



Open College of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Jose Souto Martinez	Student number	●●●●
Course/Unit	Context & Narrative	Assignment	1
Type of tutorial (eg video/audio/written)	Written		

Overall Comments

This is a good start to the course. Your initial idea about duality shows interesting conceptualization. Also, your execution of the images is rigorous and very neat, showing strong design skills. I like the way you change from Set 1 to Set 2 with the page fold of two flipped images in the bathroom as if they were two different viewpoints. The pdf file works really well. Good visual thinking.

Feedback on assignment

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Quality of Outcome, Demonstration of Creativity

Conceptualization

I wanted to start by asking you about this sentence:

I wanted to explore in this assignment the idea of ambiguity and duality and to dissipate any perception that these two characters could not coexist, to a certain extent, in real life.

It isn't clear. Do you mean you wanted to create a narrative where it was difficult to perceive these two sides of self? Or that they could somehow coexist in harmony?

You're showing two sides of someone's (your) persona - the working self and the more domestic self. You sort of break it down into fairly illustrative and descriptive images. Set 1 includes: driving to work in a suit, working at a computer, eating a very over-prepared type meal, studying etc. The shaving takes us to Set 2 which covers: sleeping, watching TV (recreation), eating a far more simple meal, hobbies, riding a bus in more casual clothes.

I think the only danger with thinking in illustrative terms like this is that it feels a bit too much

like you're 'telling the viewer what to think'. You haven't over-done it, it's not heavy-handed work. It has a documentary 'look'. But it feels a bit clinical and a bit superficial.

What you can do to improve on this ideational strategy is to choose a theme - say, driving to work, then take a lot of pictures and try to find one that communicates more of the model's personality (after all, this is about persona). It feels like each picture is too rigorously staged and doesn't leave enough room for the spontaneous. This may be relevant for Set 1, which is more about a cold, work persona, but for Set 2, you needed to find more happening, more personality.

I didn't really understand your notion of photography's limitations. Those very limitations are what inspires artists to push the boundaries of the medium and seek to break through mere appearances. And that is a key learning point for you. Just look at the way you are already expressing ideas - a relaxed or bored businessman in a taxi, reading The Times, the light is blue outside suggesting morning or evening. He looks wealthy, confident, how can we tell? He could be a leader or a boss, but he's relaxed about it. There are ideas here, the man sitting in front of a TV looking dreadfully bored, a pack of snacks on the table, the room seems tidy, maybe too tidy, clinical and unimaginative, a designer room with few signs of personality, almost like a hotel room. Is something missing from this person's life? But saying this, I'm not sure whether these are your ideas, you expressing something as a photographer. The overhead picture with the laptop make me think you were thinking of simple illustrations rather than a human story, a real human story.

Visual Skills

Visually, all the images are very strong, showing considered compositions and lighting. It's clear that you are well aware of the frame and how to arrange shapes within it.

You also understand much of the way the visual subject communicates. The work has a 'deadpan' style that works well, but it does tend to hold you into expressionless poses where more candid, lived expressions could have been more lively and compelling.

Coursework

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity

Looks good. I loved the guy in a drain picture!

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

Your course related research is very good and extensive. You don't seem to have looked at any photographers though. Your research was based on an essay from "Public Information" which includes a lot of personal life photographers like Nan Goldin and Larry Clark. Have a look at Sophie Calle's "Double Game" - it's a book that collates her work and includes an interesting creative relationship with the writer Paul Auster.

Learning Log

Summarize how you have applied what you've learned from the course to your assignment photographs. Also note down what you've learned from other photographers in executing the assignment.

I was impressed with the preparatory work you did for this assignment - you gave it some thought and tried ideas out. That's a really important practice - realizing your ideas to see which one sticks, which one 'communicates' most strongly.

Suggested reading/viewing

Context

Sophie Calle. But also look at the work of Elina Brotherus. She seems to be particularly pertinent to photographers trying to communicate ideas of self.

Pointers for the next assignment

This is a good, proficient first assignment and shows you may be on the cusp of making some big leaps in your development. It'll be interesting to see what you make out of the next assignment. Try to avoid being too illustrative. Find a real story. By that I mean, try to stick to truth, even though you may use a fictional means to express yourself.

Tutor name	
Date	9th August 2017
Next assignment due	20th October 2017