



Open  
College  
of the Arts

## Formative feedback

Student name	Rob Townsend	Student number	511892
Course/Unit	BoW	Assignment number	2
Type of tutorial	Written / Audio-Visual	SKYPE – 30 mins	35

### Overall Comments

### Assessment potential

#### Assignment 2 and 4 Assessment potential

*I understand your aim is to go for the Photography/Creative Arts\* Degree and that you plan to submit your work for assessment at the end of this course. From the work you have shown in this assignment, providing you commit yourself to the course, I believe you have the potential to pass at assessment. In order to meet all the assessment criteria, there are certain areas you will need to focus on, which I will outline in my feedback.*

### Feedback on assignment

You are trying (as I understand it) to find a visual language and strategy to explore the act of forgetting, or rather the process, as the brain ages, of trying to remember, to bring things back in to focus etc.

Remembering of course, comes often in short bursts. Sometimes remembering (as you note) memories are reawakened by the sparking of something in the distant past (music heard, etc.) as short-term memory is replaced by long-term memory.

Photography (or the visual) itself can play an important part in memory reconstruction. Its identikit drawings that are used for example to jog witnesses memories, and family photographs are also used to jog memories or reinforce existing ones.

I think at this stage in your BoW development you need to do be engaging with some intensive 'on the ground' research. Choose one of more subjects and do some close observation (either in homes, day centres, etc) photographing people in their everyday surroundings, photographing objects particularly important to them (with those that have practical value or those with sentimental value, etc.)

I think at this stage in your projects development it's critical to be simply pulling in as many ideas and visuals (i.e. photographs, drawings, sketches etc.) as possible. From this store of images and the ideas gathered - and looking at how they deal/live with memory loss, etc. you will begin to develop your project in meaningful ways.

Look at other photographers who have used a variety of strategies (still life, photographing possessions (Van Manen) or discarded messages (Arnatt) to explore ageing, memory and the act of remembrance.

1. *Give me your Image* - Bertien Van Manen

Explores the universal need for remembrance, Van Manen has photographed (from different cultural perspectives) arrangements of family photographs scattered around homes.

<http://www.dehallen.nl/en/exhibitions/bertien-van-manen-english/>

2. *Notes from my Wife* - Keith Arnatt

A poignant meditation on the frailty of memory

<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/may/19/weekend7.weekend4>

3. Remembering from the perspective of machine learning: "The cat sits on the bed", Pedagogies of vision in human and machine learning (computers and the act of 'remembering')

4.

<https://unthinking.photography/themes/machine-vision/the-cat-sits-on-the-bed-pedagogies-of-vision-in-human-and-machine-learning>

There are several strategies which spring to mind when thinking about remembering (and its mirror image, forgetting). The use of photography itself

as an aide memoire or tool for remembering is the most obvious one. It is to the photograph itself that we look most often as an aide in remembering. Then we employ the other senses - smell, touch, taste and hearing (or sound). These other senses are of course more difficult to embody in photography, where we can often only illustrate them (i.e. your graphic interpretation of sound waves into visual form).

### STUDENT FEEDBACK:

Again discussed need to focus area of interest more clearly as photography/memory/forgetting is vast. For Body of Work, currently articulating area of interest as “visualising memory processes”, looking at memory - or increasingly, more specifically *forgetting* - from an individual point of view (Contextual Studies angle will likely become more about photography and forgetting at a sociological/behavioural level - TBC).

Notwithstanding importance of clarity of focus, need to be careful not to close myself in too soon (conceptually / subject-wise / execution approaches), and to take more photographs and explore other ideas (Assignment 3 idea is quite different to A2).

Re other photographers' strategies, we also discussed Sara Davidmann's “Ken. To be destroyed”. Davidmann began taking more traditional portraits, but the work evolved into a distinctive combination of image manipulation and the archive. Davidmann has spoken and written about the work so dig into this more; get hold of a copy of the book.

Discussed ideas for next two assignments and pointers for both:

A3: based on lost objects I've photographed in public over recent years - an archive of lost gloves intended to represent my own increasingly unreliable memory (working title: *À la recherche de gants perdus*). Currently envisioning a photobook format with images of lost gloves juxtaposed with text snippets of memory lapses of my own. I want to build up a picture of how forgetfulness creeps up on you as you age. Selection and sequencing might be key to this idea.

Suggested research: look at work of Christian Boltanski and Mark Dion.

A4: thematically following more directly on from this assignment, a potential opportunity has arisen to collaborate in a project about capturing military veterans' memories of National Service 1945-60. The subject matter is potentially the interesting 'hook' here, over and above the conceptual/creative treatment.

Suggested research: look at contemporary works of Steve McQueen and Broomberg & Chanarin regarding challenges of war photography.

## Coursework

See main body of the text

## **Research**

See main body of the text

## **Learning Log**

See main body of the text

## **Suggested reading/viewing**

See main body of the text

## **Pointers for the next assignment / assessment**

Student Feedback:

Tutor name	Wendy McMurdo
Date	16 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2018
Next assignment due	TBA