

Unheard Voices

**A response to Bashar Al-Assad's
Arab Ink Project**

Leen Haddad



"My mother trickled down the back of her neck in thick, black geometric lines. As I watched her play back the meaning in her own mind, I could see that she wasn't quite prepared to expose it past the skin's surface."

-Bashar Aladdin

photographer and videographer

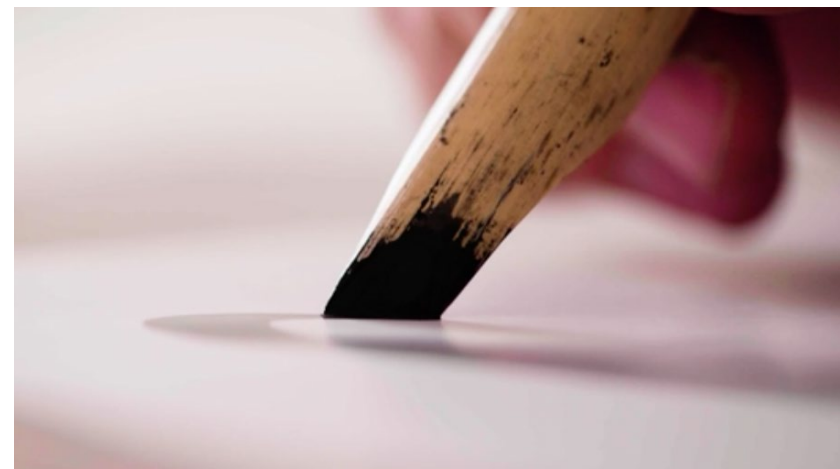
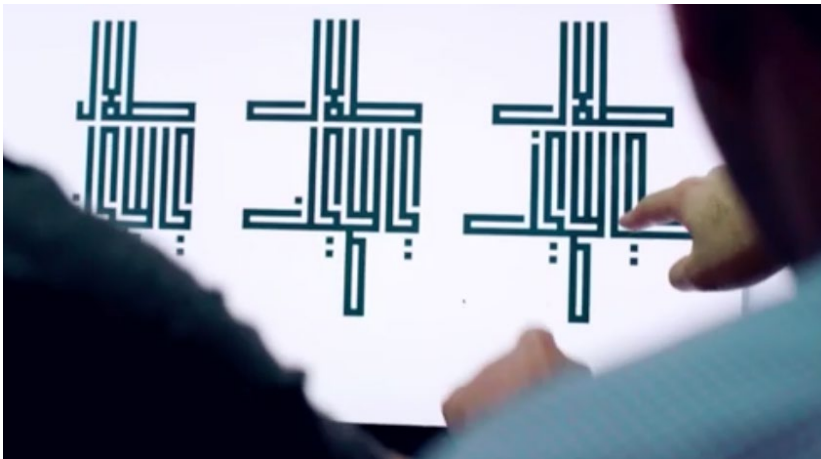
Growing up Bashar had realized that it is hard sometimes for a person to tell the story behind his or her tattoo as it might be too personal to this particular individual to be explained using simple words to another individual.

Some people prefer the tattoo to speak for itself, with a story too powerful to express otherwise. This was the main inspiration of his project 'Arab In'k' which focuses on an Arab, with an Arabic tattoo, and a story tell. 'Arab Ink' is now an ongoing project of a photo documentary of people with new style calligraphy tattoos.



He portrays their meanings and impact on people photographed. By that, he uses arabic type, the face and the body of the person to tell a story and a feeling on a series of black and white images. The artist believes that tattoos have become a new medium to express and define ones' individual. He tries to break the stereotype of how the West sees the Middle East. Arab Ink is about the new generation in the Arab world, and how they express themselves so creatively with the use of their rich culture and the Arabic language. He wants to show that this generation is becoming more open minded according to the stories they share from their lives and according to the way they express themselves by choosing to put a tattoo on their bodies.

Every tattoo that he captures has a story and a meaning behind it which speaks and connects to the audience. Each photograph shouts what an who these people love, what is their past, what do they believe in, and most importantly, what is the story. All of that is portrayed through the tattoo and is becoming a bridge between the audience and the person that has a story. Therefore tattoos is not a taboo anymore in Jordan, it is a way people can share personal stories together, creating a bond and a trust between each other.

