

Photobook Proforma

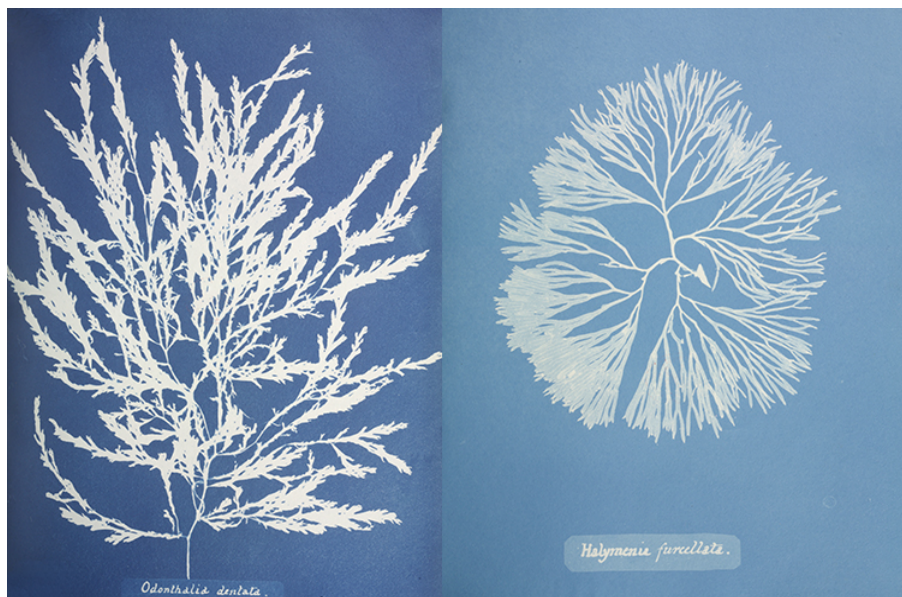
Student Name: Corey Penn-Thomas (2200822)

Knowledge and Understanding Skills: 20%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

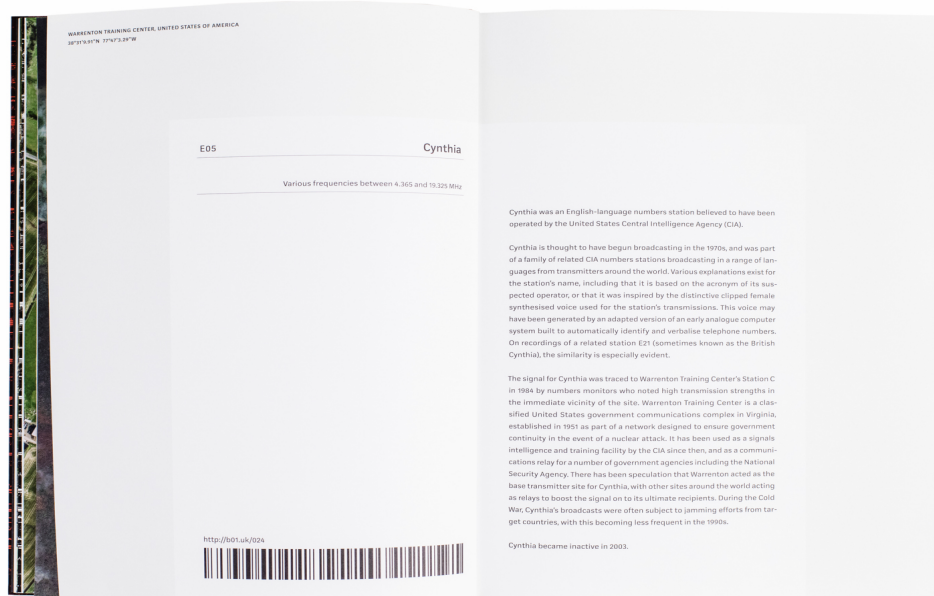
Your evaluation should show clear understanding of the history, function, practical development and production of the photobook through a range of critically understood examples. The analysis of these will highlight the functions and strategies employed by the photographer and your interpretation of their communication of meaning through the publication.

