

Visual Enquiry 2 (ADAA5009)

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What is a Photobook?

The Wikipedia definition of a photobook is as the following quote. "A photo book or photobook is a book in which photographs make a significant contribution to the overall content." ("Photo Book", 2026).

A photobook can be a form of portfolio and professional/contemporary showing of work.

A photobook can be a medium to project an artistic piece, statement or meaning.

A photobook can take on a multitude of purposes depending on the wants and needs of the artist and the contexts of the work housed within.

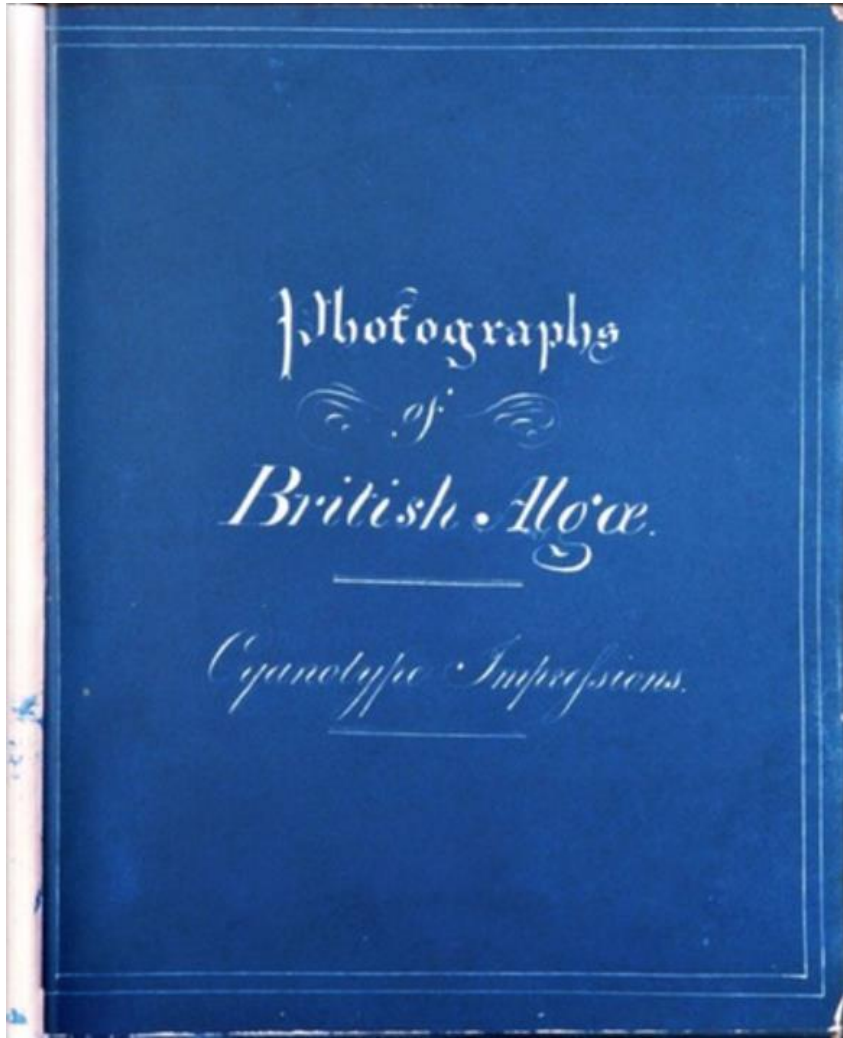
My understanding of a photobook is that primarily it is a form of artistic expression using a set group/collection of photographs with the same or similar contents, purposes or contexts. Usually accompanied with small parts of text though not always, with the purpose of conveying a chosen topic and or statement for discussion.

Photobook History

The consensus for the first created photobook was Anna Atkins '*Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*' (1843 – 1853). The photobook as its name suggests is a documentation of British Algae specimens using Cyanotypes as the medium.

Anna Atkins was an English born "Botanical Artist" (Lotzof, n.d.). Before the invention of photography, scientists, and botanists relied on artistic illustrations to record botanical specimens. Atkins' contributions to the botanical sciences and her use of the first photobook have made her work and herself an incredibly important figure in multiple subjects including photography and the arts world.

The photobook itself contains over 400 cyanotype images/illustrations of British algae.



Photobook History

Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions, 1843,
Anna Atkins.

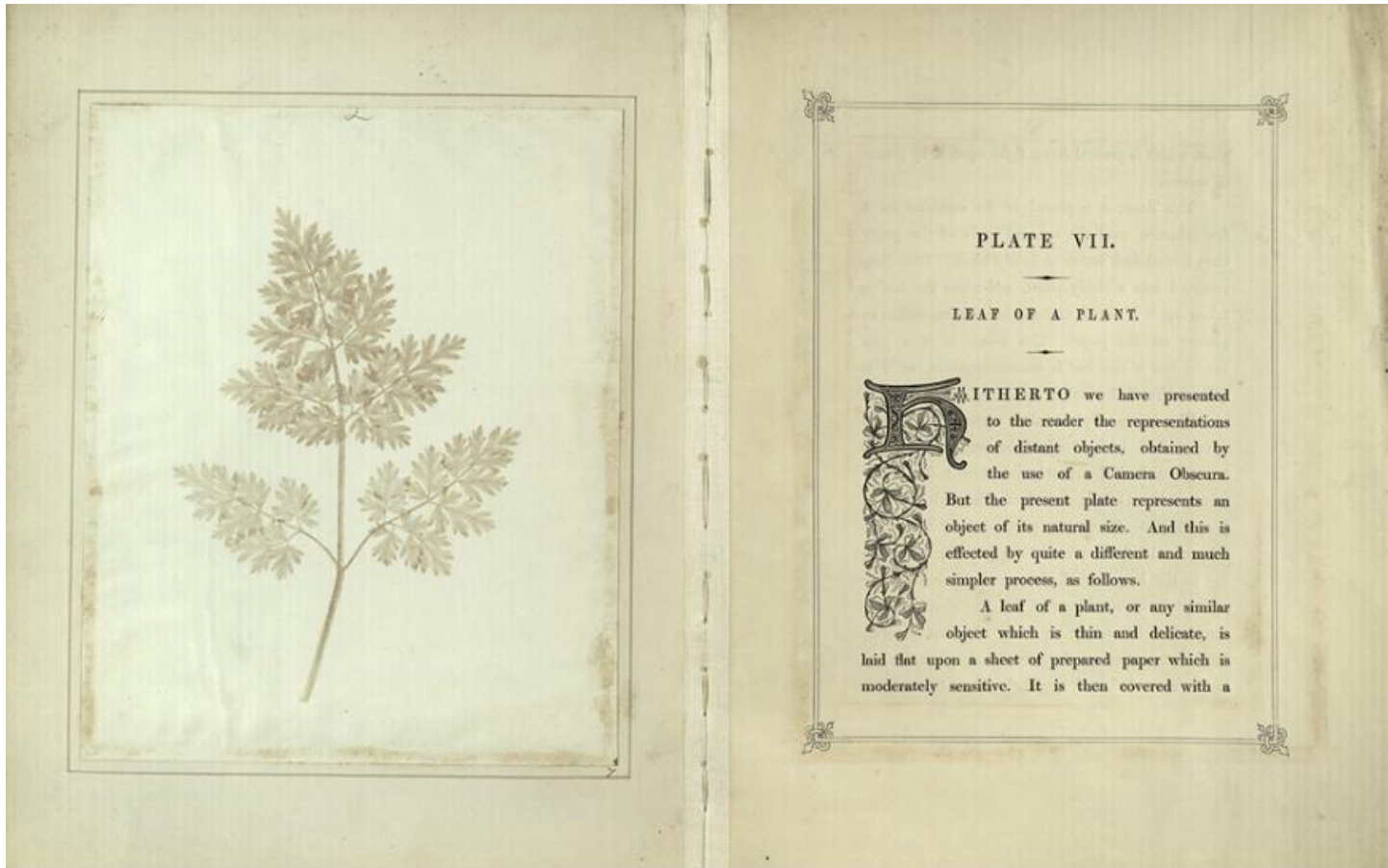
Photobook History

The Pencil of Nature by William Henry Fox Talbot is the first ever commercially published photobook, created between 1844 – 1846, the book is fanciful and beautifully stylised in its design. Holding 24 Calotype prints, pasted by hand of various subjects including a shelf of bowls and plates to a photograph of the side of a building. It is regarded as one of the most popular and influential works in photography, ironically at its time of publishing the project was terminated due to a lack of interest with only six instalments being created. “The cover page of *The Pencil of Nature* eclectically clashed the Baroque, Celtic, and Medieval styles, as was characteristic of the Victorian era.” (Wikipedia, 2026.).

Talbot's contributions to the photographic and artistic world with this at the time new and unpopular medium can still be felt today and have undoubtedly shaped the way photography has been visually presented in each decade and each genre.

Photobook History

The Pencil of Nature, 1844,
William Henry Fox Talbot.



Photobook History

The Americans published in 1958 by Robert Frank is one of the most important and influential photography books, being a collection of 83 black and white images taken during a 1955 – 1956 road trip, Frank during this time shot 27,000 images using a 35mm Leica film camera. The key themes of *The Americans* are those of social and class inequality and the breaking down of societal perspectives on the high- and low-class people of America, it serves as an interesting perspective on post war American society. Frank's photobook does not follow a chronological sequence with its images, rather it puts together images that 'flow' with each other, being sequenced by visual or emotional similarities. The cover of the photobook uses an illustration rather than a photograph, an interesting choice for a photobook, the drawing done by Saul Steinberg breaks the expectation of a strong, clear and attention-grabbing image to draw in attention rather it feels detached and almost out of place. *The Americans* visual style undermines the cohesive, unified, and optimistic America that was portrayed during the time after World War II.

