how stressful it was to keep my momentum going. Everything that was happening inside that classroom all fell on me so suddenly. I kept on having culture shock after culture shock in my first few months with the smartest of the bunch. As time went by, I had already had so much anxiety and developed the habit of overthinking. Not to mention that I was very much insecure about my appearance, especially having to wear a brace every day since eighth grade because of my scoliosis and that my problems with my acne were at their peak. I was always hurting and sweating so much because of how tight and hot it gets wearing it for the sake of avoiding any curve progression, or even worse, surgery.

The pressure to take everything all at once was too much, so I started breaking down alone in my bed more often at night. Thoughts keep on swarming inside my head: "How should I do this? Why am I not getting better at this despite my efforts? I thought I was smart. Do I even belong here? Why do I even have a crooked back in the first place? I am so ugly, why did I even exist? I am no one's favorite person, I am so stupid and useless." These were some of the many negative thoughts that were spiraling inside my head most of the time. I kept on worrying even about the smallest of things and I forgot to enjoy my life despite the hardships.

Then one day, I stumbled upon a song that comforted me and helped me go through tough times. It led me to slowly recognize these thoughts ruminating in my mind and the emotions I felt as the song played. It came from one of my favorite cartoons named "Steven Universe", created by Rebecca Sugar, who also made the song. There was this one episode titled "Mindful Education" that was centered around Steven and his best friend Connie learning how to understand and confront their feelings as they share experiences about dwelling in the past and being anxious. Through the help of Garnet (one of the Crystal Gems and protagonists), she begins to sing "Here Comes a Thought." The lyrics of this song are what made an enormous impact on me because it was sung in a way that also helped me face my thoughts and emotions as the lyrics of the song play by:

"Here comes a thought that might alarm me.

What someone said and how it harmed me

Something I did that failed to be charming.  
Things that I said are suddenly swarming.

And, oh, I'm losing sight, I'm losing touch.  
All these little things seem to matter so much.  
That they confuse me  
That I might lose me

Take a moment, remind yourself.  
To take a moment and find yourself.  
Take a moment and ask yourself.  
If this is how we fall apart

But it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not.  
It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay.  
I've got nothing, got nothing, got nothing, got nothing to fear.  
I'm here, I'm here, I'm here.

And it was just a thought, just a thought, just a thought, just a thought, just a thought.  
It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay.  
We can watch, we can watch, we can watch, we can watch them go by  
From here, from here, from here

Take a moment to think of just.  
Flexibility, love, and trust  
Take a moment to think of just.  
Flexibility, love, and trust"

I decided to create this project that stems from my personal experience with overthinking, anxiety, and mindfulness as it changed the way I see the world and see

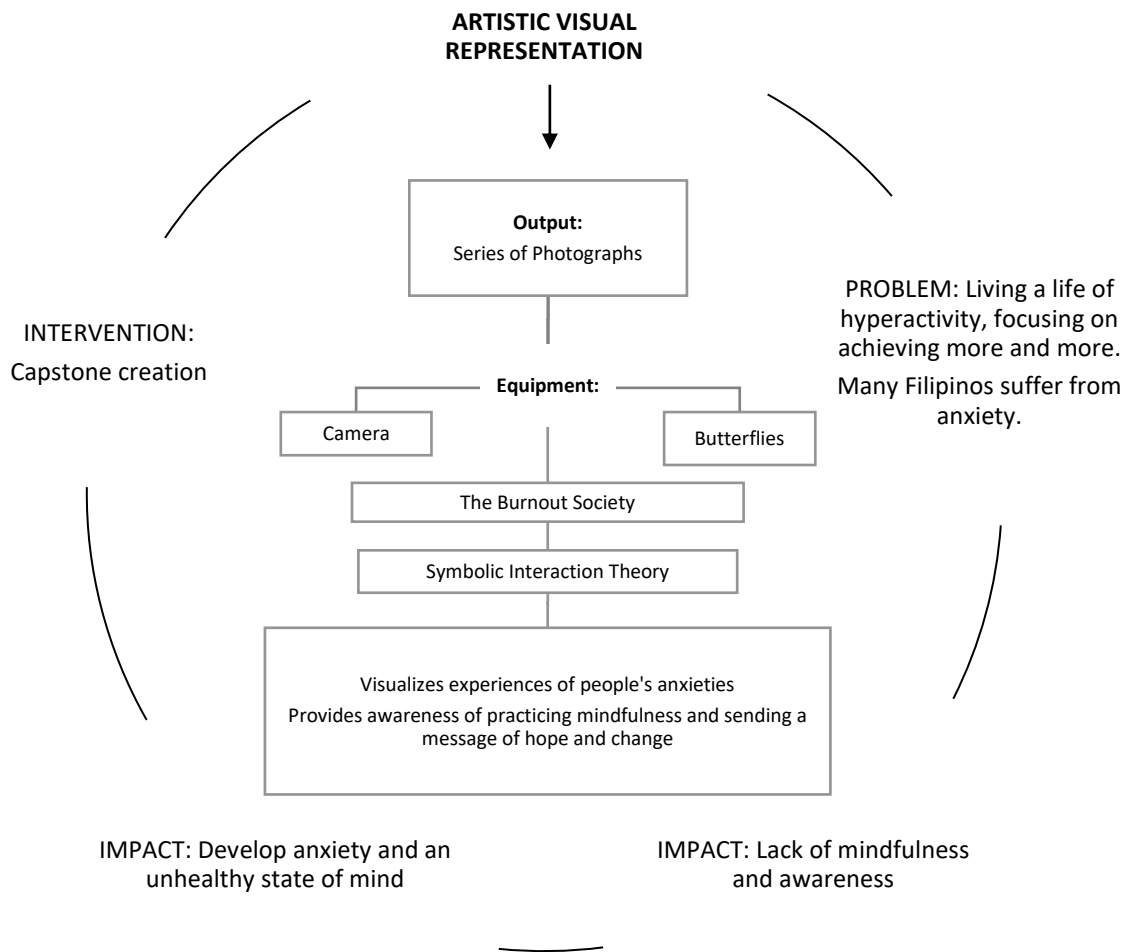
myself outside my little ruminating mind. The song “Here Comes a Thought” is one of the reasons why I am inspired to do so. But through those years as well, there were other factors that also helped me change the way I recognize, see, and handle my anxiety. I realized that I’m not alone in this journey and that there will always be people who will come into my life, as support systems and fellow companions who are also experiencing anxiety like me. Because like them, I am also experiencing life, facing the unknown every day, and it is important to acknowledge these things because it also serves to be more mindful and to keep us grounded in the present.

My approach to photography revolves around the cinematic, minimalist, and portrait type of styles. I always felt the need to capture photos that show a certain emotion that can be felt at the heart of the viewer, and at the same time emulate certain scenes. That said, I wanted to express these anxieties to spread a message of practicing mindfulness, hope, and change to others using photography. At the same time, I want to consider things by utilizing conceptual photography, cinematic photography, and symbolism to better understand how I want to convey these images that evoke feelings and meaning in every shot possible.

According to "The Burnout Society" by Byung-Chul Han (2010), he specifies that there are 2 kinds of life, namely the *Vita Activa* (Active Life) and *Vita Contemplativa* (Contemplative Life). It is understood that the active life (*vita activa*) in any form generates more constraints as opposed to having the freedom to do anything. The “achievement society’s” inability to say no in many situations has allowed many to live a life of hyperactivity and non-stop work. This, in return, puts society in focus on achieving more, leading to a toxic amount of positivity and a constant need to work, as if we could never allow ourselves to do nothing nor give ourselves the time to pause and see the present. On the other hand, Han (2010) argues that the "Active Life" requires a balance with the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) as it gives importance to the notion of “seeing.” This means that learning to see also means learning how to be calm, patient, and letting things be. Resisting the ever-crowd-intrusive stimuli brought by the *vita activa*. Hence, it reminds society to pause and devote a moment to doing nothing as we become more conscious of how tired we are in the present.

In connection, the Symbolic Interactionist Theory gives emphasis on meanings attached to the human interaction. Such interactions include verbal, non-verbal, and symbols. This form of exchange in communication by utilizing language and symbols in our lives, is believed to be as way for one to “make sense of their social worlds” (Lumen Learning, 2024).

Many of us suffer from anxiety but some of us are unable to seek help, recognize, and stay grounded and present in the moment. Anxiety is more than just what we see in the surface, and it is out there and present in our lives.

**Figure 1***Creative Framework*

This creative framework visualizes the process of how I came up with the idea of creating this project that aims to provide a visual representation of the anxieties of people who have participated in the art-making process. It took some time to apply some major changes with how I wanted this project to represent. At first, it was just about visualizing my experiences with anxiety by showcasing my thoughts and emotions. But as time flew by, it lacked meaningful representation because it only showed my own narrative. Which is why I adjusted some of the elements of this project and decided to include other people's stories as I delve into visualizing their experiences through photography.

To better understand this framework, both The Burnout Society and the Symbolic Interaction Theory are theoretical frameworks that support each other. The Burnout Society emphasizes the realities of the “achievement society” in the so-called “active life.” Living a life focusing on “achieving” more gives the author the analysis that there should be a balance between our active life and the “contemplative life.” This contemplative life now emphasizes the value of mindfulness and awareness of the present because this lets us to pause and take a moment to live in the present, rather than focusing too much on what is behind or ahead of us. In connection with anxiety, Byung-Chul Han reiterates that being in the active life too much can lead to mental issues, which leads to the development of problems such as anxiety.

As such, to be able to visualize these anxieties through photography, the Symbolic Interaction Theory supports the first framework in this regard. We as a society give meaning to symbols which, in return, guides our behaviors. Interpretations vary from person to person, depending on how they interact with the environment and society.

### **Research Design**

In the Philippines, 3.1 million Filipinos suffer from anxiety disorders according to Venturanza (2019). According to recent statistics, a survey conducted by Rakuten Insight in May 2022 states that 63% of the respondents from the Philippines felt more stress and anxiety. The remaining 21% and 17% state that these respondents have the same level and lower level of stress and anxiety, respectively (Statista, 2023). Additionally, a study by Flores (2018) showed that among 1203 Filipino participants, 39% of them had anxiety, mostly coming from young adults. Furthermore, Dr. Anuj Gaba from the Philippine Mental Health Association states that majority of the people aged 15 to 20 years old are ones who are commonly experiencing or are diagnosed with problems with their mental health. However, persons outside of that age bracket can also be vulnerable to such cases (SunStar Publishing Inc., 2022).

