

Title: Photojournalism in Context

Student Name: Sarah Grounds

P Number: 2005771

Programme of Study: Documentary Photography and Visual Activism

Module: M4X01602

Lecturer's Name: Paul Duerinckx

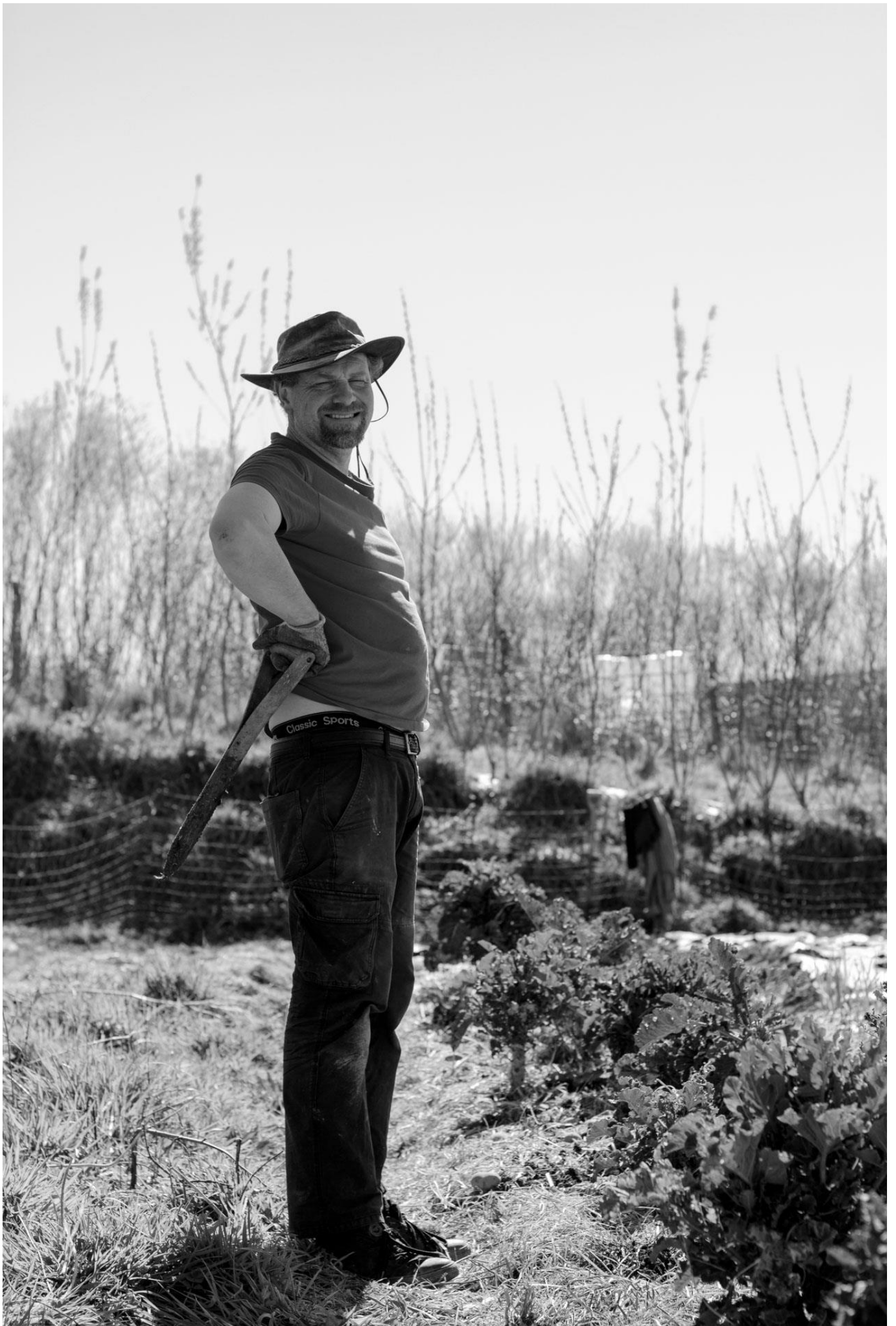
SPRING RUSH



A Photo Essay

By
Sarah Grounds

















**The
Guardian**

5 Vegan recipes in 30 minutes

01.05.2021

Weekend



SPRING RUSH

**The real life 'Good Lifers'
One Planet Living Pioneers in Wales**

SPRING RUSH

THE REAL LIFE 'GOOD LIFERS' IN WALES

By Sarah Grounds









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EDUCATION OTHERWISE



MOVING IMAGE

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[LINK TO VIDEO ON YOUTUBE](#)

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PHOTOJOURNALISM
IN CONTEXT
VISUAL DIARY



By
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This is my first Photojournalism assignment and I was quite nervous about it. When starting my degree, lots of people said that I should do documentary stories about my own life, which is quite different to most people's in the UK. But I have always said that I do not want to do that. Due to Coronavirus and lockdown though, I decided this would be the best story, practically, for me to do.

SPRING RUSH

I live on a One Planet Development called Criafolen, which is like a super eco small holding. My partner Paul Jennings, is a Permaculture teacher, consultant and designer. I have been approached by a lot of journalists wanting to do articles for television and magazines about Criafolen, which I have always declined. So I decided to make my own Photo story feature spread about my home.



(Introduction to Permaculture weekend run by Paul 2019)

I knew the garden was going to become very busy over the Easter Holidays as we entered the 'Spring Rush'. So I thought I would base the story on that. As one of the main questions people ask when they visit Criafolen is, "How much work is it to grow your own food.?"

Firstly, I wrote a mock proposal for a Feature Spread about Criafolen and Paul.



SPRING RUSH

(A Feature Spread Proposal)

As we hurtle towards climatic disaster we have to start thinking about how we can live and work on Planet Earth differently. There are already people doing just that, in Wales.