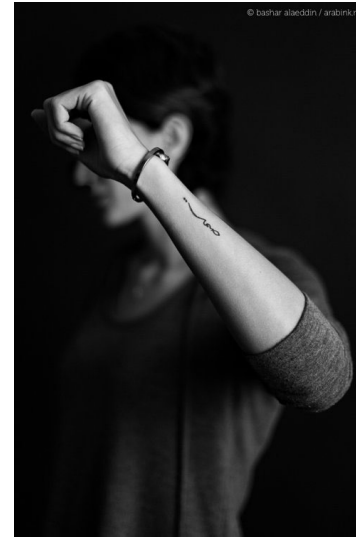


Arabic calligraphy is the artistic practice of handwriting that is based on the alphabet. His work mainly explores the culture and the stories behind Arabic calligraphy with a twist as tattoos on an Arab generation. To him the Arabic Language is very poetic, geometric and creative, and believes that It is the most complicated yet most beautiful language at the same time. A lot of the tattoos photographed are influenced from old historic styles, yet drawn in a more modernised way. The stories are very diverse and different just like arabic calligraphy can be stylised in so many different ways as well.



Al Haya

“Al haya hura” life is free, freedom in life, whatever it may mean to you irrelevant of what it means to me. I got this tattoo in Colorado. It was realized by a designer. Basically, I was at a point in my life that at the time was a milestone. An awakening of some sort. I shed social expectations. The focus was no longer on the outer layers. I became in-tuned with a deeper realization. External noise became insignificant and I was free of external factors that I thought used to matter.



Silence

“‘Silence’ describes me in so many ways. It’s pure and peaceful. It’s in me everywhere I go. I think we live in a loud disturbing world where people expect words, offense, back and forth, but they don’t expect silence. It is truly a piece of mind and I simply feel that I’m more powerful when I’m silent.”



Yousef

Some of the sweetest memories I recall are of my late uncle Yousef. He was so kind and sweet and to me, he was my favorite. Not a single birthday of mine, since I was a kid or where ever in the world I was living, he would always call me to wish me a happy birthday and make sure I opened the gift he sent me, and made sure it always arrived in March 12. This tat is very close to me and it's a piece I will enjoy for the rest of me life. RIP Uncle Yousef.



Yasmeen & Amer

“Our honeymoon summer 2010, as creatives we carry around a travel sketch book and abuse it beautifully, so when I (Yasmin) asked Amer to sketch out his name in Arabic And once he was done we headed out to town where I had booked an appointment to get inked, as we approached the parlour it hit him and he was in a happy state of shock. One exact year later Amer asked me to sketch my name, we also went back to the same tattoo artist. Not only are the tattoos very personal but their locations on our bodies have an even deeper meaning to us.”

When Stories Meet

When Stories Meet is a platform that allows people to share their sentimental objects along with their stories to be shared with other people. Just like the artist photographed people with their tattoos as a tool to tell a story about themselves; sentimental objects are photographed and printed on postcards for When Stories Meet. Since sentimental objects are considered personal to those people owning them, the use of traditional postcards is a more personal way for people to communicate with each other.





“My grandmother gave this to me when I was 13. It is a heirloom that has been passed down through generations. There is something about heirlooms that you cannot really explain. It’s not just a vintage object anymore, it is something that I own now that my mother, grandmother and great grandmother have owned before me, and I think this is amazing. Makes me think that the bond between family is the strongest bond there is.”