With this data in mind diving into this concept, I have decided to conduct an interview with participants who are either diagnosed or undiagnosed with anxiety. The mode of conversation depends on the interviewee’s availability and preference to achieve the best results in gathering the needed inputs. Hence, they have the option to be interviewed either online or onsite. It is important for both the interviewer and interviewee to be as comfortable as they are during the narrative interview. A narrative interview focuses on the stories and shared experiences of the participants, which allows me to get a better grasp of how they see their anxieties in their lives and what it represents for them. This will be conducted with utmost confidentiality and with the consent of the respondents. Their personal information will not be revealed. Though, I will be asking for their permission as well if the participants are willing to be the model of their own experiences with anxiety. This is to further help send the core message of this creative project in hopes to also strengthen the connection of the photographs to the audience. If in case a participant does not give their consent due to personal reasons, I will be using a model to represent them as the subject of their photo.

To further explain the eligibility of those willing to be interviewed, diagnosed participants are individuals who are diagnosed with anxiety or have manifested anxiety-related symptoms based on a psychiatrist’s analysis. On the other hand, undiagnosed

participants are those who feel that they are experiencing or have experienced anxiety but are not diagnosed nor have sought professional help. This is to aid me in visualizing these anxieties and see if there is a difference in how they perceive and explain their journeys with anxiety. On that note, I have created a series of publication materials that will be publicly posted via Facebook. The details include a brief description of the project, as well as the eligibility and contact information for people who will be reaching out to me for the interview. Overall, I am required to interview 10 individuals: 5 diagnosed and 5 undiagnosed.

The series of photographs will be applying certain compositions, elements, and color grades related to photography, depending on the participant's answer regarding their visual representation of their anxiety and their growth. Their answers from the interview will serve as my basis on how I will be creating the rough sketches or visuals of the images as I continue to delve into the process of making the final output.

Basically, I have formulated twelve questions that are designed to have a smooth flow of conversation throughout the interview. It is important that the conversation to connect the dots from one question to another so that the answers can easily be said by the interviewee. These are categorized in this order: Introductions, Personal Experience, Visual Expression, Communication and Misunderstanding, Coping Mechanisms, Support Systems, Future Outlook, Learning and Growth, Symbolic Representation, and Final Message.

### **Introductions**

1. I want to understand how you experience anxiety. What is it like for you? How would you define anxiety in your own words?

### **Personal Experience**

2. How does anxiety affect you in general? (e.g., social life, self-esteem, daily activities)
3. In what ways does anxiety manifest itself in your daily life? Can you share specific situations or triggers that contribute to your anxiety?

### **Visual Expression**

4. When thinking about your experience with anxiety, is there a specific image, color, symbol, or object that comes to mind? If so, what is it, and what does it represent in connection to your journey with anxiety?
5. In an artistic context, envision your experience with anxiety as if it were captured cinematically, like a scene in a movie. How would you visualize this, considering the elements, mood, and composition that would best represent your journey with anxiety?

### **Communication and Misunderstanding**

6. Are there common misconceptions or misunderstandings about your anxiety that you would like to address?

### **Coping Mechanisms**

7. What coping mechanisms or activities that helped you manage anxiety?

### **Support Systems:**

8. Are there any specific individuals or support systems that play a crucial role in helping you navigate your anxiety? Why or why not?

### **Future Outlook**

9. Can you envision a future where your relationship with anxiety changes? Or has it already changed as we speak?

### **Learning and Growth**

10. What have you learned or discovered from your experiences with anxiety? Has it led you to a personal growth or change in your life?

### **Symbolic Representation (connected to their answer from Learning & Growth)**

11. If there is anything you believe that represents your growth with anxiety, what would it be and what does it represent?

### **Final Reflection**

12. As part of this project that aims to spread awareness of practicing mindfulness and conveying a message of hope and change in dealing with anxiety, what message would you want to share with others who might be dealing with anxiety as well?

Moreover, the interview questions that I will be mostly basing their answers from are as coming from Visual Expression, Learning and Growth, and Symbolic Representation.

As I discuss the details of the interview with a possible interviewee, I would send them the list of questions beforehand so that they can run through the list and make some preparations.

### **Target Audience**

The intended audience for this creative output will be the community of Asia Pacific College, including individuals who are experiencing anxiety (both diagnosed and undiagnosed). Although ideally speaking, this creative project still applies to an audience outside the community of the school such as the general public. I believe that most will be able to understand and relate with the photographs and the stories it holds. On the same note, I will also be gathering data from the same intended audience to be used as a basis for creating the photographs. It does not matter if most respondents come from a specific group or demographic within Asia Pacific College (student, professor, or staff), as it depends on the willingness of the person to be comfortable sharing their stories about their journey with anxiety. In other words, anyone from the Asia Pacific College community can participate in the project, if they meet the requirements for the interview.

### **Design Process**



Before this, my Pre-Production assets explain a slightly different concept for this project, but the core elements and message remain almost the same. At first, the project mainly focused on my personal visualization of anxiety. This is through a series of double-sided photographs visualizing a thought in one side of the photo, and the corresponding emotion on the other. This means all the photographs only revolved around me and my past experiences and how mindfulness has helped me cope with anxiety. In simple terms, that is how my anxiety journey is represented throughout the project initially.

However, as I thought more about the project, I felt more restricted than free when it came to expressing my ideas and creativity into this. Although I already made samples and prototypes of this concept, something was lacking still. Perhaps it was not as meaningful yet if I put myself in the shoes of the audience.

Now that there was a shift in the focus of the project, I decided to remove the concept of the double-sided photographs, then expanded my horizons by deciding to visualize the anxieties of people to bring in a deeper meaning into this creative project. By letting other people participate to be part of the art process, I felt that it serves a better purpose by showcasing not only my story, but other's stories and narratives as well. This, regarding relatability, becomes more than just a project that showcases a series of photographs.

Compared to the previous design process, I will no longer be using the nylon threads and sintra boards for the final output. Hence, it will now be presented as photographs printed on A2 size photo papers, and the frame will be custom made. But the color choices and palette would still remain as a guide and reference in my art-making process.

To conceptualize and create rough visualizations of these experiences, I will be basing the compositions based on their interview answers, more importantly on questions regarding visual and symbolic representations. My goal is to visualize the elements that these participants see when they experience anxiety and what it symbolizes when a certain event in their journey has already passed that had led them to a change or personal growth.

To achieve this, I would create these rough sketches during the interview. This will allow me to have a fresher perspective and understanding of their narratives as the interviewee and I go along with the conversation. Afterwards, I would want to discuss my preliminary analysis of the sketches that I have produced with the interviewee to give them a glimpse of my initial ideas for the photograph.

There will be instances, however, that the interviewee's answers to the questions about visual and symbolic representations have different meanings that can be hard or challenging to connect the dots with. To remedy this, I tend to think of the context metaphorically and discuss it with the participant as well, since this is a participatory art in the first place. If the interviewee agrees and collaborates with me as the artist, this will help me to formulate other sketches after the interview.

As soon as I accomplish the rough sketches, I would take some time to compile and gather some visual pegs online that would help me come up with a solid concept for each photo that I'll be visualizing. After which, I will then proceed with the test shoots, exploring different compositions along the way besides the pre-planned references. I believe that some good ideas will come up suddenly during the shoot, which is a positive sign for me in terms of the exploration of technique.

After finishing the test shoots for the day, I will be reviewing each photo and narrow down the ones that I will be editing. For the most part, I will use Adobe Lightroom for the basic adjustments, color grading, masking, and polishing. In some cases, I will be using Adobe Photoshop as well for the pictures that will be needing photo manipulation to achieve the desired outcome.

### **Research Questions**

In line with the background of the study and the theoretical framework, this thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How will the use of photography become an effective tool to visualize these anxieties in creating a message of hope, change and mindfulness to others?
2. What does it take for one that can face their anxieties as they get to know someone else's?
3. What is the impact of confronting our thoughts and emotions on dealing with anxiety and letting go of the past?

### **Pre-production**

The pre-production stage of this project involves research, conceptualization, prototype making, material canvassing, and location planning. In this stage, I have gathered multiple references that I found suitable for the context of the photographs. From visualizing thoughts and emotions to the various works and styles of different photographers. All the sources gathered ought to be aligned with how the project will be accomplished concerning all the elements considered in the execution of the photographs, and to better understand the meaning behind every component of the project. As such, I had to explore and play around the elements and colors that I wanted to use in visualizing the thoughts and emotions inside the images, as well as how I can execute the project as I create my initial prototypes as the basis for the final product. Do note that anything mentioned in this stage is purely conceptual and was subject to changes before the production stage.

One of the first steps in this stage was conceptualization. Long before this creative project was created, it started as a simple assignment from my digital photography class held by Jaime Pacena II. The objective was to make an advertisement photography conveying a certain message that I want the students at Asia Pacific College to see,

addressing a certain issue. The message of seeing thoughts just as they are and letting them go transcends the creative project that it is now (see Figure 1).

**Figure 2**

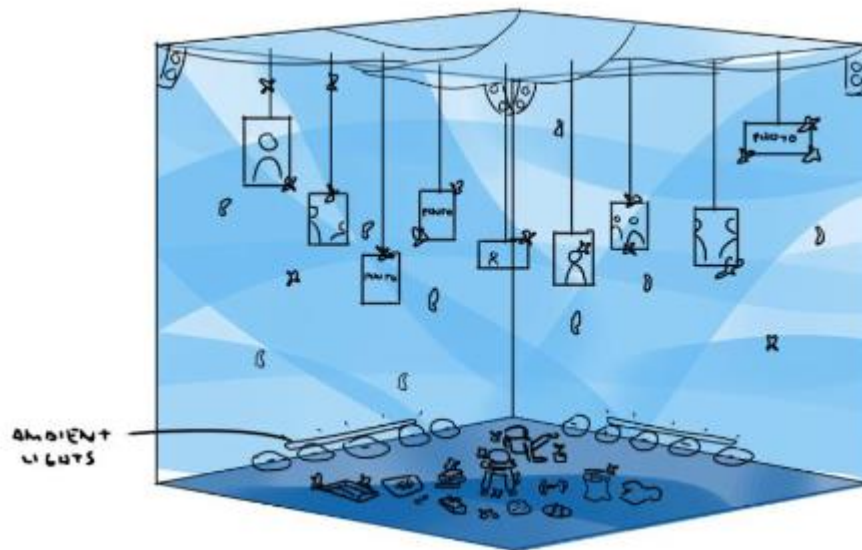
*“You are more than your thoughts. Let it go.”*



As months flew by, Jaime Pacena II's scenography class has further helped me in developing my art direction for this project. Starting with producing a set design related to this project's theme. Figure 2 visualizes that concept, featuring how the double-sided photographs are hung on the ceiling, the variety of orientations of the images, and the symbols or objects that contribute to the set's context. These objects are symbols also related to certain firsthand experiences that I plan to use in composing the desired image as part of the thought or emotion.

