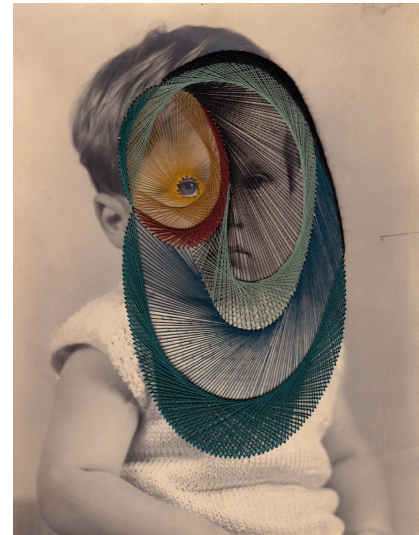


Cultural Artifact: Maurizio Anzeri - 'Penny'  
2009, Embroidery on photograph, 24 x 13cm.

Anzeri is currently exhibiting in the Saatchi Gallery, as part of a group show 'Iconoclasts: Art out of the Mainstream'. The gallery introduces his pieces: 'Maurizio Anzeri's vintage photographs garnished with embroidered patterns. Inspired by his Italian fishing heritage, the embroidery adds a third dimension to his photographs, offering an arresting juxtaposition of textures and colours.'<sup>1</sup> 'Penny' is one example of 18 of Anzeri's works hung in this exhibition space.

'Penny' features a young child sitting for a portrait with embroidery in muted colors on the child's face in a circular pattern. The serene, sepia photograph lies in contrast with the sharp and colorful thread. 'The combined media gives the effect of a dimension where history and future converge.'<sup>2</sup> Penny's eye remains uncovered - this offers the viewer an uncomfortable partly-maintained eye contact with the subject. Within his process Anzeri begs many new questions such as: 'What constitutes a photograph?' And 'How does one define a portrait?'.



The photographs used in this series of Anzeri's work are of unknown provenance. By brutally covering the face of the child Anzeri essentially covers the history and the identity of this unknown subject. It is clear Anzeri's intention was not to display found objects as he renders the subject almost unrecognizable. The thread can seem almost obstructive, blanketing the past. History is being, quite literally, covered. It works very effectively in this sense. Guising the likeness of the child creates more anonymity and mystery about the past of the photograph.

However, in covering the face, an aspect of the beauty of this intimate photograph is lost. It is a form of vandalism. Is this a portrait? The juxtaposition of a family portrait being disfigured and displayed evokes discomfort in the viewer. It may seem too intimate and intrusive as there is no context given around the original photograph or its subject. One could believe that Anzeri is aware of this uneasiness. By meshing the face there is a barrier between the subject and the viewer, creating a veil. Anzeri's intention seems aggressive or reckless, but the attention to the detail of the stitching convinces the viewer that he is acting in a considered way. He is dismantling the past and its etiquettes.

<sup>1</sup> "Saatchi Gallery Iconoclasts Exhibition: Art out of the Mainstream." Culture Whisper, 30 Sept. 2017, [www.culturewhisper.com/r/visual\\_arts/saatchi\\_gallery\\_iconoclasts\\_exhibition/10184](http://www.culturewhisper.com/r/visual_arts/saatchi_gallery_iconoclasts_exhibition/10184).

<sup>2</sup> Gallery, Saatchi. "Maurizio Anzeri." Maurizio Anzeri - Artist's Profile - The Saatchi Gallery, [www.saatchigallery.com/artists/maurizio\\_anzeri\\_iconoclasts\\_i.htm](http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/maurizio_anzeri_iconoclasts_i.htm).

Even though Anzeri's intentions aren't outlined, it is clear that he aims to destroy something. Why else exhibit under the theme 'Iconoclasts'. 'Penny', and Anzeri's other works in this series, clearly dislodge an idealization of the past, a connection to family and intimacy by masking these ethereal vintage photographs. Depending on the intention of Anzeri this can be seen as aggressive and reckless. However, this could be intentional, dismantling the past and its etiquettes. This will appeal to young, modern artists who regularly attend the Saatchi Gallery for its' ability to destroy the deeply held decorum of the past.