Wales has made a pioneering new Ecological planning law called One Planet Development. It is the first planning law of its kind in the World. The policy looks at every aspect of a person's life. All buildings must be zero carbon, they must grow 65% of their own food, they must run a land-based business, resources used on the site must be ecological, they must involve the local community in some way and they get tested every year to make sure they are doing just that. So, what does it look like to live a One Planet Lifestyle?

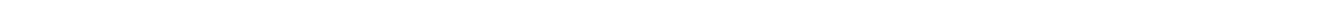
Dr Paul Jennings has been living a One Planet lifestyle for over twenty years and has been living on a One Planet Development for six years. He now teaches Permaculture and Tai Chi rather than history. He has built a low tech 'Straw Bale Mobile Home' a pioneering building design that opens up the opportunity for people on lower incomes to be able to build their own eco homes. He lives off grid and heats his home, warms his water and cooks his dinner, all on replenishable wood.

Sarah Grounds proposes to follow Paul and his family for a week, documenting their day to day lives whilst preparing for the 'Spring Rush' in their extensive vegetable garden.

Having an ecological living background herself, Sarah has a great deal of experience documenting ecological lifestyles and people working on the land. Her black and white work lends an intimate touch to what can sometimes be a very practical subject.

This project is in line with what people want to read about at the moment, and Sarah is planning a picture heavy Feature spread as the main outcome of the project.

We are looking for assignments or guarantees for this project. Please contact Alfred Grounds-Jennings as soon as possible if you are interested..



I try to take photos everyday as a part of my photography practice, which for the past year has been mostly of my home. So I had to really challenge myself to try and make the shoots I did for my assignment go beyond what I do on a normal day to day basis.

I love classic black and white documentary photography and I feel that a lot of the photos I take of my home are quite reminiscent of 1940s documentary work. The simple life and the ideology of Criafole, lends a dreamy feel to the photos which is emphasised by the black and white.

I decided to do some research to see how famous documentary photographers approach their work, especially work looking at people working on the land.

