

Student Name: Hannah Davies 2203436

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)

In the history of photography, the photobook has played a pivotal role as a creative, conceptual, and communicative tool in addition to functioning as a way to display images. Over time, it has evolved from a method of straightforward documentation into a sophisticated medium for artistic expression. Through careful editing, sequencing, layout, and design, the photobook enables photographers to craft meaning and guide the viewer's experience in a highly intentional way. This evaluation explores the history, function, and practical development of the photobook through three influential examples: Robert Frank's *The Americans* (1958), Alec Soth's *Sleeping by the Mississippi* (2004), and Christian Patterson's *Redheaded Peckerwood* (2011). Each case illustrates a different stage in the photobook's evolution, highlighting the strategies photographers use to communicate their message through the physical and conceptual structure of the book.

Robert Frank's *The Americans* is widely regarded as a pivotal moment in the history of the photobook. Created during a cross-country journey funded by the Guggenheim Foundation, Frank photographed everyday life in 1950s America from an outsider's perspective. The images challenge the dominant, idealised narratives of post-war prosperity, instead offering a more fragmented, poetic, and critical view of the country. The structure of the book plays a crucial role in shaping this message. Photographs are sequenced with a strong sense of rhythm, and black pages are used to punctuate the narrative, creating a visual pacing that mirrors the disjointed, often melancholic tone of the work. Frank's decision to present the images without detailed captions or



context allows viewers to make their own associations, encouraging an interpretive experience. As a photobook, *The Americans* marked a shift in how photography could function on the page not just as documentation, but as a personal and politically charged body of work shaped by careful editing and sequencing.

In a more contemporary context, Alec Soth's *Sleeping by the Mississippi* offers a poetic and introspective take on the photobook form. The work follows Soth's travels along the Mississippi River, capturing portraits, landscapes, and interior spaces that



collectively explore themes of solitude, spiritual searching, and a uniquely American sense of place. The design of the book plays a central role in how this tone is communicated. Large-format pages, generous white space, and a consistent, minimalist layout allows each image to exist independently while contributing to the wider

mood of the book. Typically, one photograph is presented per spread, inviting the viewer to slow down and engage with each scene. The sequencing flows like the river itself; meandering, gentle, and non-linear, supported by recurring visual motifs such as beds, crosses, and open roads. These quiet repetitions help to establish emotional continuity across the book. Soth's use of form from image selection and rhythm, to the book's physical structure transforms *Sleeping by the Mississippi* into more than a visual record; it becomes a contemplative, tangible experience that draws meaning from its calm and deliberate pace.

Christian Patterson's *Redheaded Peckerwood* takes the photobook in an experimental direction, combining original photography with found materials, archival documents, and ephemera to explore a real-life murder spree that occurred in 1950s America. The photobook is constructed to feel like a mixture between a



crime record and a conceptual artwork, with varied paper stocks, inconsistent layouts, and inserted objects contributing to a sense of disorder and psychological unease. The sequencing avoids straightforward storytelling and instead encourages the viewer to piece together clues, creating a fragmented but immersive narrative experience. This deliberate complexity reflects Patterson's strategy of engaging the reader not as a passive observer but as an active participant. The design and production methods, including tactile material choices and the integration of text-based evidence play a crucial role in shaping the tone and meaning of the book. *Redheaded Peckerwood* exemplifies how the photobook can become a layered, narrative-driven object that extends beyond the photographic image to incorporate elements of fiction, memory, and interpretation.

These three examples; *The Americans*, *sleeping by the Mississippi*, and *Redheaded Peckerwood*, each illustrate different points in the photobook's historical development, as well as the increasing sophistication of its function and form.

Frank's work represents a major turning point in the history of the photobook, using

sequencing and layout to shift the medium from straightforward documentation to personal and political expression. Soth's photobook shows how the medium can function as a quiet, reflective space, where meaning emerges through mood, repetition, and careful pacing. Patterson demonstrates the potential of the photobook as a layered, interactive object that invites active interpretation, blending photography with design and archival material. In all three cases, the production and structure of the photobook are just as important as the photographs themselves. Through editing, sequencing, and the physical qualities of the book, each artist communicates a distinct message, whether critical, contemplative, or investigative underscoring the photobook's capacity to be both a visual and conceptual medium.

In conclusion, the photobook's evolution reflects its growing role not just as a method of presentation, but as a form of authorship, meaning and making. A clear understanding of its history, function, and development reveals how photographers strategically use the medium to communicate with viewers not only through imagery, but through layout, rhythm, design choices, and production methods. These case studies show that a photobook is never just a container for images, but a crafted experience where every decision from format to sequencing contributes to how the work is read and understood. As a result, the photobook remains one of the most dynamic and intentional formats in contemporary photographic practice.

Frank, R. (1958) *The Americans*. New York: Grove Press.

