

SONOKO
OBUCHI

MY
LIFE IN
STITCHES

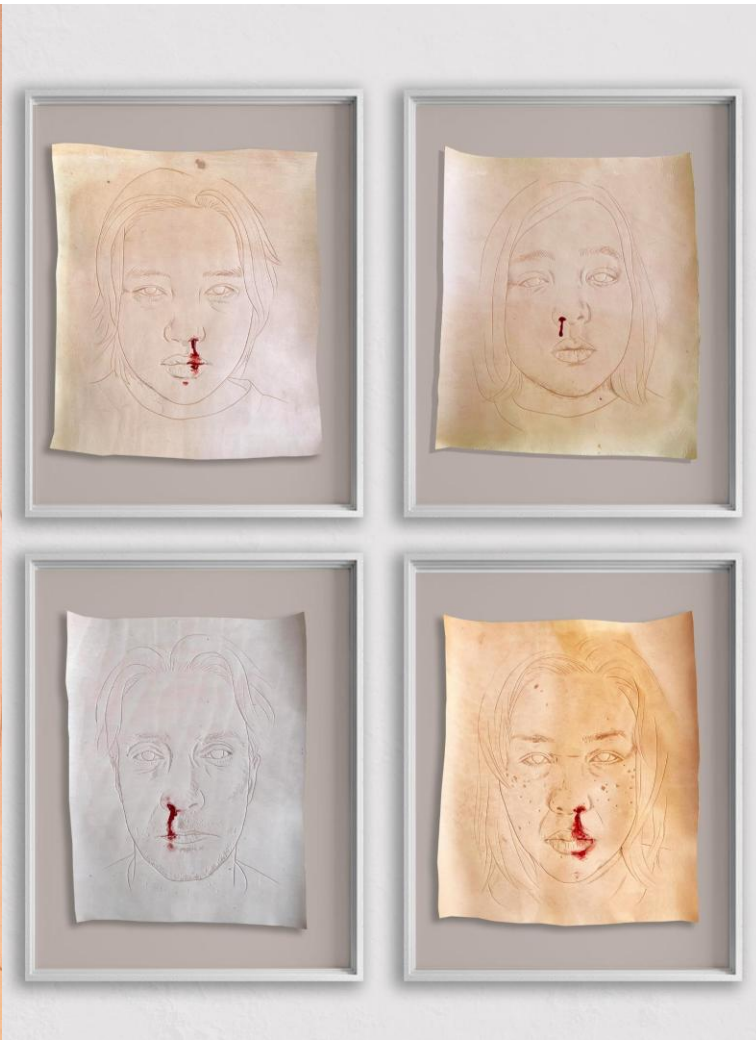


Exhibition Concept and Brief

Exhibition Title: *My Life in Stitches*

My Life in Stitches began as a deeply personal exploration of my family's journey in the UK, focusing on my teenage child's struggle with depression during the COVID-19 pandemic, his school refusal, and the profound impact this had on all of us over the past three and a half years. I started creating artwork in September 2024 as a way to heal and bring closure to this challenging chapter. So far, the exhibition has been shown in Derbyshire and Cheshire East in the UK, as well as Fukuoka, Japan. It has resonated with visitors, college students, and families facing similar challenges. The response from audiences has been phenomenal—deeply moving and overwhelmingly heartfelt.





“Skins” (2024)
Shellac, leather

Created with my grandmother's leather craft set, this series reflects endurance through hardship. The raw, textured leather represents vulnerability — something I've struggled with while supporting my teen child through depression and school refusals, all while quietly facing my own hidden challenges. Throughout this journey, my husband and younger child also endured in their own ways. Our whole family felt the weight of it, and this artwork honours our collective emotional wounds.

The leather symbolises not only the scars we carry but also the strength needed to heal. The nosebleed imagery in the work represents these emotional wounds, a physical manifestation of pain and the process of mending. Though unsettling, the roughness of the medium speaks to the rawness of our experiences, capturing both the pain of hardship and the resilience required to endure. ‘Skins’ is a reflection of survival, recovery, and the power in continuing, even when it feels impossible.



