Personal Philosophies

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The research Report

With reference: 1225

Without: 996

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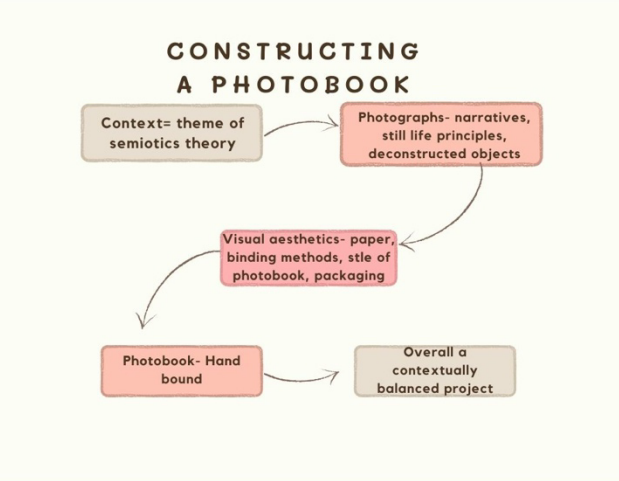
Rational

Stop, Think, Breathe, Proceed aimed to examine how a photobook and photography could collaborate in narrating semiology from written text to a visual form. Furthermore, attempts to acknowledge the historical purposes of the photobook and how it contributed to making photography more accessible. The project valued the basic principles of photobook construction, ensuring every component linked back to the theme. Still life concepts were employed to ensure the photographs related back to the theme whilst being interactive and engaging.

Summary of research

Saussure (1983, P.16) defined as a process whereby the spectator deconstructed signs and symbols and applied their unconscious and conscious influences to generate meaning. Representing this, deconstructed objects were photographed to visually demonstrate how signs and symbols resonate with a spectator to create a thought provoking photograph.

Research into photbooks complied into a direction map (see right), which served as a guide. Also regularly checking Brant. A's (2021) article which argued that if the photographs were good, but the construction was unfitting then the spectator would not engage. Therefore, the photobook, was constructed with some degree of deconstruction to represent the semiotics theory described above.



Still life photography was researched and below demonstrates how I used and applied the research to the project:

Research	My project
Staged or natural still life photography	Staged as was unable to find natural still life settings that spoke thematically
Composition	1. Grouping objects together or centre frame 2. Rule of thirds split into sections of threes either horizontally/vertically
Background/scene	Pure white setting to prevent distraction from meanings that could have been drawn

Lighting	LED, then soft boxes and settled on studio lights.

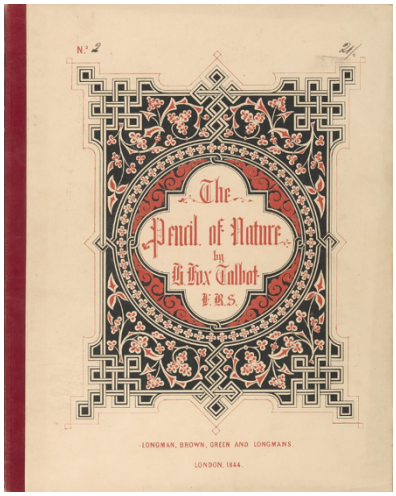


Figure 1 The pencil of nature by William Henry Fox Talbot, Met Museum, 2016

The photobook originated to make photography more accessible and a tool of documentation. Fig.1 shows William Henry Fox Talbot's photobook *The pencil of nature*, 1844. His aims with the photobook were to use photography to accurately document the world and to shift photography from metal plates to paper. My photobook honours his intentions by recognising the power of communication that photobooks have, considering aspects such as paper, photographs, and construction and how they link back thematically.

Contemporary influential photobook was Museum Bhavan (right) by Dayanita Singh; nine accordion-style photobooks, each with its own narrative that fits under one theme, as seen on the right; thus being the impact.

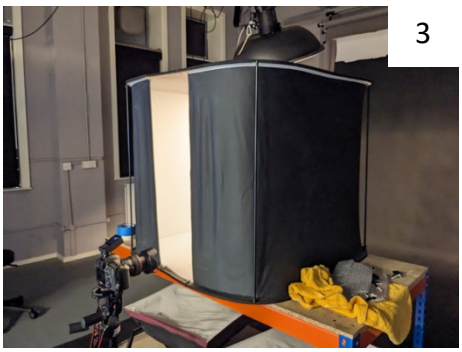


Practical skills

Lighting, setting and white balance


1


2


3

Number one was the original setup utilising two LED lights of 1200 lumens and the inside of an old reflector board, but was updated to the second, which used 5700 Kelvin bulbed softboxes and prop boards due to underexposing and space constraints. However, these issues remained; a switch to the studio Profoto lights with a diffused prop box solved them (see 3). The development in lighting/set up ensured the photographs were of high quality producing aesthetically yet narrative filled photographs.





Blue tinting occurred in photographs; learned that I needed to set a custom white balance through a grey and white card, as above, to ensure the correct balance of colour was obtained creating the clinical white required.

