

THESIS REPORT- 2020

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‘KAIF-E-IZTARAAB’ A journey through Self-Harm

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Chapter 1

SIDE NOTES & REFERENCES

'Our Scars Tell the Stories of Our Lives'

By Dana Jennings

July 20, 2009

Our scars tell stories. Sometimes they're stark tales of life-threatening catastrophes, but more often they're just footnotes to the ordinary but bloody detours that befall us on the roadways of life.

KEYWORDS - Memory, Physical Scars, Mental Scars, Self-Harm, Non-Suicidal Self Injury, Scars of Perception, distraction, choice, pain, pleasure, emotions, traumas, art, storyboarding, digital painting, animation.

ABSTRACT - I initiated my thesis with an ideation linked to the connection between Scars and Memory, also how mutually same and different the concept of Scars as Memory (physical scars) and Scars of Memory (mental scars) simultaneously exists in a way that we can correlate them to each other according to our own experiences and in relevance to . Taking my own experience and other people's stories while linking them with Scars, made this topic deflect towards the same plane but a different axis of it. We humans tend to have an array of feelings and emotions that lead us to make certain decisions based on them. Hence, my work progressed to Scars related to Self-Harm. Being in a situation where one tends to self-harm after a traumatic incident or accident is quite relatable to many people including myself. What then really matters is how to cope up with those thoughts and how to find a distraction alternative to an act of Self-Harm. 'Kaif-e-Iztaraab' as a final product for my Thesis, is an animation that talks about my own experiences related to self-harm and how I eventually found a distraction through art using the same tool which somehow held me between the two choices of either making Art or Scars

PASSION - Being an art student who loves to draw anatomy of humans, I have always been quite observant of distinctive facial and body features. When I do observe them, I always notice people having scars and marks on their body and so I sometimes do ask them about their scars. Every scar tells a different story and every scar serves as a part of our memory that we cannot erase. What bothers me the most are the self-inflicted scars that people put on themselves because that is what I can relate to the most knowing a lot of people who do that and also with my own self, since we cannot control our thoughts that come to our minds and hence we do sometimes get thoughts about hurting our own self. So what I wanted to do was to find ways for such people who self-harm or get thoughts like that and also for my own self to get distractions of some sort that will help to cope up with such thoughts and habits.

PROJECT SCOPE – Kaif-e-Iztaraab is just a representation of the events related to my life which provoked thoughts of Self-Harm in me and how I found distractions in order to cope up through such thoughts. So this may help someone to find a desired activity as a distraction from their negative thoughts. Also this can be progressed as an effort to talk and/or think about the reasons behind the stress disorder that leads to self-harming oneself.

'Kaif' in urdu means Saroor and pleasure in English

'Iztaraab' means helplessness or restlessness

'Kaif-e-Iztaraab' then means 'Ecstasy' of restlessness'

Hijr Mein Kaif-E-Iztaraab Na
Poochh
Khoon-E-Dil Bhi Sharaab Honaa
Thaa

[Majaz]

DESIGN STATEMENT - What my project 'Kaif-e-Iztaraab' associates with is the key to communicate a message to an audience that holds knowledge through their personal experiences and then, if possible, that further inspires them to ruminate about a problem within themselves or others. This can be only done when they get their feelings involved while they discern through the aspects of the Experiential design within the animation itself, which may include the storyline, the art style, the narration, and the message as well. The main focus is to generate a feeling within the viewer that he/she can relate to in a way that connects to a similar emotion owned by a person who Self harms or is close to a person who does so. This hence, gives me an opportunity to lead the viewer through a Systematic design that identifies this particular problem we socially possess and can occur due to a lack of communication, our social interaction, the circumstances and/or mental state of a person, This may not be much flexible for the viewer to fully understand the thought process behind the animation only because of it being quite molded around my own experience and story, but can somehow cognizant the relevance to the emotional value added to it in a dimension which holds my perspective as a Communication designer.

TARGET AUDIENCE - I do not aim to target a specific age or group of people, although knowing through my research and survey that this practice of Self Harm resides in mostly teenagers and some in their early twenties, but also I need to deliver to other people who are somehow connected with those who Self harm and desire to help them. Those other people can be their parents, teachers, friends and individuals who feel empathy for them.

Chapter 2

RESEARCH QUESTIONS - While initiating my thesis research and further propagating into it, I tried putting up questions for my own better understanding of my thesis. These were few of the most important questions that came across my head:

1. What inspires me as an artist?
2. How Memory and Scars are related to each other?
3. Why do people Self Harm?
4. Why do we need to talk about this?
5. How to cope up with Self harming thoughts and find distractions?

