

Photobook Proforma

Student Name: Abigail Ashman

Knowledge and Understanding Skills: 20%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Your evaluation should show clear understanding of the history, function, practical development and production of the photobook through a range of critically understood examples. The analysis of these will highlight the functions and strategies employed by the photographer and your interpretation of their communication of meaning through the publication.

Using examples (3 max), explore your understanding of the history, function and practical development of the photobook. Your analysis should highlight the strategies used by the artist/photographer to communicate their message. Include visuals (500 – 1000 words)

The photobook has played an integral part in the history of photography, not only as a form of presenting work but also as a means of artistic expression for photographers. It allows the artist to have control of how their work is seen, used and perceived. It also allows the artist to control the narrative and rhythm of their work and the sequence in which it is received. *RedHeaded Peckerwood* a photobook by Christian Patterson is a good example of this, as it tells the story of a 1950s crime spree, Patterson uses his own images mixed with hand written notes and crime scene photos to tell this narrative. The sequencing of this book is particularly interesting as it reflects the way that thoughts and memories are perceived, its order creates a confusing puzzle as it mimics the way someone may retell this story from memory. Each image in this book seems completely unlike the previous image which also reflects this idea of retelling a pre-existing narrative. Patterson also uses things such as a confession letter and map used in the evidence of this crime and sentencing to go with his photos to support its story. The use of blank space in this photobook also makes me think that it leaves a lot to the imagination of the viewer which I think is the beauty of showing this work in this way. This photobook is a great example of how photographers have used this form of presentation to add another layer to their work. These images would have been perceived in a completely different manner had they have been placed on a wall, the use of the photobook allows the viewer to turn each page to unveil the next part of the story creating a dramatic effect of uncovering the clues that lead to the conviction of these crimes.



Cognitive and Intellectual Skills: 30%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Your research report should critically analyse the theories and concepts explored in your photobook, as well as the techniques it employs. Focus on developing a reasoned and informed debate rather than simply describing the work. Your analysis should lead to clear, valid conclusions, considering the form of the book, the reading experience it creates.

Avoiding description, critically analyse the theme/ context you explore within your photobook. Your critical analysis should demonstrate your cognitive and intellectual skills in how you have understood the subject and made work as a response to it. Consider how the form of your book communicates meaning in relation to the subject of exploration. (500 -1000 words)

The theme I have chosen to explore within my book is the idea that emotions are often hidden behind a tough exterior, yet the eyes can often reveal those concealed feelings. This concept originated from a deeply personal experience while working at the funeral of a young suicide victim. I was struck by the emotional duality present in the brother of the victim: while his face wore a composed smile, his eyes revealed something far more raw and vulnerable. That brief moment shaped my theme and brought the question of how much can we really hide, and how much can our eyes truly reveal despite our efforts to mask pain?

Rather than simply documenting eyes, my aim became to use my photos as a tool for examining the difference between external presentation and internal emotion. This shifted the work from portraiture into something more forensic and interpretative. From this, my project developed into an exploration of emotional leakage: the subtle ways that grief, anxiety, or sadness slip through even the most carefully maintained exteriors.

The choice to convert all my images into high-contrast black and white was not merely aesthetic. I discovered during editing that black and white images allowed for greater visibility of the detail within the eye its veins, dryness, redness, that would be softened or obscured in colour. By enhancing contrast, I was essentially peeling back another layer, revealing the stress and fatigue that lurked just beneath the surface. I was exposing what is usually hidden or overlooked and to emphasise this further I mirrored the black and white book to the coloured book which causes the viewer to see the contrasting themes in these images.

In thinking about how the form of the book supports this investigation, I made deliberate material choices to reinforce the theme. The decision to print the images on high-gloss paper was integral, not only did the sheen mimic the wetness and reflectivity of the human eye, but it also invited the viewer to see their own faint reflection in the image. This ensured the book was not just about looking at others but also about the viewer confronting their own gaze which raised questions about empathy, projection, and recognition.

The handmade construction of the book also played a critical role. By printing each image and physically mounting them onto card pages, I was able to create a sense of weight and permanence. Each page felt substantial, much like the emotional burden many people carry silently. The thickness of the card and the difficulty of opening each page against the binding of the book encouraged slow engagement; it could not be flicked through easily. This deliberate pace was important as it mirrored the way we must look carefully and patiently at someone to perceive what is truly going on beneath the surface. I chose not to include names, backstories, or identifiers because I wanted the images to speak in a more universal language which encouraged the viewer to interpret, project, and question.

