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In what ways can a photographic practice empower the high street artisan?

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire

December 2021 (39,687 words)

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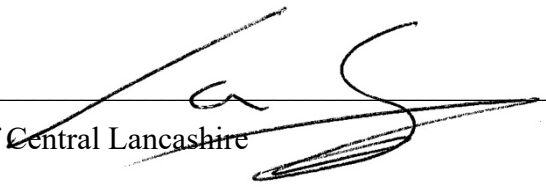
Signature of Candidate 

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Abstract.

I have observed through my advertising practice in art direction and photography that artisan businesses were compromised by the absence of a bespoke process to create photography that larger clients are offered through the traditional channels of advertising. It was clear these creative processes are based on relationships with bigger clients, frequently falling short for small high street artisan businesses trying to succeed in a changing environment, challenged by economic turndown and online selling.

The lack of a practical solution to this problem developed into the first enquiry; if artisans had easy access to tailored procedures, could they combine with a realigned photographic practice to re-negotiate their position in the high street? Secondly, could these procedures be fulfilled through a straightforward vehicle laying out specific methods of photographic engagement?

To facilitate the research questions, I designed a methodological strategy of mixed methods that align and support the ideas of practice solutions, delivering practical photographic outcomes. The practice-based research focuses on a sample of three artisan case studies from Ulverston, Cumbria. A collaborative methodology sets the scene for the relationship between the artisan and photographer. Co-production methods are the specific components which contribute to the shaping of the photography. The whole process is a collaboration, with co-creation components that lead and guide the photographer to make the individual creative images.

The theoretical framing of the literature combines with the methods to inform the research and the outcome of a vehicle. Images made through these routes are interrogated using De Saussure's (1900s) theory of semiotics and Barthes's additions (1960s) alongside Bate's (2000s), perspective that considers the changing digital landscape of the 'new' high street. Application of a modification of Flusser's (2002) process theory supports the photographer and the artisan's intents.

The mixed-method approach is a new way of working for artisans and photographers. A creative procedure allowing expression of the artisan's intent. There are three key new methods. Firstly, photo-elicitation, where the client is given a camera to define their business's story; which is not standard advertising photographic practice. However, in the research, this method enables an understanding of the intent of the artisan. Secondly, the co-creation of a briefing sheet, which advertising agencies use as an independent document, uniquely the research shares it between photographer and artisan revealing and giving shape to joint intentions. Thirdly, the design analysis document, based on the advertising agency 'branding document', used by the creative teams, re-aligned as a collaborative tool created by

the photographer and artisan for ongoing project assessment. These processes combine to inform the photographer, leading to the execution of the photography.

Output from these investigations is a user-friendly book encapsulating new collaborative methods of engagement, which create effective photographic outcomes. Empowering artisans to strengthen their place in a changing high street.

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Acknowledgements.

A thank-you to all the participants within my research, critical friends and technical experts, supervisors and colleagues. Your input and continued support has been invaluable to this thesis.

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Glossary of terms.

Artisan ~ A small business offering a bespoke service or product involving a significant element of human input into the final output

Bricks and Mortar ~ Expression indicating the business has a physical building

Brief ~ A document traditionally laying out requirements of a project to a creative team.

Client ~ An enabler, who commissions a photographer.

COVID-19 Pandemic ~ COVID-19 is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus first reported in Dec 2019, causing a global pandemic of human and economic chaos.

Dark store ~ A high street business without a high street presence, entirely online.

Depth of Field ~ Areas of sharpness controlled 'in camera' to highlight objects within the frame.

Intent ~ Expression of what messages an artisan and a photographer wish to portray.

Intentionalised ~ Goldsmith (2020) uses the term – suggesting time needs to be intentionalised to get the best out of it with reference to business management.
Whereas I use it to describe predetermining an image from discussion and collaboration to achieve shared objectives (intent). The resultant intentionalised image is produced from interaction with others.

Immersive research ~ Is where the researcher places themselves into the subculture of the participants, (Matthews, 2020).

Mass produced imagery ~ Originating from how the general public gather news images on their phones, now permeating into other photographic areas, sometimes referred to as 'citizen' images, (Radsch, 2013, p.20,).

Metadata ~ Hidden text attached to a photograph.

M tourism ~ Or mobile tourism, where visitors and tourists expect local facilities to be accessible on mobile devices (Huijnen, 2006).

Narrative ~ The narrative is the tangible form which is built around signs that reveal and make accessible the intangible story.

Offer ~ In advertising, the reason that a buyer may be enticed to purchase. Quality, craftsmanship, exclusivity for example.

Platform ~ A digital or analogue medium of communication an advertising message, Instagram and magazines are examples.

Photography ~ Contemporary photography has changed from a chemical-based medium to a mainly digital one. It has become more accessible through the ubiquitous mobile device and the distribution of the image has been transformed. One outcome is that photography and image-making, such as film and virtual design, have converged. The age-old discussion

around manipulation of the image and its distortion of the truth has also taken a step forward with photographic images being able to be created from a blank page (screen). In this research, the photographic manipulation takes a light touch approach, and acknowledges that the definition of manipulation can begin with the choice of camera, lens, lighting and focus to changes on screen of the image to suit. As the artisan ethic is to remain close to the original material and the preservation of skill and form then so does the image making for this research. Manipulation will be restricted to exposure and colour control without heavy retouching, cloning and removal or addition of parts of the image.

Praxis ~ Where a creative combines theory with practice to achieve their output.

Total Photographer **~** Recognises how the whole business works, supplying a 'package'.

Truth **~** Truth is a nebulous term that is difficult to define, however for the purpose of this thesis truth is linked to the intent of the artisan. Were the artisan feels that their original intent is being successfully conveyed by the photography

USP **~** Unique Selling Point, as opposed to 'offer' not found on other products.

Vehicle **~** An outcome that will offer the findings to the artisan in an accessible way, in this case, a book.

Visual Assets **~** Used prolifically in marketing to denote any imagery that has been commissioned and therefore needs to work as a return on investment.

Roadmap of the project.

This research has four separate practice-based elements, viewing and cross-referencing in a particular order will give context.

Components -

The thesis; The book; The design analysis documents; Appendices 3,4,5

Suggested navigation -

i) The thesis is read up to the end of Chapter 3, appendices can be referenced throughout.

ii) Design analysis documents (App.2) to be consulted, during Chapter 4 for more detail.

iii) Thesis, findings Chapter 5.

iv) Book (App.1) to be consulted during Chapter 6.

v) Thesis, Chapter 7, final conclusions.

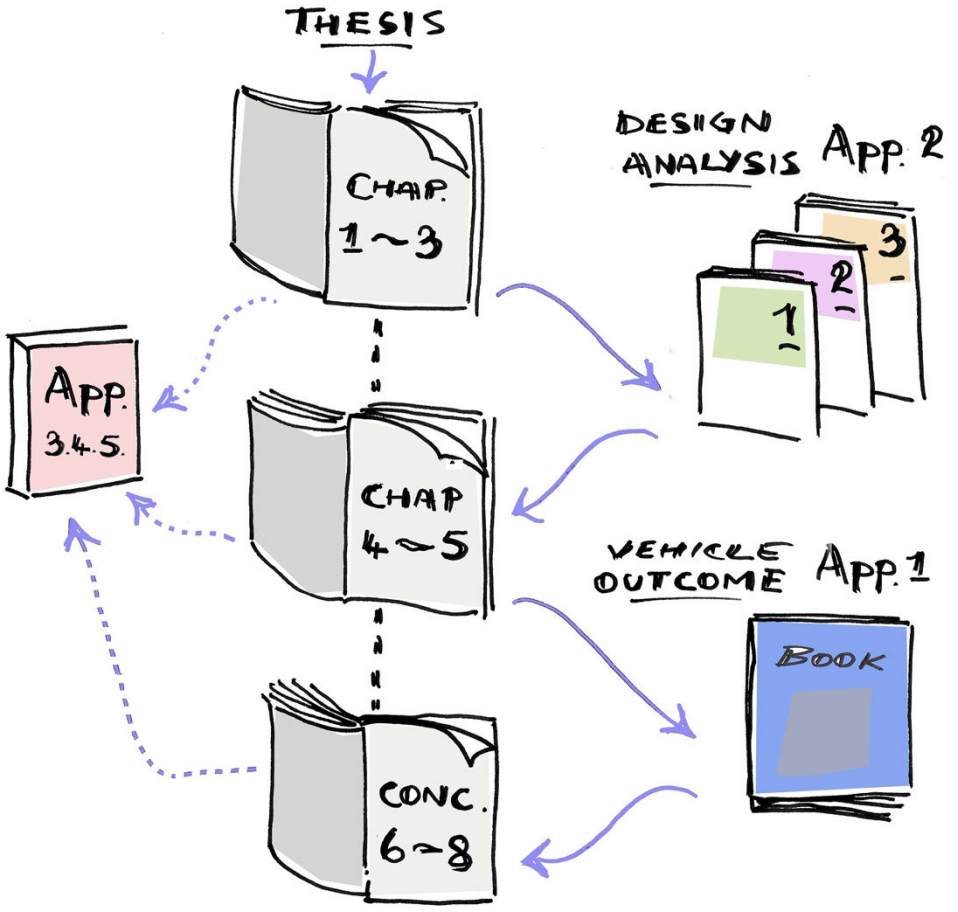

Figure 1, Roadmap of the research.

As a reminder throughout the thesis, a graphic will show which appendix is pertinent.

Introduction.

I am a practising Photographer and Art Director; my work sits in the field of advertising/commercial photography. My practice has produced images with large companies working with pre-formulated creative 'briefs'[1]. In contrast smaller companies have tended to use less formalised direction, sometimes becoming more of a collaborative campaign. This latter approach is where my interest in the artisan company and creative image making has arisen.

'Artisan' is defined for this study as a small business offering a bespoke service or product involving a significant element of human input into the final output. I am researching explicitly selected artisan businesses to ultimately, collaboratively, create a working visual vehicle to help them and photographers work effectively together. The research examines whether it would be constructive for high street-based artisans to be able to compete and tell their stories if there was a more accessible mapped out route to enable bespoke imagery production. The route's purpose would benefit artisans working collaboratively with photographers, allowing access to similar marketing tools used by large retailers. The artisans have an opportunity due to new technologies to benefit from advertising (photography) where previously, only the large corporations with deep pockets (Hegerty 2011, p.107) were able to venture.

My practice resides in this commercial world where there is often conflict between creativity and commerciality (sales and profits). I have experience in the academic/educational arena where the commercial world appears to have a blurred definition; Williamson (1978, p.57) argues that advertisements (or commercials) sell products and are commodities in themselves, the most ubiquitous form being commercial photography. Scott (2015) points out that all photographic work is commercial if involved in a transaction, be it in a gallery, documentary or advertising. I add that it is not definitively required to be creative. This attempt at demarcation is seen throughout photography literature; on entering Waterstones,[2] it is typical that cataloguing of photography separates the books into 'Practice'[3] 'Art' and critical 'Academic', with intellectual emphasis placed upon the latter rather than integration of them all. Maybe as Scott (2015) points out, 'commercial' should be substituted by 'professional', then all the books would be on the same shelf, which is rational but not a widely accepted solution.

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[1] *A document which lays out the creative approach to a project, a guide for the creative and the client.*
[2] *A U.K. wide bookstore.*
[3] *This would be the face of commercial photography as well as skills of photography.*

Harper (2016) concludes commercial imagery is widely spread and an illustration of how the broader population thinks claiming that photographic theorists see this as the only credible critical analysis perspective; she proceeds to say other media-based disciplines value a rigorous empirical approach and an understanding of structures which create and commission the work with the images and practitioners taking centre stage. Edge (2009) accentuates that there is a rift that is encouraged between commercial and fine art photographers where the fine art photographer can only be called so if their practice is quite different from the commercial photographer. For simplicity and to avoid a somewhat wearisome debate, I shall predominantly use the term 'advertising photography' or just 'photography' in referring to practice.

Often an effective image is defined by its sales and profit minus investment, with the creative element argued as not being part of the 'commercial' component. It is as though the creative or fine art element is not associated with money at all, even though they all have a monetised component. This thesis will consider the effectiveness of the produced images by gauging the positive influence on the artisan business, ultimately linking them to sales, money, and profit.

Commercial photography is considered mainstream culture by academia, where it is used in the pejorative sense to [form] a view that it is artistically and aesthetically mediocre (Pysnakova, 2013, p.64). This permeates into the sectors of photography and practice is just as much culpable as education. As Harper (2016) comments, during the APHE[4] conference of 2015, the commercial sector was referred to as the 'dark side' on more than one occasion. She points out that photography theory criticises this mainstream culture within Higher Education, yet the students are sent out into that same mainstream. Bate (2016, p. 145) remarks that other critics have gone further, saying that advertising (commercial photography) deceitfully conspires against consumers, as the advertising industry is commonly seen as selling items we don't need. John Berger (2013, p. 69) in 'Understanding a photograph' declares that we are surrounded by photographic images that constitute a global misinformation system via a system known as publicity. He continues to evaluate this system by making evocative comments describing photography as proliferating consumerist lies. In his critique of consumers and commodities, Baudrillard (2005, p.178) declares advertising to be a useless and unnecessary universe. It is against this backdrop that research must acknowledge these embedded tensions and perceptions between the artisan's commercial requirements and the photographer's creative aims, and this friction considered when

[4] *Association for Photography in Higher Education, professional body*

critiquing the success of imagery. When processes aren't understood, nervousness builds between clients and creatives, resulting in micromanagement by the client and photographers pushing back against a perceived bland brief. The outcomes unsurprisingly are disjointed and lack good narratives. There is a tangible interface between a creative practitioner and an artisan during a project, where commercialism distinctively meets creativity; this interface will be explored and examined in this research. In this interface, photography can do what it does best and portray the artisan's offer truthfully whilst exploiting advertising procedure as a bedrock of generating compelling imagery. In my experience, photographers can charge premium prices when they help their clients achieve what they need and [5]pair this with creativity; however, too many selfishly value their creative objectives (such as images for their portfolios) above working collaboratively to ensure success for both parties.

The research problem is the lack of a vehicle which can enable the artisans to successfully utilise photography, ultimately gaining sales for their high street businesses. The thesis will begin by setting out clear aims and objectives to investigate how to bring an artisan and photographer into a collaborative environment.

To achieve a measure of objectiveness, the selection of the participants will use transparent methods and ensure there is no cross over of sectors[6]. This research is immersive as it requires the researcher to be fully involved with the artisan's business, goals, strategies, and methods for dealing with imagery. The aim is to bring both parties together and collaboratively create photography, narrating their intentions. This research methodology requires mutual levels of commitment[7] from the outset.

The role of my literary review is to support the practice knowledge. The rationale is that the new knowledge is found in the practice and methodology's capacity. Accordingly, photographic literature and the theory will be explored to support the findings. The literature review has another function; to give a framework and inform the practice, incorporated with the contextual review, emphasising the practice context. The theory will analyse the debate around photographs and their meaning (narratives[8]), which will interrogate the research questions. The practice element will have semi-structured interviews where questions take on a role of guidance to encourage discussion, photo-elicitation will be a steppingstone to other collaborative methods in the research journey.

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[5] When they exceed the expectations of the client, supplying a book at the end of a project or winning an award with the images.
[6] There would be a natural aversion to reveal business information if two participants were carpenters for example.
[7] Formalized in the consent and information forms App. 4.
[8] Stories, information about the artisan's unique business.

The photographs must 'talk' to their customers, portraying the artisan's stories that will sell their products. To achieve this outcome, photographic production will utilise knowledge from advertising, practice, key semiotic writings and a theoretical framework. They are laid out in Chap. 3 where semiotics combines with advertising knowledge enabling translation to the final vehicle in an accessible format.

The participants are consciously selected from as different sectors as possible to gain a varied insight into the use of photography for the high street. Not only for the rigorousness of the research but also ethically and professionally as the artisans may not feel comfortable discussing their business if their competitors were in the research. Following the methodology laid out in Chap. 2, ensures each participant undergoes a similar engagement with the researcher to permit comparative findings and reflection.

For each case study, a Design analysis document is employed (App.2). Where the outcomes of the semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation, collaborative engagement and photographic projects are found. From this gathering of qualitative information, findings and reflection will form, with comments on the influence on my practice and the effectiveness of the images for the artisans' businesses. Moreover, there will be reflection on the interaction between photographer and artisan based and compared with my current practice and past experience within the Advertising sector. As Schon (1983, p. 68) remarks,

"a researcher in the practice context is not dependent on the categories of established theory but can utilise case studies to reflect on or even discover new theory."

The participants' responses to the methods and knowledge gained from these experiences feed into the final outcome, a vehicle in the form of a printed book written in an accessible format to be available in the public domain.

This book is a sum of the collaborative experience and an endeavour to demystify the relationship between the artisan and the photographer and encourage a better interface during photographic imagery production. The overarching requirement is that the images produced are effective by the return upon investment[9] and invoke the intended narratives of both the photographer and the artisan.

To examine the relationship between the artisan and the photographer, I must begin the research journey by first examining the problem and the questions in-depth and context, acknowledging their positioning in the high street environment and reflecting on the external factors that affect their relationship with photography.

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[9] *Generally known as R.O.I., it is a measurement of benefit divided by cost, normally expressed by a percentage.*

1 : The Research Problem and its context.

The interaction between client and creative has always been an area of interest for my practice. Specifically, working with large and smaller clients has highlighted[10] the gulf in the availability of resources and experience.

This chapter places the research problem within the high street context and the personal relationships that artisans have with their image-making (photography) and their image-makers (photographers) in these difficult economic times for a small business[11]. There is an assumption underlying this perspective that there are no defined strategies to utilise photography, and there is no clear path to achieve them. The chapter also introduces the literature and several contemporary theorists to support the examination of the interaction between photographic practice and the artisan in fulfilling their photographic needs.

I define the traditional high street as a place not far from the centre of town where the main marketing platform is the 'shop window'. This research examines a high street not based in a large city but rather a town or rural location where we find a mix of independent stores. One parameter of the research is that the artisans chosen should have a 'bricks and mortar'[12] presence on this high street, (however, the change in positioning to a 'virtual' high street is discussed further in this research). Historically in retail, 'online' has referred to personal computer-based website media, which ultimately points customers to a real physical outlet, whereas the contemporary high street is more virtual, mobile device-driven and utterly reliant on descriptive photography.

The transfer to digital.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the move to digital, sending online retail sales to an all-time high of 33% of total sales in January 2020 (Tolhurst K. 2021). Successive Lockdowns[13] have pushed the artisan retailers' shop window into high maintenance, proactive social media channels (Instagram, Facebook) requiring fast turnover of photography. To survive, the artisans must join this virtual high street and offer innovative, reactive solutions such as online ordering, video support, feedback and storyline blogs, situated on image and narrative hungry platforms.

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[10] Chap.3,3.5 gives practice examples.
[11] Government definition, Dept. of trade 2020-22 of small businesses is less than 10 employees and less than £2M turnover.
[12] Denotes a business which is located within a building in which it creates its product and brand, this can of course filter out through digital platforms locally and globally.
[13] A country wide restriction of access, in this case a closure of retail outlets for a long period of time.

In supporting this demand, it is imperative they work successfully with photographers, producing images that 'sell' their unique business.

Artisans and small businesses are experiencing visual-based competition from large retailers who are closing in on the physical and virtual high street. Artisans as a group are particularly suffering; for example, 'online only' mega-retailer Amazon has created "Hand made at Amazon, a marketplace for artisans" (Amazon, 2020). High street artisans do not have a straightforward route to use similar marketing tools to the multinationals, and Amazon is exploiting this gap by offering them some of these tools, the downsides are the high charges and disinterest in sustaining the physical shop. The artisan should look to more of an independently minded solution utilising photography to close the gap between themselves and their highly funded competitors. Access to a vehicle that would make use of photography as a powerful part of their overall marketing strategy would allow them to capitalise on their unique 'offerings'. To be artisan, is after all, what makes them different to the larger companies.

> *'Having the ability to show your potential customers the authenticity of your work; the processes, the materials, the skills, has never been more important*.'
> (Seddon, 2018)

Closures and economics.

Even preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the high street economic climate was slowing, and closures of artisan and independent retailers were increasing.

> *'British high street weathers the most testing retail and leisure climate in five years as the gap between store openings and closures widens.'*
> (PWC, Nov 9th, 2018)

During this research in Ulverston, over 30% of the long-established artisan shops[14] antiques, hardware, wool and haberdashery, film and comic books and a highly regarded artisan restaurant have closed their doors for good. Footfall[15] in the U.K. high street was down a massive 73% in Jan 2021 (Statista, 2021). Artisan businesses will keep closing down during this transition of the high street landscape unless they look to more robust advertising

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[14] *See design analysis documents Chapters 9, maps of closures.*
[15] *The number of people entering a shopping area in business hours.*

methods, such as effective photography, to promote their services. Regrettably, many artisan companies regard professional photography as an expensive luxury, failing to perceive its potential worth. This often results in them resorting to cheap alternative strategies; stock images, poorly executed images, or worse, no images at all. Not to pursue a visual-based marketing strategy in this digital-based era is catastrophic for a small business. Undoubtedly, the high street landscape is changing, and artisan businesses and many other retail outlets will continue to close.

> *'Closures increased by nearly 17% to 24,205 across 3,000 towns, cities, retail parks and shopping centres monitored by the Local Data Company.'*
> (Butler, 2018)

As yet, there is no sign of the numbers levelling off, meanwhile to assist the artisans in competing there ought to be a more accessible route aiding the production of bespoke imagery, highlighting artisan values and telling their stories of involvement in the high street and long connection to the community. The consequences of retail high streets vanishing or becoming repopulated with the large retail clone franchises are not confined to the artisan owners but also the towns' communities that thrive around them. High streets with flourishing artisan companies are a vital component of civic and community life. 'Why me' commentated in their 2017 report that 75% of high street users in a London suburb identified something more than just retail as the 'best thing' about their high street and that over 40% of SMEs in the high street performed some kind of social function *(LSE, Cities, 2017).*

Other underlying factors are causal to a contracting high street, notably planning and urban regeneration population movement and other human geography factors. Still, these will be beyond the scope of this research. Further inescapable challenges have occurred due to the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Government compulsory closure of retail stores) plus the worst retail economic downturn for 25 years (Guardian, 2020). Photographers and artisans must diversify roles and use this changing landscape as an opportunity to encourage new photographic approaches.

Research and literature context, engagement and collaboration.

Contemporary marketing research tends to consider photography as a minor component and centres on corporate companies, identity, communications and branding (Podnar, Balmer, 2010 p.37.) and none of the research is in the context of a global pandemic. However, advertising procedures and components can be used as a reference point and be utilised in a

modified form, enlightening how personal collaborations between artisans and photographic practices can work. It is from these relationships that effective imagery can be produced. The corporation's research says the future of their campaigns is visual, with 94% of U.K. marketing agencies regarding visual assets as paramount (Marketing Week, 2020), with 50% increasing their spend specifically on visual assets. Advertising agencies are formulaic in their approach to marketing, and their campaigns involve many 'creative' people. These include Brand Managers, Designers, Art Directors, Copywriters, and Photographers, supported by hefty briefing documents with a goal to sell the product. Artisans are competing with this advertising machine with its large investment in visual assets. They require a cost-effective and efficient alternative, which is to collaborate closely with photographers, negating the need for the mass of creatives.

Artisans have mixed approaches to image-making, ranging from photographing their products themselves to allowing a professional photographer free reign with little or no direction, which seems conflicting to their own meticulous and often obsessively controlled artisan processes.

There is a gap in effective engagement within the process of image-making. Images can occur via a 'seat of the pants' approach with little input or guidance from both the artisan and photographer. An advertising photographer is usually given a brief[16] by an Art director or creative (Bates, 2016, p.140), but economies of scale can be prohibitive so an artisan's photographic budget would soon vanish involving so many people. Professional practising photographers are often struggling artisans themselves. They also do not have a procedural vehicle giving guidance on how to work collaboratively with artisans, to write briefs and produce photographic imagery that portrays their products' unique narrative.

The democratising of the camera through the mobile phone has unleashed mass imagery, in combination with the availability of cheap micropayment stock imagery. This has populated the internet with 'narrativeless' space-filling images. There are opportunities for improving this disengagement, high street artisans can effectively market themselves through targeted photography and celebrate their independence. I suggest that the skilled photographer, combined with the artisan, can produce well planned, powerful, narrative based imagery.

Researchers are working in the broader field of SME[17] marketing, but mainly observing overall function and attitudes in the marketplace (Smith and Sparks, 2000) and attempting to cover the effects of online electronic commerce (Foscht, Swoboda, Morschett, 2006) but not

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[16] A document which is normally created in an advertising agency by an art director specifying the creative guidelines to be closely followed by the photographer.

[17] Small Medium Enterprise, sometimes Artisan, a genre often referred to in articles.

how the artisan can engage expressly with photography in telling their stories. Although considerable material exists regarding brand management, it is based on large corporates (Krake, 2005), where photography is seen as subordinate to the overall marketing package. My experience (Chap. 3, 3.5) is that even the branding guides[18] can pass over photography as a mechanism and a commodity, not as an essential part of the process. Refining the approach and the collaborative interface between the photographer and the artisan is the way forward, where the roles of the Art director and their creative team are absorbed into the photographer's skills and the artisan benefits from a more rounded methodology to the process of producing visuals. By structuring the methodology of producing images, the artisans can produce images with more influence, enabling them to compete, achieving a healthier presence on the high street.

As a researcher, it is important to note marketing and photographic theoretical work pre 1990s was written before the availability of a workable Internet and digital cameras. For example, Edward Steichen, an advertising photographer prominent in the 1930-50s, examined processes of working collaboratively with clients (ed. Johnston, 1997). While still partially relevant, the methods are contextualised in a pre-digital era.

Comparisons of best and poor practice form part of my critical framework. In collaboration with the participants I examine other businesses that use imagery (Chap. 4, 4.2) to promote artisan skills. 'Lovingly artisan' (Kendal, Monks, 2019) is such a company that utilises photography with a 'narrative' supporting the human input behind the product. The 'bureau of common goods' (bureau of commongoods.com, 2017) use well-produced videos (handmade.com, 2013) and stills photography to portray passion and community collaboration within their artisan world. These examples of good practice will be shared with the participants during the semi-structured interviews and comment encouraged.

I support my research by cross-referring to historical-critical theory regarding semiotics, the signifier, signified and coded images, beginning with texts from De Saussure and Barthes. This well-established theory will support the use of photography as a language (Burgin, 2009) and a narrative based medium, allowing interrogation of the values brought to the viewers' image.

