Ann Dineen 1903613

Contemporary Narratives (M5X01636)

Lecturer – Sian Addicott / Ryan Moule

Word Count: 1024

This module was set in the middle of the second lockdown in wales, we were unable to leave our homes or meet others except for very limited reasons, because of this I initially struggled with ideas of what I could produce mainly as I love capturing people and events and for me not being able to do either was a struggle.

At around this time I was approached by friends who run an art collective in Llanelli called Y Ty Celf - https://www.ytycelf-thearthouse.com I was already taking part in art workshops they were running during lockdown and they had also received funding from The Arts Council Wales, https://arts.wales to provide the workshops free of charge as part of a Covid Recovery programme. They were looking to capture images of how the project was managing to operate and reach people even during these strange times. They also wanted to record participants thoughts and feelings about the sessions and had asked me if I could help to capture these ideas in image form.

The two things fitted perfectly and so I used the project firstly to compile my photobook and as a way of capturing the project for Ty Celf who would use it as part of their report back to the arts council and also as part of their application for further funding.

I had a clear idea in my head that I wanted the books main focus to be portraits of those involved stating with the artists, although due to covid rules I couldn't photograph everyone

of them. I started researching documentary and portrait photographers there are the classic ones such as Dorothea Lang and I spent some time looking at her portraits.

Image – Dorothea Lang

And as much as I love many of her images I also wanted to try and find some current portrait artists that are producing similar strong images.

I found Nelli Palomaki https://www.nellipalomaki.com a finish artist who has produced some beautiful portraits many of which were black and white.

Image – Nelli Palomaki

The other photographer I found and loved his images was Ossi Pisspanen, https://www.piispanenossi.com/work/teenage-racers his work was very contemporary and in particular I loved the strength of his portraits of individuals in their work space or homes.

Images – Ossi Pisspanen

In a similar vain I found David Brunetti's work http://davidbrunetti.com/gallery/2394/ his simple yet strong portraits were used to tell a story.

Using all these images an influence I wanted to try and capture strong portraits of the artists and some of the participants with the work they had produced. I made appointments with all those who agreed to take part over several days I also asked them to hand write a few lines about how the project has helped them. I collected the hand written notes and scanned them into the computer as jpegs in order to include them with the book. I felt being handwritten rather than typed gave a more personal touch to the book.

I was able to photograph some of the artists in their workspace as I could be outside and look into the room, others had to be done on the doorstep, with these I asked them to bring a piece of art that said something about them and the project, so I left it up to them to pick the items they have in the images.

Similarly with the participants, I captured them all on their doorsteps or just outside their homes, surrounded by the art they had created as a result of the classes.

I kept all the images in full colour as I felt it best reflects what the project is all about, positivity and moving forward.

During each of the sessions I captured images that show how the lessons were delivered and how people were able to take part, most of which was online, however some sessions were delivered before the lockdown when we were able to attend the group sessions albeit whilst still remaining socially distanced. It was important to include a few of these images as well.

When it came to creating the book I started using InDesign and then moved onto Lightroom having tried both of them I found the end product was very much the same. I wanted the portraits to stand out and having looked at several photobooks such as:

http://jane-jeremy.co.uk/books/she-could-have-been-a-cowboy/

https://www.tisbooks.pub/products/township-bement-grain

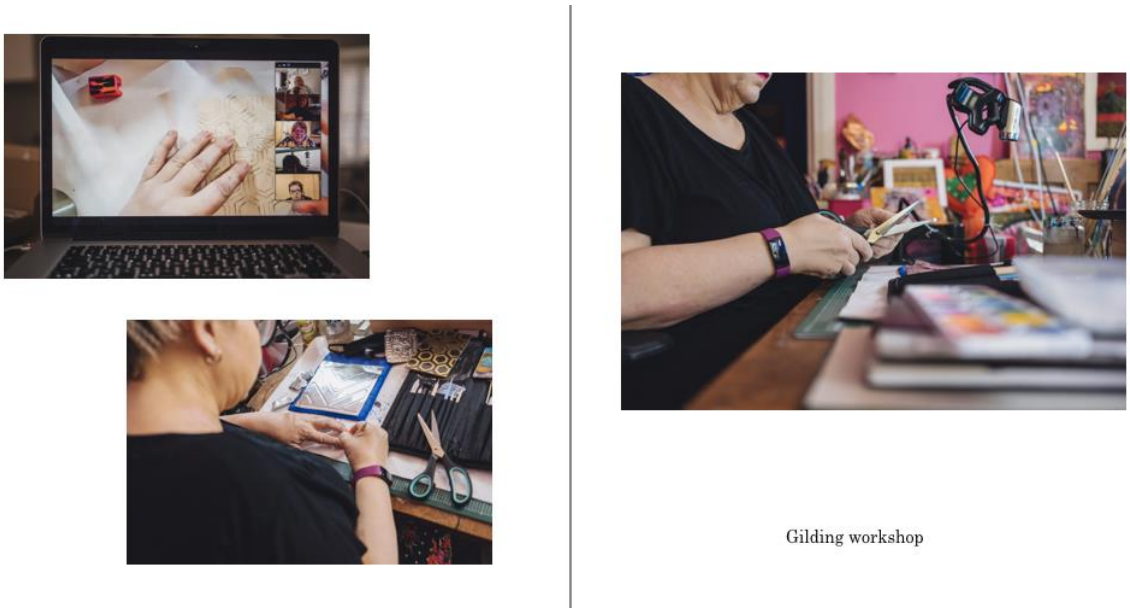
I liked the way some of the pages just had a single image, there are many more examples of this and I find those images stand out more. I did a similar thing with the portraits but added their names on the blank page.

Similarly with the participants they each had a single page for the images but when I first placed them on the pages it was with no thought as to whether they sat together so I spent some time moving the images around until I felt each pair suited each other and felt connected.

The handwritten notes were placed anonymously without names or being linked to a person or image, the reason for this was some of the messages were very personal and emotional.

I played around with the layout for the workshops and my first draft was like this:

I had followed this layout for all the session's but wasn't sure about it so sent a copy to one of my peers to ask for some feed back and they felt there were too many images on the one side and also very similar images, with this in mind I then reduced the number of images I used for each session and created a more balanced layout as below.



The front page of the book had to include the logos from Welsh Assembley, Arts Council and Ty Celf but I wanted to include some of the hand written notes I had, after a lecture by the founders of Folium books I loved one of the front covers that had used layers of writing on

the cover. I then created PNG files of the notes and layered them into one image to use on the front cover.