Soth, A. (2004) *Sleeping by the Mississippi*. Göttingen: Steidl.

Patterson, C. (2011) *Redheaded Peckerwood*. London: MACK.

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)

Fatal Crossings is a photobook that takes a quiet but critical approach to the often-invisible marks left behind by road traffic collisions. Rather than focusing on the moment of impact, the work engages with what remains, surface traces, subtle disruptions, and infrastructural wear. My goal was not to document, but to reflect: to consider how public trauma is absorbed by the environment and made invisible through routine maintenance, data abstraction, and the pace of everyday life. In shaping this project, I became increasingly focused on how photography and the photobook format in particular could be used not just to show something, but to ask questions about how we see and what we ignore.

A key part of my intellectual engagement with the subject came from recognising that the collisions themselves were not the real focus. What interested me was how these events are systemically recorded but visually and socially erased. Early in the project, I spent time with crash data from Swansea, using coordinates from crashmap.co.uk as a foundation. The information was factual and clinical; incident dates, locations, severity levels but this did not reflect the visual or emotional weight of the places themselves. That gap between lived reality and statistical record became central to the project's direction. I began to think about how systems obscure rather than reveal trauma. This was supported by research into the work of theorists such as Ariella Azoulay, whose idea of the "*civil contract of photography*" encouraged me to consider the ethics of what is made visible or withheld. I decided that my own response shouldn't attempt to complete the missing information, but rather mirror that absence through restraint and ambiguity. In this sense, *Fatal Crossings* became a conceptual response to both the spaces and the way they are processed, and the photobook became a way of structuring that response through careful pacing, form, and disruption.

The structure of the book is central to how this thinking is communicated. It is divided into three chapters, each corresponding to a different crash site. These divisions are not labelled or explained; instead, they are marked by inserted card bookmarks printed with GPS coordinates. These bookmarks act as subtle spatial interruptions, tactile and visual pauses that require the reader to reorient themselves physically, echoing the fragmented experience of moving through sites marked by trauma. The act of removal or repositioning a bookmark becomes a small but intentional gesture, aligning the reading experience with the subject matter. The most significant disruption comes at the book's centre, where a fold-out gatefold printed on tracing paper reveals anonymised crash data written in computer code. This was a deliberate choice. I didn't want to translate the data, but to let it remain cold,

abstract, and unreadable much like how it functions within the public record. The semi-transparent paper ensures that the viewer sees the data but cannot fully grasp it, reinforcing the idea of systemic distance between lived experience and governmental record. This moment of opacity interrupts the flow of the book and marks a thematic shift from image to infrastructure, from trace to system.

Photography here became less about capturing a moment and more about suggesting a condition; one of disrepair, invisibility, and systemic indifference. The absence of colour, the consistent tonal range, and the restrained editing were all deliberate. I wasn't aiming for beauty or dramatic contrast. Instead, I used visual repetition and subtle variation to guide the reader into a slower, more reflective mode of looking. Images were selected and sequenced not for narrative, but for rhythm, a pacing that mimics walking, stopping, noticing. This is where the photobook form excels: it allows the work to unfold gradually, quietly, and with intentional friction.

In conclusion, *Fatal Crossings* is a project built on reflection, restraint, and response. Every decision from image selection and book pacing to structural features like bookmarks and the gatefold was shaped by a critical understanding of the subject and a desire to communicate through form rather than explanation. By engaging with both the content and the systems that obscure it, I developed a book that doesn't aim to resolve, but to surface questions about how we engage with space, trauma, and visual silence. I believe the work shows not only my technical proficiency, but also my ability to translate conceptual ideas into a material, spatial experience that invites others to think with me not just to look.

Azoulay, A. (2008) *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone Books.

Practical Skills: 40%

Guidance specific to task (from the brief):

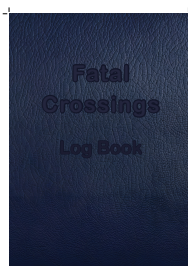
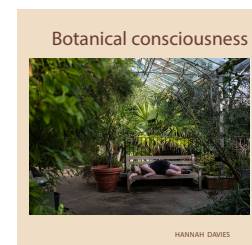
Present your book professionally, carefully considering how you deploy methods, technical processes. Your methods should synthesize the form of your book and the context/meaning of your subject. Your book should demonstrate proficiency, selection in editing and flair. The decisions you make should be 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)

This evaluation reflects on the technical methods and material decisions employed in the making of my photobook *Fatal Crossings*, with a focus on how these processes evolved in response to concept and research. The brief called for a book that synthesises form and meaning, and my aim throughout was to ensure that every aspect from editing and sequencing to physical construction, contributed to the project's critical inquiry. The work explores how road traffic collision sites, particularly those documented in Swansea, carry visible but often unnoticed traces of past trauma. Using photography and book form, I set out to build a structure that prompts viewers to reconsider their relationship with the everyday urban environment; one that invites slow, reflective reading rather than direct storytelling. This required not only technical experimentation, but repeated re-evaluation of how structure, material, and tone could communicate the work's central themes of trace, erasure, and systemic invisibility.