Using examples (3 max), explore your understanding of the history, function and practical development of the photobook. Your analysis should highlight the strategies used by the artist/photographer to communicate their message. Include visuals (500 - 1000 words)



Through my studies I have come across a broad range of different artists' work in the form of a 'photobook'. The definition for this has likely shifted throughout the years as artists found new ways and formats to present their work or tell a story, but one of the earliest iterations I would consider a photobook was by Anna Atkins. She was a botanist and a photographer who used cyanotypes to depict a variety of plants and compiled these into a book format. Though it could be argued that her work wasn't telling any particular story or narrative, like many art driven photobooks do in contemporary years, I firmly believe this would still count. It was the first of its time and cyanotypes are an alternative printing method even in the current year. Furthermore, I believe a photobook's only intention can be one of information and what separates it from a text book is the use of imagery as the

primary communication method over written word. Photobooks by modern artists so commonly are trying to inform a reader of a topic, or bring perspective to something a person may not personally be familiar with, and Atkins' *Cyanotypes of British Algae* achieves both of these intentions through a medium of photography.



This isn't to say, though, that I believe a photobook should solely communicate via images, there's many cases that text or even audio being incorporated into a book helps to strengthen the creator's message. *Shadows of the State* is a photobook by Lewis Bush and shines a light on covert radio stations used by intelligence agencies to contact and communicate to agents in the field. Within it, he has pages that hold barcodes the reader can scan on their phone to be able to listen to the recordings taken from the stations he discovered. Imagery throughout the book depicts radio graphs of various radio frequencies amongst the drone shots of the stations themselves, and I think the incorporation of an audio format that accompanies the images is a fascinating way to play with what a photobook can be. Bush effectively created a way to be able to narrate the radio graphs of the stations' recordings that we would be looking at while it still not making a lot of sense to us, but his intention isn't to get us to understand it's to be informed these stations exist despite their attempts to be covert and giving us his proof of their activities.

Overall I feel it's important as creatives to keep seeing how different strategies can possibly push the definitions set for us. Experimenting with how we format our information to a reader means they can be introduced to new ways to engage with an artist's work, such as the use of audio from Bush.

Cognitive and Intellectual Skills: 30%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Your research report should critically analyse the theories and concepts explored in your photobook, as well as the techniques it employs. Focus on developing a reasoned and informed debate rather than simply describing the work. Your analysis should lead to clear, valid conclusions, considering the form of the book, the reading experience it creates.

Avoiding description, critically analyse the theme/ context you explore within your photobook. Your critical analysis should demonstrate your cognitive and intellectual skills in how you have understood the subject and made work as a response to it. Consider how the form of your book communicates meaning in relation to the subject of exploration. (500 -1000 words)

The theme I was using my photobook to explore was the theories of panopticism, and how those present themselves in a contemporary society with the embedding of cameras in everyday life. With how widespread a camera watching a space is, and frequently unnoticed, it prompted a consideration for how the role of "watcher" felt as opposed to "watched". The integration of mass surveillance in increasingly sly methods is done with intent to monitor and preserve safety but comes at no cost of privacy to figures pinning their attentions on information. Hence, in order for me to explore this imbalance, I sought to sit and observe the public despite not being physically present in the space as to maintain my own anonymity. My 100 page book is just a drop in the water condensed between a front and back cover to extend this feeling to those who read it, allowing them an insight into what the reversal of the norm looks like. It lets someone imagine themselves in the empty spaces between the images, to consider if it could be their own features distorted by a camera quality and reflect that this is, innately, an uncomfortable reality. The differing sizes of my images, reflecting true to the place they were on my screen when I took the photographs, makes example of how it doesn't matter how much of the frame someone takes up it won't stop someone who desires to pay attention to them from doing so. Highly distorted and abstract pictures of strangers is still physical evidence that someone has been recorded, across an ocean and without their knowledge, at no expense to myself or to whoever is viewing my collection of people. Repeated appearance of locations, people, and actions or behaviours, speaks to the intense observation done in order to make the book created what it is. The study of behaviour in both crowds and solo figures and waiting for "a sign" in their actions to take the picture is influenced by the topic of panopticism and has informed my experience in the observer's role, you're unable to not recognise the position you're in when watching people through a screen. Close cropped pictures on peoples faces and upper body communicate the things that drew my eye most in the process, reminiscent to facial recognition software that's been seeping into certain surveillance systems, as well as the indistinct bodies of people moving from one place to another where I'd wait to see if they would do anything simultaneously.