Bates (2016), discusses semiotic principles in the production of the advertising 'Packshot', which can be applied to producing imagery for the artisans. Bates also comments that Advertising (*per-se* photography) deceitfully conspires against the consumer. Which has its origins from large corporates history of manipulating reality in advertising, whereas the

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[18] *Concise information about marketing needs and objectives, supplied as a pack*

artisan can show truthful narrative, that for example has not been produced in a large factory, and 'sell' their product in alignment with their artisan ethic[19]. Flusser (2000, p.26) remarks that narrative is not the article [the text or copy] that explains the photograph, but the photograph illustrates the article. He also claims that the basis of photographic creation can be summarised by his foundation of 4 influences -

image – apparatus – program – information. [intent]

I supplement the human element of *intent*, as crucial to the effectiveness of the narrative image, or it becomes just another 'story less' picture, without form. The effect of intent is the overarching influencer. The intent – Flusser suggests – is solely from the photographer. True perhaps in some sectors of non-collaborative photography, Fine art possibly. With advertising photography this intent is the crucial creative 'hook' that the photographer must seek out from the artisan, making their product unique and divinely sellable, enabling them to be competitive on the high street.

Filling a gap.

The contemporary advertising literature, which could be called 'best practice' rather than pure theory, is pertinent to the artisans' approaches. Hegarty (2011, p.77), a prominent advertising guru, remarks that a 'brief' should be crafted to inspire the people who want to liberate the creative process. I see this as the collaboration between artisan and photographer, brought to life in my proposed 'Vehicle'. Other Advertising practices can inform my new approaches; Levinson (1994, p.10) intimates towards the artisan by saying they do not have to be a national brand name, a successful local brand name will do very nicely. Still, the most difficult task in advertising (photography) is saying things that people will believe, giving artisans an advantage in that their truth is all they have to tell.

A photographer's role is producing images that sell the product, yet they must offer more and tell the 'story' of the client. Skills of the future photographer should include ways of engaging with the client and producing images that reflect and translate the intent of both parties. The application of these skills when working with a small artisan business has not been written about or studied before. To fill this gap in the knowledge of approach, the process should include respecting both parties' skills, allowing creativity and storytelling to flourish.

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[19] *Artisans' skill and honest approach to their product is part of their essence.*

Statement of originality.

The high street landscape has changed so rapidly that it has created gaps in how to manage photography. The digital revolution has been accelerated by the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn. This has placed the research in a unique arena and left many small businesses, such as artisans, behind in their photographic marketing. Lack of guidelines or access to practice models prevents artisans from engaging with photographers just when they need them most.

Various studies have been made regarding the photographic narrative in documentary, editorial and fine art. They are incomplete when dealing with advertising photography, and discussions about intentions or narratives from an artisan's or photographer's angle are absent. This interaction between artisan and photographer will be a core focus of this research as it is key to creating photography with a narrative.

The research proceeds with new collaborative working processes put into practice with real-life case studies. The methods involve new ways of examining and designing photographic projects, evidenced in the design analysis documents. They are a model for further researchers to use and adapt to their own questions regarding collaboration with photographic practices and other creative sectors; film making, marketing, design, to name a few. The methodology includes a unique way of identifying which businesses are artisan, a decision tree process which is an adaptation of a management tool and could be applied to other research areas as a means of objective selection.

Some methods from the research pass over into the unique vehicle, the book. Its user-friendly format guides artisans and interested photographers through procedures for producing effective imagery. It will help artisans gain a contemporary understanding of photographic narrative and collaboration to improve their advertising strategies and empower them to flourish in a changing high street.

In the book, the language of photography is presented innovatively, allowing artisans to access complex theories such as semiotics and create narrative-based images with their photographer. The participants' commitment to photography is substantiated by the positive impacts on their businesses. The initial challenge was to survive the two lockdowns, which all three did, against the backdrop of 40% (Simply Business, 2020) national closures. As retail began opening back up, two participants exceeded their expectations and substantially grew their businesses.

1.1 Research questions.

In what ways can photographic practice empower artisans to re-negotiate their place in a changing and challenging High Street?

What scalable transferable vehicle, that encapsulates methods of photographic engagement, can be created to act as an enabler for photographers and artisans alike?

Throughout my practice experience, I have encountered photographic briefing sessions with large and small companies involving agencies and design studios, creating campaigns or photographic projects. It stood out that the creative processes were based on relationships with bigger clients and frequently fell short for the small high street artisan business. The deficiency of a practical solution to this problem developed into the first enquiry; if artisans had easy access to their own tailored procedures, could they combine with a realigned photographic practice to re-negotiate and strengthen their position in the high street? Secondly, how would this access be provided? Conceivably, supported by the research, it would be through a straightforward vehicle that lays out methods of photographic engagement specific to the artisan's situation.

1.2 Aims, main goals and overarching purpose.

- To enable artisan businesses to find new ways to access and engage with photographic practices that will empower them to strengthen their place in a changing high street.

- Working with artisans and photographers, creating imagery for a scalable and transferable 'vehicle' that will develop opportunities to use new approaches to photography.

- Inform and impact on my own practice as a photographer, investigating and innovating with artisans, jointly forming new ideas and methodologies.

1.3 Objectives, how the research is going to get there.

- To immerse myself in the high street artisan community. Identifying specific difficulties an artisan has engaging with a photographic practice.

- To generate a literature review that draws on photographic, advertising and marketing literature to examine the context of photographic methodology and the suggestion that visual images are a kind of language-independent of text (Alpers, 1983, p.93).

- To develop and produce a photographic 'Vehicle', making the findings accessible to artisans and other Photographic practices.

- Produce my own photographic images during the research then reflect on the outcomes. These images will be utilised within the 'Vehicle'.

- Use methods, gained from my own experience and practice, then creating new methods which can be used by other photographers and artisans. These methods and approaches amalgamated into my own photographic practice.

- Identify areas for artisans to effectively use photography, then collaborate with the artisans in immersive experimentation, analysing the output via qualitative interviews, photo elicitation and focus groups. Reflecting on the way the research influences my own practice as a photographer via the design analysis documents.

1.4 Ethics. (Documentation ~ App. 5)

A small business is often built upon very personal beliefs and can rely on its 'secret' ingredient, its unknown skill or unique offer. It is this belief that can make them unusually reserved and reticent to share knowledge.

The provided documents will give them reassurance that the data will be handled professionally and sensitive information will not be shared with other participants. As added security, the chosen case studies will not have similar products and services to each other.

Working with people, investigating and photographing their businesses, highlights a couple of ethical points, these were addressed before formal research began. As there was an

immersion of the researcher into these businesses, mutual trust of information, including images, was formalised through recognised methods of informative and consent documentation.

The critical points for inclusion in the documentation -

i) As an act of good faith, there was no charge for the photography created.

ii) There were to be no restrictions on where participants or researchers can use the images.

iii) Assurance of no cross over of information that might disturb the participants' competitiveness.

iv) Informed consent was required, utilising industry-standard documents produced by the U.K. professional body of the AOP (Association of Photography) combined with UCLan information templates. This deals with image usage rights (including model and property releases if required). The forms give a clear description of copyright and licence agreements to protect all parties.

The supporting documentation includes an information sheet and a consent form requiring to be signed by both parties (App.4) including agreements allowing the use of information and images in the public domain. Adherence to GDPR guidelines required for data storage was assessed and compliance was fulfilled during the research.

These forms provide total or partial exit routes from the project by participants, during the research. The procedures documentation and methods were submitted and approved by the UCLan BAHSS[20] Ethics Committee.

All documentation was signed by the participants and research commenced.

[20] *Business, Arts, Humanities and Social Science.*

2 : Methodology and Methods.

Chapter Synopsis.

This chapter sets out the methodology and methods used for the research. It considers the position of the researcher and provides a rationale for the methods chosen.

2.1 Introduction.

There is a practical problem to solve, for artisans and photographers (fig.2), and the research question is designed to provide original new solutions to that problem. To facilitate the research question in achieving those aims, I designed a methodological strategy of mixed methods that align and support the ideas of practice solutions, delivering practical photographic outcomes. The decision tree creates an objective sample, the photo-elicitation highlights an artisan's story, the design analysis documents reflect on the procedures and created photography offering interim findings, and the brief adds intent. The literature gives theoretical framing to the whole process, the cumulation of all these methods informs the research and the outcome of a vehicle.

Figure 2, Methods supporting the idea of practice solutions, delivering photographic outcomes.

The methodology entails a combination of current and previously qualified methods, which are predominantly practice-based and immersive. As a practitioner and wishing to contribute new knowledge within my practice, I have elected to use an interdisciplinary multi-method approach to deploy that strategy. Alongside practice-based fieldwork, there will be a sound theoretical underpinning by way of a contextual and literature review and a reflective practice using a Design analysis document described in 2.9.

I employ a variety of techniques taken from the disciplines of social sciences such as an autoethnographic understanding of looking inwardly using our experiences and outward to our relationship with communities (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis, 2014, p.46). Combined with this, I have adapted Knudsen's ethnomediaology (2018, p.3, p.111), which is an interdisciplinary and immersive style of bringing elements of film production processes together. I have applied it to photography, advertising and marketing, where participants are linked through personal engagement to create the briefing document and photographic outcomes.

The collaborative approach is an overarching description of the methodology and the whole process for the collaboration. It is the scene-setting of the relationship between the artisan and photographer. Co-production methods are the specific components which contribute to the shaping of the photography. The whole process is a collaboration. Within this overall collaboration, there are co-creation components, such as the analysis of the photo-elicitation images, development of the briefing document and identifying the artisan's intent. These components are part of the process which guides the photographer to make the individual creative images of the photographic production.

2.2 The COVID-19 problem.

In the middle stages of the research, the COVID-19 pandemic closed the artisans' physical shops for most of 2020 and well into 2021, leaving the 'virtual high street' as the only remaining marketing channel.

> *'It would be foolish to deny the challenges faced by bricks and mortar retailers. Declining footfall was already hitting the headlines when the pandemic struck.'*
> (Lund-Yates, 2021, p.12)

This forced the research methods to be adaptive and gave the participants opportunities to exploit the situation and create photography to promote their businesses actively.
The unique findings and outcomes have fed into the practice and the world situation has extraordinarily placed the researcher into a privileged position of being genuinely beneficial to the artisans.

Initially, the timetable was adhered to, but the pandemic outbreak consequentially required both researcher and participant to assume a flexible approach to allow the research to continue. The artisans' businesses changed; their physical workplaces changed, and the

methods adjusted accordingly. The social distancing[21] rules meant some of our meetings had to be changed to work electronically, such as using Pinterest for the reference boards. Models for shoots were going to be problematic, and generally less face-to-face contact was essential. The businesses needed to recalibrate. The 'researcher' became even more immersed, and the experience of practice was heavily lent upon to find new and effective ways of meeting the challenges. There became an acceptance (by at least two of the three participants) that what I was doing was possibly transformative and my practice was the transformative element. It was a grounding feeling as I was now working with them and actively involved in their business rather than holding a more passive position as an observing researcher which may have been perceived as taking rather than sharing and giving. The research and methodologies would now directly impact these peoples' lives as we altered the working practices and collaborated to produce effective imagery. I had to think carefully about my approach, acknowledge that I was part of this change, and recognise new insights into the nature of the process and the methods employed to achieve this, a mark of success will be the extent the participants take onboard the transformed working practices.

2.3 Researcher's position.

As I am a practising photographer with many years of advertising experience and an involvement in Higher Educational institutions, I intend to combine knowledge using methods from both. The research is guided by a constructivist stance (Gray C. Malins J, 2004, p.19). Consequently, research will build based on my personal knowledge (my practice) and immersive research through active exploration, combined with social interaction via meetings and workshops.

2.4 Methods.

Several methods have been employed throughout the research. The driver will be my practice which incorporates image-making and reflection. There will be live case studies taken from extensive engagement with a series of artisans in the Ulverston area and the production of a vehicle for sharing the findings of the research. Each stage of the methodology is recorded and reflected upon in the Design analysis documents (App.2).

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[21] *COVID-19, government guidelines required people must stay 2 metres apart, wear facemasks and not meet unless essential.*

Practice.

Not only is the research practice-based, it also entails a deeply embedded and immersive process inside the participants' businesses. The aim of the practice is to join together with the artisans and create what Edmonds (2006, p.191-194) calls a co-designed vehicle. Although Edmond's research observed artists and their audiences rather than retail businesses, a version of this co-designed vehicle is suitable for analysing the reaction and engagement of photographers and artisans when co-producing photographic imagery. The research intended to have a professional and social interaction with the case studies, as Banks (2002, p.136) assertively puts it, research unaccompanied without interaction between researcher and subject is fundamentally antithetical to a humanistic sociology.

2.5 Decision tree; The selection process.

Case Studies.

The research is centralised upon the town of Ulverston in the South Lakes. Initially, an assessment of the extent of its high street was required through physical interaction, walking the street layouts, noting shop clustering and distances from businesses to main thoroughfares. After applying a restriction of a central location, eight possible businesses were approached through observation and unobtrusive questions to see whether they would be willing in principle to take part. The original eight were narrowed down to three potential case studies, using an adapted version of a decision tree, a known managerial and engineering learning tool for handling data sets. While generally used for predicting outcomes from complex scenarios (Woodruff, 2020) I adapted it to produce an objective and non-reflexive answer to the question of whether the final three businesses are truly artisan. The customised Decision tree (fig.3) is based upon the 'categorical variable decision tree' model (CFI, 2021), where the categories follow a 'yes or no' pathway through to a conclusion reducing ambiguity. In laying the questions out in a linear manner and colour-coded, the viewer can follow the arrowed route to ascertain suitability with each tested business. Some of the questions are obtained from my experience as a photographic practitioner working with businesses. Others from business sources such as Stone (2021) who refers to the French origins of 'artisan' to classify them as skilled workers, creating items by hand. Other questions are more straightforward, such as ownership of a high street shop window. *Fig.3* shows the full range of questions on the branches of the tree, here are the positive answers formed when participant Tracy Wells Millinery's business, was put through the method;

Choosing an artisan business ~
Employees less than four.
Sole trader.
Involvement by all.
Unique and skilled workset.
Specific skills, Specific Service, Specific product.
Element of Human Involvement.
Bricks and mortar outlet.
Element of digital presence, some use of photography for - literature, Media platforms, Window display, Community presence.
Yes proceed.

These questions are used to interrogate the business's status as artisan and their current or potential requirement for photographic imagery. Businesses were processed and only the successful outcomes resulted in a request for full participation in the research; the others were precluded. It should be noted that the researcher was conscious that the selected businesses should not be from similar competitive sectors, avoiding any conflicts of information sharing.

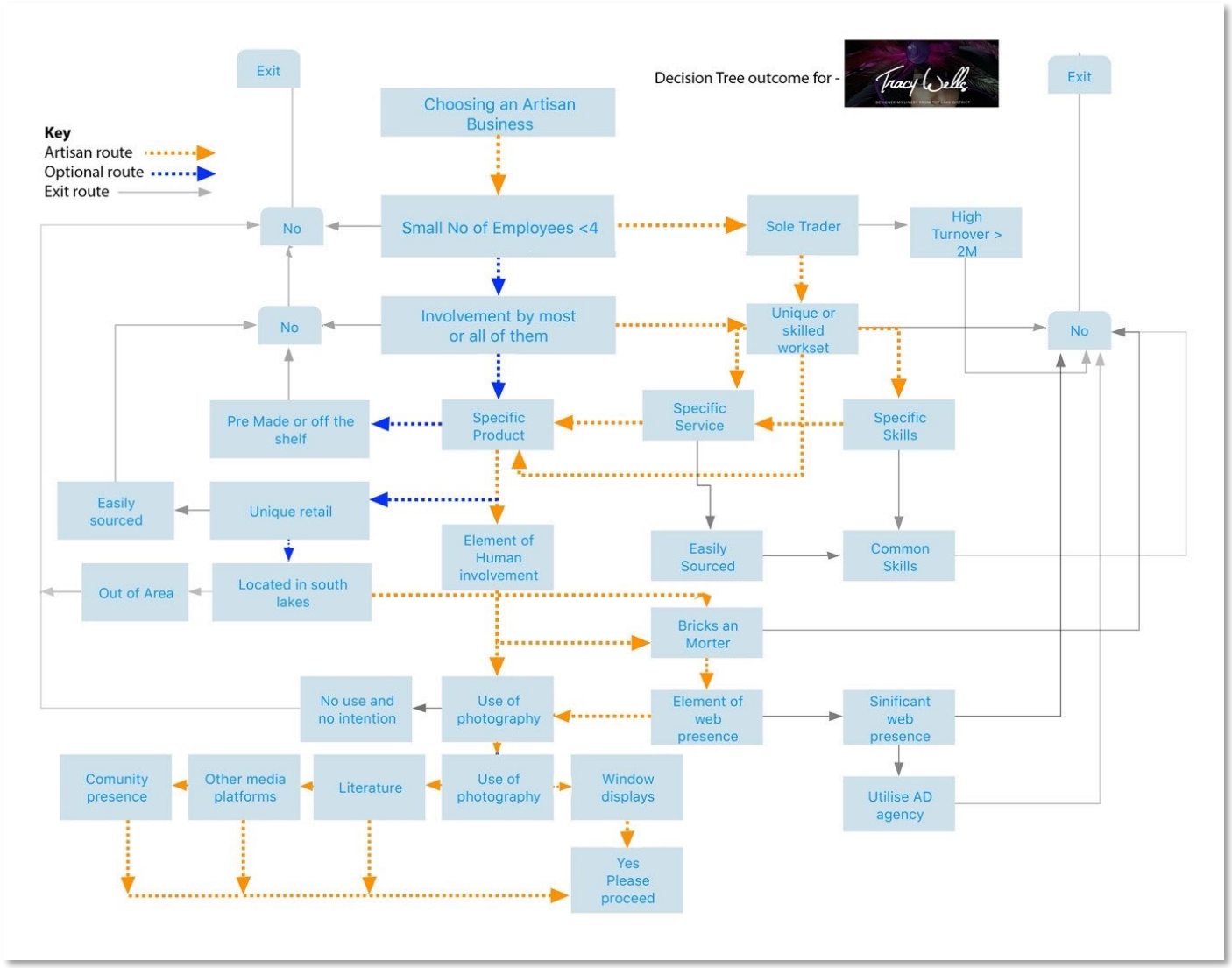

Figure 3, The full decision tree, confirming a business is an artisan.

2.6 Photo elicitation.

Involving qualitative interviews

Elicitation is a powerful tool used for conducting research in anthropology, education, community health, psychology and sociology, and other disciplines. Employed within this photography-based project, it brings images into the centre of the research Harper, (2002, pp.13-26) and as Carlsson, (2001, pp.125-143) says, it reduces the asymmetry of power between the participant and researcher (photographer), taking the focus off the researcher and onto the photography.

The participants were asked to take three photographs (utilising accessible cameras)[22] that most represented significant areas of their businesses. These images were then discussed via semi-structured interviews questioning their meanings in a model of collaborative research (Harper, 2002). These reference points were an opportunity to represent their reality to myself and vice versa Nelson, (2013, p.68). This collaborative approach gives the researcher the ability to listen as the participants take the leading roles in describing and taking images. Considerably more effective than an 'ice breaker'[23], using these photographs as a method enabled the conversation to proceed to a deeper level of understanding and meaning between researcher and participant.

The second photo-elicitation session is an examination and deconstruction of current examples of related advertising, reference material co-selected by the use of 'Pinterest'[24]. Using gathered images from competitors, similar sectors and the public domain for collaborative analysis, we shared thoughts on narratives and investigated the participants' experiences and reactions to the images. Hartman's et al. (2011, p.293), deduced that found visuals as opposed to photographs taken by the participants, provide a depth of knowledge into the context and methods of photography in a way that text-only sessions would struggle with. I found that this was precisely the case and the participants opened up and enjoyed examining competitors' images.

I established a personal engagement in an 'ethnomediaology' immersive stance (Knudsen, 2018, p.111) as a basis for knowledge creation and data gathering using these images as a catalyst for discussion openly sharing and discussing narratives, lighting and artisan ethos. These two formalised meetings were conducted as semi-structured qualitative interviews as an additional dimension to my other methods to improve rigour and observe collaborations (Mason, 1998). This qualitative research enabled me to gain open and complete perspectives (Cron, 2019) ascertaining the artisans' thoughts on representation through photography.

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[22] Either a supplied instant camera or the participants own camera.
[23] Normally a small task or question to lighten the mood of a meeting, or to lead into more intensive discussion.
[24] An online pinboard used to save found images from the web to be shared viewed and commented on amongst multiple users.

2.7 Briefing document development & application.

The semi-structured interviews supply data from a reflexive role. As Mason (1998, p.55) comments, it is useful because it helps focus the way people articulate their ideas about engagement, not just in the substance of what they say. Whilst most advertising research subordinates the creative brief (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2015, pp.176-194) to a minor role in a multi-part process, it should now be seen as a significant stage in a marketing strategy for a small business. This research elevates the 'brief' to act as a gateway to creating narrative-based visuals. Creating co-designed visuals has been challenged somewhat by feasibility problems from the COVID-19 pandemic[25]. However, with the flexibility of the research methodology, the research has progressed and gained information not accessible through standard interview or survey (Hartman, Mandich, Magalhães, Orchard, 2011 p.293), utilising online sharing platforms and studio-based photography which has aligned more with the emerging virtual high street. The briefing document has allowed and accentuated communication, facilitating sharing of knowledge through visual representation of found and created visuals through sites such as Pinterest.

Briefing documents don't happen by accident; they are planned, discussed, and rewritten. They are part of the framework of producing a photograph. This is the stage when the artisan and the photographer emerge as collaborators, as the detail of the briefing sheet requires both parties to contribute and declare their intentions and expectations prior to production of the image. It is the realisation of both the artisan and photographers' intents, agreed by both, a collaborative shared specification of the proposed photography and will lead to effective creation of imagery. We can then codesign (Edmunds, E. 2006, 2, (4)) and develop new methods and knowledge, which will inform my practice and the artisans' businesses. I use the term *intentionalised* to define where the creation of an image is discussed, planned and the narrative predetermined. The outcome being a mutually satisfying result for both photographer and artisan an *intentionlised* image.

Creation of photographic imagery.

Using the created briefing sheets, we explore new methods of narrative, promoting the skills and services of the artisan and local visual culture (Pink, 2007, p.50) using my own

[25] *Closure of shops necessitating online communications, lockdowns preventing travel and social distancing stopping meetings face to face.*

experience in advertising photography as an autoethnographic participant and observer (Chang, 2008) interacting personally with the artisan businesses. The created images will be a mixture of 'Pack shots'[26] and 'editorial contextual'[27] styles. Furthermore, usable for cross-platform but may be specifically colour or black and white. These images are shared with the participants and used selectively in the proposed vehicle.

2.8 Design analysis document.

Using objective world evidence will show that some things have worked and some have not, and a reflective approach will give other elements and insight around the relationships between artisan and photographer. This evidence will be displayed in the Design analysis documents and discussed in the findings and conclusion.

Evaluation and Reflection.

This research's key evaluation is through the Design analysis documents showing immersive fieldwork data gathered for each participant, allowing reflection on the findings. The meetings, conversations, visual assets, notes, sketches and reflections, are all logged linearly. I have developed this method based on documents commonly used in advertising called 'brand packs', which are formed prior to a project to lay out the ground rules and goals of a product. I have changed its function to create a rolling document that shows branding and goals and reflects upon the development of ideas and outcomes. It is a unique way of bringing together the participants' information, in examining the interaction between the photographer and artisan. It challenges the effectiveness of the collaborations in creating visual assets and shows the newly moulded methods, proactively developed from the input of the artisans. I use the method of reflection that Dewy (1933, p.78) practises, which learns from reflecting on experience rather than from it, comparing the experiences of working in my practice with large clients and big creative teams to a 'one on one' collaborative style. Each document will conclude in gauging the effectiveness of the project and imagery produced from it, employing analytical tools and sales information.

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[26] *An image showing a product on a plain unobtrusive background, where the item is dominant.*
[27] *Photography that is normally in situ or on location, supporting a text-based editorial article.*

These documents will serve as a site for reviewing and interpreting the data feeding into the findings. These documents are the bedrock for populating and producing an appropriate practice-based vehicle.

2.9 Contextual and literature review.

A method that provides the conceptual and theoretical underpinning to my practice and helps answer the research question. Ultimately the vehicle will be based upon a combination of the findings and theoretical framework. The literature context review will provide the parameters for the framework. Theoretical literature specific to advertising photography process is sketchy, as Harper (2016) observes, most contemporary industry-focused discussions that include photography rarely if ever, follow on to examine creative production. I am using combinations of theories that are non-specific to the artisan and photography context, such as marketing, advertising and film. Therefore, reflection and discussion of the literature and context will have more clarity when reviewed together.

The literature has aided the creation of a framework from which new insights and knowledge can be contributed to the field of advertising via the outcome of a book. The rationale is that the new knowledge is found in the practice and methodology's capacity, not just the literature and theory.

2.10 The vehicle, a creative guide.[28]

App. 1 App. 2 App. 3 App. 4 App. 5

The final outcome is a creative guide, a 'vehicle' that can be used by artisan businesses and photographers as an enabler for engagement with photography. As the research question states, there are challenges that have varying effects upon these small businesses. This vehicle focuses upon the application of production methods of photographic imagery, followed by the challenge of portraying the uniqueness of the artisan offer. The content of such a vehicle simplifies methods of creating narrative in a photographic medium. Exploring ways in which an artisan can be seen to portray the essential truths of their businesses and stimulate the imagination to create effective imagery.

Taking account of the many 'how to' guides that are already present in the genre of photography, this vehicle seeks to differ in presenting clear routes and procedures

[28] *The medium of such a vehicle was undecided at the outset of the research but developed into a book as reflection took place.*

encouraging the interaction between artisan and photographer from the outset. Findings are sourced from the design analysis documents and readers are able to dip in and out of the vehicle's real-world experiences. It avoids using advertising and academic jargon, helping navigation of photography projects, enabling users to create narrative-based images directly relating to their businesses.

3 : Literature & contextual review.

3.1 Chapter Synopsis

The literature and contextual reviews are combined in the same chapter to allow closer correlation of contemporary practice and relevant literature. To retain clarity there is a separation of part one, a contextual viewpoint and part two the literature framework.

The chapter will begin by defining key areas of the research that are essential to contextualise the case studies, what is an artisan, a high street and how my practice is placed. A comparison is made with the current and past literature concerning advertising photography and marketing whilst considering a theoretical framework based on theories specific to photography. The lack of studies on advertising photography means that other areas will be utilised for transferable theory, and contemporary practice will be referenced and added to the arguments. The theory of semiotics and other codifications of photography will be brought into play, measuring the recent thoughts of Flusser (2006) and Bates (2016) against more established writing. To conclude, the interim findings will point towards a solution to the research question of what scalable transferable vehicle, that encapsulates methods of photographic engagement, can be created to act as an enabler for photographers and artisans alike?

3.2 Part One, a contextual perspective.

3.3 Introduction.

Various studies have been made on the photographic narrative in documentary, such as Burgin (1982) regarding the FSA and Roy Stryker's interventions[29] on the stories of the American farmers in 1935-43. Editorial, with Hardt and Brennan (1999) celebrating the power of visual narrative in journalism and fine art where Fried (2008) discusses the

[29] *Noted for putting a hole-punch through his photographers 'negatives when he disagreed with their portrayal.*

relationships between viewer and photograph. However, they are limited when it comes to advertising imagery and especially in respect to the 'intention of a narrative' from clients and photographers.

