Formative feedback

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<th>Student name</th>
<th>Kate Aston</th>
<th>Student number</th>
<th>513940</th>
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<tr>
<td>Course/Unit</td>
<td>Context and Narrative</td>
<td>Assignment number</td>
<td>Five</td>
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<td>Type of tutorial</td>
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**Overall Comments**

There are many positives about this final body of work and your research. As with your other assignments you demonstrate that you have a range of ideas in action at any given moment and that you are confident enough in your personal judgment to hold back on one idea that is developing very well, and to embark on another topic and set of visual experiments.

Your proactiveness to use blogs and other personal interactions for feedback at all stages should be commended. This works very well to introduce other perspectives and critical views to help shape the ongoing work.

I thought that it was fascinating that your interests in lace had gone full circle from the first assignment and had now emerged (quite differently) again as your submission for A5.

**Assignment 5 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*

With the initial set of photograms on your blog I was immediately taken by the simplicity of the garments sitting on their deep black background and, whilst I could not see directly the scale of the work at life size, I could get a strong sense of the images in a gallery context. Thank you for posting the originals. These help to see the detail and aesthetic impact of the items at full scale.

As most of the underwear items allude to flower-like motifs I was recognising in one or two of them a link with other forms of natural objects in arrangements/compositions. Here I’m thinking about the typological work of someone like Ernst Haeckel (circa 1904) or even Karl Blossfeldt (circa 1930s). Both
relate to an earlier history of Victorian realistic tradition of flora and fauna drawing and the beginning so the
museum culture.

The use of flora within lace of course then connects with ideas of the feminine and nature and the
application of such imagery within very personal and intimate clothing. You talk very about this area within
your various texts but you could deepen this if you felt it appropriate.

The work also connects (as you hoped) to early visual and technical experiments with photograms of
Thomas Wedgwood and Henry Fox Talbot. It’s interesting that Talbot’s first book, entitled The Pencil of
Nature focused on an amalgamation of the natural phenomenon of light and natural objects, with object
apparently drawing themselves to create permanent impressions.

You are using a very traditional and rudimentary technical methods to create the images, but the articles
themselves and the subject that you are investigating is quite removed from traditional aesthetics. The
outcomes appear to seduce by virtue of being very beautiful and traditional, but in essence they touch on
something quite spirited and deviant. I think that was why one suggestion was to explore what might
happen if you simply dropped the items on the paper - although I’m not convinced that would work for you.
In the way you have them now they touch on the language of evidence or specimens (hence my mention of
Blossfeldt etc.) that allow the viewer to scan and absorb them more fully.

I applaud your goal to retain the one-to-one size - if the work can be seen at its original size this will create a
significant impact. I hope that you can develop a solution to the issues of imagery being seen on the smaller
digital screen or within physical publications. Maybe you could consider getting one of two printed at the
right size on to thinner paper that can then be folded and unfolded. This might extended the sense of
handling/tactility and allude to the storage of clothing.

The feedback given to you by Jesse Alexander is very good. Before I read this on your blog I also thought
about the importance of embracing the expression ‘fetish’ and accepting that the work cannot be perceived
as asexual - this is intensified by your approach of using worn items which have been sourced from other
people through the Internet. Your texts are still coming across as reticent in this area.

I can see that the way that you composed the items on the paper has been a point of discussion. This is
important and, therefore, so is the scale at which you’re working. If you are planning a typological series
then how you to compose each image and use the framing and black space is crucial. It seems simple to
frame the single pairs of pants with black space surrounding them, as these are generally small. However, I
think that when you use much larger items such as corsets, or similar (I’ve reached the limit of my
knowledge of women’s underwear!) the edge of the frame too needs to be controlled, but not in the same
way.

You need to work backwards from your realistic largest item in terms of paper size. Although you might end
up with over-sized sheets for the assessment you could rephotograph each one and present these alongside
a small number of actual size prints to show the concept and importance of scale to the viewer. You do
need to accept that the only way that this work can only be seen in the way you intended is within a gallery,
and so do make sure that what you submit and say about the work gets the message of the work across.
Just a thought - I wondered what the underwear would come out like if you used a large-scale flatbed or backlit scanner. Years go my students used to spend hours working on photocopiers. These too would have a very narrow focal layer and would flatten the objects through the tracking illumination. I’m not suggesting that you go down this route but assessors do like to see that different methods were attempted along the journey of the development of the final work.

Coursework

*Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity*

Good engagement as usual with one or two omissions (over the course) that you recognised. I enjoyed the writing on personal archives and that you had projected into an uncertain future in a digital context. I liked the work you are doing with the image of your uncle David and the way it/he is now paired with your life. Some useful springboards here for future courses. You have a natural curiosity both intellectually and practically, which will be valuable qualities for future studies.

Research

*Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis*

The V&A show *Shadow Catchers* is of course an excellent resource for you as that show included a wide variety of methods and ambitions and some remarkable physical encounters for audiences.

Although his practice is mainly installation art and sculpture you might be interested in the way that Christian Boltanski appropriates uses clothing and imagery in his work. Whilst he doesn’t employ photograms he evokes a very strong sentiment and power by the use of light. In this work he gets way beyond the frame and invites a more physical encounter.

The evidence on your blog shows very clearly that you are a good critical thinker who does not hold back from a full and frank internal discussion of your work in relation to the work of other contemporary artists. You also demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the history of the language of the photogram from its very earliest discovery and through to its use and the transferability of the technique within contemporary art practices.

It was very healthy for you that you were able to break your assignment practice down into four areas of context. The two key areas seem to be for you the inspiration of your early encounters with the lace photograms of Talbot and your growing interest to embed the work within feminist debate and consumerism etc. You are right in your summary that it can be challenging to find perfectly matched contextual references, but as this is often the case the only way to move forward is to explore transferable ideas and theories and their impact on your practice. The important thing to remember is that you are pursuing a primarily practice-based degree, which should be theory-informed - work can legitimately advanced through practice-led means, and sometimes this will open up areas of debate for you.

Learning Log

*Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis*
I looked through your preparations and early stage ideas and I did think that your thoughts and visual experiments around the impact of pink were quite eye catching and thought provoking. This is an approach that seemed to be generating some very innovative outcomes. I’m not sure that text would be needed with the images as they are already rich and thrive in their ambiguity and sense of detachment and wonderment. The blog feedback was very helpful – I thought that the mention of seasonal colours for fashion and lifestyle was good. Personally, I didn’t have a problem with the more garish patterned backgrounds to, as you say, emphasise that the work could be also about wrenching the pink out. I’d think quite radically in terms of colour and not worry too much about taste and aesthetics.

Suggested reading/viewing Context
https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/864480090949895446/
http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/karl-blossfeldt/

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<th>Dr. Andy Langford</th>
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<tr>
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