

Photobook Proforma

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Knowledge and Understanding Skills (20%)

This photobook brings together a constructed narrative about travel, persona, and the act of looking. It isn't about Wales in a documentary sense. It is about performance within landscape, and how easily we accept fiction when it is presented through the visual language of photography. Throughout this process, I have been thinking about the photobook not just as a container of images, but as a controlled journey for you, the viewer. Like the exhibition text I previously wrote, this book also moves you, from distance, to familiarity, to quiet uncertainty.

To understand how I arrived here, I looked closely at artists who use photography to blur performance and reality.

I begin with Cindy Sherman, particularly her *Untitled Film Stills*. Sherman stages herself as different female archetypes, referencing cinema without belonging to any actual film. What interests me is not just the costume, but the suggestion of narrative. The images feel like fragments of something larger. We enter mid,scene, mid,thought. There is no resolution. When sequenced in book form, this becomes even stronger, we begin to search for continuity that may not exist. Sherman demonstrates how photography can construct fiction while still appearing truthful. That tension is something I bring into my own work.



I then look at Duane Michals, whose sequenced images operate almost like short stories. His work proves that meaning doesn't sit inside a single frame; it exists in the movement between them. The page turn becomes a cut, a pause, a shift in time. What I take from Michals is the understanding that a photobook is temporal. It unfolds. It guides. It withholds. My book follows this logic, the narrative of travel across Wales is not explained, it is implied through progression.



Finally, Tseng Kwong Chi plays a significant role in shaping my approach. In his *East Meets West* series, he performs as a character in front of landmarks, positioning himself within iconic spaces while remaining emotionally detached. His presence is both serious and absurd. He is tourist, official, outsider, all at once. What resonates with me is how repetition of a character across landscapes creates a narrative that feels cohesive yet performative.



My own work adopts a detective or insurance man persona, tan overcoat, glasses, suit, placed across different locations in Wales. The book does not document Wales; it stages Wales. Through black and white imagery, I reference film stills and noir aesthetics, encouraging you to search for clues, motives, or hidden narratives. The history of the photobook as a narrative device has shaped how I sequence and structure this journey. Each spread becomes part of an unfolding investigation, though what is being investigated is never made explicit.



Cognitive and Intellectual Skills (30%)

This project explores identity as performance. The detective figure is not a real profession within this context; it is a constructed role, one that carries cinematic and a mystique baggage. By placing this archetype within the Welsh landscape, I am deliberately creating a fictional story.



When you see a man in an overcoat rendered in black and white, you instinctively anticipate a crime, a mystery, or some form of underlying tension. This expectation is shaped by the visual language of cinema particularly traditions associated with film noir, where costume, lighting, and composition signal narrative before any action unfolds. The figure becomes coded: he suggests investigation, secrecy, or unresolved events.

However, the landscapes of Wales its cliffs, coastlines, and quiet towns do not naturally reinforce this expectation. They are still, open, and often uneventful. The anticipated drama is absent, or at least not immediately visible. This creates a dissonance between what you think you should be seeing and what is actually presented.

As a result, the tension shifts away from the image itself and onto you, the viewer. You begin to search for meaning, for clues, for confirmation that the narrative you expect is unfolding. In doing so, you are no longer passively viewing the photograph but actively constructing its story. The work therefore operates in a space of uncertainty, where it becomes unclear whether the narrative exists within the images, or whether it is something you are projecting onto them based on learned visual cues.



The decision to shoot in black and white is important. It removes immediacy. It strips away the distraction of colour and places the work into a space that feels both contemporary and historical. It references my love of cinema and to mirror archival imagery, allowing the character to exist outside of a fixed time. This ambiguity supports the fiction. I ask you to suspend certainty.

There is also a question here about travel photography. Traditionally, travel imagery presents landscape as discovery something to be admired or consumed. In this book, however, the landscape becomes a backdrop for performance. I am not revealing Wales; I am using it as a stage. This mirrors the way we often move through places projecting our own narratives onto them.

The sequencing reinforces this idea. Some images position the figure small against vast landscapes, suggesting vulnerability or isolation. Others frame him centrally, appearing composed and controlled. The repetition of this character creates continuity, but subtle shifts in posture and scale destabilise him. He is not heroic. He is not entirely confident. He is simply present.



Importantly, there is no explanatory text guiding you. This is intentional. Like Sherman's work, the narrative remains unresolved. Like Michals, the meaning exists between images. You, as viewer, construct the story. In doing so, you become part of the fiction. You are searching for something clues, coherence, motive even if nothing explicit is there.

The book ultimately questions authenticity. If I am both photographer and subject, observer and performer, where does truth sit? The project becomes less about Wales and more about how easily photography convinces us that narrative exists.