THE AMERICANS



Photobook History

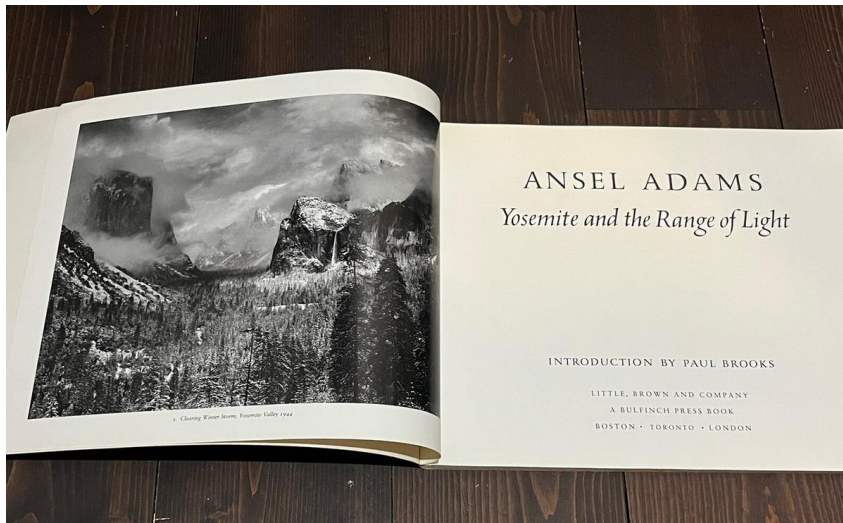
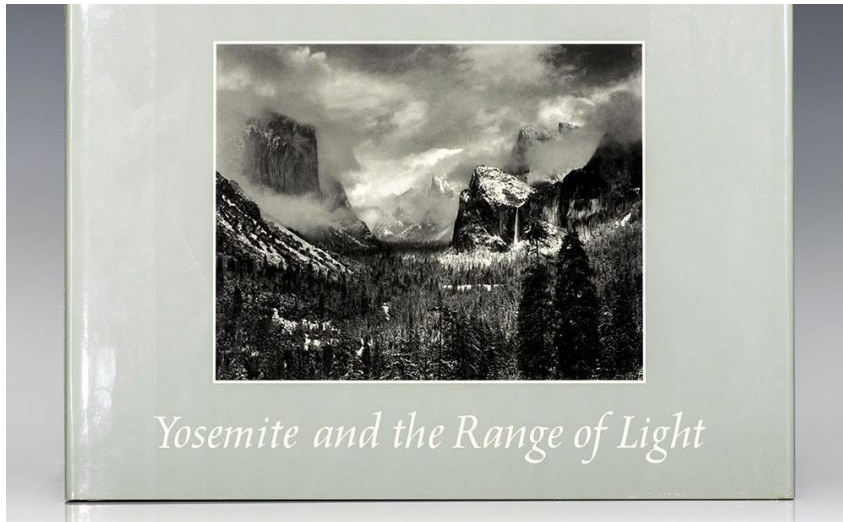
The Americans, 1958, Robert Frank.

Week Task 14/01/2026

Photobook analysis

Example 1: The themes of Ansel Adams' *Yosemite and the Range of Light*, is that of connection to wilderness, conservationism, and the effects of how lighting shapes how we see natural landscapes. The layout of the photobook contains 116 black and white photographs; the original 1979 edition was produced with two-toned (red and blue) cloth binding and a photo-illustrated dust jacket. The majority of images are put onto one page each with a small number sharing a singular page, designed as a traditional coffee table book.

The audience of the photobook is primarily pre-established/practicing photographers, those who already know and are a fan of Ansel Adams' published works. The successful aspects of this photobook are the quality of the prints within the photobook, being professionally made and pieced together, the chronology and layout of the prints on each page help to keep the attention of a reader throughout the entirety of the photobook rather than slowly becoming disinterested as you flip the pages, the photobook is of incredible quality construction itself, being sturdy and strong, made of good quality material. The size of the photobook works well to bring outside interest as those who may not know of Adams' work may be able to become interested through the small size of the book along with a brief look into its content making it marketable to a wider audience. Introductory text roughly 28 pages long helps to contextualise the photobook and the author helping greatly to reach outside audiences.



Week Task 14/01/2026

Photobook analysis

Example 1: Ansel Adams' *Yosemite and the Range of Light*;

While not having many the main fault of the photobook are as follows, the price of the book is by no means cheap today, especially the original printing of the book. Prices can range anywhere between £60 for the average modern reprint to £1,300 for signed first copy editions. Of course, cheap editions can be found through the internet namely sites such as eBay and Amazon, but quality and authenticity cannot be 100% guaranteed on such sites.

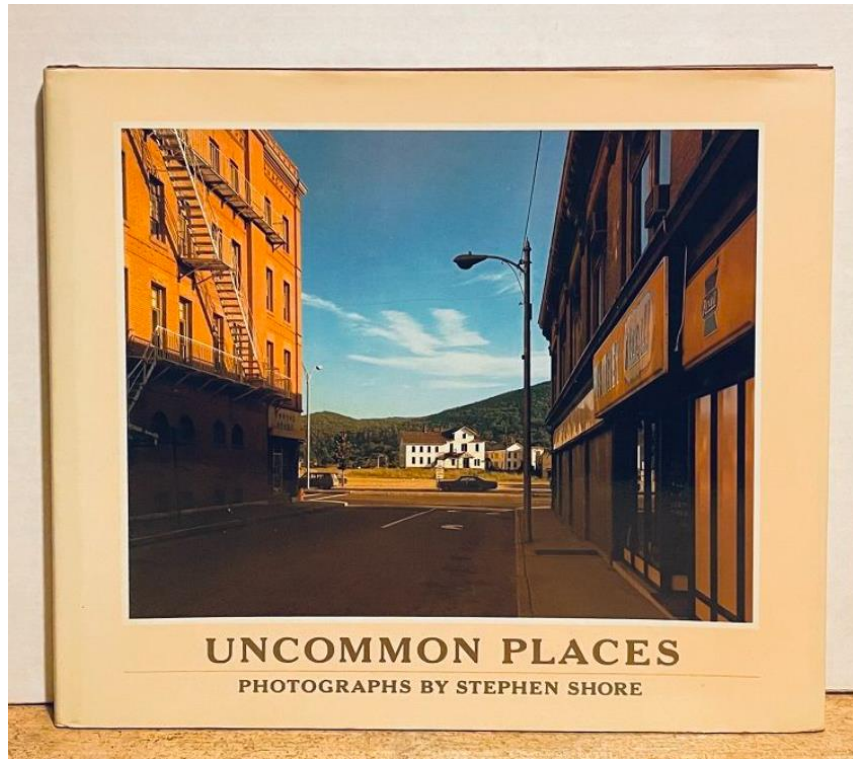
"Like the landscape painters and conservationists before him, Ansel Adams' photographs – showing Yosemite in all its glory – have been instrumental in protecting this national park."(CNN, 2019).

Week Task 14/01/2026

Photobook analysis

Example 2: The themes of *Uncommon Places* by Stephen Shore are that of finding beauty and photographic scenes in the most mundane of places during daily life, documenting the seen but unnoticed spaces that are often busy and creating a sprawling vision of America through a new perspective. The layout of the photobook contains 208 pages for current editions; it is designed as landscape and is approximately 26cm x 33cm in size. Shot with an 8x 10 camera the photobooks images are large format, coloured photographs with a medium sized white border to frame the images.

The photobook is wildly successful, with the incredible quality of the prints and the unique perspective and colourful, powerful scenes painted by the project, *Uncommon Places* is an easy and comprehensive read through its entirety, easy to follow with large formatted and framed images to see each photograph in its entirety and explore the contents of each photograph. Other than high prices *Uncommon Places* is a great coffee table book with great content.



Week Task 14/01/2026

Photobook analysis

EXAMPLE 2: *UNCOMMON PLACES* BY STEPHEN SHORE

Week Task 14/01/2026

Photobook analysis

Example 3: The theme of *People of the 20th Century* by August Sander is a sociological exploration and documentation of people and social classes in the 20th century. Organising German society into seven distinct groups, The Farmer, The Skilled Tradesman, The Woman, Classes, and Professions, The Artists, The City and The Last People. The photobook explores and questions the differences between each class of people and their contributions.

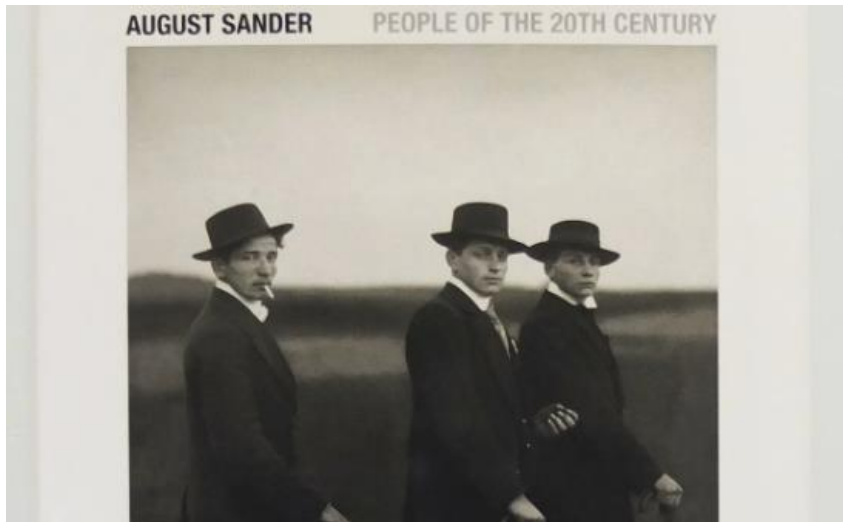
The layout of the photobook is that of a framework based on occupation rather than a traditional chronological chaptered book, it has 808 pages holding 619 photographs. The dimensions of the photobook are approximately 9.38 x 11.69 inches. Many of the photographs have white borders to window the photos and draw attention toward the centre of the page, along with this the photographs themselves are large black and white images, all of which are portraits of singular or groups of people in their respective classes/occupations. The images are clean and striking and grab the attention of the viewer easily.

Week Task 14/01/2026

Photobook analysis

Example 3: *People of the 20th Century* by August Sander;

The photobook is an incredible piece of portrait photography paired with a great design; it has been a highly successful photobook since its release with many reprints. It attracts those interested in portraiture along with those interested in the history of photobooks and the development of its works and methods. Its comprehensive, easy to dissect and read, and a unique piece of work that sheds light on a myriad of subjects from recent history.



