



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Wendy Rose	Student number	515908
Course/Unit	Context and Narrative	Assignment number	1
Type of tutorial	Written / Audio-Visual		

Overall Comments

A thoughtful, ambitious and highly engaging first assignment, Wendy. The preparatory materials that look at the gendering of everyday consumer commodities are great; a really interesting way to find a route into the work, and one that fits incredibly well with the assignment brief.

The contact sheets provide a (crystal) clear demonstration of how much labour has gone into this assignment and how many different ideas you worked through before settling on this one. Your accompanying email- 'It has frustrated me no end'- shows how determined you are to get things right. It's really good to see someone who understands that perspiration is as important as inspiration!!!!

Assessment potential

Assignment 1

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

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

- For the most part, I really like how you've approached this assignment, electing to stage/ 'construct' each image as opposed to photographing in a more obviously candid style. Given the nature and 'seriousness' of the themes you're exploring, this could very easily have been mishandled and resulted in an unintentionally comic effect. While there is a sly sense of humour running through the assignment, I think that you've done your aims justice, and have largely achieved what you set out to do. There's a *slight* irony in the fact that you've polarised an area of culture that Judith Butler, a seminal and groundbreaking theorist in the field of gender studies, regards as being defined by its utter fluidity, but the brief calls for something that sees the world via two distinct perspectives, and your response has been measured, thoughtful and thought-provoking.
- This was quite a challenge in a technical sense: working with the model as you have brought in an extra dimension to be mindful of, and shooting indoors in an environment with mirrors and competing light sources presented a number of potential problems. While the overall results are pretty pleasing, I think a bit of judicious dodging and burning might have been worth considering. Not to any massive degree, some of the brighter parts of certain shots would benefit from being toned down ever so slightly.
- A minor technical grumble, one that's more to do with general 'housekeeping' than anything to do with your camera skills or creative processes, is that there doesn't appear to be any way to enlarge the final images. I get a good-enough sense of the work, but it would have been nice to be able to see them fullscreen on my monitor. For future reference, send your final images and accompanying text as email attachments, as well as the relevant link to your blog.
- Your accompanying notes are thoughtful, enthusiastic and demonstrate much intellectual curiosity, and underline the extent to which you've thrown yourself in to this assignment. I do, however, think there's room for further development. You've obviously taken a look at some wider literature in this field, and I think it would strengthen your writing, as well as the assignment as a whole, if you were to explicitly cite relevant passages from the people whose work you've been reading. This is definitely something to consider with future assignments, as bringing in particular quotations and/ or referencing specific ideas and theories makes your writing much more 'scholarly'. n.b., I've added a few more below that I think you'll find useful, and that you'll be able to access via the UCA's online library.

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

As noted above, your accompanying text is thoughtful and encouraging, although I was not quite sure about your point that gender is not something that we 'acquire'. We learn to 'perform' gender, picking up codes and conventions that become part of everyday performative routines, which, so many say, are then monitored and 'policed' by ourselves and others (n.b., disrupting this is the 'trouble' that Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* refers to!). I certainly don't want to split hairs, but the more comfortable you are with the wider theory, the more convincing as a whole this assignment, and any subsequent development of this work, will be. Beyond this, while you've considered some relevant and worthwhile photographic work, I do think that there is a lack of explicit reference to literature in the field that you're exploring. Again, take a look at what I've highlighted below and see how you might incorporate some of it into your accompanying text, along with whatever else you've

picked up already. The Gauntlett book will provide with the most accessible overview of some of the key ideas in this area.

Learning Log

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

I think it might be worth shuffling the order of the various materials you've included with this assignment. On the link you sent over, the **Demonstration of technical and visual skills** comes first, followed by **Quality of outcome**, then **Demonstration of creativity** etc etc, i.e. it seems like things are back-to-front. Ideally, clicking on the link will take the viewer to an assignment's text overview and photographs, before being followed by your own assessment and any preparatory materials/ research. Certainly no major issue, but the best blogs are always user-friendly and intuitive to follow, and I felt that this ordering was ever so slightly awkward.

Suggested reading/viewing

Context

Some literature in the field of gender studies that you'll no doubt find really interesting includes:

[Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction](#) by David Gauntlett.

[Gender and the Media](#) by Rosalind Gill.

[The Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media](#) by Karen Ross.

[Mainstreaming Sex: the Sexualisation of Western Culture](#) by Feona Attwood.

n.b., these links will take you to the specific page of the UCA's online library. If you have any problems signing in, give the technical support team at OCA HQ a quick call.

If these whet your appetite and you think you might pursue more work that explores gender, it's definitely worth you taking a closer look at Judith Butler's work. Her own writing, as David Gauntlett has no compunction about pointing out, can be *really* hard going, but the underlying ideas are inspired. *Gender Trouble* is the big hitter and the book that's most relevant to what you're doing here, but secondary texts that explore its ideas might be worth looking at first.

As noted earlier, your photographing of gender commodities is great stuff, and I wonder if it's worth you looking at work that has done this around other subjects/ themes and thinking about how it might be developed as a research project in its own right.

Pointers for the next assignment / assessment

This is a likeable and pleasingly ambitious start to the unit, Wendy. If you continue on this trajectory and commit yourself to wider reading and viewing, then it's very easy to see your time on *Context & Narrative* being a success. Don't forget, scrutinise every detail of the photographs you produce, and make your accompanying text as rigorous and well-researched as possible, always explicitly referencing any wider reading you've done that's been of particular importance.

See below for details of the next deadline and Skype tutorial. Best of luck!

Tutor name	Andrew Conroy
Date	26/9/17
Next assignment due	Submit A2 on or before 10/11/17, with a Skype tutorial following on 14th November at 1115.