

Unravelling

Anger

CPTSD

What A Shame

CPTSD

I Am Perfect

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Mental Illness and Indian Womanhood

Pain



ACKNOWLEDGE- MENTS

This year has been a challenge that has proven to be one of the most difficult and rewarding periods I have experienced. I discovered so much about my identity, not just as an artist, but as an indian woman who struggles with her mental health. As much as I can congratulate myself for never throwing in the towel, I have had the most supportive and inspiring people by my side throughout this journey, that i could never fully express my gratitude towards.

First and foremost, I would like to thank myself. Four years of art school has forced me to confront the deepest parts of myself as an individual and I can confidently say that I am glad that this chapter of my life is over. This has been one of the hardest years of my life but I take pride in the strength I had to push through the loss of my passion in order to experience this feeling of accomplishment and relief.

I would like to thank my mother for never doubting my drive and loving me through the chaos. Thank you to my little sister for inspiring me, through her hard work and resilience

despite the obstacles she has had to face.

I am grateful to my aunt, who tirelessly stood by my side, even when that became overwhelming; my uncle, who encouraged my talent and my Ma, who remained a ray of light in my darkest moments.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my best friend Vida, who remained a strong and incredibly grounding force in my life. She made the pain more palatable and never failed to remind me of my own light and power.

I love you all so very much,
Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts I am working with include the intersection of two integral aspects of my life, that somewhat defines (but not limits) who I am as a person. These specific aspects are my personal identity as an Indian woman and my various experiences with my mental health, and how they interact and inform each

other. I have learnt so much about my community and my position within it and, if anything, it has inspired me to actively reach out and allow people in similar positions to relate to my practice.

My work is a gateway into my body, life struggles and the complexities of my mind. A big part it is also the idea that nothing is irredeemable and that it is possible not to lose to your afflictions.

I am still becoming accustomed to the concept of being

a disappointment to a community that wants to mould me into an extension of a culture that I do not agree with, regardless of all the aspects of beauty that I would like to embrace. The purpose of my work is not to commit cultural suicide, but rather, challenge the perceptions of Indian women and mental health in my family and the communities I grew up in.



Mental Illness and Indian Womanhood

I have been clinically diagnosed with the following mental health conditions:

Bipolar Disorder- characterised by extreme shifts in mood, concentration, energy levels and the ability to complete daily tasks.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder- a mental illness that consists of obsessions (the repetition of unwanted thoughts and feelings), compulsions (the need to carry out actions repeatedly) or both.

Complicated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder- the same

characteristics as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder with the addition of symptoms such as imposter syndrome, dissociative episodes, suicidal feelings, feelings of worthlessness etc.

Some of the things I experience include: extremes episodes of mania and depression, paranoia, obsessive and neurotic tendencies, over-stimulation, panic attacks, severe attachment to people and objects and an inability to accurately recollect moments from my childhood to beginning university. This is already a lot for me to manage but what makes it more difficult to navigate is

the stigma that a large sector of my family has attached to mental illnesses.

An issue that I often struggle with is the ownership I have over my own body. Wearing whatever I want, choosing to express my bodily confidence and self-esteem, in a way that suits me, still feels foreign and uncomfortable for me because of the external pressures placed on me to “respect myself”.

The act of stripping a woman of her bodily and mental autonomy is also something that needs to be heavily monitored and changed.

A few years before I started psychoanalytic therapy, I tried to keep the issues I struggled with a secret. Members of my family were not receptive to these conversations either and my cries for help often fell on deaf ears (a continuation of this outdated cycle of a lack of understanding surrounding mental illnesses). It is only when a life shattering event occurs in an individual's life, that attention is paid to the crisis management of it (which only ever happens in rare circumstances). In my case, it was the death of my father. It took me spiraling completely

out of control and becoming destructive to my family and community environment (which is directly linked to the emphasis of a community's wellbeing over an individual's), for the people responsible for my wellbeing to start listening and trying to help me or giving me the resources to help myself. The specific garments that the women in my family had an abundance of were saris. My decision to use some of my grandmother's saris to paint on, print on and rip apart is based on the nostalgic sentimental and cultural value they possess. I

will be creating series or stories of works on saris, each representing either the mental health struggles I face or the issues I experience within the Indian community I grew up and am surrounded by. The way in which I handle the different saris is also carefully chosen in order to further correlate with the concept for which they are being used for.

