

TASK 2 - Illustrated Book Project Proposal Task

500 words, due 5pm Feb 12th, submitted via moodle.

Formatting: please use the headings below making use of the advice and resources provided.
References should be made using the Harvard format.



Name:

Theme/Context

Provide a brief summary of the theme or subject you want your work to focus on. You might include details about the impact you hope to achieve, how the book format will help you connect with your audience, and what will make your work stand out. (300 – 500 words)

This project centres on creating a photobook that investigates themes of temporality, ephemerality, and the relationship between the physical and metaphysical realms. It explores dualities such as life and death, presence and absence, and memory and decay. The primary aim is to explore how these elements coexist and to examine how photography can serve as a medium for reflecting on the cycles of transformation.

The photobook is conceived as a dynamic artifact that evolves over time with the reader's interaction. Incorporating heat-sensitive materials, the images will shift and develop, thus making the book itself a metaphor for impermanence and change. Each reader's engagement with the book will result in a unique experience, reflecting the fluid nature of time and the human condition.

This project draws from the ideas of key art philosophers who have considered temporality within the medium of photography. André Bazin (1960) argued that photography inherently preserves time, capturing moments that resist the decay of memory, while simultaneously remaining marked by their impermanence. Susan Sontag (1977) furthered this notion, viewing photography

both as an act of preservation and a confrontation with mortality, reflecting humanity's longing to hold onto that which is inevitably fleeting. Roland Barthes (1981) expanded on these ideas in *Camera Lucida*, proposing the concept of the "punctum," the element within an image that strikes the viewer and connects them emotionally to the inevitable passage of time.

This photobook aims to embody these philosophical perspectives, examining how photography navigates the space between preservation and impermanence, presence and absence.

To deepen the exploration of these themes, the book will incorporate experimental photographic processes such as cyanotypes and chemigrams, both of which engage directly with transformation and decay. The use of heat-sensitive materials will add another layer of interactivity, allowing the images to evolve and shift in response to touch, further emphasizing the theme of memory and decay.

The cover of the book will/could utilize materials such as wood, chosen for its durability and symbolic connection to natural cycles. The organic texture of wood mirrors the book's exploration of life's cycles—decay, renewal, and the passage of time.

By embracing interactivity and materiality, this photobook challenges traditional formats. It transforms into an evolving artifact that invites readers into an intimate experience, prompting reflection on the impermanence of life and the ongoing flow of time.

- Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Hill and Wang.
- Bazin, A. (1960). *What Is Cinema?* University of California Press.
- Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. Penguin Books.

Influence

Highlight the work of a photographer who currently inspires your work. Analyse an image of theirs and explain your interest in their work. Consider style, theme, context, practical technique. (300 – 500 words)

One photographer whose work significantly influences my approach to this project is Man Ray, particularly his iconic "Rayograph" (1922).



Gelatin silver print (photogram), 9 3/8 x 11 3/4" (23.9 x 29.9 cm).

This image was created using a photogram technique, where objects are placed directly onto photographic paper and exposed to light, has been a key reference in shaping my understanding of photography's relationship with impermanence, transformation, and the metaphysical.

The composition of the Rayograph is an engaging interplay of abstract forms, shadows, and contrasts. Everyday objects, seemingly ordinary, are rendered in ethereal outlines. The sharpness of the shadows and the intangible quality of the light suggest a tension between presence and absence, as if the moment is simultaneously captured and fleeting. This speaks to the core themes I am exploring: the fragile nature of existence and the dualities inherent in life, such as creation and decay, presence and absence.

Man Ray's approach is rooted in surrealism, and his experimental use of photographic techniques challenges traditional notions of representation. By directly manipulating the photographic process through the photogram method, he bypasses the camera and instead allows light and shadow to become the principal means of image creation. This deconstruction of photography emphasizes the medium's materiality while hinting at its inherent impermanence. These qualities

resonate with my project, where I aim to investigate how photography, as a medium, reflects both the passing of time and its own temporal nature.