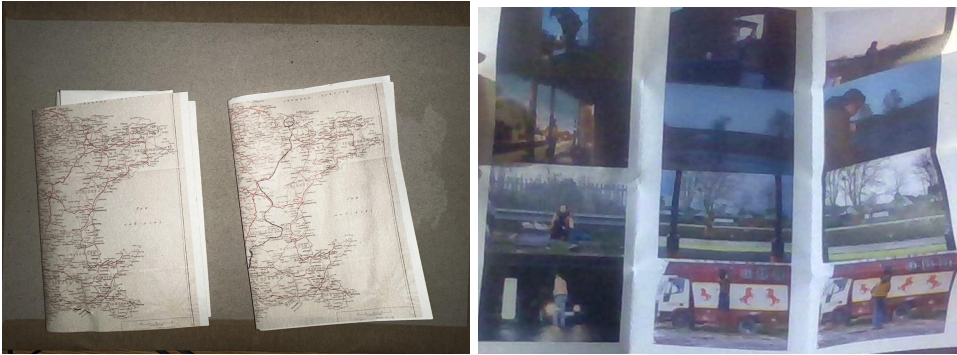
Practical Skills (40%)

The making of this book was iterative. Each dummy marked a shift in understanding how form communicates meaning.

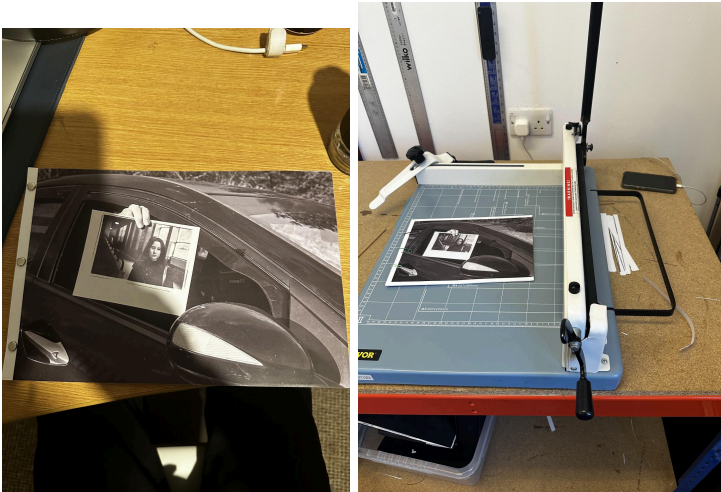
The first dummy was small and structured chronologically, following the literal route of travel across Wales. At that stage, I relied on a linear progression that mirrored the journey as it happened. While this created a clear sense of movement, it ultimately felt too safe and predictable. The work leaned heavily into a documentary approach, presenting locations as evidence of where I had been rather than contributing to a constructed idea. As a result, it lacked the psychological tension and ambiguity I was aiming to create.

Instead of operating as a controlled narrative, the sequence read more like a visual diary. Descriptive, but not interpretive. This became particularly apparent following discussions in the Finnermore lecture, where the idea that sequencing can actively shape meaning, rather than simply organise it, became central to my thinking. I began to recognise that by adhering too closely to geography, I was allowing the journey itself to dictate the structure of the work.

Feedback reinforced this shift in understanding and led me to a key realisation that geography was not the story, performance was.



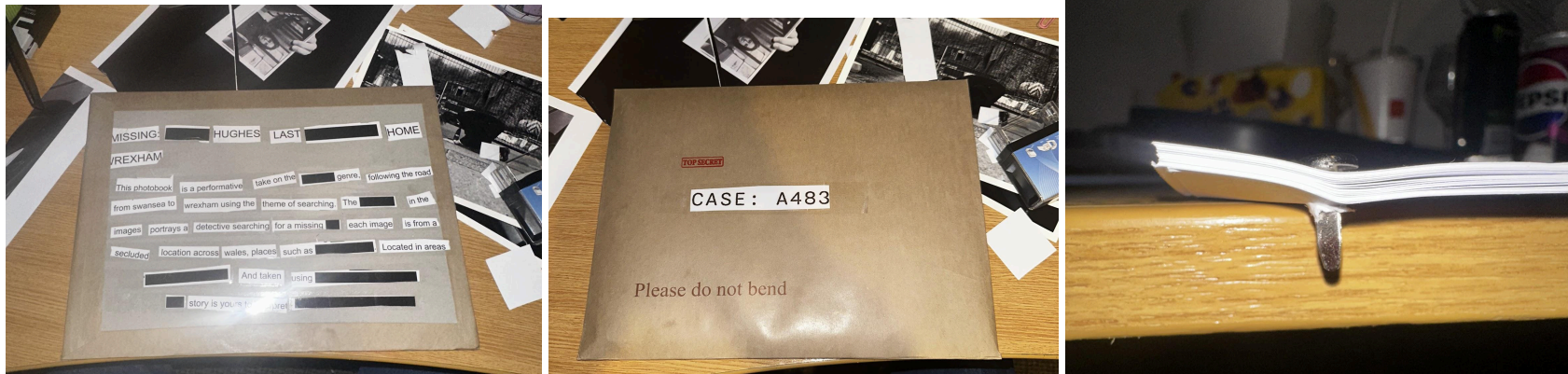
The second dummy changed scale and pacing. I introduced variation: full, bleed spreads followed by smaller, isolated images surrounded by white space. This created rhythm. It allowed certain photographs to feel like establishing shots and others like close-ups. I abandoned chronological order and instead sequenced by mood and visual echo, roads leading to hills, coastlines followed by interior spaces, actions repeated across pages. This strengthened the cinematic quality.