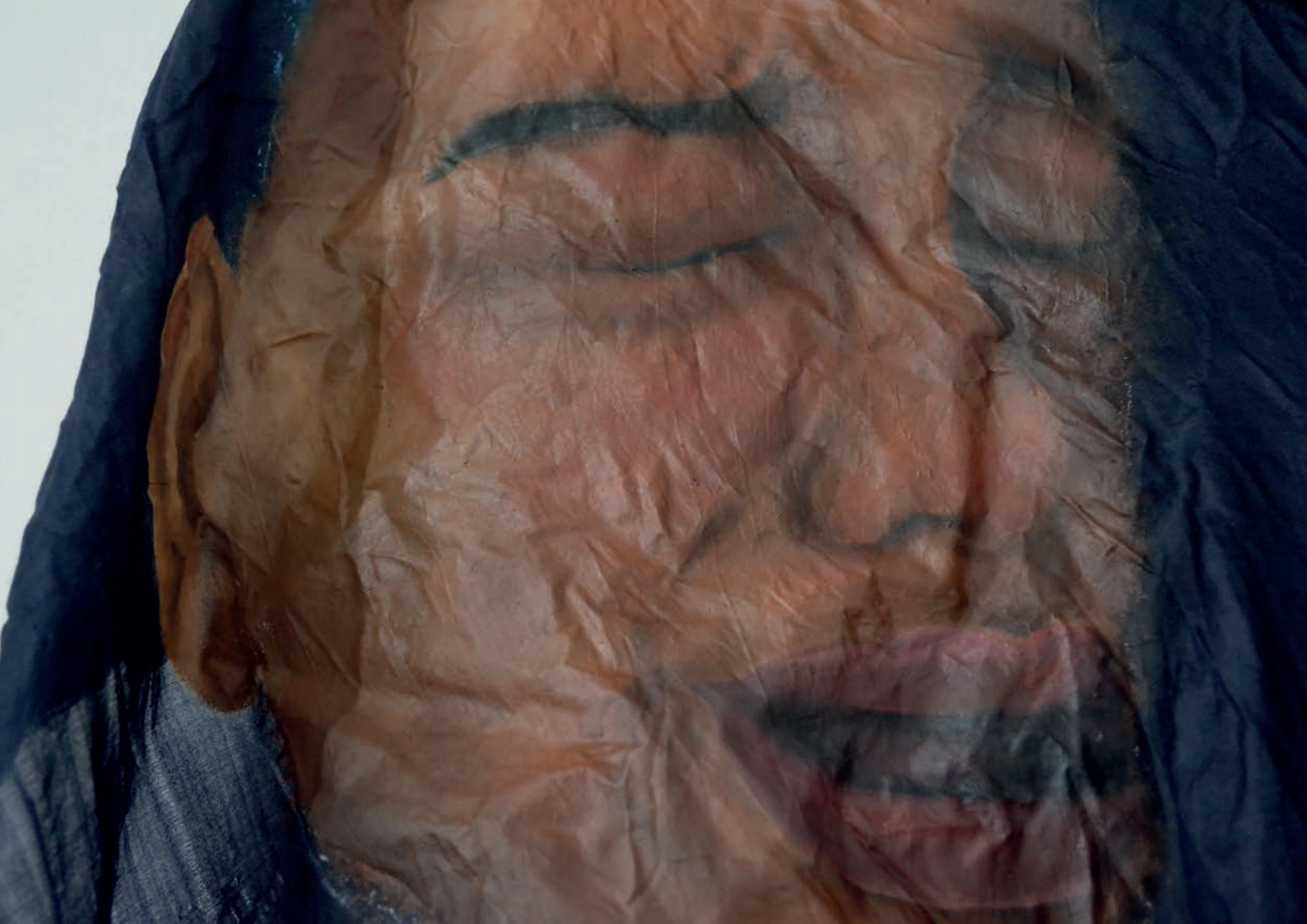
A close-up photograph of a dark blue, textured fabric, possibly denim or a similar heavy material. The fabric is draped and has frayed, frayed edges, particularly at the top and bottom. The background is a light, neutral grey. The word "PAIN" is printed in a bold, white, sans-serif font in the lower right corner of the image.