Photobook Ideas

My first idea for the project to use for the photobook was a continuation of my past work with cloudscape photographs and scenes. I had the idea to create cloudscape scenes with cyanotypes using natural objects to imprint the shape of clouds onto the cyanotype, the theme for this idea of using cloudscapes was not developed before moving onto the final idea.

My main reasons for wanting to initially do the photobook project on cloudscapes and skyboxes was my previous project utilising projection of cloudscapes and a great prior interest of cloudscape photography and art in general, along with this I took inspiration from Zoe Power and Alfred Stieglitz work with cloudscapes and skyscapes.

This idea was quickly abandoned after I had thought of another idea with a stronger theme and a new type of work that I wanted to explore.

Photobook Ideas

My second idea being the idea that I have finalised on, is to photograph monuments, memorials, and man-made structures. Exploring themes of human ingenuity, progress, industrialisation, and human nature to create incredible and beautifully imposing structures and instruments.

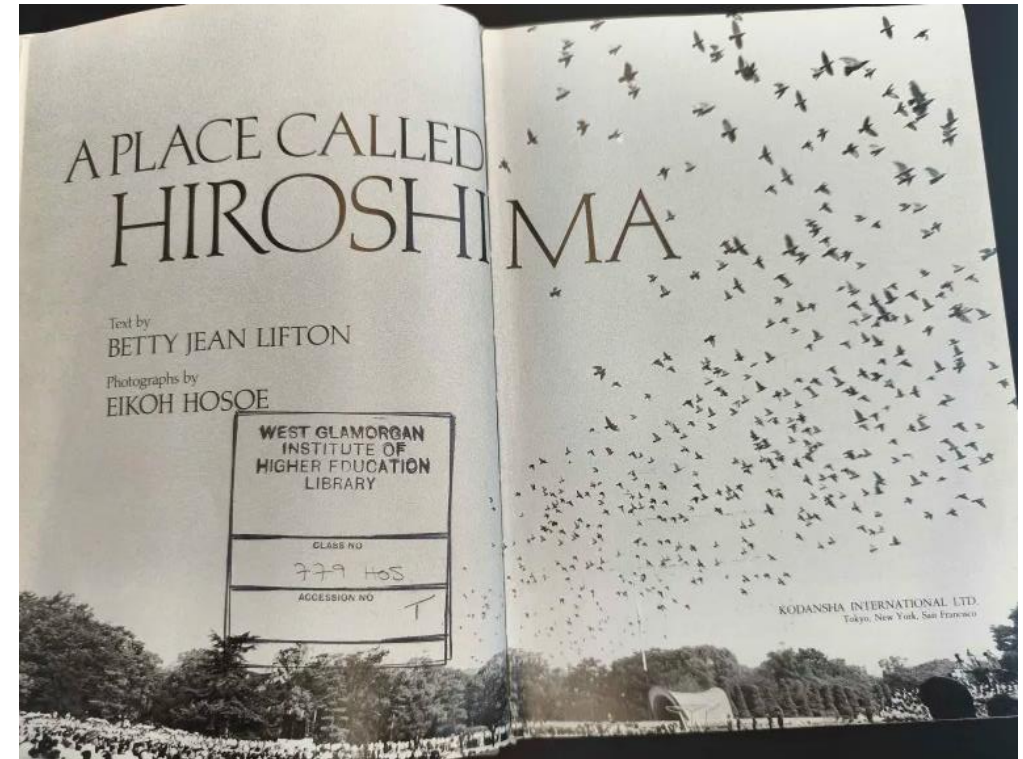
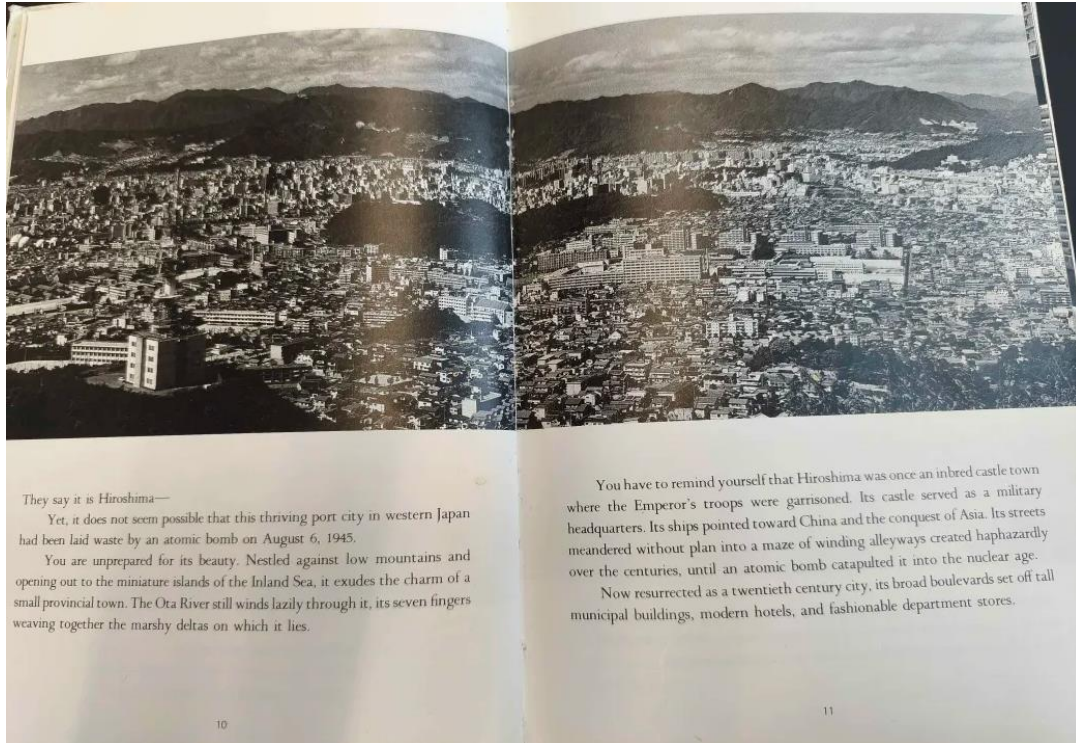
For this project I will exploring Cardiff and its surrounding towns up the valleys and through the vale of Glamorgan along with exploring Swansea at the surrounding area for memorials, structures and monuments that fit in nicely with my vision for the themes of the project and that are able to convey the contexts of my project.

The idea came to me through a mix of inspiration from my earlier work with cloudscape photography and the themes I took from those works, along with being inspired by artists such as Zoe Power, Alfred Stieglitz, and Richard Misrach's *Golden Gate* photobook.

Week Task 25/02/2026

My chosen example for the task set on the 25th of February is the photobook *A Place Called Hiroshima*. The photobook documents the impact of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on the survivors and the landscape; the photobook contains a wide variety of images along with pieces of text of both narration from the authors and text from survivor accounts. The photographer of *A Place Called Hiroshima* is Eikoh Hosoe a renowned Japanese photographer, and the secondary author is Betty Jean Lifton.

The layout of the photobook is of both unevenly bordered images with a white background/border and occasional full-bleed images; the images themselves are all black and white film. A majority of the pages include text as survivors accounts or the authors narration which is found primarily in the beginning of the photobook. The images are large many of the bordered image's span both pages or take the majority of a single page leaving just half of the space for text, the sequencing and placement of the images themselves on each page changes and can be rather unusual, as if a bomb itself had blown through the pages and rearranged the them. The result is a deeply powerful and moving experience, pulling the viewers' attention to different places on each page but always holding it there for long periods of time. The accounts themselves can go from positive messages of always moving forward to horrific and haunting accountings of the effects physically and psychologically of their experiences.



Week Task 25/02/2026

Week Task 25/02/2026

My chosen example for the task set on the 25th of February is the photobook *A Place Called Hiroshima*. The photobook's visual strategies in relation to its theme are incredibly successful, the layout of the book as said previously is unique yet works incredibly well for the images, text, and tone of the book itself. The images themselves making use of black and white, devoid of colour and with the sizes of the images they convey the feelings and emotions of its subject, at no point is the photobook a visually comfortable read but it is always attention grabbing/holding. I could think of any way to improve the photobook or its experience.

As for the links of my chosen example to my practices, there are not a great many, while in my works and projects I lean toward themes and subjects of human goodwill, kindness and greatness, *A Place Called Hiroshima* holds the worst of humanity and our deeds. However, the small link to my practices is more in the subject location of my example, Hiroshima and Nagasaki being at the time of their bombing the two cities with the largest population of Catholic Japanese in the country, and two incredibly important historical and cultural cities.