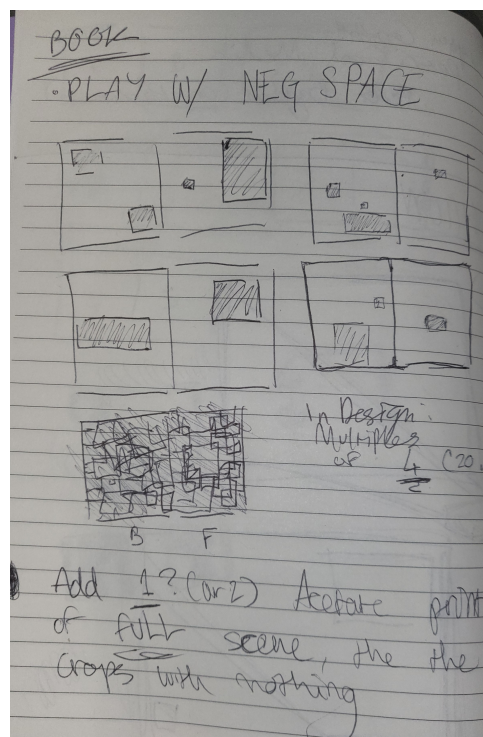
Practical Skills: 40%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Present your book professionally, carefully considering how you deploy methods, technical processes. Your methods should synthesize the form of your book and the context/meaning of your subject. Your book should demonstrate proficiency, selection in editing and flair. The decisions you make should be as product of significant research into book production and design. Within your evaluation, ensure to provide examples of book dummies to show the developments in your practical processes. These decisions should be as product of significant book design planning including alternative idea generation.

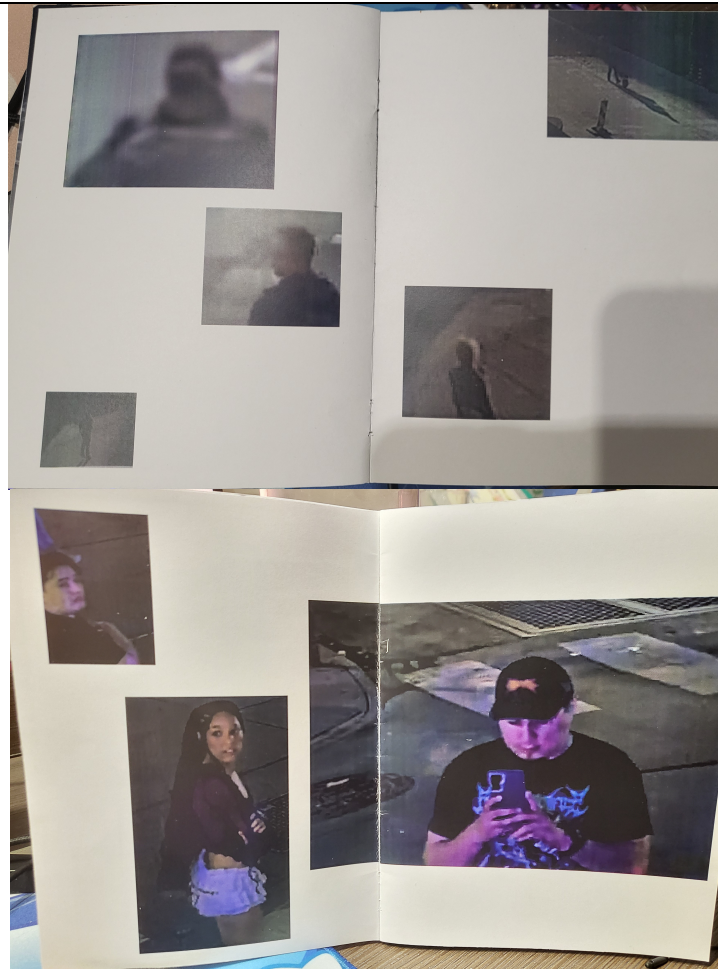
Evaluate the methods and technical processes you have employed in the making of this body of practice. Explain your process for making your book, consider how editing/ design/ typography and format speak to the subject matter you have explored. Provide examples of the book dummies you have created over the past semester to show developments in your practical processes. (800 - 1500 words)

Before creating a physical book I needed to plan out the ideas behind the layout and how I could consider making it a visually interesting piece. It was suggested to me to potentially play with the negative spacing on the page and I agreed that would be effective so planned as much, shown in my initial drawings for pages. If images mimicked the places that they were taken as a screen shot it would leave the empty space around it up for the reader to try and imagine, while also elongating and aligning lines in the structures of certain pictures to make them feel less isolated from each other. In my early drafts I had no plans for text and a considered middle page was to flood the page with images so that absolutely no negative space was left.



