PORTFOLIO PROJECT GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

The following is an outline of the proposed project. This is only for those who wish to take part and is **not** intended to be "compulsory" for the members who do not wish to be involved at this time. As we discussed, however, those who do not wish to prepare a panel of work would be invited to contribute to the workshop sessions by way of commentary, critiquing the work and ideas on offer and being involved in the general discussions.

The task outlined below is intended to provide an opportunity for those involved to design, develop and implement a photographic body of work intended to encourage your growth as a creative photographer. The expectations are significantly different to those sought within a conventional camera club competition. In fact, this task is not competitive other than you are competing against yourself! It uses different criteria and has substantially different outcomes to those usually applied to club work. That is, the panel developed will be original rather than novel, expressive rather than literal, subjective rather than objective and celebrate your freedom of expression. In short, the finished work will be "imagined vision" and NOT "camera vision". In fact, there is no rule that says you must use a camera to take/make a photograph!

You will need to demonstrate growth via application to the task. Ideally, all images in the panel will be captured within the development period rather than from of a trawl through your archive. The latter strategy is very unlikely to lead to success.

TASK DESCRIPTION

There are *no rules, no limits, no restrictions and no constraints*. The following is a guideline only and is intended to encourage your thoughts.

You are to create a body of work comprising between 4-8 individual images. Any mode of presentation is acceptable. The final panel can be in the form of mounted prints for display, an audio visual, a slideshow, a book, or any other suitable format. The choice is yours.

The work is to be unified by the use of an idea or concept (the "subject") and not by the subject matter.

The content you use will be a product of the idea, concept or theme – your intention –and not the reverse. In other words, the *"subject"* will determine the choices of *"subject matter"*

The timeframe for the preparation of the panel of work is that the panel be completed in time for the presentation night on December 1st 2011. Some participants may complete their panel more quickly than others and those who finish early may decide to carry on with a second panel. There is no restriction on the number, however it is expected that this process will take some time to work through if it is going to be of any benefit as a learning and personal development exercise.

SUBJECTS AND CONTENT (ALSO CALLED "SUBJECT MATTER")

The choice of subject and subject matter for the panel is to be left entirely to the photographer. For assistance, we have included a list of subject ideas that can be used, or ignored as the participants see fit.

For the purposes of these sessions, we define "Subject" and "Content" as follows:

The "**Subject**" is the overall theme, idea or statement that the photographer wishes to address. For example, you may wish to examine the impact of climate change on our environment. This is your subject.

The "**Content**" will be the specific aspects of the subject (in our example - climate change) that you examine, for example – drought, rising seas or species extinction are all aspects of climate change that can be used as the subject matter for the subject being addressed.

Your panel of work presented should be unified by the choice of subject and not the content or subject matter. The goal is to present a series of images that effectively addresses your subject in the use of subject matter, photographic style and method of presentation. Ideally, each image should stand alone as well as form a part of the whole body.

OUTLINE

The portfolio project will be developed over 3 designated nights where participants and club members will be involved in discussing the ideas, concepts and work in progress as a means of assisting the participants refine and develop their work in a supportive and cooperative manner.

It is expected that participants may be working at different stages of their individual projects on any given night, so we may be evaluating and discussing work that is either at an early stage, or nearly completed. This will assist those not participating to see the process at work. The discussion and evaluation will concentrate on what the photographer is trying to say with the image and how it can be made more effective.

The purpose of having a body of work to review rather than a single image is so that the photographer can gain experience in exploring an idea or subject in a more comprehensive and creative manner and to learn how to put together a group of images that form a folio or photo essay. This is similar to the submission requirements expected of students studying photography at HSC level.

To be an effective tool in expanding the photographer's skills and creativity, it is essential that the images presented are new and not the result of a trawl through their archives. In fact, an essential part of the process is the pre visualisation of the images and the subsequent work undertaken to create the images that will form the panel of work.

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THE PROCESS

To assist the participants to get started on the process of developing a subject and working through the image creation process, the first session will be largely dedicated to exploring the ideas and possible concepts that participants may wish to pursue. This process of discussion should assist the participants refine their thinking about their chosen idea, theme or concept.

STEP 1

The initial task is to find the subject you wish to address. This is the most important part of the process as it will guide your thinking through the remaining steps. It is likely that your subject matter and images resulting from the examination of the subject may develop as the process expands, however without a clear idea of what your subject is, you may well become distracted and lose direction in your approach.