I have loved looking at vintage documentary images since I can remember. Now though, as a documentary student, I am finally asking myself the question why? What is it about this work that moves me so much?



(Eugene Smith)

Eugene Smith was the pioneer of the Photo Story. Ben Maddow wrote;

"His vocation, he once said, was to do nothing less than record, by word and photograph, the human condition. No one could really succeed at such a job: yet Smith almost did. During his relatively brief and often painful life, he created at least fifty images so powerful that they have altered the perception of our history."

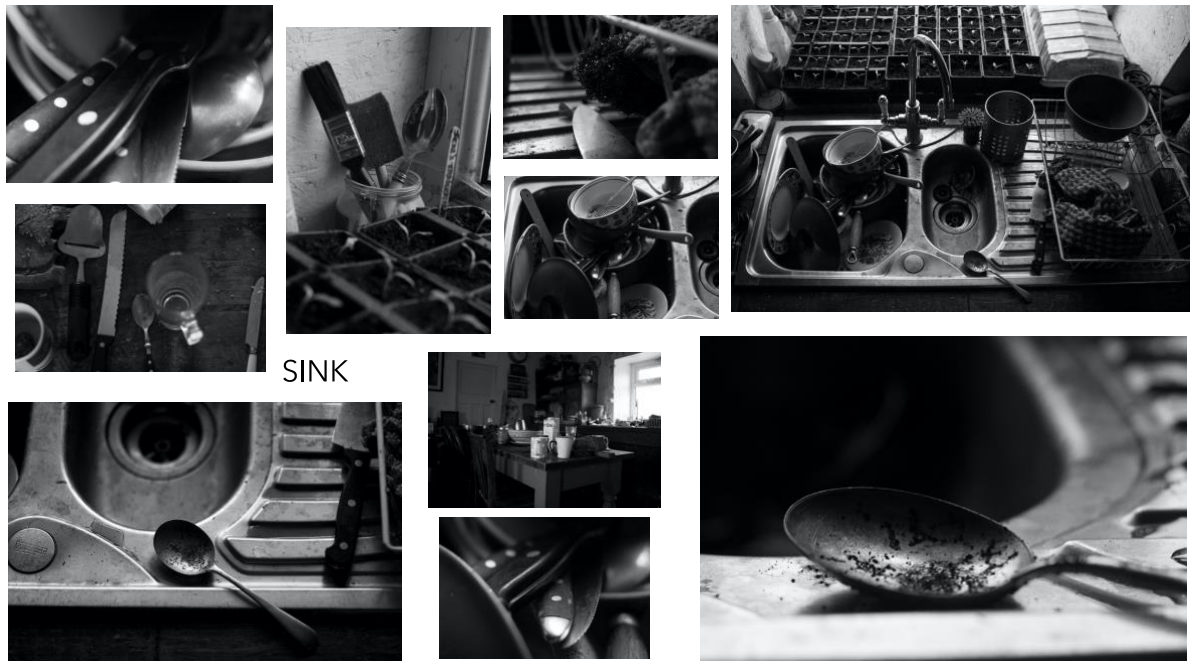
Eugene was a perfectionist and his methods became the foundations of documentary photography for generations. I love the honesty in his work, the dark tones and how beautiful he obviously viewed all life not just the typically beautiful things.

I also researched more recent work from other documentary photographers ([Modern documentary Photographers](#)) such as Claire Richardson who visited a Rudolf Steiner Community in America in the Spring of 2000. She talks of trying to get to know her subjects before shooting. Sometimes going for days without ever getting her camera out. These connections she made with the people in the community, come across in the final photos. An intimacy that can only be achieved by actually becoming involved in these peoples lives.



