



Open College of the Arts

Tutor report

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| Student name | Martin Tayler | Student number | 511655 |
| Course/Module | AoP: Contrasts | Assignment number | One |

Overall Comments

This was a good start to the course. You have been producing some fine imagery and engaging in wider research activity which all bode well for your future study. The blog reveals some great work as you work through the exercises and probe ideas for the assignments. However, the actual assignment reveals some lessons to bear in mind for future submissions as you seem to have misdirected yourself a little and not produced the same quality of work for the assignment compared to the evidence in the blog. There is a possibility you are making things difficult for yourself in treating the assignments in a different manner to your ordinary practice, while perhaps forgetting the outcomes of the exercises and the techniques and ideas explored there.

It was nice to see a comprehensive submission. It provided me with the back up I needed if there was a problem with the imagery. It is a lot of extra work to produce this, so in future you only need to send me just some key samples of the imagery on disk (together with related prints for later assignments).

Overall the images reveal a sound grounding in the technical aspects of image capture using your camera, so that is unlikely to be a concern for the future. You have worked through the assignments diligently and have produced some fine work in the process. Some of the images from the exercises have more to offer regarding content, structure and meaning than those you actually submitted. I often find that when students shoot again for this submission it is often weaker in some respects. I think this is to do with the feeling of it being a test, and therefore requires a different way of thinking.

Some of the titles don't seem to reflect the themes too well and are often visually confused with the extraneous subject matter evident in the image, particularly if these are also in focus owing to a large depth of field.

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

The images

STRONG/WEAK

This pair of images is typical of what I meant about some confusion. The strong image is clearly referring to the old crane, but there are many other elements in the image: the people, cars, architecture and river all compete for attention of the viewer. Perhaps a more closer, abstract view may have been more relevant here.

The spine like sculpture doesn't "say" weak to me as it does remind me of a spine which is of course very strong. The interpretation I think comes from the flexing nature of the structure and would therefore be more relevant in *Curved* for instance.

The base of the sculpture is also fighting for clarity with background elements. Slight change of position may have helped to make this more clear: a half step to the left would have made the structure clear of the building on the left's roof for instance.

LARGE/SMALL

The subject matter and intent of this pair was a good choice. Again the subjects are fighting for distinction from their backgrounds, but this might not have been a choice given the location and available positions. The small image works in part, but it really is a combination of the 2 as the larger ship subject and the monolithic warehouse dominate the image. If the small boat had been lit by a beam of light and the remainder of the image was in shadow, this would have been the perfect image. It is small details like this which can turn a good image into a great one.

This is not a problem at this stage, but it is important to bear in mind these issues as you move on.

HARD/SOFT

The bronze table is hard, if it is a bronze table. How do we know it is real? and therefore hard. How do we convey "hardness" in an image. Is photographing the object enough? In contrast the cushion we also know is soft- or is it? It could be a painted stone to look like a cushion. These are some of the questions you might wish to reflect on in the learning log (which is missing this kind of commentary at the moment). How do we convey meaning in our photographs? What are the mechanisms and conventions?

The hard image also suffers from the positioning which conflicts with the advertising board in the background. If the table was isolated with space all around it might look "harder".

SMOOTH/ROUGH

The statue in this pair benefits from the lack of confusion evident in the above images. It is isolated from its background which is rendered out of focus through relevant depth of field. The face looks out of focus in the blog, but close examination of the file reveals sharpness around the facial area which is most important.

The expressive bronze bust is just as successful, but could have also been improved slightly by a better choice of positioning and background. The face is looking out of the image which has little space on the right. Generally when looking in a particular

direction, space should be provided in that direction for balance. Compare this with the ideas image of the trees which is a perfect response in both subject matter, composition and feel. Although "roughness" is not as pronounced as it could have been with light at a different angle, it is more of a photograph than a simple recording of a subject.

STRAIGHT/CURVED

Straight is another good example of how a subject becomes clear when given the space to work. Despite additional elements, the boardwalk is given enough compositional space so that it dominates the scene and the message becomes clear very quickly. If I was photographing this professionally, I would have a pair of step ladders to shoot from so that the edge of the pier was clear of the cliff and water between. This would have made for a stronger shape and emphasized the boardwalk with more foreground providing a stronger shape.

Curved is less successful as the curves have not been given the space and are pushed to the edge of the composition. Even though there are fluid curves in the reflection, the hard lines of the sculpture are begging for a little more space.

If you have a large pixel count on your camera you can crop down without too much impact on quality. Unless you are aiming for complete abstraction (or perhaps also) zoom out a little or move back slightly. The additional information could be useful, particularly as you develop your skills.

DIAGONAL/ROUNDED

The diagonal of the pair suffers from the problems already mentioned while rounded, while initially polluted by additional elements, actually benefits from these on reflection. The bodies are isolated just enough to add a dimension to this image which is pleasing. Compare this to your other images where the visual elements intrude on each other.

STILL/MOVING

Both water images provide a contrasting perspective. The slow moving water reflections of still convey a tranquil feeling which is highly successful. By contrast, the fast shutter speed of "moving" is still owing to the fast shutter speed. This is a situation where you could have used the lessons of the exercises undertaken to convey movement, as you have successfully done in those exercises. It is important to reflect on the exercises and what they can bring to an image, rather than just going through the motions. The technical aspect of the programme is of course very important, but what the image conveys in meaning is perhaps more important in developing your creativity.

THICK/THIN

These images illustrate how the subject can be isolated through use of depth of field. This may not be intentional, as close up work usually limits DoF but here the subject is clear. The meaning however is less so. A stem which takes up most of the image is wider than one which takes up less. Does this proportion of space in itself make it thick or thin?

Learning Logs

This has been a learning curve for you but you have done well considering this new field. The blog is a little complex for assessment purposes, so I would try and make it easier for the assessors when the time comes. The assignment submission is mixed with exercise work and other commentaries. Please try to make the submission clear with links to relevant excerpts from other parts of the blog. This will make feedback quicker as there will be less navigation to find all the relevant parts. I found myself going round and round the blog to find the relevant parts of the assignment. Keep the assignments as separate entities.

Suggested reading/viewing

Choose one book from the reading list (perhaps David Company's book) which is theoretical rather than practical. Delve into this bit by bit and try and relate your readings to your work on the course through your blog commentaries.

Pointers for the next assignment

Try not to over-think the assignment. You clearly have the ability to engage with the assignments, evidenced by the exercise outcomes. Be yourself and enjoy the assignments. If you have any doubts ask me for guidance. That is what I am here for. If I don't pick up on things through my trawls of the blogs send me an e-mail with a link to your current work for ease and ask a couple of questions. This is better than submitting an assignment blind. The blog illustrates that you are producing fine work so I am certain you will do well in future assignments so plough ahead with confidence.

Looking at other artists would help support your development here, find more time to read about photography and understand what photographers are working on within the UK and internationally. Read more journals and really begin to study your subject.

Try not to forget the lessons from the exercises. They are preparation for the assignments and there should be evidence of the knowledge and experience gained coming through in not just one, but all subsequent assignments. It is so easy to forget these as you progress.

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| Tutor name: | David Kinney |
| Date | 21 st March 2013 |
| Next assignment due | 2 nd May 2013 |