The initial meetings and discussion groups will hopefully assist you in refining your thinking. As a guide, try not to make your subject too broad as you will probably have difficulty in refining your subject matter choices. Choosing an abstract idea or subject can be beneficial in developing your creative thinking about the subject.

Some examples (as a guide to your thinking might be):

power, grandeur, faded glory, fire, faith, adventure, depression, movement, dance, romance, information, desire, favourite, need, exchange, friend, memory, time, masculinity, continuity, persistence, control, flavour, celebration, ritual, end, generation, vigour, echo, belief, polity, anguish, success, patriotism, identity, language, symbolism.

You may also consider some alternative approaches that are based on your experiences and interests. For example, someone who has a pet dog or cat (or goldfish?) may like to consider how their animal perceives the world. Last year members produced folios on the following themes:

Relationship breakdown and recovery; the life of a champagne glass; phobias; relationships and trust; the human psyche; personal journeys, well as others.

There are no limits to ideas or concepts other than one's imagination. Ideas come from your experiences, your memory. Ideas are free and there is no limit to them or to what you might like to explore with this project. Fact, fantasy, fear, folly, frailty or foible are all welcome. There is no failure, only failure to try !

In establishing your ideas and concepts you will need to be aware of the likely imagery that will flow from the idea. For instance, if your idea will require the use of model(s) and you are not yet comfortable or experienced in working within this genre, we suggest you allow some time to work on the techniques required to successfully generate the image material.

To complete the first step you will need to **write out an explanation and description of your idea in a clear manner that is understandable and meaningful**. This sounds simple, but the process of putting your idea into words will crystallise and clarify your thinking. This is an important part of the process.

STEP 2

Once you have settled on your subject, you need to create a "*mind map*" or outline of your subject. Write down on the left hand side of a piece of paper a full description of your subject and all of the terms that help to illustrate your subject.

On the right hand side of the page, write down a list of words and ideas that relate to the subject. The use of a Thesaurus and or dictionary can be of great assistance here. Write down as many ideas and words as you can. Often thinking of one word will lead to the words that describe other aspects of your subject matter. There is no limit to how many words or descriptions you come up with during this process.

These words and ideas will lead you to the *content* that addresses the *subject* you have chosen.

Once you have worked on this list, you will come up with a "short list" of subject matter that you will use as the basis of your image making. Often during this process a previsualisation of an image will come to mind that you can develop into a photographic image.

At this time you will also be thinking about the style and design of the imagery that will form the basis of the subject matter. Will it be monochrome, colour, portrait based, will you need props, models etc?

However, (and just when you thought it was easy) your representation must also include use of at least one of the thousands of options available to you that we call **photographic language**. Some examples of photographic language include: abstraction, contour, proximity, opposition, atmosphere, perspective, omission, implication, illusion, trope, narrative, space, personification and too many more to cite here (In the first session we will issue a more comprehensive list. But it will by no means be complete – there are too many of them!)

STEP 3

The next step (notice, we haven't picked up a camera yet !) is to sketch out how the completed images will look. Now you will need to think about how the images will be constructed, how they will be laid out and what photographic language you will employ to refine your image choice.

Now you will start to think about such things as image content, framing, background, lighting, inclusion of key elements and symbols that will be used in the image. We have attached a list of photographic language terms to assist in this process.

The outline of the image can be in the form of a sketch or a word description. To assist in this process, imagine yourself at an exhibition of artworks or photographs. Now write a description of the piece of work for someone who will not be seeing the images. This description will not only describe the content of the image in detail, but also your response to the image.

This process is very much like the "storyboard" process undertaken when making motion pictures. Each scene and each part of a scene is sketched out so that the scriptwriter (you) and the director (you again) can direct the camera operator (yes, you again) and the actors (if applicable) how to act and move in order to tell the story and preserve continuity. Obviously the parallels are limited, but the process is very important in creating the detailed pre visualisation required to create the image.

STEP 3 CONTINUED

Just as Cartier Bresson imagined in his mind's eye the design and timing of the person stepping off the plank in his famous image, this process will tell you what the decisive moment and composition of the image needs to be in order to fulfil your image concept.

At this stage you may wish to carry out some experimentation with techniques and processing options to see whether the imagined image is achievable. If the technique proves to be difficult, this is where you can draw on the experience and ideas of the club members to assist you in refining your technical skills.

STEP 4

The next step is to take your detailed description and sketch of the images and set about creating them in the camera. You should think hard about what you intend to include and what you want excluded from the image. Remember that everything in the image is there because you have made a conscious decision to include it as part of the image construction.