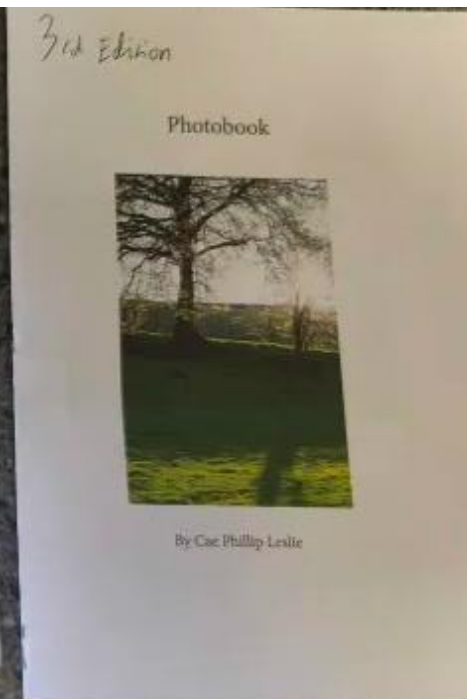
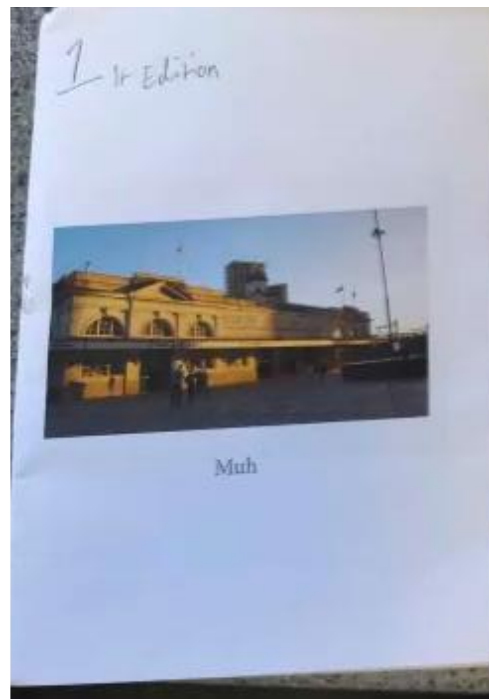
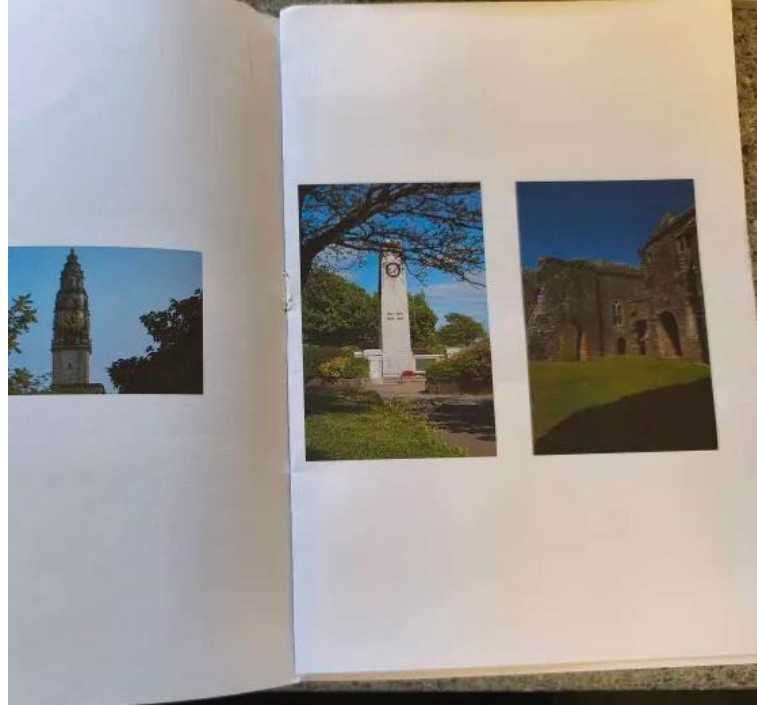
Photobook Development

Dummy book series 1: As the start of my experimentation and the application of my early research and ideas, my first set of photobook dummies focused on getting used to the InDesign program and getting a feel for the sizes of my images in the photobooks along with the potential size of the photobook itself.

My starting ideas for my photobook were for a mostly landscape based and A3 or A2 sized coffee book esq design. Leaning towards a softback as to be able to full open the book flat which would work best for the presentation of my work inside the book. 20 – 28 images was the set amount I decided on along with the idea of small accompanying text with each image, name, date of construction and state of repair. E.G (Cardiff Castle, 1091, Currently Maintained.). The state of repair part of text was the only part I was unsure of and may be removed in future iterations. Finally, the type of binding and type of paper at this point was undecided and awaiting further experimentation and research.

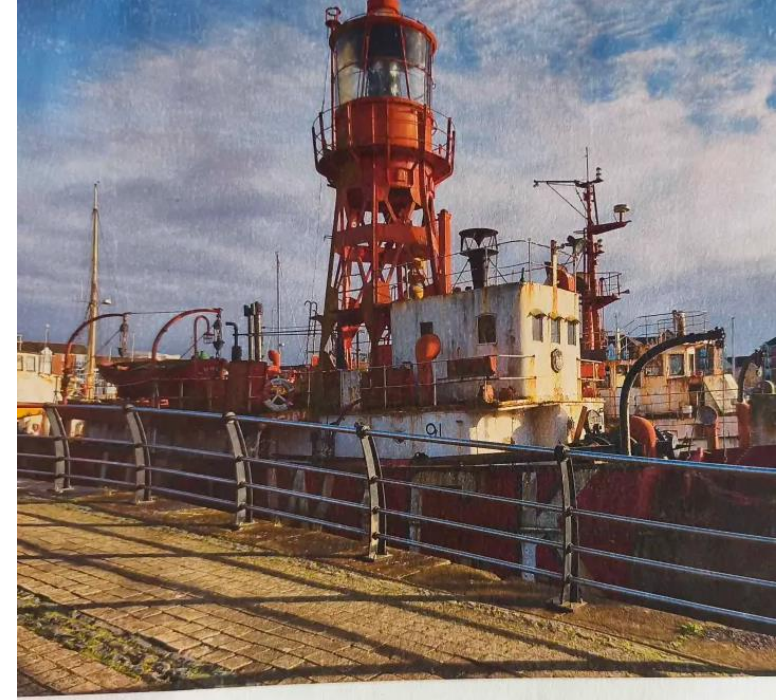
Photobook Development

Dummy book series 1: The first iterations of my dummy photobooks were printed in A4 sheets and then folded into A5, stapled together as the initial way of binding, and experimented with differently sized and spaced images as I figured out the InDesign process and continued researching relevant and or interesting photobooks.



Photobook Development

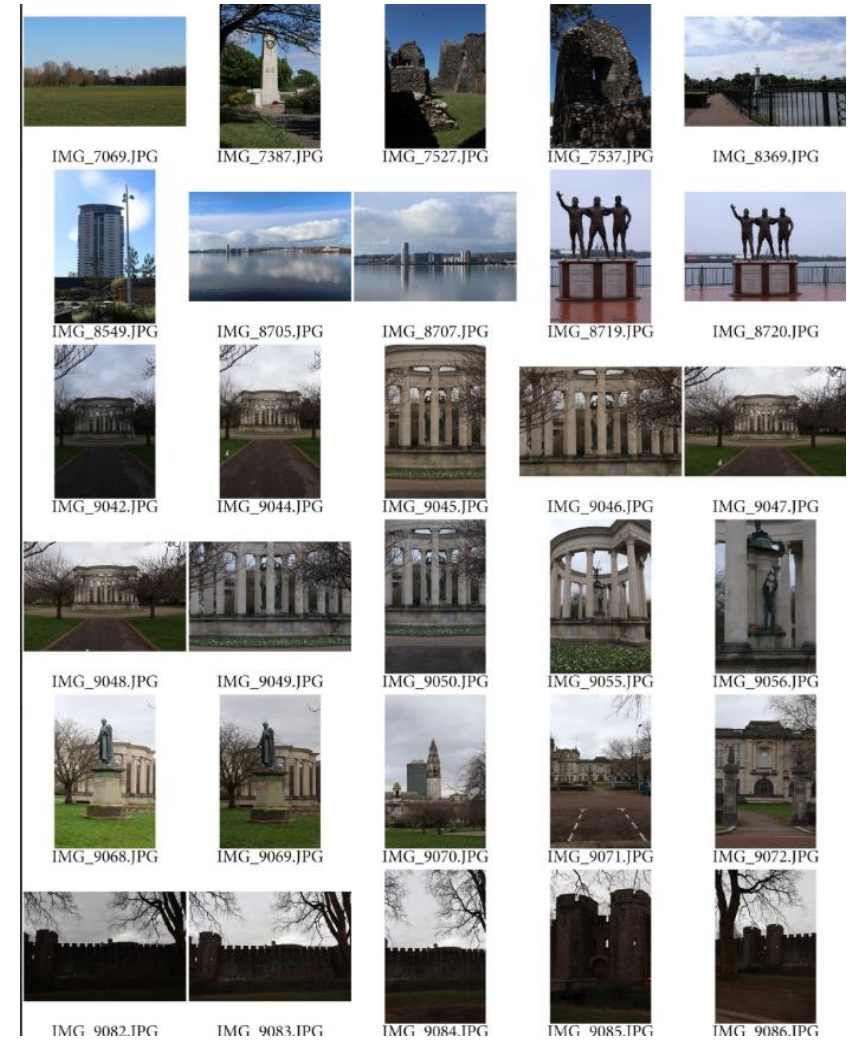
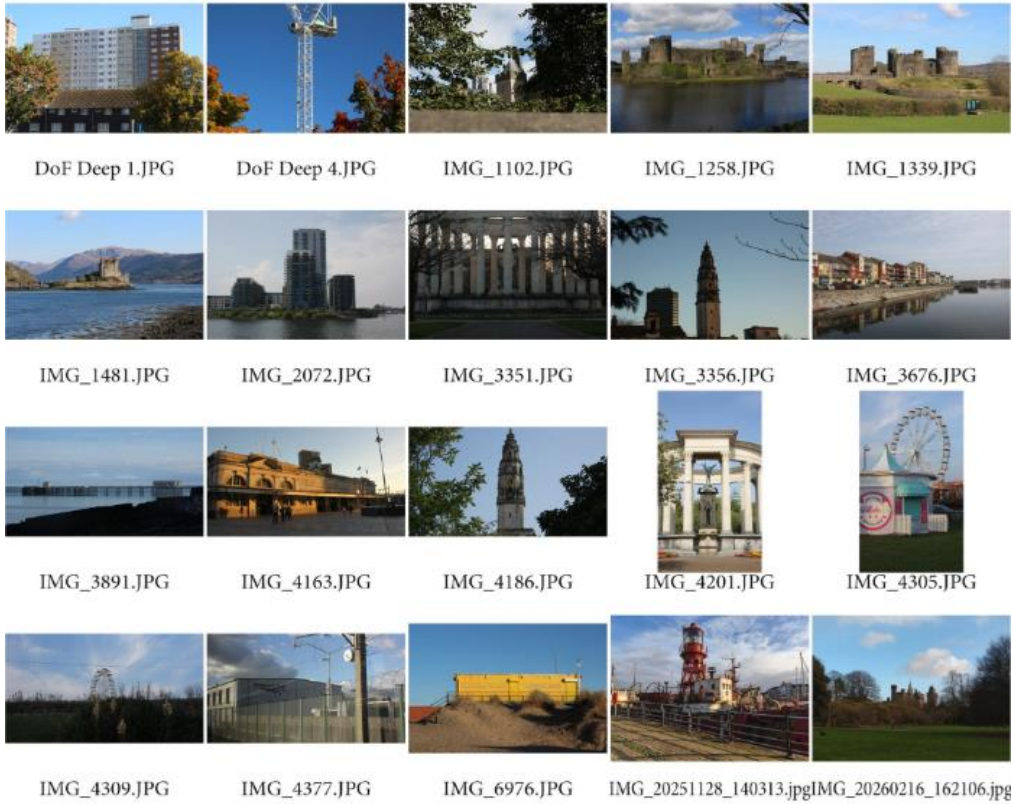
Dummy book series 1: The second iterations of my photobook dummies experimented with a larger size photobook, A3 – A4, along with different image sizing and positioning on the pages, it also served as a contact sheet for a small shoot I had done for the project. Along with this I tried with a dummy that opened upwards rather than sideways with landscape images and a card like textured paper that was coloured off white.