The final version pulled together everything I set out to achieve, both conceptually and physically. Rather than existing as a conventional photobook, it was bound using office materials and sealed inside an envelope, immediately shifting its identity from a book to an object. The envelope itself was treated as part of the work, marked with custom-made stamps designed to resemble an official “case file.” This framing extends the narrative beyond the images, positioning the viewer not simply as a reader, but as someone handling evidence.

The book becomes an investigative experience rather than a passive sequence of photographs. Access is not immediate or effortless; it requires action. To open it for the first time, the viewer must use a letter opener and physically tear into the envelope. This act is intentional, it mirrors the idea of intrusion, of uncovering something that was not meant to be easily accessed. The moment of opening becomes part of the narrative structure, introducing tension before a single image is seen.

Once sealed, the work suggests finality. It implies that the “case” has been closed, filed away, and left in the past. Reopening it disrupts that sense of closure, positioning the viewer as someone revisiting something unresolved. In this way, the physical design reinforces the conceptual concerns of the project: ambiguity, investigation, and the construction of narrative. The object does not simply contain the work, it performs it.



Editing was perhaps the most significant practical skill developed. From nearly 200 images, I reduced the sequence to approximately 40. I removed photographs that were visually strong but narratively repetitive. This required detachment understanding that good images do not always serve the whole.

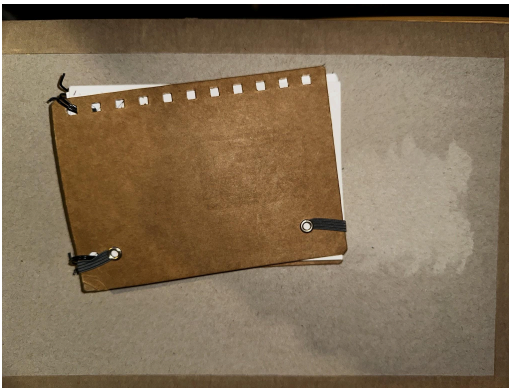
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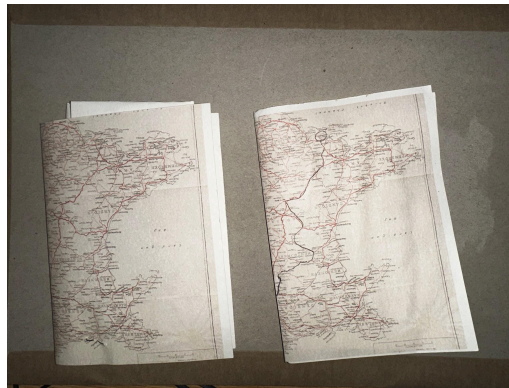


Binding was selected to reinforce permanence. A perfect, bound format gives the book weight. It feels intentional. It feels considered. It supports the idea that this is not a zine or casual document, but a constructed body of work.

Throughout the semester, each dummy demonstrated progression. from literal documentation to psychological sequencing. The practical decisions format, pacing, typography, paper are not decorative. They reinforce the tone of quiet investigation and ambiguity that runs through the work.



Pre work dummy



dummy 1



final book

Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice (10%)

This project has strengthened my ability to think beyond the single image. I now understand how sequencing, pacing, and material choices shape interpretation. That awareness is transferable into exhibition, making, editorial work, and client-based projects.

Time management became essential. Travelling across Wales required planning shoots around weather and access. Producing multiple dummies required organisation and deadlines. I had to balance creative experimentation with practical production timelines.

Confidence also developed particularly performing in public spaces while in character. Wearing the costume shifted my awareness of body language, presence, and how I am perceived. This is valuable in portraiture and collaborative practice, where directing and performing often intersect.



Critically, I have learned how to defend conceptual decisions. Through discussion and critique sessions, I became more articulate in explaining why ambiguity matters, why black and white was necessary, and why the book form was essential.

Most importantly, I have learned that research is not separate from practice. Looking at Sherman, Michals, and Tseng Kwong Chi did not lead to imitation; it clarified strategy. It showed me how persona, sequencing, and repetition can construct meaning.

This process has made me more considered, more deliberate, and more aware of how photography operates not just as image, but as narrative object.