



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Wendy Rose	Student number	515908
Course/Unit	C&N	Assignment number	3
Type of tutorial	Written / Audio-Visual		

Overall Comments

Fascinating, funny, revealing, creative and nicely-realised stuff, Wendy. I was quite surprised to see you so un-enthusiastic about what you've produced: this, for me, is an idea whose visual simplicity belies the complexity of the ideas it touches on around identity, taste, distinction, consumption, and, more specifically, the communicative role that clothes play in day to day life. It still needs further refinement, but most assignments do. The basic idea is good, so stick with it and make more of it before assessment.

The visual approach you've taken is neat and unfussy, and I really like how work that (quietly) says such weighty and 'serious' things about the connections between 'stuff' and identity is so playful. This said, your background research could have been more comprehensive, and I suspect that this would have given the work more conceptual detail. There are a few texts below in the fields of consumption that I hope you'll find useful, one of which discusses the birth of 'fashion' in the court of queen Elizabeth.

On a more administrative note, I know I mentioned it in an email, but I do want to reiterate the importance of submitting assignments **well** before the subsequent tutorial, i.e., at least three or four days. In this case, I was in the fortunate position of having a gap in my timetable, so was able to review your work in good(ish) time. However, this isn't always the case, and I won't be able to guarantee a session if you cut it so fine with future submissions. But beyond the whims and vagaries of my own calendar, it's *essential* that you always aim to leave at least a few days between completing and assignment and firing it over. This way you'll be able to step away and have a brief 'cooling off' period that will put you in a much better position to decide whether or not you're satisfied with your work.

Feedback on assignment

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

- The layout of the work in grid format is really nice, allowing the viewer to see each pair of shoes within a wider context- good. However, it's hard to have an adequate sense of the technical aspects of each photograph. For future reference, can you always send me jpegs that can be viewed at fullscreen on a standard monitor please?
- Equally, in choosing to present your images in a grid format next to one another, you're obviously simultaneously saying something about 'sameness and difference'. Taking such an approach means that it's easier to see the technical inconsistencies between each photograph, and you've unwittingly flagged up some 'unwanted' differences between the images. They're by no means major, but the *Home in the office* photograph has a background that's noticeably out of sync with the others. With work such as this, it's really important to make sure that you minimise any differences outside of the ones that you're actually calling the viewer's attention to. The XY function in Lightroom will help with this.
- By extension, I think you should give quite a bit of thought to how you might present this assignment when you submit for assessment. The photographs and the underlying ideas are really interesting, and how they are presented in printed/ physical form will be useful in demonstrating another side of your creativity. I also think you could do something interesting and potentially disruptive with the way you've captioned the work, e.g. shift them around in playful ways.

Coursework

Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Demonstration of Creativity

Because of receiving your assignment fairly late, I did actually find myself struggling to work through the coursework you've been doing. At first glance, all *looks* to be in order, but do make sure to think about how coursework and exercises can be used as a testing ground for ideas and approaches to the assignments.

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

While you're definitely tuned in to some really interesting stuff around class, taste, status, consumption and identity, there's not much here to suggest that you've engaged with relevant literature in the field (of which there is plenty). I've highlighted a few that below that will help you to think about the issues you're touching on in more critical detail, which should help to bring a richness to the basic concept. But, either way, I would like to see you more focused on doing this as a general guideline.

More broadly, the **Research and Reflection** section of your blog is quite underdeveloped, with only once post added since November 7th. While there are very useful bits of research peppered around your blog, there does need to be more of it. Put simply, the quality of your ideas and reflections are **directly related** to the research that you do. The more you read and view, the better your ideas will be and the greater the possibility of you feeling satisfied with what you produce.

Suggested reading/viewing

Context

The central theme of this assignment is, at least by my reading, how consumption is a *communicative* practice, i.e., how the things we buy 'say' things about us. Whether people 'hear' what we want them to say is, however, another matter entirely, so clothing and fashion are 'texts' that are complex and often extremely ambiguous: we can never be entirely sure that what we wear gets across what we want it to, and clothes' meaning(s) can change over time.

This is something that has been of **huge** interest to scholars in the field of cultural studies. Take a look at the section of Peter Corrigan's book *The Sociology of Consumption* that looks at Grant McCracken's work on the socio-cultural importance of clothes in the court of queen Elizabeth. If it rings some bells, the subsequent sections/ chapters enlarge on it. Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang's *The Unmanageable Consumer* is also great, and the chapter 'The Consumer as Identity-seeker' might also resonate, particularly the material that explores 'the Diderot unity', which is about how one purchase links to another and another and another and another.... Interesting stuff. Ian Woodward's *Understanding Material Cultures* is also worth a look.

Another way to think about all this is in relation to semiotics, i.e., the study of 'signs' and what they 'mean'. The chapter in Richard Salkeld's book *Reading Photographs* titled 'Reading the signs' will be a useful way to get your head around its basic ideas.

Pointers for the next assignment

Things are generally moving in the right direction, and there's plenty of evidence on your blog of an engaged, creative and very promising student who's got a really interesting way of looking at the world. The bigger picture is very encouraging. It does seem, however, that time management is something that needs to be looked at. This is really dull stuff to have to flag up, but I do think that it's an issue that's had a bit of an impact on how well this assignment has come together. Your ideas are consistently engaging, but you need to more carefully develop them so that they live up to your hopes and expectations. This is the second assignment where you've been slightly dismissive of what you've produced and, for my money, it's not because of the quality of the basic idea and/ or your ability to realise it. More effective creative use of the coursework that leads up to an assignment and a greater commitment to researching and unpacking the various themes that your work touches on will all ultimately make the final outcome more consistent.

As a final word, I should ask, does this mean that you wore your Ugg boots as you were working on the assignment!? A wise choice. I tend to wear a pair of *filthy* hiking boots when I'm out in the field, and a pair of sandals when I'm processing at home. In all seriousness, I've come to see the strategic importance of my hiking boots when I'm working, i.e., how they have a particular set of connotations, something that the Salkeld book will help you to explore. I often photograph around so-called edgeland spaces where security guards can be a little *too* vigilant, and I've come to be more and more aware of how my hiking boots, along with the other 'walker' gear I wear, offers an immediate visual shorthand that I'm not a terrorist/ reprobate, and just a harmless and slightly buffoonish middle-aged man. Hmmm.

Actually, maybe this is less a strategic use of footwear and more the brutal reality of where I currently am in life...

Tutor name	Andrew Conroy
Date	1/2/18
Next assignment due	Tutorial on 5th April at 10am , assignment submitted at least 3 days beforehand.