



Formative feedback

Student name	Simon Chirgwin	Student number	512973
Course/Unit	Photography 2: Context & Narrative: Assignment 5:	Assignment number	PH4CN-5
Type of tutorial	Google video; written feedback and e-mails.		

Overall Comments

Well contextualised work on identity using a still life of groceries with a constructed strategy appraised from Barthes' *italianicity*. Well referenced.

Feedback on assignment and supporting work

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

Visual and technical

One or two technical 'niggle's which you could look at:

- not sure if the cream square is a layout device within the background or you are login to take this out. It detracts a little.
- Is the background paper? (not sure you mention this) cloth might be better as in the original (if we can use such a word) Barthes image and in reference to the 'vanitas' which it derives its conventions from.
- Fill light (which you do mention) light loss in the black of the string bag which makes it hard to see the form of the 'highland park' box. Could you have a little fill light in here - possibly on a snoot?
- Would you be willing to re-shoot this with the corrections?

Quality of Outcome

The refinements you mention are readable (to an informed critical reader). In popular readings the viewer may not 'get' the Barthes reference, but that doesn't detract from the comprehension of the message which is fine (I've tested this on others). The poem 'anchors' the identity formation concept

Main thing to consider, although as you know your writing style is very engaging. Make more of a summary of the key critical terminology (even list them in your reflective learning). So when you talk about your 'identity' mention (in passing) where this concept originates from. For example, in-built 'identity and the 'identity formation' that portraiture concerns itself with (it's an aspect of the genre and has certain codes and conventions). Particular key terms to define before you expand upon their use:

- semiotics: convention, anchor & relay (see - *Readings*)
- Anchor and Relay (from Barthes "functions of the linguistic message with regard to the iconic message"). You mention this. Define it more clearly.
- Still life: 'vanitas' codes and conventions (Bate, 2016, 136) - chapter 6 and 'rhetorical images' and commercial uses p148
- Self-referential: use this term when referring to your work and stylistic devices which refer back to photography itself - see Christopher Williams in - *Readings*. Also - which is well expressed in your summary this has both a positive aspect: the previous assumptions in the 1930s, say, that pictures were a direct transcription of 'reality' needs to be questioned; the more pejorative aspect, as you mention, is that it may be making 'smart-arse' clever-clever references. I'll leave you to tread this perilous path.
- "hierarchies of subject matter" do you mean *Genre*. Apart from 'historical painting' a tradition the rest are genres (which have notable codes and conventions which are referenced once photography took over from painting). Define them in list form.
- Reality and Realism: See (Bate, 2016, 30). What we believe to be real. Consider some discussion on definitions of 'realism' as opposed to staging (see Di Corcia below - mentioned in last feedback but I've included it again and your dislike of the 'cold' cinematic style of Crewdson). So that this debate, which came to photography probably mid-1980s in the critique of documentary and it being 'tied-down' by its reference 'objective' reality was being questioned. This can tie you in 'semantic knots' if you're not careful - as many academic texts suffer from this dense definition oscillation. Simply stress that photography has always had a privileged relationship with 'realism' but there are subtle shades. The use of two 'positions' on visual material as research:
 - traditional or *naive realist* (simply capturing an event)
 - *reflective or critical realist* approach, whereby the roles that informants and others may have played in influencing the resulting image is recognised and foregrounded (in social science: Pink, 2006) in *Photography the work of Alan Sekula*.

- Consider the 'realism' of early documentary (Bresson etc from last assignment) and the need then to construct something in order to highlight the social problems the image seeks to depict. From Brecht and Steve Edwards (getting slightly off topic of this assignment but something you could make reference to when summing up at course end).

Learning Logs or Blogs/Critical essays

Context

- What is particulate noteworthy (which you do mention) in this assignment is that it has coalesced the 'skills' - as OCA calls them p122 - learned from Parts One to Four. I would stress that these are both formal (technique, application etc) as well as conceptual (narrative, your 'identity formation' as a subject) and the reading of images (decisive moment v on-going memento). Make sure you reference these critically in the blog and within some aspects of the introductory write ups. Summarise using the questions (Pointers for the next assignment below).

Notes from Google Hangouts conversation 21 April 2017 (12.00 pm):

- Simon to make lists of things to amend.
- the 'lie of photography'
- False scheme between 'art' and 'documentary'

Your Notes on Google Hangouts conversation:

- "You've become a contextual artist now"
- Define your terms more - still life (Bate), vanitas, adverts
- The assignment picture
 - works on two levels - a popular one and a critical one
 - Cloth rather than brown paper backdrop?
 - The text/full-bleed boxes from the Guardian - are they needed?
- During the whole of C&N, I've been playing with ideas of what separates reality from realism and fact versus fiction and humanism v conceptual art
- and also self-reference versus smartarsery; how to stop things going round in circles and back again
- Look up the Atlas Group (engine-blocks in Lebanon etc)

- We talked about the Sophie Calle and oppositions between art and documentary
- Christopher Williams

And now from reading this draft of the feedback: “I’ve tested it (the assignment picture) on others” - interesting! who? what did they think?

Suggested reading/viewing

Context

- semiotics: convention, anchor & relay:
<http://kellyludwig.com/kcai-embeds/act-semioticslecture-intro3.pdf>
- Still Life Vanitas:
- Contrast your critique, (as you say, not a particular fan of Crewdson) in critical terminology. Whether its a that you don’t feel that ‘The Tableau’ approach works to express notions of identity or if its simply Crewdson’s cinematic formal strategy that you find artificial.

Practitioner influence:

Certainly look at the ‘dead pan’ and more ‘disinterested’ photographers who avoid over-appeal to a more emotional response. This is not to say that (as you say “ more arid end of the head/heart spectrum) the pictures don’t make us ‘feel’ but that it is a strategy which implies that you are critiquing representations of ‘reality’.

- Christopher Williams: ‘self-referential’ work which critiques the realism of advertizing images:
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/apr/28/dead-appealing-photographer-christopher-williams-whitechapel-gallery>
- (as proviso feedback) Philip Lorca Di Corcia Using ‘types’ and ‘staging’ to question the assumptions of documentary. Particularly his ‘street photography’ which has little or no engagement with the subject whatsoever. See:
<http://www.hepworthwakefield.org/whatson/dicorcia/>

Pointers for the next assignment

- Preparing for assessment do include some references to the reflective questions in the OCA handbook summing up your 'journey' in this module (which, for me, has been productive - see below).
- Out of all the topics covered in this course, which felt most comfortable to you? Why?
- Did you discover anything completely new to you? What was it?
- Which area enabled you to come closest to finding your personal voice?
- Which area seemed furthest away from who you want to be as a photographer? Why?
- What were the main things you learnt? Were there any epiphany moments?
- Will you return to any of the assignments from this course at a later date?
- Did you feel as if you were on the cusp of anything?

Tutor name	Garry Clarkson FHEA
Date	21 April 2017
Next assignment due	Assessment: July 2017