**Figure 3**

*A perspective view of the set design in relation to the creative project*



Do note that this set design is more of an exaggeration of how I want the photographs to be exhibited in the postproduction phase. The elements presented in Figure 3 that I feel are the most possible ones to be produced are those drawn near the ceiling. The nylon threads that will be used to hang the photographs as it is glued onto the sintra boards represents thoughts “floating” in the mind, as well as the notion of letting go of the past. The “invisible” strings give this effect of both unnoticed attachment and detachment of memories and experiences as we allow it to let it all go and allot new space for the present. Figures 4 and 5 show a scale model prototype of the final output as instructed from Rainer Cruz’s Studio Arts class.

**Figure 4**

*Prototypes of the double-sided photographs in A4 size*

**Figure 5**

*Hanging options for nylon threads to the sintra boards*

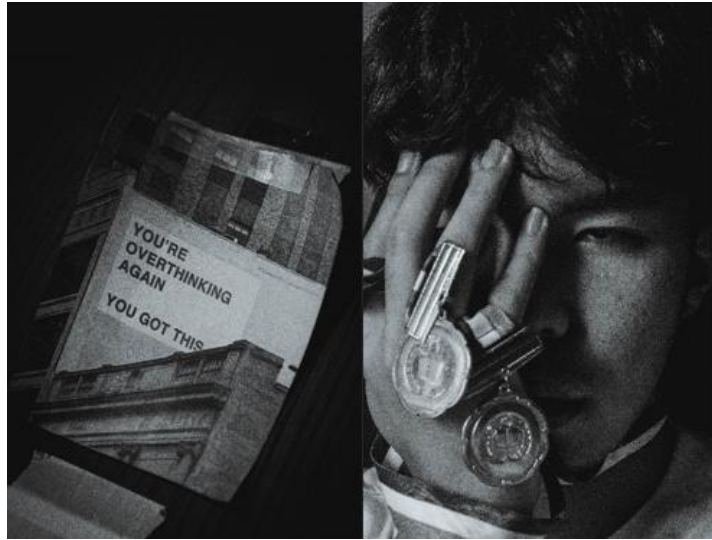


*Note.* Option 1 (left side) used hooks that are screwed onto the sintra board to tie the nylon threads afterwards. Option 2 (right side) shows a cleaner presentation as it uses screws to embed the nylon threads inside the sintra board.

Based on Figures 3 to 4, my initial plan in terms of color direction was to use black and white, removing color as an expression of my images (see Figures 6-8).

### Figure 6

*Pair #1 - My constant drive for academics, which also drove me into constant burnout.*



### Figure 7

*Pair #2 - My first struggle with scoliosis: Feeling suffocated trying to mend what's bent inside.*



## Figure 8

*Pair #3 - No matter what I put in my face; it just keeps on coming back. Just like the thoughts ruminating in my mind telling me that I should be ashamed to show the world how hideous I look in these scars.*



However, as I thought more about the art direction, I decided to use a mix of colored, black, and white, allowing me to expand my options and expression of the images rather than restricting myself to it. Figures 9-11 present the color direction from my scenography class as a reference for the production stage.

## Figure 9

*Narrative shape of the creative project and its description*

### 1. Explain the narrative shape



Since my creative project isn't a story-reliant/heavy type, I feel like the narrative shape that suits best is presented above - full of ups and downs just like in our life. It's synonymous to how I faced my anxiety, thoughts, and emotions as I journey through life. There were times that it made me go at my lowest, there were times that it made life calm and still, and there were also times where I was at my highest.

## Figure 10

### *Purpose of Color*

#### **2. Purpose of Color Transitional or Associative? Why?**

These colors associates with certain emotions depending on which tone suits them most. Just like the my double-sided photographs for this project, I believe that these colors are double-sided as well, in a way that it can have a positive and negative connotation depending on how the person perceives the message. For instance, warm tones in **black and white** (monochromatic) can be associated with warmth or anxiety. Cooler tones can represent either comfort or immense sadness. It also depends on the context of the photo if one can determine which suits the certain photo (one side each for thought and its corresponding emotion)

*Note.* The creative project's purpose of color is associative.

## Figure 11

### *Color titles and brief description of color choices*

#### **3. Color titles and explanation of color choices**



The color titles at first might be confusing, but to put it in a simpler way, instead of putting these photographs in plain black and white to express the context of thoughts and emotions, I've decided to put either a warm or cold tone of black and white to add to the overall mood of the output. While plain black and white can still give that effect, turning it to monochromatic can elevate the way these thoughts and emotions can be perceived in a rather unique way.

Following the creation of the art direction, I was also tasked to create three scenes based on my creative project for the same class. Thus, I have rendered these scenes using photographs as well so that it also serves as a reference and basis of the actual project. Moreover, these rendered scenes (see Figures 12-14) are in a way, an improved version of the previous series of black and white images from Figures 6-8, which will also serve as proof of concept before proceeding to the production phase of the project.



**Figure 12**

*Improved Rendered Scene No.1 (Based on Figure 6)*

**Figure 13**

*Improved Rendered Scene No.2 (Based on Figure 7)*



**Figure 14**

*Improved Rendered Scene No.3 (Based on Figure 8)*



With all the pre-production assets aside, I am in the process of finalizing the needed materials for this project as I canvass every item based on price and quality. But based on my preliminary analysis, I plan to have these photographs printed in an A2 photopaper while using an A2 size sintra board that will either be painted black or bought in a black color, depending on the availability of these items. Additionally, preliminary analysis of certain experiences in relation to topics such as self-esteem, academics, relationships, and such will be done in line with the draft sketches of the photo compositions for the photographs.

## **Production**

The production stage now revolves around the application of what was planned in the pre-production phase of the project, as well as some other changes of the concept along the way. This stage involves the interviews, test shoots, photoshoot proper, initial editing of photographs (color correction and grading), as well as the printing of the mockups and final outputs that will be assembled for the exhibit afterwards.

In this stage, however, some factors that was mentioned in the pre-production stage will no longer push through due to changes in the delivery and concept of the project. To specify, the double-sided photograph concept will no longer be of use, as well

as the preliminary analysis of experiences that were only revolving around my experiences with anxiety.

Before proceeding with the overall photoshoots, I will be doing test shoots where I must accomplish at least one mockup to be presented to the panel for proof of concept. During these test shoots, there will be some tweaking involved when it comes to the rough sketches, as the conceptualization of these drafts will still change as per the consultations with the adviser and with the interviewees. Additionally, interviews are done during this period as well. Location-wise, there will be days allocated for studio shoots either at the APC photo studio or at another studio that will be rented, as well as days allocated for outside shoots. The locations will be based on the narratives that were shared by the interviewee, especially when they mention a specific place. Hence, their answers from the interview, especially on the visual representation is crucial in this aspect to aid me in conveying the context of the images. Once the test shoots are done, the photos for the mockup will be processed and edited using Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom based on the chosen color grading or palette. This step will be repeated and applied at the actual photoshoots and post processing. Do note that I will still be in touch with the participants to let them see the progress of the work done as of late. That way, they are still involved in the process of the project.

Once necessary edits are made, I will proceed with the test prints as a precautionary measure before proceeding with the actual printing. This is to check if the modifications made digitally are satisfactory and up to standard.

There will be instances, however, when I have multiple good shots that will make it hard for me to not display on the exhibition. To solve this problem, these extra good shots will be transferred to a catalogue alongside the final lineup of shots for the visitors to view. That way, visitors can have a glance of the process behind choosing the final ten shots that will be printed and exhibited. Furthermore, producing multiple copies of this catalogue will be a good option for those who want to see the images in a more compact format.

## **Post-Production**

In this stage, I will now be finalizing the photographs that will be included in the final output, which will be printed and framed for the exhibit.

The creative project will be receiving final additions before proceeding with the construction of the exhibit paraphernalia, particularly the assembly of the framed photographs, depending on the place of exhibit within the campus of Asia Pacific College.

For the exhibition proper, if the plan is to have the event held at Asia Pacific College, I will be using a separate room to exhibit the photographs. The said outputs will be exhibited using two options. The first option would be having a custom-made glass pane and frame that will be shone with a small light. The second option on the other hand would be a series of large print sintra boards. As much as possible, the decorations within

the exhibit will be done in a minimalist way. This will enable the audience to focus more on the outputs that will be displayed depending on how the exhibit will be designed.

## **Review of Related Literature**

The multimedia project is a photography installation featuring a series of photographs visualizing the anxieties of various people.

This review covers various topics that are essential in supporting the meaning and process behind the creative output, such as The Burnout Society, Symbolic Interaction Theory stress, mindfulness, visualizing emotions, cinematic photography, conceptual photography, and the importance of letting go and acknowledging your thoughts and emotions. The sources that I have cited here come from credible websites, e-journals, articles, and theses that are accessible online. As I delve into these topics, I have produced a clearer understanding and technique on how I want to incorporate all the ideas presented in this section into the execution of the creative project.

### **The Burnout Society: The Active and Contemplative Life (Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa)**

In today's fast-paced world, we individuals now live amid extreme competition in many aspects of our lives. We are placed in an environment where everything drags us into constant movement and action with little to no pauses dedicated within the hours of the day. With this regard, the book titled "The Burnout Society" by Byung-Chul Han (2010) delves into the concept of the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* (or the Active and Contemplative life, respectively) as one of the scopes of his book. It is understood that the active life (*vita activa*) in any form generates more constraints as opposed to having the freedom to do anything. Han believes that we are in a performative or "achievement society" that cannot say no in many situations. Thus, allowing most of us today to live a life of hyperactivity and nonstop work. This, in return, puts us, society, in a toxic amount of positivity and desire to achieve something in life, as if we could never allow ourselves to do nothing nor give ourselves enough credit for our little efforts in life. It can also make the person develop mental health issues, having anxiety as one of the most common factors. On the other hand, the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) leans toward the notion of "seeing." This means that learning to see means getting used to being calm, patient, and letting things be. Resisting the ever-crowd-intrusive stimuli brought by the *vita activa*. Additionally, nervousness, distraction, and lack of focus are some of the many signs that mindfulness is absent, which is caused by this same stimulus brought by today's time (Sauer, 2021). As such, it reminds society to pause and devote a moment to doing nothing as we become more conscious of how tired we are.

Han's book concerning the creative project reveals how I also experienced being in a remarkably similar position to what he perceives to be an "achievement society" as today. Now, that same spark that gave me the desire to aim higher and achieve more also led me to compromise my well-being without even realizing it; because the concept of being calm, collected, and present in the moment was not in my mindset before. Only after a few years then I see how destructive it was for me to stress and get anxious about

everything, ruminating until self-deprecation became more of a lifestyle rather than just being a habit itself. The moment that I became mindful of those thoughts, it became a stepping stone for me to get better at handling and confronting my emotions calmly as time passed by. That being said, the creative project aims to integrate the concept of *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa* in the context of the photographs by using other's personal experiences, including my own as a guide to execute the said project.

