RE-IMAGINING ROMANIAN CULTURE FROM AFAR
THROUGH STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF WOLF MYTHS.

By

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate how creative practice can help to find new photographic ways to re-imagine Romanian culture through disciplinary and interdisciplinary photographic methods and identify possible entangled situations. It intends to portray Romanian culture in a new light, through its wolf myths. It questions how can a practice of photographing objects help to re-imagine Romanian culture from afar through the photographic image? This is the main question that led the initial stages of this research and created new questions, including how to photograph the indexical and what is the photo-entanglement.

The problem is that through the photographic image, the representations of myths are often distorted, misrepresented, or only partially revealed. From an artist's personal experience of living in the UK, Romania is often portrayed in terms of immigration and Transylvanian stories of Dracula, including experiences of being included in discussions about the prejudiced images of Romanians. It can be argued that stories can be shared through photography, including those of Romanian wolf myths and folklore.

This research focuses on Romanian culture through its wolf myths and looks at new photographic ways of sharing and transporting the significance of culture within the entanglement of material objects and visual culture while working with photographs of still life objects and the banal and still life artefacts and their significance. Jung suggests that collecting stories from the conscious and unconscious realities of the participants could create a common story, and in addition I am guided by Barthes' third meaning in an analogy to Einstein's entanglement.

The original contribution to knowledge of this research is the artist's own creative still life photographic practice, including self-reflections on the creative challenges, in response to an ethnographic analysis of the data collected from Romania and the UK. By employing disciplinary and interdisciplinary creative methods of photographing still life objects, this research follows the artist's creative process of producing a body of work that will articulate the findings, including a portfolio of photographs, an autoethnographic approach and a public exhibition.

Potentially, this research will provide a new insight into the practice of photographing still life objects. It introduces the photo-entanglement concept to the field of still life photography to emphasise the importance of the indexical meaning within this field. A new systematic process of enquiry has been developed that allowed for new ways to explore how and where potential photographic misrepresentations can appear, ultimately providing solutions.

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NOTES TO READER

This thesis is written following the research led by practice events chronologically and it concerns with a still life creative practice of creating photographic images. At the beginning I am introducing the problem of misrepresentation and the potential methods I have used, including field trips to Romania conducting photo-elicitation interviews, followed by the production of my first photo documentary and an autoethnographic reflecting of my own experience in Romania. This thesis traces my own process of producing a portfolio of photographs, part of the autoethnographic process, and is accompanied by a solo exhibition presenting both, the collective story collected from the participants during the field trips to Romania and the portfolio of 13 photographs I have produced. Finally, the thesis presents the research findings and the suggestions recommended.

English is my second language, and I have done my best efforts to keep the meaning, the sentences and the grammar clear and accurate. Romanian language, my first language is a Latin language and compared with the English language often the sentences' structure are different. I have looked carefully to redress this, but there may be some situations when this was not entirely possible, after all this may be a cultural diversity element, which I have valued interviewing people from different parts of the Romania and the UK.

The title of the thesis is:
Re-imagining Romanian culture from afar through
still life photographic images of wolf myths.

Here are some of my thoughts to the title words regarding photography and my own creative practice, aspects of which I have discussed in more details in the thesis, I will add:

'Re-imagining'

- To present an image in a different light, in a more positive light
- To form a new image; to create a new image
- To create a new representation of a story
- To impress a new conception of (something) on a group of people
- To re-create an image, photograph to re-imagine a story again, now, here in the UK

- To re-create the image as I had experienced recently in Romania, comparing it with my own image and presenting it here
- To guide people both in Romania and in the UK to see an image again mentally, as experienced or learnt

'Romanian culture' (specific to this research)

- Wolf myths, habits, and folklore
- Romanian beliefs and values as Romanians understand and live them
- Knowledge inherited and transmitted through generations to the present
- Popular and religious habits and their social meaning
- The particular way Romania values its wolf myths and folklore

'From afar'

- At a distance, both the geographical distance from the UK to Romania and my own spiritual distance, living here at a distance from Romania
- The autoethnographic process may help me better understand Romanian culture today, compare it with my childhood image from ten years ago, and help me re-imagine it and present it to others.

'Photographic image' (of still life objects)

- The photograph itself, accompanied by the indexical meaning, my own insights and interpretations
- Identify objects from Romanian culture. There are various suggestions by the participants from photo-elicitation interviews from Romania and there are stories related to them.
- There may be a short collection process of various objects attached to making a photographic image (Csikszentmihalyi, 1981). Attached to the photographic image, as Barthes (1977) suggested, there may be the social element of a culture that could have been seen differently, depending on to whom it is presented (Csikszentmihalyi, 1981).

'Wolf myths'

- Selected stories from the participants from Romania

- The wolf has been present in Romanian lives, and it seems to have a strong presence in Romanians' imagination, not only in the literature stories but also in daily life experience
- Wolf myths transmitted from generations, through folklore, stories told by parents and grandparents, everyday life experiences

Here are terms I have used:

- Photo-elicitation interviews (PEIs) are the field trip video-recorded interviews in Romania
- The collective story is my own selection of words from the interviews with the participants
- Photo-entanglement is a term I have used to describe the connection between a photograph and its indexical meaning as presented by the artist's statement and the participants' insights
- Photo documentary 'Photo-elicitation interviews conducted in Romania, 2019' is a 30-minute-long video I have produced using the video recorded interviews in Romania.
- Public exhibition: 'Photographs of Wolf Myths' 22nd November 2021 – 13th February 2022 at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, UK
- Portfolio of photographs, a set of 13 photographs I have produced during this research. This portfolio was possible only by analysing the PEIs, followed by making the photo documentary and ultimately conducting autoethnography, re-imagining my own experiences of the wolf myths from Romanian culture.
- Exhibition labels, on this occasion, are statements written by the artist (myself) in the first person. Each one of them was written at the same time the photograph was produced and is an integral part of the artwork.
- Exhibition documentation is the photographic evidence of the exhibition layout at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This practice-led research explores how a creative practice of photographing still life objects can effectively engage with wolf myths and folklore from Romanian culture. I seek to find new disciplinary and interdisciplinary creative photographic methods within the field of still life photography, including ethnography, autoethnography, photo-elicitation, video making, public exhibitions and self-reflection of my own experiences during this research.

The thesis is structured chronologically, reflecting on the events and outcomes. There are five main stages, presented as chapters. The first chapter presents the methodology and the methods I have chosen, followed by a literature and contextual review (chapter two). These lay a foundation for the third chapter, the fieldwork in Romania. In chapter four, I apply the findings and outcomes identified to the autoethnographic, including creating a portfolio of 13 photographs and organising a public exhibition. Finally, in chapter five, I present the findings, final reflections and my suggestions and discuss new next potential projects derived from this research.

During this research, based on the ethnographic methods of collecting stories, observing and self-reflections of my creative practice, I was open to new outcomes, open to the unexpected. This curiosity has become part of my continuous process of learning and adapting methods to events. Despite the research presenting no major problems, overcoming COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, delivery and travel restrictions caused a notable change to my methods and methodology.

At the start of this research, I thought that I would use still life photography to contribute to the field of 3D reproductions of artefacts using the visual information offered by photography. My argument was that photography at that time and today might not collect the full information needed for such reproductions. This was my main focus, and, linked to this, there were some supporting arguments. These included that the reproduction would be somehow complete, but the ethnographic aspect of an artefact of an object created with a particular and cultural purpose would be missing. After the first four months, my research became solely concerned with the ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches. Inspired by Knudsen's work (2003, 2009), I have become more interested in elements surrounding the main object, 'the ice-cream' , the still life object or the artefact, those ethnographic elements, including life experiences and cultural encounters.

I moved to the UK in 2010 to continue practising and studying photography. I have exhibited on various occasions and completed BA and MA photography studies and have submitted this thesis towards the completion of my PhD. Photography was a childhood passion, I used to develop the negatives at home, taken with cameras that had completely manual settings. This, over time, developed a state of constant curiosity and enquiry in my way of working with photography. I have used photography in everyday situations and to experiment with the visual image. My second passion of travelling and exploring the Romanian mountains and forest, including countryside life with its folklore, habits and traditions, also helped develop new photographic skills. Both areas of curiosity, photographic practice and exploring nature have always been rewarding and impressed my feelings. Similarly, today I enjoy nature, running in the hills and mountains here in the UK, and I have a positive feeling that photography works for me and for this practice-led research.

1. Problem

The problem is that through the photographic image the representations of myths are often distorted, misrepresented, or only partially revealed. From what I have experienced in the UK, Romania is often portrayed in terms of immigration and Transylvanian stories of Dracula. With the recent political changes, myself and other people living in the UK can relate to experiences of being included in discussions about the prejudiced images of Romanians, which can often be uncomfortable. I believe, that there are stories to be shared, including those of Romanian wolf myths and folklore, and I can potentially find a photographic method that will be able to contribute to better relations between people. Recalling life-experiences from my culture, I find that people cannot easily connect with them and there is much to be missed or distorted. For example, the tombstone found in Chester that is displayed at the Grosvenor Museum, and which shows a Dacian warrior riding a horse while holding the war flag. From Romanian histories and from lessons at school, I know that the flag was made of a wolf's head and the body from a log tube similar to the body of a snake. This was the symbol of the Dacians and was produced with the belief that the winds from the mountains would pass through the flag (tube) and howl like a wolf, thus frightening enemies away. However, the head of the wolf is missing on the tombstone and the museum interpreted the image as representing 'a dragon's head' instead without mentioning the wolf aspect.[1] Barthes (1972, p. 28) refers to this as

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[1] Grosvenor Museum Chester (2019). 'Tombstone showing a Romanian Dacian warrior' in the Roman Tombstones Gallery. and the documentation of the label provided by the museum.

'Roman-ness', a spectacle which avoids a simple reality. Meanwhile, it is through the photographic image, both still and moving, that attempts are made to exaggerate and misrepresent with intention.[2]

A photographic image of still life objects that refers to photographs of the 'material object' as a visual presence entangled with its 'visual culture', with people's means of imagination and communication. Through the interim findings of this research, which I have presented later on this thesis, I have understood that the indexical of a photograph with its particular secretes may be a link of this entanglement. A connection I have referred to as photo-entanglement. It is a 'spooky action at a distance'[3] between two entities that work inseparable as a whole. Pink (2001, p. 24) looked at the photograph 'This Is My Dog' (Sekula, 1982, p. 86) and pointed out that a picture of a dog without its visual culture will rather be seen as a material object only. It is only through this relationship that it becomes a photographic image of someone's dog, from a wallet belonging to someone who cares about it, someone who shows the picture to other people, and attaches meaning to it. An entanglement between material object and visual culture, each influencing the other, a change of meanings from iconic to indexical and vice versa.

Conceptually, I used the theories of Einstein and Jung. I applied Einstein's quantum entanglement theory to my research ideas, particularly notions of 'separation', 're-entanglement', 'non-local' and afar that cannot be separated as each one cannot be discussed separately. Einstein identifies 'inseparable forces', which in my case included communication, own expression, message and reason, as well as others to be identified. And, Jung's suggests the conscious and unconscious realities, personal insights into the archetypes and personal experience of understanding the archaic man (Jung, 1933, 2010).

2. Research question

How can a practice of photographing objects help to re-imagine Romanian culture from afar through the photographic image?

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[2] Jordan, N. (1984). The company of wolves [DVD]. The wolf is portrayed negatively, related to werewolves' myths, confident in having contact with people, a killer rather than a hunter.
[3] Einstein (1935) and 'Spooky Action at a Distance' in. A. Shaffer ed. (2011), The Albert Einstein collection: Essays in humanism, the theory of relativity, and the world as I see it. Philosophical Library: New York.

This is the main question that led the first stages of this research and created new questions, including how to photograph the indexical (Barthes, 1977) and what is the photo-entanglement.

Jung (2002, p. 6) asks the question, 'What are the secret thoughts expressed in the dream?'. Instead of the dream, I am referring to the photography's narrative. Therefore, the question I can ask becomes, 'What are the secret thoughts expressed in the photograph?'

3. Aims

1. It is my intention to find new photographic ways of re-imagining Romanian culture through disciplinary in interdisciplinary photographic methods and to identify possible entangled situations.
2. It is my intention to offer a new image/portrait of Romanian culture through its wolf mythologies.
3. It is my intention to redress a prejudiced view of Romanian culture that can build better relations between the Romanian and British people.
4. It is my intention to evolve a new photographic practice that allows me to engage with diverse methods.

4. Objectives

- To identify stories, folklore and traditions related to wolf myths guided by the PEIs conducted in Romania, including those from the Popular and Orthodox calendars, fables, poems or histories
- To conduct a review of the relevant literature
- To employ interdisciplinary methods in my photographic practice
- To develop the methods that I am familiar with and planning to work with while also considering potential alternatives
- To create a portfolio of photographs and present my findings
- To present my findings/artworks in the form of an exhibition and to produce a written thesis. The thesis should be completed once the exhibition has taken place so that my reflections can be included.

5. Exhibition

The solo exhibition available to the general public was presented under the title: Photographs of Wolf Myths. It opened on 22nd November 2021 and closed on 13th February 2022 at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, UK. This was the same place from where this research started, inspired by the tombstone of the Dacian warrior and where I have conducted interviews with people from the UK. Finally, this was the place where I presented my research findings, the participants' input and my own photographs, accompanied by the collective story of wolf myths from Romanian culture.

CHAPTER I - METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

1.1. Methodology

The methodological strategy is driven by practice-led actions. Through exploring the creative challenges as I encountered them, I am seeking to contribute to the practice of photographing still life objects with the new knowledge and new insights. Silverman suggests, that this can only be done through practice, accompanied by the self-reflections including autoethnography, semi-structured interviews and the use of innovative photographic technologies (2010). Bringing methods from other disciplines into my own practice, including film making and photo elicitation, to unlock the creative approaches in addition to the data from the fieldwork in the UK and the data collected in Romania, informed my own photographic experiments and the autoethnography I undertook and, ultimately, contributed to producing my own photographs in parallel with writing a thesis that includes reflections and conclusions on my findings. How can a creative practice of photographing objects with their indexical meaning attached help to re-imagine Romanian culture?

In addition, I, the artist, have used a personal artistic curatorial approach when selecting, presenting, ordering and printing the photographs, whilst paying close attention to the photographic narrative and the stories experienced in Romania and the UK that must not be lost or misrepresented. This includes interpreting and testing the photographs (Mason, 2002, pp. 103–119) to achieve photographic documentation prior to any distortions of the narrative or the intended photographic message.

The creative practice-led actions have ultimately helped re-imagine Romanian culture from afar, here in the UK, through the still life photographic images of wolf myths. Together, the voluntary participants' contributions, the video documentary and my own portfolio of photographs will potentially offer a new portrait of Romanian culture. I have evaluated for potential misrepresentations of how the stories are photographically and contextually shared. Moreover, through exhibiting and collecting feedback, I potentially have identified a new way of working with still life photography to prevent the statements attached to the photographs being changed or missed. Stages of finding the stories, deciding which ones to share, deciding how to share (including both a photographic image and a statement with the story), and then learning how public audiences would potentially receive the stories are included. Ultimately, I considered how institutions, such as museums or public art galleries, intervene in the written

statements and narratives, which are an integral part of the artworks. I wish to embrace those collaborations that help emphasise the aims of the work and, if possible, defending against those who would change the sense of the work, omit significant messages or even change the subject of a creative practice of still life photographs.

1.2. Methods

The methods I have employed are as follows:

1. I conducted literature and contextual review. This was a continuous method of approaching and contribute to the practice. From a contemporary art practice perspective, I investigated the emerging photographic problems to emphasise potentially entangled states, for example looking at 'the third meaning' idea (Barthes, 1977). Some of the objects photographed and represented as photographs not only become biased still life representations, but also seem to suffer other transformations, such as 'speculation and fantasy', a-temporal and a-spatial (Penny, 2014).

2. I conducted open-ended interviews (PEIs) with my family members, friends and people living in Romania in order to 'directly access what happens in life-histories' from Romania (Silverman, 2004, pp. 165–203; Pink, 2007). Here, my intention was to use video recording. I offered people photo cameras to take pictures of what they considered as portraying their particular story about the wolf myths in Romania. I have used a from a selection of iPhone, or instant or single use photo cameras (Emmison, 2000, pp. 246–265) in order to answer to the question: how can a folklore be shared through photographic expression?

3. I made a photo documentary by using the PEI data that I collected, video recorded interviews and photographs. This led me not only to produce my own original work, but also a self-reflection of my work within the work itself (Knudsen, 2003). I have used this knowledge at the self-critical stage of the research outcomes.

4. I conducted semi-structured interviews with British people in the UK, applying the understanding and knowledge I gained from the PEIs I conducted in Romania. It was my intention to identify from the British people's unconscious imagination a possible predetermined view of the Romania culture in the UK and to find a new method of selecting the still life objects to photograph (Pink, 2001, 2007).

5. I used an autoethnographic approach to emphasise my experience during the field trip to Romania (Silverman, 2016). Here, my intention was to use video recording, which I used for the PEIs. I used a selection of digital, iPhone, instant and single-use cameras.

6. I conducted a comparative practice method within my field. This includes conducting photographic experiments with existing methods and seeking potential new methods.

7. I created photographs related to my fieldwork experience using analogue and digital cameras, including smartphones, while remaining open to new approaches and techniques during my research. I photographed objects together to study, for example, distance, shadows, colour, shape and time, as well as staged, banal or misplaced objects within the photographed relationship between them. However, these were only some of the aspects that can be explored and expressed through photography.

8. I created a portfolio of photographs of still life objects using my own artistic curatorial approach: selecting, presenting, ordering and printing the photographs, paying close attention to the photographic narrative and the stories experienced in Romania and the UK that must not be lost or misrepresented. I selected, interpreted and tested the photographs (Mason, 2002, pp. 103–119) to achieve photographic documentation prior to any distortions of the narrative or the intended photographic message.

9. I kept a record of the process in sketchbooks, written reflective work and images of the whiteboard annotations saved on OneDrive.

10. I created an online blog (at www.alexandrumodoi.com) through which I presented photographs and shared ideas to elicit other people's opinions.

11. I tested my findings and conclusions by studying theories of photographs as 'a subject of meaning and visual intent' and reflected on my academic practice and its outcomes being distinct from the 'mechanical act of taking pictures' (Bazin, 1960; Batchen, 1999a).

12. I organised a public exhibition, presenting the work, including the participants' PEI sessions from Romania, the photo documentary and my own portfolio. The exhibition was scheduled at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester from 22nd November 2021 to 13th February 2022. The aim was to emphasise the photograph's significance as a physical object when it is entangled with its indexical meaning to create a photo-entanglement. It was also my intention to evaluate how a new portrait of Romanian culture can be offered and where potential misrepresentations can occur. I employed my previous experience of exhibiting, collaborating with curatorial teams and preparing the work for a public audience, as I believe that the artist's presence in the exhibiting space is essential.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

2.1. Research context and focus

The focus of this research is on photographic images related to Romania culture through its wolf mythologies. The main object, the wolf, recalls my experience of living in Romania until the age of 30. It evokes the folklore and myths I experienced during mountaineering expeditions in all the four seasons, and through stories told by my friends and family, especially those heard from my grandparents and their friends. Through a relationship with this main object of study, I found secondary objects from my everyday life. It represents my current experience in the UK where, over the last ten years, I have built a family while studying and working, emphasising a relationship between the objects and recalling my personal narrative. I was able to find these objects in my house, through speaking with my new friends and by learning about diverse backgrounds as well as through my relatives and friends from my native country, with whom I was in touch. I am not concerned with still life or wildlife photographic, but rather with a photographic practice of using still life objects in order to interrogate the meaning of photography, and potentially to find new ways of working with photography.

In addition, the research was inspired by Jung's (2002) theories of the confused images from his analysis of dreams. I found that there are similarities to the photo-elicitation interviews (PEIs) I conducted in Romania, including the idea of the existence of a deeper meaning beyond the façade of the confused images. This is the level of the manifest content, but 'What is essential?' is what a particular person dreams and the insights with its particularities offered, is something personal, a latent content, as Jung explains. Jung's further question is, 'What are the secret thoughts expressed in the dream?'. After analysing the PEIs I conducted in Romania and the discussions with the participants about the photographs they produced, I have concluded that people's personal thoughts were unveiled. I have found in Freud's theory (2009) further context that in unveiling personal insights, a participant needs to have a deep focus and be ultimately 'detached' from the surroundings with only the interviewer and the interviewee together to reach into the inside of the insights. During the PEIs, people managed to make abstraction of their surroundings, and confidence and trust were built between them and myself and their personal thoughts were discussed. This is the indexical level of meaning as I understand and intend to research further. In addition, I found theories of contextualising the iconic, symbolic and indexical levels of meaning in Baudrillard's work (1996), which brings

the ideas of objects that may be seen by a general audience at the iconic level of meaning and the objects may be valued likewise. Moreover, at a deeper level, there is 'what cannot be seen',[4] the knowledge to be discovered, as Foucault suggests (2002). It is 'The impossible photograph' with which Good (2019) refers to photographing people's personal thoughts through still photography as staged and deliberate. Baudrillard and Edwards highlight that often, objects in museums, for example, a statue, a tombstone or a photograph, are more likely to be 'archived' regarding their iconic and symbolic meanings and the secrets, the indexical level of meaning, are rarely explored. What is that statue, that diamond, that tombstone or photograph portraying? Why? Who commissioned the work and why? What is the context, what is the message intended to be transmitted when it was produced? What is the social aspect of it? These are often questions that require additional expertise and responsibilities. Foucault (2002) suggests that only by reaching deep inside at the 'archaeological knowledge' and its findings will the secrets be unveiled. My argument is that similarly, the tombstone from Grosvenor Museum shows the head of a wolf not a dragon, Roman-ness, which Barthes (1977) refers to as the indexical level of meaning being missed, with or without intention.

