

PORTFOLIO

IMD

Abi van Dam 2025

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I'm a 20-year-old media and communications student with a current focus on graphic design, film and photography. I like learning new skills, and my aim is to further broaden my abilities in the creative and artistic sector. I have a curious mind and an active body, allowing

me to ponder and question what it is that drives me as a creative maker with an interest in new skills. This can take me from embroidery to podcasting and bouldering to boxing.



ABOUT ME

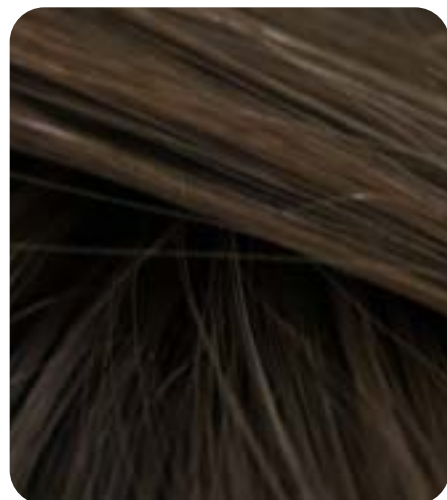
WHAT INSPIRES ME



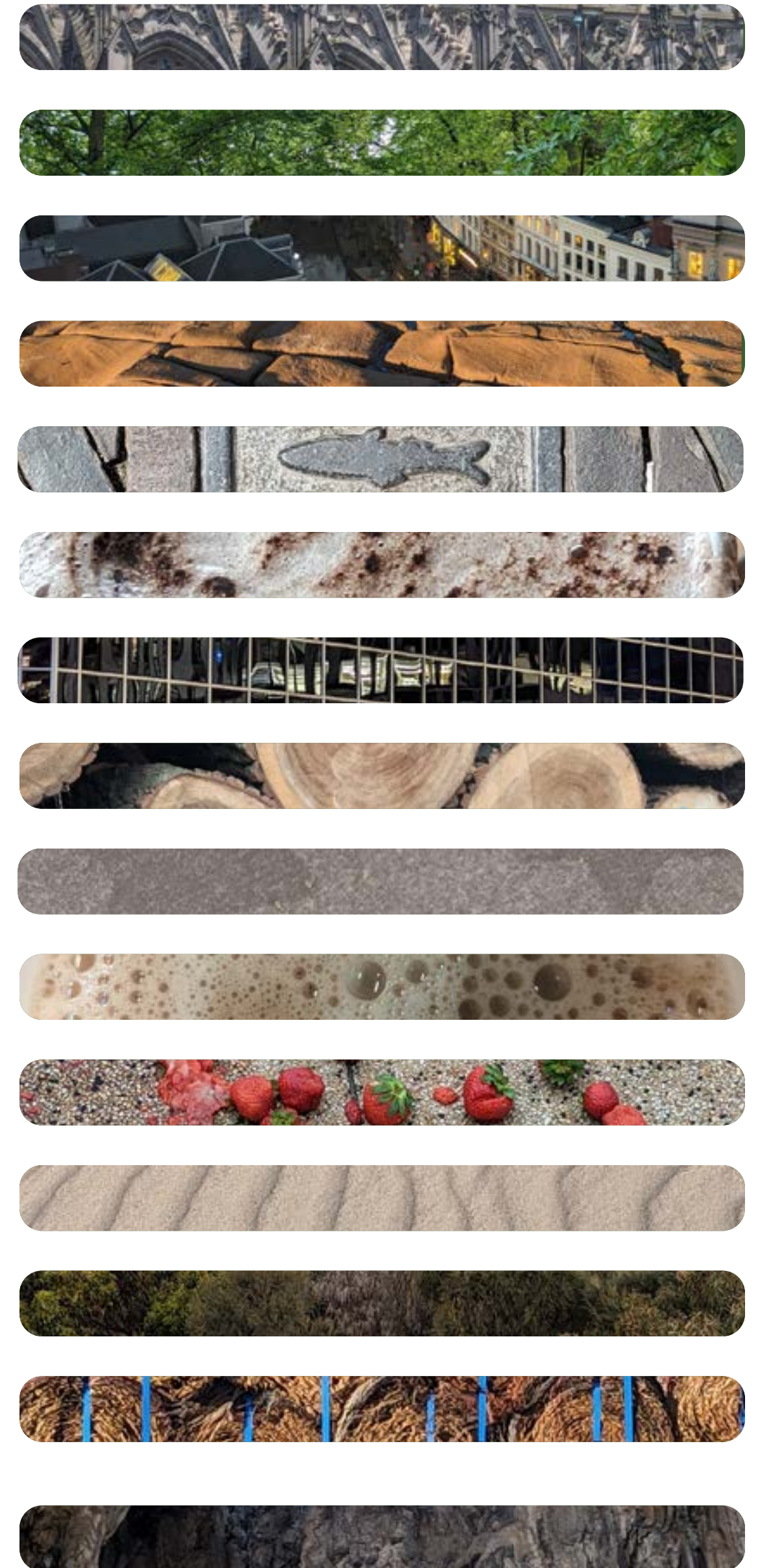
The chunkiness of texture and depth. I like the contrast of various surfaces and the relationships different visual elements have with each other. I like the challenge of unpacking, puzzling and learning, with a focus on physical knowledge. I'm a practical thinker with a playful enjoyment of gaining new skills. I can be quite an "of the moment physical experiences" person.