PAIN

“When you have a persistent sense of heartbreak and gutwrench, the physical sensations become intolerable and we will do anything to make those feelings disappear. And that is really the origin of what happens in human pathology. People take drugs to make it disappear, and they cut themselves to make it disappear, and they starve themselves to make it disappear, and they have sex with anyone who comes along to make it disappear and once you have these horrible sensations in your body, you’ll do anything to make it go away.”

— *Bessel A. van der Kolk*





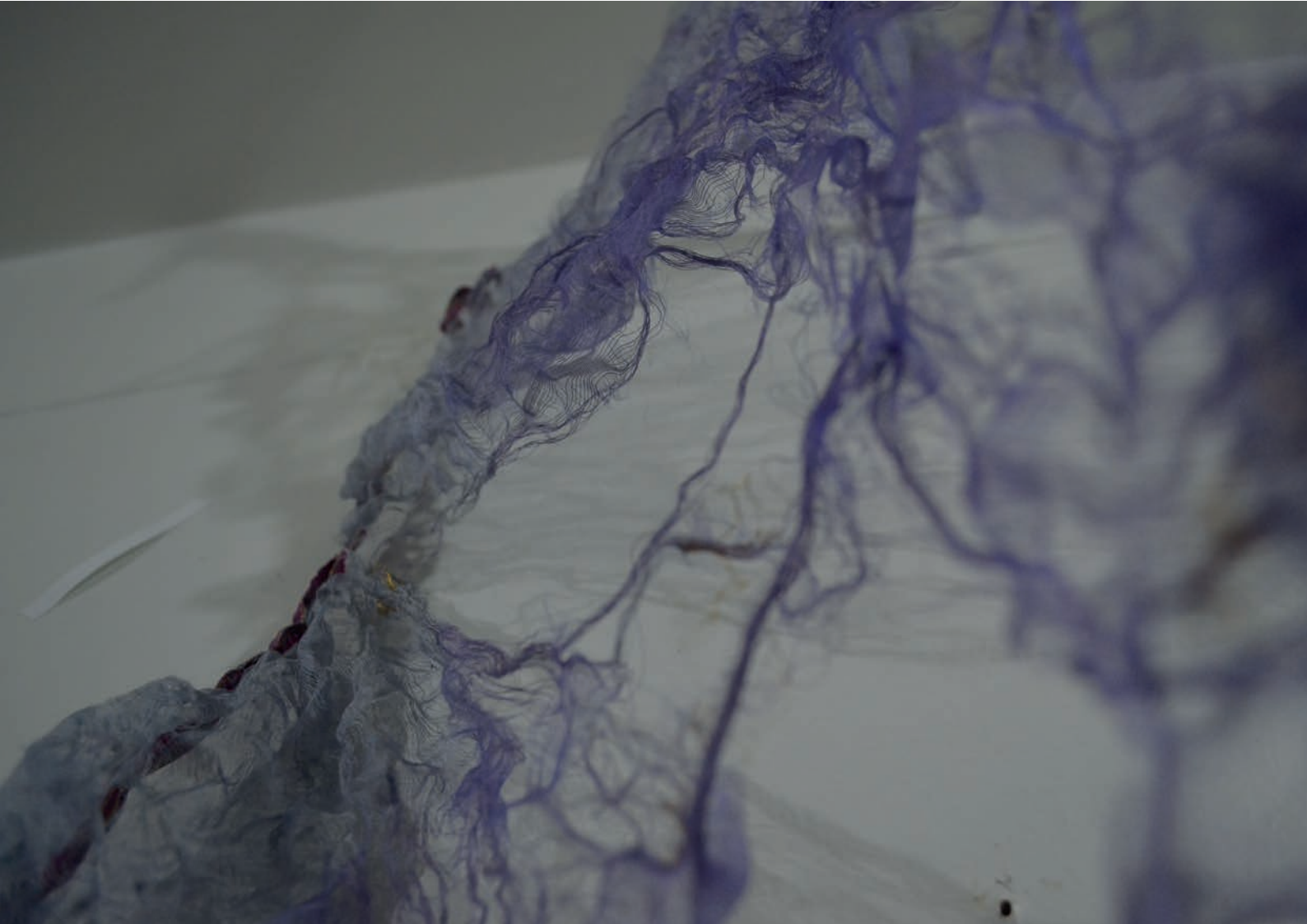