By removing narrative context, I forced the viewer to confront the uncertainty. We are conditioned to search for meaning in faces, especially eyes, but what happens when we are denied that clarity? In a world today that often demands polished exteriors and the removal and hiding of emotion, my work attempts to pause that expectation and make space for what leaks through.

Practical Skills: 40%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Present your book professionally, carefully considering how you deploy methods, technical processes. Your methods should synthesize the form of your book and the context/meaning of your subject. Your book should demonstrate proficiency, selection in editing and flair. The decisions you make should be as product of significant research into book production and design. Within your evaluation, ensure to provide examples of book dummies to show the developments in your practical

processes. These decisions should be as product of significant book design planning including alternative idea generation.

Evaluate the methods and technical processes you have employed in the making of this body of practice. Explain your process for making your book, consider how editing/ design/ typography and format speak to the subject matter you have explored. Provide examples of the book dummies you have created over the past semester to show developments in your practical processes. (800 – 1500 words)

For this project I used a range of technical processes including; concept development, digital skills for software such as photoshop, binding, paper selection etc. The process of making this book involved lots of trial and error along with testing and troubleshooting. I created many Book Dummies within the developing stage of this project, each one testing a different style or method. The first few Book Dummies I made were made through InDesign and printed on standard paper inhouse. I trialled multiple different styles such as full bleed images printed back to back that I then cut the pupils out of using a scalpel, this created a window effect throughout the book which I found very intriguing, however the execution of this looked very unprofessional so I decided against this idea. Images of this can be seen below. I also trialled a Dummy where some images were cut in half over two pages and some were very small on a larger white page. (also seen below) I disliked the lack of uniformity in this style, but liked the idea of larger white borders surrounding the image. While testing these out I also attempted to print another Book Dummy which failed as I made a printing error which allowed each page to be printed back to back in the wrong order and wrong orientation, this Dummy was meant to be a bigger A4 size. While this Dummy was never completed the larger printed images confirmed that I wanted my book to be smaller than A4, eventually decided on making my book A5 size as I liked this size as it was easier to hold and observe than each page being A4 size. I chose to print my images on a high-gloss paper because its reflective surface echoed the natural glossiness of the eyes I was photographing. This paper choice felt appropriate, as it captured the true texture of my subject while providing a high quality image. Conceptually, I was also drawn to the idea that the viewer might catch a slight reflection of themselves in the surface of the images. The notion of someone using their own eyes to view an image of an eye and seeing their own reflected gaze within it added a layered, poetic dimension to the work. It created a visual and conceptual idea deepened the theme of perception and how we show emotion through our eyes.

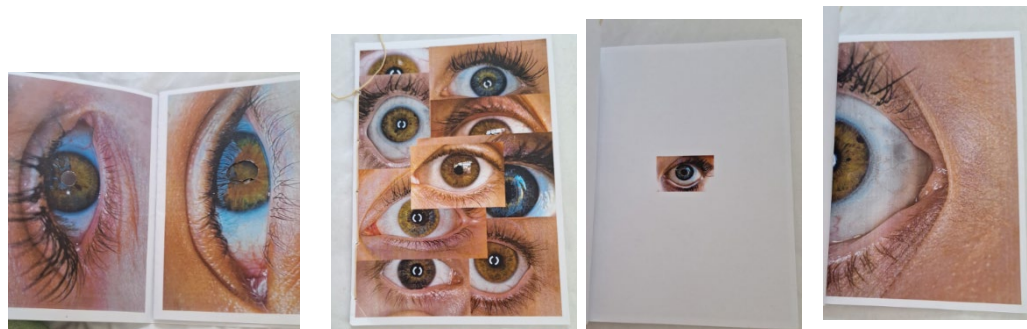
When sequencing these images to make into the book I discovered that two mirrored books would work best, one with the coloured images and the other with the more high contrasted black and white images. These books perfectly mirror each other to reflect the idea that people may be hiding their true emotions under their exterior. The coloured book is meant to reflect the exterior that people see whereas the black and white book is reflecting the true emotion seen through the prominent veins which are metaphors for cracks that let emotion through.

