



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

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

Overall Comments

This work has an immediate graphic impact through the use of your fixed head/face and your obviously serious expression as a coherent framework for the variations of the superimposed collages taken from your environment during Covid-19.

Assignment 3 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

You're not alone in preferring to be on the taking side of the camera as almost all photographers feel the same. What it teaches us is taking responsibility and really thinking deeply about what matters and how those inner thoughts can be given an original visual shape.

This work is obviously the outcome on your part of establishing a clear concept and structure to the series and of remaining open through experimenting with what might work. You've done very well to focus the viewer's attention on your face - complete with stubble (maybe the product of lockdown – maybe not) - and your choice to use a neutral expression where you stare directly at the viewer. I think your stripped back appearance and facial character adds greatly to the 'narrative' that the viewer could imagine in each.

We have had exchanges about your tendency to overuse monochrome, but I do accept your argument for this work. I wonder if you did try out keeping the black and white face but bring in elements where the colour saturation is lessened a little?

The use of short statements that alternate with each image works well, but not in all cases. Starting with the cover page just strip it further back to something like My Journey through Covid- 19 and Isolation and remove everything else, as this is now the actual work that could be in the public domain. Again, I would adjust the alternating statements so that they appear as simple public commands. In this way you set up a dialogue between very factual orders and the self-portraits which bring in a much more complex narrative. Maybe try out centering the words in each page to lock them down graphically in keeping with the tone of an authoritative voice.

The work, as you say, has allowed you to both stay with your interest in images that derive from urban spaces, but has also allowed you to enjoy pushing a new (for you) language of electro-collage.

Your consideration of the work becoming composed into a printed form is a good one that should be pursued. Continuing with your experimentation, why don't you explore further your idea of the work becoming a zine. These are often produced with a very low budget and so the authors are forced to play with making the publications using low cost and lower tech materials and processes. As pictures in a Word or PDF format the viewer has to scroll down and they remain firmly in the domain of the screen. If you make a couple of physical mock-ups you can play with different papers and texture backgrounds and you'll get a stronger sense of the way the pictures relate to the scale of the viewer and how turning physical pages can add a different feature to the work.

If you do self-produce a zine then you can simply make a video for your blog of someone turning the pages to show another version of the work. This is an important step to show that you understand how work changes in different forms and how your work reaches and is engaged with by audiences.

I liked to sober soundtrack to the audio-visual on your blog and the way that you let just the images do the work.

As with your work so far you show good command over the technical aspects and you have a good eye for composition.

In some images I enjoyed the interplay between for facial features and the imposition of say a window over your eyes or the three-dimensional underside of a bridge through the top half of your head. This link between you, your psychological state whilst constrained under lock down and the everyday spaces that are normal your everyday becomes profound so do make time to explore these links and interplays. I think that this work connects very well to psychology so might be worth exploring.

Coursework

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity

Your blog shows very clearly that you are fully engaged in the various exercises and projects that sit behind each part of the course – well done. All of the research around other artists and all of the ways that you push your photography forward – even without it being coursework – will pay dividends in the long run. You do write well, but try to edit out some of the typos and start to build your confidence to incorporate quotes that are then formal referenced. This is good practice for Assignment Four.

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

Below I've given you a range of links and references to research - they are intentionally quite broad range.

In Colvin's photographs see for instance his earlier work using a 10 by 8 inch studio camera of birds and the way that from the camera viewpoint he creates 3-d illusions using photography, objects and painting directly onto the space and objects. He also enjoys the interplay between the objects – which can be quite hidden – and the painted figure/s.

Although you might not agree with the political standpoint of someone like Kennard his processes and outcomes have a very direct link to his world-view and to the long history of photography and propaganda.

The book by Ades could offer a good survey of how collage has been used since the beginning of photography and the interconnections between art and communication.

See the work of someone like John Heartfield and his anti-Nazi images and in contrast the work of John Stezaker whose work is much more poetic. I've given a couple of links to help you see how you went about making this work and how other creatives make work within the same category (or genre).

When you decide on a solution or direction for assignments then do research both the work of photographers that can deepen your theoretical understanding to help you contextualize the work that then ensues. If you saw value in the self-portraits of Maier then also look at the self-portraits of Lee Friedlander and maybe spend time analyzing and writing about these two image makers to help you find a language that you can use to introduce your own images.

Learning Log

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

In my feedback I've offered a brief summary of the ways that your work might be better appreciated that I think you could adapt and incorporate into your introduction. I know that you lack confidence when writing about meaning/reading and use of an arts vocabulary to describe the work at a more profound level. As it stands, your introduction does not articulate the key visual strategy and conceptual ambition of your work. Instead you hop around a bit describing things like your preference to not take pictures of yourself, through to what you are not going to do, to your techniques found on UTube. Try to use the opportunity to say something about the work as if you were giving a short three hundred-word lecture to a high level cultural audience. In this way you really have to then drill down to the 'why' of the work and how you used the processes and images to build meaning for an audience.

It's good to see the short video of you working on screen, but do try to reveal more about the images from what might be a starting point of uncertainty, through to the finished submission. Your blog

suggests that you are someone who is taking study seriously and that you are investing much more than the bare minimum.

Suggested reading/viewing Context

Lee Friedlander, (2005), *Self-Portrait: Photographs by Lee Friedlander*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

<http://www.artnet.com/artists/calum-colvin/>

<http://www.peterkennard.com/art#/new-gallery/>

<http://www.peterkennard.com/photomontage>

<https://www.johnheartfield.com/John-Heartfield-Exhibition/photomontage-adolf-hitler-portrait-2694>

Silke Krohn et al, (2013), *The Age of Collage: Contemporary Collage in Modern Art*, Die Gestalten Verlag

Dawn Ades, (1986), *Photomontage*, Thames and Hudson

Dawn Ades, (2010), *John Stezaker*, Ridinghouse

Strengths	Areas for development
Strong skill in establishing as structure within which the images are held and understood	With any introduction to new work edit it down so that you allocate most of the word count to explain the creative aims and objectives of the work
Well resolved images that create an stimulating interplay between you and the situation of Covid-19	You have some work to build your confidence at expressing what it is you feel and understand about an other artist’s work so pay particular attention when reading ore theoretical texts that link to images to help build this skill
Good and effective manipulation of software to achieve the collages	

Tutor name	Dr. Andy Langford
Date	10.05.2020
Next assignment due	TBC