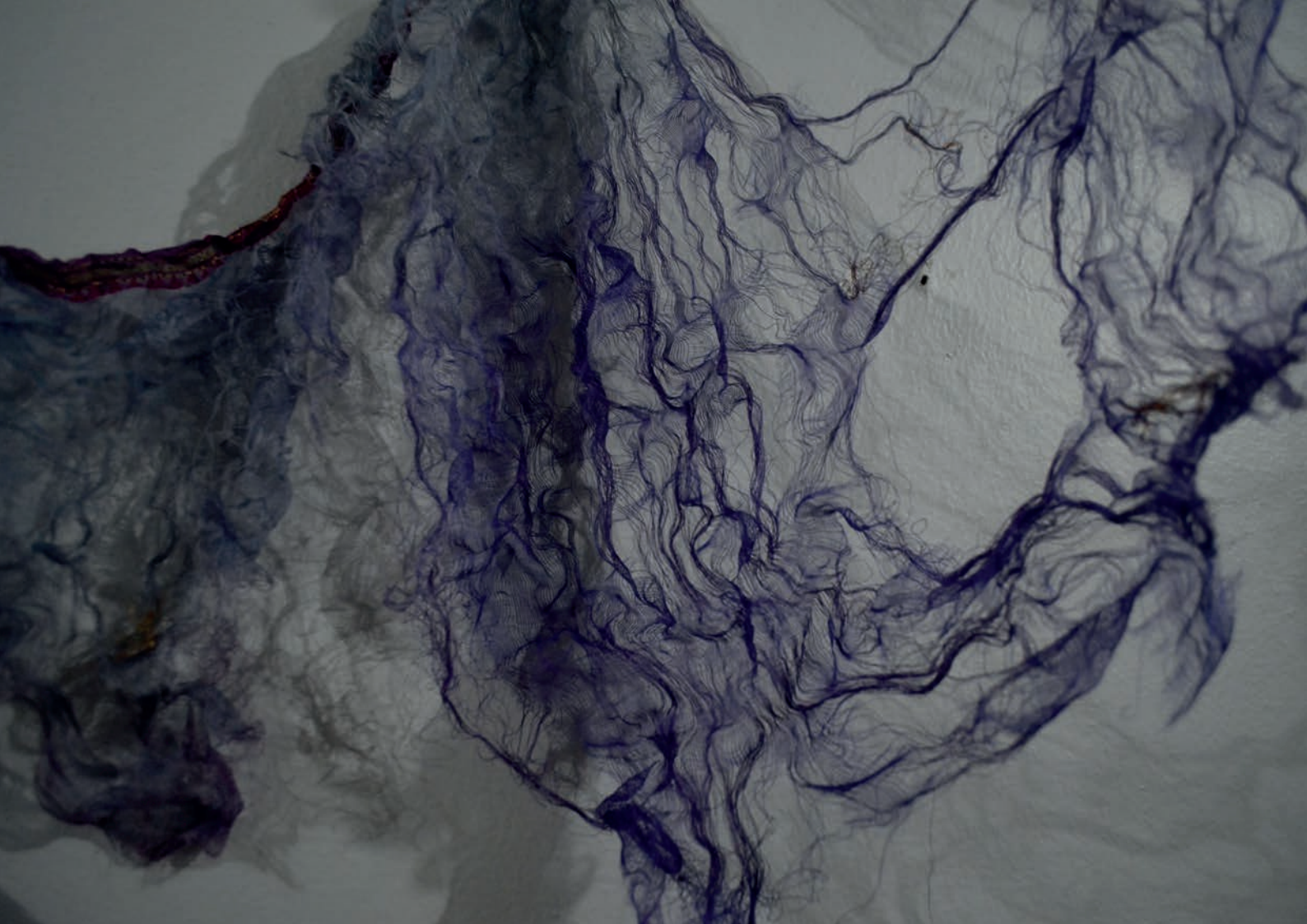


UNRAVELLED

*Six meters of unravelled sari.
An unravelled mind.
An unravelled identity.*







“Anger is a thing that brings
Negative and sad things
Find a way to control your feeling
Don’t let it send you reeling.

Anger is an emotion
That can be compared to an explosion
But it doesn’t have to be that way
If you control it and keep it at bay.

Anger can hurt and it can harm
When you feel it is reason for alarm
Go for a walk, just cool off
Then sit down and have a talk.

When you don’t give in to it
When you don’t throw a fit
You will find control you will have
And for that you’ll be glad.”