To keep the style of large white borders I adhered each image to a thick slightly textured card, taking time to cut each piece of paper to the exact same size and

ensuring that each image was placed central to the paper. To ensure this I measured every page, marking where the image should sit and sticking it down with double sided tape, I trialled multiple methods of adhering the images including glue and glue dots, but the double sided tape gave me the most professional looking outcome.

I originally wanted to use eyelets to bind this book as the idea of the viewer being able to see through the holes I made to thread string through intrigued me and added to the conceptual narrative of vision and seeing past the exterior of a person to what they are truly feeling. However during the trial of this I discovered that, after spending an hour attempting to punch the eyelets together, it wasn't a feasible option. I settled upon the next best option which was binding, I trialled multiple methods of binding and decided on a simple stitch through two holes half an inch into the edge of the books. I decided on only two holes as it mirrors two eyes, which links to the front cover of my books which include 2 eyes.

I am very pleased with the technical outcome of these books, I am very happy with the attention to detail that I was able to achieve along with the professional standard that I believe I achieve. I think I have improved my technical skills massively throughout this module, especially my binding skills and ability to create a uniform looking book.



Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice 10%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Your photobook should meet industry standards in design, development, and production. Plan your workflow according to your chosen publication method to ensure timely completion. Active participation in sessions is essential for sharing your work, engaging in discussions, and demonstrating both employability skills and a

strong grasp of the module content. Your evaluation should reflect on your learning throughout the process and highlight the transferable skills you have developed.

Evaluate what you have learnt throughout the process of making your photobook. Pay particular attention to the transferable skills you have developed. (500-1000 words)

Throughout the process of creating my photobook, I developed a range of transferable skills that will benefit me in professional practice. This module has helped me to develop technical skills, specifically, my binding skills have greatly improved from the practice I have gotten from this project. I learnt how to use InDesign and print as a booklet using Adobe Acrobat, which are valuable skills to take into my professional practice. Learning how to set up documents to print, understanding bleed, margins, and resolution, as well as navigating software like InDesign, gave me insight into the professional practices used in publishing and design industries. Although I didn't apply these elements directly in my final outcome, having that foundational knowledge means I'll be more confident in future projects that require these skills and software's. Time Management was another skill that I further developed in this module. Working to a deadline forced me to use my time effectively, balancing shooting, editing, constructing the book, while also meeting other module deadlines and juggling my personal life while working a part-time job. I had to make decisions on prioritising tasks, allocating appropriate time to each stage, and being flexible to change when problems and delays arose. This task gave good insight into the professional world, where multiple elements often need to be juggled at once while still meeting the deadline provided. I learned the importance of organising my time effectively and sticking to that timeline under pressure. Linked to this is the development of problem solving skills which became an integral part of this module. When things such as my original plan of using eyelets to bind failed, I had to quickly find another way to bind my book and adapt to this issue and rise above it. Problems like this taught me to think critically under a time crunch and use trial and error to find a successful method, these are extremely valuable skills that I developed that will be vital to take into my professional practice.

During this module I also used communication skills as I frequently asked for feedback from both peers and lecturing staff, whether formally in a tutorial or through informal discussions in the workshop room asking for advice while constructing my book. I learnt the importance of verbalising ideas and seeking opinions then taking these views on board, whether positive or critical, from those around me, although this was an individual project these skills were vital to the outcome of this project. Creative thinking was another skill that I developed in throughout this project, particularly when conceptualising the themes and ensuring the narrative of this book was seen through this book. This module also ensured that I thought not only as a photographer but also as an editor in how I curated this book, this broader perspective allowed me to consider the audience and how they would perceive the message of how eyes reveal emotion. These are valuable skills that will be transferred into my professional practice in future. I also worked a lot on attention to detail in this module as this photobook has to be to industry standard. To ensure I achieved this meticulous standard I completed lots of trials and tested lots of

different methods of technical elements such as binding, printing and adhesion. This again is a vital transferable skill for professional life after university. In summary, while the photobook project was based in creative practice, it gave me a platform to build a range of transferable skills listed above, all of which will be very valuable in both creative industries and other professional contexts.