Man Ray's technique of creating images without a camera is particularly inspiring for my own practice. His work invites me to push the boundaries of how I interact with photographic materials. In my photobook, I plan to use heat-sensitive materials that develop or alter as the viewer engages with them, which parallels the transient nature of time and existence. Like the Rayograph, this approach brings attention to the tactile qualities of the photograph and the role that change, impermanence, and decay play in shaping meaning.

Book Form

Referencing the session PowerPoint on Moodle (or another relevant source), discuss at least one book that has influenced you. Explore its visual and aesthetic qualities, social or historical context, impact, or practical methods relevant to your theme. You may also evaluate its overall effectiveness. (300 – 500 words)

A significant influence on my work has been Tom Griggs' *A Creature That Obeys is a Creature That Wants* (2019). This book engages with themes of nature, identity, and the tension between control and instinct, and its visual approach and conceptual depth have shaped my exploration of temporality, decay, and the dualities inherent in life.

Tom Griggs' *A Creature Obeys a Creature That Wants* is an original book that cautiously dissects his father's depression without falling into the easy pitfalls of narcissism or abjection. (Arturo Soto, 2025)



The visual style of Griggs' work is particularly impactful, with his use of monochrome photography enhancing the textures and forms of his subjects. The intimate quality of the images captures quiet moments, often revealing a fragility that speaks to my own exploration of impermanence. The strong contrast between light and shadow in his images introduces a balance of opposites that I find compelling, reflecting the dualities I aim to explore in my own project, such as presence and absence, life and death. These contrasts emphasize the coexistence of opposing forces, an idea that is central to my work on decay and transformation.



Griggs also uses decaying elements, such as dying plant life, as recurring visual motifs. These suggest themes of deterioration and renewal, which resonate with my investigation of how decay—whether in nature, memory, or the body—can act as a transformative force. The way Griggs’ photographs capture moments that are on the edge of change aligns with my desire to create work that reflects the passage of time and the fragility of existence. Through similar methods, I hope to convey how photography can document both presence and absence, capturing what is fleeting while allowing space for what is lost.

Another book that has shaped my thinking is Odette England’s *Dairy Character* (2018). England's exploration of memory, place, and familial ties through the lens of dairy farming provides a powerful dialogue between past and present. Her use of archival photographs paired with contemporary imagery speaks directly to my interest in memory and temporality, and has influenced my approach to combining historical and experimental photography in my own work.

Dairy Character is a book through which Odette England seeks to unpack the tangles of femininity, labour, childhood, love and home. Much of the book is concerned with England’s formative experiences: observing and participating in the work of a dairy farm; learning what being a woman on the farm could mean; and growing dissatisfied at the status quo of Australian farming. Complicating these threads is also the pervasive feeling that England still loves her family and feels, in some ways, proud and nostalgic while also let down. This confusion is anchored in the photographic language, which reflects both the intimacy, distance and complexity of growing up loved but not in love with how you grew up (Saint Lucy Books, 2021)



England's technique of layering imagery—old photographs paired with new ones—has been particularly influential. I plan to integrate archival images alongside processes like cyanotypes and chemigrams, which will allow me to physically alter the images over time, symbolizing the transitory nature of both memory and existence. Just as England's work layers time and history, my own project will use the materials of photography to embody the passage of time and the inevitable decay that accompanies it.

The social and historical contexts in both of these works also shape their impact. Griggs' focus on the interaction between humanity and nature addresses larger environmental concerns, while England's exploration of farming life comments on the shifting landscape of agricultural labor and its connection to place. Both books use photography not just as a way to document but as a medium through which to examine transformation, loss, and renewal, aligning with my own desire to create a book that evolves over time.



Ultimately, both Griggs and England's work demonstrates how photography can act as a tool for reflection and transformation, capturing the impermanence of time while revealing deeper, often hidden, layers of meaning. Their books have inspired me to think about photography as more than a static medium, and I aim to apply similar techniques to my own project to explore the intersection of memory, decay, and change.