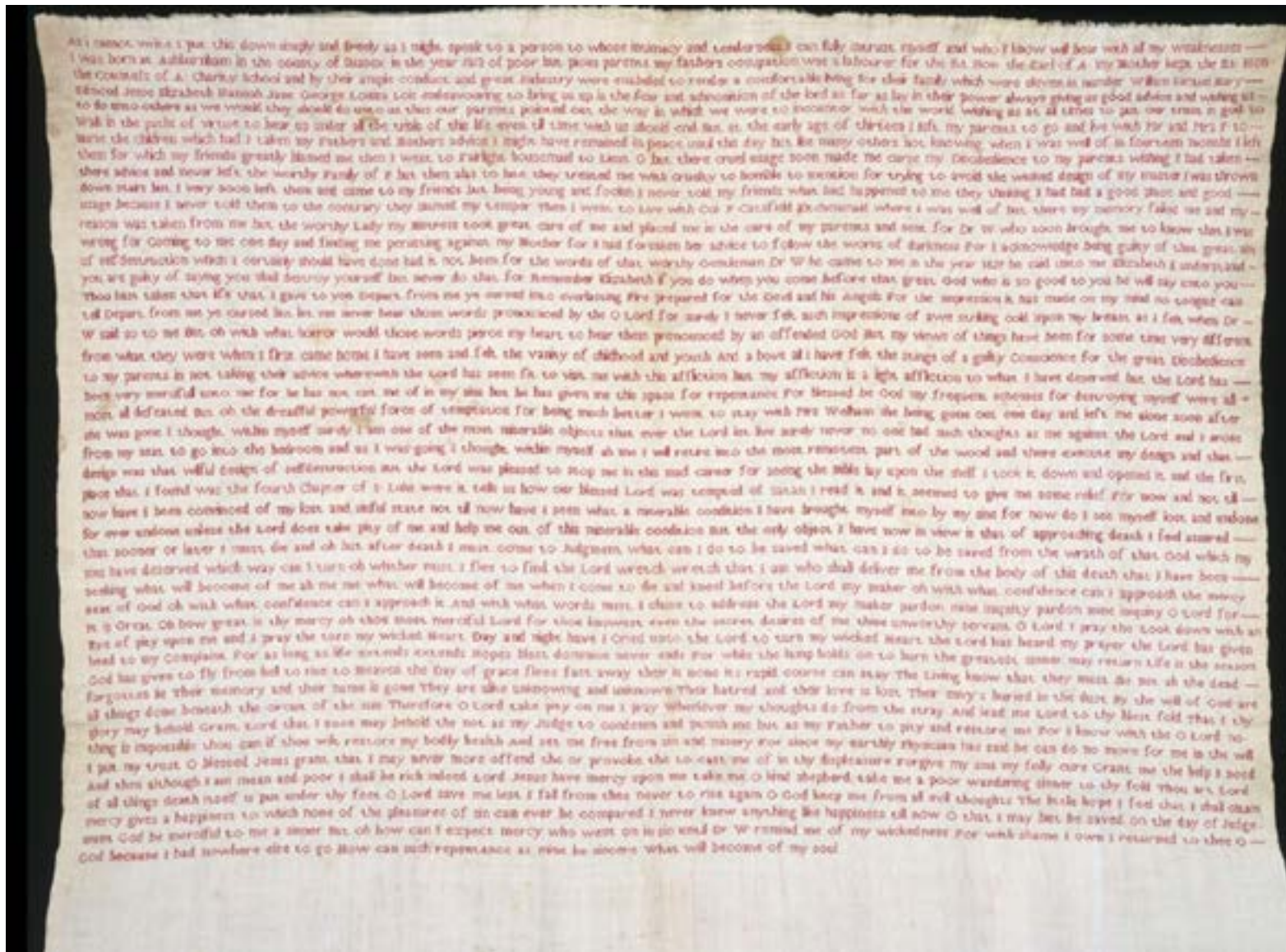
I'm not motivated by a job or buying a house, but by a desire to be engaged with what I'm doing, to have it satisfy me, to present an itch and to then scratch it. I purposefully put myself in places and situations that are new to me, to see whether or not I like them. I like the journey of acquiring knowledge and skill and I'm not at all scared to laugh at myself. I see the playfulness and absurdity in things, and I feel comfortable there.



Next to this text are a collection of pictures I have taken over the past three years. They are pictures of textures, patterns, composition or colors that intrigued me.



EMBROIDERY PROJECT

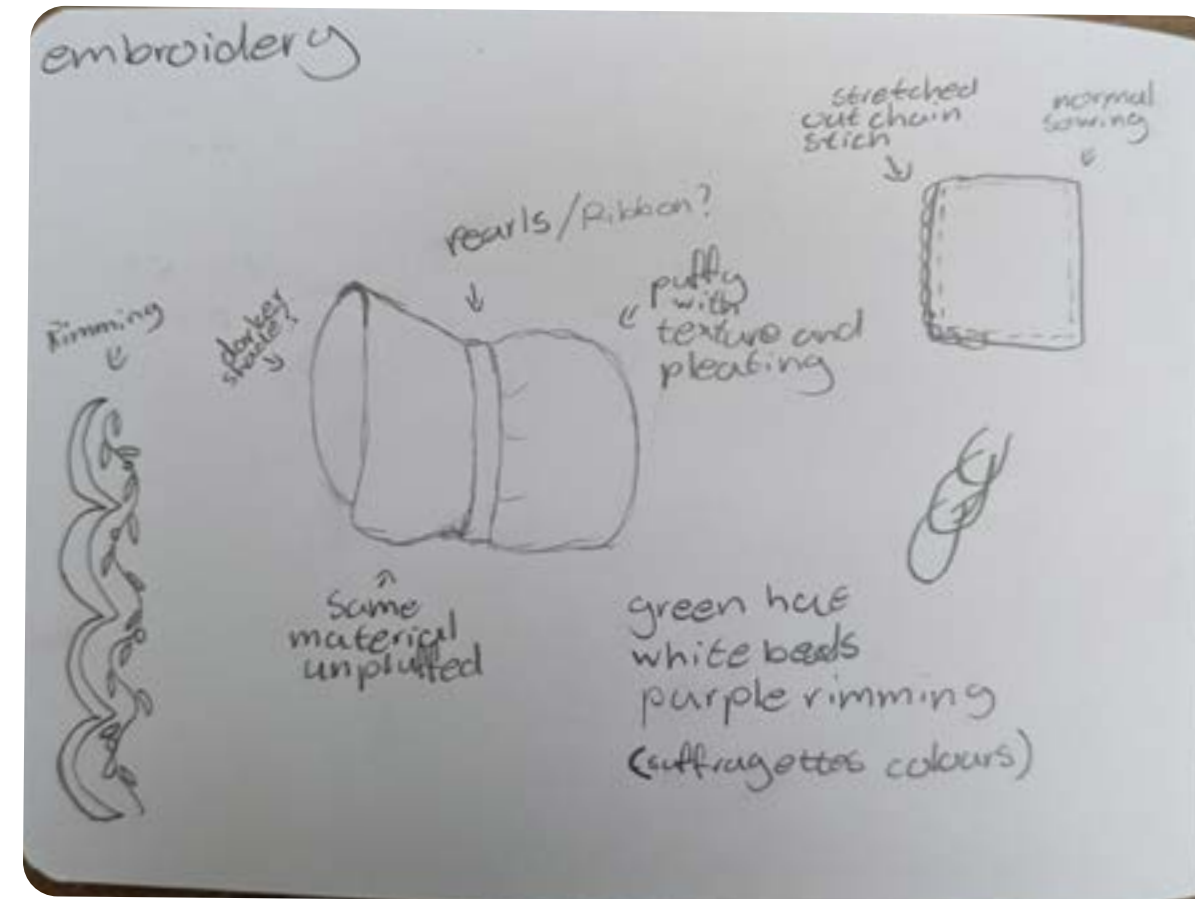


Elizabeth Parker, Sampler, 1830

On the left you see a sampler made by Elizabeth Parker. Elizabeth was a 17-year-old girl living in Britain in 1830. She embroidered a piece that speaks so well of what embroidery, as a craft, meant to a woman. She begins her sampler with “as I cannot write, I put this down simply and freely”. Throughout the text she shows quite clearly that she can write, implying that embroidery was perhaps the only way she felt she could freely express herself. This story, specifically the first sentence, really struck me. The topic of feminism has always drawn my attention and so this reminded me of a conversation I had with my mother a year or two ago. We were watching a period drama, and a woman was wearing a bonnet “You know women had to wear bonnets to limit their sight of the world” my mother said. I later researched whether this was true or not and sadly I couldn’t find anything online saying that this was the motive for the bonnet. Most people talked about how a bonnet was a staple fashion item of the time and a great way for women to be able to express themselves whilst staying modest and protected from the elements. Personally, I see similarities with the corset, an item put onto women to limit them, but advertised as a piece of fashion.