(Claire Richardson)

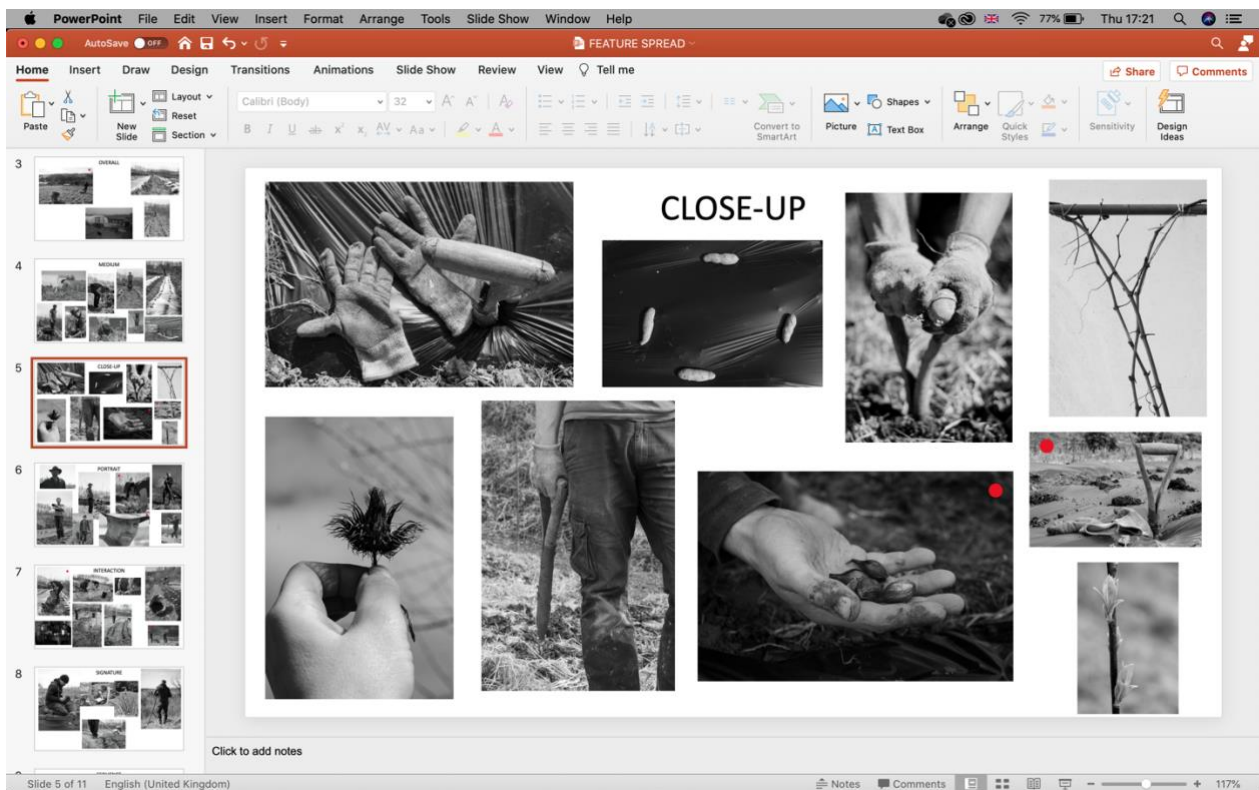
So, having done some research I realised it is the candid base of documentary photography that I love. I also realised I love very dark black and white images, so I decided to emphasis this in my project. Being given the Photo Essay list has been very useful. I am very nervous about going into groups and shooting and am anxious that my nerves will result in me not getting the shots I need. Having a list in my head to tick off as I work, is going to be so useful and will hopefully make me feel more relaxed and prepared when I go on a shoot. I decided to practice the Photo essay, with an emphasis on darkness and different angles, on my kitchen sink.



I take my camera outside whenever I work on the land but I set aside Five actual shoots where I could completely concentrate on my photography and the photo story and not actually be useful in the garden :D Two were of Paul and Dan working in our young forest garden scything. One of planting potatoes, one of planting onions and one of general work in the vegetable garden.



Next I had to choose which shots to use. I organised the best shots by Life Magazine's Photo Story List.



