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Personal Philosophies (ADAA5004)

Research Report

1100 Words

This semester, we were presented with the task of creating a photobook. To begin with, we were introduced to the origins of the photobook, and the evolution of this form of artwork since its initial usage as documentation. I was immediately intrigued by the concept of pages created by an individual holding the memory of someone or something else. I considered my notes from a poem by Walt Whitman entitled *As Consequent Etc.* within which I had drawn into his insinuation that the mouth of a river at the sea, signifies the end of journeys, of life and acts as a conclusive destination – “Or from the sea of Time, collecting vasting all, I bring” (Walt Whitman, *As Consequent Etc.*). I considered my options for a photographic response to these ideas, and at first began my planning into the depiction of a river’s journey from source to mouth with the intended metaphor to stand for human life. However, after visiting a coastal location, I quickly realised that the study of the ‘end’ of the journey was what I felt most connected to. My work following these developments, began to form a pattern – coincidently of patterns – which depict the ideas I had initially intended well. My work, entitled *Terminus*, delves into the profound narrative of life’s journey, portrayed through scarred rock faces and imperfect surfaces. Sourced from local coastlines, these images mirror the scars accumulated throughout human life, each pockmark telling a unique story of resilience, endurance and growth.

During this project, I have drawn inspiration from a range of different sources. This has included the work of other artists, poets – as previously mentioned – and subjects of creation from my own life. An artist whose work inspired my own from the beginning has been Erik Kessels, and his series of projects, numerically ordered, under the repeated title *In Almost Every Picture*. Each of these, follow a different theme, but are linked through a consistency – of some nature – within their subject matter. This was an engaging concept for me, as I felt that the idea of a large number of images, each with their own uniqueness, yet all sharing a common trait, would lend itself to the ideologies of my own project. Therefore, whilst my final work is incredibly different to that belonging to Kessels, I feel I have this particular inspiration to thank for the cohesive nature of my photographs within a photobook format.

I have also utilised various methods of primary research. For example, upon my initial site visit, I felt that it might be helpful to my visual development to collect a small amount of rocks, pebbles and other beach materials that may aid in the stimulation of arrangement and curation of aesthetic ideas. Another instance within which I undertook my own primary research was during the making of decisions that would ultimately form my physical book outcome. Choices had to be made regarding paper types, binding methods, sizing of

photographs and their borders, accompanying materials, cover types/methods and various other details that were all unassuming yet vital in the production of my final work. Each time I encountered an instance that required a decision, I made sure to carry out a suitable amount of research and testing to properly inform my choices. For example, I created numerous book dummies, printing my images on various materials, to ensure I was thoroughly satisfied with my chosen materials.



(Above, paper type tests and dummy books)

Throughout this project, I have developed a range of skills, some of which I had previous experience using, and some which have had not encountered before. I quickly discovered that with each new step, came a corresponding skill that I had to develop in order to progress in a manner that my work required. At the beginning of this project, my technical – non-editorial – skills with Photoshop were incredibly limited. Initially, I was unaware of how to format my images in the correct manner, if my prints were to be the dimensions I needed; however, through practise, I can now use both Photoshop and InDesign, to a standard which I feel I can be proud of. I also had to learn how to use a single hole punch, a task that I majorly underestimated the challenge of. In order to bind my book, I first needed to measure and punch the holes in each of my pages; and in this area I found that I also had to manage my patience in order to achieve precision with this skill.

The physical format of my photobook was a vital aspect of this project. Realising that in order to fittingly display my photographic work and effectively reflect the narrative of my project, I would need to construct my photobook in a very specific manner, I knew that this step required careful consideration. As a result, I drew inspiration from my own artistic 'archives', more specifically the origins for my affection for these types of creative processes.

My book is constructed in the manner in which my first photobook was created, when I was around six years old. The method of a 'photo with white border' bound by rings, with a light material cover, was the simple way my parents used to help my sister and I create books. In this way, the construction of my photobook for *Terminus* acts as an ode-to this memory, whilst also encompassing my more honed skills as an artist and a photographer to present a matured version of these methods. I made sure that, just as Anna Atkins did in her own photobook, my work allowed me to use documentation through photographs, whilst at the same time giving freedom to the narrative and purpose of my project.

My intention for this project had been to explore the human experience through the narrative of the terminus of a river at the sea, and considering the final outcome of my work as a whole, I truly feel I have done this justice. As with any creative project, there are areas that would allow for improvement and possible alterations within this work, such as the possibility of developing or changing my choice of 'nostalgic' ring-binding, and instead attempting a more sophisticated binding technique such as sewing. The method of binding I chose was incredibly time consuming, and whilst in the future, I could have this done professionally, I have saved a considerable amount of money by simply attempting this myself. All-in-all, whilst my ideas have changed and adapted throughout this project, I feel the results that I have produced are an honest reflection of my efforts to produce work that I can be proud of.



(*Terminus* in cover (left), *Terminus* uncovered (right))