Advertising has always been about the message, or the narrative. This chapter looks at how literature says that message is conveyed, primarily through signs and signification within a photograph noting the diminishing use of text in advertising especially on social media.
It will look at how advertising photography uses these signs and make comparisons to other media. Then consider and discuss the skills required by the artisan and photographer to achieve clarity in the narratives.

Flusser (2006) and Bate (2016) address some of the complexities of image-making. The most pertinent was that of Flusser with his almost passing reference to the 'intent' of the photographer when producing imagery, which I build on to include the intent of the artisan. As the methodologies I have employed are multidisciplinary, the supporting literature is also diverse and is referenced in context within Chap:2 for each method giving evidence of the source materials used. Methods include elicitation, ethnomediaology, design analysis documents and briefing documents, autoethnographic research and design trees.

3.4 What is an artisan?

Artisans are those who maintain an autonomous control over their creations, is probably the most accurate description of an artisan (Long & Walton, 2014, p.102) taken from their studies of published treatises from the 15/16th century.

As a contemporary description, artisan is much overused in the retail industry. Unfortunately, the word isn't marshalled by any professional body and is consistently hijacked by large corporations wanting to present a friendlier face for their products, be it environmentally or to feign a personality. Small businesses with banal or ubiquitous products are not averse to dropping the odd reference to artisan, hoping to give the products a personable narrative. It is commonly abused and randomly used as a prefix to coffee, pizza or even crisps implying that it isn't mass-produced or over-processed. The term has even encroached into the service industry, artisan - cleaning, estate agencies, roofing; suggesting personal attention to the customer.

The term artisan appears to have originated from a combination of Latin and Italian Circa 16 Century (Merriam-Webster, 2021), combining meanings of art and craft. This could be seen as controversial as the creative world is awash with the debate of the value of craft versus art.

Shiner (2001, p.229) gives a valid suggestion that fine art versus craft is intellect versus mechanism, artist versus artisan becomes imagination versus technical skill. Notable comparisons can be made with photography which is criticised for the ability to produce multiple copies, and artisans for making 'one offs'. This research will not pursue that discussion but merely points out the irony of combining the two rivals of art and craft into the term artisan.

For this research, artisan is used as a description of a skilled person adding a human handmade element or craft to a product, even a service. The uniqueness and narrative of such adds value and as the word suggests, debatably becomes art. Hegerty was talking about work in his advertising career when he said,

> *'You cannot create great work unless a little bit of you goes into it, be it your heart, your soul or your beliefs. ---- the work that results is an expression of you* (Hegerty, 2011, p.20)

This quote inadvertently describes the essence of how a true artisan approaches their work. I have made some necessary assumptions that a true artisan is already skilled in their work and that a photographer is also at a high level so that they can mutually respect and interact with each other. A good point of reference might be Ericsson's et al. (1993, p.394) 10,000-hour rule in defining professional levels of skill. As photographers and artisans referred to in this research are running their own businesses, we should accept they have surpassed this level of experience and are experts in their own field. Arierly (2012) further notes that investment into a truly valued product involves meaning, creation, challenge, identity, pride and skill. All these attributes lend themselves to describing what an artisan is producing, and it is also these values that a photographer should convey in the images.

Artisans make things that others don't; photographers also produce something that others (non-photographers) don't. In this way, they are far more similar than they might believe, so is their striving to make high quality and creative outcomes. An artisan product is exclusive, it is not transported from thousands of miles away or made by exploited workers from low-grade materials. With this provenance, a photograph of the product should celebrate this narrative. It does not need to portray fiction or require heavy retouching; it is a pure declaration of informative narrative.

The artisan can afford to show the product in its true light even with some of its imperfections; this gives the USP. Indeed, an artisan then should be seen as the photographers' dream client.

3.5 What is the high street?

There are many other definitions of the term high street, and they are constantly changing as a result of economies and global events. For this research, I have developed a functional definition as a place that services the retail needs of the local community and catchment[30] areas.

The Government commissioned a report (2020) allocating high street status to locations throughout the U.K., which neatly frames the parameters they followed to highlight a high street. They were classified with the intention of fair distribution of the 'Future high streets fund', which began in 2018.

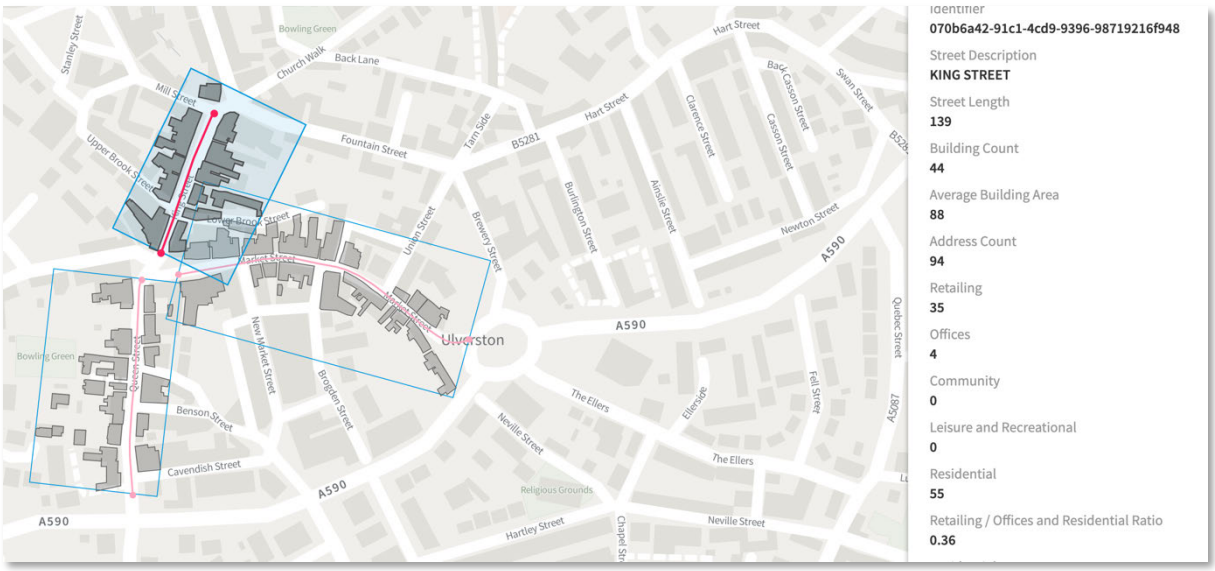

Figure 4, Ulverston high st. Ordinance Survey, 2020.

The classification requires a cluster of retail addresses of more than 15 within 150 metres, to which Ulverston qualifies in each of its three clusters (fig.4).

Within this thesis, the case studies are located on the high street of Ulverston in the South Lakes, U.K., which has the additional classification of a 'destination' town (GENECON, 2011) where the driver of use can be considered to be a specialist retail appeal [artisan shops] and having a catchment area enlarged by tourism. It is not an examination of the London, Oxford road type high street with large department stores and very few independent small retailers.

[30] *Standard catchment areas of say 20 kilometres are defined by reasonable local travel times, tourism can increase this to national and even global levels.*

At the beginning of this research, the main factor affecting the change in the high street was the downturn in the economy, then then COVID-19 pandemic struck, which accelerated the move to the digital platforms, especially as the U.K. retail industry on the high street was forced to close for business for over nine months.

> *'The effects are being felt throughout Britain's high streets - main shopping drags where people bought everything from groceries to clothes. Many had been on the decline for decades even before the pandemic, struggling to adapt to modern times.'*
> *(Phil Noble, Sonya Dowsett, Reuters, 2020)*

The landscape has changed for both artisan and photographer. The artisan high street shop had been slowly moving towards the necessity of having an external digital context. Now accelerated by possibly six years

> '*COVID-19 accelerated companies' digital communication strategy by an average of 6 years while 97% of enterprise decision makers believe the pandemic sped up their companys' digital transformation*.'
> (*COVID Digital engagement report, Twilio, 2021)*

This changing landscape has demanded that the definition metamorphoses to accommodate a virtual high street, not solely a 'bricks and mortar' presence. Whilst there still is a need for a shop frontage, especially in a town with a tourist customer base. The contributing effect is that mobile technology has become a necessity for tourists, Law, Chan and Wang, (2018, pp.626-648) seeking out the little known or 'secret' places to visit and buy unique products. Huijnen (2006, p.66) introduces the term of 'm tourism' where the visitor (customer) expects the local shops, restaurants etc., to be viewable online, accessible via a mobile device. The cultural shift has brought about the emergence of the 'dark company'. A business that would historically have opened on the physical high street instead sets up a kitchen, a warehouse, or other such hubs to service a purely digital customer-facing front. There is no high street shop, no place to visit, the customer will never see the engine room, photography is the only way they can sell products and tell the story behind the venture. The term high street now extends to encapsulate more than just the physical shops.

3.6 Practice context.

Professional photography & clients in contemporary practice.

My practice sits in the field of advertising/commercial photography. This involves photography that captures the essence of the product or service (Quain, 2019) and by definition, also persuades the customer via a visual narrative. My experience in creating and working with branding documents for large corporates is transferrable in producing a photographic vehicle for encapsulating methods of engagement useful for the artisans' businesses.

The advertising world has its own structures and operates within its own rules. The landscape is alien to most people who don't work in it; the artisans are not part of that world. To give context to my practice this section will show examples of some of the photographic campaigns I have been involved in.

The descriptions show established ways of working and refer to the strengths and weaknesses of their application. Dealing with large clients, there usually is distance between photographer and the core stories of the product, this can produce committee-based ideas and a dilution of creativity.

Before the photography reaches its final viewing platform, may it be screen or print it follows a complex process involving a large number of people - account executives, copywriters, art directors, graphic designers, photographer and more. These people make decisions about the finished advert and have a determining influence on what it will look like and inevitably instilling substantial costs. These large budget campaigns are beyond the resources of the artisan. Artisans require cost-effective and efficient alternatives, such as collaborating solely with photographers, negating the need for a mass of creatives. Employing modified and scaled-down versions of advertising processes and methods to their own photographic strategies will rule out a necessity for the artisan to engage with the costly advertising arena. For a small business and artisan, we can apply some of the successful approaches and learn from the unsuccessful, creating nimble procedures for photography. As a result, the budgets will be proportionally smaller. Hegerty (2011) attributes a lot of this reduction in costs when he says,

> *'Today brands can reach out to audiences in a myriad of ways. It no longer takes vast quantities of cash to reach large groups of people, but it does require inventiveness, daring and creativity – all the attributes large companies are bad at deploying'*
> Hegerty (2011, p.109)

He also echoes my experience in dealing with large companies with big budgets in that they are not always creative and rather uninventive.

The following section shows some examples of projects I have been involved with, ranging from medium budget with few creatives to large budgets with many. I have moulded processes that will be more appropriate to working with an artisan-based business from this practice-based knowledge. For each example, I give a compact version of the shoot analysis and then a summary of what can be taken forward into the research in a method of 'reflection by doing' Gibbs (1988).

Practice examples.

Verve Designs, Ltd.

A medium sized company creating a unique and upmarket product.

A successful company that supplied bespoke upholstered furniture to 'A sector'[31] demographic customers. Footballers, entrepreneurs, property specialists. They worked with interior designers to make 'one off' pieces, the designer was face to face with the customers and then commissioned the furniture from Verve. They had some very interesting projects, but they always dealt through a third party. Not only did the designs suffer from lots of changes during production due to misinterpretation of the designer, but they were also only getting wholesale prices for their work. They wanted to build their own customer-facing brand with a personality so they could sell the products direct but separate from their core business. They were very open to new ideas and after trawling through many interiors magazines, we jointly came up with a plan to exploit their hillside factory location. We would take the pieces out into the environment, which would give narratives about U.K. based manufacture, sturdiness and natural materials.

[31] *Marketing denotation of customers, A is high spend, C is low.*

Figure 5, Occasional chair, Haslingdon Grane.

Figure 6, White linen chair, Jackson heights.

Figure 7, Two fireside chairs, Twitchels brook.

Points to note for the artisan photographic process ~

Strength	*Weakness*
The narrative can be suggested by a radical change of context	Not enough follow through on narrative
Expensive in studio photography can often be avoided	Presentation of ethos not clearly stated
Think tank ideas until something creative pops up	Items often sent out before being photographed

Figure 8, Strengths and weaknesses of the photographic elements:Verve.

Noted elements for the research from this project –

Client could only take the creative idea so far; they needed some form of measurement of success. Changing just the photography is not enough, it must be supported by the other advertising elements such as branding and print. Photography should be planned into the making timeline of the product, once the product has gone to the customer, it is too late. The lack of a briefing process resulted in ad-hoc images, which sometimes missed the aims and objectives of the company. The imagery lacked any embedding of consistent ideas. The

narratives were there but didn't translate through. The positives to reflect were that they had great faith in photography and understood the value of selling a product by its documentation throughout the whole making process.

B&Q Plc.

A big company using a large budget and many creatives to great effect

Being involved with the photography for B&Qs early adoption of online selling was a privilege. Working closely with the client and a forward-looking web agency, we defined what the photography needed to do. The company had a great team, they brought in experts for each stage. I worked closely with the web developer to create effective images. The task was enormous as all the product in a flagship warehouse was photographed in six months. Each of the many products had input from the buyers, descriptions of the benefits and features, which helped the photographer choose the angles and lighting to emphasise these. My role as the photography consultant gave me access to how their creative machine worked. The clients clear vision was that either everything was photographed or the website would fail. The narrative was, the product is king, show nothing as a falsehood, some images had backgrounds, some pure cut outs on white. As a result, we produced some of the best work we had ever done, beautiful simple images that showed the narratives do not need to be complicated, but they need to be clear.

Figure 9, B&Q, light switch, Website, Location Group.

Figure 10, B&Q, rotor blade, Website, Location Group.

Figure 11, B&Q, strimmer wire, Website, Location Group.

Points to note for the artisan photographic process ~

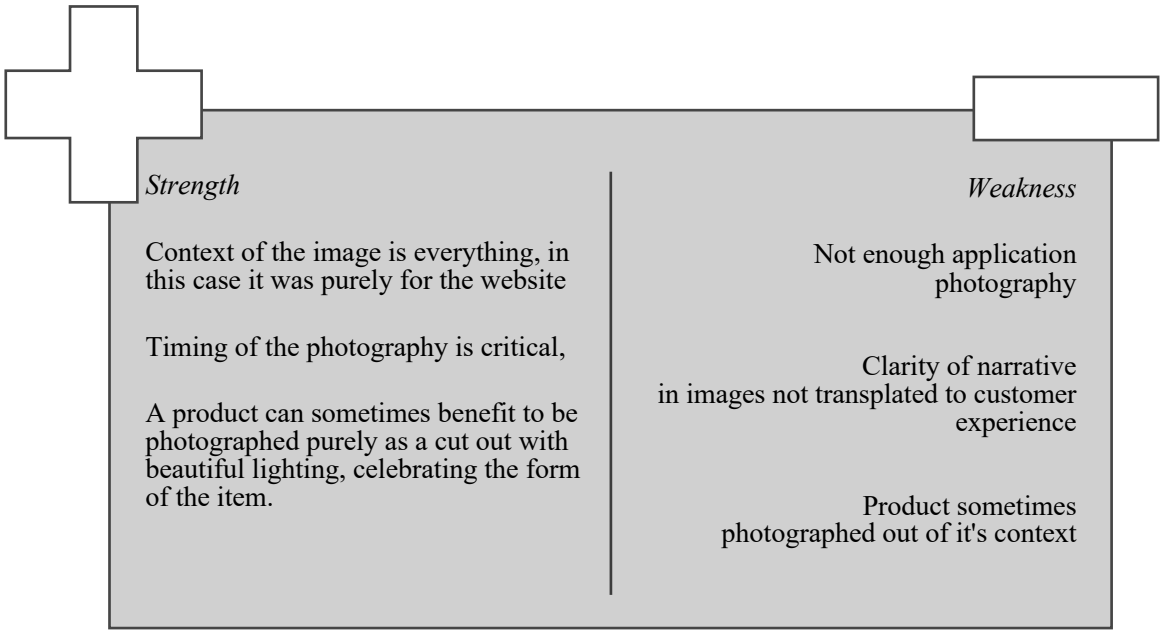

Figure 12, Strengths and weaknesses of the photographic elements:B&Q.

Noted elements for the research from this project –
Sometimes the product is king! Involving backgrounds and extraneous props can get in the way of the simple story of the product itself, shoot it on white.
There is of course, exceptions that prove the rule when an application[32] photograph would help immensely. The briefing meetings were made up of many people, only a few were creatives, but they did have a say. It was splendid that the views of the photographers were considered at the outset of the project, which ultimately delivered a website with imagery that worked.

Slingco Ltd.
A big company using a large budget to great effect.
An engineering company based in the Northwest U.K. and expanded to Georgia, U.S.A. and India. They design and manufacture grips for the cable laying industry and bespoke equipment for pylon maintenance. The exciting part of working with this company is that the photographer gets a brief straight from the Managing Director in conjunction with the engineers and makers of the equipment. The people I worked with know far more about the product than any agency could impart, as they give first hand in depth knowledge. They also value the photographer's skills in obtaining the best possible shot.

[32] *When a product is shown in use, a strimmer cutting grass for example.*

Figure 13, Twin ended grip, Slingco.

We have spent time discussing the narratives of the products and sourcing suitable locations to shoot them. Discussions of what the customer understood about the product and what they seemed not to.

The vast majority of the grips were shot on a black background with a spotlight highlighting the features of each. There was one product which wasn't selling at all. We concluded that the customer didn't have any reference points for scale. As this was a massive grip unlike any other of the range. The conclusion was it should be placed in the studio next to a fire escape and a worker's white hat. The use of industrial metal flooring and dark lighting looked like it was on an Oil Rig or ship. To my great delight, within hours of going on the website, they had sold two of these very expensive grips.

Figure 14, Large cable grip, Refinery Group.

This type of context shot became their signature on their promotional material. I followed up with a pylon engineer hanging off the side of a pylon with a cable laying pully. Now the customer knows precisely the context the product is used in.

Figure 15, Pylon wheel, Darlington.

Figure 16, Slingco engineer monitors the cable stretch on an electricity cable.

The most recent dilemma was how to promote the remote pylon sensor to be sold worldwide when it wasn't past the prototype stage. The answer? Don't show the product show what it does. A day on the moors above Rochdale produced this laptop monitoring shot. The product, of course is way up on the pylon. We don't need to see it, indexically we know it is there.

Points to note for the artisan photographic process ~

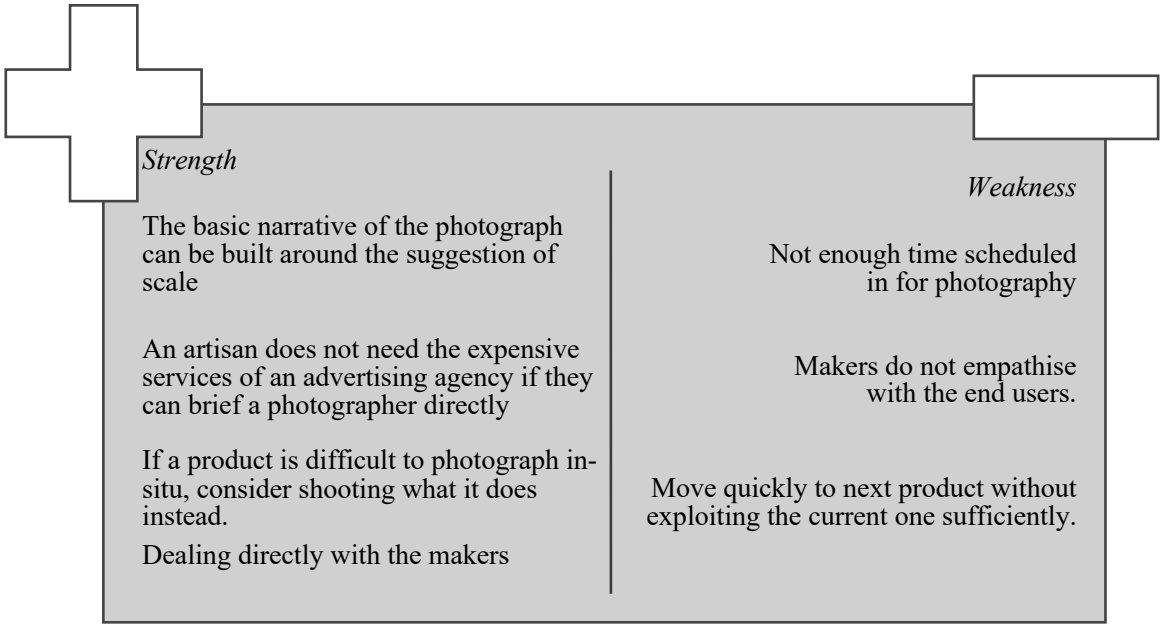

Figure 17, Strengths and weaknesses of the photographic elements.

Noted elements for the research from this project –
Briefing directly to the photographer can prevent the dilution of the fundamental narratives of the product. When a product is ugly or in a challenging context, shoot what it does or produces. Remember the end-user, tell the story to them, if the product is used outdoors near pylons, show it there. The product doesn't always need to be big in the frame, if the context is right, then that becomes as important. The pylon shot, for example only requires a suggestion that the product is functioning way up on the wires of the pylon.

These projects are just a few examples to show the source material for my practice input into the research. It shows how elements have been abstracted from my previous work and utilised in the research methodology.

3.7 Literature aimed at professional practitioners.

This section presents the scope of literature that relates to a photographic practice in the environment of advertising photography. The specific search was for works examining the relationship between photographer and client. There are limited in-depth studies on the narrative of advertising imagery, let alone those created especially for artisans. Ogilvy sums up the difficulty in sourcing material.

> *'I cannot think of any other profession which gets by on such a small corpus of knowledge. Millions are spent on testing individual commercials and advertisements but next to nothing is done to analyse the results of those tests in search of plus or minus factors. Advertising textbooks have nothing to say on the subject, are they afraid that knowledge would impose some discipline on their work?'*
> Ogilvy (2011, p.21)

Unfortunately, Ogilvy highlights that initiative rather than a cognitive approach to advertising is valued more. There were encouraging signs of advertising beginning to reflect upon itself when Harold Rudolph (1947) a researcher at the New York agency J. Stirling Getchel Inc., published a book examining advertising techniques, including the use of photography. He used consumers reactions (over 2,500) to deconstruct advertisements in a forward-thinking magazine, 'The Saturday Evening Post', over the period 1935-1939. Only to be dismissed by the advertising fraternity, a book reviewer (Welch, 1949) stated that mechanical factors, while important, are secondary to the advertiser's intuitive ability to tap into human motives. This aversion to studying the framework of advertising and photography and the belief that good advertising happens by instinct persists to this day.

The research has therefore widened its source of literature to include general advertising, marketing and branding, not inherently exclusive to photography. The reference to practice within the advertising industry will be adapted and compared to photographic practice. Semi-autobiographical books, Hegerty (2001), 'Turning intelligence into magic', and Ogilvy (2011) 'On Advertising' give insight into their own advertising practice. Many of their points are directly applicable to photography. Older texts such as Young (1940) 'A technique for producing ideas' and Bond & Kirshenbaum (1998) 'Under the Radar' still contain content pertinent to contemporary practice. Other sources closer to professional photographic practice are Scott (2015) 'Professional photography' and Dyers (2005) 'Advertising as Communication'. Other sources which will feed into the practice framework are 'Bullimore (2003), 'Bull more Bull' and 'Conrad Levinson (1994), 'Guerrilla Advertising', which draw on their own experiences of marketing and advertising. The research delves into other areas such as Sinozik, Klanten (2015) 'Still life photography' and educational papers, including Harper (2016) on photographic training in Higher Education, which can offer divergent viewpoints on praxis and the photographic industry.

Since its beginnings in the 1840s, photography has accepted change; faster films allowing quicker shutter speeds, miniaturisation of cameras, colour film, the ability to telegraph images, digitalisation, to name a few. One of photography's current challenges is its

comparisons to ‘citizen’ mass-produced imagery Radsch (2013, p.20) who defines it as an alternative form of newsgathering. This somewhat passive encroachment upon photojournalism is now gaining momentum in the other photography sectors, especially on social media platforms. We live in a visual information culture. In no other time in history has there been such an explosion of visual images Schroeder (2002, p.35). Photographers (myself included) face competition from the invasion of the camera phone, which promises to make everyone a photographer. Mortensen and Keshelashvilis’ (2013) article makes a valid point that the professional photographer must reassert their advantage [over mass photography] by ‘skill’ not title alone. I would take this further to suggest additional skills outside the normal scope of photography must be learnt. These skills will come from the photographer’s praxis, observation and experience in the whole gamut of advertising and marketing. The research can then relate them back to the artisan context, much like the literature research itself.

Surprisingly, much of the literature on photographic practice addresses the practical with little theoretical engagement of specific industry practice. The ones that try generally attempt to define guidelines and rules for ‘good’ pictures and good campaigns… are not concerned with analysis or interpretation but rather with practice and expertise [of just the photographer] Dyer (2005, p.107). Literature concentrating on these areas is not widening the photographer's scope beyond the technical. We keep returning to note, a photographer’s survival depends upon widening their knowledge to include the relationship with clients and the pursuit of narratives. It is by looking at comparative literature from marketing, public relations, advertising that will enable some of this knowledge to be applied. This is how we separate the professional photographer’s imagery from the ‘citizen’ images.

Photographic theory covers a few of the topics (of advertising, briefs, budgets, media, publishing with practice) and often makes huge assumptions about commercial production and consumption, tending to make broad claims that lack a nuanced or empirically founded understanding Harper (2016).

Existing literature avoids the vital interaction between photographers and clients, instead advising how the creatives ‘sell’ their own work, adding assertiveness that a photographer knows best when approaching projects. Abegglen (2010) notes that studies have been made on the narrative in documentary editorial and art but are limited when addressing advertising imagery, especially when it comes to intention of a client and art directors and photographers. Swift (2011, p.39) adds that literature stops short of examining third part collaborations, with photographers, for example. This encourages a separation between client and photographer where one party is dominant, unhelpful to say the least, when involved in the creative project.

The artisan compact businesses and the availability of direct discourse with the owner/maker is an ideal environment for collaborative working.

Dyer (2005) discusses that the effect of advertising agencies takes the decision-making away from the client. The artisan however, has an opportunity to affect this decision-making directly and portray an honesty somewhat lacking in mainstream advertising. Photographing their products showing the true origins of the products makes the artisans' creative process all that much easier.

Advertising textbooks use a lot of jargon and make assumptions that are aimed at art directors and sometimes photographers, clients are ignored with the presumption they have little to offer to the creative process.