I then did some research into how I should set these out in a Feature spread. I looked at various magazines that might carry this story in particular, such as the organic gardening magazine. But as the feature is black and white documentary work, with a middle class, aspirational living slant, I thought a more arty/newspaper format might suit it better. Such as the Guardian Weekend magazine.



([Guardian Weekend Magazine Covers](#))

Whilst putting my Feature spread together, I found it interesting how it was not always the best photo that was the best photo for the spread. Especially with the Close up details and some of the General photos.

CONCLUSION

I ended up really enjoying doing this work. I was very disappointed that we could not be placed with a charity for the assignment, as I really felt I was ready and needed that challenge. But I have actually found that this was a completely different challenge. Trying to take images of something I see every day, get excited by those images and so pass on that excitement to the viewers, was a real challenge.

I shared a lot of the images for this assignment on Instagram as I was taking them. The company that make the Starch Mulch we use in the garden contacted me to buy the rights to use some of the images on their website. This made me very happy and was the first images I have made money from. It also made me realise the potential of selling other images of eco products being used on a One Planet Development. Which sounds awful now I have written it down! But bills have to be paid :D We have various building projects etc planned for Criafolen and also hold courses and talks. So there are lot's of future potential stories for me, if I want them, right on my doorstep.

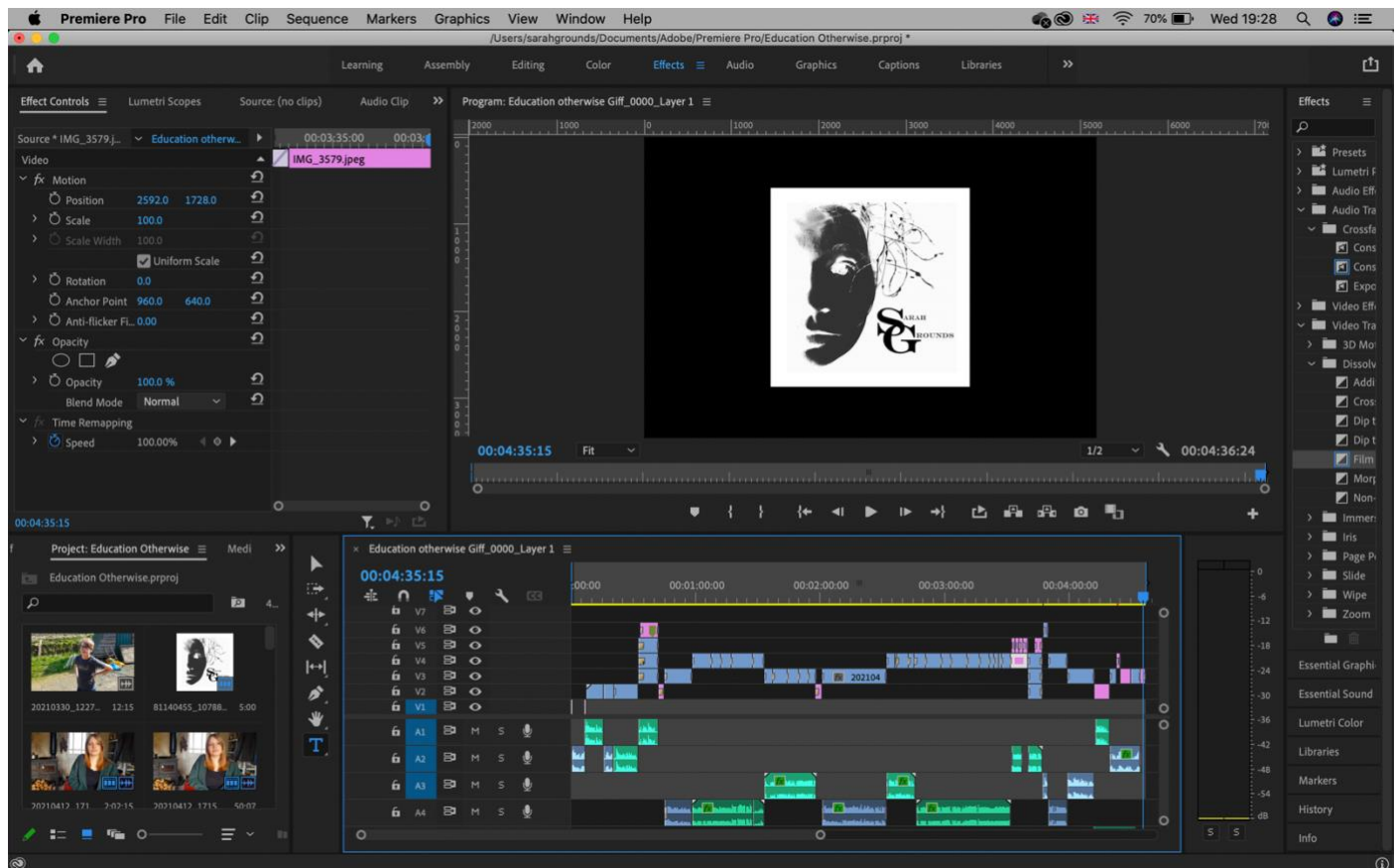
EDUCATION OTHERWISE

Another difference in my life, is that none of my three children have ever been to school. So I decided to make a documentary video about them and home education. Luckily this assignment ran over the Easter holiday, so they all came to visit, which meant I could make my filming a bit more interesting



I watched some documentary videos and decided to try and create something similar to a short Panorama episode. ([Panorama Video](#)) With voice overs, action shots and sat down interviews. As Alfred is the only child still at home, I got a lot of footage of him living his day to day life, so I based the video mainly around him. This I think gave the video a fun feel. My dslr that I was using over this assignment is slightly broken and the autofocus no longer works. So this meant, for a lot of the action shots of Alfred, I had to use my phone. I created a stop motion for the