Project Cycle 1

Plan: The plan for my first project cycle will be to gather already existing shots into a contact sheet and then to complete two shoots, one shoot in Cardiff and one shoot in Penarth. These locations have been chosen for their ease of access and short time/distance of travel from where I live, making them both a good starting point for the production of my work and the refinement through additional shoots/reshoots later on. Both of these locations are also rich in the content I want to shoot, namely memorials, monuments, and specific types of architecture and buildings.

For these shoots I will be using my own Canon EOS 800D camera with an 18-55mm lens and a 75-300mm lens. I have chosen to do the shoots on a sunny/semi sunny semi cloudy day to get the harsh shadows and highlights created by direct sunlight on parts of the structures and shade and shadow on other parts. The sunlight will also bring out a much more developed and potent colour palate in the shots while providing with a great background (Blue skies, White clouds).



Project Cycle 1

CONTACT SHEET:



IMG_9116.JPG



IMG_9132.JPG



IMG_9133.JPG



IMG_9159.JPG



IMG_9160.JPG



IMG_9169.JPG



IMG_9183.JPG



IMG_9184.JPG



IMG_9189.JPG



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IMG_9207.JPG



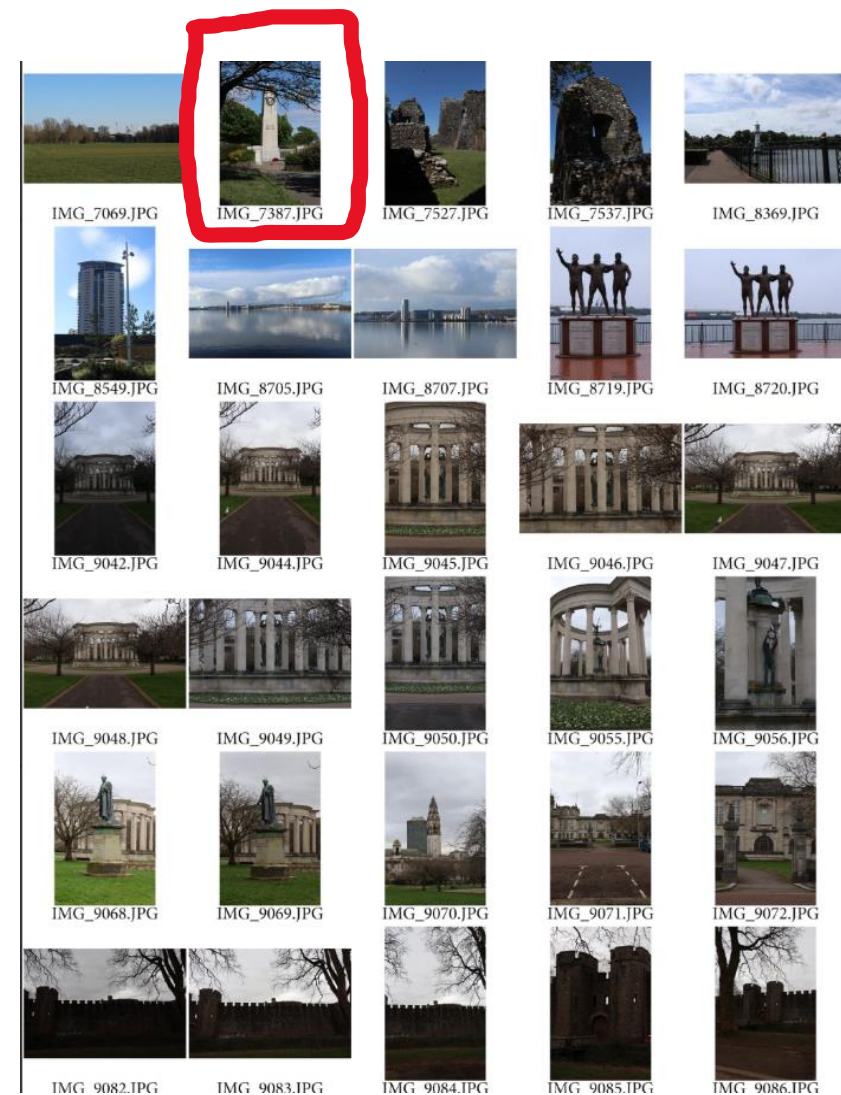
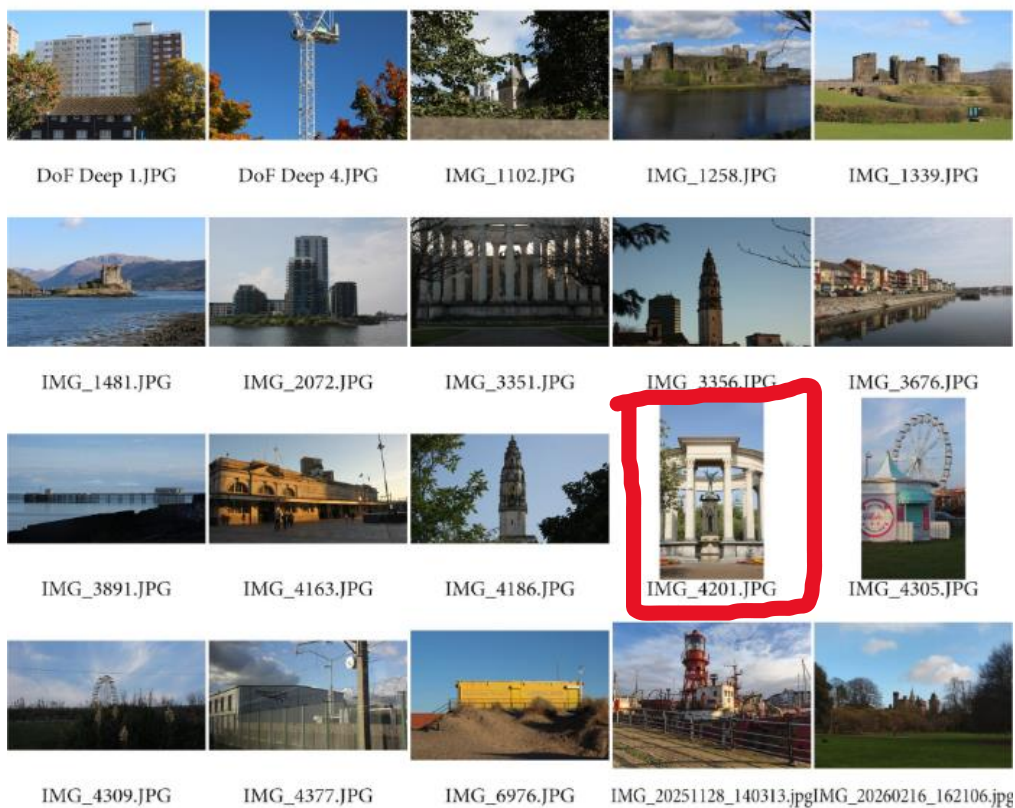
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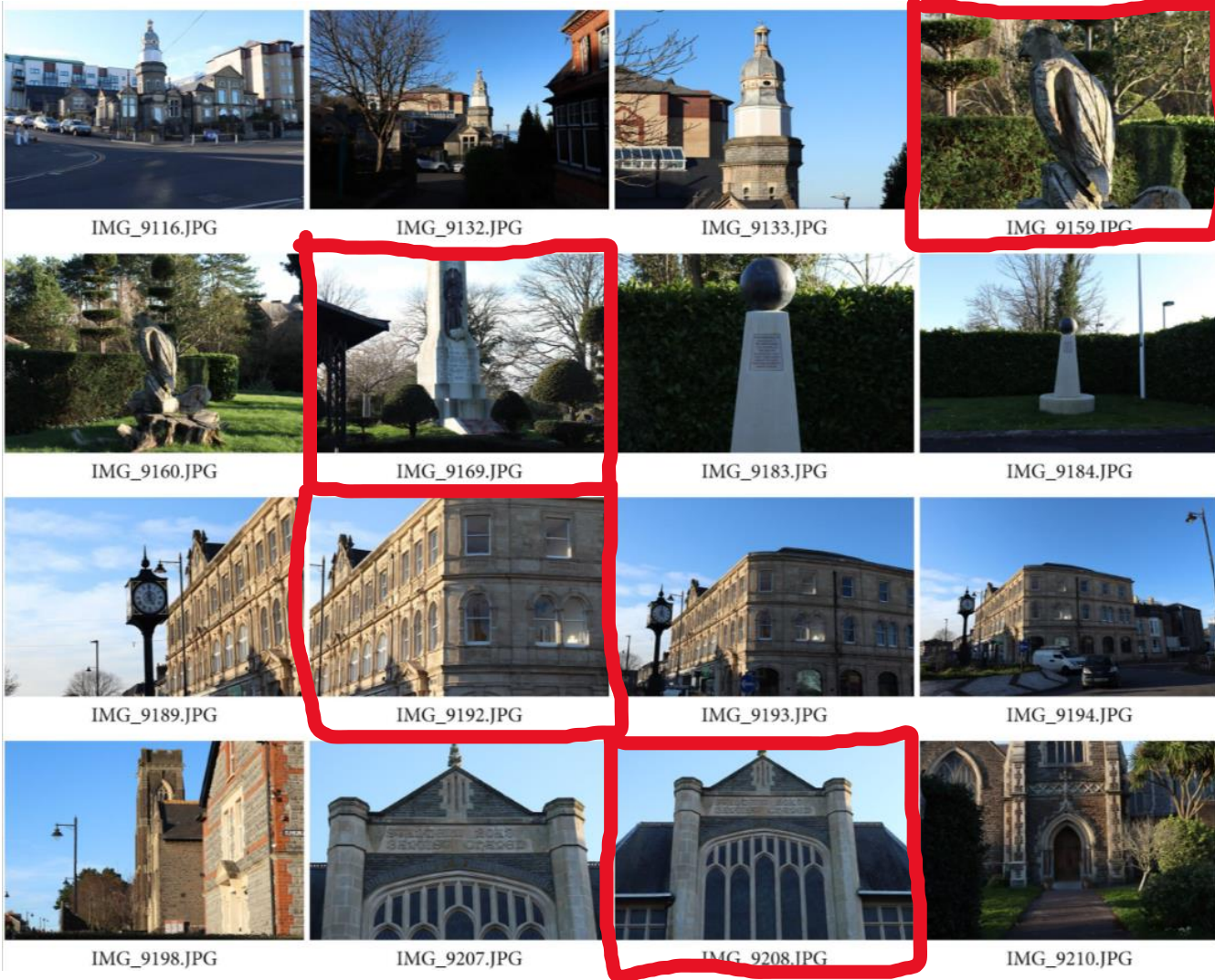
Project Cycle 1