I originally started embroidering because I saw someone online embroidering with beads. When doing research on embroidery at the beginning of the Christmas holidays I found Elizebeth Parker, but it was only really around the end of the holidays that I connected this story with the bonnet. I then went through a month’s process of teaching myself basic embroidery and testing different stitches, beading and materials. Luckily my mother had an entire collection of materials to use. By the end of January, the piece was finished.

Process



After all this trial and error, I committed to working on two trial pieces. Here are my sketches followed by the trial pieces and finally, the end result.



This is a collection of practice stitches I did while trying to choose which I preferred.



I wanted to decorate the band of the bonnet with beads, symbolizing the way both embroidery and bonnets were a way for women to express themselves, even if it was limited. Here are a couple of trial bead patterns, although I rejected them. Whilst looking through my mother's ribbon collection, I found the green one. It looked exactly like the green of the suffragette colors, and so I decided to incorporate these colors into the piece.



I didn't like a shape filled entirely by one type of stitch, so I thought of layering different materials. When doing this I struggled to get my needle hooked onto both layers going from the bottom to the top. But when I went from the top to the bottom it worked much better. To attach the second layer to the first as neatly as possible, I sewed through both layers from top to bottom, and then when going back from bottom to top, only sewed the edge of the rim, meaning only through one layer. This became a sort of extended chain stitch, making it easier to neatly embroider one piece of fabric onto another, whilst also hiding the rim of the second layer.