2.2. Photographic context

My field is based on still life photography explored by artists, reconstruction and representation of objects from still life photographs, including works by Allahyari (2016) and Paul's research (2017) on the still life photography themes of 'the studio, the object, and the commodity'; as well as Penny's work on photographs, found objects and artefacts (2014). Within my field, there is also recent ethnological practice-based research, such as revisiting cultures and their respective homelands (Preston, 2018), objects and domestic places (Vale, 2014), memories and encounters (Ahrens, 2017), and the photograph as an object of ethnographic analysis (Parrott, 2009). The gap in this field was identified by Rose (2014) as being between the 'visual research methods' and 'contemporary visual culture' with reference to the images as a communication tool. In order to explore this gap, it was my intention to use combined photographic methods, a contemporary art practice of photographing objects and still life objects representations with an ethnographic and visual data analysis approach, and to

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[4] How can I photograph what cannot be seen? This was one of the questions I asked after reflecting on the previous stages of this research, considering that one of the final outcomes was to produce my own portfolio of photographs.

reflect on own practice and experience during the research. It is a gap to be experimented with creative photographic methods and as well as a gap between cultures encounters to be re-imagined. My research is informed by photography theories such as Barthes' 'third meaning', Bazin's 'real and re-present', Richon's object 'allegories', Batchen's still life as a manifesto of photography intended to certify its conceptual and pictorial identity (Bazin, 1960; Batchen, 1999a; Richon, Dick and Leader, 2006), the ethnographic and visual images of the myth as a way of signification (Barthes, 1972, p. 109; Sontag, 1982). Myths as a system of communication as well as historical and cultural differences (Huppatz, 2011), a field of the signifier, signification and significance, a field of iconic and indexical meaning of photography (Barthes, 1977, p. 54).

2.3. Field of practice

Still life photographs of everyday objects may be easy to understand at their iconic and symbolic level. However, they also have a third meaning at the indexical meaning that may be less evident, as Barthes (1977) suggests in his theory of the third level of meaning. Edwards and Hart similarly discuss how a photograph (Figure 2.1) may have its historical traces ignored and how the intended audience may not be reached if the surrounding information is overlooked and the photograph is viewed as distinct from its context, introducing the idea of inseparable (Edwards and Hart, 2004, pp. 66–67).
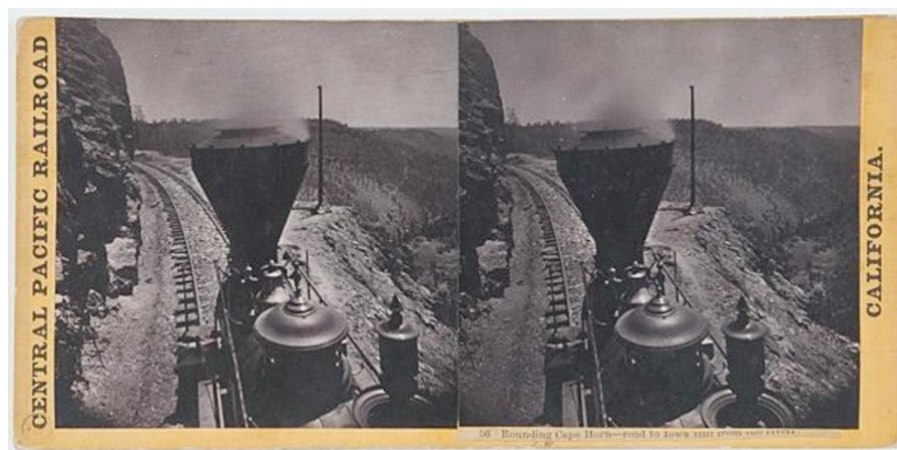
Figure 2.1. Alfred Hart, 56. 1866.
Rounding Cape Horn. Road to Iowa Hill from the River, in the Distance.

I have experienced issues similar to this, two examples of which involve my practice and collaborating with the Grosvenor Museum before commencing this research. First, I produced a bas-relief copy using photographs to reproduce a three-dimensional object, as much as

possible considering the available technology at that time (Figure 2.2). The museum had two interventions to the work: one was that the edges of the resin layer were sandpapered to closely resemble the original. However, this research is not concerned with the issue of reproduction. The second intervention was that the object's label was changed. This left the image without the artist's statement. The two were separated, creating a shift from the artist's intention to the physical process of reproducing an object from a photograph. The second example concerns the tombstone in the Webster Gallery (Figure 2.3), which, as described on its label, represents a dragon's head, rather than that of a wolf as I have always understood it to be from Romanian folklore. I have discussed this in more detail in the research focus. However, as previously discussed, it is not the right and the wrong but the missing or changing the information I am concerned with, that is, the ethnographic input, the stories that can be heard and transmitted – the third level of meaning at the indexical level of meaning.

As the research progressed, my attention changed from a concern of reproduction and 3D printing from photographs to the ethnographic aspects attached to a visual image - a photographic image.

Figure 2.2. Alexandru Modoi. 3D print, Chester, 2019. 3D reproduction of a bas-relief. On display in the Newstead Gallery at Grosvenor Museum, Chester

Figure 2.3. Tombstone of a Sarmatian warrior. On display in the Webster Gallery, Grosvenor Museum, Chester 2019

Reflecting on one of my first photographs created for this research (Figure 2.4), 'Does it have strong jaws?', I interpret it in the following way. The photograph has a pair of scissors as the main object, tied with string so as not to be opened, an object that at the iconic or symbolic level will be categorised as exactly that. However, I intend for it to be viewed in combination with the surrounding elements, its label with my own statement. The photograph's main

purpose is to depict a wolf mouth, which is tightly tied to prevent the animal biting, in line with Romanian tradition. My subject is not the still life objects, that is, the pair of scissors and the string, but the story behind the image, which assists me to re-imagine the photograph.

Figure 2.4. Alexandru Modoi.
Does it have strong jaws? 2020.

The photographing of everyday still life objects is one of the research's limitations. I have also included some discussions on the technicality of taking pictures and photographic, only when these can influence the context and subject of the research. The research subject is photography a creative practice of objects that help the artist and the participants to re-imagine wolf stories from Romanian culture. The emphasis is on the stories associated with the images and how the two can remain connected, a state of entanglement, which I discuss further on as photo-entanglement. Looking at Allahyari's (2016) work, I understand that photographing objects, cultural objects in this case, poses a problem in terms of transmitting the cultural meaning of those objects when objects are reproduced (Figure 2.5). This research tries to address the transmitting and re-imagining of the cultural story behind a visual image. Applying Allahyari's finding to the tombstone and its label from the Grosvenor Museum (see), I understand how misrepresentation can occur when the ethnographic input is forgotten or missed. Therefore, this research is not concerned with the methods of creating or reproducing an image containing still life objects but in how an image can retain its intended meaning.

Figure 2.5. Morehshin Allahyari.
Material speculation: ISIS. 2015.

There are various still life objects that can be photographed – the everyday objects as commodities as Paul (2017) refers to them (Figure 2.6), and the found objects (Penny, 2014) – those banal, overlooked objects that are selected and explored to establish their visual form as well as their story. For this research, I re-imagine stories from Romanian culture here in the UK where I live, involving both objects I already had at home and those that surround me. This process involved commodities, but I have only selected from those objects I have had access to, which limited the research. The process would have been different, if I had imported objects from Romania and photographed them in the UK, referring to practices of collecting, storing or maintaining which are not part of this study. The research aligns my current situation of living in the UK, surrounded by everyday objects, with the re-imagining of those stories from my childhood.

Figure 2.6. Richard Paul. *Mimic* 3D Lenticular Print
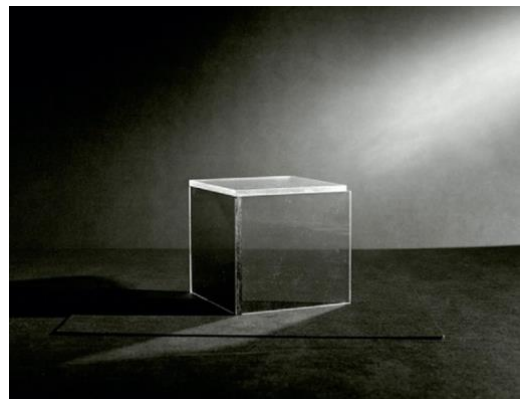
Figure 2.7. David Penny. From the series *Fragments. Monoliths. Portals.* 2013.

My research also involves found objects only to be photographed, those that Penny's (2014) research explores, which, via a creative practice of photography, can get multiple meanings when their context, form or surroundings are changed (Figure 2.7). My research refers to Penny's method of identifying multiple meanings that a photographic image can transmit. In terms of which objects I have used and why, this research focuses on the banal objects, those objects that I have found in my house here in the UK and that have surrounded me in everyday life. These objects may have multiple stories attached to them, but, via photographic practice, are given a specific meaning as the stories are re-imagined. The images I have created of the still life objects inherit my statement, allowing the meaning and the object to remain connected.

This research led by practice delimitates a creative practice of photographing objects from the mechanical reproduction (Benjamin, 2008) of still life objects with their photographic and eye catching look. Therefore, one of the main aspects of the research is that it my practice rather answers the 'what' and 'why' questions than the 'how'. The research is situated within the context of photo-elicitation sessions, involving visual ethnography, where participants' reflections and feelings are expressed through photographs of still life objects. The participants were given time to reflect, prepare and recall stories from our experiences. The details were remembered during the process of photographing – for example, when constructing the image using the camera – as well as the process of presenting the photographs during the photo-elicitation interviews. A hands-on approach, accentuating the importance of the intention and transmission of personal meaning, has been the focus of the PEIs sessions, encouraging the participants to enact the stories with details and gain a sense of wellbeing as their stories are heard. The photographs produced from the PEIs and autoethnography have a distinct element of authenticity and uniqueness attached to them.

Photo-elicitation sessions, such as those both Bratchford and Back conducted (Bratchford, 2018; Back, 2007), were included in this research. These involved participants sharing personal stories to have their voices heard via the medium of photography; ultimately, the aim of the sessions was to ensure that participants are socially engaged and gain a sense of wellbeing (Bratchford, 2018; Bratchford, Giotaki and Wewiora, 2018). I have employed the PEI method with a difference, in that the focus is on the messages and stories to be shared. The main objective was to learn from the participants, to identify how to approach later stages of the research, to understand how to approach the autoethnography process and produce my own portfolio of photographs. Back's PEI method focuses on what the person conducting the sessions can learn from the participants regarding their stories, habits and daily routine. This

approach is focused on potential new ways of listening to stories told by participants (Back, 2007; Pink, 2007). By combining these two approaches, I am learning that participants can gain a sense of wellbeing, offering new insight into Romanian culture here in the UK, and I am exploring the objects they photograph, along with their contexts and stories. In addition, by analysing the interviews, I can apply any knowledge gained to my own practice. My practice is essentially informed by these sessions.

Within my practice-based field, there exists ethnographic and autoethnographic elements of re-imagining stories and experiences lived in the natal country. Here I have looked at works by Wang Preston and Ahrens. Wang Preston (2018) undertakes field trips to China, her natal country, and is motivated by her own personal search for experiences once lived. I refer here to the ethnographic approach, similar to mine. While Preston's focus is on the encounter with the physical landscape of the River Yangtze and mapping her findings (Figure 2.8), in my research, the landscape is less significant and refers rather to the general location (forest, mountain, countryside village or city) from which I have collected and re-imagined stories and myths. Ahrens' (2017) research introduces the *dialogue* and the photograph as object (Figure 2.9), which in my research takes the form of discussions with the participants around the photographs as objects on the table. Ahrens views the print-making and photographic images as potential traces of multiple histories along the Parana River. Between the photographic practices of documenting a landscape and capturing stories and secrets lies my practice, within an ethnographic approach influenced by landscapes as locations from my childhood, as well as stories and myths.

Figure 2.8. Yan Wang Preston. *Y58 5,700 from the river source.* From *Mother River* series, 2010-2014

Figure 2.9. Victoria Ahrens. *Last Views,* 2015.

My argument is that the photographic images of still life objects, which re-imagine wolf myths originating from Romania, can be difficult to be understand when viewed in isolation, without the participants' stories or artists' statements attached. Similar photographs, or allegories,

exist by Richon (Richon, Dick and Leader, 2006), wherein the objects have unfamiliar associations – for example, a dog viewing a pile of books or a carrot on a plinth or table (Figure 2.10). Photographic images associated with a specific context often feel unfamiliar. In my work, this unfamiliar and specific context may be more easily identified by people from Romania, especially those who have previously experienced the histories and myths in context.

Figure 2.10. Olivier Richon. *Literally carrot*, *After Emil Zola*

This research concerns the practice of photographing still life everyday objects. It aims to explore personal experiences and myths, involving ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches, and to re-imagine them via a creative practice of photographing still life objects. The photographs, produced in a specific context, are entangled with the participants' insights or artists' statement.

2.4. The original contribution to knowledge

This research will potentially provide a new insight into the practice of photographing still life objects. It introduces the photo-entanglement concept within the field of still life photography to emphasise the importance of the indexical meaning within this field. A new systematic process of enquiry has been developed that allowed for new ways to explore how and where potential photographic misrepresentations can appear, ultimately providing solutions.

The initial findings suggest that possible misrepresentations and misunderstandings can occur at the indexical meaning of the photographs. A photo-entanglement exists between a photograph and its indexical meaning. It may appear and become significant once combined with methods from visual ethnography, creative still life photography and narrative used to understand and share myths and stories.

The contribution to knowledge includes self-reflection on the creative challenges and overcoming the unexpected in response to the ethnographic and autoethnographic analysis of the data collected from Romania and the UK. By employing disciplinary and interdisciplinary creative methods of photographing still life objects, I seek innovative ways of working with the photographic image at the iconic, symbolic and indexical levels of meaning, including an autoethnographic approach, a portfolio of photographs and a public exhibition.

CHAPTER III – FIELDWORK

3.1. Photo-elicitations video interviews, field trip to Romania

3.1.1. Possible ethnographic findings and suggestions of how the ethnographic approach may guide my work and myself.

Reading Jung (1933) for an understanding of the forthcoming encounters with people living in Romania revisiting their culture, which is also my own. Looking at the idea of 'archaic man', as presented by Jung, on one hand, and on the other hand looking at my prospective experience, I found possible similarities as well as possible guidance. Therefore, based on Jung's idea and my own beliefs based on my previous experiences in Romania, I have revisited my childhood places to find Romanian people with their own beliefs, their 'own collective unconsciousness', which I was aware that existed before I left Romania 10 years ago. Now, after living, building a family and studying in the UK, I have become familiar with Western European people – the 'British man', which Jung identified as antithetical with the African people. I have seen that I have experienced similarities from Jung's 'vantage point'[5] in my search to re-imagine the Romanian Culture from afar.

Living in the UK for more that 10 years, I am aware that my unconscious, habits and beliefs would differ from those here in the UK. Recalling my own experience and reading Jung to guide my approach to understanding that there are different cultures based on people's own psyches. In addition, which I have not seen in the 'archaic man' idea, I ultimately wonder how these two cultures can co-exist in harmony: how these two cultures to which I belong, should be embedded into my own being, a link which I found reading Erik Knudsen (2003). Having read these two sources to help me to build a foundation for a photo-elicitation ethnographic approach, as well to guide my field trip, to record my thoughts, and to value my experiences from the first stages of the research. In summary, at this stage of the research are two questions to address: What are the possible myths that I should identify during my encounters (Jung, 1933)?; and how could these potentially would shape my own experience, work and reflections (Knudsen, 2003)?

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[5] Jung considers African and European culture from his own vantage point p. 143

In Romanian culture there is a myth, which I heard from my relatives, that a wild wolf may attack a farm because it is hungry. This is seen as a strong reason to be pardoned and understood by some of the local people. Some people often would give food to the wolves and in return the wolves should not need to hunt the sheep at the farm. 'The wolves are hungry', the locals may say when a wolf is around a farm. Hunting the wolves is not the best solution because the woods will be left without their 'doctor of the forest', but feeding them from time to time can keep the farms more secure. When they choose to lock their animals in barns, people know or will assume that the wolf is outside, especially during the night. Today, many of my relatives live in the cities, where there are no wolves, but even now 'the wolves are hungry' unconsciousness is still used when other animals that live in the city are agitated for their survival, such as stray dogs, cats or crows. Jung gives a similar example - that the crocodiles are not killers, but rather shy, and would not attack a person unless it is summoned by their nature or by a sorcerer and not being hungry; my point is that nature is understood and accepted by the people coexisting with it. Romanian culture accepts the wolves just as African culture accepts the crocodiles.

Figure 3.1. Alexandru N. Participant,
Bucharest, November 2019
Personification of the wolf

Jung adds humour by mentioning that the African people said that the crocodiles had moved to the British Parliament, as the natural power within African culture switched to the 'British man'. My relatives would say a similar thing about the hungry wolves relating to their politicians.

From reading Erik Knudsen, I found guidance towards understanding my own experience, and it is through my own reflections to build the coherence of two cultures within in one practice, and therefore to discover how to re-imagine the Romanian culture through still life photographs here in UK. It is my understanding that Knudsen suggests that is 'difficult' to

evolve one entity from multiple cultures, and it is through this desire that I believe Jung's theory of the archaic man developed, and through this guidance I intended to apply it to my own research, practice and self-reflection.

From a friend in the UK, I have learned the expression 'I have wolfed down my lunch'. This does not mean the same as ' the wolves are hungry', because the Romanian refer to the wolves being hungry rather as a consequence of events and actions that have caused the wolves to be hungry, not to explain how quickly a wolf would eat its dinner or how fast someone is eating their diner when they are hungry. The emphasis is on the natural harmony of co-existing within the nature and thinking of actions that can maintain the harmony. It was through my own experience and research to see the differences and to re-present the stories from Romania in order not to be misunderstood or misrepresented in the UK.

From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary's definition, the myth is what to do according to that culture. Myths provide an insight into a culture, shaping the life of the individual and even whole communities; in my case referring to annual ceremonial, beliefs and religious rituals in Romania. Can myths guide and grow up around someone, and unfold a part of the world and people's views?

I have seen these myths being collected through semi-structured interviews and through the photo-elicitation to enact the creative of the archaic man psyche, through choosing surrounding still life objects to tell their story. I was thinking at examples that participants would photograph a door from inside to suggest that the hungry wolves are outside, a fence, a forest from a window, or a mountain from a distance, raw meat, or a block of flats suggesting personifications of the wolves. I expected that some people would photograph objects that I have never thought of, including stories that I have never heard of, and I believe that these would may become important in the constructing my own understanding and ultimately my own representation of the wolf myths.

There are other points to reference from Jung's archaic man and Knudsen's creation, including pre-logical state of mind, primitive man as a riddle, and collective representations. Placing myself in the position of the 'civilised man' with regard to the 'archaic man', which I may re-encounter in Romania, possibly finding a pre-logical state through observing the views of people from my native country and my relatives. Disregarding my own lessons, experience, as Knudsen's suggested, and sitting into a vantage point to observe both and accounting for things and simply receiving their collective representations.

3.1.2. Rationale and preparations for semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation

Life experiences and stories are open and responsible to visual exploration, as Knowles (2006) suggests 'living is a form of narration which is particularly amenable to visual exploration, but are not immediately obvious'.

The people I approached were relatives and friends, as well as other participants I have identified during my field trips. An ethnographic approach that was conducted through open discussions, hands-on and making photographs. This concluded with show-and-tell sessions, similarly to a workshop from a photography practice. I was familiar with this approach as it was a method that I have often used for my own creations and running photography workshops. The participants had my support throughout the photo-elicitation process to represent their intended meaning, which ultimately helped me to identify not only their stories but also discover potentially new approaches and new findings.

I received positive feedback from the participants stating that they gained a sense of accomplishment and achievement by sharing their stories and knowing that it may contribute to improving the relationship between Romanians and British people, as well as being part of this initiative. People told their own stories to their own relatives and other Romanians living in the UK, as well as to people of other nationalities also living in UK. It was though the photographs that these stories to travel at a distance between both cultures, and the photographs to remain as documentation. People from the UK will potentially become aware of Romanian stories about wolf myths in addition to those of Dracula or immigration. As a symbol of integration, diversity and confidence, I believe that there is a 'hunger' for listening to stories about wolf myths from the Romanian culture here in the UK, from Romanians to British people and other nationalities. I have experienced this during my research presentations to my peers and various groups who have provided feedback and eventually further references to consider. As Les Back (2007) identified in photographing people from Brick Lane in London: food for the eyes and listening with the eyes through photographs can give people their moment to be listened to, and in response they offered back their captions/poses. In addition to Back's art of listening, I suggest that, as well as the participants and myself as a practice-based researcher, people who are not directly involved in this study may also be interested in and listening the stories. I believe that wolf mythology is just one aspect of what Romanian culture can offer, and this study may open up a new approach to telling and listening stories through photographs and encourages other people to tell their stories as well.

Preparation for interview meetings: Each participant, at least two weeks prior to any sessions, was provided with the following information which was presented in the information sheet and in the consent form. These contained details about myself, updates about my recent collaborations and exhibitions, and my current status and research work as a full-time PhD candidate. The topic of the PEI: Identifying from the Romanian culture myths about wolves and possible ways to re-imagine them through photographs of still life objects. The purpose and terminologies of the study, including Romanian culture, wolf myth, photographic image of objects, and still life objects. I have also explained that at no point would this research concern, nor taking interest in, any contact with or approach to the wolf as a wild animal, but only with how myths and folklore were told and possible ways to represent them through photographs. These should be photographs of objects and surroundings, not wildlife. I have informed the participants that they were able to withdraw at any time, and that these photographs were going to be shared. That it was my intention to use the video and the photographs for analysis and possible exhibition, or to make public. The participants were provided in advance the main questions. This was in order to allow them time to think about the questions and their answers in advance. This would then serve as an agenda for our meeting, and to potentially help them to find objects that they could bring along.

The equipment I prepared for this field trip included two digital photo cameras, tripods, memory cards for video recording the interviews. For photo-elicitation sessions I chosen three types of photo cameras, instant (Figure 3.2) and single-use cameras (Figure 3.3) and the iPhone and for my own photographs a digital camera, spare batteries and my laptop.

Figure 3.2. Instant camera model
used for PEIs in Romania, November 2019

Figure 3.3. Single use camera model,
used for PEIs in Romania, November 2019

One option for photo-elicitation was to use instant photographs. This has the advantage that the photographs would be produced without any extra time or services being involved. Other

options would have taken another day and having a second meeting, or additional costs. The disadvantage was that these photographs are unique (which could also be seen as an advantage), but producing any copies to be shared or offered to the participants would be an inconvenience. However, there was the possibility of scanning the images and offering them digitally or printed out. A second option was to provide the participants with single use cameras. These would have offered the advantage of printing multiple copies of the photographs from the original negative, which could include different sized prints or scanning for further digital use. However, this process was likely to require a second day for developing and printing images for further discussions of the photo-elicitation. A third option was the use of an iPhone. The advantage is the apparatus itself and its new technology, for accessibility, using and sharing the images. Disadvantages included printing the photographs for the photo-elicitation process, as well as once the digital camera was an option to work with, multiple exposures which may eliminate the care and deep thought, as limited by single use cameras or a set of only 10 sheets of photographic paper for instant cameras.

Reflecting on the possible situations that could have occurred during my fieldwork, at that point I concluded that I would have preferred the instant camera for this approach. However, I did consideru8 the options at each location, with each participant and at the moment of the day that was needed to be assessed.

