

## Evaluation

Having commenced the 'body of work' project with an objective to observe and explore how the inequality of homelessness can be portrayed, there has been a relatively sizeable shift in terms of my photographic development. From a logistical position, the pandemic disrupted and delayed my longing to maintain a documentary element to the overall vision. Previous work with St Mungo's homeless charity ceased (my subjects) and my own health concerns blocked further exploratory observations. This period of delay (a year) channeled a project into photographing staged political juxtapositions using my daughters' puppets to display a more readable meaning. The project raised a desire to remove personal identities and symbolize a metaphor to elevate my self-expression. Whilst using a tableaux style documentary, I became intrigued into the use of media within historical photography and researched how significant our cultural understanding is when amplified as news both visually and in text. The combination of photographing puppets and researching the responsibility of visual documentary forces a question as to the need to photograph subjects' identities, and why I could not relate human presence through an implied vision of existence.

Through the reworking of various contextual meanings, I adapted the visual language used for the puppet photography to project my conscious thoughts within the inequality of homelessness. I developed an intention to completely remove the power relation between myself and the subject, I developed the understanding for introducing a placement of a symbol to represent the unseen power (Financial Times and bowler hat) that determines the socio-economic structures of society. Discussions with my tutor helped push a workable idea into a fully blown concept and an escalation to push an absurd situation to a point where it ceased being comfortable to my eye. The work displayed a juxtaposition within the connoted understanding, although remained relatively insular within the broader depth of causation. The implied situation within the boundaries of the absurdity of Bristol's Castle Park remained an associated reference in concept alone and fell slightly short in terms of contextual meaning.

Research into documentary photography from Allan Sekula and Stuart Hall prompted further questions as to where the perceived power is and how it affects the lives of those I am outlining. I observed the work of Peter Kennard who equally used the symbol of the Financial Times to portray a wider context and researched Martha Rosler's position on documentary photography as art. Both informed my position to elevate my self-expression and visually display the absurdity within the wider perspective to help feed the narrative.

Conversation with my tutor led me to relate the significant meaning of unoccupied buildings to the point where I spent days in Castle Park observing ways to convey the message. The development of new ideas to imply the responsibility of our economic structures forged creative ways to elevate a transferable message. I returned to the principles of documentary photography to creatively inform the audience about a situation they see, but don't necessarily associate.

The combination of all the above factors resulted in a contextually more focused vision that imparts large space to the unoccupied properties towering over a community of Bristol in need of shelter. Creative methods to propel the identity of financial power break up the visual repetitiveness and express a higher degree of causation. The elevation of creativity within the representation of power, also promoted the level of absurdity.

The absurd situation of buildings (symbolized by the bank of England, Lloyds and Norwich Union ex premises) remaining vacant and increasing in land value, whilst people were sheltering in tents in the adjacent park, extenuated the narrative.

Both the photography and editing process remained relatively natural. My choice has been to use natural light and concentrate on representing the main elements with a degree of objective reality. All scenes were photographed as seen to remain combined to documentary photography principles with the addition of one staged element to anchor the meaning and elevate the absurdity.

The direction of the 'body of work' has significantly presented a pathway that has elevated my voice, a voice I have always had, yet failed to project visually. My awareness of visual language may have been forced in light of 2020 conditions and barriers. However, my reflection on this are positive in the sense that the requirement to stop and re-think both logistically and structurally aided the delivery of contextual meaning. The visual language and codes required a wider reach and I had become too reliant upon multi layered concepts that were over complicated and often bypassed the spectator. It certainly feels as if I have developed a different approach to embracing the subjectivity behind the camera in a way that has greater consideration for the structure of the message.

By combining the Body of Work alongside Contextual studies, I am able to feed areas of research into my practice. The understanding of Stuart Halls theory of representation aided my understanding of the power dynamic and how a vision portrayed as a juxtaposition can imply negative assumptions by appealing to a binary choice. The questions that arise from Halls theory and Allan Sekula's 'Against the Grain' essays prompted greater consideration for my practice to look at power differently and to look left, when told to look right. Both also displayed a high regard for the perception of the spectator and how your responsibility as to how your identification could be misconstrued.

To avoid misrepresentation, additional text is applied to the photography to further anchor the meaning by aiding the 'showing', without 'telling'. The language is within my personal style and designed to be sincere and unexaggerated. I observed the work of Martha Rosler to foster a better understanding to the use of accompanied text. The importance of balancing a voice that is apparent in the visual presentation with the tone of the written text is a skill I practiced in Assignment 4 and developed into the final body of work. My awareness of how text works is reliant upon my own experience of reading after observing the photography. However, I am aware that this is certainly not always the case and I found difficulty in applying a tone that both anchored the meaning and came from my personal position. For the next course, 'Sustaining Your Practice' I will need to observe more examples where documentary photography finds an agreeable balance within the text.

With regards to presenting the work, I will be looking to display at the Bristol St Mungo's recovery college and potentially in a number of locations in Stokes Croft, Bristol. The audience in both are not necessarily regular visitors to art galleries, but a number will have experienced extreme poverty, eviction and homelessness, whilst others will be able to consider their part within the structures of the socio-economical climate. I would like my photography to relate to the both the experiences of association within a city renowned for thinking differently to the messages from established power. My links with St Mungo's will enable access to numerous avenues, although much preparatory work is required over the coming months to make this happen. I see the work as the basis for a discussion point to extrapolate peoples experiences and thoughts. The work is by no means making an assumption towards a political ideology for economic structural change. It is designed to provoke the realization that the current structure is not advantageous for contemporary existence and that the levels of inequality are unsustainable.

## Conclusion

The last two years has witnessed change in society that are not beneficial conditions for practicing documentary photography. Due to the Pandemic, the course evolved into a relatively uneven vehicle that hampers development and constrains practice. Personal situations have delayed progression whilst I experienced blood clots as a result of Covid19. Within all of this unhelpful environment, I feel my level of understanding has progressed significantly more than at any other time during the many modules. My photography has always been motivated by situations that I oppose and finding the right way to visually describe has been a constant issue for me. The passion for political 'documentary' photography shown by my tutor has elevated my desire and ability to convey a message through a visual understanding. This level of enthusiasm I feel for a subject is often channeled through my objection an unjust or unethical principle, which has often been a complex situation to represent visually. I have learnt through the process of deep and rich observation to scratch away at a subject until a wider contextual perspective reveals itself.

Patience is not a trait I have in abundance, although within documentary photography, I find it a necessary skill to work within a subject and be prepared to develop a concept. Too often I have forced an understanding that relates to my personal psyche, and only has elements of relatability to other peoples experience. I have learnt to reduce the complexity of the message and use visual metaphors and symbols to only add to the overall context, not to provide a sub text.

To conclude, I will evaluate the Final assignment for changes in order that will help elevate the overall meaning. The photography is selected from a bank of numerous images over two years and all selections have been made from the last two assignments. Although I have no objection to revisiting any of the images, there has been considerable time taken to produce a collection that best portrays the familiarity I have with a small section of Bristol. An area that defines the inequality of society within a square mile of Castle Park.

My consistent reflective thoughts compel me to go back with more objects signifying the financial markets. There is always room for improving upon a concept and I am fairly sure my work is among many that could be enhanced by being more creative. I am however aware that the work demonstrates a level of creativity and contextual understanding that has been absent from my previous projects.