### **Symbolic Interaction Theory**

According to Main (2023), Symbolic Interaction is a theory that focuses on how individuals create and interpret meaning by using symbols and language in interactions. Khan Academy (2023) also argues that people's actions are based on the things that mean to them, which can vary and differ from person to person, which can also change with time. This theory traces back to its roots from the works of George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and Herbert Blumer. The theory emphasizes the importance of symbols in one's social reality, their identity as an individual. When it comes to research methods, one uses observation and in-depth interviews to be able to explore and gain insight into the subjective meanings and experiences of certain individuals in a variety of contexts. Moreover, this theory can be applied to many areas of our social lives such as academics, work, media consumption, culture, experiences, and health. Khan Academy (2023) also highlights the notion where "critics say the theory is too narrow, but proponents claim it can help explain social change and society as a whole."

This theory supports how this creative project is aiming to visualize the anxieties of selected participants by letting them share their stories and how they see their journeys with anxiety through visual representations. Which is why I design the interview questions in a way that it can help them converse in a more casual and light way, while still being able to attribute their experiences with anxiety with symbols that represent or mean something to them. For instance, a string for someone with anxiety can represent constriction with their actions, or music can represent their growth and learnings from their experiences with anxiety. These symbolisms will help me as an artist because it enables me to understand their narratives with more depth as I try to visualize their experiences and translate it into photographs.

### **The Importance of Recognizing our Thoughts and Emotions rather than avoiding them**

One of the mindfulness-based interventions that I think suitably describes the creative project is the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy or ACT. According to Psychology Today (2022), ACT emphasizes the need of committing to face one's problems rather than avoiding them, as suppressing one's thoughts and emotions can cause more pain and negative effects to the individual, overall. This practice encourages the person to embrace their thoughts and emotions rather than trying to fight them off or guilt trip themselves. Self-acceptance and being present are the primary tenets of this approach. Practicing mindfulness in our daily lives can help us deal with worry, rumination, reappraisal, and suppression in direct or indirect ways. Constant worry and rumination can lead to unhealthy levels of anxiety (Andres et al., 2019). It is also

essential to note that developing the habit of staying mindful and present takes time and effort.

The project integrates ACT by reflecting the process of how the audience views the photographs in the exhibit. As the audience enters the exhibit and looks at the photographs, they confront their anxieties through the context of the images presented. The interpretation of the project will vary based on the individual's perspective. The aim is to make it relatable to them, which is more important than expecting a specific interpretation. While the project mirrors the principles of ACT, it primarily focuses on raising awareness about mindfulness and letting people know that they are not alone in their struggles with anxiety. The key to having a healthy and a more effective way to respond to anxiety is to accept it and use it as it is.

### **Visualization of Thoughts and Emotions**

Thoughts and emotions are complicated. These feelings often influence our physical and physiological attributes. Cherry (2023) states that such emotions involve "Physical arousal, conscious experiences, and behavioral expressions." Several theories further discuss emotions. Physiological theories delve into the responses of the body to certain emotions. Neurological theories suggest that brain activity and emotional responses have a direct relationship with each other. Cognitive theories discuss how our thoughts play a significant role in the emotions formed hereafter. According to Eckman (1992, as cited in Cherry, 2023), emotions are made up of six universal expressions, namely: joy, anger, sadness, disgust, surprise, and fear. Subsequently, Eckman (1992) also added pride, shame, embarrassment, and excitement to the list of basic emotions. Robert Plutchik emphasizes that these basic emotions can also be combined, resulting in other feelings or mixed emotions. It is important to note that there is a mutual connection between thoughts and emotions.

As Clements (2023) said, "Thoughts can trigger emotions, and in turn, emotions can influence our thoughts. For instance, if someone believes that they are not good enough, this negative thought can trigger feelings of sadness and low self-esteem." The Cannon-Bard Theory of Emotions (1927, as cited in Clements, 2023), suggests that emotions and physiological reactions happen at the same time but also acts independently from one another. This means that a certain stimulus, a stressful event, for example, can trigger behaviors in linked to emotions such as anxiety. On the other hand, the James-Lange theory of emotion argues that reactions from the body are what causes these feelings to occur rather than the other way around. As Clements (2023) explains, "For example, if a person sees a snake, their heart rate may increase, and they start to sweat." Furthermore, these emotions have various expressions that stem from facial expressions, body language, as well as vocal tones (Cannon, 1987, as cited in Cherry, 2023). For instance, happiness can be expressed through a smile, a relaxed stature, or a friendly tone of voice. Sadness can be expressed through a person's quietness, low mood, or crying is the most common one. Fear, in connection to anxiety, can be seen through the eyes, or the act of fleeing or hiding from something that bothers a person.

Shapes can evoke such emotions concerning one's thoughts as well. Depending on the softness or rigidity of a shape one can associate it with a certain meaning. Shapes that curve that are continuous and smooth are often linked to completeness. Circles,

ovals, and ellipses are examples of shapes that give a sense of comfort. While shapes that feature straight lines and right angles represent stability and order. Triangles are a unique shape as the interpretation can depend on their orientation. An upward triangle can signify a positive attribute, while a downward triangle signifies the opposite (Contra, 2023).

The creative output explores a way to express these thoughts and emotions that certain stimuli, triggers, and shapes can be used to convey a personal experience expressed through photos. I will be using these visual elements to further utilize the butterflies as a symbol of positive change and hope as they interact with the subject and the surrounding environment of the photographs.

### **Conceptual and Symbolic Photography**

Conceptual Photography, according to Iberdrola (n.d.), is a genre that contains a lot of meaning as it uses a person's creativity to extract ideas that evoke a certain feeling, thought, or message to the piece. Emerging in the 1960s, conceptual art in relation to photography transcends its use in shooting images such as portraits and landscapes. In some cases, Iberdrola adds that this art style also uses digital manipulation to better enhance the context or message it needs to deliver to the audience. Furthermore, according to Johnson and Stoddard (2020), symbolic photography is like conceptual photography as it uses objects, color direction, and themes to express ideas and portray certain emotions. This style of photography is meant to be understood easily by the viewer. Hence, the elements that will be used have to be carefully thought through. But it is also understood that interpretation varies from one person to another. Symbols can help an image tell a story. In some cases, a certain object such as an old watch can imply timelessness or history. In food photography, the difference between using fine cutlery instead of plastic can tell contrasting stories about social status or an event. Additionally, Johnson and Stoddard (2020), state that different types of symbolisms include color, objects, shapes, religion, nature, death, and time.

This creative project will use these photography styles to convey the main message of the project and the context of each image designated for each photograph. Certain themes, colors, and objects are to be considered in the creative process hereafter, depending on the participants' interview answers.

### **Cinematic Photography**

DS (2023) states that cinematic photography is a style that "emulates stills or frames from movie scenes." It is a technique that is effectively used in telling a story, creating images that give depth and feeling to it. Cinematic photography aims to express a certain mood. To achieve this style, one must take into consideration the things that the photographer is shooting. That includes light direction, the subject, as well as composition (Bailey, 2021). With this regard, cinematography can also be defined as the art of photography through moving frames. There are things to consider that takes a photograph look cinematic. The author discusses how aspects such as composition, lighting, angles, aspect ratio, and especially color grading are what make this photography style as it is.

In another definition, Liu (2022) states that “cinematic photography is a subgenre of portrait and still life photography that imitates the style of a movie or video. It is characterized by rich colors, dramatic lighting, and a focus on the subject’s face and expressions.” With this regard, the author also emphasizes the use of the common ratio used for this genre. Cinematic photography uses either a 16:9 ratio or the more known “cinematic crop” which uses a 2.39:1 aspect ratio that crops the upper and lower edges that give a more cinematic look to the frame (Brown, 2019).

Aside from conceptual and symbolic photography, the creative project will also be infusing cinematic photography to further enhance the visual aesthetic of the images. This, in a way, benefits the project as it should give a certain feel for each image that will be produced, adding a touch of uniqueness to the project overall. The expected outcome should look as if each photograph of a certain interpretation of a person’s anxiety presented emulates a certain scene that of a movie still or frame.

### **Participatory Art**

Participatory art is a form of artistic expression that involves many individuals collaborating with the artist in the art-making process. This genre of art transcends the traditional way of spectating art as it is, encouraging people to contribute to and interpret art in the collective process. The term “participatory art” has various types that have evolved over the years, each offering distinct ways for the audience to engage. According to the Irish Museum of Modern Art (2020), Participatory Art showcases a range, or practices usually learned by social, political, geographical, economical, and cultural needs such as Community Arts, Activist Art, New Genre Public Art, Socially Engaged Art, and Dialogical Art. This term is also connected to an art practice called “Relational Aesthetics”, where it emphasizes the role of both the participant in creation and function of the artwork. Hence, the active participation of the participants plays a significant role, decentralizing the role of the artist as the sole author of the creative work. “Participation is based on people contributing a key creative element to the realization of the art project. This can happen in the planning, design, execution, and/or exhibition.” (Participedia, 2021)

Rodriguez-Dorans (2022) states that Narrative Portraits draws a “parallel between the artistic work of a portrait maker in depicting a subject – sometimes an object – and the work of the researcher in exploring people’s experiences, narrative portraiture invites a close-up into a person’s narrated and embodied experience.” In photography, a narrative tells a story, emotion, idea, or expression (Martinique, 2021), Narrative photography.

The type of participatory art that involves interviewing people and using their responses as the foundation for visualizing and creating the project’s series of photographs is often referred to as a “narrative or story-based participatory art.” This approach emphasizes the personal stories and experiences of individuals, turning their narratives into visual representations. Hence, the most suitable term for this approach specifically falls into the area of “Narrative Portraiture” which accurately describes the design process of the creative project.

### **The Importance of Letting It Go**



One of the reasons why we get anxious is that we keep on dwelling and not letting go of the past and future, neglecting our present life. All of us are experiencing life as we go on. While there are times when we feel proud of our milestones and achievements, there are also instances when life becomes challenging and burdensome for many. Some experiences in life cause us to ruminate in our thoughts, fearing the unknown and becoming anxious about what's behind and ahead of us. We either get stuck, slowed down, or feel like we have little to no space for something new. It can stem from our insecurities, unresolved conflicts, relationship closures, failures, and so on (Brenner, 2020). But despite all of this, it is perfectly normal to feel that way. But remaining in this never-ending cycle of negativity will not change anything for the better. Letting go is always the hardest first step, but doing so allows that immense pain to pave the way to a better self and a step closer to growth. Pueblo (2022) states that there are things that one should know about letting go of what is behind us. Letting go does not mean that the bad things that happened before will be erased, but rather, the way we react or attach to these thoughts changes the moment we do so. These thoughts may occur sometimes, but the impact is no longer as hard as before. Therefore, the moment these thoughts no longer consume the mind of the person is considered a stepping stone to becoming better at handling similar scenarios.