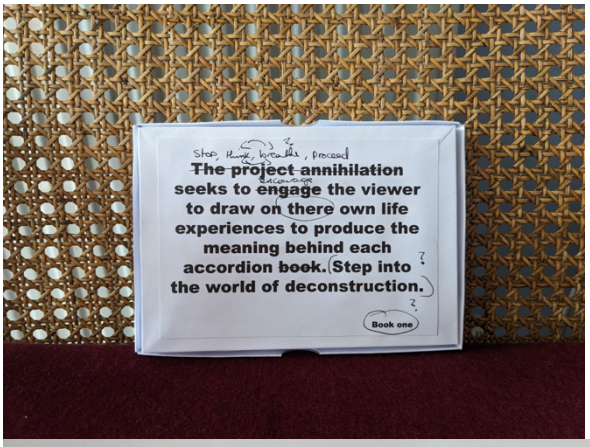
Construction of the photobook



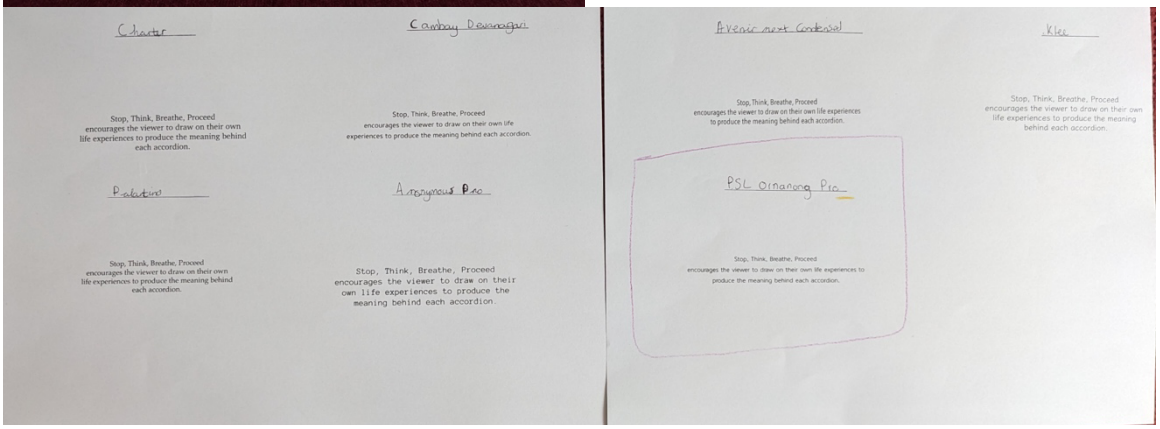
Was created in a strip on InDesign (as above), as this software was showed an accurate representation of what would be printed. Phtographs were placed with ½ inch width from the edge to ensure they were centred for clarity of viewing.

Tests of Matt and Gloss papers were conducted; to which the matt was used as it fitted contextually whereas the gloss left a cooperate connotation which would negatively impact the meaning drawn from the photobooks. Tests of 75gsm, 180gsm and 190gsm papers, determining that the 180gsm provide the durability required for long-term viewing through its light weight yet sturdy nature.

Typography

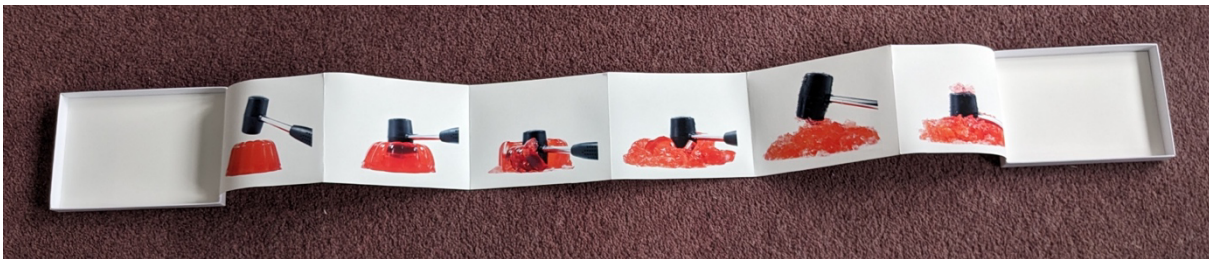


The initial typography was 'loud' in delivery of the message through too bold of a stroke, blocky spacing between text and harsh finishes to the letters which negatively distracted from the work (see left). I tested several types of fonts focusing on a softer letter finish and decrease in boldness of stroke (see below) settling on PSL Ornang Pro (regular).