Quotes abound in the advertising books regarding overall creative methodology and media, yet they often see photography as a commodity within a 'campaign'[33] and not as the major outcome. This is especially moot in the realisation of photography for the smaller business, where the client's skill in translating their intent is often lacking and commissioning photographers is unhelpfully portrayed as a technical exercise akin to a grocery order. Not an integral part of the process. Scott (2015, p.53) begins an erudite observation from his practice, in that clients, when commissioning photography, often think they can just ring up and ask for something. He goes further;

> *'This ignorance can result in either an over-controlling client expecting to receive the impossible or a hands-off client who expects the photographer to make all the decisions only to be disappointed that the photographer has not done what they wanted – despite the fact that they never told the photographer what they wanted.'*
> Scott, (2015, p.53)

I was keen to read further comments on this aspect in his book 'Professional Photography' as he was getting close to my research and practice objectives. Disappointingly he immediately diverts away from this subject and returns to giving practical technical advice.

My experience is that even well-produced branding guidelines can pass over photography as a service, not as an essential part of the process. I anticipated that a book entitled 'The freelance photographer's project book' Tracy and Gibson, (2015), would at least touch upon the interaction between the photographer and the commissioner, but its essence is on how to 'raise your game' to 'sell' pictures rather than collaborate in producing them. The interaction between client and creative (photographer) is ignored and presented as a battle of wits in how

[33] *A larger scope of work for a client, combining TV, Web, radio photography, copywriting and more.*

to get the most creative (portfolio and cv material) pitch past the client – not the most effective pitch that satisfies the intent of the client and the photographer.

The high street has become a completely new place to do business, with the lengthy effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes have become permanent. This has rendered a large proportion of the previous 'go to' literature and research into advertising photography redundant as high street retail joins the online high street. More traditional promotion methods, flyers, posters, window displays now figure less in the artisan strategies. There is an antagonism between the craving of the advertising world to create overproduced imagery and the under the radar approach of social media. The platform of social media is a massive power in supporting the latter, creating a digital 'word of mouth' environment where the honest image is king. Social media often doesn't look like advertising, when it actually is, that is its strength (for now).

> *'Don't look or feel anything like advertising and you won't be detected by consumers marketing radar.'*
> (Bond and Kishenbaum, 1998*)*

Hegerty (2001, p.117) a high-profile advertising guru, comments that a pitch should not be around the advertising [or photography] as the clients are hopeless at addressing its value and recommends 'selling the idea'. Apply this directly to photography and it reveals that the narrative (the idea) is more important than trying to get the client to understand advertising photography.

3.8 Part Two, a literature framework.

3.9 Theoretical context of the literature.

The review of the theoretical literature takes the form of a combination of texts that discuss the narratives in image-making and others that attempt to relate to the photographer's involvement. Lehmuskallio, (2016, p.4) states at the outset of his book that in order to engage with [advertising] photography as representation then it needs to be complemented with practice-based assignments. The autoethnographic nature of this research ensures that real case studies are used to feedback into the practice.

We cannot look at the deconstruction of the photographic image without referring to the seminal works of Saucerre and Sanders Pierce (1890s) Barthes (1964) and Berger. These detailed explanations of semiotics give great insight into the language of photography but must be modified to provide relevance to current digital contexts.

Vishneski (2019) notes that pre-1990s discourse, although pertinent did not have the internet to consider or its profound changes on photography. Contemporary theoretical input is found with Flusser (2011) offering a viewpoint on the influence of the camera itself to Bates (2016), who questions the intuitive skills of a photographer. The ability to read and create images with a prescribed narrative is touched upon by Dyer (2005) and her thoughts on the current use of symbolism for advertising. Scott (2015) gives an alternative view of the role of the photographer being a multi-disciplinary career, which feeds into my concept of the polymath 'total photographer'. Harper (2016) consistently grounds my research in her references to the advertising/commercial photography being branded the 'Dark side'. However, she resolutely says that all photography is commercial if part of a transaction, which helps when references are drawn from fine art reflections and other texts consulted in the quest for clarity on the language of photography and its relevance back to advertising photography. I conclude by referring again to Flusser, who has inspired my creation of the term the 'Intentionalised image', which is added to my methodology of creating narrative-based photography.

In this research substituting the words 'advertising', 'marketing', 'promotion' in the available literature with 'photography' broadens the scope of relevant texts and allows some parallels to be made.

3.10 Semiotics in advertising photography.

As a photographer having the chance to work with an artisan is also an opportunity to do great work. Their stories are more interesting than most clients, they have pride in their work, make beautiful things which are usually photogenic. A photographer can tell this narrative by intuition or practising semiotics; at least theory can question whether improvements can be made to intuition. Suggesting we use semiotics as a method with the artisans could be seen as theoretical overkill, but having a little knowledge of the theory can also become part of the co-creation of the images, allowing both parties to converse at the same level. By understanding the workings of a photograph we can repeat the success of the previous jobs, tweaking the framework of how they were produced and not relying on the hit and miss approach of intuition alone.

As a researcher and photographer, it is beneficial to study images and signs with more attention to detail of how meaning is constructed than the ordinary consumer would, Bignell, (2002, p.41). To utilise the language of photography is to enable the alignment of signs and the portrayal of stories.

There is a raft of literature that deconstructs adverts and imagery, from paintings to films to photography. Literature that shows the processes to achieve symbolically laden imagery is scant. Work on the still photograph has tended to leave out the question of narrativity (Alvarado, 2001, p.148) the consequence is I will endeavour to fill this gap with related and new theories grounded by general texts on photography.

The science of signs [Semiotics] was first proposed by De Saussure in the late 1800s and developed by Barthes and Peirce (Wells, 2000, p.352). As an academic school of thought, it has had its distractors and supporters but remains a valuable tool for looking deeper into codes of images. It has long been common to speak loosely of 'the language of photography' it was not until the 1960s early 'semiotic' studies and their aftermath when it radically reorientation the theory of photography (Alvarado, Buscombe, Collins, 2001, p.66)
Other methods of deconstructing imagery have been created but we keep returning to the semiotic method.

> *'It is probable then that the creative process could be enriched and made easier if the creators would take account consciously of a system that they use intuitively.'*
> Durand, (1970, p.29-61)

The semiotic system may have been formed over years of experience but ultimately has been culture led, ironically the belief that there is no system is the admission of a system in itself.

> '*The semiotician works from the assumption that wherever we recognise 'mastery' of an art, we also implicitly acknowledge the existence of some sort of system which has been mastered- whether the 'master' is consciously aware of the system or not.'*
> Burgin, (1997, p.82)

An explanation of the semiotic system is mentioned in many texts but understanding its applications is not always clear and can be conflicting. Confusion occurs when Saussure explicitly notes that the signified is not directly associated with an object but with a mental concept (Vickers et al. 2013, p.2). Various modifications and adjustments have been made since its inception, such as Pierce (cited in Deely, 1958, CP 2.229) who modified it to associate with real objects rather than pure linguistics. Eco (1976, p.7) almost achieves clarity by saying a sign is anything that can be used to tell a lie. This association is a referent to photography which is arguably a recorder of truth, and the signs in an advertising shots are often placed as portraying this truth. Eco inferring that photography can be used to tell lies

relies on its reputation of showing the truth. This is how advertising exploits the storytelling power of photography.

Saussure, mainly studying linguistics, created the term semiotics and put forward the system of signs and that these signs referred to other meanings. Pierce added that further meanings were also attributable. From these early beginnings of semiotics, terminologies such as ‘symbolic’ and ‘indexical’ were formed and subsequent academics have applied these to photography. The basics of semiotic principles remain the most effective method for understanding the photograph.

Semiotics in this research is introduced to the participants via a method of elicitation and newly created imagery. To proceed further, we must first look at the framework of semiotics itself.

Dyer (2005, p.124) says photographic images look like the real thing, this makes them iconic and the signifier-signified relationship one of resemblance. This is where the signifier is the actual photographic image, whether it is a print or on a screen and the signified the concept formed in the viewer's mind. She goes further to describe that elements depicted within the photograph are used indexically to indicate more than conspicuous signification. Their representational strategy is widely found in advertising, which relies extensively on our ability to read images in terms of underlying verbal texts. Burgin (1982, p.196). By buying and using the advertised product, the customers are also buying part of the ‘myth’. Bignell (2002, p.36) describes the action of purchase is to possess some of the products social value. By purchasing an attainable thing, for example, a chocolate bar, we are also buying a small part of the unattainable rich lifestyle portrayed by the advertising images.

Figure 18, Tesco, BBH, 2010.

We can use the advertising images (fig,18) to show an elementary overview of how semiotics works as a tool for understanding meaning via signs.

The signifier, a material thing that signifies. The photograph or the advert.

The signified, the concept the signifier refers to. The appearance it makes to our consciousness as distinguished from what it is in itself.

The relationship between the signifier and the signified creates a sign, giving rise to signified meanings of the story or the photograph's narrative.
The meanings can be classified into three areas -
1) ***iconically***, the tomatoes look like tomatoes.
2) ***indexically,*** the tomatoes in a tray that suggests they are all hand-picked.
3) ***symbolically***, the words that relate to both signifier and signified by their defined cultural meanings. Through the language of text we deduce 'fresh, quality tomatoes'.

The consumer is buying a very small part of a lifestyle. Eating fresh tomatoes that are grown by healthy-looking people, tomatoes that have been lovingly propagated in cosy looking greenhouses, and as Tesco puts it, symbolically, 'Every little helps'.

Further, more detailed terminology which subdivides the definitions are listed below -
Metonymy, where a sign is substituted for another, a crown for the power of a king or queen, for example.
Denotation, an object literally means what it looks like, product photography on white backgrounds are commonly suggested as this
Connotation, signs used as a secondary meaning, gold signifying wealth.
These are some of the examples of the further complexity of semiotics. Very few advertisers or photographers will use this subdivision of terminology. Generally keeping to the iconic and indexical classification. I refer later (see 3.9) to particular texts that describe the codification more directly relatable to photography. The informative and redundant image, which Flusser (2011, p.10) uses as descriptors for iconic and indexical imagery is an attempt to clarify the relation of semiotics and the language of photography.

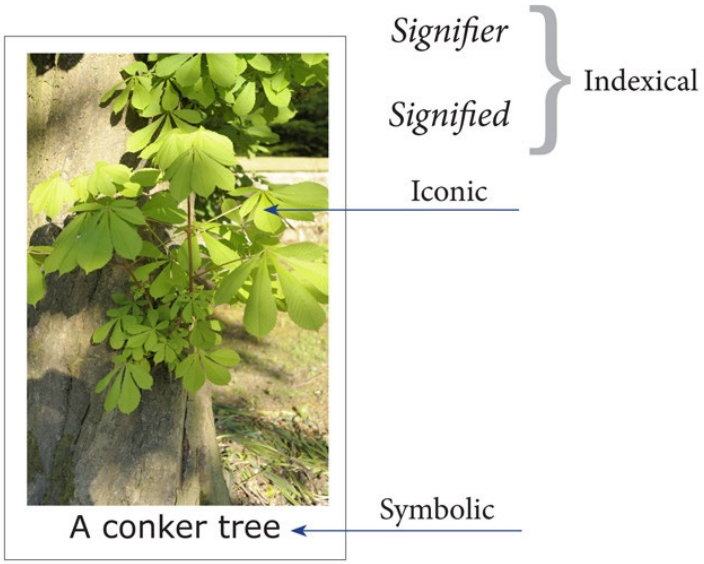

Figure 19, semiotic referenced image.

Fig,19 shows an example of how my practice requires the client to have a modicum of understanding of semiotics. This is the level of semiotics used with the participants in the photo-elicitation method (see 2.6). We see the photograph - it is the signifier. The photograph contains the signified for of a tree. The image is of a tree, and we can see it is a tree - Iconic, The text footer says it's 'A conker tree'- Symbolic. Indexically the positioning or supporting role of the photograph becomes important. Placed in a company report, it suggests sustainability and longevity. On a product label, naturalness or health, whereas in a children's book, games, outdoors and playground.

When creating the briefing document, the context is critical information. Artisans must reveal where the image is being placed as the narratives implied by the signified elements of the image will change. The photographer can then advise and help keep the narrative close to the client's intentions.

In relation to stills photography, the arrangement of the photograph by angle, props, lighting and situation gives signs to the spectator. There is an acceptance by the viewer/consumer that advertising images are constructed, this must be taken into account by the advertiser. Photographs must use the semiotic system to exploit this way of portraying a narrative

In the image (fig.20), we see the photograph as the signifier, it looks like a picture of chisels, the image we see is symbolically recognisable as chisels (although culturally speaking, not everyone will know they are chisels). Other routes could take a viewer off track

regarding the truth of the photographic, which we will return to later. Once recognised, the chisels refer to other indexical meanings, Saucerre called these referents, which point towards external meanings. Depending on the context the image is placed in, the chisels may refer to craftsmanship and old-fashioned skills. The picture aims to tell a story, we are forced to decipher this synchronically, to comprehend a series of events all at once Williamson (1990, p.155). This story imparts craftsmanship and the old skills of restoration. The symbolic representation is not always present in photography, which is its weakest semiotic tool. Here the words on the chisel say 'Sheffield England', symbolic of a city yet indexically representational (to those with the cultural knowledge) of the best steel and the most refined metal tools.

Figure 20, CTF, restoration of a Georgian door.

Some signs go beyond mere depiction and are used indexically to indicate further, and additional meaning to the obviously signified, Dyer (2005, p.124). Thus, a photograph of the shadow of the branches of a tree can indexically signify a whole tree, while an open landscape, to some, may symbolise escapism and freedom from the city; however, care is needed as in other cultures, it represents the harsh rural locations from which people have escaped.

As Bates (2016, p.20) notes, a photographer while recording what has been seen, always refers to what is not seen, all a photograph's references are external to itself. Although (Alvarado et al., 2001, p.66) says there is no single signifying system upon which all photographs depend. The semiotic system remains the most useful aid in creating advertising

images, which are required to perform a specific task, namely, convincingly portraying a story utilising indexical pointers.

Harper (2016) states that when creating a photographic image, investigation conventions in an academic and observed fashion allow for a better understanding of innovation and how it evolves. Analysis of this kind is valuable in considering creative development and decision making, certainly in the commercial context, alongside acknowledging industry production modes, commissioning processes and distribution channels. All of which contributes to highlighting the shape and context of the final image. This approach could be summarised as helping to understand photographic practice.

> *'In advertising, there is almost no denotative communication,'*
> Dyer, G. (2005, p.130)

This is a far-reaching statement as denotation as it is used here is a non-communicative iconic level. It is assuming that 'all' advertising is connotative or indexical. Whether by accident or ineffective process, a vast amount of advertising is denotive as it clearly misses the customer's eye, thus by default becoming iconic or redundant (see 3.4.2). Fully applying the terminology, an advertisement works best when it contains both iconic and indexical elements, denotive and connotative.

Figure 21, The Rhetoric Of The Image – Roland Barthes (1964).

Barthes, (1964) deconstrucion of the pasta Panzani photograph (fig.21) has been a reference point of semiotic theorists for decades. The reading of the advert is thorough and intensely academic, it is so profusely cited that it seems improper to criticise. But where are the thought processes of the photographer mentioned? Were the photographer and the client thinking about the indexicality of the string bag to 'plenty' and the parable of the fish? Or during the brief, it was noted that the photograph's context was a portrait A4, and the client demanded that all the products needed equal emphasis in the advert. The response from the photographer/art director may have been, 'what if we put it all in a shopping bag? We could hang it into that space, and the customer could see everything equal-sized, and if it was a string bag, they could see the product right through it'. Did the photographers and art directors read Sauserre? Or did they have a process that has become second nature, an intuition? We will never know the actual answers as the creators are not quoted in deconstruction discourse. To summarise, Barthes makes excellent use of semiotics to interrogate the image for its messages, presupposing that the signification is intentional, merely because it is an advertisement. It leaves us having to make some assumptions that the creators possessed a combination of experience of practice and an element of understanding the semiotics of photography. Photographers or art directors universally use terminology such

as narrative or storytelling, which inadvertently gives the nod to the theory of semiotics. Overall, I must concede that the examination of rhetoric in advertising is useful. It draws attention to the constructed nature of advertisements and, as Dyer (2005, p.74) puts it, avoids some of the weaknesses associated with intuitive analysis

With the constant bombardment of advertising all around us, creators and the consumers inevitably make semiotic links subconsciously to the point that these references become commonplace and vigorously exploited by advertisers, the green bottle of Gordon's gin, the whoosh of Nike, a meerkat, the cobbled streets of Hovis adverts. These all indexically point to further meanings of quality, nostalgia and efficiency, narratives which the producers have invested vast amounts of time and money to popularise. Jay Conrad Levinson (1994, p.17) reminds us that you advertise with the sole purpose of creating a desire to buy in the minds of your prospects and customers and consequently, if advertising photography does not follow this purpose then it fails.

Advertisers rely on customers who have an innate knowledge of the code and as the internet makes the world smaller, corporate brands become recognisable and signified across multiple cultures. The internet is a cross-culture platform. The symbols and signified create a self-sustainable code of their own, brands becoming popularised or disregarded through the democracy of the consumer.

Bullimore (2003, p.84) makes a wonderful observation that acknowledges the dichotomy of intuition versus invention. He says good advertising can speak quite deliberately in code or uses a secret language and excludes the rest of us, that's one of the reasons why it is good. This cleverly explains the method when an advertising message is not apparent, but the consumer accepts the challenge of deciphering, and having done so, feels an attachment to the product. Straightforward examples in advertising photography are using colour, such as the red and green in Barthes Panzani advert (fig.21) for the Italian flag, silver for Mercedes Benz, purple for Cadbury. Photography commonly takes advantage of an association by placing the product on the colour linked with the brand or colour to accentuate the packaging Vestergaard and Schroder (1985) describe this as the simplest form of advertising illustration [photography] as the iconic image, a photograph on a neutral background.

A simple product photograph, however is seldom, if ever iconic. Whether the consumer recognises the packaging, which has its own associations, or the product attains more emphasis on white or the coloured background gives other meanings, a background is never neutral.

The weakest semiotic elements in photography are the symbolic, the headline text or supporting copy. These words form an anchorage for a photograph yet can become

disconnected from the original image. Contemporary digital platforms such as Instagram actively encourage little or no text by limiting characters counts or space. As a photographer, I can no longer rely on an embedded catchy headline to reassert the narrative of the photograph. The role of the contemporary copywriter has changed, text has been pressed into other areas, fast-moving headlines, SEO[34], metadata read by AI search engines and fierce competitiveness from a world of keyboard experts writing their own copy. One can draw parallels to photographers' challenges arising from the copious amounts of consumer-created images. The hidden world of metadata text is beyond the scope of this research, its influence on the future of adverting will keep growing as it becomes exploited by the knowledge harvesting agencies.

All events and products nowadays aspire to be photographed and translated into a state of signifiers, to the extent of, do they exist if they aren't? Not forgetting that text limitation has forced us to become more erudite with the photography itself. Thus, Flusser concludes that photography has assumed the authority it deserves, and I would further say it has exceeded the mantle once held by the written word. Tomlin (2020) says digital [photography] is the biggest thing to happen to advertising and that it is bigger than the invention of the printing press. Consequently, this has bestowed upon photography the challenge of storytelling without words. As Hegerty (2011, p.95) reminds us storytelling is the most powerful form of communication a civilisation has, which is not surprising therefore, that 'great' advertising is based around it.

'*It is not easy to take a good photograph*,' Larger, (as cited in Sinofzik, Klanten R., 2015, p.269) says Peter Larger a Paris and Berlin-based photographer who labels himself as a 'narrative still life photographer', and by a good photograph he means one that makes a meaningful point, without a story, you have dead images, which are merely two-dimensional copies of reality. If you want to create something new, you need some sort of narrative; you need to construct tension by choosing suitable ingredients and blending them in a surprising way.

This brings us to consider the question of truth, which concerns not only the truth function of photographs but also what Sontag (2008, p.6) has called 'the usually shady commerce between art and truth'. The truth and status as witness of the photograph have always been in question by those with the knowledge of the process. Dentin (1989:229, p.24) quite rightly points out that camera lenses do not see precisely what the human eye sees, and they do not represent the things depicted, which is correct in a sense, but the human brain can normally

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[34] *Search Engine Optimisation, key texts which drives traffic to a site.*

make assumptions about objects representation in a photograph, which is exactly what semiotics explains.

3.11 The apparatus, intent.

Intent is a critical element of the internationalised image; no intent then no narrative. It is the human part of the process of creating photographic images. Rather like an artisan adding the human aspect of the process to their products. As with both outcomes the lack of intent results in an inferior product without narrative.

Literature on advertising and marketing can range from hardly mentioning or completely ignoring the effect of intent and the interpretation of the 'intent of the client' on the photographic outcome. Research work on the single photograph has tended to leave out of the account the question of narrativity (Alvarado, Buscombe, Collins 2001, p.148). The starting point for narrative in the instance of the artisan would be - How did the product happen to be made? Who made it? What is it made of? Who would buy it?

> *'I must draw back to the contestation of the supposed neutrality of the camera and its unique point of view* – [surely the cameras operator – the photographer's intent is a major part of this] - *even back to the origins of the camera obscura – there are decisions made before the set up and the shutter release to consider.'*
> Burgin, (1982, p.188)

The camera is not a dumb hand tool; it is an apparatus that sits and waits for a photographer to encode an image via its internal program. Every time we observe a photograph Berger (1972, p.10) points out there would have been infinite other variations of the presented image available to the photographer. There is an obligation on the photographer, a responsibility of choosing the final image.

Photographers produce carriers of information- photographs. Flusser (2002, p.25) sees this as being controlled by the 'apparatus' the camera. It is programmed to 'help' produce photographs and every single edited image is one of the almost infinite available to the photographer at the precise moment of pressing the shutter, multiplied by the infinite variations the program can produce. He endeavours to classify all photography into two parts, more straightforward than semiotics, the 'informative' image and the 'non-informative redundant image'. The informative image is the more worthy, it describes information not necessarily seen but inferred in the final image, it has more than a two-dimensional space, this explanation coincides with Barthes indexical image. An example of the redundant image

may be a snapshot, a mere record photograph, which corresponds with Barthes iconic image, he infers that the cut-out[35] advertising shot is a redundant image, yet as a practising photographer, I would strongly disagree as a cut-out photograph can reveal a lot about its subject without the distraction of a background. This non-informative descriptor acknowledges the mass of citizen images taken on a daily basis (usually by phones) and placed on digital platforms as being largely redundant, the question is who decides which is redundant and which is informative?

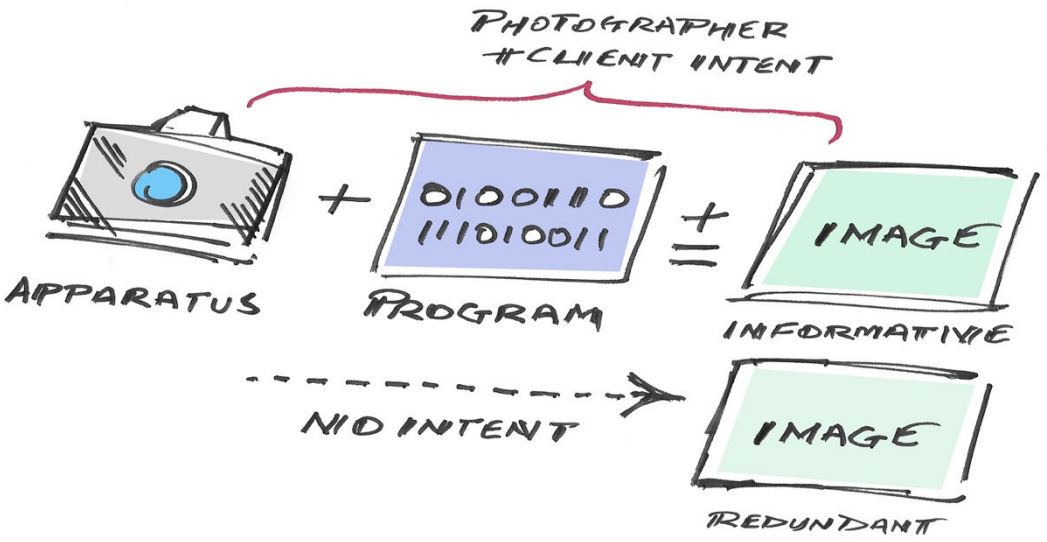

Figure 22, the addition of joint intent to Flusser's (2002) classification of images.

A few fundamental concepts came to light: image – apparatus – program – information. These must be the cornerstone of any philosophy of photography, and they make possible the definition of a photograph (Flusser, p.26). The other influences on the photographer's 'intent' are the cumulation of their own social relations, cultural background, and even political stance. Whether they do it knowledgeably or as an automatic reflex, a feel, or intuition, they are nevertheless influenced by these factors. It is here that I add my supplement to the theory in that there must be an intent of two parties to create an effective image for the artisan (fig.22), it must tell a story and ultimately create sales. The only way that this can happen is if they work together and openly discuss the narratives and agree on the intent. Then they can create informative images and avoid redundant ones.

Cruz, Lehmuskallio (2016, p.271) remarks that we have seen the camera become a computer with connected technologies. What differentiates a camera from an automatic and independent machine is the human intention of the photographer as an extension of the

[35] *Photographs that dispense with a background often replaced with white or black but sometimes a plain colour is used.*

apparatuses. Although sometimes highly influenced by the apparatus – it is the negotiation between the photographer and the inventor of the apparatus that results in the informative image.

An ethical position that must be mentioned is that some of my clients would reject an overmanipulated image others are drawn to the excitement of making their product 'look' better. Whereas a photojournalist would be taken to task for manipulating a news image, an advertising photographer is sometimes expected to clone out imperfections and 'improve' the product.

It prompts us to invert our title of a photographer and to consider that the photographer has now become an actor positioned within a dispersed field of non-human agents, to which intelligent and networked cameras give access (Cruz, Lehmuskallio, 2016, p.272). The photographer has become an extension of the camera. They are in the middle of a negotiation with the image, client and context. It is the negotiation skills that makes them a contemporary photographer with higher skills than a straightforward technical operator.

The academically informed photographer, who accepts the term 'Praxis' as the symbiotic combination of theory and practice, must also acknowledge that semiotics or other codes are intertwined with academia and the advertising world. My practice experience proposes that the artisan should be involved with the image-making process at the same entry point as the photographer allowing for true collaboration.

Photographers are functionalists who use the camera to create [or even copy] information- they are continually searching for information, battling with the program via the apparatus to create their intended outcomes. The fight is with the box; it always has been; they don't know what goes on inside (even more so with digital) trying to control a game over which they have variable competence. The new control in the digital revolution is not a Nikon camera (the apparatus); it is the installed software, the Sonys and Microsofts who produce the program, unavoidably from a political and sociological context. The 'in camera' software has embedded social and political frameworks; it is difficult to override and makes decisions that affect the photographer's intentions ~

Colour boosting modes to enhance skin tones in portraiture

- Decisions on focus points - Facial/eye recognition.
- High definition algorithms for hyper sharpening.
- Aesthetics engines.[36]
- High-Definition Rendering, combining of images to increase shadow detail.

