Open College of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Peter Walker	Student number	514508
Course/Unit	C&N	Assignment	1
Type of tutorial (eg video/audio/written)	Written		

Overall Comments

You've made a documentary assignment here with the added interest of setting up a juxtaposition. This series of diptychs are not entirely clear as contrasts of perspectives between tourists and locals in Thailand as you're relying on very obvious signs like language and Westerners to signify tourism. But even then the difference is not so striking. This is largely because although you are making an attempt to show superficial differences, you are not going very deeply into them. The simplicity is manifest in "Here's a white person walking down the street, here's an Asian person walking down the street." However, there is potential in this project.

Once you've started with an idea of the contrast of perspectives and life-styles between tourists and locals, you need to ask yourself how that is best visualized. Surely the simple act of walking down a street or shopping is hardly enough of a cultural distinction. Dress would seem to be one of the biggest contrasts, with Western people looking more obviously like tourists and Thai's looking like they're accustomed to the heat. Clothes are a visual cultural symbol so they help photographers. How do holiday makers have fun in contrast with the locals? How do people's attitudes differ? But this does deserve an in-depth treatment. Take care not to set up an artificial dichotomy unless it truly exists. You could also seek similarities and synthesis of foreigners in Thailand. Above all, I think your search should centre on people and their behaviour. Without them you're stuck with generalities.

If you want to make telling portrayals of street life you need to get your camera closer, in the way that Maciej Dakowicz. Look for peak moments. Events that show us characters in their specificity. Look for the drama of everyday life.

Feedback on assignment
Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Quality of Outcome, Demonstration of Creativity

1

Visually I like the play on two people walking away from each other in two separate images. The figure on the right is not as clear as the one on the left, sort of blending in with the gas cylinders.

But the real issue here is what your picture expresses: white European man and Asian man. The grey environment in the left photo could be anywhere sunny. The Thai sign obviously locates it. But ask yourself, what locates an image as being shot in Thailand without the use of the Thai language?

2

Again, visually this juxtaposition works quite well with the pattern of text. But it seems like all you're really doing is showing fish & chips English on the left and Thai on the right. What would be better?

3

You seem to have sabotaged your own system here because the man on the right is obviously a white European old man having a foot massage. Also the curving graphic shape of the jetty is strong and could have been juxtaposed with something equally graphic to set it off.

4

Too many of these images feel like distant pedestrian views which are vaguely descriptive of something but not decisively expressive. Asians paddling juxtaposed with four bored looking people in green jackets is not that telling.

5

Two more very distant images. Western tourists in a bar. People with their backs to camera emptying a beer truck.

6

The photo on the right, of someone sleeping in the luggage compartment of a coach is the best photo here. Why? It's the most telling of a culture in a hot country. It suggests an easy-going attitude to life in the sun which we just don't have in England. You'd never see a British bus driver sleeping like this! It's the informality, the barefoot attitude that people in the tropics have. This is probably the image which provides a visual centre to the idea.

Could you find a holiday maker snoozing on the beach? Maybe.

I have to ask, how many images did you have to choose from? On a given assignment of a couple of hours work I will produce around 300 images. Are you keenly observing the world around you with your camera ready? You must observe without distraction in order to find what you're looking for. The evidence of the sleeping bus driver suggests you are ready when you find the event. But because you are - as a photographer - dependent on the real world, you must continue to search until you've honed your visual idea into a strong assignment.

Coursework
Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity

Your coursework looks studious and I'm wondering why you haven't been about to turn your research into documentary photographers into more powerful images for this assignment.

Research
Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

The reason you do research is to notice how other photographers are doing things and try to emulate them. In this trial and error process, you should improve your photography. These images of yours seem shyly taken and distant. You don't need to be Dougie Wallace but you do need to gain the confidence of your own conviction to be a photographer.

Learning Log
Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis
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.

Your text suggests you've understood some of the social dynamics going on in Pattaya but the images do not show you've found a way to visualize it.

Your text: "As a tourist destination, Pattaya can have an unseemly reputation in the eyes of Westerners however, it is a major destination for Mainland Chinese and Indians tours, so I have tried to weight the images in this way and avoid obvious nightlife scenes." In what way have you tried to 'weight' these images? The sentence is not clear.

"Also, as we are currently in "low season" the town is relatively quiet and has the slightly sad feeling that all seaside towns have in their closed season, again I have tried to reflect that in the images." This is clearer. The holiday destination without the holiday makers.

Suggested reading/viewing
Context

Incase you haven't seen all this work: https://www.maciejdakowicz.com/cardiff-after-dark/

Pointers for the next assignment

Part Two has a lot to do with deepening your photography. Try to approach it with a desire for truth.

Summary

Strengths	Areas for development
• Good visual idea with the diptychs.	• More clarity in understanding your own project. • A more in-depth approach.

Please inform me of how you would like your feedback for the next assignment: written or video/audio.

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