Steps undertaken after the sessions included my keeping in contact with the participants and sending them feedback, via direct communication (phone calls, WhatsApp) or through emails. In order to debrief the sessions, I have summarised the discussion and outlined the possible strengths that I have identified. I also opened a short discussion about the possible outcomes of the research, in which their participation become important, as the information gathered was a significant part of this project. For protection and safety of the data, all the data has been stored on the university's One Drive account, as needed for editing or interpretations, and I have worked with my personal computer only, which is protected by a password and connected to the university campus network.

3.1.3. Questions for semi-structured interviews

There were the three main questions I asked during the semi-structured video-recorded interviews, which are guided by Barthes (1977) theories of the iconic (Q1), symbolic (Q2) and indexical (Q3) meaning of the pictures:

Q1: What is this object in this picture and where is it from?

Q2: What does this picture represents for you?

Q3: What does this picture make you feel about wolves?

3.1.4. Psychoanalytical framework for analysing the photo-elicitation video-recorded interviews outcomes

The structure of my analysis is around the iconic, the symbolic and the indexical of the photograph with reference to Barthes's third meaning of the photographic image[6], and contextually borrowing ideas from Jung[7] and Campbell[8] of collecting from the unconscious realities in the people the emerging story, using the photographic image as a catalyst, and Peterson's[9] analysis of the images. Knowles and Mason[10] suggest that ethnographic methods are often shaped by experience on the field trips and any plan to use such methods may not always fully work as initially designed. This became a potential subject for discussion regarding any contrast between my current plan I have had for the PEIs and the actual experience after these sessions.

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[6] Barthes's levels of meaning, including the obvious and obtuse meaning and the still (1977, p.52)

[7] Jung's ideas of unconscious realities are forgotten experiences and archetypes that deposits of repeated experiences that can be expressed images, Archaic Man and Four Archetypes (1933, 2010).

[8] 'Myth and dream' (Campbell, 1949), imagery from big dreams. 'Initiatory images that are so necessary to the psyche that if they are not supplied through myth they will have to be announced again, or will remain locked in a banal' (p. 7)

[9] Jordan Peterson's lecture on youtube.com channel (Peterson, 2017), suggesting that there may be a general understanding through the interpretation of the images, photography being an universal visual language.

[10] Knowles (2006) and Mason (2002) ethnography is open and responsible for visual exploration, but not immediately obvious.

My understanding of Barthes' theory of the photographic image is that photographs may be analysed through different levels of meanings, and applying disciplinary theories and intradisciplinary photographic methods, I have analysed the PEIs outcomes through the fallowing three groups of meaning:

is-iconic, *represents-symbolic,* and *feels-indexical*

People were invited to take part in PEIs, where they took pictures of objects. Then we discussed the photographs, discussions which were video recorded and which form part of the data I have collected, along with the photographs of objects taken representing the wolf. My intention was to enact those stories about the wolves, trying to capture from the unconscious collective realities the emerging collective story, as well as to identify possible situations of cultural entanglement.[11] It was very important that the participants were informed that they were not to take pictures or approaching the wolves, or take any pictures of other people. This project is concerned only with the still life pictures and the stories behind them. The question is: How can a practice of photographing still life objects help to re-imagine Romania culture from afar through the photographic image of wolf myths? Once the photographs were taken and printed, I analysed them through three the main groups, iconic, symbolic, and indexical, and for this I will use the Figure 3.4 as an example.

Figure 3.4. Alexandru Modoi. Photomontage at the stage of planning
the field trips and not having the data to work with. 2019

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[11] Contextual idea about of entanglement (Einstein, Albert; Podolsky, B.; Rosen, 1935), which I have discussed it in a later rationale.

Is-iconic refers to the identification of the objects and their surroundings in the pictures. Looking at the photograph with the tombstone, there is a Dacian warrior on a horse with a warrior flag built from a wolf head. The missing head from the tombstone re-enacted my own fantasy about the wolf and its myths from Romania. From Barthes's theory, this is the informational level 'which gathers together everything' from Central Image in Figure 3.4. Gathering information from the whole image, including the information from the background, such as river, mountains, overcast or bright day and forests. These are iconic elements, which thinking about the wolf as I have experienced, made me select the photographs as the most representative. This is my interpretation at the is-iconic level, which for other people may be different, but the particular information behind the image together with the image itself is what I am interested in.

Represents-symbolic is the identity and ancestral heritage, unique through my own cultural history and geographical virtutes. Both are mentioned in our myths about wolves and Dacian warriors, and have been that transmitted through our grandparents, teachers and cultural institutions down the generations. Here, I refer to those experiences when myths, histories and folklore were often discussed and accepted in the Romanian culture within a wide community, including our appurtenances and traditions, which often are associated with surrounding objects. These objects are a clear signification of those traditions and histories. For example, red-painted eggs for Easter, the Lupa Capitolina statue representing the she-wolf with Romulus and Remus, the image of a Dacian warrior and the nearby mountains with their nature and running waters, that have been there for centuries.

Lastly, **Feels-indexical** in relation to the picture of the tombstone brings back to me feelings of adventure and accomplishment, as well as exploration and insecurity in the face of the unknown. In order to emphasise this, I have selected the other pictures, all of which, together, express a positive feeling that makes me happy to share it and to potentially experience it again. The photos enact my memories of an early story of finding a way through the unknown in the Romanian mountains, and these are similar to other people's memories from Romania. This is my own interpretation and representation of these photographs together, and I believe that without this the meaning of this set would, potentially tell a different story. What, potentially, could this set of pictures meant to someone else? These may be indexical to someone's childhood place, or fear of no-go/entry area, or danger, or a cold night. How will a different interpretation shape my current story, and ultimately, what will the common story be after the PEIs experiences?

There is a problem with the photographic image in that its representation of the myths can be distorted, partially revealed or misinterpreted. For example, the tombstone from my example (still life Central Image in Figure 3.4.) has the top-right corner missing and as I have learnt from Romania culture, that part is a missing head of a wolf, and not the head of a dragon as I am learning today from Grosvenor Museum in Chester, which does not reference the wolf in any form. Can this change the details of the story, and potentially, also change the character of the warriors - from brave people living in the mountains with the wild life into dragons hunters and their myths? As I know, the dragons' theme in Romania is rather an abstract concept that is missing from our folklore and histories. At this stage, I presented my research to other people from Romania, and I learnt that the Dacian dragon term had become known to some people from Romania too, but it has always been referred to the wolf animal and the myths associated to it and not to dragons flying over the mountains and spiting fire. In our myths, it is the wolf that saved and cared for Romulus and Remus, and it is the Dacian warrior that lived amongst the wolves, sharing the mountain together. The warrior flags being made of a wolf head has a different symbolism (Q2 represents-symbolic), and any misrepresentation or partially revealed message of the photographic image, which as Barthes names as Roman-ness,[12] may affect the other levels of meanings too, is-iconic and feels-indexical. In theory Berger states that 'what we see and what we know is never settled' (1997, p. 7), while Tag refers to 'regimes of truth', and Sontag suggests that the photographic images and their interpretation may be the 'evidence of something happened and staged'.

Looking at the Figure 3.4 am answering the three interview questions, I am using Table 1 to sort the potential answers, similarly as I am expecting from the photo-elicitation sessions.

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[12] Barthes in Mythologies (1972, p. 28) refers to this as 'Roman-ness', an interpretation that avoids a simple reality, and consequently my question 'What is this object in this picture and where is it from? (Q1); and in this particular example it can influence the other levels of meaning, including the represents-symbolic and feel-indexical.

Table 1: Photo-elicitation potential answers

Name	Q1: Is-iconic	Q2: represents-symbolic	Q3: feels-indexical
Tombstone	Artefact Tombstone Wolf head missing Dacian warrior Stone Carved image, portrait Dacian standard Wolf head Statue in the city centre	Heritage Ancestral, traditions Bravery (from Romanian culture and histories) Natural wealth Mountaineering and respect for the mountains Traditions and folklore	Appurtenance Confident to tell the story behind Wishing to share the particular story behind Multicultural and inclusion Positive, completing my story of the missing part of the tombstone
background left	Country side River Forest Overcast	Wolves habitat amongst the villages A starting point of a mountaineering expedition	Respect for nature Living in harmony Danger Familiar and unfamiliar places
background right	Mountains Forest Bright day	During a mountaineering expedition, before the summit climb Wolves habitat with some rarely sheep farms.	Adventurous Respectful Living in harmony Discovering

Jung (1933, 2010) and Campbell (1949) state that a story resides in the people's psyche and I asked them to re-imagine their story through the photographic image which would potentially elicit a common story emerging from their collective unconscious realities. Stories not told would become inactive in the unconscious, and although those that once were active and no longer are and those that have never been active would remain in people's psyche trough archetypes. It was through this ethnographic approach that I intended to find ways to re-imagine the Romania culture from afar, where the stories from Romania were to be told through the PEIs sessions here in the UK. In the photography practice and theory (Sontag, 1982) and (Penny, 2014), both suggested, that the transporting of significance of the photographic image that may have some ontological transformations. Moreover, looking contextually at Einstein's idea of entanglement (1935), there were other aspects to consider. For example, there have been archetypal situations of entanglement between people's stories and Romania culture and heritage, as well as regarding the photographic image with its particular story/meaning. Two aspects I have transported together here in the UK, and re-imagined as a whole.

Knowles (2006) and Back (2007) suggested that the general location and the people's gender may cover different aspects, also that there, as I did, may be a need for photographs to be grouped on themes, such as darkness, inside or outside the houses, daylight, familiar objects, antique objects or contemporary ones. In addition, it was necessary to consider that a higher number of for repetitive images in a theme would potentially represent stronger feelings than isolated images. Furthermore, by sharing and actively contributing to this project of telling and sharing the story inherited from ancestors may improve people's sense of well-being and potentially build their self-esteem. I wondered how much categorisation would be needed and how significant would be for this research. I was also taking into consideration the time required for PEIs, including the video-recorded interviews, and whether 30 minutes or 1 hour will be sufficient. At the same time, it was necessary to consider whether the participants were having positive energy to cover the interview and grouping the photographs. Both Knowles (2006) and Back (2007), suggested that it is more likely that people will bring comments and insights that I may not have thought about and that there will be much to discover during the field trips. The last time I have visited Romania was 10 years ago and it has been a long time since I discussed the wolf stories with other people from Romania.

3.1.5. Notes reflecting on the field trip to Romania

Chronological notes reflecting on the steps undertaken and on preparing the PEIs. First, in this section of the thesis, I discussed the decisions made, and second, I reflected on how I have applied the PEI method - using single-use cameras and instant photographs. Finally, I reflected on what I expected from the field trip experience, and how it met my expectations. I conducted twelve PEIs sessions in two areas in Romania, in Brasov and in Bucharest. The initial plan was to go to three cities to include Iasi, which I thought that I was going to visit on my second field trip, and to conduct more that 20 PEIs in total.

The events took place as follows:

- **In July** - **August 2019,** the participants were contacted via Facebook, WhatsApp and also through the word of mouth. I started the initial conversations with approximately 25 people from which I have finalised 12 interviews.

- Those interested received the *information sheet* and the *release form* for further documentation via email, and other details were discussed, such as not to photograph the

animals or other people, and that my interest was in those objects associated with the wolf, as participants would imagine, as well as the number of photographs to be taken and that the documentation needed to be signed beforehand.

- Often, I felt the need to say that it was not the case of the participant finding the 'correct answer', and that there was no right or wrong, but it was the individual's unique approach that would matter too. Not to persuade them to participate, but rather to emphasise that it was their individual contribution and approach that I would value the most.

- I planned how to approach the meetings, and when which city to go to first, and what travel links there were between one city and another (by car or train).

- I found that three meetings would be needed with each participant; the first to give the cameras and to sign the paperwork, a second to collect the cameras and to print out the photographs, and the third for the interview sessions.

- During discussions with the participants, I have found that it could save time if I sent the cameras and the paperwork to the participants in advance (in Brasov). Also, they offered to take the cameras to the printing shop, and it was left for me to pick up the prints directly and meet them for interviews. This way, I had just one meeting with each participant and it saved time for everyone. As I have discussed later in the thesis, the approach involving three meetings was often inconvenient, both for people to find availability for all meetings (in Bucharest), and for me to have the time for all the meetings.

- The field trip was **from 26th September to 5th October**, and my initial plan was to go to three cities: Bucharest, Brasov and Iasi. Unfortunately, I have had to postpone the sessions in Iasi.

- **27th September 2019, Friday:** Arrived in Brasov. The cameras were sent to the printing shop in advance and I had reserved the whole day to collect the photographs and to confirm each meeting with the participants for the next day.

- **28th September 2019, Saturday:** I conducted the interviews as planned. To save time, I arranged for the sessions to be conducted in one place. I found that even though I managed to have the sessions in one location, discussing with each individually and waiting for them to arrive took around two hours for each, including the interview and the informal discussion before and after. Romanian people were very welcoming and

generous with their time, especially in a socially friendly environment, as these sessions brought to each one of them an improved sense of well-being and a positive feeling from contributing and growing in confidence to talk about their own photographs. Ultimately, I have had a similar experience in recognising the overall positive reaction and feelings.

- The whole experience was challenging for me. Whereas the experience was unique for each participant, in contrast, for me it had become repetitive. This made me think about the next sessions in Bucharest, and not having more than three interviews per day.

- **29th September 2019, Sunday:** All day travelling to Bucharest. The initial plan was to go to Iasi on a night train and conduct the PEIs on Sunday, and then the next Monday and Tuesday to go to Bucharest. Unfortunately, the commuting network in Romania did not work well with my plan. Commuting from Brasov to Iasi and then from Iasi to Bucharest by train, to cover between approximately 300 miles on each journey, would have taken me over 11 hours each way; and driving would have been exhausting as I was planning to sleep and rest on the night trains.

- **30th September 2019, Monday:** I contacted the participants and met them to hand over the cameras. I chose to save the time for each participant and went where was the most convenient for them (their offices, their homes, neighbors), but it was challenging for me to travel from one location to another, considering the distances and the traffic, and also the time spent with each participant. In total I have had 15 meetings in the first two days.

- **1st October, Tuesday:** I realised that the most popular and trustworthy photography shop in the city would not be able to develop and print out the photographs in less than two weeks.

- As an alternative I have offered an instant camera to the next participants instead of a single-use one. At the same time, and I had to find a solution for those who had already received the single-use cameras, as to where to process the photographs in time for the interviews.

- **2nd October, Wednesday:** Through a recommendation, I found a shop that was able to process the photographs in two days. Thus, it would be Thursday after 6pm when I could have the photographs, with Thursday, Friday and Saturday to conduct the interviews. I was running out of time, and I started to consider the option of conducting the interviews via Skype.

- **3rd October, Thursday**: I have interviewed four participants, (it would have been good to have remembered that 'afternoon' in Romania meant more like 'after 5pm' or after they would finish the workday).

- **4th October, Friday:** I have interviewed two participants. Fortunately, I have managed to complete all the interviews that I planned, but I am also thinking of using Skype for next PEIs.

- **5th October, Saturday:** I finished this first field trip and arrived back home just before midnight.

- It is important to underline that there may be questioning by the airport security about a bag full of photographic equipment, and for this, I have had prepared the following, in case they required further explanation: documentation of the research, a printed copy of the ethics which was approved by the university and my student ID card.

I planned this field trip inspired by models such as Knowles and Black, and also recalling, from my own previous experience, about the possible challenges that I may encounter specific to Romania and being back in Romania after ten years. I expected that the models I have referenced so far, and after ten years away, aspects with which I was once familiar may be different during my field trip, and this led me to reflect on different options (which camera may be the most appropriate, when and where to meet people, what people's beliefs are on the visual arts, whether it is seen as a serious approach, and whether they would think that it is worth their time), and also to think how much the wolf image that I have experienced meets my expectations as I remember from my childhood.

How I have used the pictures to elicit the dialogue. It is not only the photographs that speak for themselves, but it is the dialogue and the articulation that builds on the meaning of the photographic image.

Two approaches I have used to photograph for the PEIs method - single use cameras and instant photographs. Here I summarise the aspects of the PEIs that I conducted during my sessions. Each participant was to work individually with a photographic camera and with a limited number of photographs to be taken (approximately 20). This allowed participants to manage their available frames, as well as making them more frugal with images and potentially making them question whether it was worth taking the photograph. Participants where not to be able to see the image after the photographic act, letting the imagination and

the expectation work differently to the experience with a digital camera. Each participant was to work with their own photographs. After printing, they had the possibility of looking at them as prints on the photographic paper, to arrange them in order of events or in relation to each other, as well as selecting three of them and arranging them in the order of how they may potentially work to be shown to other people. Each participant was to discuss each photograph, and by doing this each could experience how to talk about their own photographs and how to articulate the significance and meaning of a photograph.

Eight participants used the single-use camera, my preferred option, and four used the instant cameras, using this second method only due to not having other option. With the instant camera, the photographs were produced in about two minutes each, which could have been an advantage, but the participant could look at the photographs and in addition the photographs produced are unique and cannot be duplicated or enlarged. In order to keep the unknown of the photographs produced intact, I have asked the participants to put each photograph away without looking at the images, but this I could not control. Using any of these two methods, each participant produced their own photographic images, and I analysed the associations and compositions created by them, as they contextualised during the interviews.

Even though they share similarities and common aspects, each interview has its own personality, and its own distinction. The preferred option (as I have initially planned) was to give people instant cameras, to collect them, to print the photographs out and then to conduct the interviews. One of the participants forgot the camera that I give to him, (he wanted to take pictures in the village where he spent his most of his childhood) and the only solution was to use the instant camera (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Adi D. Participant, Brasov, November 2019
The still life object is the Romanian
Orthodox Calendar in the kitchen

Another situation in which I have used the instant camera was when, on two different occasions, the participants were happy to contribute, and to take a picture of what the wolf represented for them and they answered to the interview questions but without being recorded. I have the photographs and I have the images with the objects used to represent the wolf from their imaginations. Regarding the last two participants who used the instant cameras when in Bucharest, I have learned later that developing the negatives and printing the pictures out would take approximately two weeks.

The research made the participants very curious. This also made me talk about the research, aims and objectives. In addition, it was for them to understand viability of the research, and also whether it was a serious project. This way, talking with each participant was a good exercise for me, learning more about what was important for them to know and how much, and also to be even more specific and clear. These discussions about my research it seemed to be an introductory stage of the PEI, with the role of enabling the participants to trust that it was worth spending their effort and time with me.

There were two aspects, my passion for conducting the research, which often less obvious that was important for participants, but also their passion, for the participants themselves to be motivated about the project, including the reasons behind it and why they would be involved, as well as how their contribution would be valued, which was more important for them than it was for me. Many of the meetings would have included drinking and eating, as this is the custom in Romania to show welcome and gratitude, but I have set a rule of excluding this. My motivation was that this was well planned and agreed so the interviews could be conducted when fully conscious, thus controlled and deliberate. This also, worked well and was not received as an act of disrespect, as I feared. It worked well because I showed that I am very serious and respect the ethical rules of the research. Moreover, because I had one meeting one after another, I have had the reasonable excuse not to have lunch and to drink after each session.

The initial objective was to go on three separate field trips to Romania to collect data from 20 participants. It was my intention to have a balanced number of men and women. It was important that the participants were aged over 18 years and it was preferable to have diverse age groups, including parents and grandparents and younger ages relating to the new generation, those who have the potential to transmit the Romanian stories to future generations. I managed to conduct all 20 interviews during my first field trip by the end of November 2019. This indicated that after the next two field trips, in February and May 2020, I

would have much more data to work with than initially planned. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 lockdown, I have had to cancel these two last trips; however, this did not affect the research as I had already collected the data from the 20 participants during my first field trip, as originally planned.

By the end of February 2020, I had conducted the last three PEIs online via WhatsApp. After conducting all the PEIs, I realised that the overwhelming amount of data I had collected (photographs, video and audio interviews, my own experience and reflections) needed to be prepared for photographic analysis. This would involve curating the photographs, transcribing and translating the interviews, and preparing data for analysis.
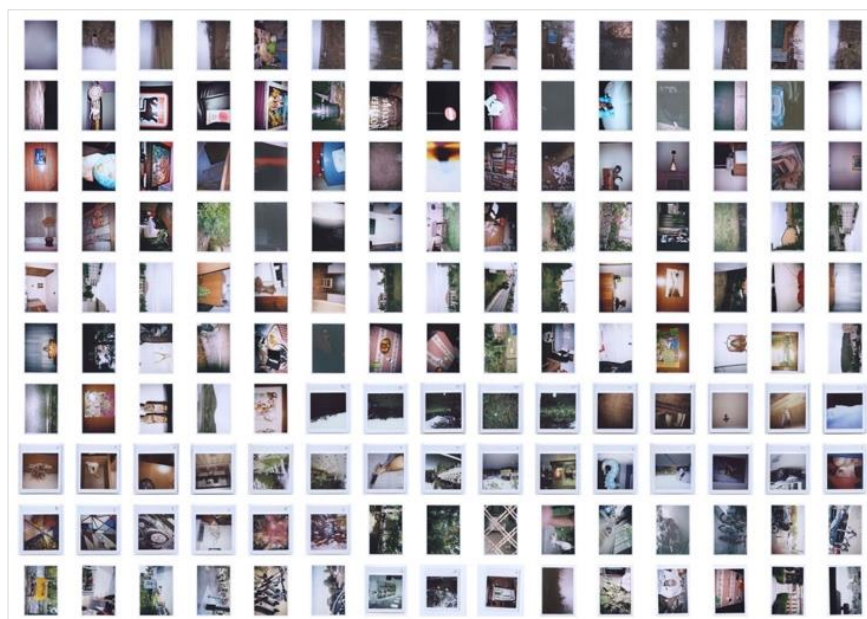
Figure 3.6. Contact sheet 1 of 2 with photographs produced by the
photo-elicitation participants, November 2019 Romania

Looking at over 220 photographs together to find the story was a challenge. I arranged all the photographs together on a contact sheet (Figure 3.6) and analysed them as a whole; however, I believe that this could have changed the experience and potentially the understanding of each participant's insight. There were 22 interviews with more than 600 hours of video and audio to transcribe and review for narratives, (Figure 3.7 - documentation of a PEI session). From all the various stories and photographs, I have selected three myths with 16 photographs to present them. I have not rejected the others, but I would prefer to emphasise the finding of unexpected insights, which is one of my research objectives, and well-known narratives of the wolf in Romanian culture with its common story.