CONTACT SHEET:



Project Cycle 1

BEST IMAGES:



Project Cycle 1

BEST IMAGES:

Project Cycle 1

Best Images Reflection: The best images I have chosen are the ones that fit in best with the themes I want to present in my photobook, along with this they are ones that I deem are good enough images to use in my photobook.

For this project cycle the images I have circled in red are those that have more vibrant colours, harsher lighting, and bright backgrounds, so far these types of images I have found work best to convey the themes of the overall project. For me, the bright and natural lighting from the sun brings across a stronger connection to the themes of human architecture and ingenuity when creating visually appealing and magnificent structures as opposed to the darker toned and moodier images that could come across in a less positive interpretation.

Project Cycle 1

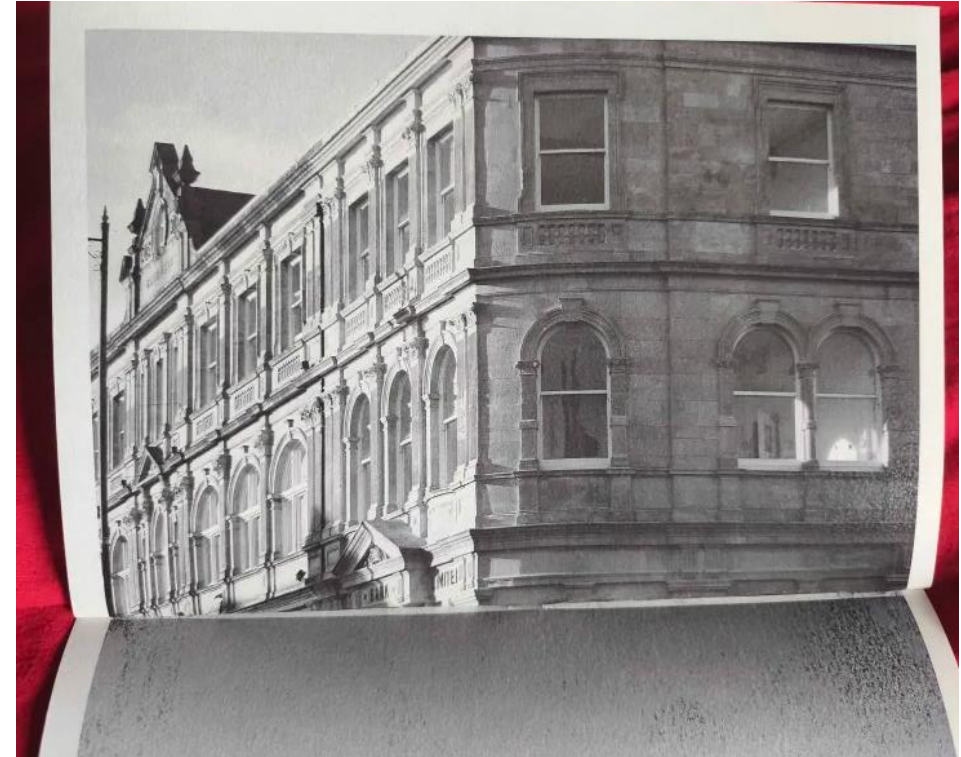
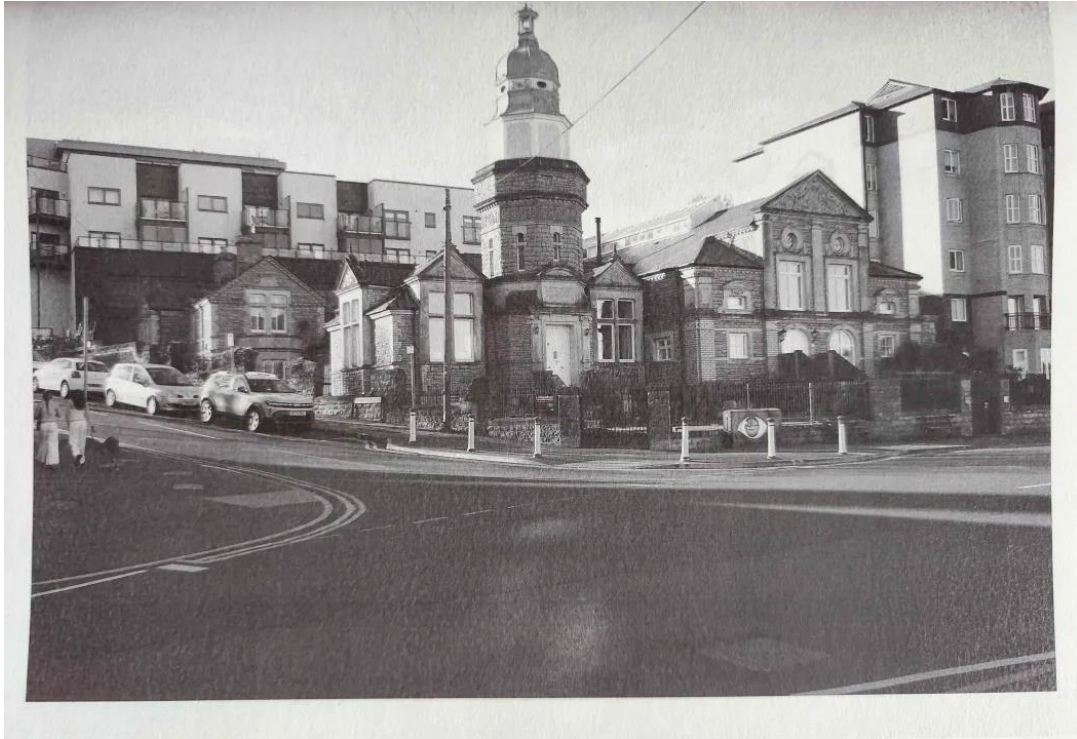
Evaluation: This first project cycle combining two shoots and previously taken images to combine the outline of my photographic work for the photobook was a good success. I was able to gather a good number of viable images for my themes and further the design ideas and practice for my photobook.

Now with more material and having a clearer grasp on my themes and ideas for the photographs I want to put into the photobook, I will be able to plan out future project cycles and gather more images to work with until I have developed the photobook enough to start my final selection of images for the final photobook ahead of the submission deadline.

Photobook Development

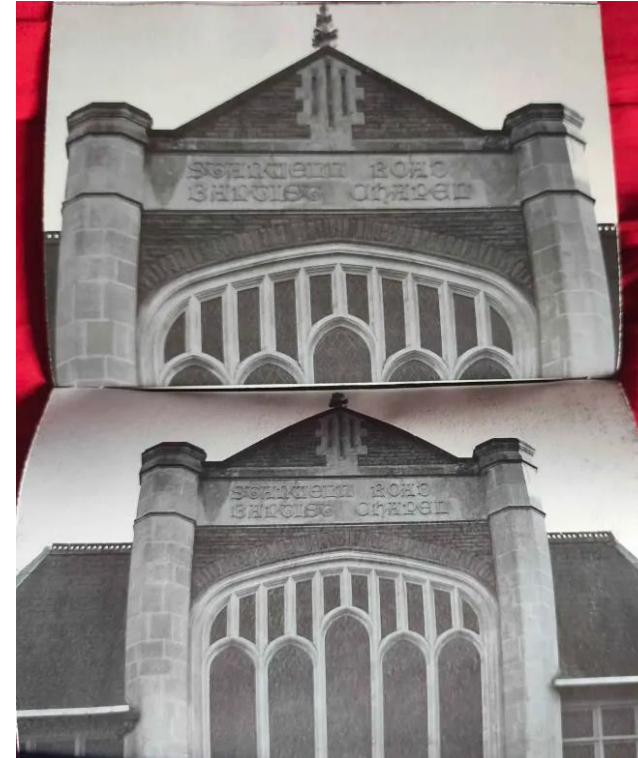
Dummy book series 2: The second series of photobook dummies started with using a grainy and more card like paper and turning my digital colour images to black and white to work with the grain of the paper. The idea to explore black and white along with using a preexisting grainy paper rather than adding artificial grain in Lightroom was given to me during a tutorial session.