“My Little Bro” (2024)

Textiles, acrylic paints, bed cover

Made from the bedcover of my younger son, this piece reflects his cheerful innocence amid the turmoil surrounding his older sibling's struggles. While my eldest faced immense challenges, my younger son carried on, unaffected outwardly but silently enduring. This work imagines him awake in the stillness of 3am, embodying his quiet strength and resilience.



“Family Portrait” (2024)

Wall paint, acrylic paint, oil pastels, fabric

Three years ago, our family faced a difficult time. The happy memories I once cherished became too painful to recall. After moving to a new home, we packed away all our family photos and lived without them. Over time, I found the courage to create a family portrait, and together, we completed it. I am forever grateful to my amazing family.



“13” (2024)

Leather paints, oil pastels, on mattress protector

Using our family mattress protector, Sonoko drew a picture of her eldest son. When he turned 13, Covid arrived in the UK, changing everything. He struggled mentally, and the years from 13 onwards have been his toughest. The mattress protector likely holds countless memories of sleepless nights and battles. Sonoko chose to draw him on it, as if to overwrite the painful times and help us overcome those struggles.



“Fragments” (2024)

wall paint, oil pastels on canvas

This oil pastel piece reflects my personal evolution, where loss reveals new strengths and weaknesses with each passing day. Sonoko was once certain of who she was before the turmoil. But the difficult three years made her realise that we are always changing, moment by moment. Life is a journey of constantly letting go of what we once thought was ours, only for something new to emerge from places we never expected.



“Self Portrait” (2024)

Acrylic paint, oil pastels on canvas

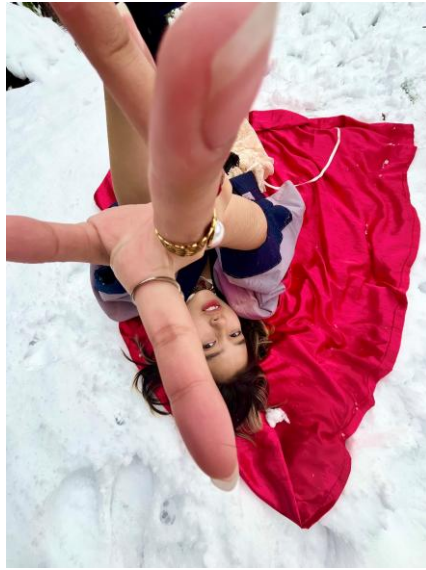
This self-portrait is an affirmation of my resilience. Despite not typically drawing myself, I wanted to mark my survival through the challenges we’ve faced. Framed by an embroidery hoop, the piece features Elsa, our dearly beloved cat, who passed in May 2024. I feel she’s watching over us, reminding me that I’m still standing, despite everything.



“Gone with the Wind” (2024)

Photography

This photograph captures Sonoko's feeling of wanting to disappear during the challenging past three years. She wishes something would sweep her away, leaving no trace. In the image, she becomes part of the fabric artwork from My Little Bro, no longer human, dissolving into the air and vanishing within the artwork itself.



“My son in November” (2024)

Photography

This photographic work is a collaboration with my transgender son, who had gone through a difficult years since the Covid lock down. Since coming out three years ago, he has chosen to dress in a more masculine style every day. However, on one November day, for an art school project, he decided to wear something more feminine. Seeing him in that moment, I was taken aback—it was the first time in years that I had sensed a trace of femininity in him. While helping him with the photoshoot, I asked if he would also model for my own artwork, and he agreed without hesitation. A thought crossed my mind as I captured the image: this might be the last time I see this side of him. In the coming years, as he begins hormone treatment, his body will increasingly reflect his male identity. This photoshoot became a profoundly special experience for both of us—a shared moment between mother and son, and a precious record of his transition. It is a treasure we will carry with us forever.