Figure 3.7. PEI session, Brasov Romania, November 2019

There is a linearity within my PEI structure aligned with my research, and for this I asked what is iconic, symbolic and indexical. This is how I have designed the main questions of the semi-structured PEIs: 'What is this object in the photograph?' 'What does this photograph represent for you?' and 'What does this photograph make you feel?' To retain this linearity, I have selected the three myths and discussed the photographs. I have investigated different ways to present and analyse these myths by experimenting with various platforms, including NVivo, an online blog, a photo documentary and public exhibitions in that order, and I concluded that the most appropriate method was to create a photo documentary. At this stage of my research, to analyse the data with its linearity, I understood that it was more coherent to make a video that runs from a starting point to an end. Initially, I looked at the data to find common themes based on words and meanings.

The interviews were conducted in Romanian language and the meaning of the answers was often represented by groups of words; therefore, it was difficult to use the word map from NVivo for this stage. I have postponed making the blog available online as I believe that it would be the right platform to present the interim outcomes and the interviews curated. I was more interested in finding a way to curate and analyse the PEIs. I also realised that it may be more appropriate for this project to include something specific from my own practice to present to the general public, aligned with participants' contributions, which I should be working on in the next research stages. Finally, two public exhibits and installations were ready but were postponed due to the Covid-19 lockdown, which meant that the making of a video documentary was the most appropriate method to curate, analyse and, ultimately, present the work.

3.2. Photo documentary

3.2.1   Rationale and steps undertaken for making a photo documentary

After the photo-elicitation interviews (PEI), there was a phase in my research when I realised that the overwhelming amount of data I had collected (photographs, video and audio interviews, my own experience and reflections) needed to be prepared for photographic analysis. Looking at over 220 photographs together in order to see the story as a whole was quite challenging. I could have printed the photographs in a smaller A0 size, but I believe that may have changed the experience and potentially the understanding. There were 22 interviews with more than 600 hours of video and audio to transcribe[13] and review for narratives.

I used a similar linearity with the PEI structure to create the photo documentary. Again, I asked what is iconic, symbolic and indexical: What is this object in the photograph? What does this photograph represent for you? and What does this photograph make you feel? I have selected the three myths and discusses the photographs (Figure 3.8).
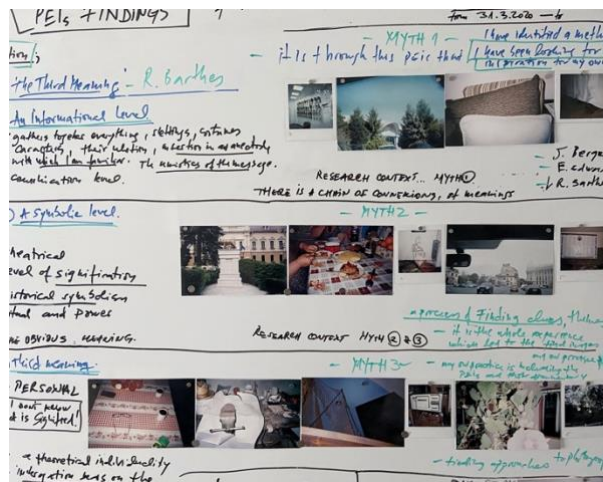
Figure 3.8. Alexandru Modoi. Whiteboard sketches and notes about
all three sets, is-iconic, represents-symbolic and feels indexical, Chester UK.

After identifying the myths and selecting the photographs, the first step in creating the photo documentary was to upload the photographs and their narratives into the video editor. This action made me reflect on the order of the photographs to be presented. When the photo documentary was published for the general audience, I realised that I had started with the

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[13] I used 'Simon Says' software. It was a very useful application. Even so, I have had to rewrite every transcription. The Romanian language is not fully working with the transcription software yet from Romanian to English.

middle part, followed by the conclusion, my own narrative and lastly, the introduction. This was not my initial plan for my first video of this type.

Looking at the photographs in order in one specific time period helped me to see the work in a different way by making me think about the fluency of the narratives (Figure 3.9). The order of appearance of the photographs in the movie became an important element in re-imagining the myths as they were told and experienced during the PEIs and aligning the narrative with the research structure.
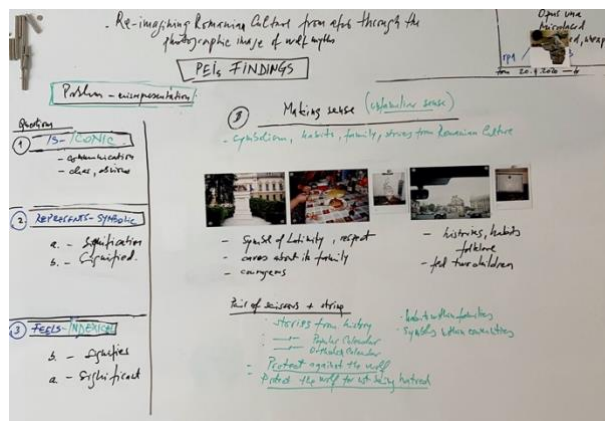
Figure 3.9. Alexandru Modoi. Represents-symbolic, whiteboard sketches and notes, Chester UK.

The long process and detailed attention to the habits and folklore of the Romanian culture was needed to reach my research objectives of finding new ways of working with photography and new insights that aligned with a photographic practice in order to re-imagine an ethnographic experience. This process gave me an understanding of a different way to curate a project because a video starts from one point and ends at another. Making this photo documentary helped me to look at the primary data repetitively and to curate it with a beginning and an end. The end point is actually the starting point of my next objective of conducting my own photographic experiments guided by the findings of the PEIs.

Video documentary link: https://youtu.be/vLdqT9Dcbpo

Creating a photo documentary[14] and designing and conducting PEIs helped me to identifying a way to expand the photographic methods of finding objects within my field[15], which includes the works of Morehshin Allahyari, David Penny, Wang Preston and Olivier Richon. The central method consists of finding the object(s) to photograph, producing the visual work and presenting the photograph as the final result. In my case, the first stage of finding object(s) implied a pre-finding stage that is essential. I designed the initial PEI sessions and then the various participants found their own objects and narratives through photography. Participants were given instructions about the specific theme, and then we discussed their findings during the individual PEI sessions. I would not see the objects or know their associated stories until the photographs were produced and printed on paper. I ultimately found my own objects only by revisiting the PEI sessions and working on the photo documentary[16]. While the PEIs reflected on the *pre-finding stage*, the making of the photo documentary reflected on producing and presenting the findings by expanding the initial stages.

After identifying the myths and selecting the photographs, the first step in creating the photo documentary was to upload the photographs and their narratives into the video editor. This action made me reflect on the order of the photographs to be presented and was according to the research structure I wanted to highlight. Once the photo documentary was published for the general audience, I realised that I had started with the middle part, which was followed by the conclusion, my own narrative and, finally, the introduction, which was not my initial plan. Moreover, making a short documentary for my first video was a completely new method. Looking at the photographs in a specific order for a set period of time, one photograph after another, helped me to see the work in a different way and made me reflect on the fluency of the narrative and how other people would understand it (Figure 3.10). The order in which the photographs were shown in the film became an important element in re-imagining the myths, as they were told and experienced during the PEIs and it was equally important that they were aligned with the narrative and the research structure.

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[14] This was my first time making a photo documentary, learning how to make a script, putting together information, working with audio and recording my own narratives. I have made moving-image videos of up to 3 minutes long before, but this is a different method.
[15] They have used finding objects and association meanings from ethnical and cultural contexts to bring their own creations and understanding to the general public but without the PEI and video documentary processes. These primary data processes and their outcomes are embedded in the artists' produced works.
[16] 'Wolf Myths draft 12' represents the progress involved in making the documentary.
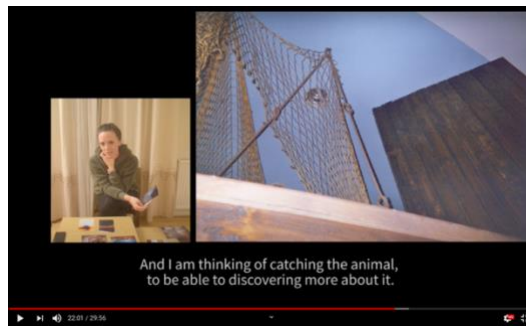
Figure 3.10. Still from the video documentary. April 2020
Link: https://youtu.be/vLdqT9Dcbpo

The editing process took a long time, and this reminded me of with the slow-media photography.[17] Furthermore, attention to the details of the narratives of the habits, beliefs and folklore from Romanian culture was required to achieve the research objectives of finding new insights that can be aligned with a photographic practice to re-imagine an ethnographic experience[18] and potentially finding new ways of working with photography. This process gave me an understanding of a different way to curate a project since a video starts from one point and ends at another. It helped me to look at the primary data repetitively and to select a beginning and an end as mentioned previously, the end point is actually the starting point of my next objective of conducting my own photographic experiments guided by the findings of the PEIs, and the documentary helps to introduce this. Working with the technical aspects of editing a short documentary, I have seen that it is easy to add new content, audio or photographs without realising that the length and the overall editing times involved may easily increase. Therefore, my initial purpose was to keep the film as short as possible without omitting anything from the main story. This also made me reflect constantly on the overall story, which is related to the ethnographic experience in Romania, to determine the cultural findings and achieve the research goals. Moreover, this helped me to stay focused on the point and to present it at the right time in the video (Figure 3.11). It was easy to add more to a video; however, playing it again from the beginning helped me to see possible fractures in my storyline.

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[17] Slow-media photography refers to the methods that require extra time, different to digital photography, such as working with negatives, being limited by the number of pictures that can be photographed, then using darkrooms or other dedicated print-making workshops to produce the photograph. This may provide additional time to reflect on other contextual aspects of the project.
[18] A set of photographs with the participants' captions is included in the Appendix 4, p. 106.

Figure 3.11. Still from the video documentary, April 2020.
Presenting the PEIs structure.

Working with NVivo to find keywords and common or original themes was quite difficult as I could not find the meanings when looking for just words. As I mentioned above, the meanings were often phrases in the wider context, which could not be found in word maps or transcriptions. Using video with audio, telling the stories and showing related images, made the curating of the narrative much more efficient. I managed to find themes that may help in the next research stages, such as 'it changes its fur', 'a danger', 'respect through fear' or 'is afraid of fire'. In addition, following the order of the photo documentary, I have written the narrative as a poem, which follows the narrative and my own experience from Romania (Modoi, 2020).[19]

The production of the first photograph which is also the final part of the photo documentary, a pair of scissors tied closed with string (Figure 3.12), is discussed in the photo documentary through my own narrative document. It reflects on the whole experience from the beginning of the narrative and introduces the iconic aspect within the photograph, going through the symbolic aspect and, finally, the indexical aspect of the photographic image. I have gained a better understanding of the overall work produced by the participants. This only happened when an early draft of the photo documentary was presented to obtain feedback, and I concluded that my own photograph may improve the coherence within the documentary. For my photography practice worked to unlock a creative process of producing new photograph and for the video to support the whole narrative.

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[19] A list of themes I have extracted from the interviews is included in the Appendix 5, p. 114.
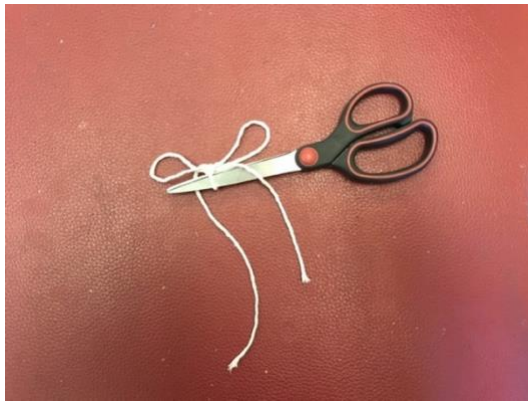
Figure 3.12. Alexandru Modoi. Work in progress, Chester, 2020,
Later, the work has been named 'Does it eat fruit?
Using words from the participants

Another outcome was the introduction of my own practice. For this stage, a new process in my own practice was employed – the process of recording my own thoughts and presenting them with both audio and video. The technical aspect of producing the records had an emotional aspect as it involves listening to and looking at your own performance. This helped me to refine my own comments not only by adjusting how to speak and deciding whether my gestures were appropriate, but also, more importantly, whether I had said what I intended to and how I had said it. At first, I preferred the shorter recordings of myself, which led me to be as short and specific as possible. Later, once I started to build some confidence,[20] I understood that some additional details could be introduced as long as they would support the main narrative and could help to clarify aspects of my own practice. Initially, the main focus was on only the outcomes of the PEIs; however, this changed to focus on how my own practice has been guided by the PEIs.

The participants' feedback was positive, stating that they felt happy about taking part. They also said that they were very pleased with the photo documentary, that their story counts, and that a different portrait of Romania is available for the general public. There is a general sense of wellbeing. Bratchford (2018) states that he reflected on how his project could involve photo-elicitation with a focus group. After collecting the feedback on the individual sessions from the participants, I saw that there may be differences between the focus groups and individual PEIs, which I should discuss later in my research, also including Back's work in this analysis (2007).

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[20] I had similar feeling as I was making my self-portrait.

3.2.2. Outcomes of the photo documentary

To conclude on this point, the photo documentary helped me to understand the people's photographs and guided me in the identification of the wider context of their stories within the Romanian culture from the stage of finding objects through all of the stages including the stage of presenting them. The photographic method was widened by the combination of preparing and conducting PEIs and making a photo documentary.

Photo-entanglement has become evident, editing the narrative and its sequences containing images and stories. At this stage, it was important to identify which photograph belongs to each interpretation and translate and clearly interpret the Romanian language into the English language, integrating the intonations and accents. Creating this documentary strengthened my belief that a photographic image and its ethnographic input by the participants would constitute the primary data and represent a truthful value collected directly from people. Discussing the image in the context of the participants' insights from their culture and establishing the indexical meaning of a photograph is essential in editing for both to be preserved and misunderstandings and misrepresentation can be avoided.

The outcome from working with NVivo to find keywords and common or original themes was quite difficult because I could not find the meanings when looking just for words. As I have mentioned it above, the meanings were often a set of words in a larger context, which could not be found in word maps or transcriptions. Using video editing made the curating much more efficient and enjoyable. I have managed to find the themes, such as 'it changes its fur', 'a danger', 'respect through fear' or 'is afraid of fire'. In addition, following the order of the photo documentary, the narrative and my own experiences from Romania, I inspired me to write the narrative (Figure 3.13) as a poem with words from the participants.
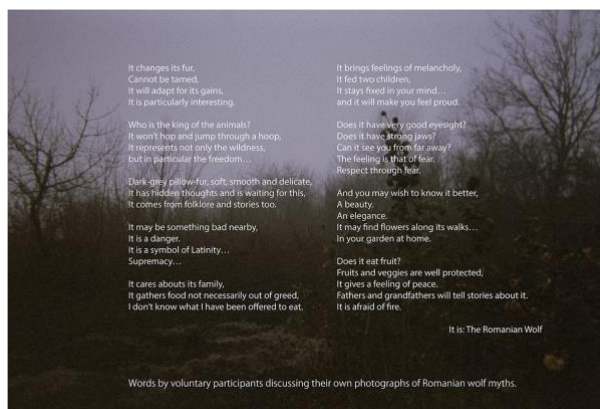
Figure 3.13. *The Collective Story*
Words by voluntary participants discussing their own photographs.
Presented in the video documentary and in public exhibition.

One of the outcomes was that the making of the video documentary has led me to produce the first photograph, a pair of scissors tied closed with a string, (Figure 3.12, *Does it have strong jaws?).* From reflecting on the whole experience from the beginning of the narrative referring to the iconic within the photography, going through the symbolic and lastly, the indexical aspect, I have a better understanding of the overall work produced by the participants and my own photograph.

This ultimately led me to identify one of my interim findings relating to misrepresentation— the indexical meaning in determining what an object is in a photographic image. Working with photographs and their meaning at the indexical level when making the photo documentary, I have discovered that some details in the photograph are less important than the personal meaning and the narrative itself to be accurate. After the documentary was completed, the finding of a potential understanding of my key problem was that misrepresentation of the photographs may occur at the indexical level of the photographic narrative.

Another outcome was the introduction of my own practice. For this stage a new process in my own practice was implied—the process of recording my own thoughts with both audio and video and presenting them. The part of the technical aspect of having the records produced had an emotional aspect, because implied listening to and looking at my own performance. This helped me to refine my own comments not only by adjusting how to speak and deciding if my gestures were appropriate but more importantly whether I had said what I intended, and how. At the beginning, as I had mentioned, I had preferred the shorter recordings of myself, which led me to be as short and specific as possible. Later, once I started to build some confidence, I understood that some details could be introduced as long as they stayed on the main narrative and could help to clarify aspects of my own practice. Initially, the main focus was on only the PEIs outcomes, but this has changed to focus on how my own practice has been guided by PEIs.

My initial purpose was to stay as short as possible without omitting anything from the main story. This also made me constantly reflect on the overall story, question the ethnographic experience in Romania, determine the cultural findings and reach the research goals. Moreover, this helped me to stay focused on the point and to present it at the right time in the video. It was easy to add more to a video, but playing it again from the beginning made me see possible fractures in my storyline. The photo documentary helped me understanding how to better approach the autoethnographic method, approach which is one of the next objectives.

Editing for a long time was exhausting. However, undertaking one small task after another helped me to add all the parts together. Also, I have had time to reflect longer over each part often asking myself if this is a relevant and necessary addition. Revisiting the video and looking for one aspect to correct makes it easy to omit other ones like typos, sounds and transitions while at the same time identifying others to edit. This helped me to develop my own method of finding and editing the video. It works similarly to slow media in photography. By taking the time to look for details, I have actually saved time in building the main storyline.

3.3 Interviews in the UK

The next stage involved discussions with British people in the UK about the wolf myths from Romanian culture. I have adopted a similar approach to that used for the semi-structured interviews conducted in Romania, including finding participants and designing the structure and interview questions. For the interviews in the UK, I have not used the photographs produced by the participants as it was my intention to be guided by their imagination from their unconscious, and my role was to determine what objects I should photograph. By working with people in the UK, it was my intention to apply my new knowledge from Romania, in a new situation.

This stage of the research led me back to reflect from where I started — at the Grosvenor Museum looking again at the tombstone of the Dacian warrior. On this occasion, not only to reflect on my childhood experiences and the recent ethnographic photo-elicitations in Romania, but also to conduct interviews with people from the UK and learn about their views regarding the wolf myths. It was also to introduce myself as a Romanian, let people know that, that this object has influenced my research and that I would like to present aspects from my own culture and learn about those from people from the UK.

One of my aims was to identify and to find guidance from potential differences and similarities between the stories from Romania and those of the UK. This has not only, collected interview data for this research, but potentially represents the start of my autoethnographic process, a process which I discussed in the next chapter. I had to consider questions such as how I would introduce myself, which wolf myths from Romanian culture I would present, and where Romania is located. I have had to prepare the answers in a way that is clear and concise and would inspire people to discuss their own views.

Considering the COVID-19 restrictions in the Grosvenor Museum Chester (two metres distance, 15-minute intervals between visitors and the duration of the whole visit in the museum), I had to choose to conduct short interviews of approximately three to five minutes each. During the interviews, I learned that the limited time was the main inconvenience, and people were interested in participating in and discussing the wolf myths and stories. On the other hand, this simplified the structure of the interviews, as the discussions were focused on only three questions.

The three questions I asked in the interviews were:

Q1. What do you feel when thinking about a wolf?

Q2. Do you know any myths or stories about wolves?

Q3. Do you know where Romania is?

The participants were happy to contribute and discuss the wolf myths. They were presented with the tombstone, one of the Grosvenor Museum's highly valued objects, by myself, a Romanian who found inspiration in that object to start a PhD research, and has particular views of a native culture, including those of wolf myths. The image of the warrior riding a horse and holding a standard made of the head of a wolf. This made me re-image my own experiences living in Romania; it has been motivating to discuss it and reflect upon how I will conduct my autoethnographic process (Pink, 2007).

I conducted 16 interviews with 21 participants. Most of the participants visited the museum in groups of two or three people; therefore, I had the chance to collect answers from each of them simultaneously. One of the advantages was that one person inspired the other; therefore, the discussions became constructive and positive. This was contrary to the photo-elicitation interviews in Romania, where each participant had one-to-one sessions, offering privacy and the ability to distance themselves from their surroundings. The participants were approached in a public space, at a time when personal space and distance are much valued following the COVID-19 rules. This may have led to difficulty in obtaining a positive interest in discussing my questions, but the cultural setting of the museum, the subject, and ultimately not being alone could have influenced this outcome of 21 participants being interviewed.

Words collected table 2:

1. Feelings about a wolf: fear; scavenger; danger; fierce.
2. Myths, stories related to a wolf: Red Riding Hood; Three Little Pigs; werewolf; horse's wolf-tooth.
3. Where Romania is: Eastern Europe; near Russia/Ukraine.

Table 2: Words collected from the interviews in the UK

	Feelings	**Myths/stories**	**Where Romania is**
Participant 1	Nervous; I would not want to see one for real; Lovely creature, pretty.	Little Red Riding Hood; Three Little Pigs; (you do as you told, wolves are dangerous).	Not really,
Participant 2	Hunter; Survival, (it become friend with the man).	White Fang;	Around Germany, near Yugoslavia and Russia
Participant 3 and 4	Vicious wild animal; I would be excited to see one Rome, Romulus and Remus.	Little Red Riding Hood; Romulus and Remus.	We've been to Romania, Danube Delta, Transylvania and many other cities
Participant 5 and 6	Predatory; Danger, fierce.	I don't think so… Nothing right now…	South East Europe, Underneath Hungary, Ukraine
Participant 7	Fascinating; Vicious; Very protective.	I can't remember now… Call of the wild (movie)	Vaguely, Easter Europe
Participant 8 and 9	Scavenger; Looking after itself, looking for food. Not friendly;	Little Red Riding Hood; Three Little Pigs	Yes, we have a Rumanian dog. Near Bulgaria
Participant 10 and 11	Predator; Large fierce; Wild animal	Still can be friendly; I don't know. Little Riding Hood Three little Pigs Call of the wild (movie)	South of Europe, I don't know Near Hungary
Participant 12 and 13	Very protective pack; Always stronger together; Hunt together. I don't know	Not really; The boy who cried wolf 'You keep crying wolf'	Not, I don't know
Participant 14	I am comfortable about the wolf, It will be nice to be released in the wild in	Not really, There are poems always regarded as evil.	Not really

	Scotland, as they are considering		
Participant 15 and 16	Beautiful creatures, Wild animal	Fairy tales, Little Red Riding Hood Romulus and Remus, two abandon children, Mowgli, Jungle Book	Easter Europe, East of Poland.
Participant 17	Powerful animal, Frightening	I can't remember now,	Eastern Europe,
Participant 18	I feel anxious about wolves, Suspicious, Fictitious, we don't really know if they exist or not Charactered badly, Being black	Aesop fables; Keep the wolves of the doors	Yes, Central Europe,
Participant 19	Alsatian dogs, German shepherds; I think they a great My old dog used to look like a wolf	Not really; Werewolves; American Werewolf; London Werewolf.	Eastern Europe
Participant 20	Beautiful, pleasing symbol Old, Still today very similar how it was in the past, Fierce wolf which turns up in the winter – Eastern countries Cutie animal portrayed here in some books The real wolf is between these two	Little Red Riding Hood; Peter and the Wolf - I think is Tchaikovsky's. (Sergei Prokofiev) Three Little Pigs; The horse's Wolf-tooth/teeth;	I can pinpoint it on the map;
Participant 21	Something wild and ferocious, Also, Elegant, Mysterious	I can't think of a myth, The boy who cried wolf The wolf is a danger	I do, I have been there into Transylvania.

