



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Claire Borlase	Student number	511768
Course/Unit	Context & Narrative	Assignment number	4
Type of tutorial	written		

Overall Comments

Many thanks for sending in your assignment. It's good to see you enjoying the new-found area of semiotics and applying it to Brassai's image.

Overall you have done well in applying your knowledge to interpreting your chosen image. I particularly like the research you have done to link the signage - ABras and 'Fromages' - with English colloquialisms and rhyming slang. This puts an interesting interpretation on the image and poses an intriguing questions about Brassai's knowledge of English when composing the photograph - was this deliberate or happenstance and had the benefit of post shoot recognition?

Your review covers the facets of setting the context of the image and the discussion of the image in terms signifiers and signified well. As with everything there are areas where improvements can be made these relate to tweaking the structure of the review and specific details and I'll go into these in more detail in my comments below.

Assessment potential

I understand your aim is to go for the Photography Degree and that you plan to submit your work for assessment at the end of this course. From the work you have shown in this assignment, providing you commit yourself to the course, I believe you have the potential to pass at assessment. In order to meet all the assessment criteria, there are certain areas you will need to focus on, which I will outline in my feedback.

Feedback on assignment and supporting work

As mentioned above the overall impression of the review is good. On the whole you structure it well and make good, valid points. The comments below are suggestions for making improvements.

You introduce the review well by placing the image in context. You could have given more background information perhaps covering off things like:

- the fact that this night photography was quite unique at the time and this presented some technical challenges given the state of film emulsions.

- that Brassai spent a lot of time chatting to his subjects in the cafes shots of the book, engaging with them so that they felt they were taking part in 'the event' of taking the photograph. It would be interesting to contrast this with the voyeuristic style of your chosen image.
- that Brassai's night photography with the limits of the technology was quite unique at the time in the way he used the light and dark to create form, shape and composition

On a technical level you want to look carefully at the structure and some of your phraseology but bear in mind the points below are matters of detail:

- In the second paragraph you say: 'Brassai was often observed photographing the Parisian streets and he became quite familiar to those who found him or herself also in the vicinity'. It's slightly odd wording. I suggest: 'Brassai was often observed photographing the Parisian streets and he became quite familiar to those who found themselves also in the vicinity'.
- In your third paragraph you pose a good question whether it was Miller who pointed out the slang terms; but this is quite a detailed point and afterwards you return to more general points. As you are setting the context at this stage I suggest you reposition the detailed point about slang to appear alongside other detailed observations.
- The last paragraph of the context you make reference to the vimeo clip showing the publication but this is at the end of the paragraph adjacent to your point about a 'city that is divided into those who have and those who have not'. The inference is that the reference is to the have and have nots. I suggest a restructuring of the sentence to place the reference (10) at the end of the first sentence of the paragraph.
- In your narrative section - the first paragraph I would avoid the somewhat pejorative language when you say: 'anybody with only the slightest cultural awareness'.
- I think you need to re-work the second sentence in the second paragraph, perhaps: 'One of the less obvious denoted elements is to the left of the lady. She is looking away from the light and her back which is in deep shadow is facing the viewer'. You go on to say that a signifier is born... I'm not sure that a signifier is born. You might want to re-phrase it something like: 'There is a potential signifier if the viewer ...'. Remember that the interpretation of an image is personal and dependent on what each person 'brings' to it.
- In the third paragraph you make some interesting points about the lady's concealed identity and her commodification. But the english is a little tortured and could be improved. (Being pedantic the lady's identity is concealed not so much by the shadow but more because she has her back to the viewer.)
- The painted face on the signage - It's a good observation. I'm not sure about it being 'painted', or that a 'catch light' reveals the painted face. Catchlight usually refers to the highlight in the eyes of a portrait and could be confusing being used here. Isn't more of a ghostly face underneath the 'S' of 'aBras' appearing to stare at the lady?

Learning Logs or Blogs/Critical essays

This continues to be extensive and a good record of your reaction to and feelings concerned with the topics covered in the assignment and preceding exercises.

Suggested reading/viewing

I recently came across the work of Travis Hodges. He would be worth looking at - particularly his Quantified self work. It's rich in semiotics as a way of exploring the topic and gives a new look to portraiture.

<http://travishodges.co.uk/thequantifiedself/>

Look at Philip-Lorca di Corcia, his work and his interviews about - Hustlers, Lucky 13 and it's relevance to 9/11, A story book life. His work needs to be looked at in relation to time and sequence to fully appreciate the reading of the work. He is also a good person to look at in respect of the staged scene.

Pointers for the next assignment

- This is your opportunity to put all your learning from the previous assignments into practice - what you choose to concentrate on is up to you. But you might find setting up a personal scenario to compliment and extend the work from Assignment 2 and 3 a good source and a becoming culmination to the course.

Tutor name	Simon Barber
Date	11 September 2015
Next assignment due	30 October 2015