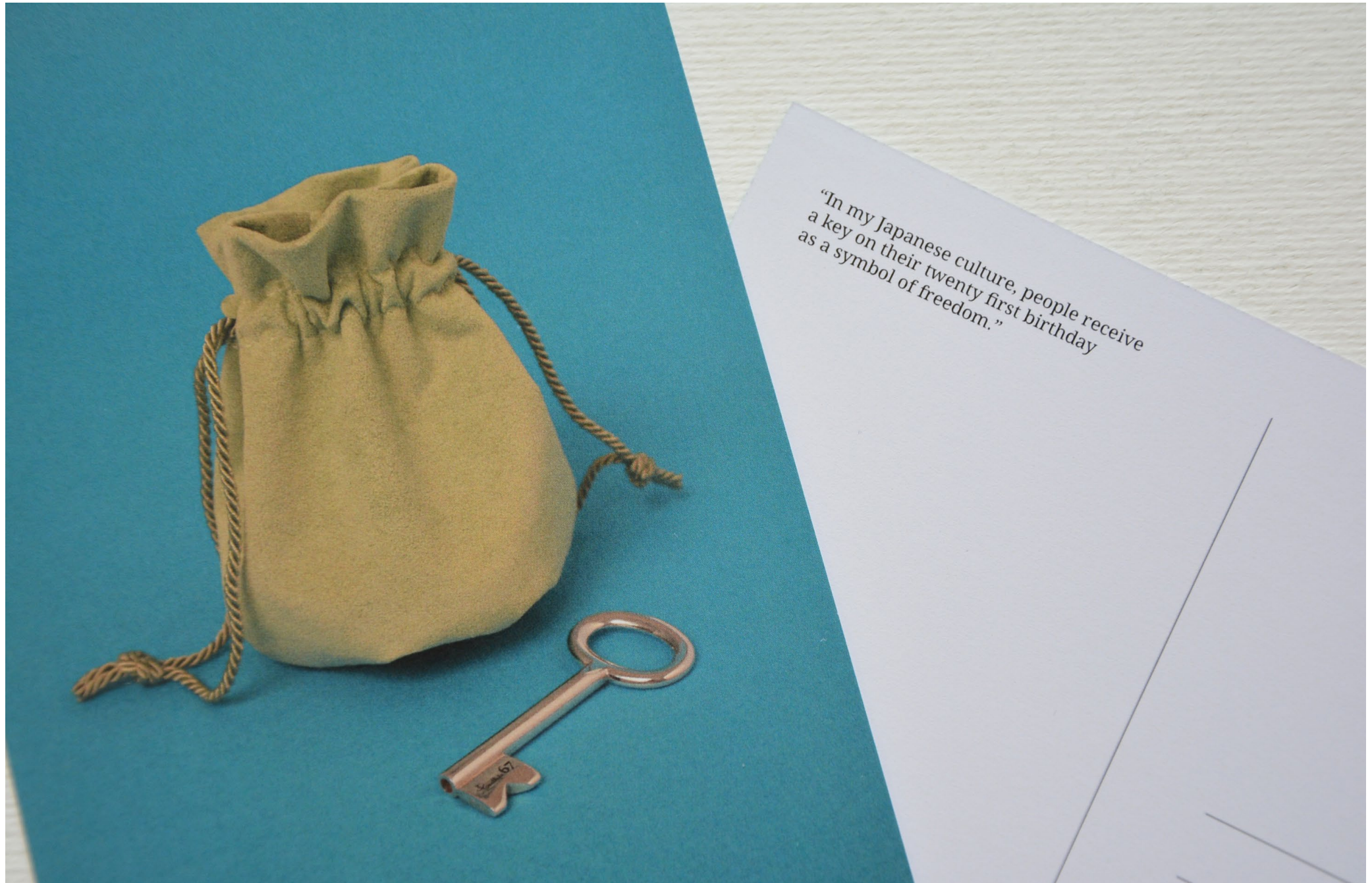
-Lottie



“When I turned 21, I was given this key by my parents. It is in our Japanese culture to receive a key as a symbol for freedom. Whenever I see it, I know that I am so grateful for them for everything they have done, and I would not be who I am today if it weren’t for them. I am also proud of how rich my culture is, and the fact that we still hold on to past traditions which helps unite every family in Japan.”

-Lily







“In whatever mood I am in, I listen to music. I grew up listening to music in the car with my parents. As I grew older I started understanding all the genres and realising what kind of music I like. I got those headphones as a graduation present, and ever since they have been an essential to pack wherever I go. It is more like a symbol to me.”

-Leen



“This Camera was my mother’s. she used to take the most amazing pictures. I think she is one of the main reasons I love photography so much now. I remember I begged her to take it with me on my very first school trip. I felt so cool that day. Now’ it is mine. The fact that double generation used the same object means alot!”