Book dummies played a foundational role in this development. Book Dummy 1, built from a previous project using a pre-designed template, allowed me to test pacing, image alignment, and printing workflows. Although not conceptually linked to *Fatal Crossings*, it helped me understand the spatial logic of photobooks. Book Dummy 2, created for a separate project enabled me to work independently in Adobe InDesign. This gave me essential technical confidence and helped me approach layout decisions



in later stages with greater control. The first version to explore *Fatal Crossings* directly was Book Dummy 3, where I experimented with a logbook-inspired design. Drawing influence from Broomberg and Chanarin's *The Holy Bible* (2013), I explored how graphic and administrative visual language could mirror the depersonalisation of trauma through data. However, the result was visually overbearing and conceptually rigid. The design began to overpower the images and limited space for subtle interpretation. This realisation led me to reconsider the tone and scale of intervention, and to pursue a quieter, more spatially reflective approach.

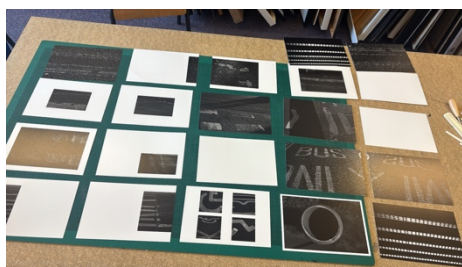
This shift took form in Book Dummy 4, which became the basis for the final photobook. The work is divided into three chapters, each corresponding to a specific

crash site. To distinguish these sections, I introduced card bookmarks printed with GPS coordinates. These markers are inserted at the beginning of each chapter and serve as spatial interruptions rather than traditional section headers. Their format invites physical interaction, requiring the reader to pause and consider each site as a discrete space. Unlike printed pages, the bookmarks are tactile and movable, a design choice that reflects the fragmented and discontinuous nature of urban trauma. This chaptered structure provided a framework for pacing and image grouping, reinforcing the sense of rhythm and spatial specificity I was aiming to achieve.

A crucial feature of the book is the four-page gatefold located at its centre. Printed on translucent tracing paper, it contains anonymised crash data presented in lines of computer code. This was a deliberate departure from readable narrative or statistics. The use of tracing paper creates an opaque, ghostly visual effect alluding to how trauma is archived but not memorialised. The gatefold disrupts the book's sequence both physically and conceptually, mirroring the moment where the work shifts from photographic observation to a more systemic critique. It also links the viewer back to the source of the project's research, crashmap.co.uk while maintaining a focus on abstraction and elimination rather than explanation.

The editing and sequencing of images were shaped by the desire to visualise disruption without embellishing it. Photographs were made in high-contrast black and white, eliminating visual distraction and allowing surface details such as broken lines, eroded curbs, and patched tarmac to take visual precedence. Colour was removed to reinforce a forensic tone. Some spreads feature isolated images, while others include paired compositions that create visual echoes or contrasts. There are no pages of text; instead, meaning is communicated through repetition, structure, and material pacing. Each image was selected not for spectacle, but for the quiet evidence it carries often invisible without close inspection.

In terms of production, the book was made from A5 lustre prints, chosen for its



balance between sharpness and surface neutrality. I used double-sided sticky tape to assemble the pages back-to-back, a solution developed after testing glue, which caused warping. The spreads were bound using faux leather twine, threaded through two hand-punched holes, giving the book a raw but cohesive structure. The book block was attached

to the cover using epoxy glue, which offered strength and allowed for controlled alignment. These technical decisions were all tested during dummy stages and selected for their ability to preserve the book's structure without compromising its tactile sensitivity.

The cover was one of the most critically considered elements of the book. Originally, I planned to brand the title into the faux leather using a custom-welded metal tool. The concept was to create a literal mark, echoing the project's exploration of impact and

surface. However, through experimentation I found this method produced unpredictable and visually immature results. Instead, I adopted a hammer-embossing technique, using metal stamps to press the title into the leather cover. The result is subtle and tactile, a title that is felt more than seen. This shift reflects a broader pattern in the project: a move away from blatant gestures toward quieter, more controlled interventions that align with the subject's complexity.



Typography is minimal throughout. The only text appears is in the bookmarks and the gatefold. No captions, location names, or narrative context are provided. This decision was made to preserve the ambiguity and openness of the project allowing the viewer to move through the images as spatial rather than narrative units. The design trusts the reader's ability to engage critically, aligning with the book's focus on the power of what is left unsaid.