-

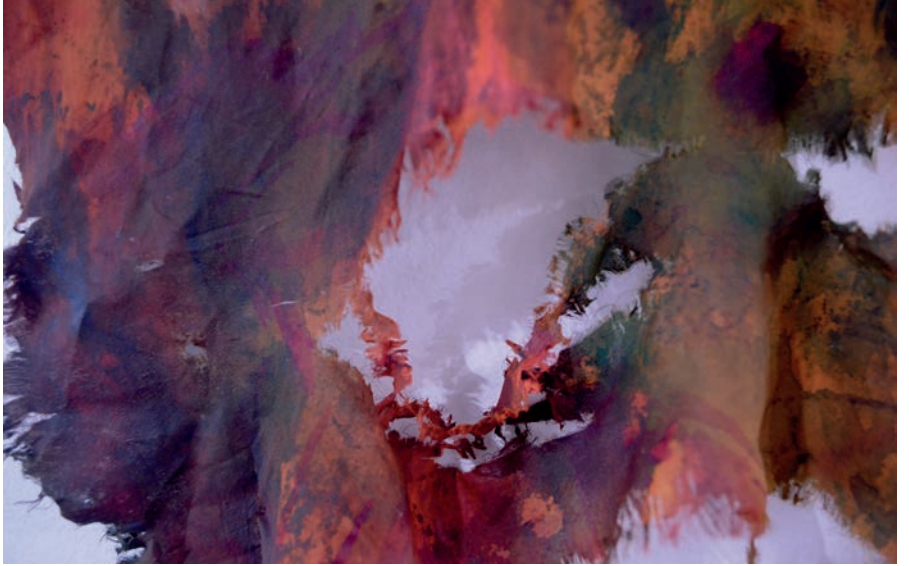
Catherine

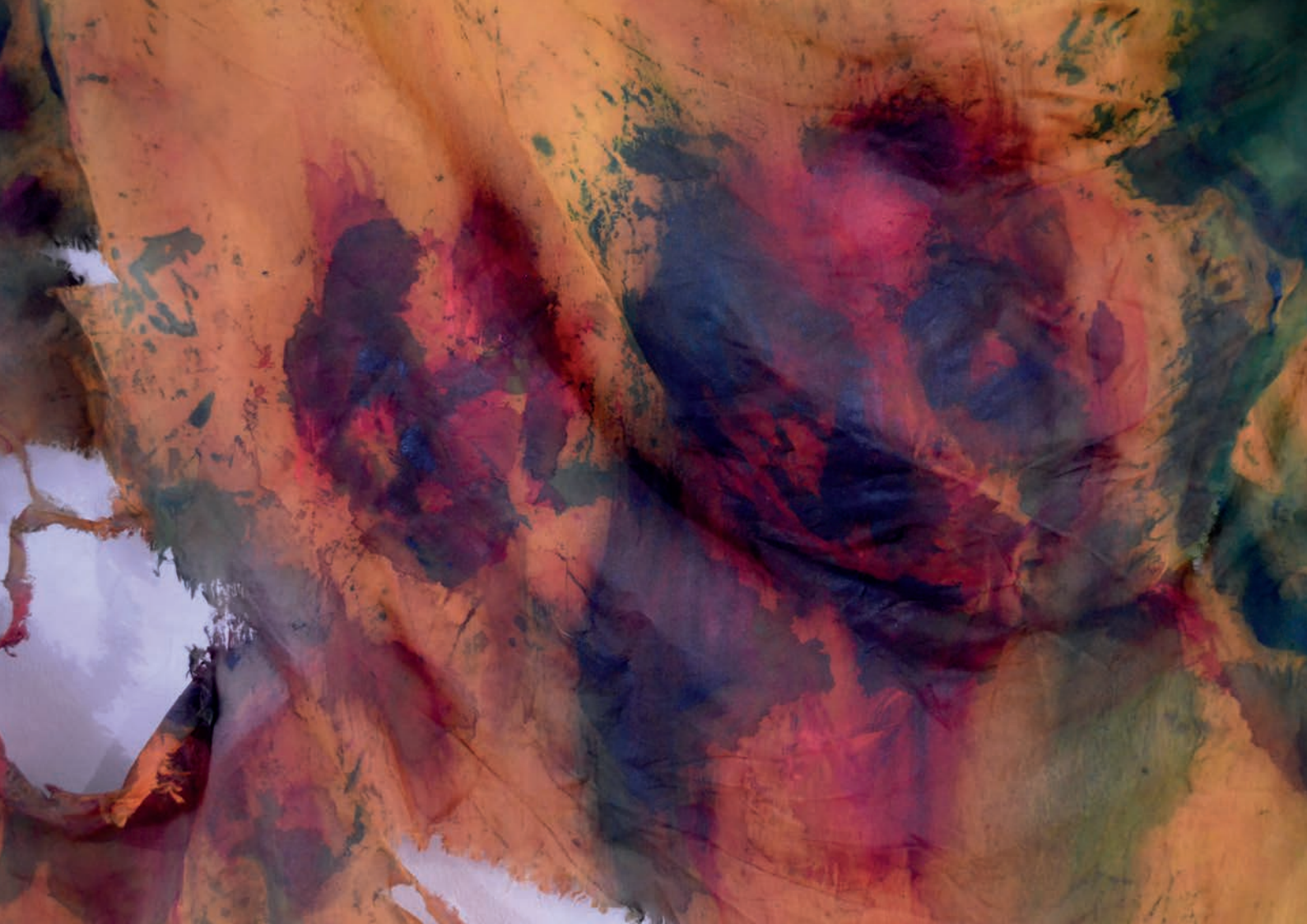
Pulsifer