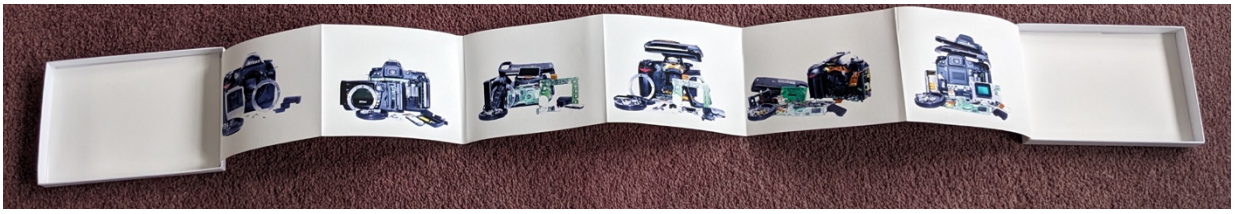


Methods of production

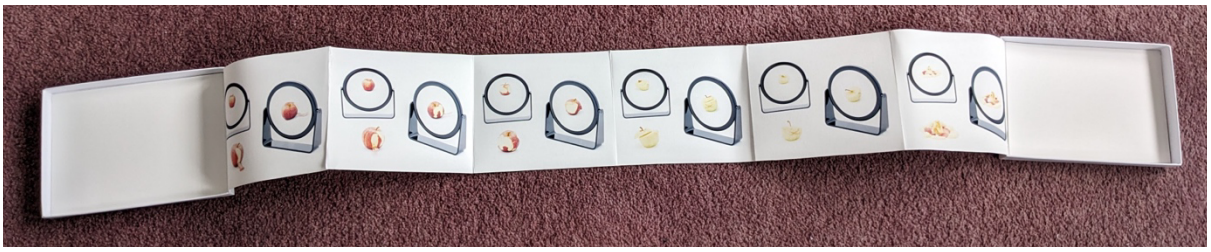
Accordions were constructed into a 15mm depth box sized 4.1 inches (hight) by 5.8 inches (width) from 250GSM paper, and the sides reenforced with an additional 50gsm; to ensure a tactile representation of deconstruction (as seen in the theory) was highlighted Below shows the starting point of each accordion, however as Barthes. R (1991) outlined semiology is a discourse between the spectator and photographer, and therefore the meaning of the books is naturally fluid.



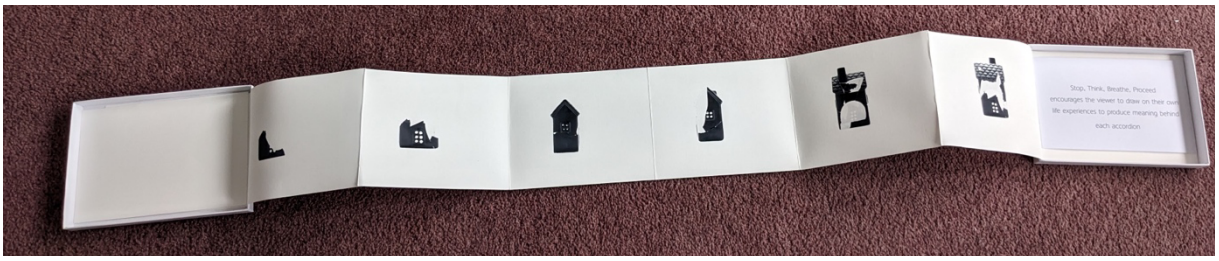
Stop- encourages to take a moment to become an active participant of photography and stop being a passive spectator.



Think- Needs to deconstruct there unconscious and conscious social, cultural, and religious influences to draw meaning from a body of work.



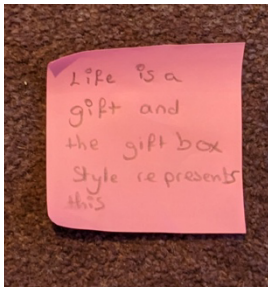
Breathe- Moment to apply the influences against signs and symbols to ensure something lasting is taken away.



Proceed- individuals could potentially build upon findings and use it as an influence in drawing further meanings.



The card was deliberately not scaled to fit the hight of the box, for easy remove, to allow for active discard or for a chance to be lost, emphasising the need for the spectator to think not just view.



The tied ribbon (right) inspired by a spectator (see left) about how the boxes reminded them about life being a gift.



Evaluation

Outlined was to create a photobook that reflected the historical intentions of photobooks, which was not met. I honoured the notion of photobooks being created for easier access to photography and a tool of communication, I did not succeed in creating it easily accessible. Adjusting to be reproduceable, and through research more specific, look into materials historically used and apply them to the project.

I would like to create another copy of this book, printing to the dimension of the box and leaving more than two weeks for the paper to sit flat; so, the paper fits flush within the box. From other practitioners, I have learnt valuable information about shooting the deconstruction of camera thus in an investigation how it works as a standalone project to narrate semiology.

Improvements on the graphics, packing and display need to be revised, such as embosting the boxes with the titles, and creating a rack for them to sit in, providing clarity of how the books related to each other. Lastly, the photobook portrays the semiotic theory, in future projects providing opportunities to understand what the photographs mean to the viewer, as this aspect was somewhat lost in the project.

Reference

Articles

Brant. A (2021) *On the narrative potential of photobooks: an analysis of Alec Soth's: Niagara's book* (18), pp. 4-5 [Online]. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20220421232326/https://impactum-journals.uc.pt/matlit/article/download/9582/7671 (Accessed: 24th February 2024).

Books

Barthes. R (1991) *Mythologies*, New York: The Noonday press

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Website

Met Museum (2016) *The pencil of nature,* Available at: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/267022 (Accessed: 20th February 2024).