This step is the most challenging and also the most rewarding. You will soon find that your powers of previsualisation need to be worked on as you will almost certainly find that the real world is more complicated than your visualised image. This is normal and will help to refine your thinking for future image making.

STEP 5

This step is the processing of the image and refining the content to reflect your sketched layout and visualisation. Depending on your chosen subject matter, this step may or may not involve a lot of image adjustment and enhancement.

It is generally understood that all images will need some form of post processing, however the intention is always to do the most work pre capture and employ good technical practice in the image capture activities. Photoshop cannot "fix up" poorly captured images, out of focus, shaky or otherwise degraded images.

STEP 6

This step involves presentation of the "work in progress" or completed images for peer review. You should also be sure to employ a large amount of self assessment before you present the work. At all times you should be referring to your subject and how your image conveys the idea, story or message that is relevant to the subject of your choice.

The final step will be to prepare and present your completed panel on the "Gala Opening Night" on the date shown in the program.

Please remember that the workshop sessions are a two way process, the moderators and club members will gain valuable experience in evaluating images based on content, message and ideas and not just on impact. The photographer will gain valuable understanding of their ability to communicate with their image making and will have the opportunity to discuss their methods and ideas in a positive and constructive environment.

To quote Ansel Adams, "Great images are not taken, they are made".

APPENDIX 1 – SUBJECT IDEAS

Here is a list of ideas that could be considered as a subject to be explored:

Reproduced from "Photography as Art".

emotions,
fears,
follies,
character,
anxiety,
joy,
guile,
decay,
age,
desire,
isolation,
family,
anger,
boredom,
persistence,
family,
love,
depression,
deceit,
masculine,
feminine,
dependence,
memory,
deception,
generation,
identity,
personality,
relationships,
innocence,
animal characteristics,
animal behaviour,
animal interactions,
animal relationships,
habitat,
majesty,
power,
grandeur,

faded glory,
destruction,
erosion,
decay,
information age,
attack,
majesty,
sweet,
sour,
adventure,
beauty,
peace,
peaceful,
pleasure,
ancient,
sublime,
fire,
faith,
control,
taste,
flavour,
time,
movement,
ambiguity,
success,
rituals,
beliefs,
traditions,
patriotism,
exclusion,
vigour,
symbolism,

If none of these ideas appeals, try something from your experience or imagination.

APPENDIX 2 – EXAMPLES OF PHOTOGRAPHIC LANGUAGE

Abstraction	Elements combined for their graphic quality – process is intended to eliminate elements that distract from representation/idea.
Reduction	Process followed to eliminate information from an image that does not serve intention
Simplification	The avoidance of any element within an image that competes with or confuses compositional principles
Implication	Element used to suggest presence of compositional feature that is not actually visible.
Metaphor	An element used to represent another idea. Eg. fire as danger; flower as beauty; snake as evil
Confrontation	Element that conveys a conflict or contested idea or presence
Narrative	Story telling elements within image
Discordance	Elements that at first glance seem out of place or pose questions/provoke curiosity
Ambiguity	Element that is unclear or subject to a variety of interpretations, 'Is it a tree?'
Omission	Absence of element that ought to be present and that absence enhances the power of image in some way.
Trope	Various figures of design – line, shape, pattern, repetition, figure-ground.
Symbolism	Element that is a powerful shorthand way of communicating complex idea and relationships. Eg. flag=patriotism/identity, coin=wealth/exchange; cracked earth=drought/infertility; tree=strength/growth
Dissonance	Elements arranged to provoke curiosity, perplexity or negative emotional behaviour. Elements that make viewer uncomfortable
Space	Element used as a positive or negative area to provide links to key compositional features.
Atmosphere	A quality which encourages/elicits a moodful response from viewer.
Contour	The edge of a design element that in itself endorses, supports or adds to design character image
Proximity	To position design elements so that the near/far relationship adds to the compositional goals.
Emotion	Elements intended to appeal to sentiment as opposed to pure intellect/reason.
Allusion	Use of a design element that points or makes an indirect/oblique reference to an idea
Sensation	Element(s) intended to evoke response via senses. Use of texture, for example.
Colour	Elements where hue in complementary or contrast form or via other qualities (saturation) adds weight to intention
Similarity	Element(s) that possess shared characteristics that enhance intention.
Illusion	Creation of a presence that is neither obvious nor readily apparent but nonetheless is real within the image. Use of optical illusion to convey thought.

Reproduced from "Photography as Art"

www.lanecovecreativephotography.org