CPTSD











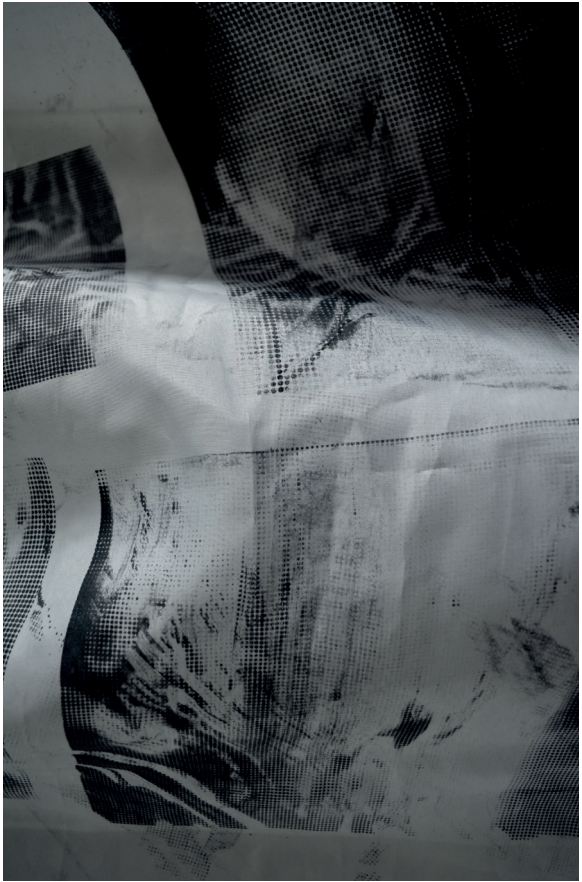
WHAT A SHAME





Sincerely, I don't apologise.