Following the final format of a A4 sized photobook utilising full-bleed images along with being landscape and opening upwards rather than side to side, I created a few versions of the black and white photobook, one with white borders which I quickly disregarded as an idea, and the rest with full-bleed and no border. The grain of the paper worked very well with the black and white images and complimented the size and landscape format of the photobook. I will continue with developing a black and white version using this paper type alongside the main-coloured version with a smoother glossier paper photobook.



Photobook Development

DUMMY BOOK SERIES 2:



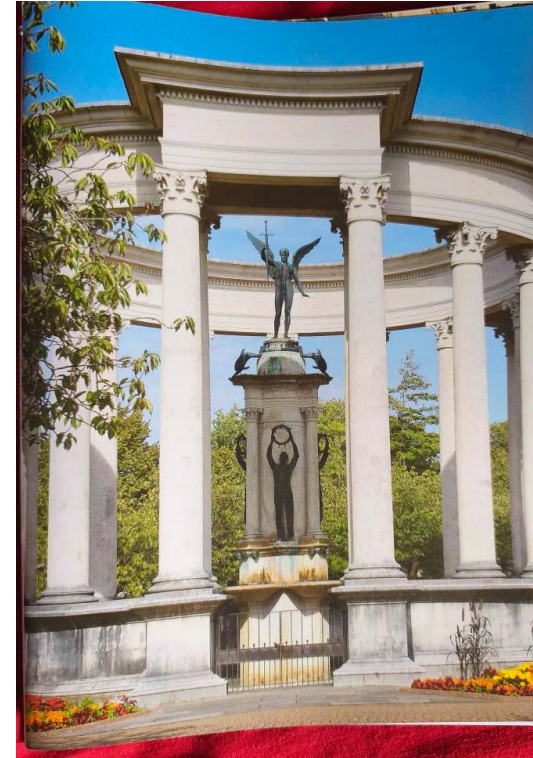
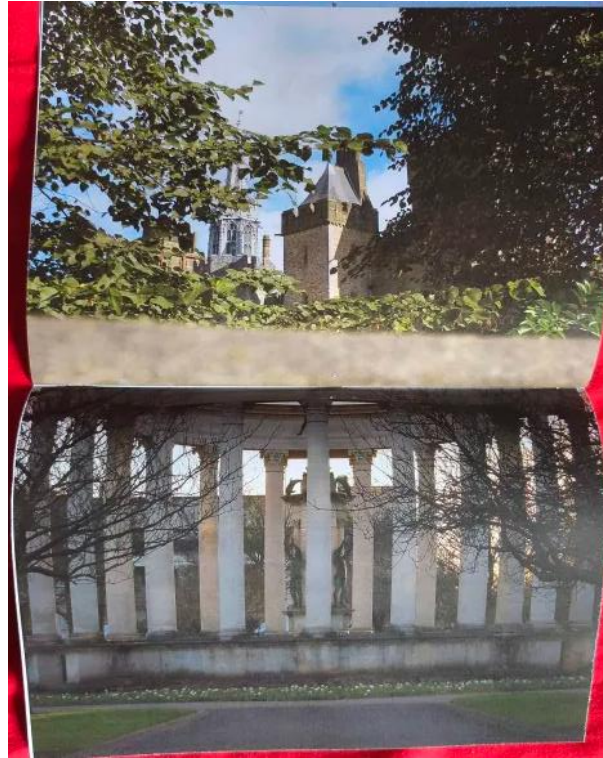
Photobook Development

DUMMY BOOK SERIES 2:

Photobook Development

Dummy book series 3: The third series of my photobook dummies followed the same format and principles of the 2nd series but developing the photobook as a colour piece. Utilising full bleeds at an A4 size for the majority of the book, however switching to a portrait cover piece for the front and back covers, this creates the dynamic of having to open and then rotate the book to view the rest of the works, giving a more in depth feeling of interaction and personalised experience when viewing the photobook. At this point I have also started to cut down the images to those I feel are good enough to fit into the photobook and that work with the themes, contexts and adjacent works alongside.

With more of my decisions and ideas becoming final, I will have to begin finalising the binding type and experimenting with materials for said binding. The binding should allow for the photobook to open completely or almost completely flat as to show off the landscape images in the best and most professional manner.



Photobook Development

DUMMY BOOK SERIES 3:



Photobook Development

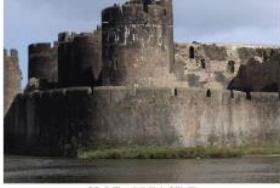
DUMMY BOOK SERIES 3:

Project Cycle 2

Plan: This second project cycle was to get my final shoot done and gather any singular images that needed reshooting to put into the final selection of images for the photobook. The full shoot was planned for Caerffili.

For the shoot I used my Canon EOS 800D camera with an 18-55mm lens.

I had planned for this shoot to span over two days with sunny weather and harsh lighting to fit in with the already existing works that were going in the photobook. The first day I dedicated to solely shooting in Caerffili, going through the town centre and then gradually working my way north to the border of Senghennydd. The second day of the shoot was primarily in Caerdydd and Abertawe to regather previous shots that I thought would be vital to the photobook but needed to be refined/reshot for a better visual experience.



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IMG_9388.JPG



IMG_9396.JPG



IMG_9416.JPG



IMG_9432.JPG



IMG_9439.JPG



IMG_9451.JPG



IMG_9464.JPG



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IMG_9509.JPG



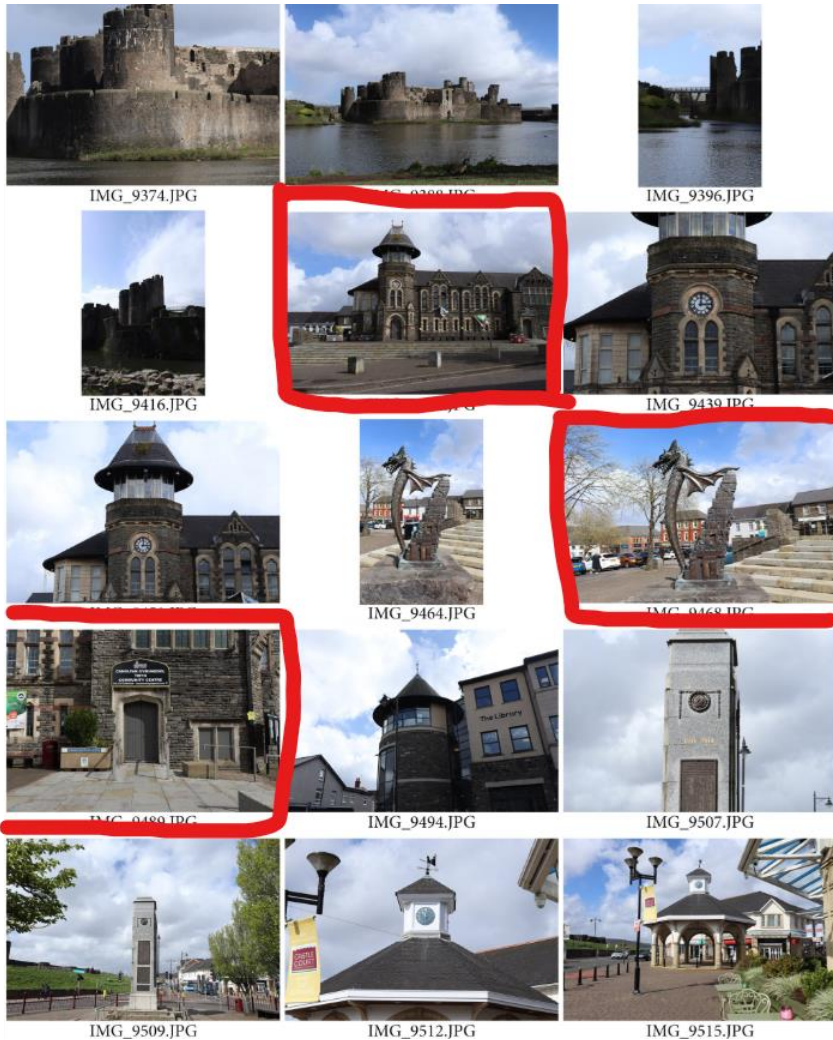
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IMG_9515.JPG

Project Cycle 2

CONTACT SHEET:



Project Cycle 2

BEST IMAGES:

Project Cycle 2

Best Images Reflection: The best images chosen are those that will be added to the final selection of photos for the photobook. They fit in with the other works already selected as final images and also work with the contexts and themes of the photobook.

Two of the best images are that of the Caerffili town hall, a wider full shot and a close up of the main entrance, I specifically chose these images as the best due to their extensive history and incredible location, working with the themes of older architecture and visually appealing buildings it was also surrounded with similarly dated and beautiful structures, along with being across the moat and road to Caerffili castle itself.

The third image just outside the previous two is a dragon statue with the Welsh national anthem (Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau), this in particular caught my attention for the aspect of nationalistic themes it could bring into the rest of the work.

Project Cycle 2

Evaluation: Overall, this was a decently successful project cycle, from Caerffili I was able to gather four additional images for the final selection along with an additional two images that came along with the reshoots. Caerffili having a large number of monuments and structures that fit into the themes of my photobook made it a great place to do a final full shoot, I was able to gather a large number of images which in turn helped to cut down to those that were the best, giving me a larger pool of final images to choose from.

With a successful final shoot and the additional reshoots for previously taken images I have rounded out the final selection of images, 28 images from previous shoots before the semester and shoots during the semester along with a few standalone photos I had taken during the semester with the photobook project in mind.

Photobook Development

Cover and text page: Shown in the following slides I have created two different styles of book covers with two versions of each and four images chosen. First, I created the two portrait versions of the front and back cover, with portrait images and a white window border to set it apart from the content of the book and with the title written in text spread from the top to bottom, the text was written in the American Typewriter font. I then created two version of the cover as landscape pieces, the same as the rest of the work in the photobook, I used the same design of text, font, spacing, and border.

The photo to be used for the front and back cover will be the most eye catching/best piece to draw as much interest to the photobook as possible. The decision to use the American Typewriter font was due to the font's easy readability, smooth and simple design along with how it complements the contexts and themes of my work. The typewriter being another incredible construction of humanity and an invention that is often described and perceived as beautiful and aesthetically pleasing.