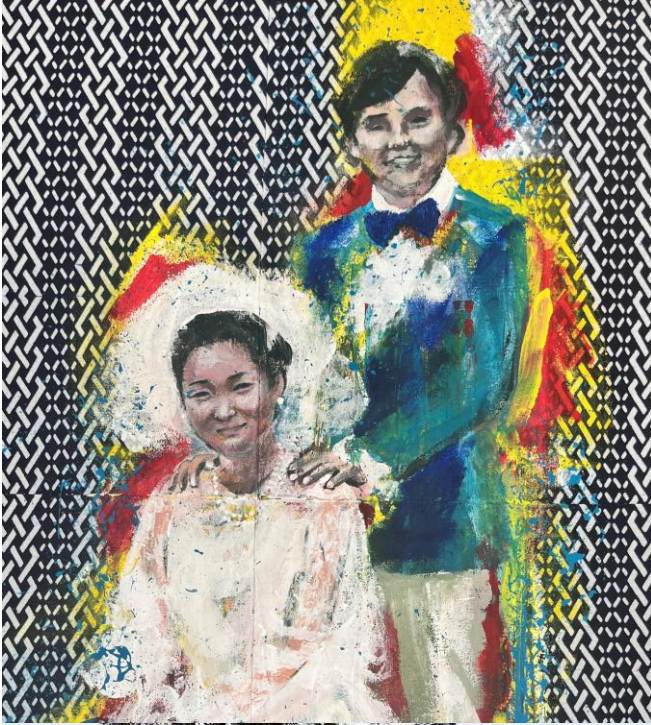


“Dearest Elsa” (2024)

Cotton and nylon threads, fabric

Embroidery & tufting

This embroidery reflects the healing journey after losing my cat, Elsa, who was a steadfast companion, especially to my eldest during dark times. The detailed stitching represents both the fragility and strength of our bond. Through the weeks spent creating this piece, I found solace, channelling my grief into something physical and healing.