-Lily

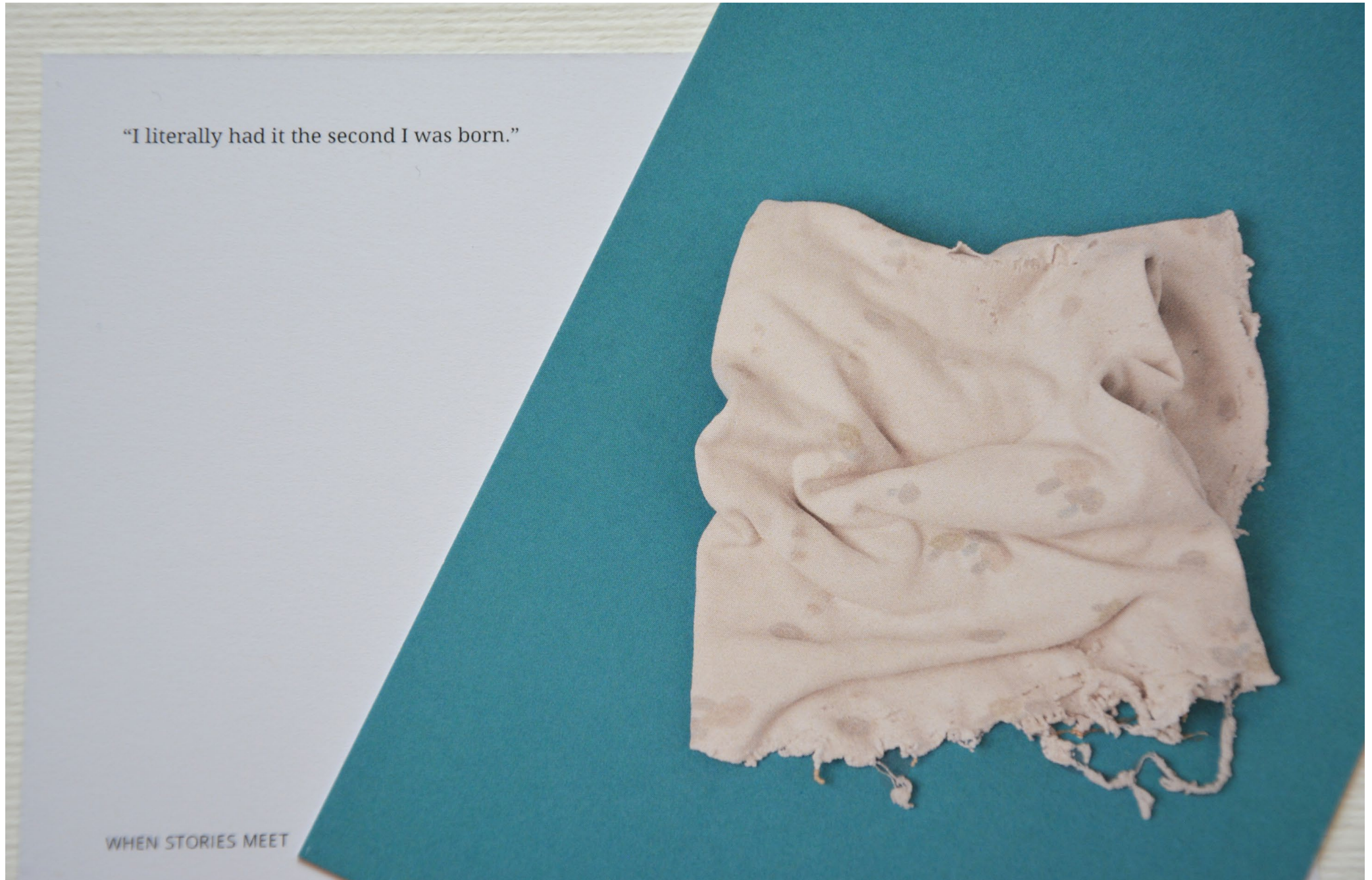






“When I was born, I was covered with this blanket. It was 4 times bigger than its size now. Growing up, I used to take it with me everywhere, to the point where my mom was afraid for me to lose it so she cut into 4 pieces. They are all gone now except for this. It is so hard to explain the emotional attachment to something you’ve had the second you were born. It’s almost like you feel the safest when you're holding it”

-Erica



“Meet my dog, Bowie. It was another ordinary day were I took him out for a walk. It started to rain and so we waited outside a bakery down the road of my house until the rain stopped. I put him on the chair because I did not want him to get wet and I just think the way he looked was so funny. It’s those random things you do with your pet that make you realize how much they bring joy and happiness to your life. This picture reminds me of all those moments and it puts a smile on my face every time I see it.”

-Erica





"I remember this moment was really funny. It reminds me how much my dog, Bowie, brings joy and laughter into my life."





“If anyone asks me who is the most person I miss the mosf while I’m away from home, I would shout out my sister’s name with out any hesitation. I get so excited whenever I go back home to see her, and spend time with her and watch her grown up with the little time I have. She always welcomes me by leaving me a present or a card on my bedside table, and this ring was the last thing I received. It’s those small things that siblings do that really touches your heart and make you think how blessed you are to have them in your life. I actually wear this ring all the time, I think it’s looks pretty cool”

-Alex



"Whenever I travel back home, I find something on my bedside table that my six year old sister had made. This ring was the last thing I received."



“I have a six year old sister, Vasilisa, I call her tough cookie. She means the absolute word to me. However, she drives me crazy, but only because I love her so much and I want her to be the best version of her self. And this is why we fight. Whenever we do, she either apologises with words or gestures, but most of the time, she’d give me a present which she makes by herself. I was the one who got her the beads and the threads to do her own bracelets. She sneakily went up to mother to ask for her help to make one for me. Isn’t she a touch cookie or what? Oh by the way, S is for Sasha and V is for Vasilisa, incase you hadn’t noticed.”

-Sasha







My crush back in the day ladies and gentleman! No I am kidding, he just looked like him, but trust me he really was cute. He had big brown eyes, brown hair, and, as I can remember, really bad teeth. However, who did not have bad teeth in seventh grade?" My best friend gave me the toy as she was the one who first thought it looked like him, as for me, the more I look at the toy, the more I see the resemblance.

-Lily





Thank you
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