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[36] *Algorithms, machine aesthetics, being incorporated into cameras, (Datta, Wang, 2010).*

'Clients often say – we don't understand it [the creative brief] but know we should be there.'
Bond, Kischbaum, (1998, p.165)

This comment highlights a problem at the core of the collaborative photographic process that clients feel left out of the creative journey. Yes, advertising has an ideology, that of selling and creating a need or a want for services or products, but the ideology of the artisan[37], right from the outset of the process, should have an opportunity to filter through into the production of the photography for their business. Williamson (1990, p.12) argues that advertising images provide that structure for translating that ideology through to the people. Nevertheless, more than other sectors in advertising, the intent of the client, the artisan, should be as much or greater than the photographers they are commissioning. Narrative, after all, emanates from the client (or the business) by way of a brief, not from the photographer. If the photographer adds their narrative without consultation with the client, the narrative is solely theirs, unlikely to be accurate, and the collaboration has failed.

There is an assumption by the consumer that a contemporary artisan has an ethical framework that they have built their business upon, green, local, handmade and sustainability. It should be a priority that this is reflected in the photography. It should also be noted that the main competitors are not fellow artisans in the high street. They are the supermarkets and nationals, who dream of having artisan provenance, their intentions are to hide the origins of their mass-produced products. Unfortunately, photography helps them do this with its ability to portray perceived truths.

The artisan product only exists because of its niche role, and the photography must reflect this niche. In the instance of an artisan, the narrative of honesty does not require an advertising construct. The image merely needs to suggest human creativity, small workshops, handmade, old machinery and location. The high street supermarket giants strive to emulate this through photography, exploiting semiotics and rhetoric.

The product on offer from these large concerns, no matter how well presented, how well propped, cannot or should not compete and win over the artisan's well planned 'intentionalised' images.

[37] *That of creating hand crafted quality products.*

3.12 The Intentionalised Image.

The reasoning behind this term is the need for a contemporary word for a photograph that carries more weight than an informative image (Flusser, 2011). It is a finalised image that tells an intended story as a result of collaboration between the client and photographer. The research has highlighted that it is important to be prepared and clear about one's intentions before starting a photographic project. Maria (2011, p.107) adds it is vital to be aware of the narrative devices, meaning the theories of signs and semiotics. The terms effective focused, targeted exclude the application of the intentions of the client and the photographer. Maria adds that total immersion in the process enables the photographer to be highly tuned into the vital aspect of the photograph. An intentionalised image will sell a narrative of the pleasure of owning the product, not overtly selling the product itself, this is the power it has over a regular photograph.

Bullimore (2003, p.301) also adds that the eternal issue of pursuing the ethereal goal of creativity must stop, a photographer who ignores their clients' needs [intentions] will fail. These skills will separate the informative photographer from the redundant. Flusser's (2011, p.20) comment that a photographer will only press the shutter when the image corresponds to his intentions must, for advertising photography, also be expanded to include the client's intentions.

> *'One of the most difficult tasks in advertising (photography) is saying things that people will believe.'*
> Levinson (1994, p.43)

This general comment about the advertising sector happens to be very relevant to the creation of narratives with photography and can be applied to the historical debate of the 'truth' of photography as a medium. Burgin in a somewhat obvious remark about advertising says,

> *'The camera can bestow authenticity upon any set of appearances, however false. The camera does not lie even when used to quote a lie. And so, this makes them appear more truthful.'*
> (Burgin, 1982, p.69)

Which creates a dichotomy in the debate. I agree with Burnnice Abbot (Burgin, 1982, p.110) when she says photography cannot ignore the great challenge to celebrate reality.

The consumer will resonate with authentic content (truth) and that will, in the end, equate to sales. Photography in this scenario is doing what it does best, showing the truth pure and simple, there is nothing to hide as the artisan ethos is enough of a story in itself. Beautiful product begets beautiful images, and as Ruskin (Ruskin and Roe, p.69. 2013) said, nothing can be beautiful, which is not true. Is not a professional photographer and an artisan striving to make beautiful things?

3.13 Interim findings.

This section reflects on the practice and theory contexts and draws interim conclusions that have driven the next stages of the research. It identifies gaps in the literature of practice and theory and draws comparisons to other available vehicles.

It is an extraordinary phenomenon that the technical side of photographic practice is a dominant feature in literature, book shop shelves are littered with equipment reviews and comparisons with this and that type of lens or camera. Even recognised journals such as the 'British Journal of Photography' allocate an equipment review section in its monthly publication. We may have to accept that this is part of the territory of a technical based skill. Yet, I can see no parallels with other technical creative media; ceramics, printmaking, and even film-making sectors do not discuss technicalities with the intensity of the photographic sector. The result is a plethora of technical books, magazines and guides and a lack of deeper understanding of the interface between clients and photographers. Jaeger's comment (2007, v.132,13).

> *'Photography is surely one of if not 'the' greatest method of communication of this era, yet literature is still struggling with its language.'*
> Jaeger (2007, v.132,13)

Jaeger's is a powerful comment; he then approaches an objective view of the field by interviewing a cross-section of practices, advertising, fashion and documentary, each skilled practitioner commenting on their work. Yet the overarching theme is of advice to the watching photographer and the 'talent of photography', not an examination into the procedures between client and photographer. The fine art photographer, editorial, documentary, advertising all answer to a client, they can be the initiator or the viewer, or both. However, they are still a client, and interaction is a critical skill set for all of them. Advertising as an industry is slowly recognising photography (or visual assets) rather than

text as ‘the’ most important element on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and generally online. The lack of texts that even acknowledge this is surprising.

Available literature discussing proses does a decent job of revealing best practice from the viewpoint of companies, agencies and rafts of creatives. What is missing is the exposure of the interaction between small companies (artisans) and photographers. As this research progressed, it became apparent that there was a disconnect between artisans and photographers. Take an artisan, a baker, milliner, carpenter, back ten years and they would not have dreamt that they would ever need to deal with a photographer.

The current literature or the artisan has not caught up with the digital environment we all live in. Artisans seem inadvertently excluded by the advertising genre, as a result, the artisans find it difficult to know where to start in portraying their stories.

> *‘The critics of advertising have always said it is a rich man’s club. The only beneficiaries of the right to advertise where the large corporations with pockets deep enough to afford entry into the game. ..... the individual entrepreneur is excluded from the game.’*
> Hegerty, (2011, p.109)

The solution lies in reducing this detachment and nervousness of commissioning photography. The methodologies have shown it is possible to re-engage and close the gap. Methods such as the elicitation exercise combined with a modicum of semiotic theory have given the participants knowledge to greatly improve the effectiveness of the photographic commissions. Before there was little or no process to follow, now this research has produced a handbook with the artisan in mind. It should go some way to enable artisans to proceed in commissioning photography with confidence.

Photography may well still be seen as a small cog in the advertising industry, but to the artisans, it is a lifeline to survival in the digital environment. Through the vehicle, artisans will see the value of collaborating and photographers wishing to work in this sector will see the artisans have similar goals and intentions as them.

Objectives have manifested themselves in a particular set of ideas and advice in the vehicle. Consisting of guidance actions and tools supported by the design analysis documents findings.

3.14 The total photographer.[38]

> *'Every good person in advertising whom I have known has always had two noticeable characteristics. There was no subject under the sun in which they could not easily get interested…. second, they were an extensive browser in all sorts of fields.'*
> Bullimore (2002, p.230)

From the analysis of findings from the design analysis documents, the objectives of the *vehicle* are formed. As the working environment has shifted, so the 'total photographer' must emerge. The vehicle will offer this outcome to the photographer and show the artisan the importance of using photography as a narrator of their business and the opportunities for collaborations with a 'total photographer' to create the visual story.

> *'Practical enquiry is just as valid as theoretical.'*
> Nelson, (2013, p.82)

Technical and business skills are important but assuming that these skills alone will make a practice successful is somewhat misguided if a well-priced, well-exposed, sharp image misses the narrative of the business. The part of the process that the vehicle will examine is the sometimes-uneasy interaction between the client (in our case, the artisan) and the photographer during the creation of this narrative. The photographer must change, and the artisan must adapt, as Kenney (2013, p.12) eruditely states, there are only two types of people in advertising those who think they are smarter than their client and those who are successful. In the same vein, a photographer cannot rely solely on technique, as Davis (2010, p.192) observes, someone will work it out and copy or do it better. A photographer must learn to see the photograph in a unique and personal way, creating something difficult to replicate, the intentionalised image is such an outcome.

The artisan 'model' of production and selling differs from other mainstream consumer products. It relies on focusing on consumer reaction to the product, almost personally. The artisan offers benefits beyond that of an ordinary product, it has aesthetic and ethical standards attached as part of the purchase. The methods of established advertising could be seen as antagonistic to this model. They concentrate more on want than need, which is reflected in much of the marketing and advertising references.

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[38] *see 5.1, findings, for further development of this term.*

> *'One of the major criticisms of advertising is that it makes us too materialistic by persuading us, for instance, that we can achieve certain desirable goals in life through possessing things in a cycle of continuous conspicuous consumption.'*
> (Dyer, 2005, p.7)

This can be taken as a thinly veiled warning for the artisan to tread lightly to avoid creating advertising that is a negative force against their own ethic. This may be one of the reasons that artisans feel excluded from the arena of advertising. Their exclusion is magnified by the unnerving amount of money that can be spent on advertising, resulting in artisans rarely using or avoiding advertising altogether as they don't have the deep pockets of larger companies. Artisans are lumped together with SMEs as the same entities by the business and marketing spheres, this shows a root level misunderstanding of the artisan business. This is strange as many large companies admire and emulate the artisan product style through their own advertising campaigns. Creative processes are written and commented upon in advertising or marketing literature, mainly taking an overview, not a detailed standpoint. Strangely photography, as Podnar, Balmer (2010, p.37) comment, within contemporary texts is consistently seen as a small part of the overall procedure even though visual elements have become the main player within contemporary online advertising.

The advertising requirement for design, print and even copywriting is diminishing and photography increasing. Yet much of the current literature reinforces the assumption that advertisements are still created in an advertising agency's hidden white room rather than acknowledging a more democratised social media led system. The upshot is that it also somewhat ignores more collaborative methods such as those proposed in this research. And none of the research is in the context of a pandemic.

From analysis of contemporary photographic literature (current vehicles), key subject areas can be summarised-

- The skills of the photographer and technical methods are investigated and documented.
- Techniques of 'selling' the image to the client are prevalent.
- There is limited focus on the intentions of the client.
- There is a total disconnect between an artisan and current practices.
- There is no literature currently that can help an artisan connect with photography.

- One-party dominance in relationships is encouraged.
- No defined process for the commissioning of narrative-based photography.
- Photography is seen as a small cog in the process of advertising.

> *'Creative persons should, help people understand complex arguments; they can bring freshness to old promises; they can engage people's minds and self-interest; they can develop a narrative; they can forge connections through verbal and visual metaphor.'*
> Bullimore (2003, p.201)

3.15 The vehicle, a book.

App. 1 App. 2 App. 3 App. 4 App. 5

One of the objectives of the research is to produce an accessible vehicle for the artisan and by default the photographer. Exploration was carried out into what medium the vehicle should be and what voice it should carry. It must not portray the answers as being too authoritative even to the extent that the reader is reassured that what they are already doing isn't wrong but that things could be better with some strategy changes. As with much of the literature on business and marketing, simple answers can prove the most powerful. Many books and courses lead with headings like Marketing made Simple (Miller, 2020), The Essential Guide to Photography by those in the Know (Jaeger, 2007), Basic Techniques of Photography (Adams, 1999). Although far from having simple content, they suggest that the way forward is a clear path. This inviting stance is what that this vehicle should have.

The industry's very nature suggests that a book would be the first port of call as the research shows it has a relationship to written briefs. The fact that the artisan and the sole trader photographer are somewhat entrepreneurial means their way of working does not encourage them to ask for 'help' or even acknowledge a requirement, after all they have set up their own business and are inherently independent thinkers. It could wrongly be seen as an admission of failure if they sought advice. Rather than having to speak to other people, the book is a more subtle approach for advice; it would be available in digital format and have abstracts and extra materials accessible online. A question arose from the immersive research - is it a self-help guide I am creating? The answer is, yes, a sort of hybrid version that assumes the reader is already quite experienced in business. By utilising simple, practical guidelines through a vehicle, the two parties can appreciate more of their 'understandings' and produce stunning narratives that they are both happy with. The vehicle will show a path through the awkwardness of finding 'intent', addressing the fundamental gap in practice of both artisan and photographer.

A requirement is reinforced by the current range and availability of 'how to' and 'tool kit' labelled books there already are. I note the 'Help for Dummies' books have a high level of engagement and are close to my *vehicle* in methodology. Although the headline description of the books is a little misleading as they delve into the subject matters extensively, this has not stopped them from selling over 300 million copies (Grahams, 2016) having 1,950 titles, of which 57 are marketing and 88 are photographic. The best seller is for Windows software, indicating that a book is a successful cross-media vehicle. Even though the specific area I am researching is not addressed within their comprehensive title range, I learnt from their style of presentation and structure and incorporated some elements into the vehicle. I conclude that the best way of presenting the findings to the high street artisans is to use the familiarity of a book and avoid a digital-only offering.

Consequently, to lead with a book-based vehicle as a suitable medium gives options of online access versions with support from a blog or an interactive forum. It makes sense in a visually led industry that the vehicle is graphically designed to communicate the message and written in accessible language.

As Harper (2016) discusses, we need to have informed discussions about the commercial image sector without the issue of intellectual or artistic credibility, commercial images are abundant and widely viewed and they deserve this critical attention. Their procedures of creativity should be explored with a clear understanding of the industrial structures.

The methods in the vehicle have been field-tested in the research with the participants, photoelicitation, briefings, semiotics and design analysis documents. They are moulded into a model to work for the artisan. This framework gives a solution to the second research question, as a scalable vehicle, that encapsulates methods of photographic engagement.
The interim findings from the research have highlighted gaps in the currently available vehicles whether books or other media. The book sits between the writings of Sontag's examination of images and reality in our lives and the contemporary discourse of Bates and the photograph's position in advertising. The new vehicle aims to fill these gaps and answer the questions raised in the reflections in the Design analysis documents.

Points that are addressed in the vehicle.

1) No specific literature on the interaction between artisan and photographer.

There are guides and marketing books on how a photographer 'sells' their work to clients but not how to collaborate. A process that makes better photography form a collaborative process is surely more valuable and effective.

2) Other vehicles are over-technical or vague.

The focus on technical skills is overbearing in the sector of photography however, some advice relates directly to photographers' practice. There are very few that address how to commission photographers. And none specifically for artisans.

3) Elicitation methods have highlighted there is a lack of understanding between artisan and photographer.

'If you are clear about what you are photographing about your subject you can make a photographic choice' says Short (2001). That in turn will help the audiences' interpretation of the photograph. Short comes close to the subject of intent and immersion of the photographer but veers away from the actual interaction between the two parties.

4) Design analysis documents to aid reflection.

The design analysis documents reflection on the production of a written brief for each shoot advocate that a book would be an ideal format for a vehicle.

5) Engagement.

It is a process of narrative preconception that if continued onto a vehicle will be of use to an independent artisan and photographer. Starting as a reference point, to know what is behind the beautiful lighting and exhaustive technique. As Cruz, Lehmuskallio (2016, p.199) points out there is an end game in finding the interesting informative picture within the overlooked detail in the everyday environment, the brief helps seek them out.

6) Realignment of post internet photographic theory.

Now photography is a prime mover in the digital platforms older theory can still be used but requires recontextualising as much of it dates from the pre-1990s

7) Reaction to Pandemic challenges is non-existent.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for effective photography for the small business. Photography for these businesses on the high street has become their primary marketing output, artisans (and by default photographers) that cannot create briefs and translate them into visual narratives will no doubt suffer. Both artisan and photographer have had to widen their gamut to survive under this immense pressure.

8) A simple explanation of the language of photography.

Breaking down the advertising photograph via signifier, signified, referent. Decoding is all well and good, how is intent shown? How does intent play its part? How does it make its way into the final photograph?

9) Introduction to the terms 'total photographer' 'Intentionalised image'.

Explanation of the term to describe the processes of engagement with the artisan and photographer. The photographer's landscape has also changed, evolving a new type of professional.

4 : Case studies, the application of method, reflection on data.

Fig 23, Consult App.2

App. 2

App. 1 App. 3 App. 4 App. 5

This chapter will briefly summarise the data collected from the three case studies enrolled for the research. It will examine the outcomes of the methodology in relation to the research questions, the chronological order of methods will form the structure. The three case studies will be discussed as a whole, not separately, allowing comparative reflection of the cases within each of the four deployed methods. There is a large, detailed bank of data, findings and reflection in the design analysis documents in Appendices No. 2:1/2/3, referenced within this synopsis. The documents are individual to each case study but are compared side by side in this chapter.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit about a third of the way into my research, the influence cannot be ignored. I discuss how it directly affected the methodology and how it impacted the participants and how they faced the new challenges to survive the effects of the outbreak. Then to conclude, a consideration of the success of the methodology and what findings and outtakes from the data were transferable to the vehicle outcome - the book

The design analysis documents Appendix 2: 1/2/3

Participant No.1 - Cumbria Timber frame and Joinery (CTF).

Participant No.2 – Tracy Wells Millinery (TW).

Participant No.3 - Ripe Seasonal Foods.

The methods employed -

1) Decision tree.
2) Photo Elicitation.
3) Briefing document.
4) Design analysis documents.
5) Creation of imagery.

4.1 Decision Tree.

One of my core methodologies was an immersion within the artisans' business as actual live case studies. To be rigorous, I had to be certain that the businesses under examination were genuine artisans according to consistent parameters.

The selection process entailed gathering details during an informal interview for each case study, which were processed through my unique 'decision tree' (fig,24), ensuring an objective outcome utilising accepted business definitions and questions (Stone, 2021). Each business created a different route through the tree and only the 'proceed' outcomes were permissible for the research study. The original pool of approximately eight possible candidates were reduced to three using the decision tree method.

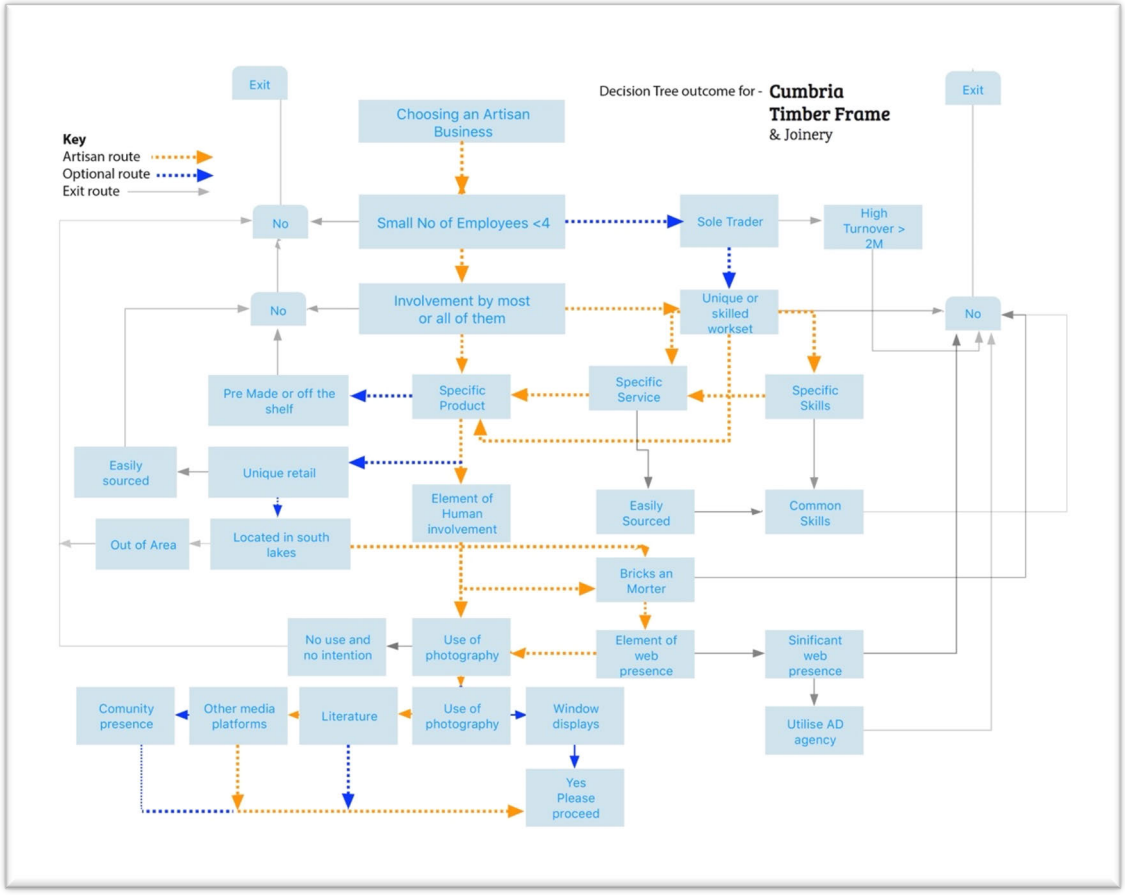

Figure 24, The decision tree for CTF. A successful outcome.

Participant No.1 - Cumbria Timber frame and Joinery (CTF).

CTF is a business owned and managed by Peter, located in the town centre of Ulverston consisting of a retail shop on the high street and workshops two miles out of town where the products are made.

CTF has been in business for 34 years and produces a selection of timber products, tables, bookcases, renovations and occasionally a whole timber-framed house. They are skill-based

products that require human involvement. Their working environment is workshop based with occasional on-site work when constructing a framed building or a renovation is required. The workshop has a mix of modern computer-aided machinery and specialised hand tools, with a large store of locally sourced exotic and seasoned timbers.

CTF have challenges in presenting their unique offer and have minimal photography, marketing strategies, literature, website or presence on any social media platforms. They are relying on the shop and word of mouth to gain work.

Participant No.2 – Tracy Wells Millinery (TW).

TW is Tracy's business located on the high street since 2016, a combined retail outlet and workshop. Initially a hairstylist, Tracy re-trained to master the craft of millinery. She has made hats for celebrities, and worked with fashion consultant Gok Wan and won awards to prove her exceptional work in making hand-made headwear. She has a plethora of specialised hand tools, with a large store of fabrics sourced from around the globe.

TW expected 2020 to be the busiest year yet. Her quest is to present the business as a 'person to person' offer, there is a substantial website, some printed literature and a social media presence. The shop is an inviting space and TW occasionally uses professional photographers as part of the marketing strategy.

Participant No.3 - Ripe Seasonal Foods.

Ripe's premises are located in a pedestrian-only area of the high street, founded by the owner Ella it has been producing food on this site for two years, including takeaways and catering services. Ripe sells a selection of products based on locally sourced seasonal fresh ingredients, labour-intensive and made daily. This changeable stock is supported by a small range of Ripe's out of season own branded products such as chocolate. The challenges include seasonally changing the products and presenting them as wholesome and enticing.

All three of these companies successfully progressed through the decision tree process and moved on to the next stage.

4.2 Photo Elicitation.

> *'In a photographic interview, ethnographer and informant will be able to discuss their different understandings of the images, thus collaborating to determine each other's views.'*
> Harper D. (1998, as cited in Pink, 2007, p.68)

First stage, participants take three photographs.

The core element of this method is that it asks what can photography say about the artisan's business and deduce what competitors' images say about theirs.

A photo elicitation-based technique, over two sessions, allowed the participants to represent their business with three self-taken images. Semi-structured interviews were used to discuss perceptions of the imagery and focus the participant through discussion and shared experiences. CTF used a phone camera, TW used a supplied instant camera, and Ripe used their personal DSLR camera. At first, I expected all participants to use the instant camera, but that expectation evolved and required flexibility to let them use what cameras they were comfortable with. This was a disappointment as the instant camera restricts the number of images and gives a sense of importance to each image, the intention was to slow them down and think about only producing three images. As a result, CTF produced six images, Ripe over 40, and TW kept to the plan with three. The method had to allow for an extra session for editing to reduce the image count. The method was successful in a different way than anticipated. It established a dialogue between us, providing an excellent link to the next stage of deconstructing images to highlight their meanings.

Figure 25, CTF, Handmade hinges one of the three selected images.

Peter (CTF) used a phone to create the image of the wooden hinge (fig.25*)*. It is a combination of different woods, Peter sees it as a mixture of skill and materials. It highlights a key business element in that it is founded on experience and creativity and attention to detail. It highlights that some of the most interesting parts of the business can be in plain sight, CTF is involved in some spectacular projects, from timber houses to bespoke furniture. Yet, Peter decided to choose this small project as one of his best achievements. On further discussion, Peter reveals there are three different types of wood in its construction and he has not seen it done before, so he thought he would have a go, taking two days to make the hinges alone. This knowledge would not have surfaced without the use of elicitation, later providing an excellent narrative for his website.

Figure 26, TW, Fabric in the workshop. Instant camera, 1one of the selected three.

Tracy (TW) represented her business using a provided instant camera. In the ensuing semi-structured session, we discussed the photo elicitated imagery and collaboratively investigated the narratives behind the pictures. This image (fig.26) initially looking like a pile of scrap material was actually showing the diverse array of sustainably sourced fabrics Tracy has at her disposal. The fabrics are a banana-based material and form the structure for most of her hats, Tracy was quite proud that it is a sustainable product and not man-made fabric. She was happy to talk about it in the session, oddly this wonderful selling point is never mentioned in her marketing. Elicitation has brought rich information like this to the surface.

Figure 27, Ripe. A cookie in the hills, DSLR, one of final three.

Ella (Ripe) used her own DSLR camera, which is more than up to the job. As Ella had chosen to photograph them on her own camera and normally creates the imagery for the business herself, she defaulted to her usual visualisation process. Although they were only intended as reference shots, they came through with a high technical specification. The spontaneity was lost in producing so many images to choose from; however, some great and intriguing points were learnt from the exercise. The packaging was 100% recycled and took Ella a lot of effort to source. Also, these small cookie boxes (fig. 27*)* weren't just sweet snacks, they were intended for use as a healthy energy boost on long walks, ideal for her Lakeland location. We could return to these selling topics further into the research.

The second stage of elicitation - Examining and deconstructing advertising images.

This stage was a semi-formal qualitative interview jointly examining examples of advertising related to the artisan business sector and competitors. The images under examination were co-selected using 'Pinterest'[39](fig.28*)* as a visual document for comment on their effectiveness. There was a gentle referral to semiotics with a discussion of the portrayed narrative. Three distinct styles were presented,

- Images that worked as a record (iconic).
- Images that gave a feel and a narrative (indexical).
- Images using text to add meaning (symbolic).

[39] *An online pinboard that can be shared.*

We used the 3 images in a visual document to discuss the effectiveness of the competitions' photography.