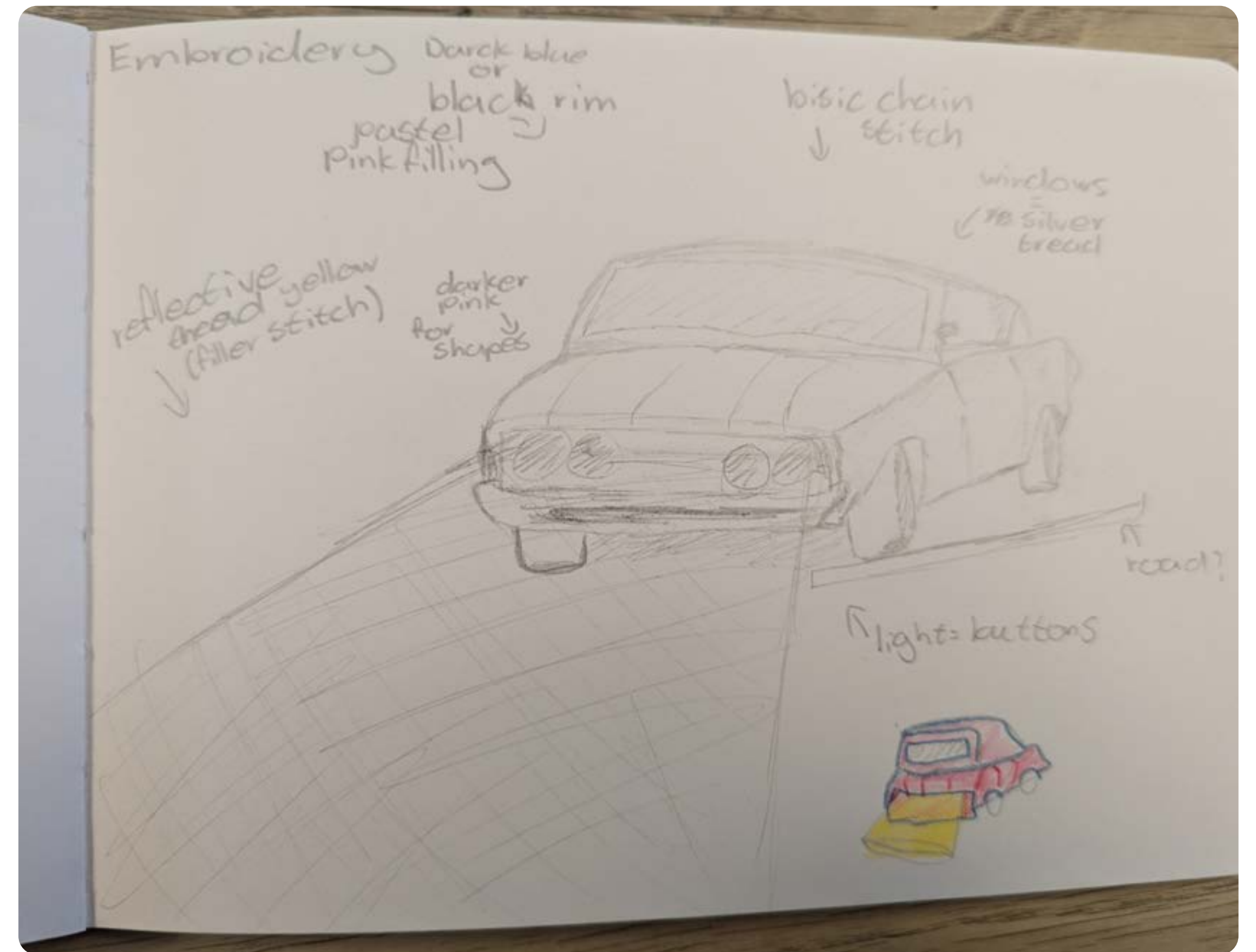




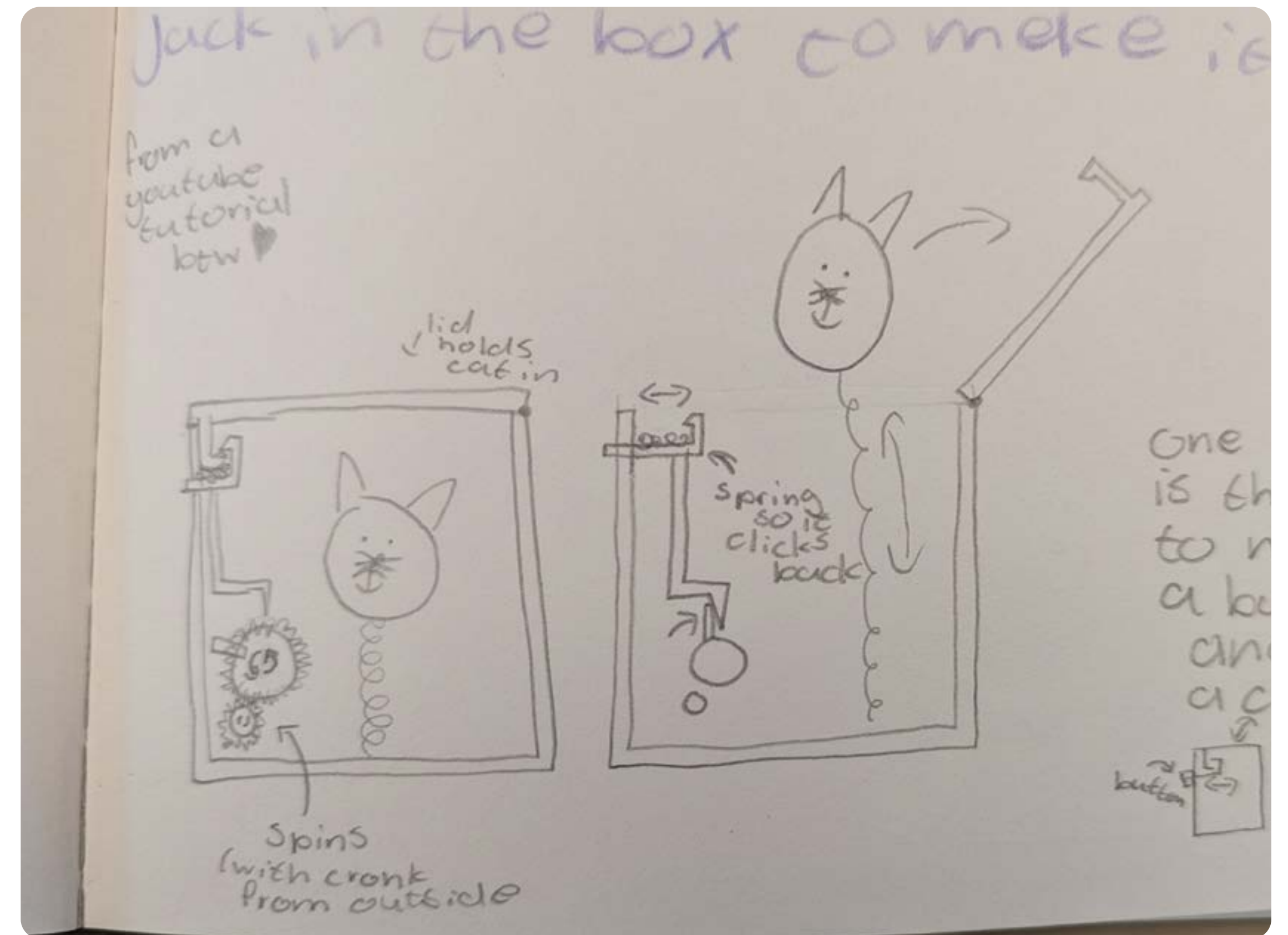
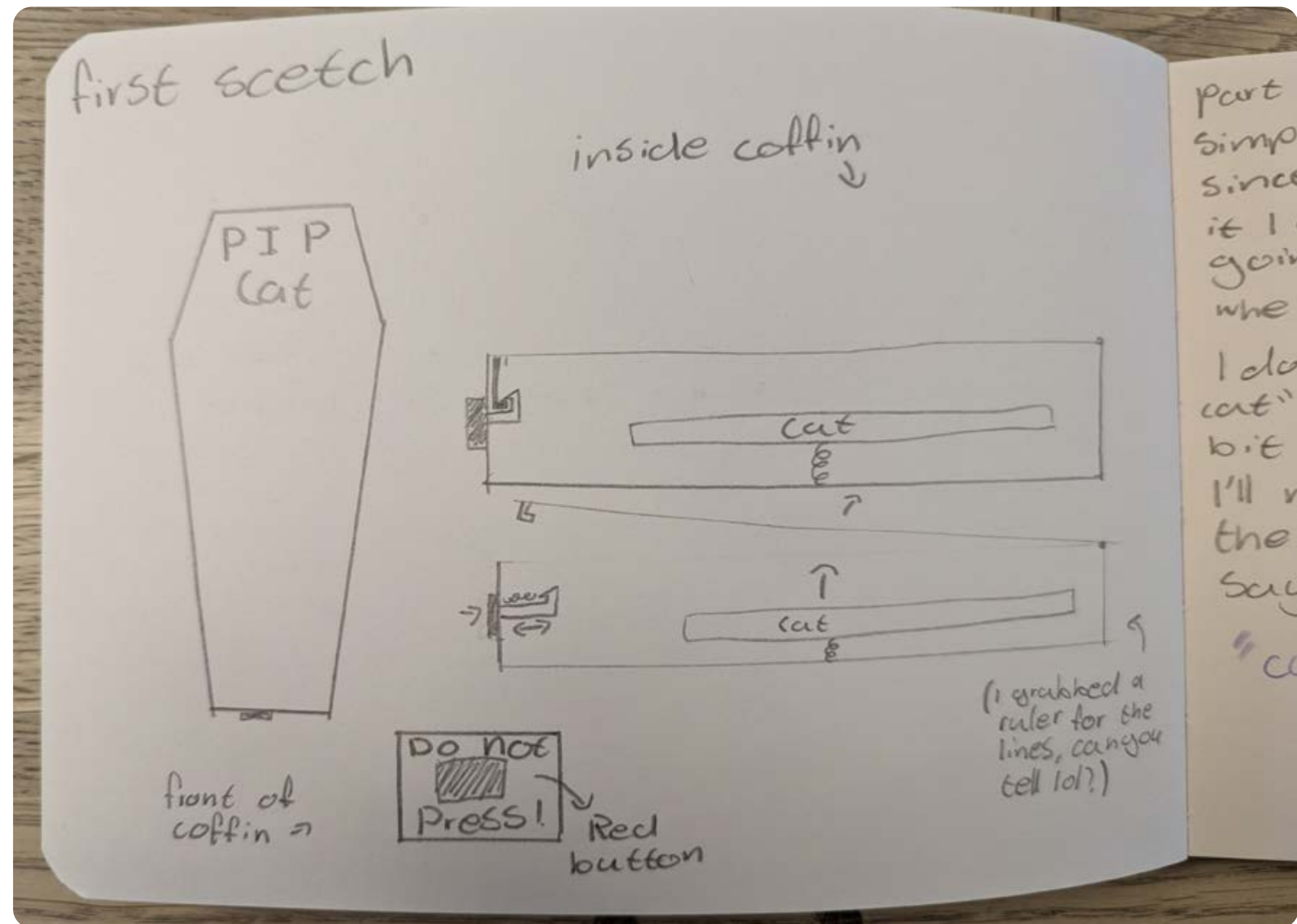
“As I cannot write,
I put this down
simply and freely”