beginning of the video, which did not work as well as I hoped as it is blurred in places. I should have used my phone to shoot these. I wanted my video to be an honest look at home education. So decided to interview my children with a positive and negative question. For the interviews I used a chair positioned where I know I get good light. I set up my phone and camera on tripods and positioned them so I would get front and side shots. I made a

conscious decision that I was going to use the first take answers to the questions. There were moments where this was hard. In Hope's answer about what was bad about being home educated there is a lot of background noise. Also, after Robin's first answer, he moves forward in his chair, which means he is blurred in the footage from the dslr. In both instances I decided they were flowing so nicely in their answers, that I did not want to interrupt them to correct these things



Whilst editing the work on Premier Pro, I tried to expand on my knowledge already. I explored merging footage of the interviews, including cutting some of the ums and ahhs out. I did a voice over commentary, which I have never done before and found very easy once I did a 'How to' Youtube video ([How to Video](#)) I added music, which I mainly didn't use, but good to know the option is there. I also learnt how to merge tracks, which made trying to create equal levels for the sound throughout the video a lot quicker. The voices were very flat, as it was all recorded without proper microphones. So I lifted the voices a bit in Premier pro. I am not entirely happy with this and find the voices still quite tinny.

CONCLUSION

In general, I am pleased with the outcome of the video. I think it is honest and fun and the flow of the piece is quite smooth. I am a little disappointed in myself that I did not produce something more creative but the experience is good preparation to produce something more creative in the future.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

I found there was a difference in my creative process producing fine art work and photojournalism work. For my fine art work I have found most of my time is spent searching for meaning in the work. Whereas for this work, I just dived in and took loads of photos and video footage, thinking more afterwards. I am constantly trying to work out how I can merge my Fine art and Documentary work. Maybe this difference in process for my assignments, is the key? So I am going to start experimenting with approaching my Photojournalism work from a much more Fine art perspective. I am also exploring using the Photo Story framework to produce fine art work, which I am very excited about.