LITERATURE REVIEW - While I was researching for my topic that is the 'Non-suicidal self-injury' and why people come up with such thoughts and how they can distract themselves from that, I read stories about different people who were indulged in an act of self-harming and then they found distractions as an alternative for doing it. One was a story of a girl who first cut herself when she was being bullied in school. She did that when she was 11 while she was in the school washroom after she ran out there crying from her sculpture class with her sculpting cutter, because everyone in her class was making fun of her. She continued doing that for years but eventually got rid of such a habit with the help of her close friend who supported her emotionally and made her visit the therapist.

Another story was of a girl who used to cut on her legs as a way to release her frustration and distress. What her therapist told her to do was that whenever she gets a thought about cutting herself, she should grab a red marker and start drawing on her legs. She did the same and found herself not indulged in self-harming herself anymore. She shared her art on the internet and got really motivational feedback and thus this also encouraged other people to try the same when they came up with a thought of self-harming.

Then there was a book 'Girl in Pieces' that I read and in it is a story of a seventeen years old girl named Charlie who used to cut because of her unfortunate circumstances after her father's death since she had to find work in the streets and also her druggie friends sold her to a sex house. She then attempts suicide and ends up in a hospital. One of her old friends Michael sends her a ticket to Arizona and she lives there and then finds herself a job and she also continues doing her arts there.

"Everyone has that moment I think, the moment when something so momentous happens that it rips your very being into small pieces. And then you have to stop. For a long time, you gather your pieces. And it takes such a very long time, not to fit them back together, but to assemble them in a new way, not necessarily a better way. More, a way you can live with until you know for certain that this piece should go there, and that one there."

— Kathleen Glasgow, Girl in Pieces

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS -

The monistic model rejects any splitting of man into parts and views him as a unified organism of great complexity and varied functioning. This view rejects the notion that he is composed of a mind and a body which interact, but rather emphasizes man's absolutely basic unity.

"I don't feel sad. For just now, I don't feel scared. I feel, for right now, well, kind of triumphant."
— Kathleen Glasgow, *Girl in Pieces*

To better understand the connection between the mind and body, we try to analyze how they are dependent over each other and how you witness a change in your mental state respective to the physical activities you experience, and also vice versa. This further brings the theory of Monism which totally opposes the theory of dualism and hence, talks about how correlated Mind and Matter are while both being separate entities have no such existence of their own without each other. So this brings upon how the mind and body function in relevance to the senses they possess, also dependent on the emotions they consume according to those senses. Let's imagine two different scenarios at the same time. You just came back home all tired and annoyed from your day and people, the first thing you see on the table is some McDonald's ordered for you by your Mom. You pick your burger up, walk into your room, and place it on the table while you sit on the comfy swivel chair facing towards it. You then unwrap it and want to keep looking at the beauty of it for minutes, but you also know about everything that ages, starts losing its charm eventually, also you are really hungry and a foodie like me cannot resist a Big Mac so easily. You turn on your most soothing playlist, bring the burger so close to your mouth that you can also smell it. You start thinking about working really hard on improving your deeds so you can order one in Heaven as well. Then you finally take a bite and your worlds upside down. You feel like the happiest person on Earth. No, it doesn't always happen this way. Now imagine, you standing in a public place with your best friend. Everything's going fine and everyone's busy with their own selves until you experience a blast a few meters away, you get pushed away by the force of it and in a few seconds you see yourself get thrown on the floor with so many other people. There's blood all over the floor, a beep sound continuously goes inside your ears and the fumes give an unbearable smell to even breathe in. At first you look at yourself all covered with wounds and then you discover that your best friend is dead too. You feel numb and helpless and the only thing you can do is to mourn but nothing else. After it has been a few years since the incident, you still cannot forget all that and whenever you look at your scars, they remind you of your friend and the whole trauma you experienced. You really want to cut yourself, punch on the walls, pull your own hair, or to do any other thing that can relieve you from that pain you have been suffering since years. So, here's the comparison between both these scenarios, The first one can be something you usually experience normally, that can change your mood and may bring happiness to you for a while but that will not remain for a very long time. Also you may forget about it the other day. Although, everyone

Epicureanism means devotion to pleasure, comfort, and high living, with a certain nicety of style.