This is one of the essential messages that I want to convey to the whole project. While people's experiences with anxiety vary and are unique to one another, the notion of letting go plays a crucial role in helping navigate our anxiety. The moment we let go of these worries about what is behind and ahead of us opens doors for learning and growth in our journeys with anxiety. Hopefully, somewhere around the exhibit one will find the participants' stories relatable with their own experiences.

## **Review of Related Works**

This segment highlights several artworks and creative pieces related to conceptual and cinematic photography, as well as a brief discussion on how my whole concept came to one.

### **Here Comes a Thought**

Composed and written by the creator of the hit Cartoon Network show *Steven Universe*, Rebecca Sugar's "*Here Comes a Thought*" focuses on understanding, confronting, and facing one's emotions and thoughts during moments of anxiety. Additionally, it is also about recognizing a certain thought that bothers us and how we respond to the point where we get overwhelmed, losing sight and touch with reality as we dwell deeper in rumination. According to Sugar (2016), it was originally made as a song to calm herself down. The way the song was sung is what made a huge impact on me because it had that sense of comfort whenever I felt anxious and deeply troubled by the thoughts ruminating in my mind. That said, whenever I feel that way, I would take a moment, breathe, and listen to this song on repeat as I calm myself down.

The song is about recognizing a particular thought that bothers us and how we respond to it, to the point where we sometimes lose touch with reality as we dwell deeper

in rumination. Since discovering this song, the way I managed my thoughts and emotions changed as I grew up into the person I am now. While it was not an easy process, it has helped me better recognize the habit of constant anxiety and how to deal with it in different scenarios.

In connection to the context visualizing the anxieties, I wanted to use the butterflies from the episode as the main symbol that represents positive change and hope, as well as the association of learning and growth of an individual. Its interaction with the surrounding environment and the subject depends on the certain scenario or experience that will be produced in the images. The butterfly's placement will depend on the certain person's symbolic representation of their learning and growth with anxiety. It can be placed in a specific place whether it be on the body, a thing, or place. The relationship between the butterflies and the subject is mutual. Figures 15-19 visualize this context further. As the lyrics suggest, the whole point of the song is to encourage us to see our thoughts as just thoughts, and to let them go by without attaching too much meaning to them. Reminding us that it is okay to feel a certain way and that everything will be all right.

### **Figure 15**

*Sapphire being consumed by the butterflies (her thoughts)*



**Figure 16**

*Connie reminiscing that one experience that has kept her in rumination*

**Figure 17**

*Connie realizing and accepting her thought, represented by the butterfly*



**Figure 18**

*Connie and Steven taking the time to take a deep breath, symbolizing one of the many ways to cope with anxiety*

**Figure 19**

*Connie, Steven, Ruby, and Sapphire looking at the butterflies*



### **LUNOD: Visualizing Emotions of College Students Amidst the Pandemic in a Series of Black and White Photographs**

LUNOD (2022) is a project that features a series of photographs that aims to break the stigma of mental health as he interprets the college students' emotions as they dealt with the struggles brought out by the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figures 20-21).

#### **Figure 20**

*Lipas*



Dela Torre interprets this as to how certain college students dealt with the lack of motivation that the pandemic has brought. The fading passion and drive that was once present before the pandemic, as well as the emotional weight and feeling of anxiety and isolation are represented by this image.

**Figure 21***Uminog*

"*Uminog*", is a photograph that, in a way, describes the feeling of unreachability. The way the hand is not in focus can translate as something that one is trying to reach the end, but the cycle remains the same, synonymous to the pandemic's effect on the people's daily lives in isolation. I wanted to utilize this technique as well in my creative work to aid me in visualizing their experience based on the data that I have gathered.

### Seeing the Mind: A Photo Essay on Teen Mental Health

In this photo essay, Mia Angioletti's photographs feature a series of images that portray anonymous teenagers' description on how they visualize their own mental issues, including the emotions they accompany it with (see Figures 22-24).

#### Figure 22

*"My ADHD looks like ants crawling around in my brain."*



#### Figure 23

*"My social anxiety looks like everyone is laughing at me and talking about me."*



**Figure 24**

*"My anxiety looks like a dark shadow looming and making me scared of everything."*



This type of conceptual photography relies on describing the certain person's take on their mental issue and emotion in a literal sense. The creative project benefits this work as this photo essay becomes a reference as it goes into this direction on how I will be interpreting the anxieties of my participants as I visualize it through the photographs.



## **Proceed to the Route: A Cinematic Photo Essay on Anxiety, Connectivity, and Isolation**

Tania Frano Klein's (2019) photo essay takes us on a route, delving into the feeling of anxiety, isolation, and the loss of a sense of home. The photos stir the audience's mind as the way it is composed seems to emulate the feeling of emptiness and isolation while having the essence of anxiety lingering within the frame. Similarly, these photographs reflect her own experience. Klein combines cinematic and conceptual photography in this work, which I also aim to do as well in the photographs that I plan to produce. I also plan to use a similar color grade for select photographs that I may find suitable to convey anxiety using warm tones (see Figures 25-27).

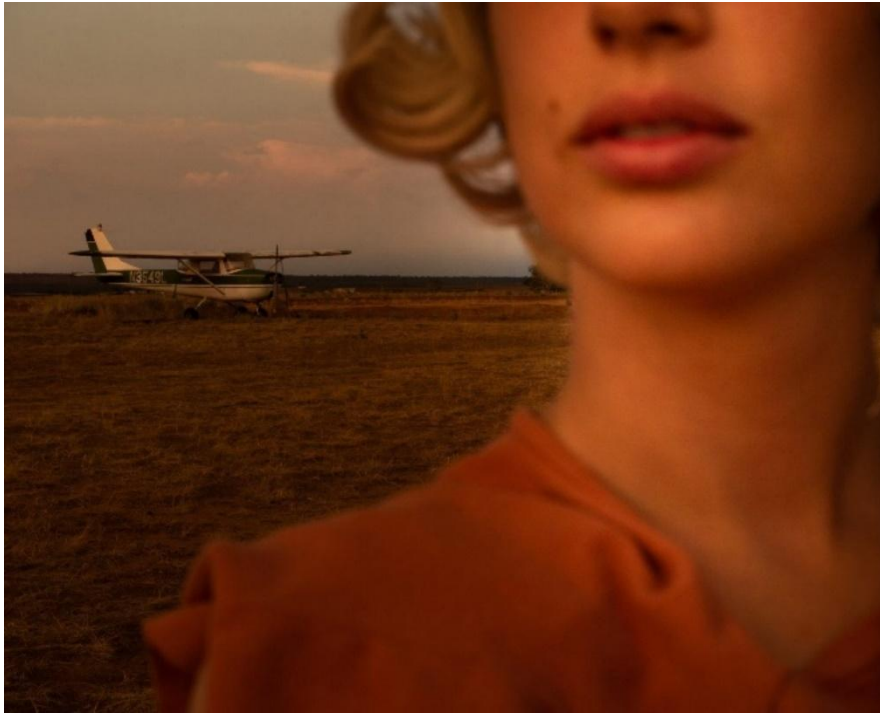
### **Figure 25**

*Untitled Photograph 1*



**Figure 26**

*Untitled Photograph 2*



**Figure 27**

*Untitled Photograph 3*



### “To find ourselves.”

Based in South Korea, Cho Gi Seok is a photographer known for his portraits conveying abstract and otherworldly themes. In one of his Instagram posts, “To find ourselves.” Cho (2022) used butterflies as the main symbol of the photographs seen in Figures 28-32. The images captured were composed in a way that emulates as if in a film. The colors used in these photographs were a mix of warm and cold tones that amplify how the mood is portrayed. Additionally, the way that the images are shown from the post somehow resembles how my creative project wants to present the participants’ stories and narratives as photographs.