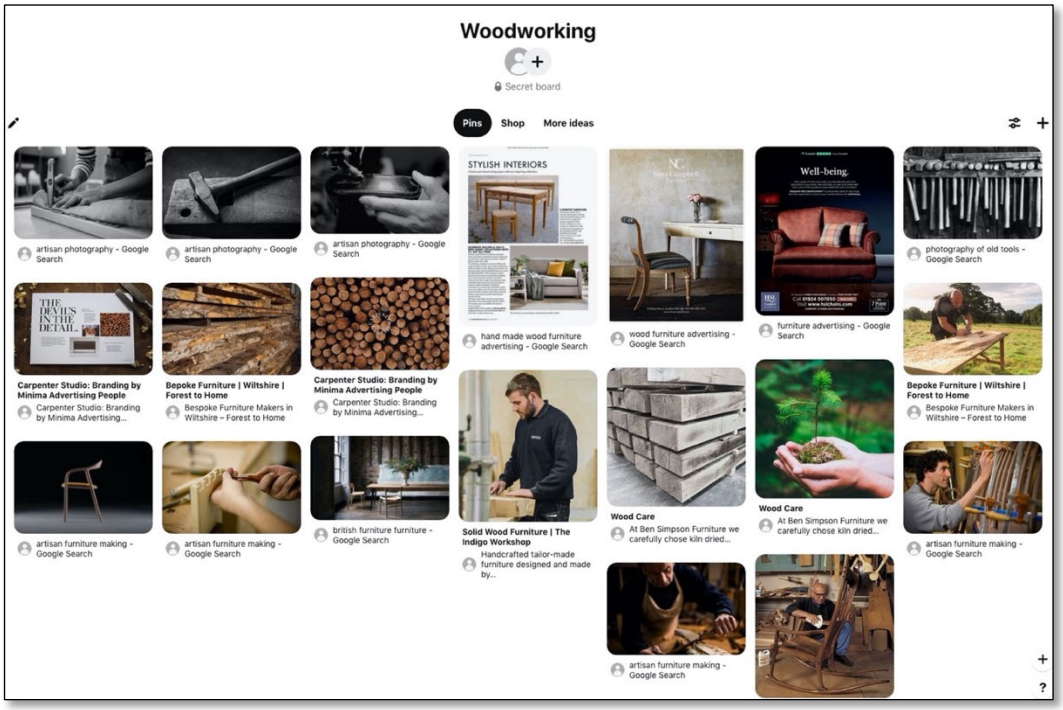

Figure 28, CTF, co-created Pinterest board.

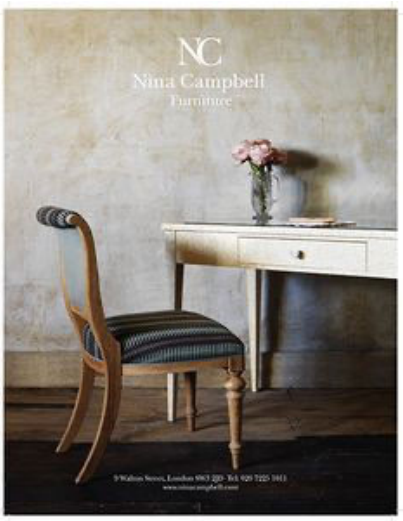

Figure 29, CTF, Nina Campbel advert.

CTF (p.27-37, App.2;1) found it strange discussing the narratives behind the imagery, but with time we made progress in exploring aspects of visual metaphor. Peter did not acknowledge anything from the advertising picture in particular (fig.29) after I described the image as suggesting long warm days in the villa writing and sipping tea. His response was *'I would like to see more of the chair front.'*

He began to see some narratives when we examined the image of a carpenter planing wood in a field with trees as a backdrop, although he still wasn't convinced. As I asked about who influenced him in his craft he surprised me and referenced a John Makepeace. (p.33. App.2;1)

'This guy to me is a legend…..a very clever woodworker. It's a piece of art.'

This breakthrough was an encouragement not to stick to the set questions, but talk around the subject allowing the conversation to drift, and you never know what may surface.

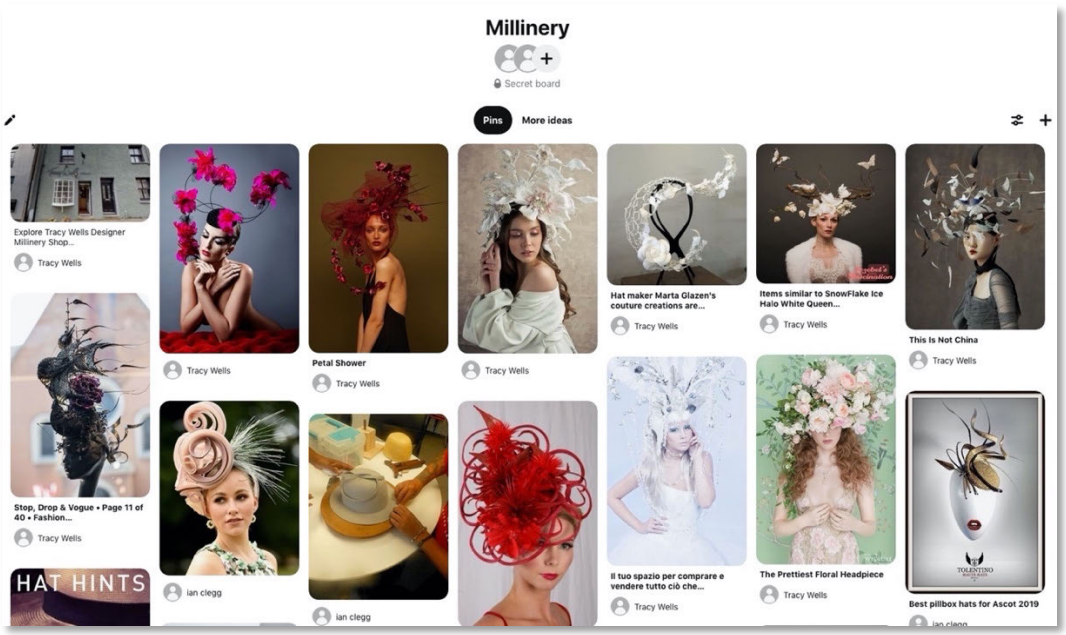

Figure 30, TW, co-created Pinterest board.

Figure 31, TW, http://tolentinohautehats.es/ Magazine Advert.

It seems that TW (p.27-33. App.2;2) does not 'brief' photographers but lets them '*do their job, as they are the experts.*'

Tracy's comment had me recalling similar meetings with large companies where the Marketing Director in trying to 'brief' the photography, makes remarks with the same undertones -

'*You are the creative people, do something creative.'*

This type of unhelpful statement passes the buck to the photographer, giving them the obligation to produce an image without the help of a pre-determined brief.

Tracy didn't understand the process of deconstruction of images but did take part and engage in discussion. She relies on the photographer's initiative when commissioning photography, being more comfortable talking about the product itself rather than the narratives of the image. Tracy made some erudite comments about this particular image (fig.31). On the suggestion of whether she ever uses still life photography, Tracy said no but maybe it is helpful as you don't rely on the model. She went further to say the hat could easily be placed in the correct position without using a real model. The comments were encouraging, and Tracy was clearly happy to experiment, especially with still life photography.

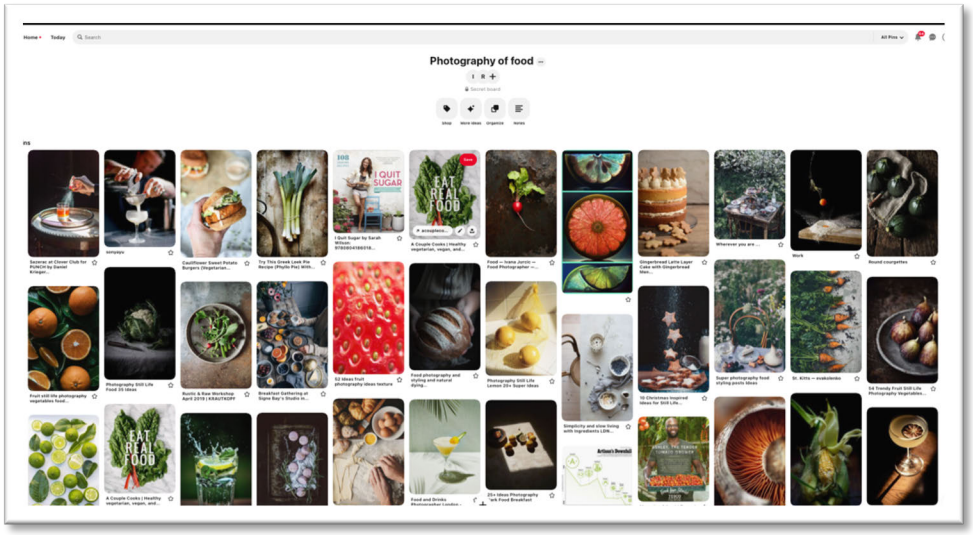

Figure 32, Ripe, co-created Pinterest board.

Figure 33, Ripe, Claire Winkle, https://blog.intact-systems.com/fighting-food-fraud-vaccp/

It was apparent that Ella (p.27-33. App.2;3) did not agree with a deconstruction of the narrative and suggestion of semiotics in imagery. Although when pressed, she read the images with great insight. Her experience at art college seems to have given her this view. A photographer can see that the image (fig.33) is a studio shot but it's not as obvious to other people. Ella is very perceptive and did pick up on that, saying it was prescriptive. I would agree, the olives are placed around the base, and the bottle is not held by hand but clamped out of shot. Ella said she hasn't got time to take photographs like this, setting it up, getting props etc. Although she adds that it looks too prescriptive.

This conundrum occurs when one tries to create the photography oneself rather than commission it. The conversation brought up the poor experiences she has had with editorial photographers. The photographers didn't communicate for the articles in local papers and magazines (p.28. App.2;3), and images and words went to print without Ella's approval. This highlights the need to discuss the shoot beforehand, artisans know their own business and are the best editors of the story; communication is key.

Good practice comparisons.

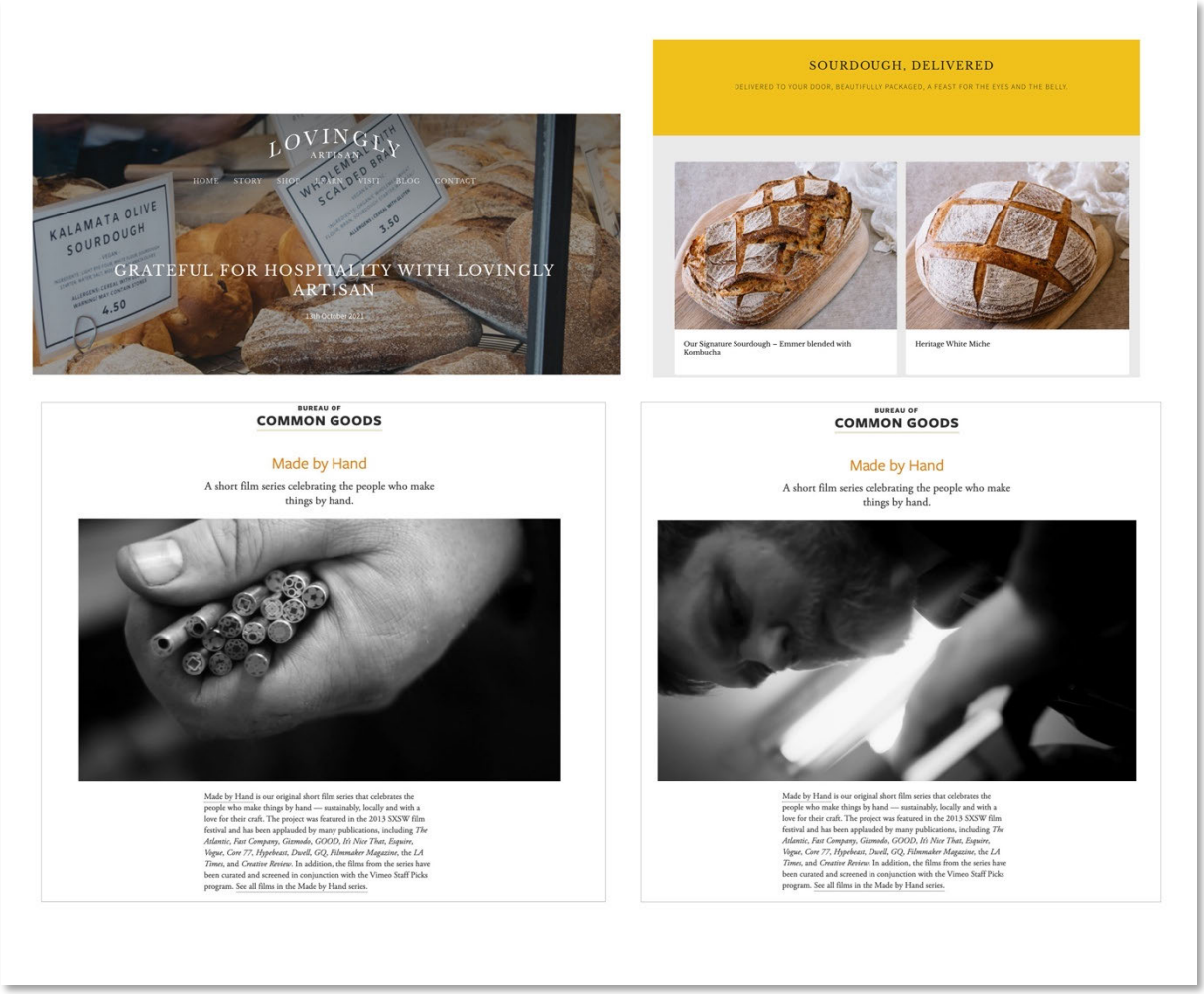

Figure 34, Examples from Bureau of Common Goods, Lovingly Artisan.

To end the elicitation sessions, we looked at another two possible artisan competitors (the Bureau of Common Goods and Lovingly artisan) websites, these I presented as good practice as they worked as co-operatives and utilised a rigorous brand look to their presentations. Both these companies show handcrafting and attention to detail. The reoccurring word in their supporting text was quality. All the participants agreed that they had the same ethic. The plus point was that they admired the attitude to the work, liked the photography with the reservation that it looked expensive, and commented that none of the competitors' businesses had a real high street shop (they were working out of town in industrial units).

Elicitation conclusion.

The elicitation brought out some great key points about each of the businesses. Not only is it an icebreaker it draws the artisan closer into the photographic production. Photographing their own business then comparing the images to the competitors focuses the mind. It is difficult if not impossible to describe a business in three images, but on social media platforms, sometimes we get to show just one. The participants have revealed through these images what is important to them in their business. The comparison to other businesses' strategies has given insight into the importance of controlling input and intents at the beginning of a project.

4.3 COVID-19 and the enforced changes.

A collaborative environment was forming with the participants, and there was progress being made towards the briefing documents stage when the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. Everything came to an abrupt halt. As the pandemic took a grip on the world, the challenges upon the retail environment grew. My initial thoughts were, should I continue with this research? Would I just be in the way of my participants and their struggle to keep afloat? Each participant was contacted to request a specific meeting regarding whether we should carry on with the research. The response was uplifting, rather than being an observer and researcher on the periphery of the business, two of the participants encouraged me to become more involved and maybe play a part in supporting the businesses.

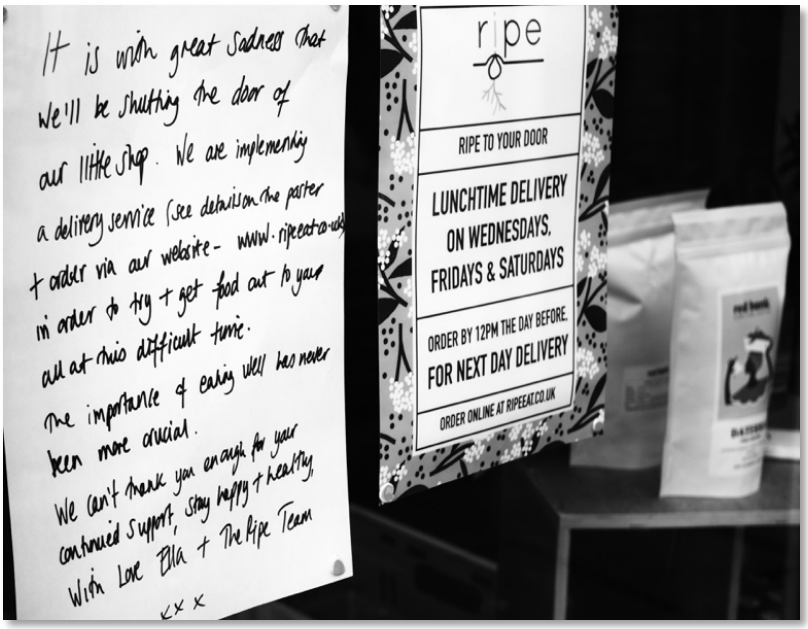

Figure 35, Ripe Food, Lockdown. A window note explaining the shop closure.

A ‘think tank’[40] style meeting was held with each participant to discuss possible responses to government lockdown rulings[41] and how the businesses would survive without a high street presence. The importance of photography combined with an online presence was understood by all three participants as the ‘only’ available substitute for a closed shop.

We discussed that the only way forward was sales through imagery production, but there was a balance to be struck in preserving brand preference[42] and sales. The use of stock imagery[43] was ruled out as every item and process was unique.

So, the research continued, and via my practice, we created imagery via briefing documents that set out new objectives and intentions to generate immediate sales.

Meeting 1 -

CTF was aware that diversification was needed but was confident they had financial contingencies available for at least a month. However, as the lockdown dragged on, CTF was forced to reinvent part of the business, selling sawn timber from his stock. To make this happen, CTF had to press the button on a website as part of my immersive research, and in collaboration, I designed and populated it with content and new photography.
https://cumbriatimberframeandjoinery.co.uk/

Meeting 2 -

TW chose the most diversification with her product. Initially, to make postable accessories for her hats sold via Instagram, comprising brooches, masks, and pins. Another area was to create online workshops, facilitating the homemaking of simple headwear and selling the material kits and access to the video workshop. All of this required photographic input to visualise the offer to the customers.

Meeting 3 -

Ripe decided to put the business on hold, and wait and see how the pandemic played out. Ella prioritised her own well-being over that of the business. We had a meeting before the shop closed and Ella though she might start an experimental small-scale home delivery service funnelled through their website.

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[40] *A meeting where all ideas are valid.*
[41] *Lockdowns made legal requirements for non-essential retail outlets to close, Mar 20 -June, Nov 20 -, Jan 21-April 21.*
[42] *Keeping the customer base interested in the core product.*
[43] *Pre-shot imagery for sale through photo libraries.*

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is considered in other areas of the thesis (see 2.2) and has unavoidably become interlaced into the research. It has not materially changed the methods; it's just that the methods have flexed and accommodated the different expectations. The inescapable reality is that the research data has become more relevant, richer and original.

4.4 The briefing document at work.

Effective outcomes can be achieved with vastly reduced budgets when dealing directly with a photographer, also narratives are less likely to be lost in translation. A briefing document is an instrumental part of the creative process and enhances the approach to image creation. It is a method taken from advertising agency procedures where many people are involved: the brief is a go-to document and a reference point for the client and agency for the whole creative journey, including roles schedules and branding boundaries. I have adapted it to be aimed purely at extracting photographic narrative and intents, then to clarify the context. The process helped establish some unique perspectives on their businesses. More than just image-making, it's an opportunity to realise artisan stories through photography.
From discussions of current competitive strategies, we completed a co-constructed briefing document (fig.36) for each of the artisan's photographic projects.
This was a challenging exercise for both TW and CTF because they believed that a professional photographer should intuitively know what was wanted. Ripe has ultimately rejected commissioning photography but agreed that pre-planning might help in increasing the effectiveness of her own shoots. I refer to this situation in the findings (Chap.3).

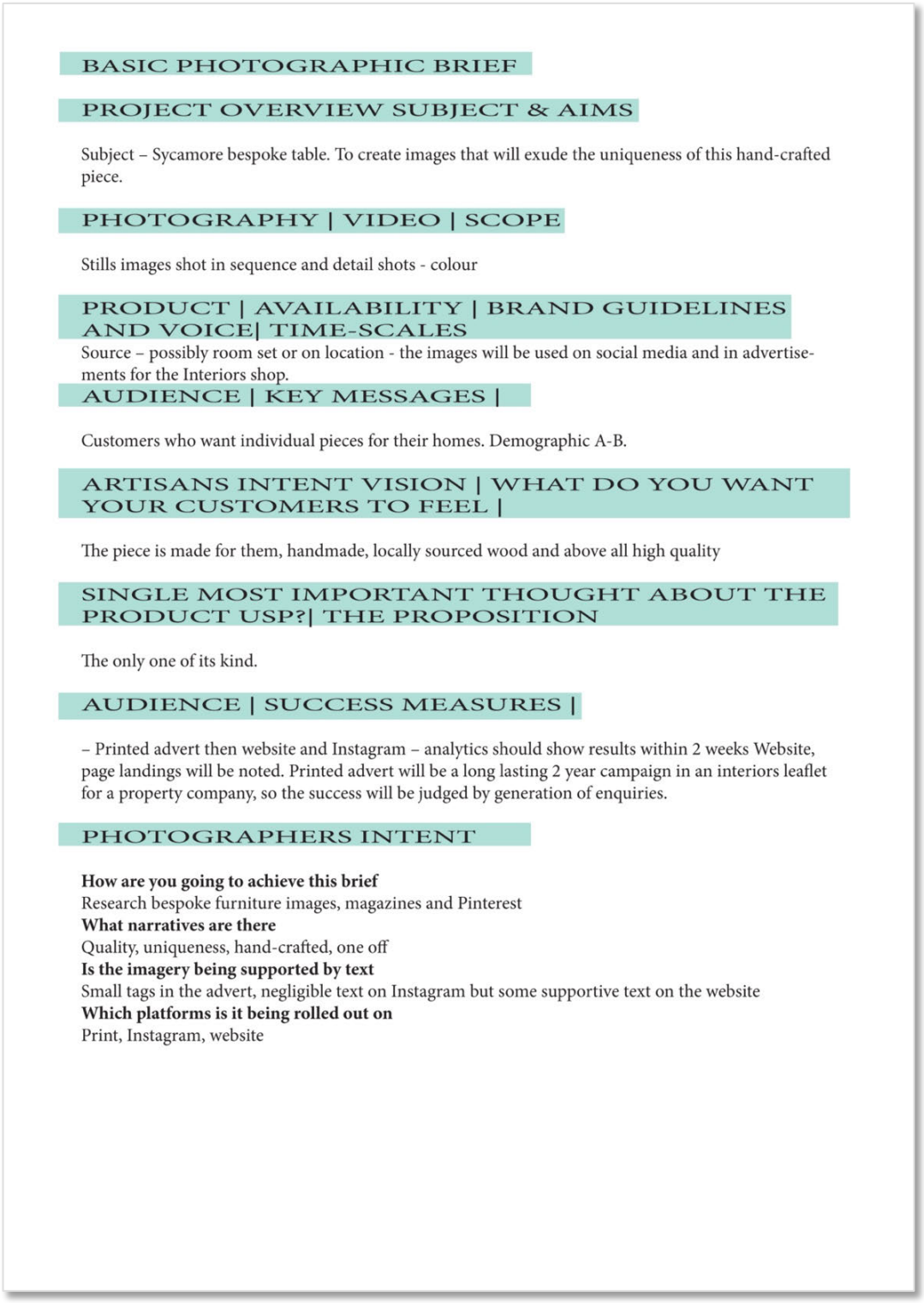
The following examples show the methodology in action, the text is abstracted from the briefs. I also show the photographic outcomes of these 3 particular briefs, which offer context to the intentions revealing what did which didn't reach the final image.
Refer to App.2; 1/2/3 for more and detailed examples.

CTF - Bespoke Sycamore Table (p.62. App.2;1)

Peter wanted to begin photography with one of his favourite items. The sycamore table is what he considers to be one of his best pieces. This project was an opportunity to show the artisan skills of making handmade bespoke furniture. Unique pieces are often a 'lead in' to bigger and more complicated projects as a taster for the customer to sample. Peter puts more time into these than he probably should, he sees them as signature items that show abilities that can be applied to more extensive, lucrative work that may follow as a result.

Peter required photography that would show these skills to future customers. He has very few images of his previous bespoke items.

Co-created Briefing sheet (fig.36) and preliminary sketch (fig.37) ~



BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Sycamore bespoke table. To create images that will exude the uniqueness of this hand-crafted piece.

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images shot in sequence and detail shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – possibly room set or on location - the images will be used on social media and in advertisements for the Interiors shop.

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Customers who want individual pieces for their homes. Demographic A-B.

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

The piece is made for them, handmade, locally sourced wood and above all high quality

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

The only one of its kind.

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Printed advert then website and Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks Website, page landings will be noted. Printed advert will be a long lasting 2 year campaign in an interiors leaflet for a property company, so the success will be judged by generation of enquiries.

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Research bespoke furniture images, magazines and Pinterest
What narratives are there
Quality, uniqueness, hand-crafted, one off
Is the imagery being supported by text
Small tags in the advert, negligible text on Instagram but some supportive text on the website
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Print, Instagram, website

Figure 36, CTF, Briefing document.

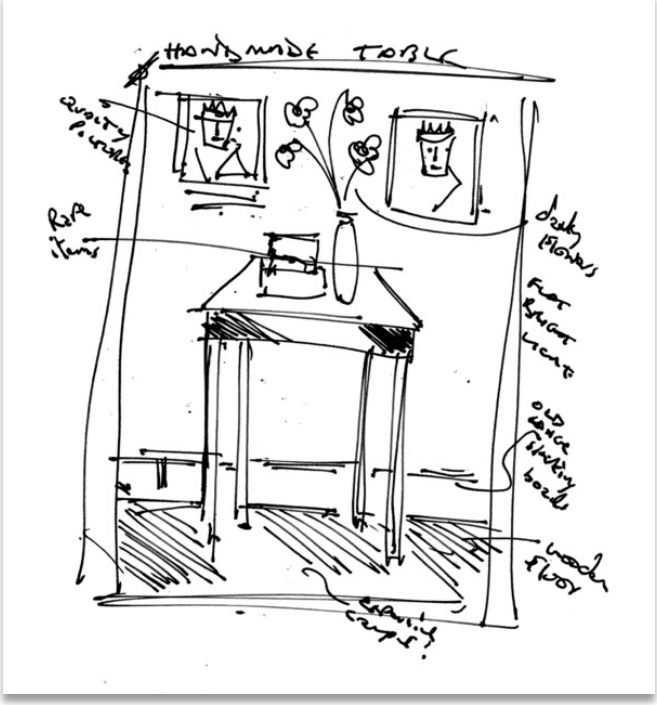


Figure 37, CTF layout sketch to accompany briefing sheet.

Figure 38, CTF final main photograph of table.

Figure 39, Insets of the details, utilised when space and context allow.

With the main photograph, the intention was to construct the table's environment as a high-quality item within a Georgian period house. The minimal number of props signify that its purpose is not really as a true table. It is to be admired and displayed as a beautiful object in its own right. The subtle, low-key lighting enhances the shape of the delicate tapering legs, the shadows were kept light by using an off-camera flash. With consideration to the brief, the table is to be seen by the owner and guests as a statement piece, not just a table. The inset shots can be used to support the narrative of the main shot where permitted, as sometimes the main shot will have to work on its own.