Scoptophobia is the fear of being stared at by someone.

can relate to it just like the second scenario but what differs between them is that second one being a trauma may keep haunting you for a lifetime and the mental effect of it is permanent besides the physical one, Now, there's a reason why we mostly know about the stories behind the scars on our body because we have dealt with pain when they used to be wounds. And here's when we discuss how people who already have been dealing with traumas, failures and mistreatments, deal with them. Some people are strong enough to live through them while others being more sensitive hurt their bodies in order to relieve the mental stress and pain they have been bearing throughout. And that's how they find new ways to turn their pain into a feeling of pleasure. That's when the Epicureans defined pleasure as the absence of pain (mental and physical), and hence pleasure can only increase until the point in which pain is absent. Beyond this, pleasure cannot increase further, and indeed one cannot rationally seek bodily pleasure beyond the state of 'Aponia'. When I started to compare other people who self-harm with my own self being in an almost same emotional state in the past, I could relate to their state of mind as well. I can relate how helpless a person is when he/she self-harms, how afraid and frustrated that person gets, and how hard it is to share that with someone else. They feel afraid that they will be judged and abandoned by people. This fear of people that mostly exists within people who are less socially active and get panicked at some situations is called 'Anthrophobia'. They might also fear a person who looks like some other person who would have hurt or abused them. But that may be also because of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Also those people who cut on their forearms also try to wear full sleeves shirts so they can be less noticed by others. A lot of people empathize for those who self-harm but sometimes they cannot help them much, but then they can provide directions to them in order to distract them from such thoughts. But sometimes they actually are judged by people and considered as crazy and psychopaths. There's a reason why we sometimes perceive people with scars as ugly and evil just like how most of the villains in the movies and fictional stories have been portrayed. I call that the Scars of Perception.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS EXPLAINED -

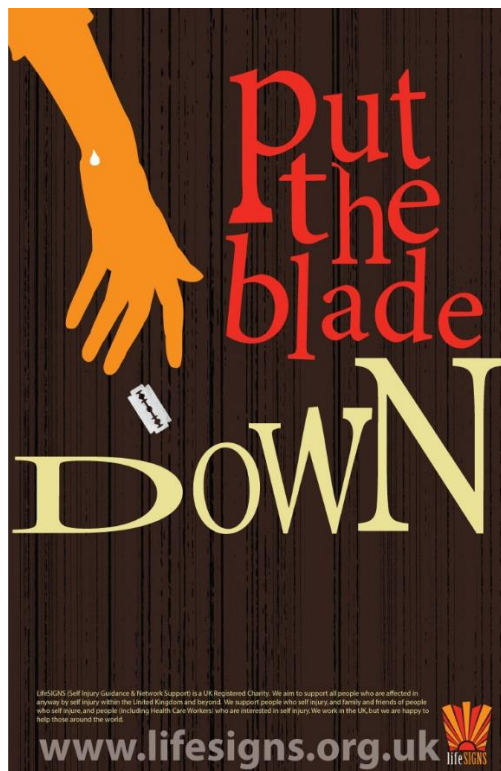
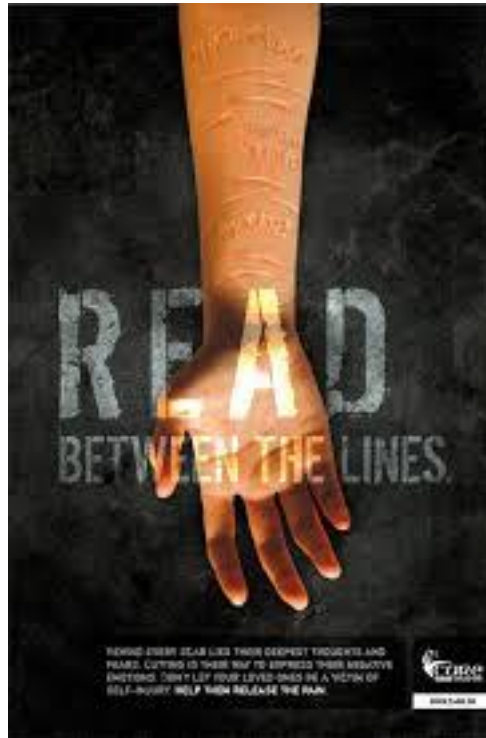
At first I tried to analyze my own personality and how I perceive things in a way that can be similar to many other people but would have the tendency to set a new plane on which I can frame a set of analytics according to my personal experiences and opinions. For that, one also needs to examine your own self in and out. What were your past struggles, what