Reflecting on the process, on what went well, and on what I may going to change next time, I have a feeling of confidence that sessions worked well for this research purpose. If I would conduct similar interviews, I would repeat it, aiming that the discussion be no shorter than five minutes. This would leave extra time for the participants to ask questions or to reflect a bit longer. Three or four minutes were sufficient to collect the answers and give the participants feedback, but I feel that just when they started having more confidence, the interviews had to

be stopped. There may be other similar interventions in the museum, and this approach can be a model of five minutes of short discussions about a selected object.

Regarding the purpose of the photographic process, this guided me on what to portray with my photographs in order to respond to what they would identify with a wolf or otherwise. Compared to the themes of the interviews I conducted in Romania, there are some aspects such as courage, majesty, pride or wildness, which were not mentioned by any of my participants. Portraying these would potentially show images that were not chosen or seen by my interviewees here in the UK. Moreover, some of the participants showed an interest in learning about foreign cultures, including wolf myths from Romanian culture, developing the idea that the Romanian folklore and habits can be portrayed here in the UK. This can offer a much broader view of the wolf from Romania and introduce Romanian culture through its folklore and myths. If the wolf itself as a wild animal may not be well seen by the participants from the UK, the stories, myths and in particular related to the Romanian culture were of a greater interest.

3.4   Interim findings, Discussions and Conclusions

1. The importance of the indexical meaning in determining the nature of what an object is in a photograph and how this can be a significant cause of misunderstanding the re-imagining of the narrative of an object in a photograph was discovered.

2. A photo-entanglement exist between a photograph and its indexical meaning. It was found that the photographic image and its narrative are entangled. All the photographs produced for the PEIs had meanings attached. This was discovered by using disciplinary and interdisciplinary photographic methods. Simplifying the iconic meaning of a photographic image at the iconic level can lead to multiple interpretations, and the indexical meaning can be misrepresented.

3. Widening the process of photographing objects, including conducting PEIs and making a photo documentary and the interviews in the UK, provided a deeper understanding of the issues involved in creating and interpreting a photographic image. This led to the realisation that looking beyond one's own specialism can lead to a better understanding of one's own practice since relying on a single perspective can be too limiting.

4. The experience of the PEIs combined with making a photo documentary helped me to realise how these ethnographic approaches can lead to gaining new insights into a

culture. This approach would inform my creative practice during the next stages, including adopting an autoethnographic approach and presenting the findings through photography.

5. Most of the Romanians I have met for this project were happy to share their stories with their folklore and traditions, especially since this material was being used to create a portrait to help redress the negative image experienced by many Romanians in the UK.

CHAPTER IV – CREATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The aim of this research remained the same. From the beginning of this research, I have changed aspects of my practice from a concern of the 3D reproduction from photographs of the objects, including the artifacts, to a creative practice led by visual ethnography and its narratives.

I intend to find new photographic ways of re-imagining Romanian culture through disciplinary and interdisciplinary photographic methods and to identify possible entangled situations. I also plan to evolve a new photographic practice that allows me to engage with diverse methods, such as visual ethnography and producing a documentary.

I intend to offer a new image/portrait of Romanian culture through its wolf mythologies and to redress a prejudiced view of Romanian culture to build better relations between the Romanian and British people. From the PEIs experiences, I similarly applied the method to the autoethnographic process to contribute to the image of Romanian culture, and I prepared a public exhibition to offer the new portrait.

4.1. Final preparations for autoethnographic and producing my own photographs

This chapter discusses how I have produced a portfolio of photographs of still life objects to represent my understanding of the PEIs in Romania and the interviews in the UK. The portfolio contains photographs of still life objects printed on photographic paper. In seeking answers to how to photograph the indexical meaning and how to re-imagine a narrative through photography, my aim is to emphasise the significance of the photograph as a physical object, and present it in a public exhibition. It is also my intention to explore how photographing objects together, and how the relationship between them can make the indexical meaning of a photographic image clearer.

As this research developed through its next stages, I have revisited some of the photographs from the PEIs in Romania, and I have prepared a set of photographs to accompany the analysis of my research findings and methods. This supportive material shows different ways people used to photograph objects and the documentation of the PEIs. This assisted me not only in further analysis, but also in further presentations of the research to public audiences. For

example, after photographing the missing object in Figure 4.1, the participant discussed a statue of a she-wolf, which was missing but was clearly present in his memory from his childhood experiences. The participant had positive feelings about the stories and the significance Romanians attach to the she-wolf statue. It is in a still form from the video documentary and contains the photograph the participant was discussing about an object, the missing statue, and the documentation of the PEI session with the photographs placed on the table.
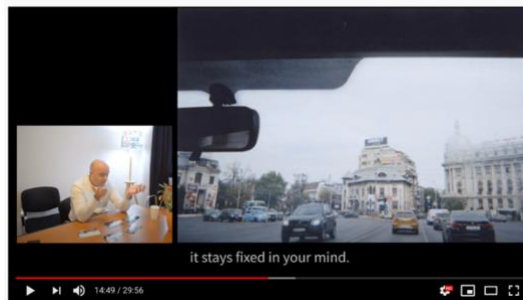
Figure 4.1. Photo by Rudolf F., Bucharest, Romania, 2019.

PEI video-recorded transcript: Photograph number two, The Roman Square, brings me feelings of melancholy... and if I think of that wolf, that she-wolf represented by the statue, it would rather be a feeling of pride and recognition.

In another example shown in Figure 4.2, the participant photographed the Romanian Orthodox Calendar in his grandmother's kitchen. He discussed the folklore and knowledge he gained from his grandparents about the wolf that lives in the wood near their home. The calendar contains various habits related to how to cohabit with the wolves based on the heritage and religious beliefs. As the participant stated, although people rarely meet the wolf face to face, there are objects such as this calendar that are visible in their daily life which remind them about various stories, including those about the Romanian wolf living near their house.

It is the missing object that was photographed in Figure 4.1; however, it was present in the memory of the photographer, with the photograph helping to recall his childhood experiences through a short visual analysis of the place itself, the presence of the buildings, the structure of the roads, and the familiarity of the place as the participant goes to his job nearby. Conversely, in Figure 4.2, the object visible in the photograph is the calendar referring to various myths and habits. In both examples, the wolf is present in their lives and in Romanian culture.

Figure 4.2. Photo by Adrian D.,
Bran-Brasov, Romania, 2019.

Figure 4.3. Alexandru Modoi.
The Orthodox Calendar in the kitchen,
Chester, UK, 2020

Here the participant associated the wolf with the Orthodox calendar because, and believes that especially for Romanians, the wolf is present both in the national history and in the Orthodox religion. His feelings about the wolf in this photograph are that Romanian people were always afraid of it and they combatted this fear through their beliefs and the Orthodox religion. Inspired from this approach (Figure 4.2), I have asked for copy of the Romanian Orthodox Calendar from my relatives in Romania in order to have easier access to the folklore and religious days, especially those related to the wolf (Figure 4.3).

At this stage of my research, I have video recorded PEIs, including the participants photographs and their stories. I also have a photo documentary that gives me inspiration of a narrative and an understanding of how to potentially present my own stories. Lastly, I have interviews with people from the UK, reflecting on the idea of wolf myths and stories, and feedback from my PhD colleagues, friends and the supervisory team, reflecting on the interim findings and the photographic methods.

There are two main stages in producing the photographs. The first one was finding and identifying myths and their associated photographic image from my memories. The second stage was to reproduce this through still life photographic images. This stage also includes finding the objects and the background and establishing the relationship between them. Therefore, the process was to choose the myth, find the object to represent it and only when the image was taken and seen physically on the screen or printed on the paper, was ready for the final revision. In this last step, I compared and checked that aspects from my own experience are entirely and accurately represented in the photographic image.

Finding and identifying myths involved recalling experiences from my childhood up to the age of 30, before I moved to the UK. These experiences included lessons and traditions learned from my grandparents and their friends as I often used to stay over during our summer and winter school vacations. They also included my own experiences into the nature through mountaineering and exploring different areas in Romania. This included wild camping, meeting local people from remote areas, as well as meeting and talking with shepherds and wild animal hunters and sharing experiences with other people who also enjoy exploring nature.

Considering my own re-enacted memories, I have made a list of myths and life experiences. These are focused on two main aspects, one related to the wild forest and its natural habitat and the second one related to the aspect of the house, farm and family that need to be protected. Some examples of how a house could be protected, a string of garlic used to be hung on the window, food was not left outside, fire was used to light up all the gate and doors from the barns used to be double checked that they were closed. People also paid attention to ensure the animals were not distressed during the night. Other examples for cohabiting with nature include not travelling at night-time; finding a place to camp in advance, preferably on an open field by a river; lighting a fire; not following animals in the forest; listening to nature; staying on the known route; and staying away from caves and dark places. These often are subject for stories, fables and traditions to be shared and experienced to this day.
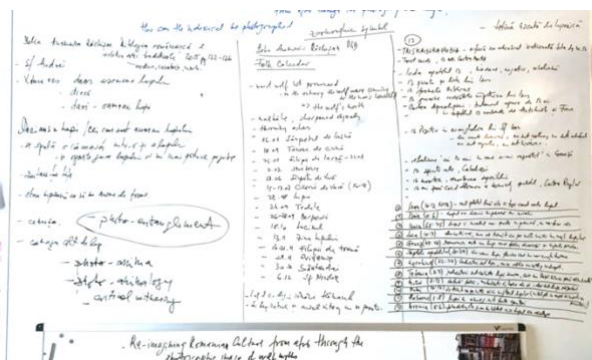
Figure 4.4. Alexandru Modoi. Whiteboard sketches and lists about wolf myths, Chester UK, 2020

Having established the list in my mind and discussed and presented it to my friends and supervisory team, I looked for some additional information in the works of Delia Răchișan (2017) and Vasile Pârvan (1928) for details about folklore and histories related to the wolf myths and histories in the Romanian culture (Figure 4.4). I also looked at stories and fables from folklore, such as *Capra cu trei iezi – The Goat with three kids* by Ion Creangă; *Miorita – The little Ewe*, an old pastoral ballad; and fables by Grigore Alexandrescu. In addition, I looked at stories about wolves portrayed here in the UK, including works by Jack London (1981) and

Neil Jordan (1984). Through this stage of reviewing aspects from my culture and learning new potential ones from the UK, I have found the inspiration to start producing my own photographs for this autoethnographic approach.

4.2. The creative process and producing a portfolio of photographs

Having already produced my first photograph during the production process of the photo documentary *Does it have strong jaws?* and having a positive feeling that this may be the way to work with still life objects for my stories, I started looking for my next photograph (Figure 4.5). It was my intention to reflect upon different ways of presenting the photographs in relation to the size scales; the original object compared with that in the photograph; the order of being visible either in a book, an exhibition or online; and the environment where the public would access the photographs. Potentially, there may be differences that influence how the photographic meaning is transmitted. Berger's (1972) ways of seeing and Benjamin's (2008) mechanical reproduction theory suggest that there may be different ways of working visually with the photographs at the iconic and indexical levels, and my aim was to ascertain how this applies to this specific practice of re-imagining Romanian culture through the photographic image of wolf myths.

Figure 4.5. Alexandru Modoi. *It may be something bad nearby,* Chester, 2020

The preparatory stage, which included interviews, the production of the photo documentary and revisiting some wolf stories, not only helped me to establish some of the wolf themes but also helped me to identify how to start from the photography perspective. Similar to the themes about wolf myths, I have made a list of photography themes, including misplaced object, missing object or surreal associations between still life objects. Bate discusses the importance of looking at photographic images objectively, including when the still life object is missing or imaginary, and there is an emphasis on the iconic level of meaning (Bate, 2012, p.

125)**. Borrowing Bate's idea, I have photographed the objects clearly, but often the allegories resulting from combining two or three objects in a photograph make the image become 'other than itself' (Berger and Richon, 1989). Furthermore, exploring this idea of objective images together with its artist's allegories for new meanings, I have found Bonnell's work which describes some of her images as fictional, 'sinister and absurd, but not funny' (2013, p. 35). This change appears to take place at the informational level of my research, and the key to clarity is to understand the ethnographic element entangled with the photograph.

It was my intention to explore variations using everyday objects to create photographs. For example, for this photograph, I had to work with different bread types and sizes, and chose this one as it had the closest resemblance to the homemade bread that I remember. Also, I had to choose between chopping boards of different shapes and materials and ultimately had to find the chain and the padlock. Finally, I have used the natural light from the kitchen so the breadcrumbs to be more visible. The photographic process itself took two days, but the most time consuming aspect was finding the image in my mind, finding the objects and selecting the most appropriate ones, and finding a way to make them visible in the photograph. The story behind the photograph is simple and clear – the bread is secured by the chain so that it will not be stolen by the wolf. It is an association of objects, and without my statement of photograph's story, this may not be clear for other viewers, especially for those who are not familiar with this folklore. This situation of uncertainty and clarification is what I intended to explore and set my photographs and the relationship between the still life objects within the photographic image. I believe that photo-entanglement exists, and one of my arguments is that without the story behind these photographic images, there is the potential for misrepresentation or misunderstanding.

Photo-entanglement it is a term I used to describe the connection between a photograph and its indexical meaning, which is attached by the artist in my situation or by the voluntary participants in the situation of the PEIs. In both situations, it is a given meaning offered with intentional ethnographic insights from a culture, which when missing the indexical meaning may be not easy understood.

The third photograph (Figure 4.6) as well as the next ones, follows the model of the first two. After identifying the myths to work with, I repeated the process but with different images, themes and meanings. Each image took approximate one month, which included choosing the myth and the related story, finding the still life objects, finding the photographic image, editing the photograph, presenting it to collect feedback, carrying out postproduction where

necessary and ultimately writing the statement. I took care of myths not to be repetitive, were significant for myself and were closely related to my own experiences during my childhood and my field trip to Romania. I also took care of identifying photography approaches, to not repeat them and to work with them to identify where a potential misrepresentation could appear. Each photograph was ready only once its indexical meaning was also clearly presented in writing. The central idea was that both the photograph and the written statement presenting its indexical meaning would be presented together as one single piece of work, and without either one of them, the work would have been incomplete, and the photo-entanglement would have changed.

Figure 4.6. Alexandru Modoi. *It gives a feeling of peace,* Chester, 2020
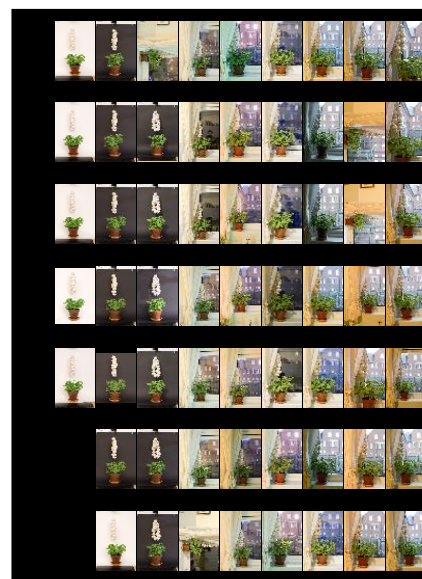
Figure 4.7. Alexandru Modoi. Contact sheet for Figure 4.6, Chester, 2020

For the photograph 'It gives a feeling of peace' (Figure 4.6), I used garlic mounted on a string, just as I remember it hanging in Romania. I placed it on my window and took pictures from the inside looking out and from the outside looking in at dusk. I selected the photograph taken from the inside looking out to emphasise the house and the household's beliefs. It is related to 30th November and the celebration of Saint Andrew. It is said that garlic will protect the house against wolves, and this day is also known as Wolf Day or Ghost's Night. On this night, the spirits are amongst the living creatures. It is believed that the wolf's neck becomes so flexible that it can see its tail and other people better, and the wolf becomes more agile so no prey can escape[21].

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[21] See Appendix 2, p. 91 containing the complete statement.

I tried different backdrops and backgrounds, including from a lighting studio set, to a kitchen yellow light set. I also looked at other objects that could be in the photograph without distracting from the main story. Overall, the story of a string of garlic in the window to protect the house may be the most familiar one, but it had an element of difficulty as many of the objects, including the window itself and the buildings outside, were rather different from the image I had in my mind. I had two options: either completely change the set with the background or embrace the situation as it was. I chose to embrace the situation, as this was my familiarity, my surrounding including the kitchen window, the curtain, the basil pot and the buildings next door. The contact sheet (Figure 4.7) shows the progress through different technical stages of creating the image. This was the moment in my autoethnographic approach when I decided to include my everyday background and my own familiar objects in the photographs to accentuate the idea of personal insights attached to an ethnographic method of sharing personal experiences and stories.

Inspired from Figure 4.6, in the next photograph (Figure 4.8), I looked in more detail at the elements defining my own surroundings and how they may potentially interact within the photographic image itself. The myth behind the photographic image is that in some parts of Romania, between the 25 and 31 January during Winter Philip, people used to boil a shirt in hot water to stop wolves from hunting on their farm and to protect their families from any disease and bad spirits the wolf might have brought into the village. In those days, young boys would wear freshly cleaned and ironed shirts to meet young girls in the village, a tradition that also refers to the context of fertility and good health to protect the farm and the family.

Figure 4.8. Alexandru Modoi. *Fathers and grandfathers will tell stories about it,* Chester, 2021

For this photograph (Figure 4.8), I chose the following still life objects: my shirt, wooden tongs and a ten-litre pot. I intended to recreate the process of scalding clothes from my childhood experience. Photographing still life is convenient in that it does not need to be spontaneous

and capture objects in motion in order to reproduce a conceptual and a pictorial identity (Batchen, 1999b, p. 133). Photographic images of still life objects showing 'Other than itself' is where Berger and Richon refer to a thing beyond itself, together with other stories and discourses (Berger and Richon, 1989).

There are some potentially misleading aspects, such as the colour of the shirt, which is traditionally white; the wooden tongs that are similar but not the same as traditional tongs; the pot, which used to be larger and made of thick aluminium; and the hob, which is not a traditional old stove. Additionally, there are other elements, such as the UK plug, the oven's on/off switch and the smartphone charger. For this photograph, I decided that these objects work with my own narrative, which reflects personal insights: this is a shirt that I like to wear nowadays, the plug and the phone charger show the time and location and reveal that the photograph was not taken in Romania in the 1970s, but in the UK. Both photographs Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.8 are similar, as they both use everyday objects from the kitchen, but one of the main aspects here is how one photograph leads to another. Without deciding to use the objects as they were in the scene during the making process of the Figure 4.6, I would not have done this in Figure 4.8.

I have selected 13 photographs for this portfolio and have written an individual statement for each one and prepared them for public exhibition. As I mentioned earlier, each photograph took me around one month to produce, so more than one year of work has gone in to this portfolio. I completed the PEIs in Romania at the end of November 2019 and had prepared the photo documentary by the end of June 2020. Following that, I was working on this portfolio until the end of August 2021.

Chosen the number 13, I am associating the wolf as it has been portrayed during my field trip to Romania, either bringing bad luck or even good fortune. There were also people who would have thought about it in both ways and people who were highly superstitious, some of whom would not even talk about the wolf. For example, one of the people I invited to take part in the research asked me, with a sort of fear in her voice 'Why would you choose the wolf? 'There are so many other animals or birds!' The wolf is the only focus of this research, but through this study of how a creative practice of photographic still life objects can help to re-imagine stories from afar, similarly other people may apply these methods and my findings in their projects to tell their own stories. Moreover, one of my concerns is not to find the complete list of myths from Romanian culture but to find a way through these photographic images and to preserve the indexical meaning containing people's personal insights for not to be missed, lost

or misrepresented while these stories are shared. The wolf may have a personal charm, and I find that it connects with many aspects from my childhood, but the priority here is the creative practice of working with photographs.

The last photograph I produced is 'The 13 entangled wolf myths' (Figure 4.9). This is different from the other photographs and is more a product of all the other photographs. The idea behind it is to bring together all the photographic images I have created. My suggestion is that this shows the multiple images and unclear meanings as they were in my mind before undertaking this study and before looking at each myth separately. After I started to separate them and to find their meaning and their stories, the whole image became clearer. This is rather an exercise, a potential way for visitors to have a look at each photographic image with their written statements with more care. Moreover, this is also a suggestion that it may be easy to misunderstand the myths, just as it might be easy if someone were to look at 'The 13 entangled wolf myths' only.

To create this, I printed all the photographs on clear acetates and placed them on a lightbox and photographed them. Even though this photograph is beyond the still life practice I have used for all the other photographs, there is an element of still life – the one of photographing photographs. It required similar care, such as setting the scene as some of the images were too dark and would not let the light pass through easily and choosing the light in the room as it needed to be totally dark and have no reflective objects around. It was my intention to make all the main still life objects I used in my portfolio visible, but it worked much better to emphasise the themes I had used, such as the wild forest, the hatred or fear, the respect for nature and the need to protect the home. This work is printed on a larger size of 37.4 x 26.4 inches on acrylic reverse. Here the emphasis is in looking through layers of acetate and reverse acrylic to see the details.

Figure 4.9. Alexandru Modoi.
13 Entangled wolf myths, Chester, 2021.
C-Type Fuji Matt, Acrylic Reverse 37.4 x 26.4 inch

Here I should discuss the two sets of two photographs in each set (for example Figure 4.10). This work consists of two photographs that were produced separately and complete one story from my own experience. They are not two stories placed one next to each other, and they should be looked at in the order given. I am borrowing here from what I have learned from the method of making a photo documentary when I placed the pictures in a particular order to be seen, one to the left and the other one to the right. In the same way, I used two photographs next to each other and framed on a single frame.

Figure 4.10. Alexandru Modoi. *Finding the way out through wildness*, Chester, 2021
Two photographs printed on C-Type Fuji Matt, 9 x 6 inch each,

Here I emphasise aspects from the PEIs as in three occasions, the PEIs participants grouped the photographs on the table in sets of two or three pointing to one myth they would have had to discuss. I noticed that it was difficult to separate the photographs as the participants referenced common and complementing aspects. Learning from these PEIs experiences, I present my own experience on those hills where I used to run and often reflected on the idea of a wildlife living in the natural habitat. This is not one story with two separate chapters, first one of finding a directional sign in the forest and the second one of some trees are cut down on a hill. Instead, it is one story where the trees have been cut down in a location that used to be a dark forest, and the directional sign has rather a different purpose, referring to the familiar as a distinction between representation and the real (Batchen, 1999a, p. 194).

