



Open  
College  
of the Arts

## Tutor report

Student name	<b>Carol Street</b>	Student number	<b>511096</b>
Course/Module	<b>Context &amp; Narrative</b>	Assignment number	<b>1</b>

### Overall Comments

In your first assignment for Context & Narrative, you have succeeded in setting your own goals, working independently and resourcefully and in producing a cohesive series of images – well done.

You have also kept detailed and reflective records of all of your research around the theme of the course towards the final assignment – these will be useful references for you in the coming months. Your blog is well laid-out and will become a valuable tool for recording and organising your thoughts as you progress through the course. (It's great to see that you've chosen to publish your blog via the OCA website - peer contact is a valuable part of the learning experience.) Your sketchbook is also rich and again shows keen critical engagement.

The images submitted show good technical ability, good observational skills and a nice light interpersonal touch, and your summary acknowledges areas where improvement is needed. As you say yourself, the assignment really called for more planning and research around the subject in order for you to express something personal about the way you saw the event (the *narrative*). In terms of *context*, who is your imagined or intended audience i.e. where would the pictures be placed (magazine, gallery, book?). Giving considering to this question will help you to focus more on what you want your images to say. (The question, 'who are you talking to?' can help you to with the question, 'what do you want to say?' - and from there your expressive voice will start to find itself.)

This is an encouraging start to the course. I would urge you to (a) plan more and (b) explore and take risks with your approach and technique as you progress through the course. The briefs are there as a jumping-off point for your creativity. If you feel a brief is uninspiring, turn it on its head and play with it – just be sure to document the journey so it is clear how you reached your end point. I am of course happy to discuss ideas between assignments if you feel you've reached a sticking-point.

Finally, you say, "*a number of things that I tried didn't work out which was frustrating and also meant that I lost time that would have been better spent on other areas of study*". I would just say here that trying things out is *never* a

waste of time. It can be a good idea to start out with 2 or 3 ideas which you can try out quickly and then either move away from (for now) or develop.

### **Assessment potential**

You may want to get credit for your hard work and achievements with the OCA by formally submitting your work for assessment at the end of the module. More and more people are taking the idea of lifelong learning seriously by submitting their work for assessment but it is entirely up to you. We are just as keen to support you whether you study for pleasure or to gain qualifications. Please consider whether you want to put your work forward for assessment and let me know your decision when you submit Assignment 2. I can then give you feedback on how well your work meets the assessment requirements.

### **Feedback on assignment**

You've taken some great shots here, giving a real flavour (sorry) of what the event was like. The interaction between the food vendors/customers has been captured very nicely, and the viewer is given a sense of there being very many different cuisines on offer – a veritable smorgasbord. Yes, you could be forgiven for mistaking this for a food festival!

The music shots are excellent, particularly 5 & 6, which are great journalistic shots (have you sent these to the performers?). Well done. It would have been nice to see a more interaction between audience and musicians. Applause or dancing or something to connect them.

Conceptually perhaps you could have played with the 'two sides' a little bit more? For example by using the camera to create a fiction, e.g. the festival that nobody went to (empty seats, empty stage, no queues for food or loos). The food-or-music theme doesn't quite challenge the "truth" element of photography (i.e. photography's "authority") when in fact it really was both in real life. What if one series had been shot in black and white, would that have made it more supposedly 'factual'?

Perhaps you might have played with a slow shutter speed, capturing the audience dancing in a blur (as you have mentioned an interest in motion blur). It's a shame the festival was a one off event – there's nothing wrong with shooting 'on the hoof' but it can be a great idea to return to the 'scene' for a re-shoot having had time to edit, reflect and research some of the more interesting threads (visual– and theoretical ).

### **Learning Logs or Blogs/Critical essays**

- Your learning log shows excellent engagement with the course and is evidence of your growing awareness of the complexities of the medium.
- You've made an excellent start by discussing the work of other photographers. Try to discuss them more in relation to your own photographs/ideas where possible.

- If you find a photographer whose work particularly inspires you, don't stop there – dig deeper. Who were their inspirations? Whose work have they gone on to influence? Be curious and at the same time critical.
- Continue to reflect on your reading as you go along, noting the main points of interest for you under each title – this will become invaluable as you progress through the degree pathway and find your work and ideas becoming more sophisticated.
- Capture quotes or questions from your reading which inspire further thought or investigation.
- I'm pleased to see that you've addressed the assessment criteria in your blog. This is excellent studentship!

### **Suggested reading/viewing**

- 'Ways of Seeing' – John Berger. Important ideas around the interpretation of images.
- I also recommend returning to 'Behind The Image' by Natasha Caruana & Anna Fox.
- On 'truth' in photography, consider the works of Thomas Demand and/or Jeff Wall – you will find essays and articles looking at how these artists interrogate the notion of photography's 'truth'.
- Important to follow your own reading interests – not necessarily cover-to-cover but in a selective way, "sieving" out the details and ideas that are relevant to your way of thinking . Be ready to make notes whilst you are reading – this focuses the mind and will leave you with a record of the main points to have stimulated your interest. The act of writing them down is in itself a key part of (neurological) absorption.
- Have a look at Joel Meyerowitz, and others in the genre of "late" photography, i.e. images made after the event but heavy with connotation.

### **Pointers For the Next Assignment**

- Continue to experiment with your approach – ultimately this will allow you to take pictures which fully express your ideas and vision. Document and reflect on this process in your learning log.
- Become a detective and research your ideas more. What do you want to portray and why? This will help you to create images with meaning behind them.
- Think about your interests and passions. As a rule, your work will be more interesting the more it reflects your real interests.
- For example, I notice you say you're interested in space and the void – lots of mileage there! And your personal Waterfront project could be taken in very many directions. For example, who are the people involved in the

story of its redevelopment? Are there any local archive photographs of the site that could be reworked or rephotographed in some way? What does the interior of the building currently look like?

- Your written summary should say more about your creative decisions and influences/ideas where possible.
- Experiment and explore. Take risks – the results may surprise you!

Tutor name:	Jayne Taylor
Date	14/10/14
Next assignment due	