We are selling the pleasure of owning such a beautiful thing with the knowledge of the work that has gone into it, it's not just a table; it is an artisan art piece. That is the narrative of this image, an intentionalised image. Although the table was already sold, orders for other bespoke items came from the posting.

- Iconic, it's a table, in a room.
- Indexical, an artist's plinth, an upmarket environment, an art gallery? Quality, expensive.

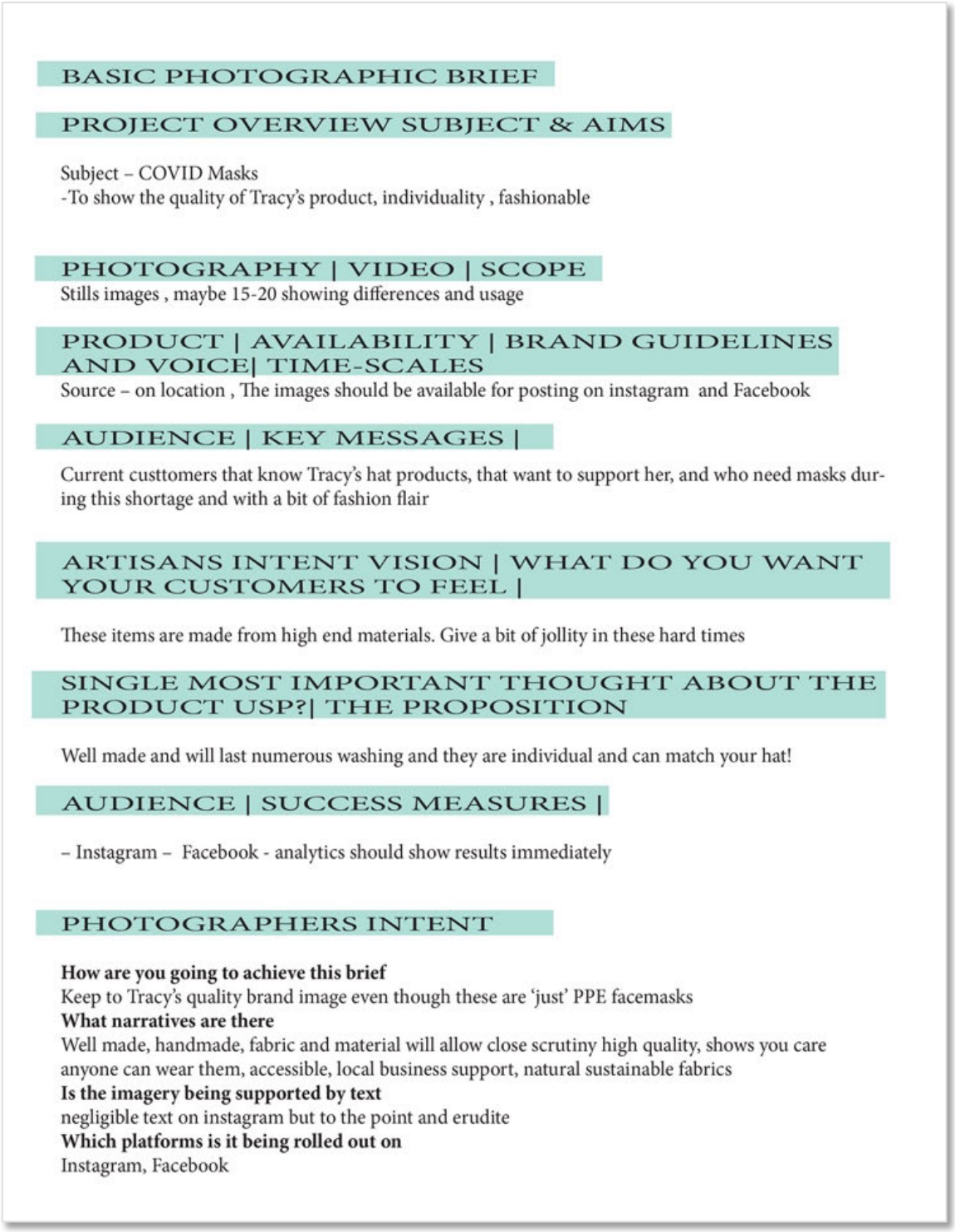
TW - Bespoke COVID masks (p.50. App.2;2).

This was the start of Tracy's plan to diversify during the national lockdown. Her first thought was 'masks' and she turned her skills to produce them for the NHS (for free) as there was a shortage at the beginning of the pandemic. It was an incredibly philanthropic gesture. As the NHS got up to speed with its own supplies, Tracy began making saleable 'fashion' masks out of high-quality material.

Tracy required photography to promote her venture on social media.

Co-created briefing notes and prelim sketch ~

i) Show the masks as individual and as high quality as her more expensive hats.
ii) Show the vast range available.
iii) It is a natural fabric mask that can filter the air.
iv) Image to reflect the gridded context of an Instagram posting.



BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – COVID Masks
-To show the quality of Tracy's product, individuality , fashionable

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images , maybe 15-20 showing differences and usage

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – on location , The images should be available for posting on instagram and Facebook

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Current custtomers that know Tracy's hat products, that want to support her, and who need masks during this shortage and with a bit of fashion flair

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

These items are made from high end materials. Give a bit of jollity in these hard times

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Well made and will last numerous washing and they are individual and can match your hat!

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – Facebook - analytics should show results immediately

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Keep to Tracy's quality brand image even though these are 'just' PPE facemasks
What narratives are there
Well made, handmade, fabric and material will allow close scrutiny high quality, shows you care
anyone can wear them, accessible, local business support, natural sustainable fabrics
Is the imagery being supported by text
negligible text on instagram but to the point and erudite
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

Figure 40, TW briefing sheet for masks.

The briefing sheet gave the parameters of scope, there were 15-20 variations of a mask. They would appear on Instagram, and the audience would be customers who already knew the hats she makes and would expect the masks would be of the same quality. The images were not to be too austere; they were intended to bring a smile during the torrid times of Lockdown.

They work well as personal protection equipment (PPE) but are made from lovely comfy fabrics. And match your hat!

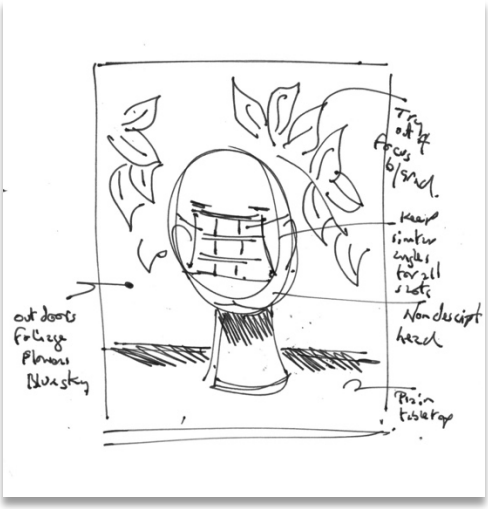


Figure 41, TW, prelim sketch to accompany briefing sheet.

The layout sketch was the outcome of discussing the location of the shoot with Tracy. We decided an outdoor setting would imply fresh air enforcing the primary function of the mask. The natural backdrop would signify the sustainable origins of the fabric.

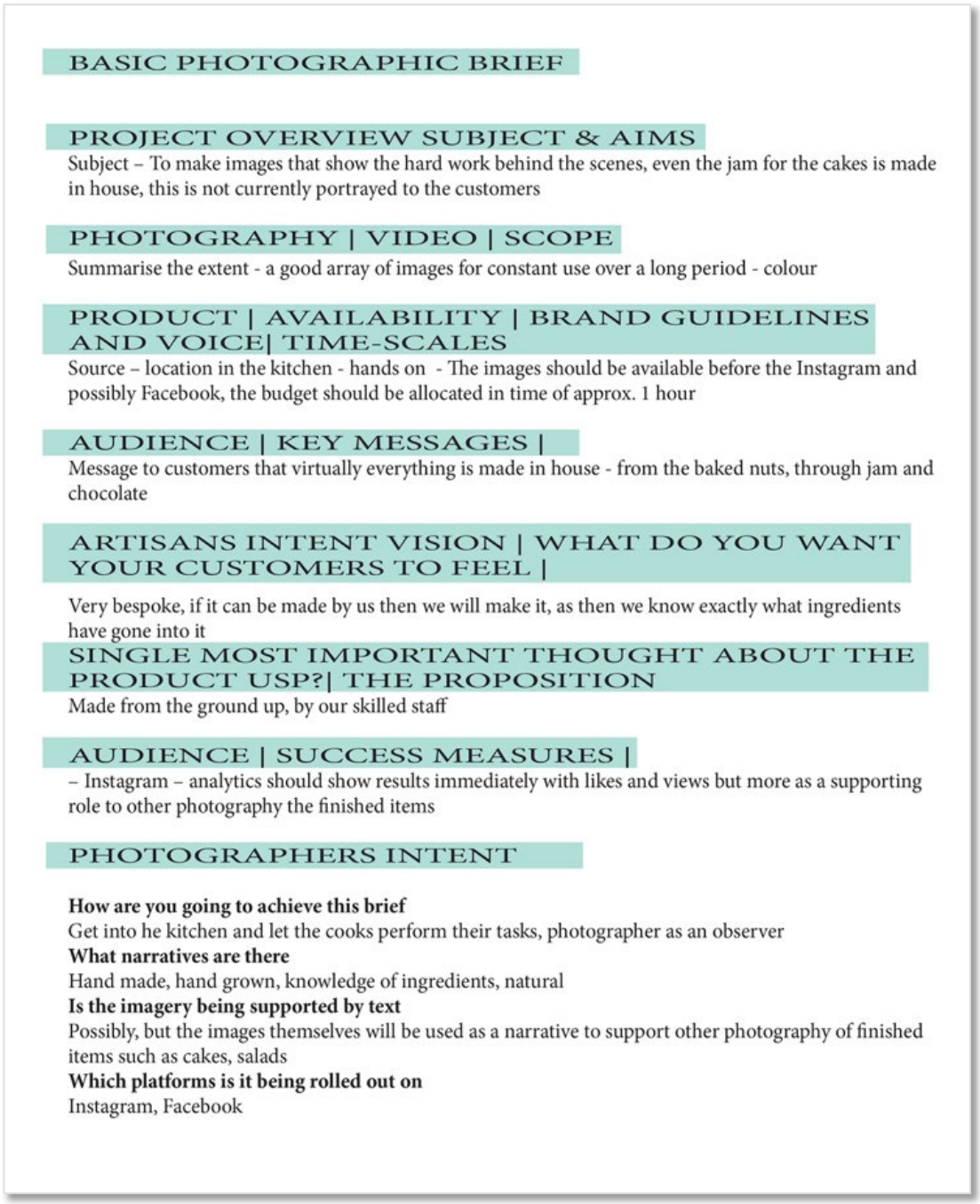
Figure 42, TW Gridded image for Instagram post.

Figure 43, TW, inset of back of mask, utilised where space and context allow.

- A featureless and neutral coloured plastic head model was made; this showed off the mask itself and avoided customer confusion or referencing to a real person's head and face.
- The mask's quality shows in the photograph, using shallow depth of field (in camera), we see the detail in the stitching and fabric rather than a sharp background. The green leaves and flowers further add to the fresh outdoor smell of summer.
- Some masks had patterns on the inside as well, insets were shot on a neutral white tissue background to emphasise the detailing. Finally, the shots were composited, forming a grid showing the whole range in one image. Regimented images fit well within the context of Instagram.
- Iconic, masks, outside, mannequin heads.
- Indexical, natural and feel of nature, fresh air, healthy, worn by everyone.

Ripe - Behind the scenes making of the seasonal food (p.48. App.2;3).

The point of this brief was to show how the food is made. This was a major selling point as all the products, apart from the bread, are made in house. We wanted to produce a range of images that could be used cross-platform, showing involvement and input. We include lots of hands and human elements, emphasising the time and care that goes into the making. It is essential to visualise the many stages, the ingredients, the attention to detail, such as separately baking the almonds and creating the jam filling for the cakes from fresh fruits. The photography should reveal a connection with the ingredients, getting in close as though the viewer was standing next to the cook, utilising tight crops and natural lighting. You can almost smell the cooking.



BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – To make images that show the hard work behind the scenes, even the jam for the cakes is made in house, this is not currently portrayed to the customers

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Summarise the extent - a good array of images for constant use over a long period - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – location in the kitchen - hands on - The images should be available before the Instagram and possibly Facebook, the budget should be allocated in time of approx. 1 hour

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Message to customers that virtually everything is made in house - from the baked nuts, through jam and chocolate

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

Very bespoke, if it can be made by us then we will make it, as then we know exactly what ingredients have gone into it

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Made from the ground up, by our skilled staff

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results immediately with likes and views but more as a supporting role to other photography the finished items

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Get into he kitchen and let the cooks perform their tasks, photographer as an observer
What narratives are there
Hand made, hand grown, knowledge of ingredients, natural
Is the imagery being supported by text
Possibly, but the images themselves will be used as a narrative to support other photography of finished items such as cakes, salads
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

Figure 44, Ripe briefing sheet for handmade narratives.

Ripe initially only had images of the final product, new photography would show the fact that virtually everything in the shop was made from raw ingredients, even the salads have locally foraged nettles in them. Amazingly the customers aren't aware that the food is made from scratch, this lack of communication with the customer is a common occurrence with artisans, they become so involved in the making they forget to reiterate primary benefits to the customers. It is the simple details that make the artisan product what it is.

The solution was to organise a shoot that would focus on the incredible attention the food was given before the customers bought it. The scope was to have a bank of images that could be used over a long time in many situations. It was to be a short shoot intended to portray the

bustle and skills of the cooks in the images. No setting up of the photography was required, the photographer would be a mere observer of the process.

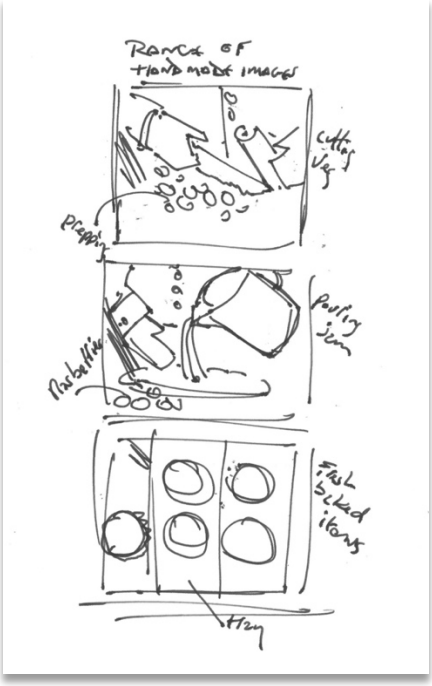


Figure 45, Ripe rough sketch to accompany brief sheet.

This sketch (fig.45) helped visualise the narratives and provided some visual notes of what might be happening at the time of the shoot. Basically, lots of chopping of vegetables, pouring of sticky chocolate and jam and hopefully some items ready to go into the ovens. This pre-knowledge is also helpful in that the photographer can bring the correct equipment on the day and allowing more time to focus on creating the narratives of the photography.

Figure 46, Ripe, a selection of the captioned images.

Images of the making are a powerful tool in presenting the story, they give the product artisan provenance and add value. From the selection (fig.46), we see hands in every shot, the artisan is involved. Wooden spoons, hand mixing, close up crops all invite the viewer into the shot and feel a part of the making event. Plastic equipment, essential for health and safety, unfortunately, looks ugly, only hints of it are suggested in the background or cropped into. These shots can be used throughout the website to keep reminding the customer of the product's origins, which are -

- Iconic, a kitchen, hands and fresh ingredients.
- Indexical, handmade, healthy, care, individual.

4.5 The design analysis documents (App.2;1/2/3).

App. 2
App. 1 App. 3 App. 4 App. 5

This immersive fieldwork and research had to be action led as the landscape constantly changed and new influences affected the planned outcomes. The ‘design analysis document’ (fig.47) was a medium to charter the separate research phases and reflect upon each participant's unique challenges. This produced interim findings highlighting the route to the following stages. Through a sustained programme of listening, discussion and conversation

Bullimore, (2003, p.35) confusion was minimised and trust built. The interaction between the researcher and the participants are detailed for each applied method. The outcomes of which are rigorously reflected upon.

Each document consisting of over 80 pages has the same chapter headings allowing for a straightforward comparison and interpretation of the data. They conclude by gauging the projects' effectiveness and imagery produced from the research, employing analytical tools and actual sales information.

The design analysis documents are the bedrock for populating and producing an appropriate practice-based vehicle.

Chapter headings for each design analysis document:

Introduction

1. Selection, decision tree.
2. Paperwork, ethics and consent.
3. Photo elicitation.
4. Photo deconstructions-structured interviews.
5. Building a briefing document.
6. Co-creation of bespoke imagery.
7. Digital platforms.
8. Further images created.
9. Findings.
10. Reflection.

It is a straightforward method to keeping an overview of a process, similar documents are created for engineering or scientific subjects and are referred to as technical reports. Seldom is such a structured document used for a creative process. They have provided a useful framework to quantify and reflect upon the same methods applied to different participants in this instance.

The following summarises the findings for each participant, taken from the reflection in the design analysis documents.

CTF - Design analysis document - (App.2; 1) (fig. 47)

The main points of reflection-

My practice has shifted to working with the actual creator of the products giving a direct uninterrupted line of reference. The artisan’s ethical thoughts of how a business should be run fed directly into creating the images. The elicited images’ feedback immediately showed

what the artisan thought relevant to the business, an almost unconscious acknowledgement of what was important.

In this case

i) Hand crafted, using hand tools, supported by the highest tech machinery.

ii) The sourcing of truly local materials - from tree to product.

iii) Artisan's immense knowledge about the different types of wood and applications.

iv) Pride from the artisan in producing the quality product.

We came to a mutual understanding that the photographic image was crucial in presenting these narratives (I didn't use the theoretical terminology of semiotics). Instead, we used accessible terminology to deconstruct the meanings of images.

This participant had a negligible digital footprint at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now the company has a fully functioning Website supported by social media streams. Ironically it has also made the high street shop very productive, the staff using terms like 'click and collect' or 'hashtags' as part of their daily vocabulary. The customers who do visit the shop have to book a slot to maintain social distancing. This paradoxically has created focused customers, rather than a passing, browsing and more often than not a non-buying customer.

The research has highlighted that a photographic led social media presence is an essential requirement for this artisan's business. The success of the images and the interaction of approach is gauged from the standpoint of the creation of new business. Peter is overwhelmed by the success of the enquiries, requests for quotations through the website include ~

Wooden Conservatory -Dunblane house.

Beach cafe - New build timber structure - Silecroft.

12 Chalet pods of bespoke design Lakeside - Penrith.

Parish Hall timber frame - Lamplugh.

Parish Hall - Bouth.

Finsthwaite - Pods.

Bespoke - Tables, chairs, gates, worktops, mirrors, chopping boards and more.

These have all occurred in the first month of the new website fed by the image-driven social media platforms, especially Instagram. The more I have interacted with Peter, the more work we have produced and instigated together. Peter's suspicion of linking narrative to photography has changed from the initial slow start to an active involvement. Also, I have

realised that my approach as a ‘total photographer’ has enhanced the final imagery output. Having little to no knowledge of the business at the outset, I now see it as an advantage; I can listen and learn from the artisan. I don’t need to know the details of sharpening a straight edge or carving a mortice joint. But I do need to ready myself to acknowledge unique parts of the business that will help give the narrative to the imagery, exploiting these shared pieces of knowledge about the business.

Small things to the artisan can be critical points for the prospective customer. For example, Peter is the only company in the North West that has sustainable wood accreditation; it is a crucial feature to convey in the imagery. If I had not persisted in asking questions and engaging in the whole process, then I/the business would not have highlighted this USP.

When I scrutinise the interaction outcomes and wonder if the interplay between the two parties has been effective, my previous reflection on the methodology’s results says, yes it has. The other overriding factor is that this research occurred during a Pandemic; this alone would make it unique. Still, only rigorous dissemination of the findings from the design analysis documents into my vehicle can make it worthy as well as exclusive.

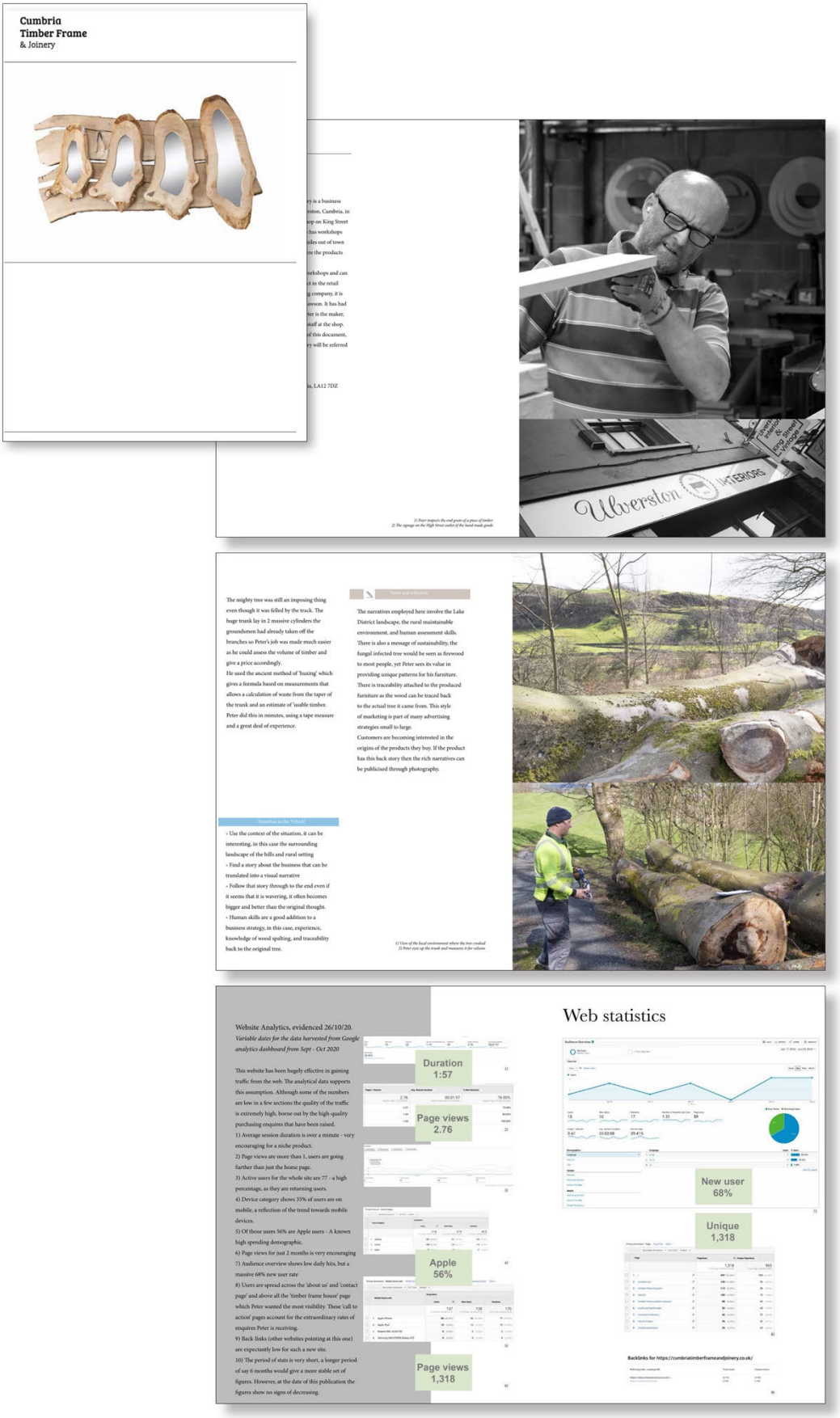


Figure 47, CTF Design analysis document.

Tracy Wells - Design analysis document - (App.2;2) (fig. 49)

The main points of reflection.

This participant had a reasonable digital footprint with a decent website and Facebook presence at the start of this research. The high street shop has been closed for the majority of 2020/1, but Tracy's response to the problem has been magnificent. The products she has been making have been selling online, and the new photography has gone some way in enabling that.

The digital platform as a selling place is competitive and fast-moving; however, similar to the other participants, the customer base has become more loyal and focused. If an enquiry comes through Facebook or Instagram, then they are likely to buy. The still life photography we have produced is ideally suited to distance selling, the product can be prominent because there is no need to use live models, which can be a distraction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Tracy has moved all her products and services online. The fundamental change in the high street has brought the necessity for compelling imagery to the fore, and the research and involvement with the participant changed with it. With closed shops during the Lockdowns, the 'only' way to approach Tracy's customers is through online platforms, creating a requirement for photography and making it more pertinent than it has ever been. The small business permanent closure rates National Annual Average, has been running at 40% (Simply Business, 2020). This sorry state of affairs has been mirrored in Ulverston (fig.48), Tracy's shop and business has done well to stay the course.

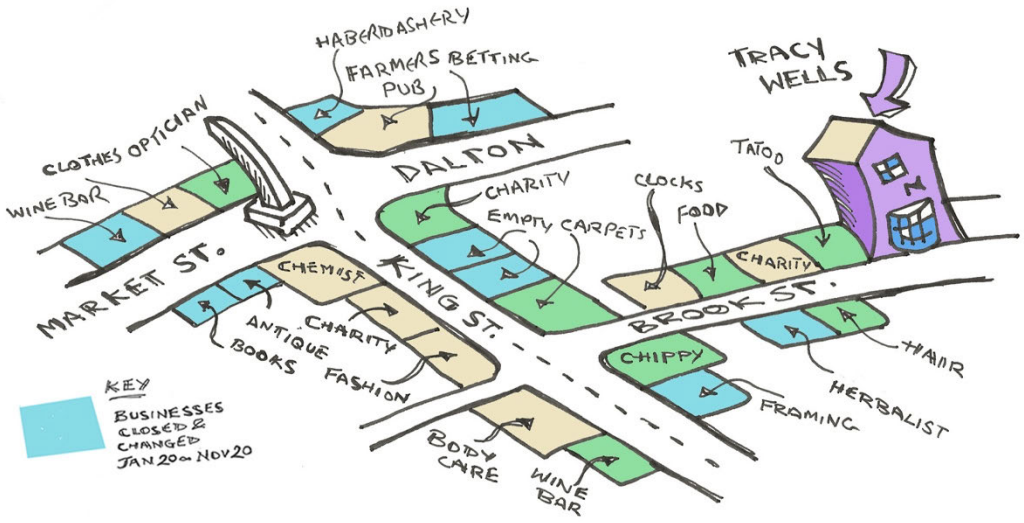


Figure 48, Shop closures and change of use, 35% Jan20-Nov20 (App.2 p.78).

Tracy has diversified her products and service more than ever. The majority of new enquiries for her skills and product have been from new customers, she has fortified her brand and branched out into online teaching at academic institutions and skills workshops.
Some key moments led by photography it the last 14months -
Creating Masks for the NHS.
Fashion masks.
High-end accessories.
New styles of headbands.
Supply of kits for homemaking.
Teaching Millinery, Higher Education, Liverpool University, Melbourne University, both online.
Partnership opportunity with a U.K. fashion designer

Tracy did not falter; she embraced the new challenges immediately after the Government imposed the firstt lockdown. Whilst she has taken a long time to be interested in the briefing side of the process, her enthusiasm to get great images remains undiminished.