SOME RECENT SKETCHES

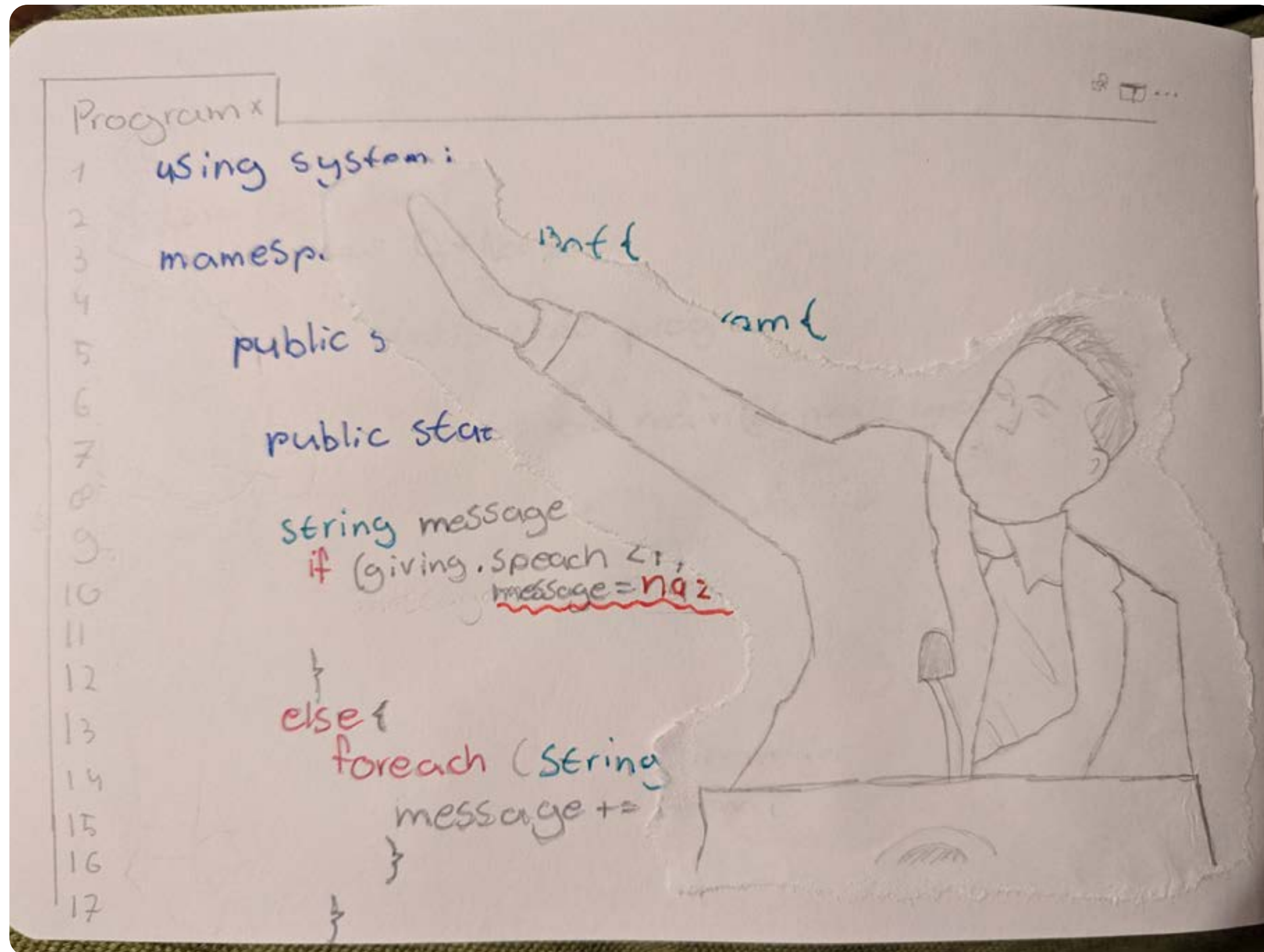
Whilst teaching myself embroidery, I thought about using reflective thread to create a headlight effect when light hits the material.



“Curiosity killed the cat, but
satisfaction brought it back.”



Perhaps a bug in the code?



After visiting the textile museum in Tilburg, I was inspired by a piece in which the artist used thread from the front of the piece to create the back. In response I designed the double-sided work shown on the left, with coding on the back and the image of Elon Musk on the front. Although I wish I didn't care about American politics. Since trump was elected in 2016 my patience had run thin. But with the recent election results and stories surfacing, I find it hard to ignore. This image of Elon Musk has really stuck with me and like a disgusting something, I'm struggling to shake it off.



When working on the project below, I had some material left over. This lay on my desk for a good couple of days before having the idea of putting it together to create a video game design in which a player must progress without touching the edges.

Video game graphics



A while ago I was reading an article in the London Review of Books and came across the word 'nascent'. This triggered my curiosity and I decided to use this word as a way of exploring topics that have recently been surrounding me. The first thing I did was further research into what this word meant. I struggled at first but then my dad showed me a website with a lot of different example sentences. I really liked the way the online dictionary designed their layout and wanted to use that too. Then I looked around my house for objects I thought would scan well but also tell a story using the word Nascent. I wanted to use our home scanner for a project, since I had never done that before but had been seeing people online doing cool stuff with one. After scanning what felt like hundreds of different objects I found a childhood book, cheese stickers and pompoms to be the most interesting and fun to play with. Layering the images over a crumpled tissue gave more dimension.



NASCENT

nas·cent

['neɪsnt, 'nasnt]

adjective

nascent (adjective)

(especially of a process or organization) just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential:

“As the daughter grows, she shows a nascent potential for patience, kindness and understanding.”





nas·cent

['neɪsnt, 'nasnt]

adjective

nascent (adjective)

(especially of a process or organization) just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential:

“Covid’s nascent days seem so far behind us, but how much more knowledge do we really have.”

nas·cent

[ˈneɪsnt, ˈnasnt]

adjective

nascent (adjective)

(especially of a process or organization) just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential:

“The new import taxes will weigh heavily on the nascent local cheese industry.”



INTERNSHIP

For the past year I've worked as an intern at two different companies. The second position was with MBO Utrecht, which gave me space to develop and learn in ways I couldn't have done at school. Although the internship didn't offer many opportunities for developing my own work, or challenge me creatively, it taught me important lessons about working for a company, receiving feedback and working in a corporate setting. The assignment in which I had most freedom was making promotional Tik Toks. These were videos I created from start to finish, with minimal to no support from colleagues, other than feedback every now and then. I learnt a lot from making these videos, the most important lesson being that I never want to do this as my actual job. On the right are links to a couple of my favorite Tik Toks made during the six months at MBO Utrecht.