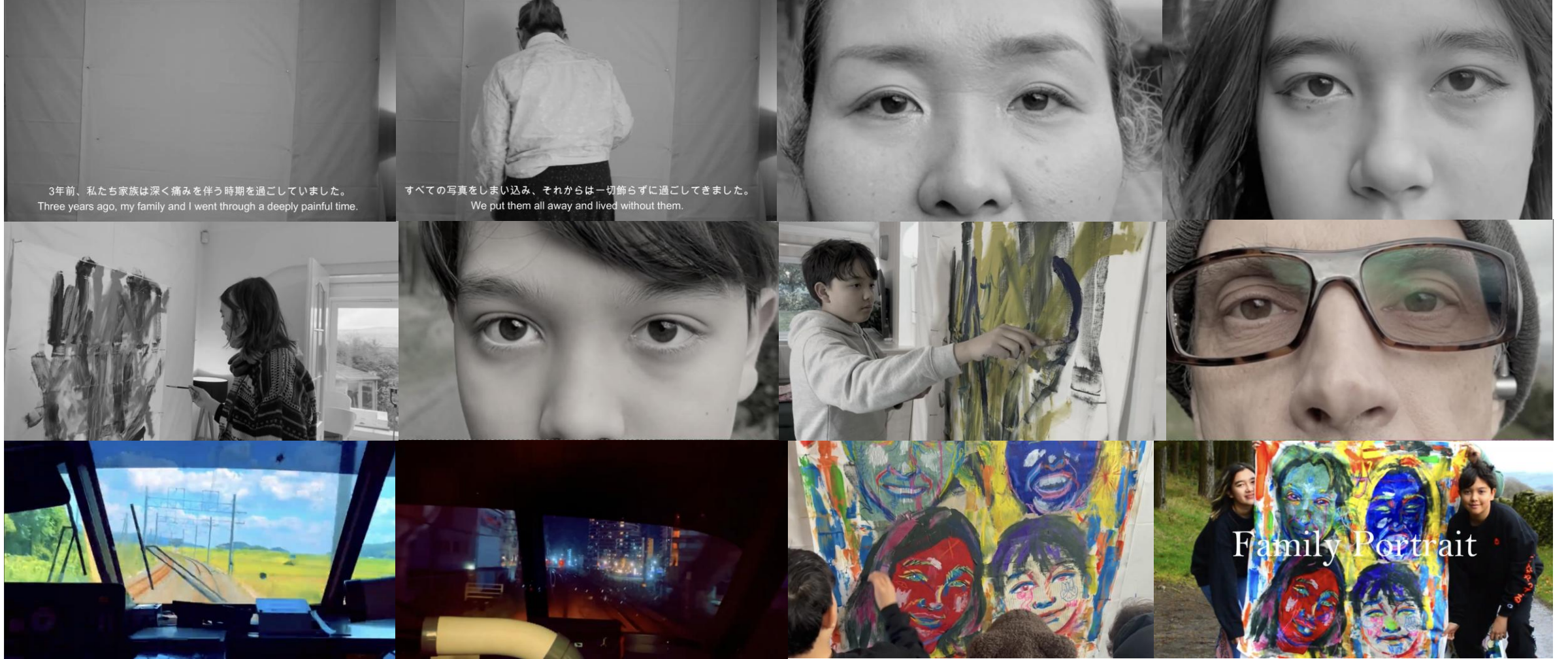


**“Their Wedding Day 1981” (2025)
Acrylic Paint on Summer Kimono (Yukata)**

My parents in Japan have been my rock through the darkest times especially for the last three years.

Recently, I found their wedding photo. So much has changed since that day, and my father’s memory is fading significantly, but I want the memory of their wedding to remain as vivid and cherished as possible, forever.

I was born the following year, and it is an honour to wear this kimono—made from my father’s old yukata—as a tribute to their lives, love, and marriage. I took this artwork with me on my recent trip to Japan, wearing it in celebration of them.



3年前、私たち家族は深く痛みを伴う時期を過ごしていました。
Three years ago, my family and I went through a deeply painful time.

すべての写真をしまい込み、それからは一切飾らずに過ごしてきました。
We put them all away and lived without them.

Family Portrait

Video Artwork: Family Portrait (2024)

The video artwork Family Portrait documents our journey of healing, growth, and resilience as a family through the process of painting a portrait together. Three years ago, we found it too painful to even look at family photos. Even after moving into a new home, we avoided displaying pictures. However, as time passed, our hearts slowly began to heal, and we found the courage to take on the challenge of creating a family portrait. What began with hesitation and fear gradually transformed into a powerful experience that strengthened our bond. In the end, this artwork became a testament to our recovery and connection as a family. [Here is the link to the video.](#)



Video works
“Happy Whatever” (2024)

A few years ago, when Sonoko and her family were in crisis, she felt like she was losing her mind. Only very recently has she recognised that what she was feeling back then was probably depression. At the time, it never occurred to her that she might be suffering from it. She was social, smiling, and always trying to stay positive. Sonoko made this short film, Happy Whatever, to capture that period of her life.

[Watch ‘Happy Whatever’ here.](#)

Solo exhibition tour in the UK and Japan so far



Sonoko Obuchi | Japanese Multimedia Artist | Based in the UK

Profile: Sonoko Obuchi is a multimedia artist, visual storyteller, and designer, known for blending traditional craft with contemporary media. She explores themes of identity, relationships, and transformation through set design, animation, fine art, and character design. With a BA in Spatial Design from University of the Arts London, Sonoko has worked across multiple creative disciplines, from stage design to animation, and has collaborated with notable artists and companies. Her work resonates with global audiences, having exhibited widely and contributed to various high-profile creative projects.

Awards & Recognition

Offies 2024 Nominee: Video Design, Sputnik Sweetheart by Haruki Murakami, Arcola Theatre (2023)
Artist in Residence: Historic Royal Palaces – Kensington Palace, Tower of London (2006), artwork became permanent collection

Selected Exhibitions

2025 – My Life in Stitches (World Tour), Jordangate Gallery, UK
2024 – My Life in Stitches (World Tour), Spazio Gallery, Fukuoka, Japan
2017 – POP JAPAN, The Dugdale Centre, London

Selected Projects

Music Video & Animation
2024 – Kirra-Kirra Animation, Sinking Ship Entertainment (Artwork, Concept)
2017 – Strobelite / Gorillaz Music Video (Styling Assistant)

Selected Press & Publications

Grazia, The Guardian, British Vogue, The Telegraph, British Theatre Guide, Soen (Japan)





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