From Figure 4.10's artist statement: 'This image of landscape changes came into my mind while running in the UK as I recalled my childhood experiences in Romania. I placed this sign in one of the forests where I used to run, and a few weeks later, I placed the sign where the forest used to be. Distant from what once was familiar, it made me feel lost as I did not have the forest to guide me anymore.' (See the full statement on the)

4.3. Photographs prints, frames and labels

The photographs are printed in predefined sizes that are available from the 'instant printing shops' in the UK. The emphasis here is on the objects on the table in the same way as in the PEIs sessions. The photographs are printed on C-Type Fuji Matt paper of sizes of 9 x 6 inches for the outdoor photographs and 8 x 6 inches for the indoor photographs. All the photographs are mounted on acid-free archival cardboard and framed on box type wooden black matt frames. The cut edges of the photographs are visible and there is approximately 5 inches on each side between the photograph and the frame, once again emphasising the idea of the objects, the photographs as objects, isolated and selected out of the other ones. PEIs' participants often used to select one photograph from the table and used to move it to be separate from the other ones. I believe that this was not only to focus the selection on one photograph but also in order to not be distracted by others surrounding it[22].

Photo-entanglement exists between each photograph in this research and their indexical meaning. Once the photographs have been printed and framed, there will be the artist statement next to each one that clarifies the myth and the story behind each photographic image. I believe that these are the meanings attached by the artist to each photographic image, and if they are changed or missed out, misrepresentations can occur. In addition, the statements are written in the first person as direct speech directly addressed by the artist to the visitor. Often, such statements are written in the third person as indirect speech, giving the impression that someone else is presenting what the artist has to say. By choosing direct speech, it was my intention that the public may feel much closer to the artist's thoughts, and therefore the myths and stories would potentially give a sense of confession and privacy. Ultimately, this also strengthens the photo-entablement and the idea of misrepresentation.

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[22] Looking at Sontag's idea that photographs are artefacts, I agree that there are photographs, as she puts it, of 'found objects reflecting images and slices of time' (1979, p. 69). I would add that this can be seen in the Figure 4.10 and Figure 4.11, as in many others in this research. However, through my research, I have come to understand that many of the images already existed in the participants' own memories and are simply re-enacted through the process of creating the photographs and participating in the photo-elicitation sessions (PEIs). I am interested in the idea of exploring the artist's intentions (Sontag, 1979, p. 53) once the experiences are re-enacted (Jung, 2002).

Figure 4.11. Alexandru Modoi. *The doctor of the forest*, Chester, 2020. Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch,

Photographs' names are inspired from the PEIs sessions. For most of them, I have used themes collected from the participants (see the Collective Story, Chapter III, Figure 3.13) as well as themes I have often discussed during the field trip, such as 'The doctor of the forest' or 'Homo homini lupus est'. I am not only highlighting the contribution of the participants to this research, but I have also looked for a simple way to introduce the myth before providing further details to help clarify the indexical meaning intended to be re-imagined through the photographic image. Therefore, with the contribution of the participants, once again, the titles would potentially be explaining the myth represented in the photograph.

Here I am using 'The doctor of the forest' myth, and for this I have used again the forest as location (Figure 4.11). Even though it is the same location, in the forest, the myth and the photographic approach is different. The stethoscope is photographed in a forest, and the artist's statement clarifies how this photograph can be interpreted. Without it, I would interpret the photograph as depicting a lost or found object in the forest. One of the differences between 'Finding the way out through wildness' and 'The doctor of the forest' is the misplaced object. Both photographs show still life objects in the forest that depict the wolf as a guide or a medic. The difference is that a directional sign is more likely to be found in a forest than a stethoscope is. Through Figure 4.11's statement, it was also my intention to direct the visitors to look again at Figure 4.10 and to see the difference between the still life objects as they are used in the photographs in order to clarify[23] not only the myth but the concept of misplaced objects in the creative practice of photographing objects. Potentially, the

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[23] Sontag indicates that the surreal image (present in the Figure 4.8, Figure 4.11 and other see Appendix 2, p. 91) is believed by many photographers to be universal, suggesting the 'superficial realism of a photograph'(Sontag, 1979, p. 52). Reading Sontag, I understand that some of the photographs from this research, if not all of them, are, by their nature, surreal, strange and sometimes difficult to understand. In this way, I believe what may be needed is a statement from the artist to clarify the indexical meaning, including fantastic disclosures and emotional weight (Sontag, 1979, p. 53).

visitor would look again at the previous image to find this difference, therefore walking from one visual experience to another and connecting the experiences in one message.

The photo documentary not only had the role of helping this research with its narrative and finding a way to analyse the stories from the participants, but it may serve as an informational work showing the stories and collecting the statements have taking place. This may also give a sense of originality to those stories as they are told and are video recorded without a script or any other postproduction editing. Presenting the photo documentary at the beginning would not only introduce the PEIs and autoethnographic methods but would strengthen the importance of the statements by showing that they were collected truthfully and that they were transcribed, translated and transmitted accurately. For the research itself, the PEIs video recording and the photo documentary itself were a catalyst in my own process of creating a portfolio of photographs, and could potentially serve as foundation and an introduction to the photo-elicitation method in exhibitions, in which I present this research.

4.4. Exhibitions, and presenting the work

Once the whole work was produced and ready to be presented to the general public, the next step was to find and organise various ways to present the work. This includes online Teams/WhatsApp meetings and online conferences. To do this, I prepared the work in a digital form, which often it was under a PowerPoint or PDF presentation, linear and without a live audience. On other occasions, when I have had the physical portfolio transported to the meetings, the work would have been unframed and there would not have been labels next to the works, giving a feeling of unfinished work and a less discontinued narrative. I believe that the most relevant part of this research with its portfolio was exhibiting the work, presenting the work as one unit with all the photographs accompanied by their labels. The photo documentary should be visible, followed by the possibility of looking at each photograph separate as needed.

I have prepared three ways to present the research: one for online; one for direct meetings, including conferences, artists talks and one to one discussions; and one for exhibitions for the general public. This stage of my research brought new challenges with many unpredictable situations to overcome. For example, delivery delays and petrol shortages, direct meetings that had to be moved online and exhibitions that were postponed due to the COVID-19 restrictions. There were a number of difficulties including some missed opportunities, but I

believe that having to adapt my research to new ways of working has potentially strengthened my overall method of working once all these challenges had been overcome.

I have prepared various forms of presenting the work, including a draft version of an online blog and a book catalogue that I will eventually publish after I have collected feedback from the main public exhibition, which was ready to take place at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester, from the 22nd November 2021 to 13th February 2022. I intentionally allowed extra time for most of the actions to be undertaken and always have a plan B to be used when needed. I often have a second plan ready, although it was not always of the same quality; however, on this occasion both options should deliver similarly. For example, I have explained the situation and have started discussions with a different venue for my exhibition. In addition to this, I have planned to have a book ready to publish that contains the exhibition and was accompanied by an online blog in case of a new lockdown when the public venues would again be closed to the public.

4.5. Results, discussions and conclusions

Each photographic image depicts a different myth and has its own indexical meaning, although there are different approaches from a creative practice of photographing still life objects. It was also my intention that each photograph would reflect on various themes that inspired my research through to its final stages – themes collected from the participants through the PEIs.

I have discussed the term of photo-entanglement, which refers to the connection between a photographic image and its indexical meaning as given by the artist or the participant. I have discussed the importance of the indexical meaning in clarifying the details of the myths as intended to be transmitted and explained how without this clarity, potential misrepresentations or misunderstandings may appear. This includes not only the full statements that are transcribed and presented in the exhibition labels but also the titles of the images, which also function as clues to the detailed story behind each image.

The PEIs and the photo documentary are important sources of inspiration for my autoethnographic process and for the production of the portfolio of photographs. This include using words from the participants to title the photographs, discussing two photographs together to present one single story, discussing still life objects that are not physically present in the picture, discussing how familiar and everyday objects can provide specific and personal

insights. Here, I should emphasise again the importance of clarifying the indexical meaning, and how this is achieved by discussing each photograph with participants and then making a photo documentary help to understand the common story from conscious and unconscious reality from the participants as well as from myself.

The photo documentary not only had the role of helping this research with its narrative and finding a way to analyse the stories from the participants, but it may serve as an informational work showing that the stories and the statements were collected.

After these approaches, the overall narrative was much clearer for myself. The photographs were presented in a public exhibition from the 22nd November 2021 to 13th February 2022 at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester where I live and where this research started.

For the exhibition I have prepared the exhibition banner (Figure 4.12) and an A0 size information sheet, introducing the title and the research question. It continues presenting my intention to offer a new portrait of Romanian culture through its wolf myths and stories. Lastly, it presented the tombstone of the Dacian warrior, which inspired my research and emphasises the idea that these myths and stories are transmitted through generations.

Figure 4.12 Alexandru Modoi.
Photographs of wolf myths exhibition banner

After this, in the exhibition was shown the video documentary and then the photographs accompanied by the artist's statements. In the middle of the gallery, there was the '13 Entangled Wolf Myths' photograph (Figure 4.13). At the end of the layout was shown the collective story with words from the participants shown (Figure 4.14). Underneath, there was a display case showing the participants' photographs, including all those referenced in the video documentary and others, 40 in total. Additionally, I have included some physical objects, some

that I have used in the photographs, other which could potentially be used for other myths and stories.

Figure 4.13. Photographs of Wolf Myths.
Grosvenor Museum, Gallery 2 Entrance

Figure 4.14. Photographs of Wolf Myths.
Gallery 2 corner with the Collective Story

There was a significant moment in the preparation and installation of the exhibition when the curatorial team suggested making some changes in the original work, for example, changing the subject of the photography of still life objects looking at the possible misrepresentations and entangled situations to the wolf stories. I defended my intentions, explaining that the labels are the artist testimonies, which had been written at the time of producing the photographs. I emphasised that both are an integral part of the artwork which concerns with a still life photographic practice and its potential misrepresentations. Finally, I managed to save many of the aspects prone to being changed, and we succeeded in finding a way to work together and keep the original intentions.

Figure 4.15. Photographs of wolf myths.
The story corner in Gallery 2

As an artist working with still life photography and visual ethnographic methods, I find a common understanding important in this type of collaboration[24]. My understanding is that this

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[24] Figure 4.15 shows a corner where people can read some books with wolf myths, which is one of the results of the collaboration with the curatorial team.

was a collaboration between multiple areas of specialism, which include contemporary creative art practice, museum collections and curating contemporary art. The task was a collaborative one which involved working with the original content in such a way that the message and the intend were delivered clearly and coherently. I have learnt from this collaboration that, for this to happen, it is necessary to employ dialogue, communication and planning between all parties involved.

Here I am presenting some curatorial guidance from the Grosvenor Museum, which includes avoiding terms used in theses, such as 'suggests', 'questions', 're-enacting', 'argument', 'misrepresentation', 'misunderstanding', 'intends to', 'photo-elicitation' and 'photo-entanglement'. This was also the case for the labels employed, and we took care to adopt a 'friendly language and not to alienate audience' as the museum said. I initially believed that the work may exclude and undermine some sectors of the audience. Therefore, from this point on, communication became significant, and, ultimately, most of the original meaning was preserved and presented in the exhibition.

I have always thought that an artist would learn from each collaboration and eventually become better prepared to work in a curatorial team. I have learnt there may be background from many different questions which is not my intention to redress them here.

Here are few questions that may arise in this type of artist-curator collaboration:

- What potential misunderstandings would possibly produce a less productive artist-curator relationship?
- Is it necessary to attach to the artwork its artist's statement or its specific meaning?
- If so, how much would be lost or miswritten with these type of interventions?

I collected exhibition feedback via a comments box available to the general audience. To avoid possible COVID-19 restrictions, I have not organised a private view. Instead, I have invited people in groups, similar to the idea of focus groups. These are special artist's tours, as I called them, by invitation. The plan for these sessions was that people would have their own time to visit the exhibition. After approximately 20 minutes, I would start open discussions, answer questions and present aspects that are not in the exhibition, such as the indexical meaning and the problem of misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Lastly, I invited them to leave anonymous feedback via the comments box. Some of the meetings continued with a social drink in one of the pubs in Chester.

There was a general feeling that the exhibition has been well received. Feedback was collected from the curatorial team, from my friends and people I had invited, from some of the participants and especially from the public. Table 3 presents the feedback from everyone who has used the comments box.

Table 3 Feedback from the comments box -22nd of November to 8th of December.

The feedback offered
I think this museum is really cool.
I like the shotgun because I haven't seen one before.
I like the man trap and I like the wolf myths.
I have seen the exhibition a few times and every time I recall stories about wolves from my childhood. The myths and the photographs give me a melancholic feeling about my childhood.
I like the man trap.
I like everything.
The main theme of the exhibition is bringing up memories from my childhood and Greek culture. Many of the associations and stories from the participants are similar to my culture, which I used to hear from my grandparents as a child. Behind the fear and the animal, there is also a lot of respect for the wolf and its role in nature. I can connect all these reflections and traditions and go back to our common Byzantium past and reflect to Romania. Must be interesting for British people as here are so many wolf myths.
It's amazing and very pretty. This museum is awesome.
The gun is epic.
Very interesting. It is not what I'd expected. It is even better. Very clever exhibition. Well done and congratulations to the artist!
Roland: 'Eu nu mai lucru pe Sf. Andrei! Nu stiam aceste invatamintele' Translated: I will not be doing any work on the St. Andrew Day. I didn't know these facts.
It is fun and has lots of interesting things.
I like it very much.
Gillian: The minute you walk into this gallery, you realise that there is an exhibition of such interest, you will want to keep coming back to learn more about the story that is illustrated here. My original thoughts about wolves were strangely so, complete negative, from the stories that I had learned from childhood. I haven't exhausted all the exhibition yet, but so far my favourite is the scissors and string. Well done and congratulations! And I shall be back!
Ian: Genius, it's great that the wolf is never seen in the show 'indexical'.
I love it ! Reanna 2021.
Very interesting, even for somebody raised in this culture. The associations people have from their childhood are completely new for me. By the way, they are absolutely fantastic. I've had fun while learning new things. Loved the concept!
Less children
Well done for all your good work you've done. Really good presentation! Zian, Andre and Adi
Wow that is huge! Jack + Dad
Very authentic aspect to be brought into attention! Well done, Alex!
Really nice! Full of information. St. Helens College.

It was a great place to present this project. It started and finished here, at the Grosvenor Museum Chester, and presented the collective story of the wolf myths from Romanian culture.

I felt that the exhibition was well received by the public. This was the feedback received after 10 days of exhibiting to the public. As I learned from the museum, at that time of the year the footfall is approximately 600 people per week. The exhibition was scheduled to run to the 13th February 2022, so many more people would have visited it and, hopefully, the general feeling has remained the same.

This was a collective project, a catalyst from the beginning to its completion in which the voluntary contributions of people have not ceased to shape and strengthen the messages of this research. Following the closing of this exhibition, I have updated the messages from the public online at www.alexandrumodoi.com.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a chronological summary of the research. Included are aspects of the preparations for the PEIs sessions, making a photo documentary, conducting interviews in the UK, producing a portfolio of photographs and exhibiting at the Grosvenor Museum. I also discuss how I was inspired by my field of still life photographic practice and how theory from this field guided my own practice. I introduce the research findings with my recommendations, and I also discuss other questions identified during this research. Ultimately, I am reflecting on my own understanding of the journey: what worked well, how this research influenced my own practice, what changes I have made and what did not work as well or differently from my expectations. Additionally, I outline some new potential directions that I may follow upon completion of this research, including working in academia, the private sector and continuing my own creative art practice.

5.1. Summarising the research

This research was inspired by the tombstone of a Sarmatian warrior at the Grosvenor Museum, which remind me some of childhood stories of Dacians and wolf myths. At that point I realised that many details behind the image on the tombstone were not shared, including the connections with the wolf and its myths. In this regard, this study believed that an ethnographic approach would be the most appropriate. Looking at other approaches, such as by Preston (2018) and Ahrens (2017), and reading Jung (2010) and Barthes (1977), I developed the confidence to find and collect those wolf myths. These myths would not only re-enact memories from Romania, but through this research would also offer me the opportunity to share stories from Romanian culture other than those about immigration and Dracula.

With this in mind, I have decided on title of this research as 'Re-imagining Romanian culture from afar through still life photographic images of wolf myths.' This formed the research question:

- 'How can a practice of photographing objects help to re-imagine Romanian culture from afar through the photographic images?'

The research title and its question helped guide my research through its findings and approaches and provided the title for the public exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum – 'Photographs of wolf myths'. Combining both titles, the thesis and the exhibition, the term 'photographs' from the exhibition can be interpreted as 'Re-imagining Romanian Culture from afar through still life photographic images'.

The aims of potentially finding a new portrait of Romania through its wolf myths through my own creative practice of still life photography and sharing these stories here in the UK motivated me to conduct this research. In addition, these feelings were strengthened by the prospect of working with stories told by people and artist's statements. I have always questioned whether this type of meaning is visible to the public, and if not, what is potentially missing.

To summarise the main stages of the research, I should first include the preparation of the interview questions and the field trip to Romania to conduct the PEIs with volunteers[25]. An analysis of outcomes was conducted upon completion of the interviews. This led me to make a photo documentary, which helped provide a better understanding of the narrative involved in the ethnographic process. At this point, the main outcomes included photographs and stories from the participants, and a photo documentary presenting the narrative of my understanding from the field trip in Romania. Through the PEIs and the photo documentary, it was shown that a photo-entanglement exists between the myths presented by the participants and the photographs a photo-entanglement exists. A photo-entanglement between a photographic image and its indexical meaning. Moreover, a cultural entanglement may also be evolved due to my childhood experience in Romania, which kept this project progressing at pace.

The next step involved an autoethnographic approach. The experience from the PEIs and the photo documentary, which emphasised the narratives of the PEIs, led this research to the stage of producing a portfolio of photographs and a public exhibition. In addition to the collective story from the participants, I have identified other myths and folklore related to the wolf from Romanian culture, in the Folklore and Orthodox Calendar and in literature, including the works of Răchișan (2017) and Pârvan (1928).

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[25] Pages 25 – 26, I have discussed the PEIs question, inspired by Barthes' theory of iconic (Q1), symbolic (Q2) and indexical (Q3):
Q1: What is the object in this picture and where is it from?
Q2: What does this picture represent for you?
Q3: What does this picture make you feel about wolves?

I have produced the first photograph - 'Does it have strong jaws?' - while I have finalised the photo documentary. A few weeks later, that I completed writing my artist statement and the title of the work. At this point, I have experienced through my own process the concept of entanglement, in the context of making sense of a surreal photograph, where only my own story should clarify the photographic image. I understood that hiding or presenting this entanglement differently would potentially lead to misrepresentations or misunderstandings.

The next photographs followed the same approach - identifying the myths, finding the still life object to be photographed, discovering the photographic relationship between the objects, choosing the background, taking the picture, deciding its title and writing the statement. I allowed about six weeks for each photograph. From time to time, I showed the photographs to the supervisory team or friends for feedback. It was a continuous process of creating, getting feedback and consulting the literature. Each photograph, once completed, led naturally to the next one. Having all the myths and the photographs produced on the whiteboard in front of my working space helped me to understand what I had been doing. It also helped me progress to the next work and avoid repeating myths and photographic approaches. Ultimately, once all 13 photographs were produced, the full narrative became visible. All the photographs with their stories set on the whiteboard were visible as one single, coherent portrait of Romania through my own wolf myths and photographic images. This inspired me further to create one single work, '13 Entangled Wolf Myths', which presented all the myths together. To better understand the whole image, each photograph needs to be examined individually to learn its indexical meaning. This was how I also approached my autoethnographic process.

The exhibition preparation and its installation it brought to my experience and to this research experiences, which I have discussed earlier in Chapter IV. The exhibition has been received positively as have learned from both written and verbal feedback. I had to find solutions to adapt some the terminologies used my original statements to meet the requirements of the museum, but I believe that the message was well received by the audience. The exhibition provided a new collaboration and a good opportunity to test my understanding of how it should be presented to the general audience at the Grosvenor Museum. Additionally, it gave me a greater insight into the relationship between myself as a contemporary artist and a curatorial team at the museum. Here, I have experienced not only from working with the narrative of the display and the production of the artworks, but also the strict timeline and limited resources that were available for its installation.

The exhibition was advertised online through my own network[26] as well as through the museum's website and social media. Figure 5.1 shows a screenshot with from the Grosvenor Museum website, which introduces aspects of my research and practice - for example, stories and folklore, memories from childhood, re-imagining from afar, and the idea of home. I have experienced three notions through this research - home in the UK, home from my childhood and my childhood. I should add that some aspects of this research may relate to home as the location of my childhood, but, more specifically 'home' for me is Chester, here in the UK.
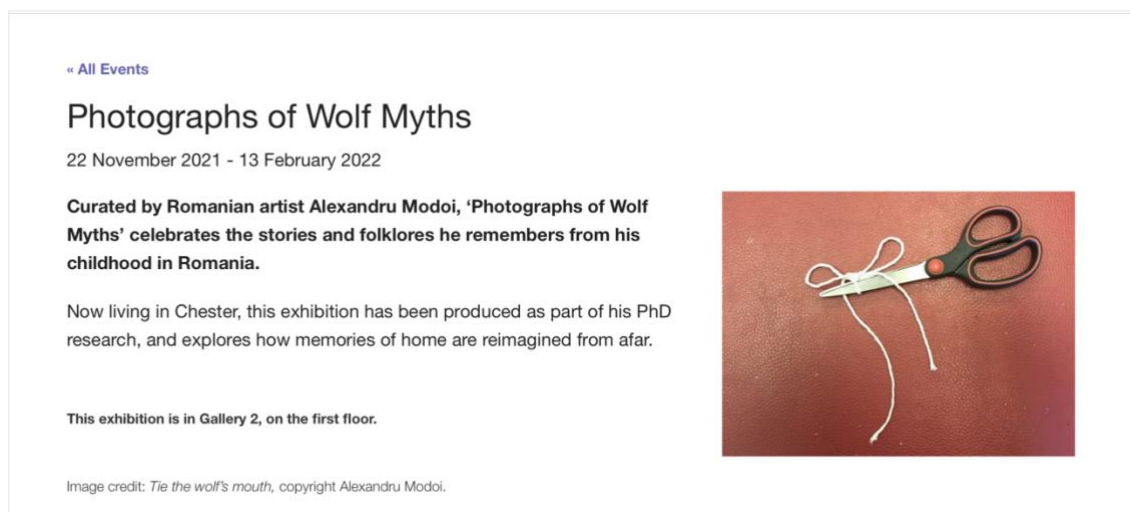

Figure 5.1. Screenshot from the Grosvenor Museum website. showing the exhibition. citation: 'Memories of home are reimagined from afar'.