did you learn from them, how they made you what you are now and then how they structured your logic and creativity into a decent shape. For me, as an artist who is more into drawing human figures, can be quite observant about the distinctive features of people and how you can interpret their stories through their faces. You can be wrong so many times with that but what if you ask those people about the scars you see on their bodies. They often tell you stories behind those scars and you can get to know more about that person through their past. So yes, your scars do serve as a memory in its physical form and there's always a need to know the connection between scars and memory because that is when people have gone through a feeling of pain which one cannot easily forget. Then came the concept of how there exists scars of memory that are the mental scars which can be those traumatic incidents, or failures, or when you have been treated badly or abused by someone, and so that haunts your mind until you try to make a choice to put scars on your body yourself. That is when you self-harm and because you are afraid to talk about what you are suffering from to even those people who you are close to. You are afraid that they too can get hurt by knowing about your suffering and pain. Also sometimes you don't want people to judge you as a psychopath. We do need to talk about this and the reasons why people self-harm so that people can get elucidated about how there is a need for proper communication between people who self-harm and people who don't, so they may help them with distractions from such thoughts to harm themselves or/and help in providing proper therapy for them.

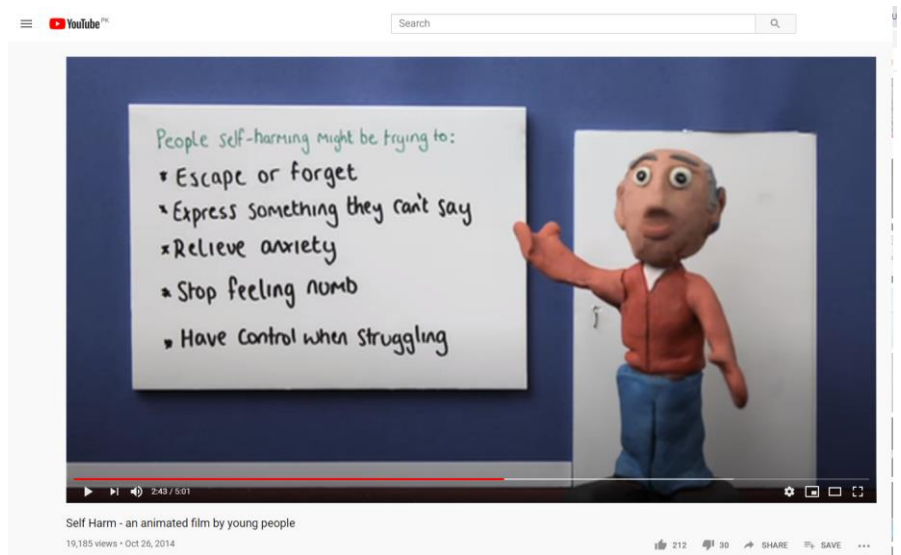
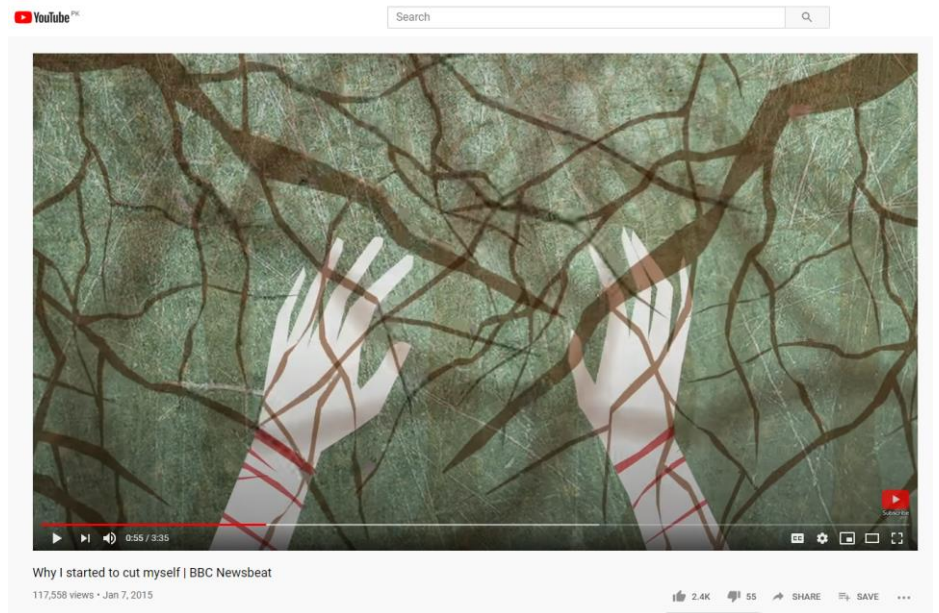
"People should know about us. Girls who write their pain on their bodies. ~Louisa"
— Kathleen Glasgow, [Girl in Pieces](#)

VISUAL REFERENCES –

Campaigns designed for the awareness of Self-harm.