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mboutrecht/video/7460127397837311265>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mboutrecht/video/7436707624483278083>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mboutrecht/video/7460128044150181153>

CLIMATE ARTICLE



In 2023 I was offered an opportunity to work with students from the University of Glasgow. My teacher made me team leader which meant I could also decide the topic of content created. Since my team and I all found climate change important, we decided to make a short video about what Utrecht is doing to fight it. Below is the voice over text I wrote, which was layered over appropriate videos. I've also included a new voice over recording done by my sister, since the original wasn't good quality.

You've probably already seen the headlines. "Climate change: the place on earth heating fastest" BBC news "reverse climate change or 'we are doomed' warns united nations" CBS news. The world is fighting a global crisis that will in the end effect everybody. Rich or poor, small or large. Is the EU's goal to make Europe climate neutral by 2050 really achievable? With the sea level rising, countries like Holland could be affected very badly. With one third of the country under sea level, it creates the question, when will Amsterdam become the lost city of Atlantis?

Concerns about climate change mean that young Dutch people today are looking at areas they need to attend to and are questioning how we live now and how we need to live in the near future. With the world's population at 8 billion people, how one travels from A to B is a pivotal question in regard to the earth's environmental health. Transportation is a topic often mentioned when the conversation arises in the Netherlands. With about 22 million bikes and only 18 million residents, there are more bikes than people. Swap Bikes are also rising in popularity. The concept of a swap bike is to provide customers with a reliable and sustainable bike without the hassle of ownership, for a small fee of 20 euros a month. Instead of buying a bike, customers can subscribe to the service and receive a bike that is always in good working condition. If the bike needs repairs or maintenance, Swap Bike takes care of it. And if a customer no longer wants the bike, they can simply return it. Swap Bikes are also made from sustainable materials and are designed to last for a long time, meaning they need to be replaced less often, reducing waste and resource consumption.

Car ownership is still important in the Netherlands but a well-designed cycle and transport system drastically reduces the amount of trips made by private vehicles. This has a large effect on not only pollution but also on the physical and mental health of individuals and communities as a whole. A child who steps out of their own front door and onto their bike not only gets fresh air, physical exercise and community engagement but also develops independence and self-confidence. Take me for example: I ride my bike, then catch a train and then a bus to school and have been doing so since I was about twelve years old. Prior to that, I, like many others in the Netherlands, started riding my bike from around age two. We begin with something called a walking bike or balance bike, meaning that from very early on Dutch children learn how to be independent and socially aware.....

Another grave concern of today, close to Dutch young ones' hearts, is fashion. According to a 2020 study by the Dutch government, roughly 46 new clothing items are bought annually per person in the Netherlands and roughly 40 of those

are then discarded. From 2008 to 2018 the number of pairs of trousers owned by men increased by 25% and by 100% for women! That's double as much within only 10 years. All these TikTok trends and monthly clothing releases create a consumer addiction, which many fall for.

Some call it retail therapy and others call it treating themselves... on a weekly basis. Yet, behind this increased wave of consumerism, are people working sometimes even 75 hours a week for a small salary of 3 euros per day. Roughly one in six people worldwide are employed by the clothing industry making it the most labor dependent industry in the world. And then, when the new t-shirt has been bought and added to the collection of 15 others, you find those not-so-old t-shirts at the back of the cupboard, and being the neat person you are, you throw them out. Worldwide, roughly 95 million tons of clothing goes yearly into landfill or is incinerated, creating even more pollution. And all this without even mentioning the damage that the production of clothing does to the earth. The Dutch however can be quite conscious of that damage. One in three Dutchies wants to live a more ecofriendly life and buying secondhand clothing is becoming more and more popular. The usage of kringloopwinkels is also increasing. Kringloopwinkels, if directly translated means circle-walk-shop, are secondhand shops that rely on the donations of others to run. You can find one in almost every town in the Netherlands. Not only are these pre-existing ecofriendly systems being used more often, but there are also new ones rising in popularity, for example Noumenon, founded in Amsterdam by Dena Simaite, based on the idea of combining ethics with aesthetics. Or MUD Jeans which is taking on the challenge of create a circular system, meaning customers can borrow or buy jeans that are eco-friendly. Quite similar to the Swap Bikes from earlier.

In summary: people of all ages the world over are becoming more conscious of environmental concerns, perhaps young people even more so. The future is theirs after all!

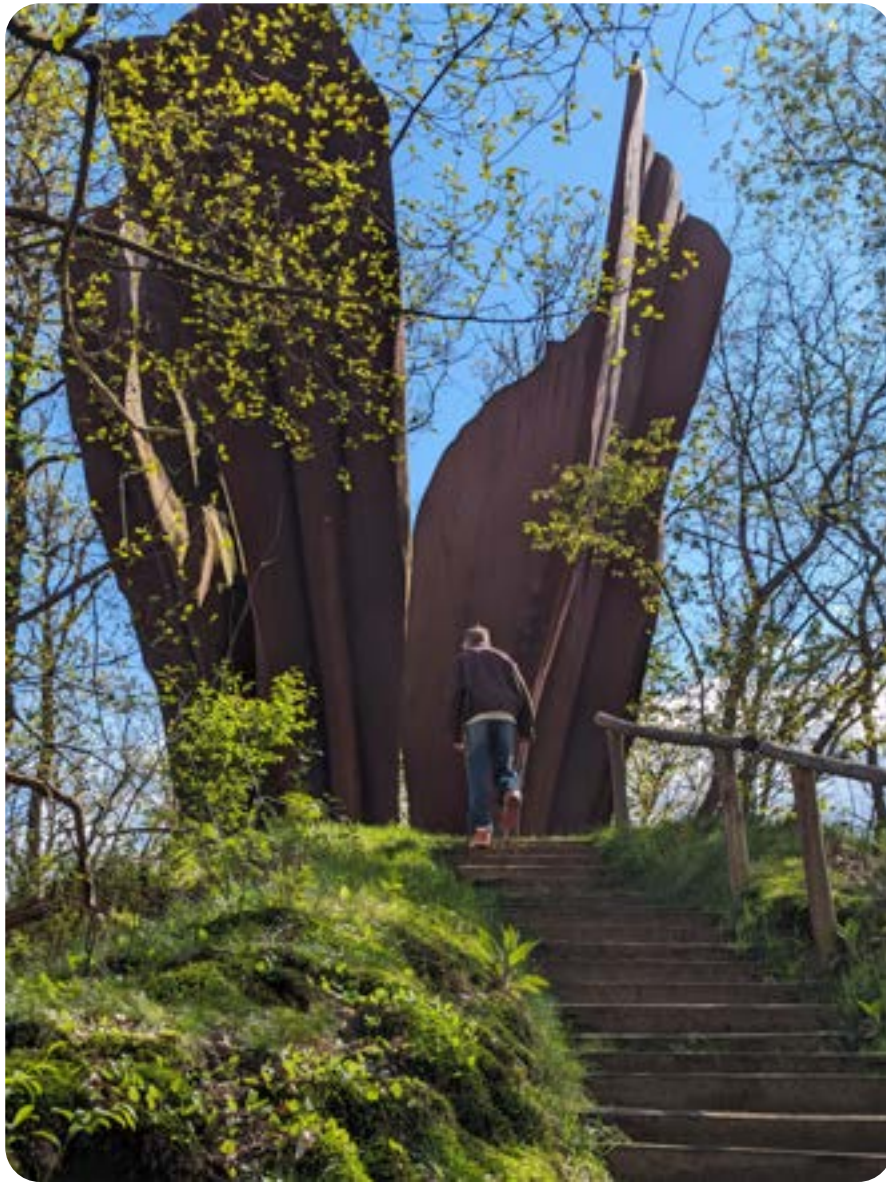
With over 90% of Dutch citizens living in urban areas, the environmental impact of how they eat, dress and move about is something the adults of the future are highly conscious of.