Monuments



To Humanity

Monuments



To Humanity

Photobook Development

Monuments



To Humanity

Monuments



To Humanity

Photobook Development

Photobook Development

Final Product: The final product from this course is a 32 page, A4 sized photobook with a simple binding. The photobook contains 28-30 images and 2 pages of pure text, there is a front and back cover that have portrait images and text depicting the title of the photobook (Monuments to Humanity). The rest of the book besides the text pages are landscape images formatted as a landscape photobook to give a better depth of interactivity when flipping from portrait to landscape to portrait once again.

The works are in full colour on a thick white paper stock; the font used in the text is American Typewriter. The photos shown in the book are of architecture, monuments, iconography, and structures related to the themes. The themes of the book are those of human creativity, ingenuity, the desire to create and imagine and be a part of a greater process than oneself. It touches additionally on historical and architectural themes along with religious/spiritual themes to connect the ideas of the human need and desire to be and or do something greater and leave a semi-permanent/permanent mark in our history.

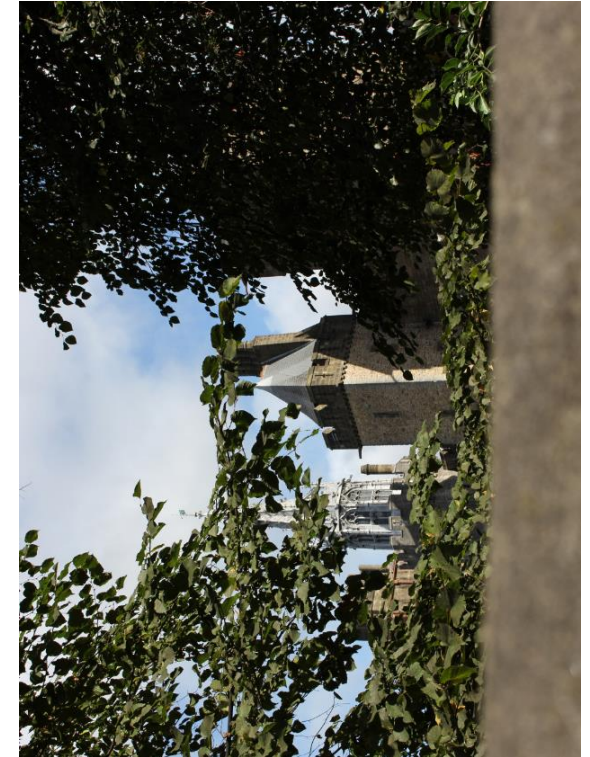
Monuments



To Humanity

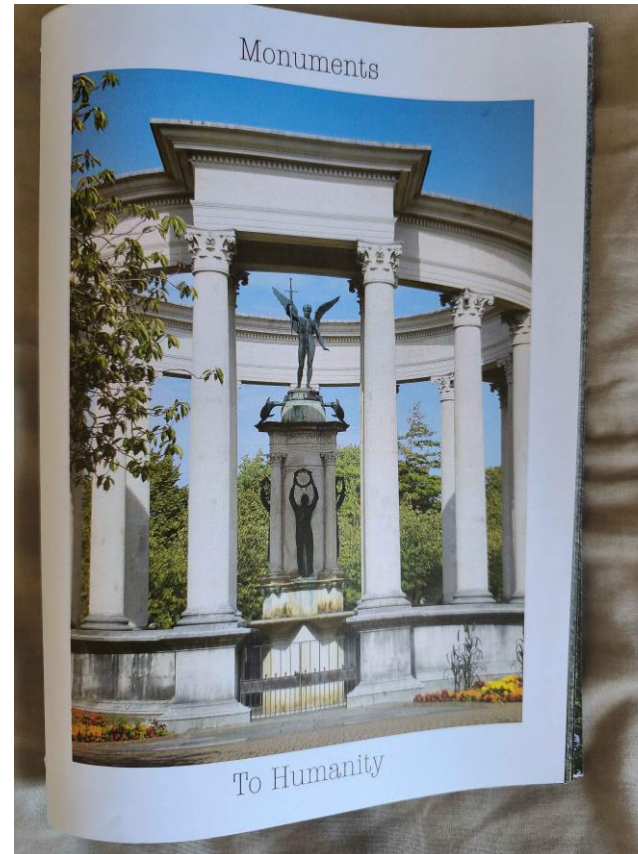
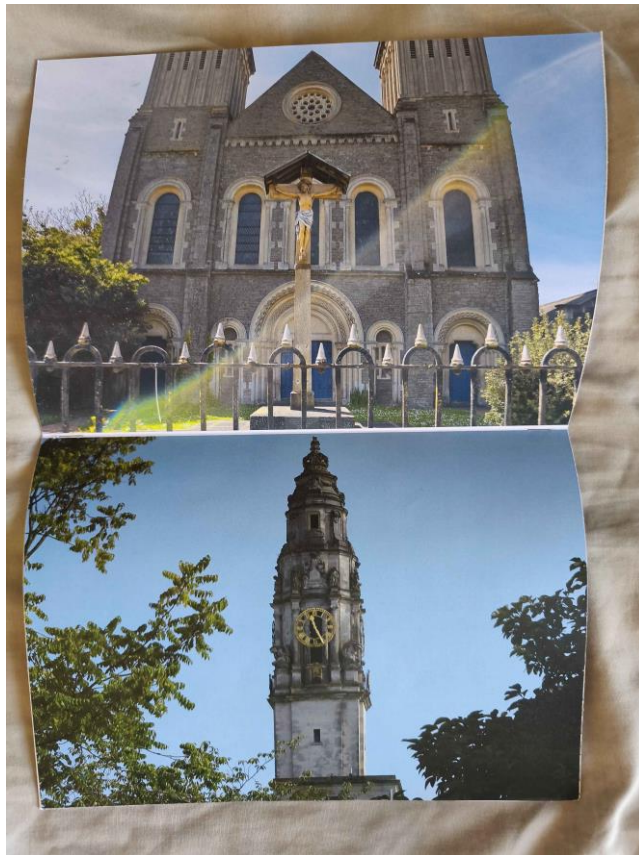
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal
life
John 3:16 NIV

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were
born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations
Jeremiah 1:5 NIV



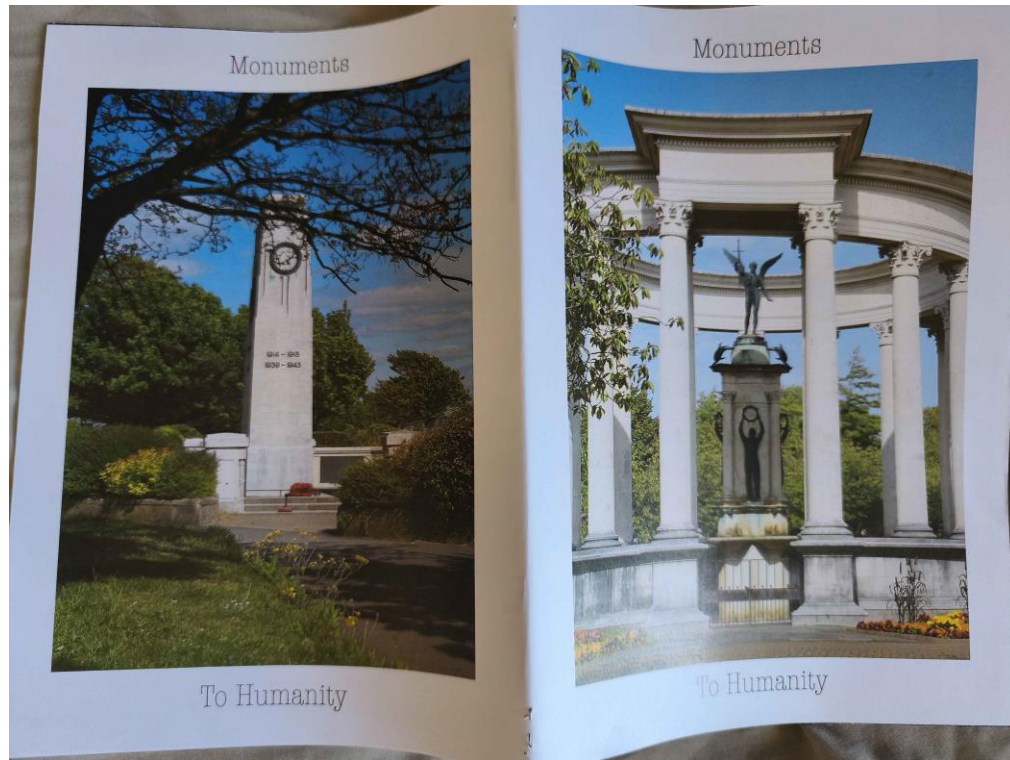
Photobook Development

FINAL PRODUCT IMAGES:



Photobook Development

FINAL PRODUCT IMAGES:



Photobook Development

FINAL PRODUCT IMAGES:

Evaluation

Some aspects of the project have been rather successful, the cover design and works themselves shown in the book tie in well with the themes of the photobook and the vision that I had for it, while going through many iterations, design choice changes and ideas I think that I have arrived at a fairly functioning photobook with solid photos and good themes.

Although I am quite happy with the work I produced for the photobook and the themes of the photobook itself, there are many aspects that could be greatly improved upon, namely the work could have benefitted in an even larger book perhaps sizing up close to or to A3 when folded rather than A4, along with this the various binding choices of using string and twine stitching to metal rings and simple staples left me desiring for a better binding design to compliment the photobooks design and the themes of it, in the end going for the simple, small and industrial staples to give a polar opposite feel to the rest of the book. With more time and experience I would have enjoyed to explore a larger number of binding designs until I had found one that complimented the photobook and satisfied me with the overall product.

Reference List

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Lotzof, K. (n.d.) 'Anna Atkins: cyanotypes and the first book of photographs', *Natural History Museum*. Available at: <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/anna-atkins-cyanotypes-the-first-book-of-photographs.html> (Accessed: 7 April 2026).

Photo book (2026) *Wikipedia*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photo_book (Accessed: 31 January 2026).

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