Some animations from YouTube about
Self-harm and stories related to it.



Zhe Chen's powerful and confrontational photographic series "**The Bearable**" spans 2007 to 2010 in her life, and is very, very personal – her own journey down the road of self-harm.



Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY -

When I started with finding the relationship between scars and memory I had to go through some Explanatory and comparative research where I was supposed to look into connections between the mind and the matter, between people who self-harm and who don't and compare them all with each other in a way that can be helpful for me to build up better concepts about my topic. Furthermore, to ask why people self-harm and what can be the possible reasons behind it, some theoretical research was to be done by looking into disorders after you face a trauma and by going through different stories about people in reference to their experiences. I also tried interviewing different people I knew who self-harm or they knew someone who does so I can relate their emotions and stories with each other and of mine.

Then I designed a survey form and asked people to fill it. The survey involved questions that were linked to qualitative and quantitative research both as they being about a topic like self-harm required people's involvement in it. The questions varied from asking people if they have ever self-harmed, since what age they have been doing it, do they know someone who self-harms, to even asking people's opinion on what objects would they choose to self-harm, how they feel about others doing it and would they help them fight with such habit in order to get distracted in some other activities other than self-harm. I then tried using the cutter as a tool to make miniature sculptures out of chinks. That's when I felt being in a state of fear and helplessness and I tried to convert my pain into pleasure and satisfaction. Furthermore, I searched about stories of people who actually found distractions and coped up through their habit of self-harming which would lead me and others to policy-oriented research in order to find further solutions.

Chapter 4

MEDIUM OF PRESENTATION – Kaif-e-Iztaraab is a complete story telling experience which has been done in a form of animation using frame by frame illustrations and an overlay of sound in the form of a narration that tells the story along the visual itself.

PRE - PRODUCTION - What I tried doing in my project was to find what people think about self-harm and how one should

discover a way to distract oneself and also others around you with such a habit. At first I tried making Band-Aids for people in order to aware them and motivate them in a way that they feel good about themselves. So I designed them with patterns of reptiles over them that would communicate about the regeneration of scars and feelings. On them were some motivational lines. This wasn't of much help but still a part of my progress. I then also designed stencils of materials with which people usually cut themselves. I did that using Calligraphy as a medium as I turned words into shapes of sharp objects. Those words were from Urdu language that are somewhat related to the feeling one is trying to achieve while cutting oneself. Then I did a self-portrait with blades on a wooden board that explained myself being filled with the traumas, bad thoughts and wrong perceptions that can lead someone to self-harm.

"I'm so unwhole. I don't know where all the pieces of me are, how to fit them together, how to make them stick. Or if I even can."

— Kathleen Glasgow, [Girl in Pieces](#)

So, these all were the progress until I evolved to something that I may call as a final product at the end of my Seventh Semester. I did a story boarding based on my own experience when I was having a thought about harming myself after I felt helpless and was afraid of failing my semester. This included how I distracted myself from my thoughts and using the same cutter that I picked up to cut myself, I carved a piece of chalk in order to shape it into a face. And this is how I discovered a coping mechanism for myself and I evolved from that state of mind where I got rid of that thought to making numerous of those miniature sculptures with chalk. Those chalk pieces as my medium depicted the fragile and delicate nature within humans themselves. My final display was my animation as my main project and there were more than 30 of those sculptures that showed the backstory behind those sculptures about how I ended up making art, not scars.

For my final Thesis product, I started sketching more of the scenarios which depicted the situations which lead me to self-harm in my past. I also took visuals from the internet as a reference to illustrate over them and then animate them using Adobe Photoshop. Since, they all were different scenes so I decided to do them in chunks and then add them in Adobe After Effects to generate an animation as a final product.

'TIME'
a brand for Band-Aids designed for the
awareness of Self harm.