Dutchies have always been sensitive to the needs of their environment, because their country is built on reclaimed land and reaching far back into their culture is a history of working together to manage natural elements. Looking forward, perhaps that's a great heritage for the Dutch Youth to build upon.

Photography has been a big part of my artistic and creative journey, but I would like to make clear that it's not something I want to study at a bachelor level. The technical thinking required to work a professional camera does not interest me and although it could be approached as a puzzle, I would not want to study it as my primary way of creating. What has drawn me to photography, since I was very young, is that it's an approachable method of playing with color, texture, composition and storytelling. A camera has always been available to me, whether that was my parents' old camera or my first Nokia phone camera. The picture on the right was taken at Japfest in 2023. Cars have never interested me, but I was allowed to borrow a camera from school for my own projects, so I used Japfest as a way of teaching myself to work with different shutter speeds. The pictures below are a collection of pictures from roughly the last three years. All those pictures have been taken with my phone camera, in the moment.



A LITTLE PHOTOGRAPHY





WOOL ON THE WALL

Nearing the end of 2023, I got an opportunity to work for De Buitenkamer, an organization focusing on ways of working with your hands to improve mental health. They were looking for students to help promote a project exploring different ways of using wool. What interested me were the different skills they were teaching and because they worked with so many textures, it meant my teammates and I could play around with capturing these textures in photos and designs. Below is a brochure I designed using photos I took during those sessions at De Buitenkamer.





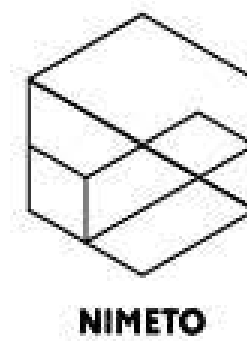
Gemaakt door de studenten
 Evi Beumer
 Hannah van Beuzekom
 Fleur Bogaard
 Roëlla van den Bosch
 Rachel Dekker
 Anouk van Dijk
 Dominique van den Enk
 Marit Gemmeker
 Kiki Jongen
 Noor Kemperman
 Richelle Klunder
 Zoë Kramer
 Merel Kruppens
 Esmee van Leeuwen
 Ronnie van Middendorp
 Hyke Pasma
 Lisanne van Peperstraten
 Evi Rohmensen
 Kayla Schouten
 Liselotte Slot
 Nigel van Straten
 Indy Wigmore



Met dank aan
 Inge Visser
 Studio Namenia
 Gregor Falkenhagen
 Men at Wool
 Anja Frijters

Media
 Vjera Kroeze
 Lotte de Goeij
 Abi van Dam

Mede mogelijk gemaakt door
 Carel Nengermanfonds
 K.F. Heinfonds en
 Stichting Elise Mathilde Fonds



De Buitenkamer

Bij De Buitenkamer vind je ruimte om uit je hoofd te komen door met je handen te werken. De Buitenkamer is er voor iedereen die woont en/of werkt in Utrecht en behoefte heeft om even weg te zijn van de hectiek van het moderne leven. Je kunt komen helpen in de moestuin, het atelier en de keuken. Door samen aan de slag te gaan kun je elkaar leren kennen, nieuwe connecties maken en aansluiting vinden bij de mensen om je heen. Zo kun je met en van elkaar leren tijdens diverse activiteiten. We werken in de tuin, de keuken en het atelier en genieten daar van de simpele dingen: groenten en bloemen zaaien, jam koken van vers geplukt fruit of schapenwol wassen en kaarden om ermee te kunnen spinnen of vilten. Wij geloven dat door met je handen en vanuit je hart te werken, er ruimte in je hoofd ontstaat om tot rust te komen en zo werken we aan positieve gezondheid.

In the Buitenkamer you will find the space to come out of your head through working with your hands. The Buitenkamer is for anyone who lives/works in Utrecht and longs to get out of the busy routine of work, stress, loneliness or just everyday life. You can come and help in the vegetable garden, studio or kitchen. With our activities we want to connect people from different backgrounds. By working with others you can get to know them and make new friends. We work in the garden, studio and kitchen where we enjoy the simple things like fresh vegetables, homemade jam, washing sheep wool or learning how to weave. We truly believe that working with your hands and from your heart clears your mind, enables you to find peace and work towards positive health.



Ook studenten van de creatieve mbo-vakschool NIMETO in Utecht hebben mogen ervaren hoe het is om uit je hoofd (en laptop) en in je hart te komen door met je handen te werken. In de eerste projectweek hebben ze verschillende technieken geleerd om wol te bewerken. Met een combinatie van creativiteit, vaardigheden en teamwork hebben de studenten in de tweede week een uniek wandkleed gecreëerd dat niet alleen hun artistieke talenten weerspiegelt, maar ook de ontdekkingstocht en groei die de studenten hebben gemaakt. Het is onze wens dat op termijn het kleed als kunststuk op diverse plaatsen tentoongesteld wordt, ieders naam zal dan ook op unieke wijze worden verbonden aan het kleed.

The NIMETO students have also experienced what it is like to get out of your head (and laptop) and into your heart. In the first plus week they were taught different wool processing techniques. With a combination of creativity, skills and teamwork the students have managed to create a unique tapestry in the second week that shows their artistic skills but also the journey they went on to learn and create. It's our wish that this art piece goes on tour with every student's name being mentioned on the tapestry.



NIMETO

NIMETO is de vakschool voor creatieve ruimtemakers. En dat kan wat ons betreft iedereen worden. We noemen onszelf creatieve ruimtemakers ook niet voor niks.

Waar staat NIMETO voor?

Mensen maximaal de ruimte geven om zichzelf te ontplooiën. Dát willen we! Hoe doen we dat? Door niet alleen ruimte voor creativiteit, maar ook ruimte voor de student als mens te creëren. Je kunt bij NIMETO jezelf zijn: wij vinden het belangrijk dat studenten zich thuis voelen bij ons op school. Dat ze zich vrij voelen om hun ideeën te uiten en dingen uit te proberen. Zo kunnen studenten elkaar inspireren en zich ontwikkelen tot topvakman of -vrouw. De wereld mooier maken begint bij NIMETO.