Evaluating the outcome, I believe the material and design choices work cohesively to express the conceptual concerns of *Fatal Crossings*. The tracing paper gatefold reflects the institutional invisibility of crash data, while the card bookmarks break the book into fragments, resonating the discontinuity of infrastructure and systemic oversight. The embossed leather cover, punched twine binding, and monochrome prints all contribute to a visual and tactile experience that mirrors the subject's underlying tension; trauma that is present, but not fully acknowledged. These decisions emerged from a process of constant revision, critique, and hands-on experimentation. Through each dummy, I was able to test how the book's form could do more than hold images, it could participate in meaning and making. Ultimately, *Fatal Crossings* became not just a collection of photographs, but a deliberately constructed object one that reflects, through every material choice, the systems, and silences it seeks to expose.

Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O. (2013) *The Holy Bible*. London: MACK.

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)

The process of producing *Fatal Crossings* was as much about developing ways of thinking and working as it was about making a final object. What began as a project about overlooked traces of trauma in the urban environment evolved into a longer, more complex challenge of managing time, responding to setbacks, and making thoughtful creative decisions under pressure. Throughout this process, I became increasingly aware of how transferable the skills I was developing were not just technical or discipline-specific, but applicable to a much wider range of creative and professional contexts.

One of the most valuable and difficult skills I developed was time management. Building the book involved multiple stages of planning, material testing, editing, and physical production. I underestimated how much time these processes would take particularly in the later stages when decisions about binding, cover finishing, and sequencing became more intricate. This was further complicated by having to work on my exhibition outputs at the same time. Although both the book and the exhibition were conceptually linked, they required very different approaches: the book demanded quiet, layered thinking and slow iteration, while the exhibition involved more immediate, display-led decisions. Balancing both formats made time management a real challenge, and I didn't always get it right. There were points when one side of the work had to be prioritised over the other, and that taught me the importance of breaking projects into phases and setting realistic, flexible deadlines. By the end of the process, I had become far more organised, planning tasks in smaller units, identifying dependencies, and building in time for unexpected issues. This ability to manage overlapping priorities is something I'll take forward into any future creative or collaborative setting.

Problem-solving also became central to my workflow. Nearly every part of the book's production required me to test, adjust, and adapt. Early binding methods didn't hold, certain glues caused warping, and attempts to brand the leather cover with metal stamps were inconsistent and unrefined. Rather than trying to force early ideas to work, I had to find better solutions. I moved from glue to double-sided tape, switched

cover techniques, and refined my embossing method to achieve the clarity and subtlety I was aiming for. These weren't just technical fixes they required experimentation, research, and practical judgement. I found myself learning through trial and error, becoming more confident in navigating unexpected problems and arriving at cleaner, more effective solutions. This practical resilience is something I hadn't fully developed before, and it's now a core part of how I approach new challenges.

Alongside the practical elements, the process also deepened my skill in critical reflection. Each dummy, test, and tutorial became part of a cycle of evaluation. I would make something, reflect on what worked or didn't, and use that insight to adjust the next version. One of the most important turning points came after Book Dummy 3. Its heavy-handed design, influenced by the aesthetic of administrative logbooks, was visually striking but ultimately out of sync with the subtlety of the photographs. Rather than trying to make the design work, I chose to let it go. That decision marked a shift in how I approached the project: no longer trying to force meaning through design, but instead allowing the form to support the content quietly. That level of self-awareness only came through consistent reflection and a willingness to revise. However, I also recognise that I didn't fully carry this reflective mindset into group discussions. While I engaged well in tutorials, I often stayed quiet during peer feedback sessions. I could have contributed more, both to help others and to sharpen my own thinking. This is something I want to improve on, becoming more vocal and collaborative in future learning environments.

Lastly, working on *Fatal Crossings* helped me refine my ability in visual communication. With no explanatory text, captions, or clear narrative, the book had to speak through sequencing, material choice, and layout. I had to learn how to guide the viewer through rhythm, spacing, and subtle shifts in tone. Creating that kind of structure required careful editing and sensitivity to visual pacing. It also challenged me to be consistent: to think not just about individual images, but about the book as a whole; how it moved, how it felt, and how it held the viewer's attention. These decisions were tested across multiple dummies and refined over time. Through this, I've learned how visual form can communicate meaning just as strongly as language, and how to be intentional in every design decision.

In conclusion, the making of *Fatal Crossings* helped me grow in key areas that extend far beyond the context of this project. I learned how to manage time under pressure and across competing demands; how to troubleshoot problems with a practical, hands-on mindset; how to reflect critically and revise with purpose; and how to communicate visually with clarity and subtlety. I also became more aware of where I could have done better, especially in contributing more actively in peer feedback environments. The skills I've gained through this process are transferable across many contexts whether creative, academic, or professional. More than anything, the project taught me how to work with care, intention, and adaptability.

