



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Sarah-Jane Field	Student number	51266
Course/Unit	Photography Level 3 - Body of Work	Assignment number	2
Type of tutorial	Oral/written		

Overall Comments

Your reflections on the group exhibition you were involved in and the collaboration that led to it, show that neither was entirely productive for you, or satisfactory in terms of outcomes. The book project has great potential, and could grow into a bigger project – a poetry collection/photo book: the form, genre, themes and meanings to be discussed.

Assessment potential

You may want to get credit for your hard work and achievements with the OCA by formally submitting your work for assessment at the end of the module. More and more people are taking the idea of lifelong learning seriously by submitting their work for assessment but it is entirely up to you. We are just as keen to support you whether you study for pleasure or to gain qualifications. Please consider whether you want to put your work forward for assessment and let me know your decision when you submit Assignment 2. I can then give you feedback on how well your work meets the assessment requirements.

Feedback on assignment

The collaboration: you have thought deeply about it, and how it was frustrating and disappointing for you because of the different, conflicting expectations of the participants and different experiences/methods that informed these. You say you want to continue collaborating with others – whether right now or in the longer term. I think that it would be helpful for you to focus in on your individual practice for the moment, and to think about other ways of producing collaborative work that might grow out of your personal practice and research. **I very much agree with this and have come to the conclusion that I need to focus on working alone for a while, and do my best to avoid the 'noise' that exists on social**

media and in the 'eather'. I think a focus on the expertise that you need to make something and that you might find in another 'collaborator', rather than hoping for a meeting of minds and bodies to produce work from scratch, will be helpful. Films are often, usually, collaborative endeavours, bringing different professional experience to bear.

The book: The writing is evocative and the ideas interesting. Some of the images are striking. The combination in your assignment, raises questions about where you want to go with it:

- What is the relationship between the images and text? How do they complement or supplement each other? Are each necessary to the other or can they work in isolation? Humans seem to really text with thier images, to the point where on social media they will add descriptive words in the fom of hashtags – (ostensibly to help others connect but it becomes ridiculoulsy tautological – From my UVC otes on *Rhetoric of the Image* (1999; 2016) “Fixer needed for floating chain of signified in such a way as to counter the **terror of uncertain signs**: linguistic messages one of these techniques”. Barthes then discusses anchorage – “Anchorage is a control – repressive value “at this level **the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested**” (ibid). I like how Bourgiuous’ work referenced in A2 refuses that. I quoted Robert Wilson (theatre director) a lot early in Self & Other – he enjoys destabilising the illusion of a “stable self” or a coherent universe. (Holmes, 2004) And so I am interested in embracing incoherence and the terror of uncertain signs especially nowadays when surrounded by signs that flicker (Hayles, 1999) – I’m really interested in that and not yet sure how I will render that flickering quality in a book - Lewis Bush is playing with this in hi *Ways of Seeing* project (2019)
- Is the layout conducive to making connections between them? Do you want them to inform each other? Or to work as separate but allusive and reinforcing narratives? Allusive is probably my preferred option but I see this as an early prototype of somethign that will evolve and grow. There is a photo book by Casper Serjesen called *Belongs to Joe* which is inspired by Lars Von Trier’s *Nymphomaniac*. (2015) I feel ambivalent about the content but I am really interested in the way he’s combined images and text, and different kinds of images too – he is weaving a range of subjects and visual styles to create a type of ‘assemblage’ which I think is something to explore - the connections are both allusive and reinforcing as you make your way through the book. You are constantly being thrown off course and then reassured by accsible meaning.
- Can you describe clearly what the book is about and what it is trying to do? This would be helpful for clarifying your own thoughts, and thinking about how it could circulate, who it speaks to, and how you might expand it.

Coursework

Your engagement with other artists and writers and their thinking is evident and thoughtful in your blogs.

To discuss: Choice of book form – It's probably too early to say but I am currently more interested in a paper back type of book - like McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* perhaps (1967) especially if I make a film connected to the themes and ideas I'm exploring. How different parts of work relate to each other.

The outcomes of group research: I was reminded of early Susan Hiller works, and think they might be useful, and also her Punch and Judy series of works. I will take a look at this and make notes on my blog.