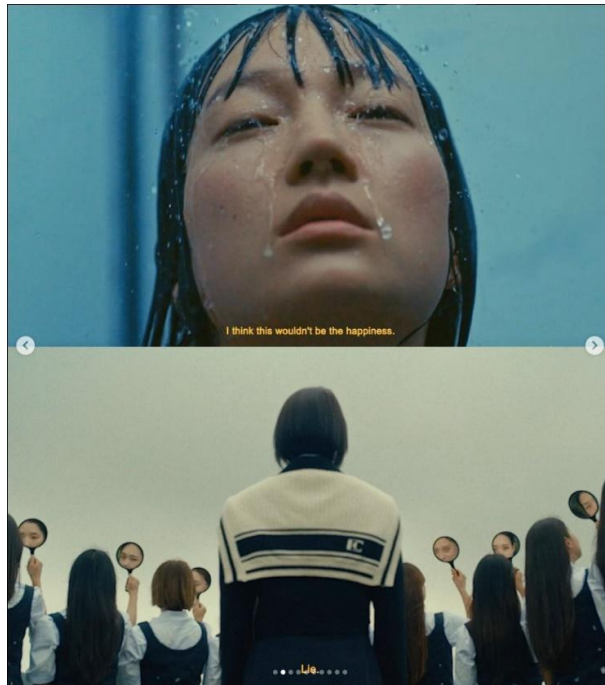
### Figure 28

*“To find ourselves” - Slide 1*



**Figure 29**

*“To find ourselves” - Slide 2*



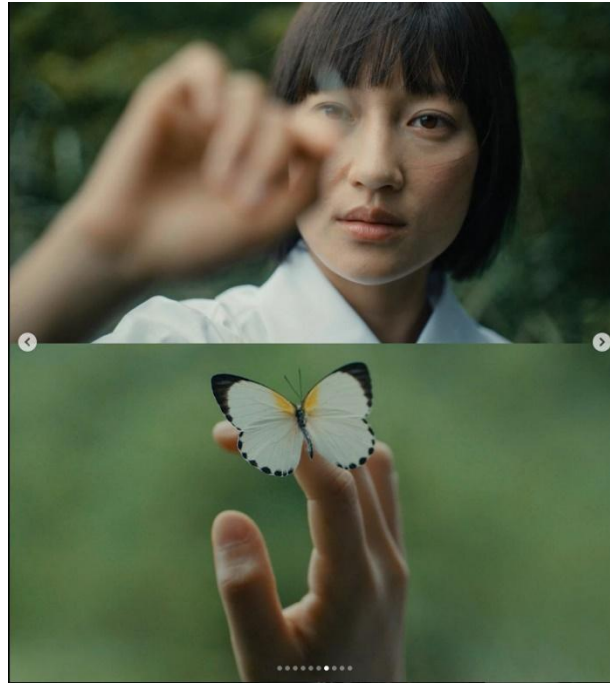
**Figure 30**

*“To find ourselves” - Slide 3*



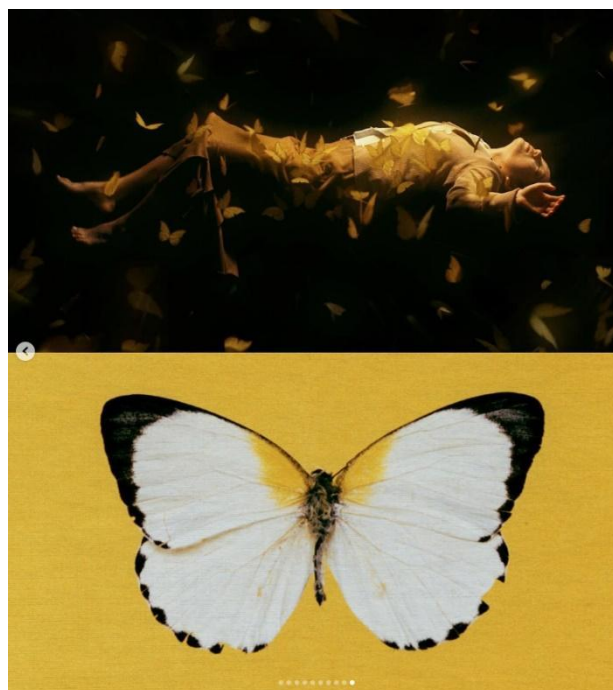
**Figure 31**

*“To find ourselves” - Slide 6*



**Figure 32**

*“To find ourselves” - Slide 10*



These related literatures and works delve into the important aspects of this creative project. Starting from how The Burnout Society describes the active and contemplative life in connection with my own life experiences and others'. It is understood that despite the many stimuli that affect the world we live in now, it is also important to take a moment and realize the things that surround us and how it affects the way we live our life. Letting go of the past also means learning to confront one's thoughts and emotions as we try to become mindful and stay present. This creative project aims to tell that message to the audience by using various symbolisms that reflect both on the images, the different narratives, and how they will be presented in an exhibit, as supported by the Symbolic Interaction Theory. Just as "Here Comes a Thought" uses the butterflies symbolizing these thoughts, it affects how Steven, Connie, Ruby, and Sapphire feel about it. I also plan to use these butterflies as the main symbol of hope and change, as they affect and interact with the certain symbol that represents the participant's change and growth. Combining conceptual, symbolic, and cinematic photography for this project will help me better understand how I want to express my firsthand experiences in photos. From how Cho's abstract and unusual ideas portray a simple yet meaningful message, Klein's way of sharing her own experiences through photos, Angioletti's way of literal interpretation, to Dela Torre's process in conceptualizing his images; I want my work to express those collective ideas as it influences my artistic philosophy and direction for this project. Of course, this would not be possible without the stories of these individuals who were willing to share their stories as I work my way in visualizing these narratives into photos.

## Results and Discussion

To visualize their experiences with anxiety, I conducted a one-on-one interview with the participants to see how I can properly translate their narratives into photographs. The main objective of this interview is to allow me to gather important information about how they see their anxiety and the symbols or representations that they affiliate with in terms of how they see their anxiety in their lives. In this regard, I created a set of questions that is tailored fit to create a smooth and casual conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. These questions are also divided into several topics. Some of which were marked as crucial questions that the interviewee needs to answer with clarity and detail, because those answers will serve as my basis in visualizing the photograph.

## Interview Results/Answers

- 1. When thinking about your experience with anxiety, is there a specific image, color, symbol, or object that comes to mind? If so, what is it, and what does it represent in connection to your journey with anxiety?**

Response 1	<i>Strings, spiderwebs, something to do with being constricted, a cocoon, marionette strings, eyeballs, red</i>
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Response 2	<i>Sea... Feeling ko nasa ilalim ako, na d-drown sa sarili kong thoughts. As if hindi I'm trying to bring myself up, but I just can't because of me overthinking ang worrying. And I can only hear muffled sounds.</i>
Response 3	<i>Crumpled paper. Scribbles, cause it's full of meaningless lines but it does mean something, and I don't know that something to be called, let's just leave it be.</i>
Response 4	<i>My social anxiety feels like a flaming, exploding heart. Ready to burst any minute. It beats so much faster than the average beat.</i>
Response 5	<i>Knowing the worse feeling of fear and anxiety, in my dreams, I would always see red and even green. Lagi akong nalulunod sa tubig, specifically murky waters. They did say that water does represent emotions in dreams.</i>

Based on the answers given by the participants, all of them had stated certain image, color, symbol, or object that represents their experience and journey with anxiety. They were able to identify and interpret what these symbols or images mean to them personally. Some of them had several symbols in mind, some of them had a single yet meaningful representation. In this certain situation, this can help them seamlessly explain their answers connected to the following question, which is about how they visualize their experiences as if it were to be captured cinematically.

**2. In an artistic context, envision your experience with anxiety as if it were captured cinematically, like a scene in a movie. How would you visualize this, considering the elements, mood, and composition that would best represent your journey with anxiety?**

Response 1	<i>My body freezes like a marionette, para siyang kahoy. Hindi ako makaisip or makagalaw ng maayos when boredom strikes. Yung naiinis yung expression ko kasi kontrolado ka tapos di ka makagalaw... Then there're eyeballs staring at me.</i>
Response 2	<i>Sea... Feeling ko nasa ilalim ako, na d-drown sa sarili kong thoughts. As if hindi I'm trying to bring myself up, but I just can't because of me overthinking ang worrying. And I can only hear muffled sounds.</i>
Response 3	<i>Crumpled paper. Scribbles, cause it's full of meaningless lines but it does mean something, and I don't know that something to be called, let's just leave it be.</i>
Response 4	<i>It's ready to burst any minute. It beats so much faster than the average especially when I'm surrounded by other people.</i>
Response 5	<i>Imagine both of us in the dark, standing still and staring at each other. None of us speak, but the longer I stare, there would be tears in my eyes that constantly drip. You wanted to know why, but no matter how hard you speak, your voice doesn't come out.</i>

Based on the answers given in this question, the participants gave deeper insight into their experiences with anxiety. They were able to use their given answers from the previous question and integrate it into something that they visualize as a scene in a movie. Although it took a little bit of time for them to explain it in detail, they were able to explain it by narrating as if they were to experience it in reality. During the interview, some of the participants even provided me a specific photo or movie reference that they believe would describe and visualize their anxieties.

**3. What have you learned or discovered from your experiences with anxiety? Has it led you to a personal growth or change in your life?**

Response 1	<i>To constantly reflect on what you think is best in your situation.</i>
Response 2	<i>Naging matured na ako, iba na yung pananaw ko dati sa ngayon. Yung mga inooverthink ko ngayon yung usually kung ako yung kailangan ko solusyunan and how I take care of myself. Kakayanin ko naman pala.</i>
Response 3	<i>I learned that I'm still weak, it changed me because I learned that I still need to work on myself. To improve, to be proper, and behave.</i>
Response 4	<i>Everything takes time to change for the better.</i>
Response 5	<i>As far as it concerns my anxiety, I've always been wary about myself and how I could lessen it. There are only a few changes no matter how many times I try to think of any other way. Mahirap kung ako tatanungin, hindi siya yung tipong in just a few words of encouragement mawawla na.</i>

In this given set of answers, we can see some differences in terms of what they have learned or discovered from their experiences with anxiety. For Response 2, the participant showed a lot of growth based on what they said about being more mature and perceptive in life. Then in contrast to Response 2, in Response 5, the participant's take on their learnings lean towards into a harder take on their discoveries with their anxiety. Furthermore, Response 3 also gives off a similar take, but it showed a hint of hope to their answer.

**4. If there is anything you believe that represents your growth with anxiety, what would it be and what does it represent?**

Response 1	<i>Tarot cards, most specifically the Wheel of Fortune that symbolizes time and change, and The Emperor card which symbolizes my authority and control over my thoughts.</i>
Response 2	<i>My camera. Kasi tuwing nag pipicture ako, feeling ko at present ako, mas feeling ko na nabubuhay ako, like there's nothing to worry. Feeling ko pag dala ko yung camera ko, at the moment ako, like hindi ko iniisip yung ibang bagay.</i>
Response 3	<i>Scribbles, cause it's full of meaningless lines but it does mean something, and I don't know that something to be called, let's just leave it be.</i>
Response 4	<i>My watch. To me it's connected to my learning na it all takes time, even with my anxiety.</i>
Response 5	<i>Usually, as a way of coping with my anxiety, dinadaan ko lang lagi through music, kasi it's the only thing na nakakasabay sa anxiety ko, yes nakakasabay rather and not to ease it.</i>

Just like the first data analysis, all of them had stated certain image, color, symbol, or object that represents their learning and growth with anxiety. They were able to identify and interpret what these symbols or images mean to them personally. The answers were slightly more specific compared to the first question about symbolism and representation.

**5. As part of this project that aims to spread awareness of practicing mindfulness and conveying a message of hope and change in dealing with anxiety, what**



**message would you want to share with others who might be dealing with anxiety as well?**

Response 1	<i>You are in control of your own mind. You have to be the one taking authority.</i>
Response 2	<i>Maghanap ka ng bagay na makakapagparamdam sayo ng peace, na feeling mo nasa present ka. Find something you hold onto na feeling mo na kalmado ka sa ginagawa mo. Take time to know yourself, to take care of yourself.</i>
Response 3	<i>Please don't stop fighting it. Go to therapy, go out, experience things, don't let anyone stop you from doing you. If someone says that it's nothing to deal with, pray that they too will understand what you are going through right now.</i>
Response 4	<i>Next year, next month, next week, or maybe tomorrow, none of these would matter.</i>
Response 5	<i>The only thing I could expect from them is to speak, just let it all out even if walang nakakarinig or mayroon man. I won't sugarcoat it, it's not like magic na mawawala lang just because you gave yourself a pep talk.</i>

Based on the given answers, I found that all their messages are still connected to their own symbolic representation of their anxiety and the learnings that came with it. Response 1 talks more about having authority over your thoughts. Response 2 emphasizes the notion of finding something that will help you be present in the moment and at peace with yourself. Response 3 leans more on letting things fly by and exploring the world around you. Response 4 talks more about how everything will eventually pass by. Response 5 on the other hand pushes a more realistic message of speaking up even if no one or someone listens to you.

