



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Janice Fairburn	Student number	505391
Course/Unit	Documentary	Assignment number	2
Type of tutorial	Audio-Visual		

Overall Comments

The one thing that really stands out in this assignment is the depth and resulting value of your research. From both a technical and creative point of view your exploration of a wide range of artists using mixed media, photo montage and post production techniques allowed you to explore quite different methods of conceptual visualization and an alternative approach to documentary narrative. Your workflow – research and practical – also demonstrates how ideas and creative approaches can be gradually explored and unlocked, building both confidence and understanding of the form.

You put a huge amount of work into this assignment, not only in the consideration and capture of the original photographs themselves, but also in the post production work, using a range of techniques with mixed media and processing to achieve your aim/vision.

Assignment 2 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

For anyone who suffers or has suffered from migraine, this set of eight images/artefacts resonates. The pain, nausea, blurred vision and a longing and struggle to hold on to and behave normally are all emotions and feelings that must be endured. For me, as a child, it was simply the duration and intensity of the attack with no way of finding even temporary comfort. The subject and underlying elements/stages that you identified offer a real challenge for photographic (and narrative) exploration.

Prodromal 1

For me, as with most of the images, the original would have been a good response to the subject, but the mixed media development builds on and transforms the idea.

As you say, the ripped surface layers:

‘...emphasises that everything feels out of focus, you can’t concentrate and your head feels heavy and full of cotton-wool. The jagged edges represent the pain.’

That separation between the two layers is very much like the disconnection between the ordinary world and that of the sufferer. There is a case for black and white here, perhaps, one of high contrast and enhanced grain, but this is also a decision based on personal aesthetic.

Prodromal 2

Great technique, and an approach like many that took a good length of time and effort to get right. The image, as you say, creates additional depth and layers of blur, as though ‘time is out of joint’, (apologies to Philip K Dick), objects echoing and shifting around the sufferer’s field of view This is a technique that would work very well to convey similar emotions in time based work.

Aura 1 and 2

The sense of one’s vision being split and shifted is vividly constructed here in this 3d work, it’s a kind of nightmare optical dysfunction where the brain is constantly trying to reconfigure the real world and make sense of what’s going on.

To truly appreciate these, as with the other images, the viewer needs to be close, almost immersed in the work to get the appropriate effect.

Headache 1

The real flexibility and creative potential of using the acetate transparency layer and the magnets to make and fix the movement is evident here. This harks back to your idea of using superimpositions in camera (or in post) to produce a similar but less flexible effect. Again I can see this working particularly well in time-based work and might take a look at that myself using After Effects. The one thing that stands out for me in this shot is the over exposure of the sky, it feels like a weight pushing the fringe of activity in the scene down and to the edges of frame.

Headache 2

I agree with you that this is perhaps the least successful image in the set. I prefer the original, which looks like a Rothko gone feral. I think it is the pattern that is too defined, inviting the viewer to make some figurative interpretation and narrative connection.

But the vivid colours, and the cutaway pattern draw the viewer's attention.

Resolution 1 and 2

I think the same applies too R1, the surface pattern created by the cutout is highly defined with too much contrast and conflict with the lower image. Maybe this would work better as a 3d image where the individual elements can be tilted and shifted to adjust the focus and depth of field?

The last image works very well, with the trompe l'oeil effect of the erupting surface and the sufferer reemerging into the world, one of darkness but one of relief and as you say, with a feeling of fatigue.

Coursework

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity

Your level of engagement for this assignment goes way beyond the brief demonstrating a genuinely high level of commitment and engagement with the course and the medium.

Pushing yourself at every stage, exploring different, often complex options that required you to develop different skills, you also exercised control and restraint, and acknowledge the need to recognise when an idea is not going to work and the need to move on.

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

As mentioned earlier, excellent research – primary and secondary – to underpin this assignment. The work of Richter, Moriyami, and Stephen Gill (new to me and **fascinating**), and also the **exhibitions you've visited these** last months, and then the practical aspects of learning, trial and error with a range of techniques, which combines, have taken this work to a different level.

There is a good balance between photographic theory and the exploration of influential practitioners throughout your commentary.

Peer interaction and feedback evidenced very well here, more condensed than in A1.

Learning Log

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

All up to date and in very good shape – thorough and detailed response of exercises and **excellent research throughout**. You're already well into Part 3.

Suggested reading/viewing

Context

You're already familiar with MAGNUM, but is the place for documentary, so many fine examples, but also some that challenge and push the genre forward – take a look at Chris Steele Perkins 'Tsunami Sidewalk' (two parts) in **Magnum in Motion**.

<http://inmotion.magnumphotos.com/essay/tsunami-streetwalk-1-kesennuma>

Elsewhere, Time magazine offers a good range of more conventional approaches

<http://time.com/photography/>

And of course The Guardian.

Incidentally, have you been able to get to the Tillmans exhibition at the Tate M?

Pointers for the next assignment / assessment

Visual Storytelling is the next assignment and I look forward to hearing your thoughts about how you might approach this – something we can discuss as you work through the next part. The brief asks you to work in colour and engage at a local level, so

something a more conventional approach to a subject that can be readily and regularly accessed might be more appropriate.

Please inform me of how you would like your feedback for the next assignment: written or video/audio.

You might want to consider this as an approach for feedback for the next assignment – it is something that OCA is encouraging.

Tutor name	Russell Murray
Date	29 March
Next assignment due	29 May