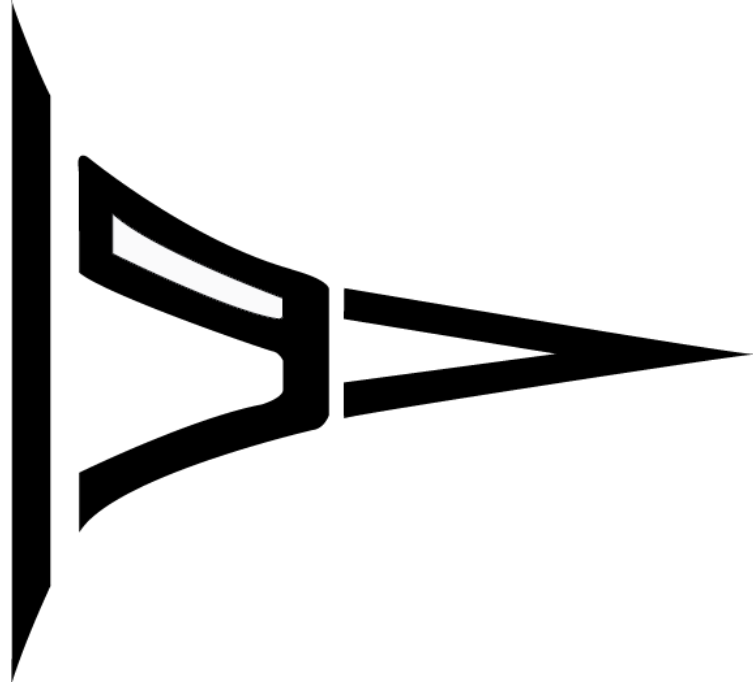


'MY LAST CUT'
A visual that explains the choice you
make when you self harm can eventually
lead to a worst decision one can make.



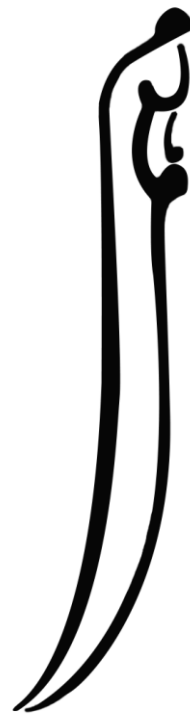
'ASAR'

Urdu words used as calligraphy to portray the feelings related to a mind which seeks pleasure or relief after one self harms.



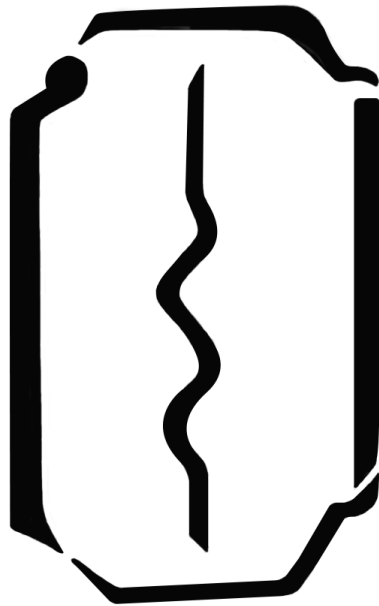
'Dawa'

'Marham'





'Sakoon'



'AARAM'

'KHUDRAZ'
A self-portrait using blades in order to
show the hidden agony inside oneself
when he/she self harms.



Some stills from the process of
animation



Chapter 5

PRODUCTION – The execution at first was supposed to be a physical one with 4 different animations on different screens in a designed space. After this pandemic of Covid'19, we switched to a Virtual Thesis. Mine involves a stop-motion sort of an animation that will be displayed virtually to the audience.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION - Throughout the phases of research, experimentation and then implementation, I have gained much understanding about my topic that is Self-Harm. What I have learnt is to search for an adequate amount of knowledge being sufficient enough for me to proceed further with putting that knowledge to use, in a way that would help in gathering both qualitative and quantitative data to be put into analysis with an intention to be implemented into a finely structured design product. I have also learnt to manage time according to the deliverables required for a desired progress and also how important it is to neglect unnecessary data, arrange the remaining clusters of necessary data into a concept building exercise that is one of the most essential parts of the design procedure. I have learnt how storytelling can be a technique to communicate to people about certain social disorders led by some flaws in the society and the people themselves. Also how important communication itself is while you try to explain the correlation of your narrative with your visual or design in relevance to all the hurdles you faced and all the efforts you have put in.

“Everything and everybody that's busted
can be fixed. That's what I think.”
— Kathleen Glasgow, *Girl in Pieces*

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