NIMETO is the vocational school for creative makers which we believe anybody can be. We don't call ourself creative space makers for nothing.

What does Nimeto stand for?

Giving people the maximum space to unfold yourself. That's what we want! How do we do that? By not only creating room for creativity but also for the student as a person. You can truly be yourself at NIMETO: we find that the most important thing for the students, that they feel at home. That they feel free to show their ideas and to try new things. This way the students can inspire each other to grow. Making the world a prettier place begins at NIMETO.

**'The next gen
 creatieve
 ruimtemakers'**



“Uit je hoofd in je hart met je handen”

Below is an allegorical essay. I would recommend first reading or listening to the full essay before looking at my motive for making it.

Polarization is a topic I've heard quite a bit about recently, but a term I had never heard of was 'information polarization'. This immediately struck a chord with me and sparked my curiosity. Me being me, I researched further and whilst reading, was reminded of a Minecraft server I was part of in 2020. I'd never written an allegory and honestly didn't even know what the term meant until talking with a friend about this Minecraft server and how it reminded me of the polarization we currently see. I decided to write this story with the question in mind of 'why does this teenage drama-filled Minecraft server look so similar to our current politics?'

I would love to further develop this idea into more physical work. A skill I would love to learn is projection mapping and perhaps I could do something with that based on this project.



PIXELATED POLARIZATION

It's the year 2020. Corona has just broken out and the whole world has gone into lockdown. You're a 15-year-old teenage girl who's just been sent home from the hell-hole that is high school and must now somehow motivate herself to be present online when there are so many other things she would rather be doing. This girl was me five years ago, who found herself, during this crazy period of history, involved in a Minecraft civil war.

March 25, 2020

Trackies on, jumpers on, breakfast skipped, and I'm present in an online class. On the corner of my screen, I see a notification pop up that I's been added to a discord group by a boy I used to have a crush on (but sadly got rejected by). I'd been invited into a Minecraft server filled with a bunch of kids I never would have spoken to in real life. Apparently, word had got around that I was a good builder and when I logged into Minecraft to venture though this new world, I saw that they really needed some architectural help. I happily obliged.

April 2, 2020

School is still online, but I'm on Minecraft from eight in the morning 'till eleven in the evening, seven days a week. Calling friends and meeting new people from different classes, sometimes even from different schools.

May 9, 2020

There's a coal shortage. It's bad. Groups were getting divided, with some going into the far corners of caves, some strip mining and others trying diverse fuel making methods they'd seen on TikTok.

May 11, 2020

The coal shortage was getting to people. Arguments started and friendships were thinning out. One of my close friends even left the server completely, mostly because her parents found out she wasn't active in school and thus had to get punished.

May 12, 2020

I and a couple of friends of mine decide to start a vote for

president, since the server owner wasn't doing much about the coal shortage and teamwork was out of the question. My old crush, the one who invited me in the first place, was voted president. He, as he had promised, started thinking about how we were going to deal with the coal issue. There was hope in the air.

May 15, 2020

The president shared a link in the discord group to a YouTube tutorial. It was a cheat code to getting more coal. Some happily agreed, saying that perhaps it's not fully legal, but it's the only hope we had. Others were disgusted that our president would even offer such a solution, stating that there was still hope in other more legal methods. Arguments broke out eventually causing a private meeting held by the owner of the server and our president. Within a couple of minutes, a statement was sent out. The server was to be taken offline for a day to do "renovations".

May 16, 2020

The server went back online and lo and behold, the coal shortage was suddenly solved. You would think that this would be the end of it, but no. Now there were arguments all over the place. Some declaring the absolute distrust and hatred they'd grown for our president: to make a decision and act upon it without truly listening to the rest. Others were far more content with the decision, asking why there were still complaints when the problem had been solved. It was three 3pm. Online school had finished and we'd all gathered in the centre to hear what our president had to say for himself. But what he said was perhaps even worse than what had happened. "I didn't do it" he claimed, almost with pride in his voice. "I wasn't online when this happened, nor was the server owner. Therefore a small team and I will begin an investigation into how this could have happened". We were baffled.

May 21, 2020

Shit had officially hit the fan. The investigation hadn't even begun yet and opinions were splitting into groups. The miners

and fighters against the builders and farmers. I was part of the builders and farmers and although I personally had my doubts about our president, still believed and followed him. Perhaps this was because he offered stability, ensuring that the coal was divided equally amongst us simultaneously, making it last longer. Whereas the miners and fighters had apparently discovered the person who had made all the new coal and proceeded elect him their new and improved president. Not that he was doing a good job of it. I had heard from a friend's friend that they had already used up all their coal.

September 18, 2020

The division was still going strong. I had heard horrible stories of the way the hunters and fighters were treating each other. We called them the outlaws. We were living in different worlds. Any time we argued, the truth was irrelevant. It was calm during the summer holidays, giving me time to rebuild some things that had either been burnt down or raided.

Oktober 29, 2020

We'd had a couple of clashes since the beginning of school, but none of them as close to home as the one today. The president and I were becoming good friends. When one of the outlaws heard this, they decided to kill my dog. Although I understand that our group hadn't been the kindest to them, this had gone too far.

Oktober 30, 2020

The president of the outlaws and our president had a private meeting with the server owner. A friend and I decide to get revenge by placing a pressure plate connected to a TNT blaster outside the door of the person who, we were told, had killed my dog. We didn't stay to enjoy the sight of this person being blown up. We had heard a story that one time, one of the farmers wasn't fast enough and when he got caught, they killed him on the spot then proceeded to take all his possessions. We had this unspoken rule that out of respect, if someone died, you let them have there stuff back when they respawned. But apparently the outlaws decide that respect wasn't necessary.

October 31, 2020

The morning was strange. We hadn't heard anything regarding the meeting. Some of us were growing suspicious but most were under the impression that no news was good news. It was only after lunch when I and everybody else discovered, or better said, experienced, the outcome of the meeting. Our presidents house had been burnt down, complete gone. Everything lost in the ashes created by, we assumed, the outlaws. We grabbed our flint and stone, heading straight to the outlaw's part of the world, but as we saw their small, sad and extremely ugly town appear in the horizon we noticed massive clouds of smoke above it. One of my classmates, an outlaw, was running towards us asking for help. For the first time in a long time, I felt bad for them.

Black.

My screen went black. As did everybody else's. At this point we were screaming and shouting so loudly that my mum ran up stairs thinking I was being kidnapped. The server was offline, and for good this time. A small, and honestly sad explanation was posted, declaring the server to be so "unstable" that it had to be shut down.

But don't worry, this wasn't the end of my Minecraft addiction, because within a day, our president had started up his own server.

PORTFOLIO

IMD

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