Therefore, I reimagined those wolf myths experienced during my childhood and Romanian culture from afar, from home in the UK. Although this research distinguishes between my childhood home and my current home in the UK, both may often be seen as one and the same. It may be a feeling of 'home', associated virtually with my childhood, to my birthplace but, in this research, home is here in the UK, afar from my childhood home. In the creative practice of photography, the 'home sick' and 'back home' themes may be explored in various ways, and it may be connected to childhood or early memories and family, some of which may be found in this research. In contrast, there are the themes of childhood, heritage and memories, which are my focus. 'Memories of home' might ask the question, 'when are you going home?', with emphasis placed on the theme of immigration. Memories of childhood from home here in the UK, might ask the question 'who are you?', with emphasis on the theme of identity. This

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[26] In addition to Grosvenor Museum connections, I have promoted the exhibition to my PhD research group, to my own friends, on my website at www.alexandrumodoi.com, on art events and social events platforms, for example www.artrabbit.com and www.eventbrite.co.uk, where details introducing the exhibition are taken from the title, question and research aims, without any changes. Here it was my intention to present a solid connection between the exhibition and the research.

research explores the latter question, and through its aims I share memories and experiences from my childhood, including myths and folklore of wolf myths from Romanian culture. On this occasion, the 'who are you?' question would possibly lead to the photographic themes - personal insights, re-calling memories and voices to be heard - advising me not to forget my heritage and to be confident to share with others who I am.

5.2. Research findings

1. The importance of the indexical meaning in determining the nature of what an object is in a photograph and how this can be a significant cause of misunderstanding the re-imagining of the narrative of an object in a photograph was discovered.

2. A photo-entanglement exist between a photograph and its indexical meaning. It was found that the photographic image and its narrative are entangled. All the photographs produced for the PEIs had meanings attached. This was discovered by using disciplinary and interdisciplinary photographic methods. Simplifying the iconic meaning of a photographic image at the iconic level can lead to multiple interpretations, and the indexical meaning can be misrepresented.

3. Myths and stories have been re-enacted from conscious and unconscious realities, as Jung suggested, using single-use cameras accompanied by photo-elicitation interview sessions. When I employed autoethnographic methods, this was made possible through the process of creating the photographic image. Using instant cameras or digital photography gave to the participants the opportunity, from time to time, to look at the pictures, which possibly provided a distraction from the idea of working with images taken from people's imaginations.

4. Once the photographic images had been produced, it may be necessary to introduce new process for the care and attention of presenting, exhibiting and archiving the images in order to preserve the original message. It seemed that the message itself is as fragile as the visual artwork.

5. The importance of my previous experience of Romanian culture and being a native speaker of the language helped to establish ethnographic connections with the participants and to understand their contributions. I believe that being originally from Romania was an essential requirement for interpreting and conducting the photo-elicitation interviews. Ultimately, at this level of communication, it is possible for misrepresentation and misunderstanding to emerge and be carried through the whole

process, and at this stage could potentially be transmitted through to further stages of the research, including the process of creating a photographic image.

6. Widening the process of photographing objects, including conducting PEIs and making a photo documentary and the interviews in the UK, provided a deeper understanding of the issues involved in creating and interpreting a photographic image. This led to the realisation that looking beyond one's own specialism can lead to a better understanding of one's own practice since relying on a single perspective can be too limiting.

7. The experience of the PEIs combined with making a photo documentary helped me to realise how these ethnographic approaches can lead to gaining new insights into a culture. This approach will inform my creative practice during the next stages, including adopting an autoethnographic approach and presenting the findings through photography.

8. Most of the Romanians I have met for this project were happy to share their stories with their folklore and traditions, especially since this material was being used to create a portrait to help redress the negative image experienced by many Romanians in the UK.

5.3. Recommendations

Through my portfolio of photographs[27] that relates to the field of creative practice of still life photography and the guiding theory,[28] I have examined different themes, which may have the potential for further projects. For example, photographing the visible object (p. 90), surreal associations between objects (pp. 81, 89), the missing object (p. 87), re-enacting memories (p. 91), misplaced object (pp. 83, 85), the familiarity (pp.82, 84), the narrative (p. 86), home (p. 87) or the banal (pp. 81, 88). This is how I have approached working with my photographs, but each of these themes may be present in one or other images within this portfolio, but this is how I have worked with them. Understanding these themes, may not be a problem of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, but the personal insight at the indexical level of meaning it is clarified by the myth and the caption on the accompanying labels. On this research, collecting the ethnographic stories it was the main approach, but there may be other methods. This could open new directions for other research to find, for example, that if there

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[27] See Appendix 2, p. 91: Portfolio of photographs and labels.
[28] See Chapter II – Literature and contextual review, section 2.3. Field of practice, p. 11.

is no ethnographic input, how discussion of problems[29] with any of the themes in this research would appear.

Potential impact on the field and my practice. This research potentially may impact the field of creative practice of photographing still life objects, as practices and theories might examine the aspects of ethnography and the artist's statement in the context of the photo-entanglement[30]. This research was inspirited by complementary disciplinary and interdisciplinary photographic methods[31]. I have added to my own approaches and methods, the concepts of an ethnographic approach to a landscape (Preston, 2018) combined with the ethnographic dialogue (Ahrens, 2017). Additionally, this involved an ethnographic approach to collecting myths and stories, combined with 'finding objects' (Penny, 2014) and identifying their stories and 'allegories' (Richon, Dick and Leader, 2006). This practice was led by theories of third and indexical meaning (Barthes, 1977; Edwards and Hart, 2004). One of findings from this study demonstrated how my childhood experiences as a native Romanian speaker led to the PEIs sessions and helped me to better understand my entanglement with Romanian culture and its heritage. It also allowed me to present the existence of a photo-entanglement. I would argue that this photo-entanglement cannot be broken,[32] but it can be hidden or missed when it is presented or misrepresented.

How has this research changed my practice of still life? My creative practice of photographing still life objects led this research and it has been developed through the stages of the research and the ideas advanced by it. Recalling the experience from the ethnographic approaches adopted, my working process became analytical and understandable. The social focus and working directly with people, especially to find their secrets, has become important to furthering my work with photography. I find this social aspect not only inspiring but a catalyst for further projects.

I believe my practice has become more structured, and I have learned from how I developed a PhD project, from its title and questions to its aims. In terms of working with photographs and

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[29] See Introduction, section 1, p. 1.
[30] This is a term I have used in this research to refer to the relationship between a photograph and its indexical meaning.
[31] See Chapter 1 – Methodology and methods, p. 6.
[32] Here is my allegory to Einstein theory (Einstein, Albert; Podolsky, B.; Rosen, 1935), which I have mentioned about it at the beginning of this research. This also inspired me to ask during this research whether or not this photo-entanglement exists in my creative practice and my heritage - a heritage which I have explored through the collective stories from conscious and unconscious realities (Jung, 2010).

examining my progress from the start to the conclusion of this research, I recall photographing an object three years ago from 10 to 10 degrees to find what was missing for it, not to be a complete reproduction of the original object[33]. Now, following my focus changing to the social meaning, at the indexical level of meaning, I look for and photographing what is not visible. In photographing an apple (Figure 5.2), what am I photographing beyond its appearance? This is one of the latest photographs that I have produced for this research. Here, even I could have been photographing from 10 to 10 degrees, as it is set, I am emphasising the idea behind a myth that a wolf does not eat fruit. It stands on a tree snag cut down in a forest. It is 'other than itself', as Richon and Berger suggest (1989). My allegory is that I may not fully understand the wild animal, even when I am offering food, if I invade its habitat. Moreover, I may enrage the animal, thus provoking a hatred and concluding that the wolf is ferocious, attacks people and does not eat fruit.

Figure 5.2. Alexandru Modoi, *Does it eat fruit?*
2021, UK Chester

The photographic setting here is like one that I would use in a studio for a simple classic still life picture on a plate or table, with the object centred in the scene, in focus and with an ambiental light clearly showing the surrounding details. This image demonstrates to me not only the ethnographic and autoethnographic input of this research, but the progress that I have made in my photography practice.

My practice has developed through the ethnographic process, where outcomes are analysed to create my work. When starting a new project, the initial interest would not be in the choice of object or how it may be photographed. It would be with the stories, secrets and unheard voices surrounding the object that working with photography I may be able to make them

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[33] See Figure 2.2, p. 12. Alexandru Modoi, 3D print, Chester, 2019. 3D reproduction of a bas-relief. On display in the Newstead Gallery at Grosvenor Museum, Chester, also on Appendix 3, p. 104.

visible and heard by an audience. This research also has nurtured an interest in finding and developing ideas by working with and for community and focus groups.

Here are questions I have identified during this research, which I have not discussed them here and some suggestions for further projects.

- Through methods similar to this research, how would new studies explore a different culture with a different story to share?
- Regarding photogrammetry,[34] how can photographing still life objects help to reproduce lost artefacts, while focusing on the object itself and the available 3D printing technologies? To involve exploring 3D printing with its visual image, without an ethnographic input.
- At one point in this research, 'how to photograph the indexical?' become a significant question. Other research, therefore, might examine 'how not to photograph the indexical?'
- How to create and what is a photograph where either the artist's statement or the visual image itself are not present?
- What if the statement is missing? What if the photograph is missing, but the statement not?
- Without discovering the ethnographic meaning, how differently can the problem of misrepresentation or misunderstanding be explored?
- Can other disciplines use the single-use camera and this research PEIs approach of this research to collect stories from conscious and unconscious realities? For example, those disciplines referencing Jung, but not exclusively.
- What potential misunderstandings would possibly produce a less productive artist-curator relationship?
- Is it necessary to attach to the artwork its artist's statement or its specific meaning? If so, how much would be lost or miswritten with this type of intervention?
- How to photograph the iconic? Undertaking the same methods and approaches, how a new project may be conducted to explore the iconic or the symbolic instead of the indexical meaning?

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[34] This is related with my initial thoughts, before this research started on how photography may help to reproduce artefacts.

- When are you going home? reflecting not only immigration, but aspects of going home from work, going home from a relationship or going home from an expedition.
- Who are you? Who am I? projects - for example, reflecting on the identity, voices to be heard, embracing the heritage, changing yourself for the better or confidence in yourself.

5.4. New potential projects

All the research questions exploring the existence of photo-entanglement between a photographic image and its indexical meaning arose during the ethnographic and auto-ethnographic processes, as well as through the creative (re)actions of my photographic practice. While my research is concerned with photographic images of still life objects, my findings can be equally useful for other disciplinary and interdisciplinary photographic practices. For example, other researchers may want to look at the use of the single-use camera or instant camera methods. A number of disciplines may find it appropriate to work with these methods. They include: creative practice research more generally; museums research involving collecting and displaying of objects; anthropology and ethnography research exploring cultural and heritage knowledge; and psychology research, in which accessing personal feelings, secrets or intimacies plays an important part of the research.

The intimacy of face-to-face semi-structured interviews discussing photographs, enables participants to share their stories with a 'sense of well-being', as many of my participants said. With reference to Jung (2002), 'Getting into the zone' was used in the creation process as a way of escaping from ordinary reality. My research shows that it may be useful for museums and different collection practices to utilise some of my methods and findings to enhance their understanding of cultural artefacts by accessing the local culture, heritage and folklore behind a physical object. I remember how I started this research, trying to reproduce a complete three-dimensional museum object. Even though the photo rendition was comprehensive, as Allahyari (2016) also found in her research, the cultural dimension of the object was missing. Finally, I would like to also suggest that once the process of collecting stories and photographs of cultural artefacts is complete, there should be specific further research projects looking into the details of how to preserve the stories of these artefacts for effective sharing with a general audience.

My new further projects, as I have learned from this research, may encounter the unexpected, with many challenges to overcome. I believe that this PhD project opens up new territory which I am looking forward to exploring. I believe that there will be new situations to overcome and adapt to. Here are two examples that may influence my future practice. First, further COVID-19 restrictions have been introduced because of the Omicron variant. Second, two days ago I received British citizenship, so now I have dual citizenship and I may learn from both cultures while experiencing a constantly changing life. How will these and other similar factors shape my practice?

Further potential projects are primarily related to academic settings and will include exploring and expanding the knowledge I have gained through this research. Once the exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum is over, it is my intention to install it at different universities. At these locations, I would include the complete original messages, including the words, such as indexical meaning, misrepresentation and the other – none of which were included at the museum exhibition. It is also my intention that the exhibitions to be accompanied by artist tours of the exhibition, guest lectures and workshops.

In addition, it is my intention to develop a method of working with communities using the approach I have adopted in this research. I would be looking for an established model, which would potentially serve as a foundation to which to apply my own methods. This would involve collaborating with the institution through a programme of extra-curricular activities in which groups of people would share their stories with their cultural meanings and take part in organising their own exhibition within the institution or at a public venue. As I have learnt from this research, these photo-elicitation sessions have significant potential for gaining a sense of well-being and creating better relationships between people.

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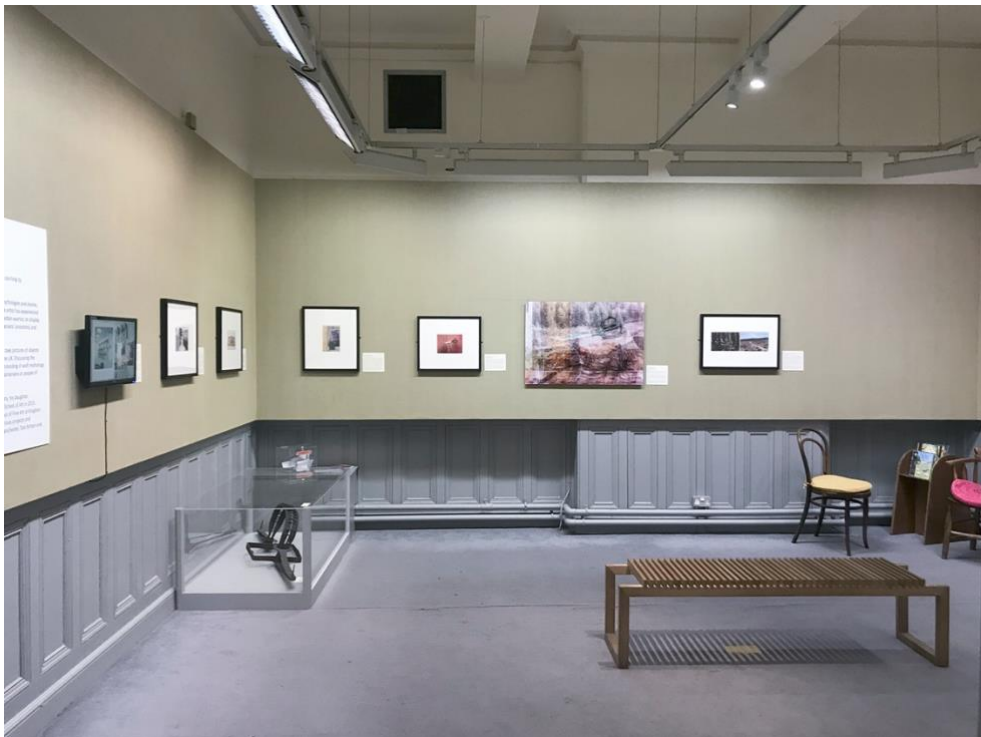
Appendix 1: Exhibition documentation
22nd November 2021 – 13th February 2022, Gallery 2, Grosvenor Museum Chester, UK

Alexandru Modoi. Exhibition documentation 1,
Photographs of Wolf Myths, Entry

Alexandru Modoi. Exhibition documentation 2,
Photographs of Wolf Myths, Front and left walls.

Alexandru Modoi. Exhibition documentation 2,
Photographs of Wolf Myths, Story corner, front and right walls.

Alexandru Modoi. Exhibition documentation 2,
Photographs of Wolf Myths, Right and the Collective Story

Alexandru Modoi. Exhibition documentation 2,
Photographs of Wolf Myths, Photographs from the participants and still life objects

Alexandru Modoi. Exhibition documentation 2,
Photographs of Wolf Myths, Exit and the left wall

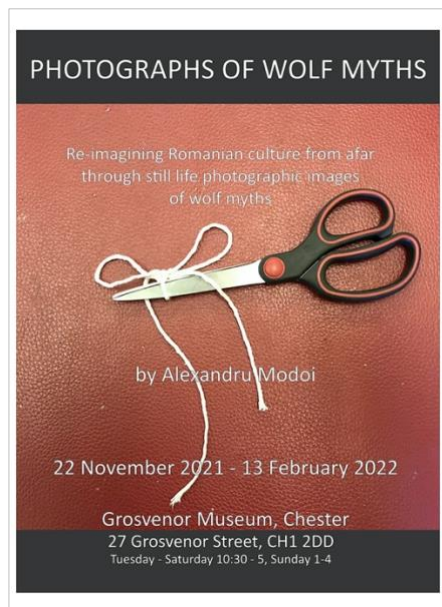# PHOTOGRAPHS OF WOLF MYTHS

BY ALEXANDRU MODOI

Alexandru Modoi questions how a creative practice of photographing still life objects can help to re-imagine Romanian culture through the photographic images of wolf myths.

This exhibition intends to portray Romanian culture in a new light, through its wolf mythologies and stories, rather than through immigration or Dracula. It evokes the folklore and myths that the artist has experienced during his childhood in Romania. The artist was inspired by the *Tombstone of a Sarmatian* warrior, on display in the Webster Gallery at Grosvenor Museum, which reminded him of Dacians (Romanians' ancestors) and wolf stories transmitted through generations.
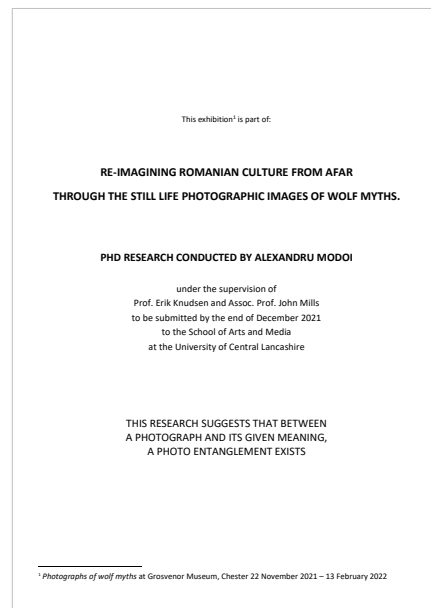
Voluntary participants from Romania and Romanians living in Chester were asked to take pictures of objects representing their personal wolf experiences, with the intention of sharing here in the UK. Discussing the photographs, the artist intends to present a collective story and share his own understanding of wolf mythology and folklore in Romania. Ultimately, this method may be used as a model by other Romanians or people of other nationalities to share their own stories.

Alexandru Modoi has lived in Chester since 2010 with Daniela, his wife, and Alexandra, his daughter. He received a Masters of Arts in Photography with distinction from the Manchester School of Art in 2015. In 2014 he graduated with 1st Class BA (Hons) degree in Photography from the School of Fine Art at Kingston University, London. Since 2011 he has been studying, exhibiting, and working for various projects and commissions in London, Manchester and Liverpool, including the Holden Gallery Manchester, Tate Britain and Kingston Museum, as well as in France, Croatia and Romania.

Exhibition Information 1.

A6 size, Post Card.

This exhibition[1] is part of:

RE-IMAGINING ROMANIAN CULTURE FROM AFAR
THROUGH THE STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF WOLF MYTHS.

PHD RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY ALEXANDRU MODOI

under the supervision of
Prof. Erik Knudsen and Assoc. Prof. John Mills
to be submitted by the end of December 2021
to the School of Arts and Media
at the University of Central Lancashire

THIS RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT BETWEEN
A PHOTOGRAPH AND ITS GIVEN MEANING,
A PHOTO ENTANGLEMENT EXISTS

[1] *Photographs of wolf myths* at Grosvenor Museum, Chester 22 November 2021 – 13 February 2022

Exhibition information 2 at the end.

13 entangled wolf myths
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt
Acrylic Reverse 37.4 x 26.4 inch

This photograph shows all of the exhibition photographs together. Each photograph was printed on clear acetate then put on a lightbox on top of each other, emphasising the idea of transparency. The intention is to create one single image containing all the layers/stories together.

The argument is that by looking at each photograph and finding its indexical meaning, helps to understand the *13 entangled wolf myths* photograph. For a better understanding, this exhibition suggests that the viewer to consider looking at both, the photographs and their meaning to avoid potential misrepresentations. Similar approaches may be taken for other stories to be found and shared using photographs and their stories together.

The number 13 refers to the idea of bad luck and good luck, which is how the wolf is similarly associated. People approached for this project were scared, angry or even avoided telling stories about it, but people also looked at the wolf as a majestic animal, a symbol of freedom, or were 'happy to meet it to get to know it better'.

Does it have strong jaws?
Alexandru Modoi, 2019, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 8 x 6 inch

'Tie the wolf's mouth' is said in some parts of Romania to ensure someone does not have an unfortunate experience with a wolf. People tightly tie scissors or other similar sharp objects, such as a handsaw or pliers, with strings or chains. In the Romanian Orthodox and Folklore Calendar, more than 20 different days refer to the wolf, and some of these days bring restrictions and traditions. For example, whoever works on those days is going to be bitten by the wolf or the wolf is going to eat the animals on their farm.

The still life objects are the scissors and a string. They are ordinary objects that I have chosen from my crafting table. Traditional Romanian scissors, which are used for everyday farm work, are bigger, stronger and often rusted.
My intention is to look at how the objects I have at home, here in the UK, may help me to re-imagine and share those experiences from years ago in Romania.

Finding the way out through wildness
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Two photographs printed on C-Type Fuji Matt, 9 x 6 inch each

In Romanian folklore, it is believed that a wolf can show the way through a forest and a way out of danger, which may include being lost in a forest or encountering potential enemies. The wolf can find its way through a forest without difficulty and, according to Zalmoxis myth, the wolf led the Dacians to victory against the Romans in several fights in the forested mountains.

Since childhood, I have believed that despite the tension between wolves and people, it is the wolf that may be willing to rebuild harmony, and it may be the wolf that shows you the way out of the forest. With this in mind,
I have always been careful in case the sign may be a trap that can lead to an ambush or the wolf pack. The key here is harmony and prudence when entering the forested mountains.