The background is an abstract, textured composition of colors. On the left, there is a large area of teal and dark green. In the center and right, there are prominent areas of red and orange-red, with some yellow-green and light green accents. The overall effect is a vibrant, somewhat chaotic mix of colors, suggesting a complex or intense theme.

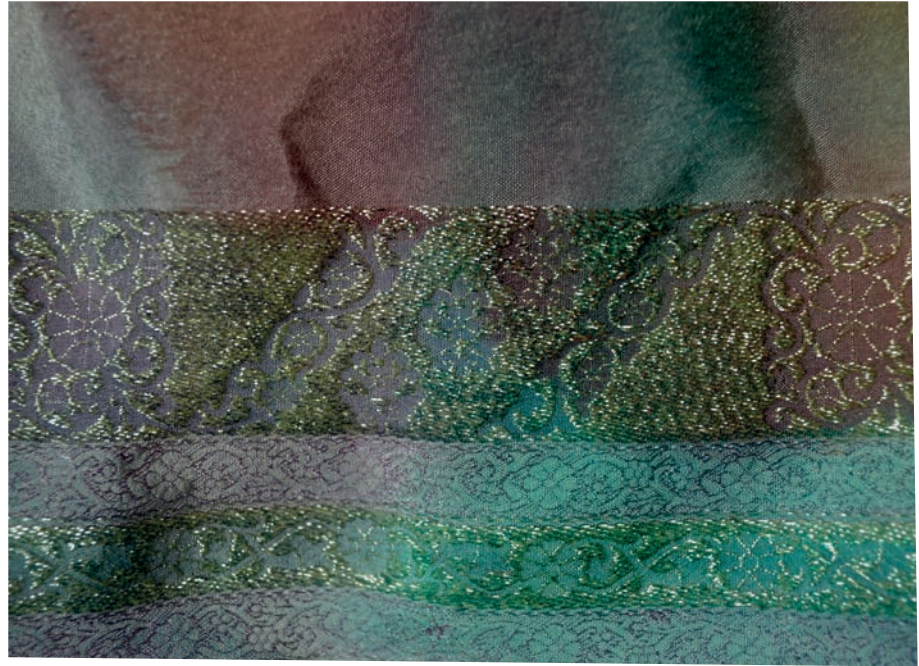
CPTSD

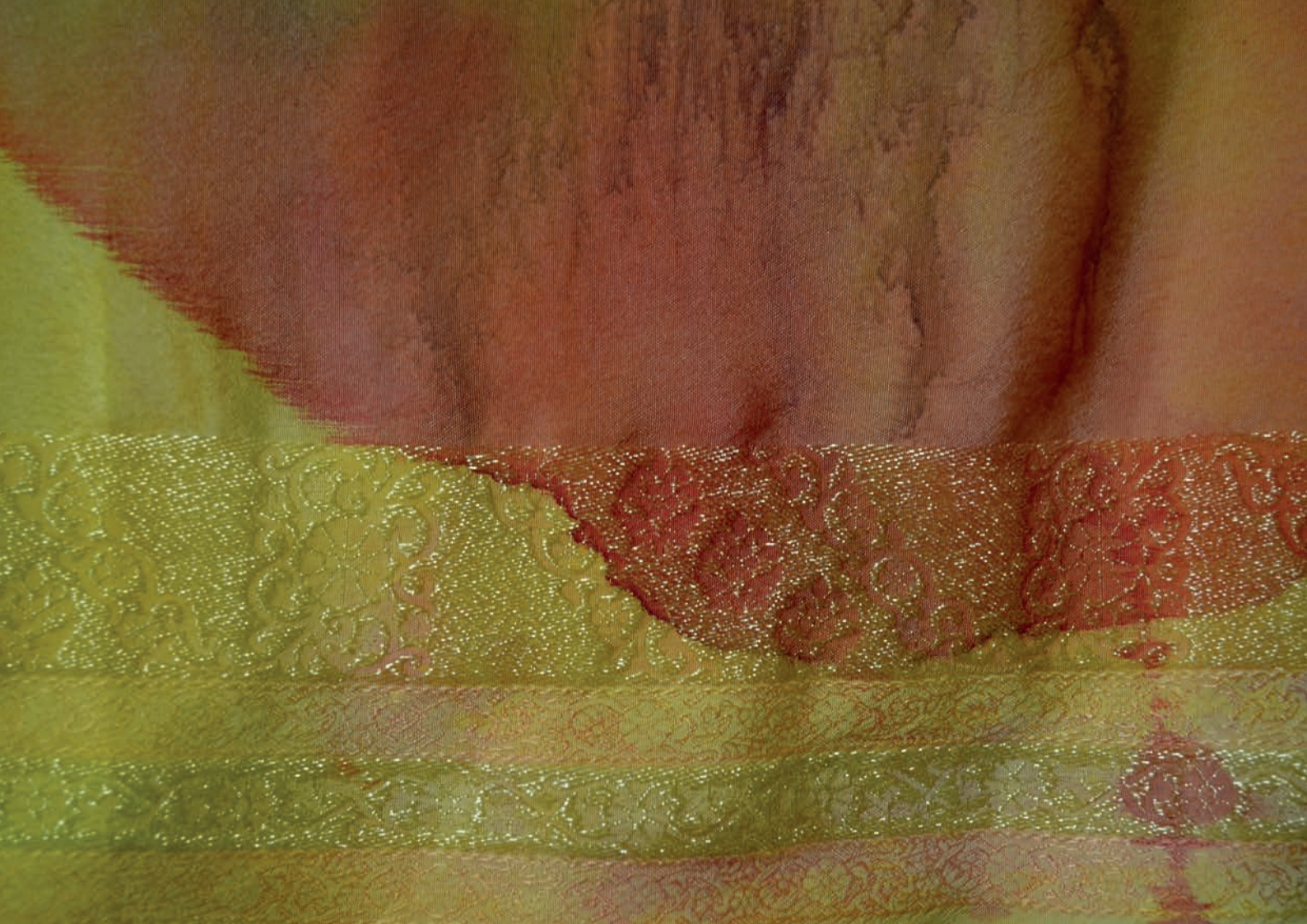
“Memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don’t go along with that. The memories I value most, I don’t ever see them fading.”

- *Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go*















The perfect woman

The perfect woman is beautiful, of course but not too beautiful, (enough to be objectify-able but not so much as to be threatening)

The perfect woman has a voice and a mind (that she wisely decides to leave behind)

The perfect woman should never be heard (unless she becomes a part of the herd)

The perfect woman is benign and blind (to everyone's faults except her own, which also, btw, she ought to make known, or god forbid, she'll be harkened a *****,

How rude.....)

The perfect woman is coy and shy (changing her demeanor for a girl or a guy)

The perfect woman Does nothing wrong (yeah right) (and still doesn't get why she can't belong)

The perfect woman Knows her salad forks and plates She encourages, she nourishes She creates, (she waits, she waits , she waits)

The perfect woman is an overachiever (but readily labeled to be a deceiver)

The perfect woman doesn't age

doesn't dream or rebel Oh no, dear no.... none of that outrage

The perfect woman can be a nymph and a nun (knows how to not show that she knows what is fun)

The perfect woman, is curvy but thin each angle defined each strand refined with a dazzling smile and a glowing skin (no matter how she gets it It'sthat she gets it, she gets it.)

The perfect woman is strong and composed But when she's patronized She doesn't resist... She carries her grace on her well turned calf and a delicate wrist Till it's proper and unopposed

The perfect woman is cruel to her daughter

and kind to her son (as she knows what it means to be a woman even if she forgets that she's also one...)

The perfect woman doesn't want to be free you see, it's simple She's come to terms with the very concept That it's her destiny

S i g h . Let's say this, let's try... Here's the gist The perfect woman is either every woman or she doesn't exist.

- **Arshia Qasim**