## **Conclusion**

### **Research Results about the Subject Matter**

Our experiences and journeys with anxiety differ from one another. It takes a certain amount of strength and courage to speak up and share our stories to spread a message of hope, change, and mindfulness to others who might be experiencing anxiety as well. According to the participants' narratives, we can see how different these symbolic representations from each other. Often, it showed how their environment also affects how they deal and experience their anxiety during the course of their journeys. I found out that one's anxiety can really be attributed to a certain object or symbol that means something to them based on their experiences and journeys. Furthermore, while majority of the participants also have answers that are seamlessly connected to each other, some have it the other way around.

Based on their stories, some of these individuals have a more complex take on how they view their anxiety in connection to certain symbols, some of them see it in a simpler perspective. Additionally, some of them have already learned something valuable from their anxieties, while others are still in the process of doing so, which is an important factor to see within this creative project. This shows that we all have our own paces in life and that it should never become a race to the finish line. Overall, conducting a casual type of interview has helped these participants in sharing their stories in the most comfortable way as possible. Letting them have the freedom to choose the mode of communication greatly helped both parties to have a mutual understanding of the things

that revolve around our journeys with anxiety. In the end, I was able to gather enough information from the participants that helped me reach the goal of visualizing these anxieties into photographs that encompasses both the cinematic and conceptual genre of the medium. I can also conclude that the Symbolic Interactionism Theory is proved to be present in visualizing these anxieties as it is turned into a series of photographs.

### **Research Results about the Design Process**

Using cinematic and conceptual photography for this creative project appeared to be an effective method to convey an individual's narratives about their experiences and journeys with anxiety. I have noticed that mixing these two genres of photography create an interesting take on visualizing these stories into a series of photographs that tells a compelling story. Based on the conducted interviews and completed photographs, I have observed that engaging in one-on-one discussion with the participants aided me further in bringing these photographs to fruition. Keeping them updated on the status of the photographs gave a chance for us to discuss ensure that our visualizations aligned with both parties. As the artist, I can confidently conclude that I have successfully visualized and created the series of photographs.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Research Topic**

This research is still open for improvements in terms of data gathering, the interview process, and the conceptual framework.

For the data gathering and interview process, I created publication materials that I have posted through social media, particularly on Facebook and Instagram. However, during this phase, I was still finalizing interview questions and selecting target individuals for the interviews. I was deliberating whether to interview individuals clinically diagnosed with anxiety or a mix of diagnosed and undiagnosed cases. Additionally, I was uncertain about the number of participants needed, considering each interview averaged between thirty-five minutes to an hour. This posed a challenge as only a few questions from the interviews were essential for the conceptualization and visualization stages of the project. Time constraints also played a role in determining the needed deliverables. Furthermore, there was uncertainty as well with regards to the number of photographs required for visual pegs and sketches before proceeding with test shoots and final shoots. It's crucial to note that the test shoots serve as a reference for making necessary changes and improvements for the final shoots. It is always up to you whether it is sufficient. For future modifications on this area, I recommend finalizing the interview questions and target participants first before conducting the interview and posting any publication material. This will greatly help you in preparing for other areas of your research, especially in the production stage.

For the conceptual framework, initially, I used Byung-Chul Han's "The Burnout Society" as the primary supporting framework for this project. However, as the project

developed, major changes and revisions eventually happened concerning the presentation, conceptualization, and photography genre that I will be using. While anxiety remained the central topic, the project's focus shifted solely from my personal experiences to visualizing other people's anxiety. Consequently, "The Burnout Society" framework no longer fully applied. The photographs no longer revolve solely around my experience with my own anxiety. This is because my own experiences with anxiety are closely connected with Han's book, which is more on about the art of seeing, balancing the active and contemplative life, and the struggles of being in the constant state of hyperactivity, specifically in academics. Changing the conceptual framework means revisiting the Research Related Literature and Works thoroughly. In other words, I must redo the paper as a whole. To avoid this from happening, I had to find another framework that will help solidify and support the first framework the I had, which is the Symbolic Interaction Theory. It is advisable to reevaluate the conceptual framework when encountering significant changes and revisions in the creative process and output to avoid major revisions.

### **Creative Process**

The process of how these photographs were visualized can still be improved and changed, especially in terms of finding the right balance between cinematic and conceptual photography for each image. There are instances where some of these narratives could be more conceptually driven rather than cinematic. To elaborate on the interviewees' side, some of the participants' answers can be particularly challenging to connect the dots with. As the interviewer, I found it hard to create a concise and proper visualization without clarifying with the interviewee my inquiries and ideas beforehand. In this case I would produce something more metaphorical rather than make the visualization in a literal sense. Subsequently, I would communicate my ideas to the participant to ensure a mutual understanding of the concept for their photograph. I recommend doing this procedure when there are instances that producing an initial visual sketch is too difficult or unclear based on the information you are given by the interviewee.

Regarding materials, I suggest exploring the types of materials that you will be using in creating the space for each photograph. The key here is to deliver the context of the image without it becoming overly complex or lackluster.

In terms of production, I advise starting as early as possible. This will allow you to give yourself more time to make changes whenever necessary. For instance, booking reservations for equipment and rooms well in advance will get you an advantage. This will give you ample time to review available shooting dates, coordinate with other people such as models and assistants, and prepare visual pegs for a certain shooting date. When compiling and sketching visual pegs, test shoots offer a huge advantage in planning what props are needed to be added or removed, potential camera angles, locations that need to be checked, and especially what necessary lighting plan is needed to achieve a desired effect or theme.

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## Appendices

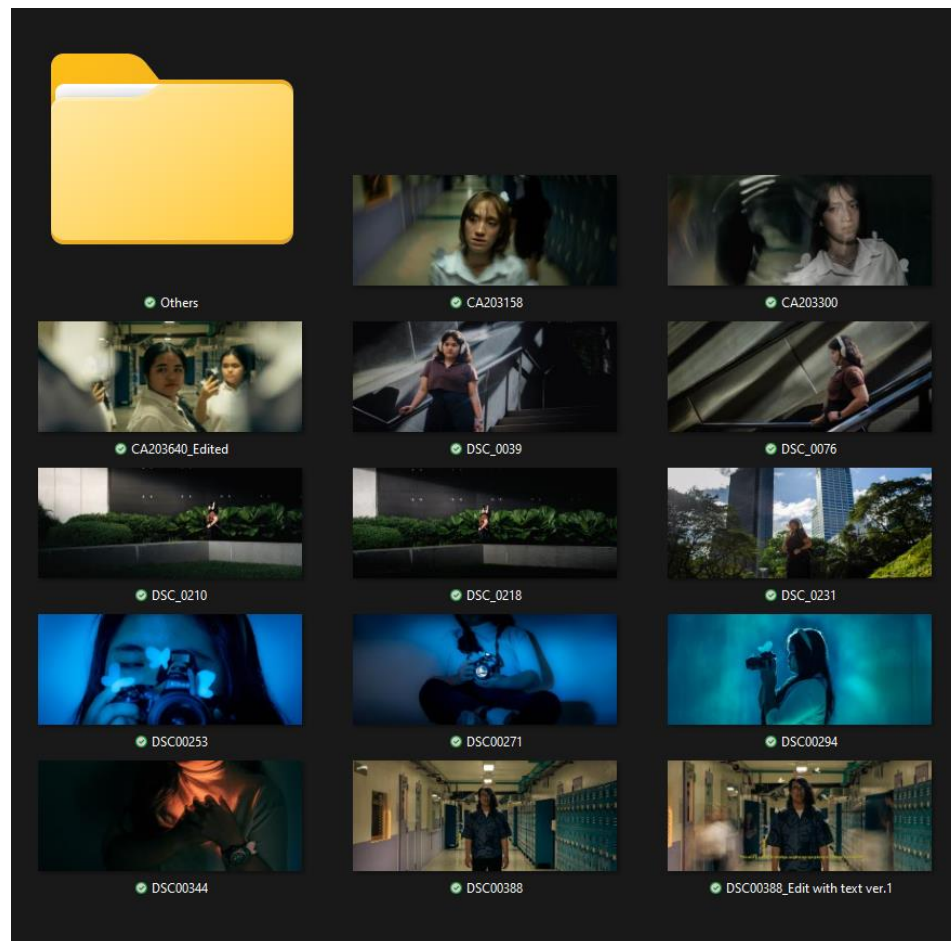
This section contains the assets and documentations created throughout the whole creative process. The images and documents that are presented in this area as evidence of the researcher's work.

