



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Thomas Pal	Student number	520377
Course/Unit	Context and Narrative	Assignment number	One
Type of tutorial	Written		

Overall Comments

Well done on completing this first assignment. Your supporting texts provide a rich point of entry into your thinking and visual strategy. Below I've given a few points to help locate the work that you made within an historical and theoretical context.

Assignment 1 Assessment Potential

I understand your aim is to go for the Photography/Creative Arts Degree and that you plan to submit your work for assessment at the end of this course. From the work you have shown in this assignment, providing you commit yourself to the course, I believe you have the potential to pass at assessment. In order to meet all the assessment criteria, there are certain areas you will need to focus on, which I will outline in my feedback.*

Feedback on Assignment

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Quality of Outcome, Demonstration of Creativity

I particularly like the underpinning questioning by you that drove the work and gave it shape. You're linking between work that you've done outside of the course (I think) and the ways that more potential can be revealed in images through systematic investigation is thoughtful. You might like to reflect a little further on how you might talk about the two positions and whether they form a contradiction or contrast.

This work reminded me of the way that museums regularly x-ray old masters to reveal the under-painting or even the changes in subject matter and composition of the work seen on the gallery wall. Below I've given a few examples of other art forms that have used this idea: whether through rescaling, cropping or editing through changing tone profiles.

Your introductory writing is quite short. Given time you will need to be able to demonstrate to assessors that the work became informed and contextualized by further research and study.

Technically there are no issues and you make very good use of black and white to add to the drama of each scene. The images are well composed and your sense of timing is effective to capture the

figure in space.

In the very early days of photography it was normal for photographers to build combinations of ground and sky, as the emulsion and lenses used were not capable of holding detail in both highlights and shadows. This created an overtly strange outcome and contradicted the capacity of the human eye to be able to see information in such a wide spectrum of light. See also Ansel Adam's Zone System (1939-40) where he controlled the sensitometry of the medium to such a very high level to be able to place the tones recorded of a scene and to be able push the medium to its limits to hold maximum information in a given landscape. Maybe not everyone's cup of tea, but this does show that even with a modern DSLR the camera is fallible and that control lies with the user to reveal the content that matters most to their intention.

I guess at the heart of your investigation is a question about what hides in the shadows. Based on your writing and your comparative images I'd be interested in getting you to describe in greater detail what you think does lie in the shadows. Of course you can leave this at a technical level or (I would suggest) you push yourself much harder to extend the analysis out of the technical and into the conceptual, or maybe to explore the opportunity of creating meaningfulness in the images if they were shown publically.

Coursework

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity

I'm very impressed with the ways that you decided to weave your own lived experiences into the question responses from the course handbook. It's very refreshing to have someone comment on issues of representation and conflict who has direct experience to draw on. This made the response personal and profound. I was particularly taken with the incorporation of your own images to bring home the thought of the emotional complexity surrounding war and soldiers.

In many ways I learnt more about the way you approach photography through the images embedded in the coursework. Because there are many more covering multiple subjects I could see that you are persistent in any given situation and that you are happy to try out different compositional approaches. This is a key strength on which you can build for the future. This often results in some very eye catching images and some which head towards abstraction.

With some of the writing that surrounds the coursework I think that you need to try to move away from technical aspects and change your conversation into the language concerning how images build meaning - see your exercise on monochrome vs. colour for instance as I think could open the door on to a more critical analysis.

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

You might try to get hold of a copy of both *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott and *Blowup* by Michelangelo Antonioni. Both films include scenes where the main protagonist investigates something that they could not see normally without extensive enlargement of the scene. In *Blowup* the black and white print is copied repeatedly to explore a hidden body and in *Blade Runner* futuristic digital enlargement is used.

Clarke's introductory book on photography offers a starting point into the area of the city and questions of utopia and dystopia. I mention this because firstly your images are overtly using the city (in a modern sense) and suggesting narratives that are alluded to through the figures that you have captured in that space. Those narratives (inferred stories) brush against the contemporary figure in an urban space and, therefore, you might like to develop your knowledge of this area.

Hilliard's conceptual piece from 1974 explores the multiple and contradictory readings that can be revealed by carefully staging one scene and progressively recropping that single scene to present four different narrative versions. These are: Death by being crushed; Death by Drowning; Death by Falling; Death by Burning. In revealing all four causes and accompanying texts within one art presentation he is overtly questioning the manner through which photography is received as truthful. Again in his work *She observed her reflection in the glass*, 1976 Hilliard simply constructs a single scene and shifts the viewers' attention through manipulation of depth of field and focus to build and manipulate the potential narrative. In each of these he also implicates the viewer of the work within the narrative and, therefore, ruptures what is often termed the 'fourth wall' of the medium- this term comes via theatre studies. It would be helpful for your research to develop a decent understanding of this term and how it might relate to the way traditional documentary images function.

You could even explore the work that you made within the genre of street photography. A reasonable start would be the site below. If you research this you will start to build your understanding of the ways that the subject can be talked about and how it interacts with photographic theory. See also the disquieting 1940's paintings of Edward Hopper that explore the human within urban settings.

Learning Log

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

I really liked the first image on your blog and the clever links between the graphic poster and the street scene. This again shows you have a good eye for anticipating and capturing. The speculative shots from Windsor are interesting and show yet another way that we can use techniques and kit to push content around.

Overall your blog offers easy access to your work and thinking so this needs to be maintained as assessors always look for the analysis and critical thinking that takes you from a starting point through to a finished submission.

When writing for projects and exercises try to get into the habit of incorporating credible quotes from sources rather than mainly adding the reading to your reference list at the end of each piece.

Suggested reading/viewing Context

Graham Clarke, (1997), *A Visual and Cultural History*, Oxford History of

Art <https://www.richardsaltoun.com/artists/182-john-hilliard/works/12131-john-hilliard-cause-of-death-study-1974/>

Carol Reed, (1949) *The Third Man*, London Films

<http://www.streetphotographyintheworld.com/category/masters-of-street-photography-by-carlo-traina/>

Strengths	Areas for development
Well-presented groups of images and well maintained blog that shows what you do to best effect.	An effort is needed to increasingly bring in theory and cultural context into the assignment work to give it context.
Good ideas under consideration that you push through trials and testing	With each approach that you take to assignments show that you have researched and developed your knowledge of the field.
Good visual perception skills and subtle control over technique to achieve best outcomes	

Tutor name	Dr. Andy Langford
Date	6 th Feb 2020
Next assignment due	TBC