This image of landscape changes came into my mind while running in the UK as I recalled my childhood experiences in Romania. I placed this sign in one of the forests where I used to run, and a few weeks later, I placed the sign where the forest used to be. Distant from what once was familiar, it made me feel lost as I did not have the forest to guide me anymore.

The doctor of the forest
Alexandru Modoi, 2020, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch

The doctor of the forest photograph focuses on the belief that the wolf is a medic. My grandparents used to say the wolf keeps a natural balance as it hunts, selects the weak, and because it is a carnivore, it keeps the forest healthy with balanced numbers of strong animals in the wild. Moreover, it is believed that a wolf can sense fear, weakness and feelings of being lost; it can hear and smell very well. However, in contrast to this 'doctor of the forest' idea, it could easily be argued that a medic does not actually kill the weak.

It is clear to me that there is a natural ecosystem and the wolf is a vital part of it. I have chosen this context because there have been occasions when I have imagined a wolf wearing a hospital gown, surgical hat and stethoscope, but it is not the wolf as a medic that I would meet in a forest.

The stethoscope is photographed in a forest, and the indexical meaning clarifies how this photograph can be interpreted. Without it, I would rather understand the photograph as depicting a lost or found object in the forest. One of the differences between *Finding the way out through wildness* and *The doctor of the forest* is the misplaced object. Both photographs show still life objects in the forest that depict the wolf as a guide or a medic. The difference is that the directional sign is more likely to be found in a forest than a stethoscope.

It will adapt for its gains
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch

During my childhood, the idea of people cohabiting with wolves was more or less accepted, especially during food shortages. Some went after the wolves for revenge once their farms were attacked, but some opposed this. They accepted that the wolf sometimes would get his food and go to his natural habitat, as well as keeping a balanced wildlife. They believed that keeping the wolf fed helped protect its habitat, so their farms and families would also be protected. 'What are you looking for, going up there where the wolves and bears live?' one of my grandparents used to ask me when I went mountaineering. The key message referred to people's actions of going where wild animals live, and in doing so, the animals might have to change their habits, developing violent behaviour or moving to new places to find a new home and food.

Does it eat fruit?
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch

Again, I recall stories about the wild forest with their wild animals and people's relationships with them. In my experience of Romanian folklore and stories, the wolf is often portrayed as looking for food, especially lambs and sheep, and people are known to protect their farms. Speaking with Romanian participants, there was an open discussion on whether or not the wolf eats fruit. My argument is that the portrait of the wolf attacking and hunting animals on people's farms is more visible compared to the one of the wolf eating fruit. I believe there may be more learn about wild animals and their habits.

Homo homini lupus est (A human is a wolf to another human)
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Two photographs printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch each

The still life objects are cheese, tomatoes, spring onions, two glasses of palinca (a strong alcoholic drink, often stronger than vodka) and a kitchen knife.
These are the items most often present on the table when nibbling and having a chat. 'And you should be careful who you invite to your table,' one of my grandparents would say. Romanian ballads, such as *Miorita*, and traditions and histories back up these words. A person may fight with another about their food and wealth (sheep and money, back then).

It is believed that some people are as bad as wolves in disputes about farms, land and money. The emphasis is not only on the fight and ferocity compared to the wolf or on the excessive cosumption of alcohol, but on the trickster - someone who may only come to your table for a particular reason, such as personal gain.

Cares about its family
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch

In Romania, boiled eggs painted red are closely associated with Easter traditions. People also eat lamb steaks and other culinary derivatives of lamb, which, in most parts, are associated with the offerings brought to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Living in Romania, people often had different opinions about this tradition; on the one hand, many chose not to eat lamb, and on the other hand, many would. I often thought that on those Easter days, the lambs would not only have to hide from wolves, but from people too.

The still life objects I have chosen are red eggs, and bread, and a lamb steak as an implied object equally present in the photographic image. It is the missing object that is strongly present in memories of my childhood experiences in Romania. Nowadays, at Easter time, I paint eggs red at home, as shown in the photograph, but the complete image that I share with my daughter and friends is one that includes other missing elements: the lamb, the wolf and the human.

It gives a feeling of peace
Alexandru Modoi, 2020, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 6 x 8 inch

This is related to 30 November and the celebration of Saint Andrew. It is said that garlic will protect the house against wolves, and this day is also known as Wolf Day or Ghost's Night. On this night, the spirits are amongst the living creatures. It is believed that the wolf's neck becomes so flexible that it can see its tail and other people better, and the wolf becomes more agile so no prey can escape. The wolf not only becomes more powerful, but it also forms an alliance with the spirits. Moreover, those who get bitten by the wolves become werewolves. On this day, it is said that housework should not be done, the bin should not be taken out and money or objects should not be loaned or given to others. It is believed that objects, such as axes, tongs and door handles, and greasing the windows with garlic will protect the house.

For this photograph, I have used garlic mounted on a string, just as I remember it hanging in Romania. I have placed it on my window and taken pictures from the inside looking out and from the outside looking in at dusk.
I have selected the photograph taken from the inside looking out, emphasising the house and the household's beliefs.

It may be something bad nearby
Alexandru Modoi, 2020, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 8 x 6 inch

Saint Andrew the Apostle Day is on 30 November, it is also known as the Apostle of the Wolves Day or the Wolf's Day (Santandrei, Romanian Orthodox and Folklore Calendar, 2020). This day brings with it some restrictions and traditions. For example, whoever works on this day is going to be bitten by the wolf or the wolf is going to eat the animals on their farm. 'Tie down the wolf' is said to ensure someone does not have an unfortunate experience with a wolf. On this day in some parts of Romania, people bake bread from wholewheat that is tied in chains, like the one shown in the picture.
Later, on the third day of Christmas, the homeowner or family leader takes the bread and breaks it into pieces to give to every person and animal. It is said that any living creature that eats the bread will not be attacked by the wolf for the whole year.

As I remember, the chain and padlock were often used to secure a house gate, shed, stable, bike or cart. It was used to keep something safe and secure rather than to restrain. The bread, similar to homemade bread, is a symbol of wheat and homemade food, which is secured using the chain and padlock so it is not taken by the wolf.

It fed two children
Alexandru Modoi, 2020, Brosov Romania
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 9 x 6 inch, frame 19 x 16 inch

Lupa Capitolina is a symbol of Latinity as referred to by the participants of the photo-elicitation. It is a statue that has been displayed to the public in various locations in Romania, including Bucharest and Brasov. These venues have become places for families and tourists to visit and learn about its story in connection with Romania. It has been present in many of our childhood stories; parents and grandparents often told stories about our Dacian ancestors and the Romans.

They often referred to the idea of a close relationship between wolves and people, especially wolves and Dacians. The name 'Dacian' has been often translated as 'themselves like wolves' or 'those who are like wolves'. There are many stories about our ancestors living amongst the wolves, including the one of Romulus and Remus being fed and cared for by a she-wolf. Here, two aspects are often emphasised: the wolf helping two children and the wolf living in harmony with people, especially Dacians.

Here the still life objects are the statue and the single-use camera placed on the plinth. This is the camera I offered to the photo-elicitation participants to take their photographs. It is a small green object compared to the statue, and it is not very visible. My intention was not to interfere too much with the statues but to emphasise the start of producing photographs for this research.

Fathers and grandfathers will tell stories about it
Alexandru Modoi, 2021, UK Chester
Photograph printed on C-Type Fuji Matt 8 x 6 inch

In some parts of Romania, between the 25 and 31 January during Winter Philip, people used to boil a shirt in hot water to stop the wolf from hunting on their farm and to protect their families from any disease and bad spirits the wolf might have brought into the village. On those days, young boys would wear freshly cleaned and ironed shirts to meet young girls in the village, a tradition that also refers to the context of fertility and good health to protect the farm and the family.

For this photograph, I have chosen the following still life objects: my shirt, wooden tongs and a ten-litre pot. I intended to recreate, from my childhood experience, the process of scalding clothes. There are some potentially misleading aspects, such as the colour of the shirt, which is traditionally white; the wooden tongs that are similar but not the same as traditional tongs; the pot, which used to be larger and made of thick aluminium; the hob, which is not a traditional old stove. Additionally, there are other elements, such as the UK plug, the oven's on/off switch and the smartphone charger. For this photograph, I have decided that these objects work with my narrative, which reflects personal insights: this is a shirt that I like to wear nowadays, the plug and the phone charger show the time and location and reveal that the photograph was not taken in Romania in the 1970s, but in the UK.

Photo-elicitation interviews conducted in Romania, 2019
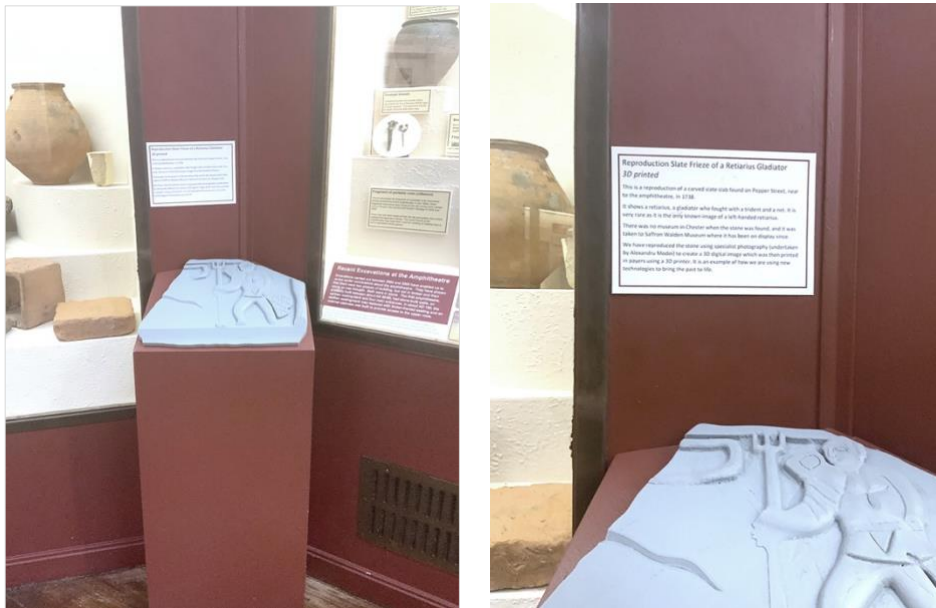Alexandru Modoi, 2020, UK Chester
Video documentary, 30mins

Identifying myths and histories was a continuous process. Every participant had their own way to emphasise the local folklore and histories, and personal feelings regarding wolf encounters in myths or real life. Participants seem to have different thoughts and feelings attached to the wolf from Romanian culture. I have looked at the data collected (video interviews and photographs), and there seems to be a common story and feelings about the Romanian wolf, but there are isolated stories too. Ultimately, all the data contributes to the collective story of the wolf myths from the Romanian culture, which I have encountered during my field trips to Romania.

Single use and instant cameras have re-enacted the stories learnt from books, teachers, parents or grandparents, or experienced in their real lives. The stories are recalled from Romanian folklore, which sometimes can be different from one place to another. Using the single use cameras, participants had not been able to look at the images prior to the interviews and were only working with a limited number of photographs (26 frames). This made them more careful about what they were photographing.

A frugal selection process took place before taking a picture. This process seemed to allow people to create their own narrative. Looking through the camera viewfinder rather than looking at the LCD screen, some of the participants were using these cameras for the first time. Once the photographs were printed and placed on the table, participants had their first opportunity to sort the photographs by date, themes meaning and intend.

Photographs by Alexandru Modoi, November 2021
The 3D Print and the label on display, Newstead Gallery, Grosvenor Museum, Chester
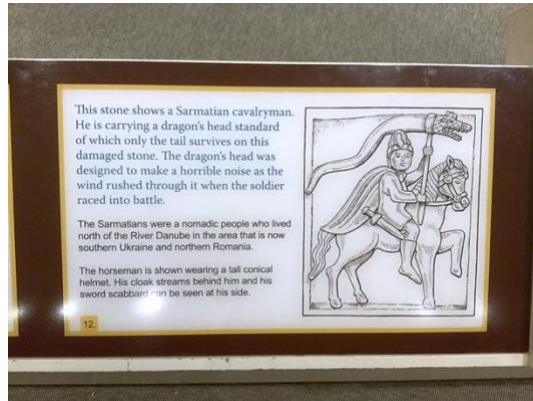
Citation from the label:

'*Reproduction Slate Frieze of a Gladiator 3D printed*

This is a reproduction of a carved slate slab found on Pepper Street, near to the amphitheatre, in 1738.

It shows a retiarius, a gladiator who fought with a trident and a net. It is very rare as it is the only known image of a left-handed retiarius.

There was no museum in Chester when the stone was found, and it was taken to Saffron Walden Museum where it has been on display since.

We have reproduced the stone using specialist photography (undertaken by Alexandru Modoi) to create a 3D digital image which was then printed in payers using a 3D printer. It is an example of how we are using new technologies to bring the past to life.'

Photographs by Alexandru Modoi, November 2021
The Tombstone and the label on display, Newstead Gallery, Grosvenor Museum, Chester

Citation from the label:

'This stone shows a Sarmatian cavalryman. He is carrying a dragon's head standard of which only the tail survives on this damaged stone. The dragon's head was designed to make a horrible noise as the wind rushed through it when the soldier raced into battle.

The Sarmatians were a nomadic people who lived north of the River Danube in the Area that is now southern Ukraine and northern Romania.

The horseman is shown wearing a tall conical helmet. His cloak streams behind him and his sword scabbard can be seen at his side.'
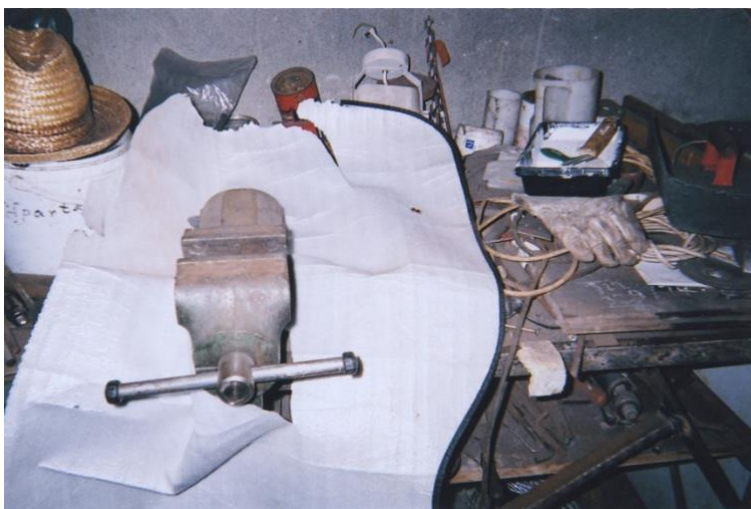
Appendix 4: Photographs from participants in Romania
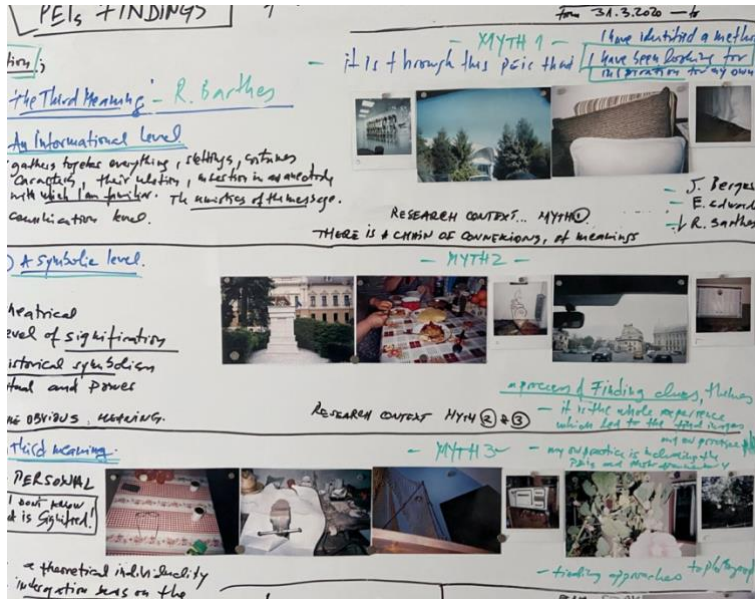
Whiteboard March 2021,
Photographs from the
participants and
the structure of the
documentary

Teofil, Brasov, 2019
It has very good eyesight.

Teofil, Brasov, 2019
It has strong jaws.

Rudy, Bucharest, 2019
Cannot be tamed.
Who is the king of the animals?
It won't hop and jump through a hoop

Rudy, Bucharest, 2019
It brings feelings of melancholy
It fed two children,
It stays fix in your mind.
And it will make you feel proud.

Sorin, Bucharest, 2019
The feeling is that of fear
Respect through fear.

Landina, Birlad, 2019
It cares about its family,
It gathers food not necessarily
out if greed.

Irina, Brasov, 2019
Dark-grey pillow-fur, soft,
smooth and delicate

Irina, Brasov, 2019

Ioana, Brasov, 2019
It is a symbol of Latinity...
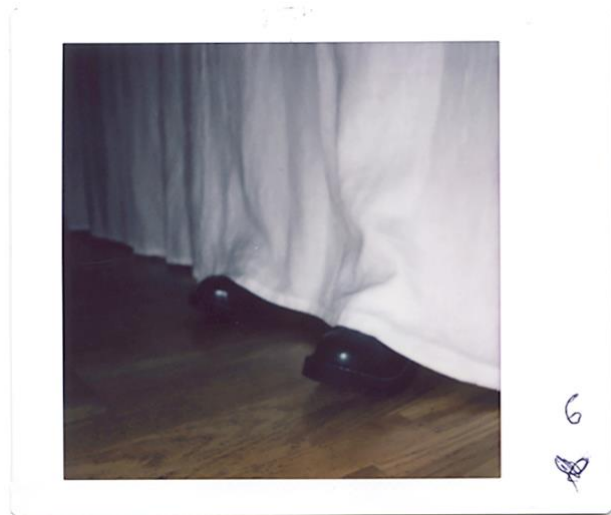Supremacy...

Andra, Cluj, Romania, 2019

Andreea, Brasov, 2019

Andreea, Brasov, 2019

Andreea, Brasov, 2019
And you may wish to know it
better

Alex, Bucharest, 2019
It may be something bad nearby

Alex, Bucharest, 2019
It is a danger.

Alex, Bucharest, 2019
It changes its fur.

Adi, Brasov, 2019
It is afraid of fire

Adi, Brasov, 2019
Fruits and veggies are well protected

Ciprian, Brasov, 2019
It may find flowers along its walks
In your garden at home

Ciprian, Brasov, 2019
A beauty.
An elegance.

Adi, Brasov, 2019
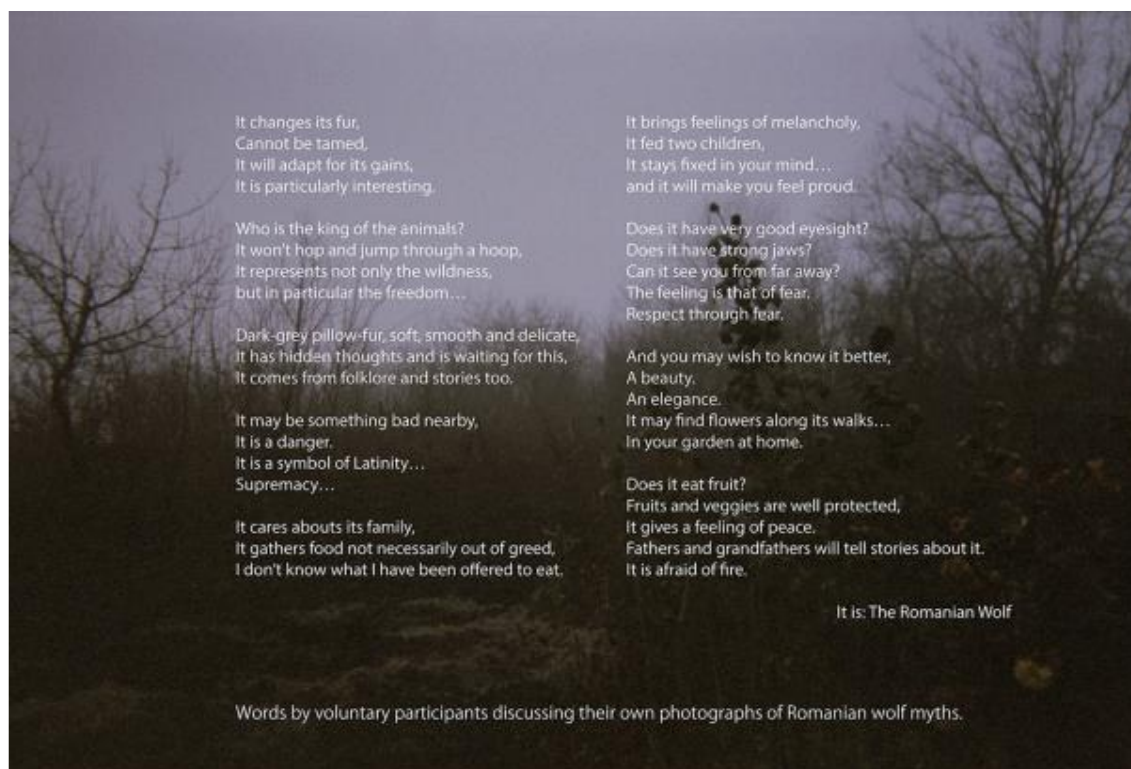Fathers and grandfather will tell stories about it.

Emilia, Drujesti Birlad, 2019
Sheep on the foggy hill,
behind the house

Emilia, Drujesti Birlad, 2019
At the rear of my house

It changes its fur,
Cannot be tamed,
It will adapt for its gains,
It is particularly interesting.

Who is the king of the animals?
It won't hop and jump through a hoop,
It represents not only the wildness,
but in particular the freedom…

Dark-grey pillow-fur, soft, smooth and
delicate,
It has hidden thoughts and is waiting for this,
It comes from folklore and stories too,

It may be something bad nearby,
It is a danger.
It is a symbol of Latinity…
Supremacy…

It cares abouts its family,
It gathers food not necessarily out of greed,
I don't know what I have been offered to eat.

It brings feelings of melancholy,
It fed two children,
It stays fixed in your mind…
and it will make you feel proud.

Does it have very good eyesight?
Does it have strong jaws?
Can it see you from far away?
The feeling is that of fear.
Respect through fear.

And you may wish to know it better,
A beauty.
An elegance.
It may find flowers along its walks…
In your garden at home.

Does it eat fruit?
Fruits and veggies are well protected.
It gives a feeling of peace.
Fathers and grandfathers will tell stories about it.
It is afraid of fire.

It is: The Romanian Wolf.