The ideas that were generated by your group on the 'village' are very general and somewhat amorphous and abstract. I agree - My feeling is that your strengths – in the photographs and writing – come from the concrete images, and observations. A big overarching 'project' may well come out of making images, trying out written ideas, and spending time in places and observing, documenting group behaviours. Then editing these, and articulating how they fit together will be key.

Research

Joan Jonas is a useful reference. Although I think your book, which you call 'sedate' is also more powerful and probing than the long list of themes and conversations arrived at through the collaborative group. So research photo books – thinking not just about whether you like the form, but what new thinking or knowledge they bring into the world, and how they have been received or responded to.

Take a look at RAQs Media Collective, and Jaki Irvine and other artists at Frith Street Gallery using photography and film in unexpected and new ways. I will do

Learning Log

'I hesitate to write the following as I am well aware much of my frustration comes from my own uncertain place which is bound up with having been an actor and wanting to incorporate that into new work.'

Your honesty and reflection are admirable. I think you don't need to worry about the group dynamic anymore for this course anyway. The experience will have been useful.

Suggested reading/viewing

Your book slightly reminded me of Robert Altman's film *Short Cuts* and of the stories and poems of Raymond Carver. Do you know them? Grace Paley, poet and short story writer, came to mind too. They are acute observations of dysfunction and domestic tension with the sense that they reflect the culture at large. Thanks for these and I will take a look.

Pointers for the next assignment / assessment

If the idea of mummification and the immortality it is about is of interest you might want to explore the contemporary versions of this: Cryonics and cryogenics for example. Or digital immortality (see Oreet Ashery's videos 'Genesis Revisited' with Artangel). There was a BBC Radio 4 broadcast recently (it was on yesterday or the day before – 29/30 October). The uncanny, undead, ghoulish has been

associated with photography and moving image for ever. The Magic exhibition at Wellcome Collection (still on I think) is also a mine of materials and information.

Keep on writing, and taking pictures. Use your reflections on your experiences to design better ones, more useful for generating what interests you. i.e. plan contexts, and subjects you want to explore, and pursue them, documenting in images and writing. Editing these together, or choosing from amongst what you make will be important but generating the material to work with comes first.

Please inform me of how you would like your feedback for the next assignment: written or video/audio. We discussed the way Level 3 CS tutors had asked me to write up the feedback, which they then added to. However, I have also found this method useful. I also understand (as I am the same) why writing it all down first might be preferable – I enjoy the slower pace of writing my thoughts and then checking them in some instances.

Strengths	Areas for development
Strong visual sense and imagination in your writing and images	Writing more: either longer pieces, or more short ones, building on the poem in the book - am already doing, see Sketchbook blog
Research: a wide range of sources	Research what others are doing now in the areas that interest you: Feminist writing, rural/urban divisions, breakdown of language... some of these or others. Ditto
a willingness to experiment and put yourself on the line, even if it isn't easy; and importantly an ability to reflect deeply on your experiences	Use your reflections on your experiences to design better ones, more useful for generating what interests you. i.e. plan contexts, and subjects you want to explore, and pursue them, documenting in images and writing.

Tutor name	Ruth MacLennan
Date	1 st November
Next assignment due	Week 1 - January

Barthes, R. (1999) 'Rhetoric of the Image' In: Evans, J. and Hall, S. (eds.) *Visual culture: the reader*. London ; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications in association with the Open University. pp.33–40.

Bush, L (2019) *Ways of Seeing Algorithmically* [Website] At: <http://www.lewisbush.com/ways-of-seeing-algorithmically/> (Accessed 08/11/2019).

Field, S. (2016) *Brief notes on Rhetoric of the Image*. [Blog] At: <https://uvcsjf.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/brief-notes-on-rhetoric-of-the-image/> (Accessed 08/11/2019).

Hayles, K. (1999) *How we became posthuman: virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

Holmberg, A. (2004) *The theatre of Robert Wilson*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sejersen, C. and Høgsbro Østergaard, C. (2015) *Belongs to Joe: book of comfort for a nymphomaniac*. London: Mack.