### Appendix A

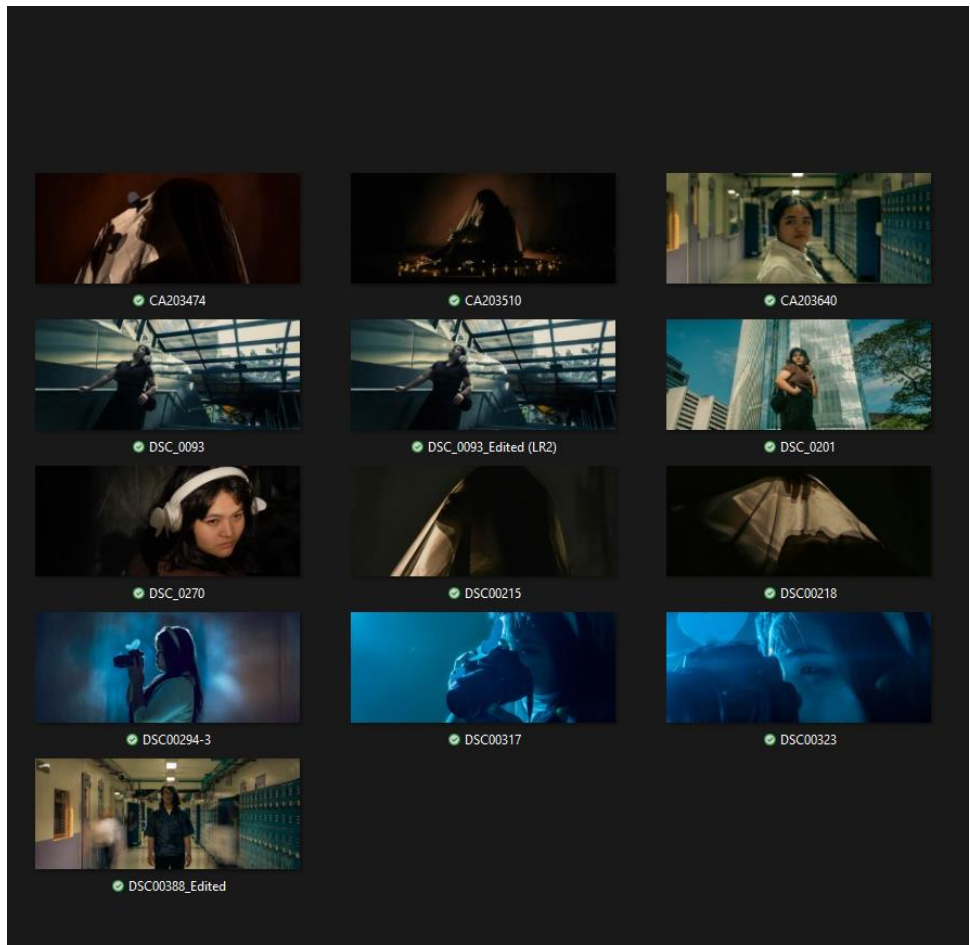
#### Visual References and Studies

#### Production Assets: MMAPRO1

#### Test Shoots

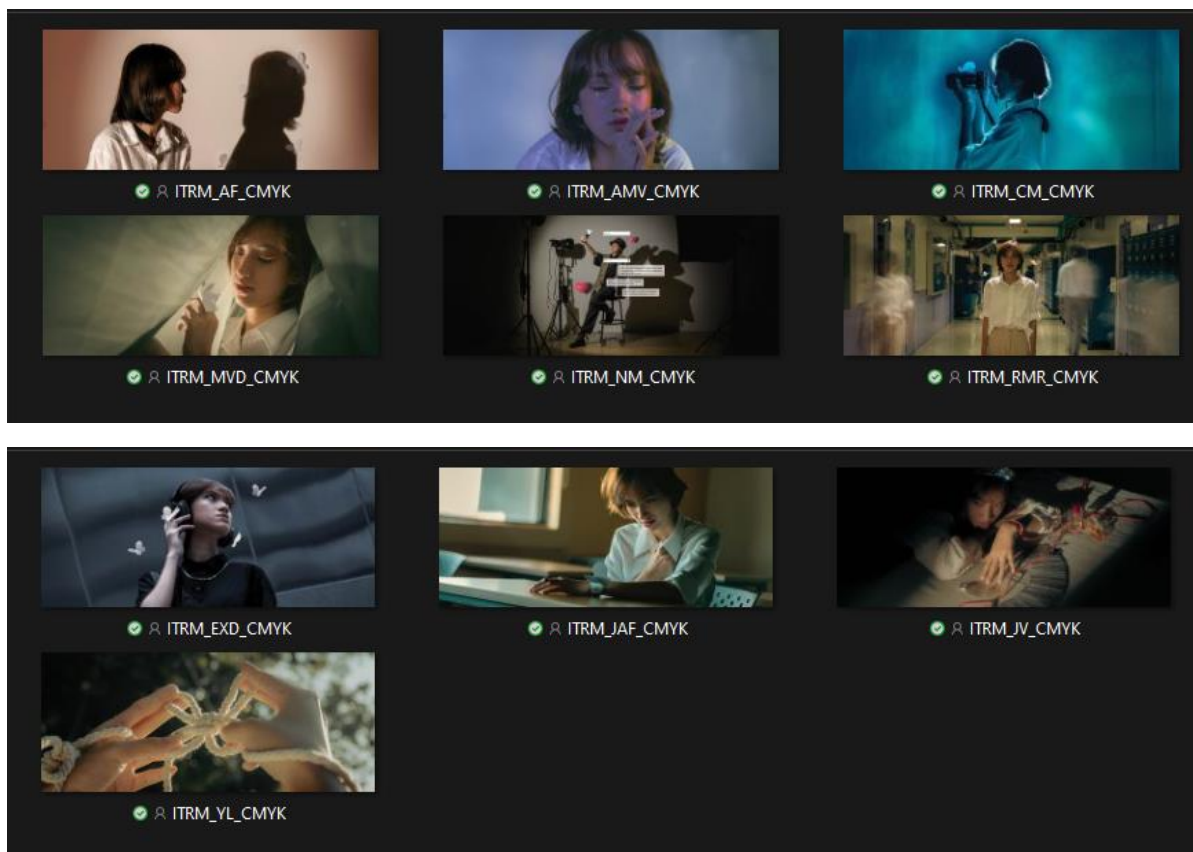


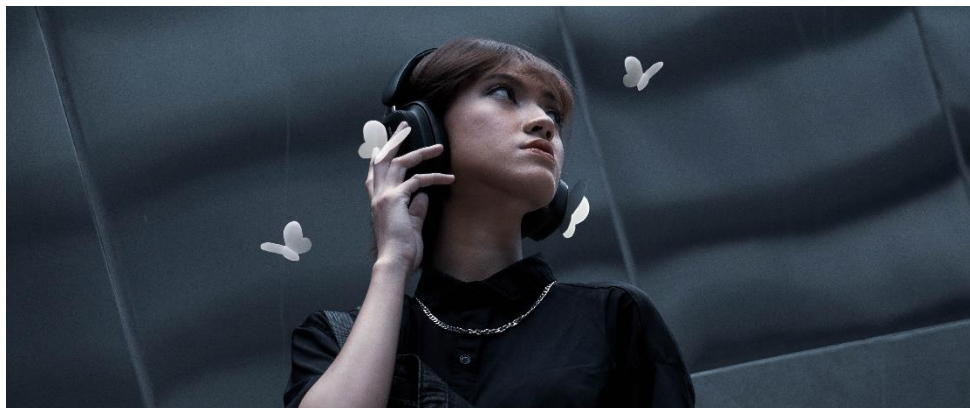




## Production Assets: MMAPRO2

### Final Shoot Lineup







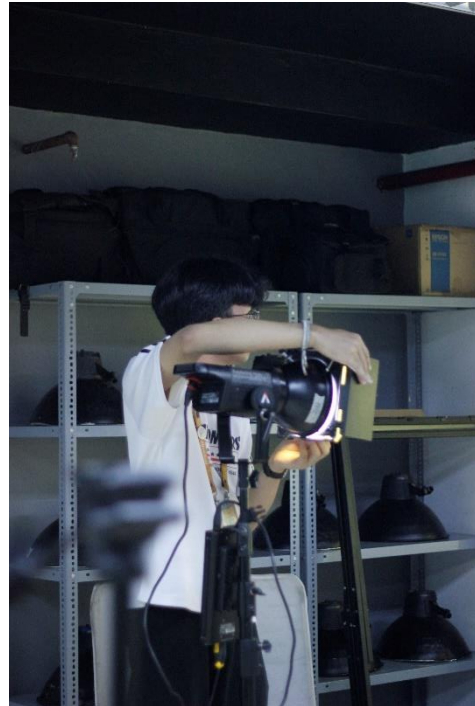


**Appendix B**  
**Project Production Documentation**  
**Test Shoot Behind the Scenes**





**Final Shoot Behind the Scenes**









### Printouts



### Framing of Pictures



**Appendix C**  
**Marketing Collaterals**

**Main Banner/Poster**

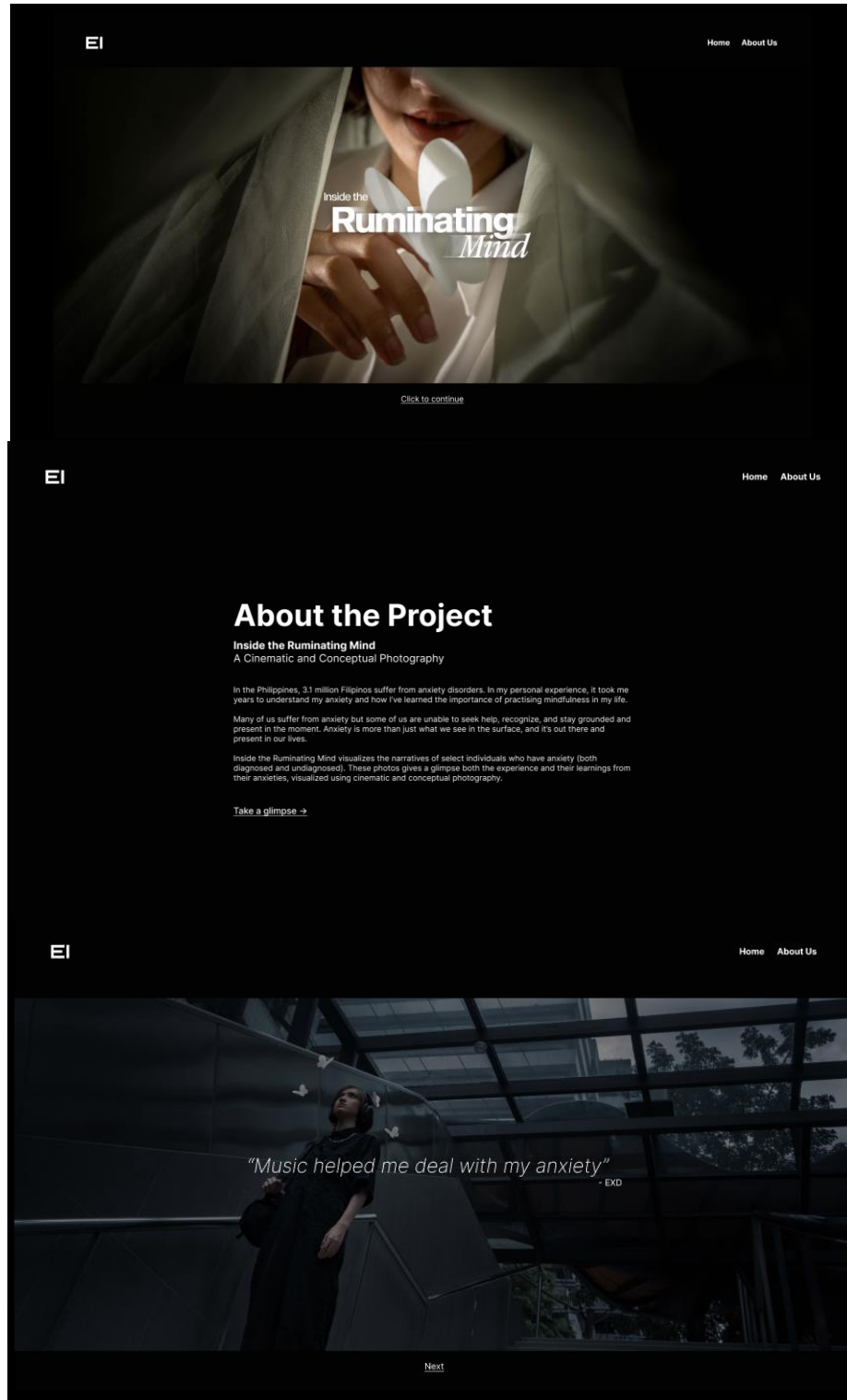


**Other Banners/Teasers**





## Website



### Video Teaser/Trailers