When making my dummy book, I wanted to play with the pacing of the book and images within it. At the start the photos were ones that had more clarity to them, with identifiable features, and from there it became a gradient of higher and higher pixelation in the shots. I also had the pictures more spaced out at first and towards the end of the book it became crowded, however I never did the double page spread of a mass of shots. This all felt a bit too on the nose for the subject I was exploring. It wouldn't necessarily be a detriment in this instance to go with more subtle ways of pacing my work, the entire concept of the modern implications of panopticism is that it's become almost like background noise to how we move around the world.





For something to break up the repetition of the negative space format I did do a double paged image in the middle of the book, though instead of many many pictures crowding the space I had one landscape shot as the background, giving the viewer the context of what I was seeing when watching the camera feed. Overlayed with it was my screenshot from that location of someone I concluded was a dog walker, enlarged so that it was as if it was zoomed into that one section of the full scene. This was done to look akin to how some police programs will present footage from activity leading up to a crime caught on CCTV, or even a close up of the crime itself. This became my front cover as opposed to being inside the book since it was such a strong layout, the front only showing the empty half of the beach while the back revealed the crop of the person I watched.



Taking forward the comments from lecturers and my own opinions on how successful the dummy was, I started formatting more of my work to be able to expand the amount of pages I had (the dummy being 20 and my goal of 100) and looked into the online book binding company Blurb. In order to ensure the dimensions of my book would suit their standard measurements I had to install an extension for the program that would also allow me to convert and upload the finished product from InDesign. I elected to not give my book a formal title on its front cover, instead the only text I wanted to use was ID codes from a police database, chosen with the desire to only have the IDs that connected to cases and reports that were still under investigation. This way even from front to back cover the theming of my work stayed consistent, as though my hours spent watching and collecting the pictures used in my final piece were my own investigations of what the people were doing. For the contents of my final piece I also changed the types of images that were paired together. Instead of having the most detailed images at the front and arranged so that they became less clear, I mixed both amongst themselves. By having more pages to work with it did help in letting me spread the different types of photos out, and worked well to give a reader something identifiable to look at rather than the engagement potentially getting boring the further into the photobook they got. This was important when I'm trying to share how sitting and watching the people within the book felt, for myself it was incredibly interesting and bizarre at the same time, but it was far from boring.

Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice 10%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

Your photobook should meet industry standards in design, development, and production. Plan your workflow according to your chosen publication method to ensure timely completion. Active participation in sessions is essential for sharing your work, engaging in discussions, and demonstrating both employability skills and a strong grasp of the module content. Your evaluation should reflect on your learning throughout the process and highlight the transferable skills you have developed.

Evaluate what you have learnt throughout the process of making your photobook. Pay particular attention to the transferable skills you have developed. (500-1000 words)

In creating my photobook, it has made me consider how to be more deliberate with how images sit on a page. I had to consider at many stages throughout what type of space a picture can occupy and whether or not that is lost or undermined if there's too much information in the same area that the reader needs to intake and process. By working alongside the empty space rather than seeing it as something lacking in a negative way, I can go forward with a mindfulness that it has its appropriate place in a project. Sometimes, much like it has been done in my final project, the negative space actually strengthens the things that are visible on the page and plays well into the themes and topics that have influenced the work in the first place. The project has also pushed me to explore the options offered by online book binding services, such as Blurb where I sent my work for printing. This was done both because of the style of book they were able to provide but also because there was such a bulk of images to be printed. They were able to create it to a professional standard which fit the aesthetic of my work as well as bind it in a clean way, which was much better than the other potential ways to bind like using a visible thread or stapling the book together, the latter of which would be less effective on a book of my volume even if the metal appearance suited it well in itself. I did still have to look at and experiment with those binding methods however, so if in the future I were to create another photobook where it was required I'm confident in my ability to choose to go down that route instead. It also has made me more familiar with what exactly those online services offer, like printing multiple copies or needing to install extensions to be able to have the right dimensions in order to make my work fit somewhere else's conditions. An extension of that too is that it forced me to work in a way that left myself plenty of time to get it made and delivered rather than falling into the bad habits I often fall back into such as working on something too close to a deadline. I hope that this has been a good exercise for me to leave enough time for other people's working speed, which will be a hurdle often presented in a professional working environment and I'd have to not get frustrated at anyone for either not matching my own pace or frustrated at myself for not leaving enough time for things such as edits or discussion with who I'm collaborating with.