The more I have interacted with Tracy, the better the photography has become, she has been able to use the images cross-platform. She has created an online following and a community that supports her business.

Small things to the artisan can be critical points for the prospective customer. For example, the thistle brooches are unique, and they are the only ones in the world. That sort of story does not come along every day. Larger businesses would dearly wish to have such a claim for their products. Yet, as it seems the case, the artisan often does not communicate these small yet critical details that only appear through a collaborative approach to briefing and creating photography.

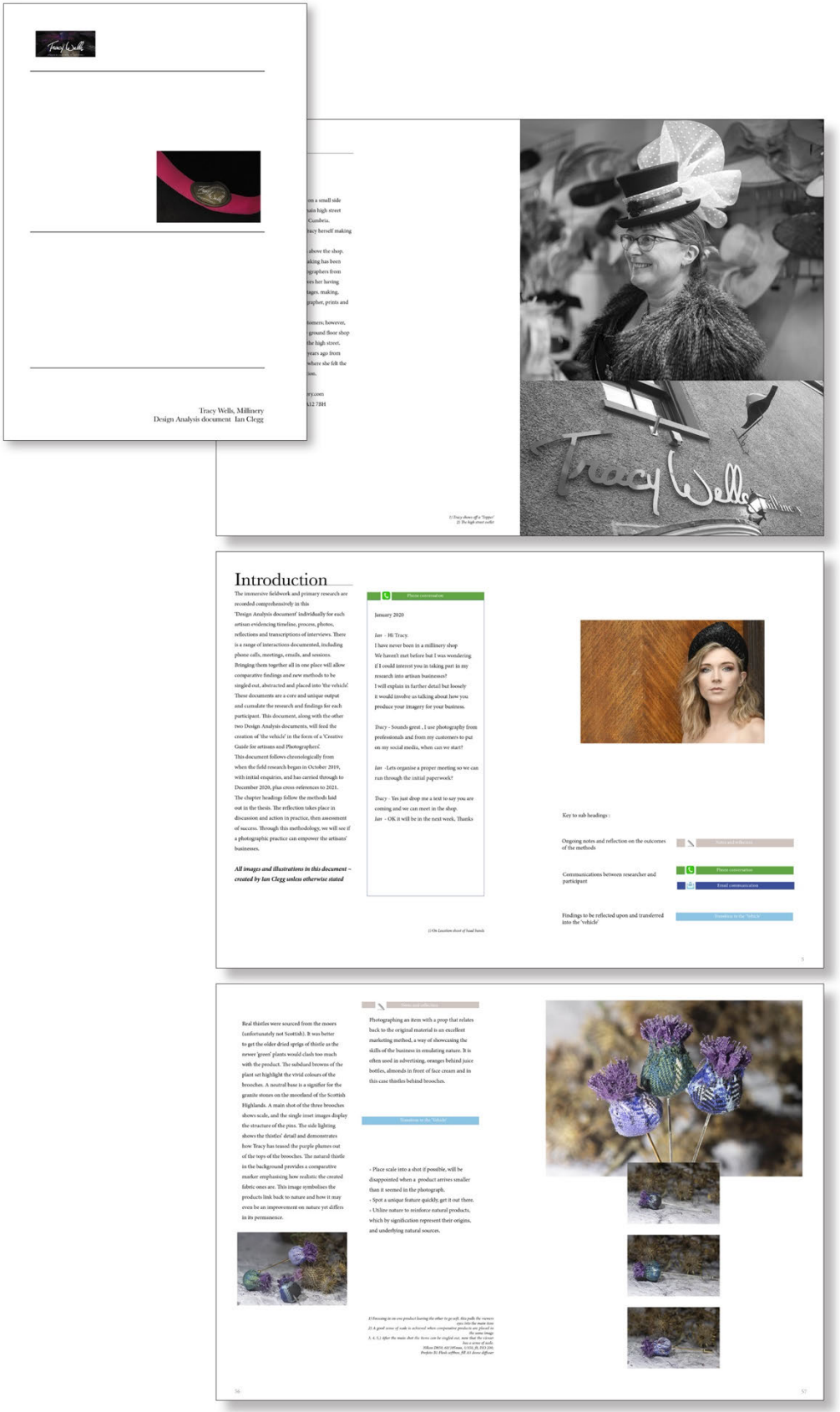


Figure 49, Tracy Wells, design analysis document.

Ripe Food - Design analysis document - (App.2;3) (fig. 50)

This participant has presented different data to the other participants. Ella's insistence on using her own photography has a distinctive effect on the research. This participant highlights that artisan can apply themselves to being a photographer. At some stage, a professional decision has to be made, what is the core business? Is it productive for the artisan to make products and photograph the products? I believe Ella would benefit from discussions with a professional image-maker or even an art director to increase the effectiveness of her photography.

Commercial questions raised ~

Would she pay for the help from a visual art director?

Is a photographer's position redundant in this scenario?

A standard practice photographer would undoubtedly find it difficult to monetise a situation like this, a 'total photographer' would stand a better chance.

The vehicle/book will still be of use to Ella as a maker of images and a commissioner.

As a photographer, I found an advisory role to be the most productive approach to get Ella to open up to the research, photo-elicitation went some way in breaking the ice. I detected that she thought she would never require the use of a photographer and would prefer to take all the shots herself. We must accept that to an extent the camera has been democratised, an artisan must also realise that having the tools does not make a skilled practitioner. In this context, owning a microwave does not make somebody an artisan cook. Ella has the advantage of some experience at art school, so yes, she has skills that would transfer to photography, and if she has the time, then yes, use them.

The business itself is indisputably artisan, and the imagery we could create with such a wealth of subject matter would be incredible. Her stories of producing the products from source, from local foraging and local farms are immense. However, with her other commitments to the business, it seems that the photographic potential is not fully exploited.

Ella's presentation of the images for the photo-elicitation task showed she is clearly interested in the photography. She is a perfectionist and of course, wanted these images to be immaculate and accurate, but the spontaneity was lost. This may have been a confusing briefing issue from myself, with hindsight, I should have insisted on the requirement of only three images and explained that they were a starting point, not a final output. We had good discussions about the language of photography, and we disagreed on the presence of pre-planned semiotics in an image, yet she did see advertising as an art which is a lovely point of view.

The pressure of the pandemic on a small, newly formed business is immense. I fully understand her choice to put the business into tick-over mode and just dabble at 'home deliveries' carefully managing her own wellbeing. It was and still is tough times in retail. Unfortunately, the research was not as data-rich for this participant as the others. Yet, it was an opportunity to obtain perspective on a business that wanted total control of their own images to the extent of not using an external photographer. Additionally, it gave me a viewpoint on other important priorities such as wellbeing of the owner over and above the business.

Ella has excellent skills at image-making but relying on intuition is risky and will often let you down. This is highlighted on Instagram, where images unrelated to selling the business or product can get in the way of effective selling images that talk about the business to the customers. Instagram is a critically harsh environment, if a customer signs up to follow a food site, they expect to see food or food-related images. Ripe is guilty of posting random images not relevant to the core products. But when the photography of the food is posted on Instagram it stands out as healthy artisan produce. The choices Ripe makes about what images to post were good points for discussion about how the large corporate methodologies try, through photography, to look approachable and small. They spend small fortunes to look like Ella's business, and not like the large factory producers they really are.
Through photography, Ella could easily exploit Ripe's substantial untapped areas, celebrating the smallness and personal service.

The amount of care and time that Ella puts into her product is not matched by any of her high street competitors, let alone the large corporates. As Arierly (2012) discussed, customers place higher value on products that show the skill, time and care that has been invested in that product. Ella could take photographs of her process, show them everywhere, print them large in the shop, put them online, send written and illustrated articles to the magazines. The visual opportunities are limitless.

So, in what ways can this business be enabled by photography?

Photograph the progression, be honest about the route from garden to plate,
and blow the competition away! Will it renegotiate Ripe's place in the high street? Absolutely. Get these images out and get the new customers in. No other shop within 10 miles can boast such an offer. And yes, although not fully formed the research into this participant has given some excellent insight into methods of engagement to put in a book.

The contribution to the research from this participant has been unique and given new perspective on the way some artisans reason. Ella has her own interesting views on the value of photography. As a commissioner, her past experience with photographers has been unsatisfactory. Like many other artisans, she becomes frustrated by a lack of competence from other professionals resulting in her trying to do it herself. Artisans quickly become unimpressed by other professionals who are not skilled or interested in their jobs. They believe they should have a passion much like themselves.

Figure 50, Ripe, design analysis document.

4.6 Co-Creation and transfer to the Vehicle.

The following section is a selection of images and details, produced as a result of the research. More images and reflections are to be found in Chaps.8 Appendices 2;1/2/3
Using my practice we created images, guided by the briefing documents. Each image reflects our joint intentions laid out in the briefing documents.

CTF - Timber framed house build.

Peter had an enquiry to make and erect a timber frame house. This was an opportunity to photograph the whole process from the raw timber to a finished house.

The brief was to show the personal touch, handmade and hand-built. Another major intention was to show the speed of the build, from timber to completion in three weeks. The key message was that one person could make an individually designed house that far exceeds the international insulation and quality standards. Peter was not fazed at all,
'I'll just make a house from the plans and nail it together.'

He had produced a house before but had very few construction images, so this was an excellent opportunity to rectify that. Instagram was an ideal platform to show the stages of the construction as we could put the pictures up as they occurred. There was a problem in that CTF didn't have an Instagram account, so it would have to start from zero followers.
We showed through the photography that there were only two men involved in the build and that the house was made as a kit and delivered onsite ready to put together. The house went up in double fast time, which made it difficult to record the process, requiring shooting every day so that any important elements were not missed. Details were photographed, such as the innovative metal webs that hold the joists together and the network of wooden lattice.

There was so much going on in the house that formed beautiful narratives, small elements came together to make an exciting set of photographs. Artisan's skills were shown using photographs of them making minor adjustments as the construction progressed, emphasised by the use of hand tools and human intervention to make sure the job was100%. (fig.51) shows some of the posts on Instagram. The 'likes' were minimal, but the followers increased substantially on each posting. Although actual numbers were small the analytics showed that the followers were migrating to the website and were clearly high-quality followers. As proof, CTF had two new build enquiries within two weeks of the story of the build being posted.

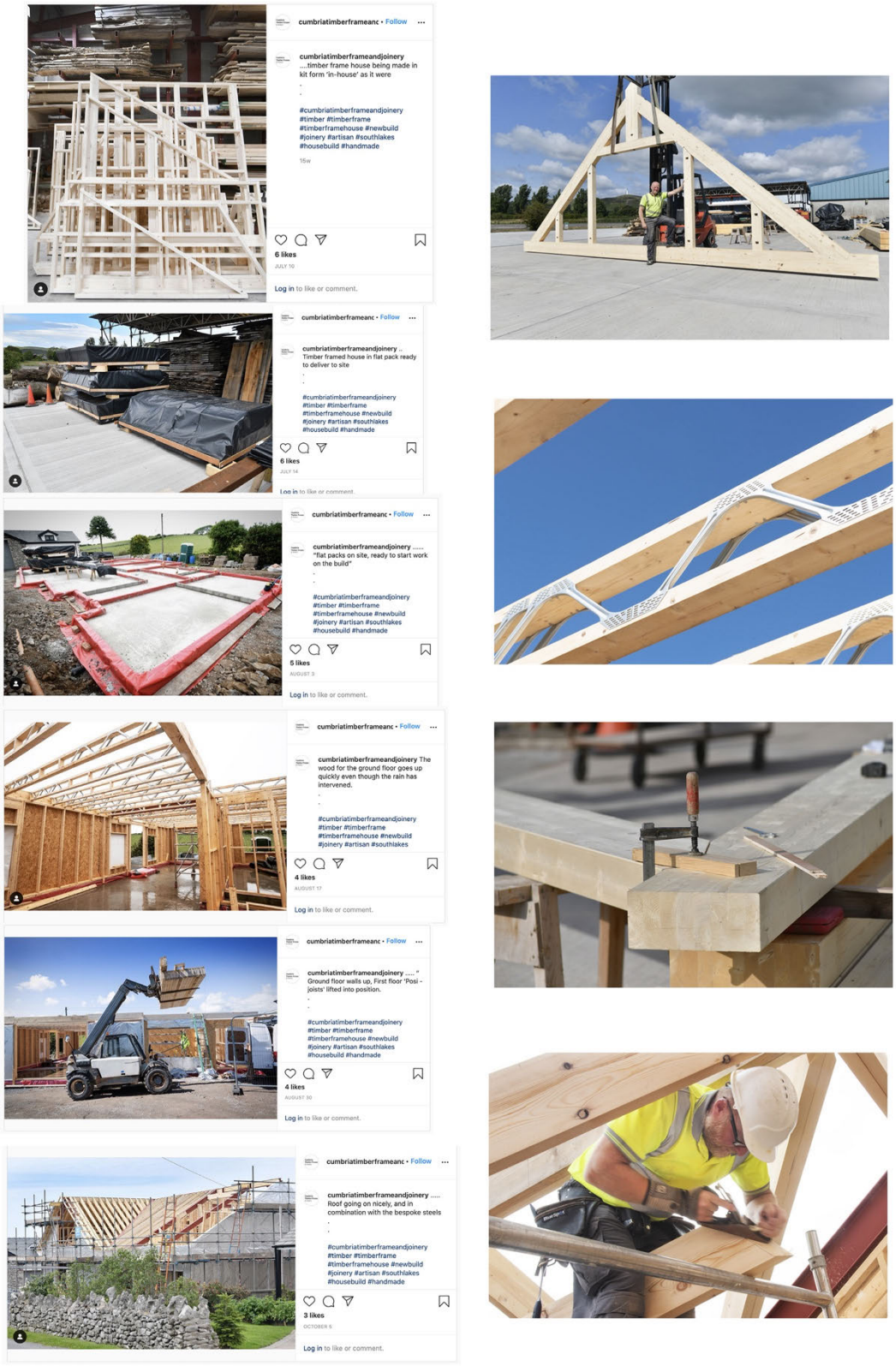


Figure 51, CTF, storyline of the build, shown on Instagram.

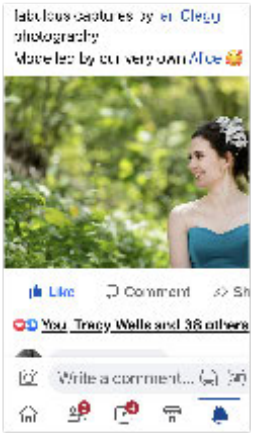
TW - Porcelain headdress.

The subject of this shoot was a handmade porcelain headdress. It is one of Tracy's most intricate products. Each one is bespoke and made from the starting point of raw materials. There is some confusion in the customers' minds. They do not perceive that even the tiny flowers are handmade out of porcelain. She wanted to put the images on Instagram and Facebook. The story, therefore, needed to be told quickly in two or three images.

As these pieces are for special events such as weddings, it was discussed and decided that an outdoor shoot would be appropriate. At these sorts of events, there is usually a photographer and shots of the guests. Tracy wanted the images to portray the model looking proud of their unique headdress, happy in the thought that no one else at the event would have the same one. Tracy does not have a history of showing her work in still life photography. I believed that the product was strong enough to have a simple background, emphasising the extreme precision of the work. The customer could then understand the high cost and relate directly to the model shots.

The Instagram story involved the customer by openly portraying the actual photographic shoot (fig.53) and revealing Tracy making the flowers and the final image of the model as though she was at an event. The still life and inset shots emphasise the hours of input into each delicate flower on the headdress.

Figure 52, Still life porcelain headdress.



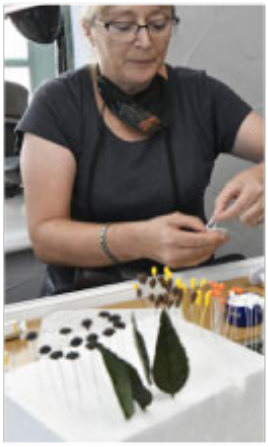


Figure 53, Tracy Wells, Headdress, Instagram, making, and the researcher/photographer at the shoot.

Ripe - Lunch pack - walking on moors.

Ella's business was in complete lockdown, and her shop was closed for the foreseeable future. She had to make a decision and offered a small home delivery service. This was quite a clever idea as she had lost all her lunchtime customers; however, the Government was encouraging people to exercise and walk every day. In response, Ripe offered a healthy walking lunch pack. What better way to display the pack than to show it out and about in the Lake District (fig.54). The idea was to show what a handy size it was, plus it still had the varied food textures of a 'meal deal supermarket lunch, with a healthy slant. Delivered straight to your door before your walk! It was an immediate success and kept her company in the mind of the business lunch customers that used to visit the shop.

The clear signified meanings are the natural setting that signifies the organic ingredients that Ripe puts in the food. The outdoors indexically signify health and long life. The long portrait format entices the customer to 'get out there' and explore during 'lockdown exercise', with a Ripe lunch pack of course.

Figure 54, Ripe seasonal lunchtime pack.

4.7 Digital Platforms.

All the participants and the majority of high street retailers have been forced to take on board the challenge of the digital world. This was bound to happen eventually, it's just the COVID-19 pandemic hastened the move. The pandemic has made the high street look at itself more seriously and as Varley (2021) reports, maybe it wasn't fulfilling the role it should have been before and in the long term, an online presence has given it a lifeline. Business has

to change with the times and each new challenge may seem harder than the last. The pandemic has been a catastrophic event, even though shops were never forced to close en masse in previous harsh times. Hergerty's comment seems to be ringing true,

'Should a brand or a company ever die? The simple answer is no. It happens only when they fail to see change coming and don't adapt to it.'
Hegerty, (2011, p.104)

CTF (App.2;1, Chap.7. p.68-75).

CTF didn't have a live website, only a static beta site[44] posted by a design company years ago, consisting of a logo, stock photography and phone images. It needed completely re-designing. We created new photography were possible. The only carried forward photographs were of items long gone and unavailable, resulting in 95% new images. I designed a new website on paper, utilising pull-down menus for each of CTF's specialities, the story being that although a small company, they were very efficient and could diversify to build a house or a table. After many hours of planning with wire diagrams and hierarchies, the web company were given the design to turn into live pages.

I distributed the images such as the sharp edges of one of Peter's hand chisels, close-ups of the beautiful wooden planks and the bark of a Monkey Puzzle tree around the website to signify the care he puts into his business. Some of the previous phone images could be used for the time being if they were cut out from their fussy backgrounds and buried in the lower levels o the site.

CTF required a narrative that expanded the customers' knowledge of services. It dawned upon them that most of the bespoke project work would cease, and the furniture orders from customers would vanish. Peter changed the focus to selling timber stock. They would be one of the only outlets in the country that supplied exotic timber for the building trade[45]. Of course, the only way to sell this timber was remotely by photography located on the website, but he didn't have any images of these beautiful pieces of wood at all.

We co-wrote the brief, and photography commenced. Each timber had its unique grain and colouration, making it very photogenic. The whole point was to show that CTF stocked more than the usual pine timber. We told a narrative of sourcing the trees, images of the trunks and bark edged planking. Only an occasional prop was used for scale and to signify the handpicked nature of the timber.

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[44] A single paged website with no functionality, normally with a - 'website coming soon' banner.
[45] The building trade was exempt from forced closure by the government.

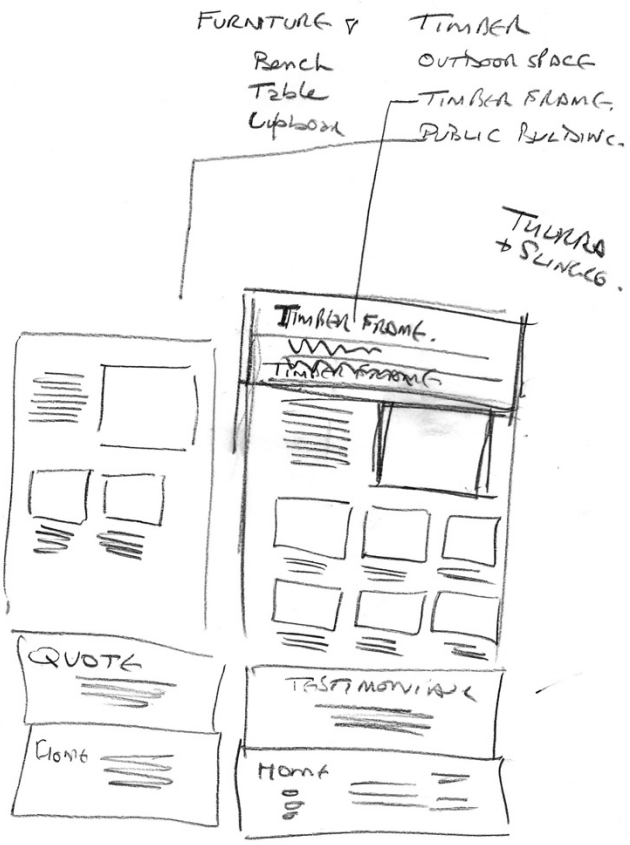

Figure 55, Initial wire diagram for the new website for CTF.

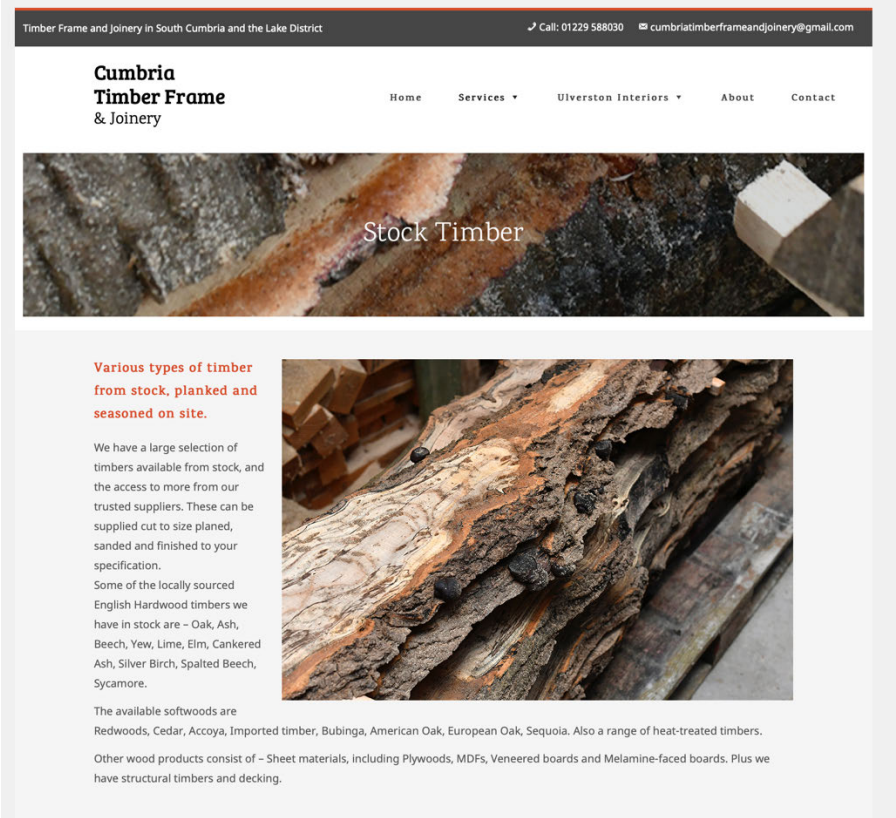

Figure 56, Website introduction to the new venture of stock timber, CTF.

Figure 57, CTF, selection of exotic timbers used on the website, showing detail timber photographs.

Close ups detail shots of the large range of exotic timbers he has in stock were taken and provision made for a very informative and interesting specification page.

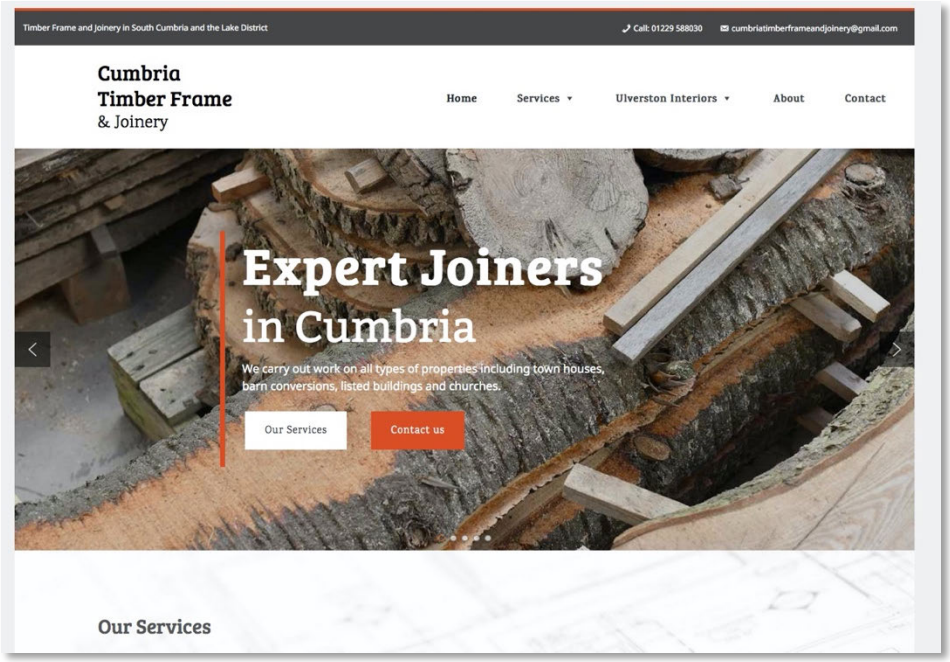

Figure 58, CTF new website and images.

Tracy Wells (App.2;2 Chap.7. p.60-63).

Tracy's plan during the COVID-19 pandemic was to keep in touch with her community. This of course would prevent customers from forgetting about her brand and business. After much discussion, Tracy decided to offer an online workshop, making simple versions of her hats. Promotion would be through Instagram and Facebook. The workshop would involve requesting a charge, so she needed to be careful as these platforms are too public for transactions. Emailing MP3 clips of the workshops direct to customer accounts after payment would provide an element of security. After subscribing, Tracy posted customers a 'work pack' containing all they needed to make a 'Fascinator' at home.

A brief was co-created in the form of a storyboard. The next stage was shooting the video of the 'How to make a fabulous fascinator'. The idea was for the video to look user-generated, not production rich, so I set up the lighting and left Tracy to the actual filming. I later edited and added titles and branding in what has come to be known as short-form video.

Tracy had a strategy, a time limit and a visual script to follow. The video required support with clear stills photography showing the pack's contents and what the customers were paying for. Storyboard to edited video clip and selling on Instagram took just five days. Here is the link to the finished item ~ https://vimeo.com/645781837

Figure 59, storyboard for the video workshop.

Figure 60, Tracy Wells, Fascinator workshop kit.

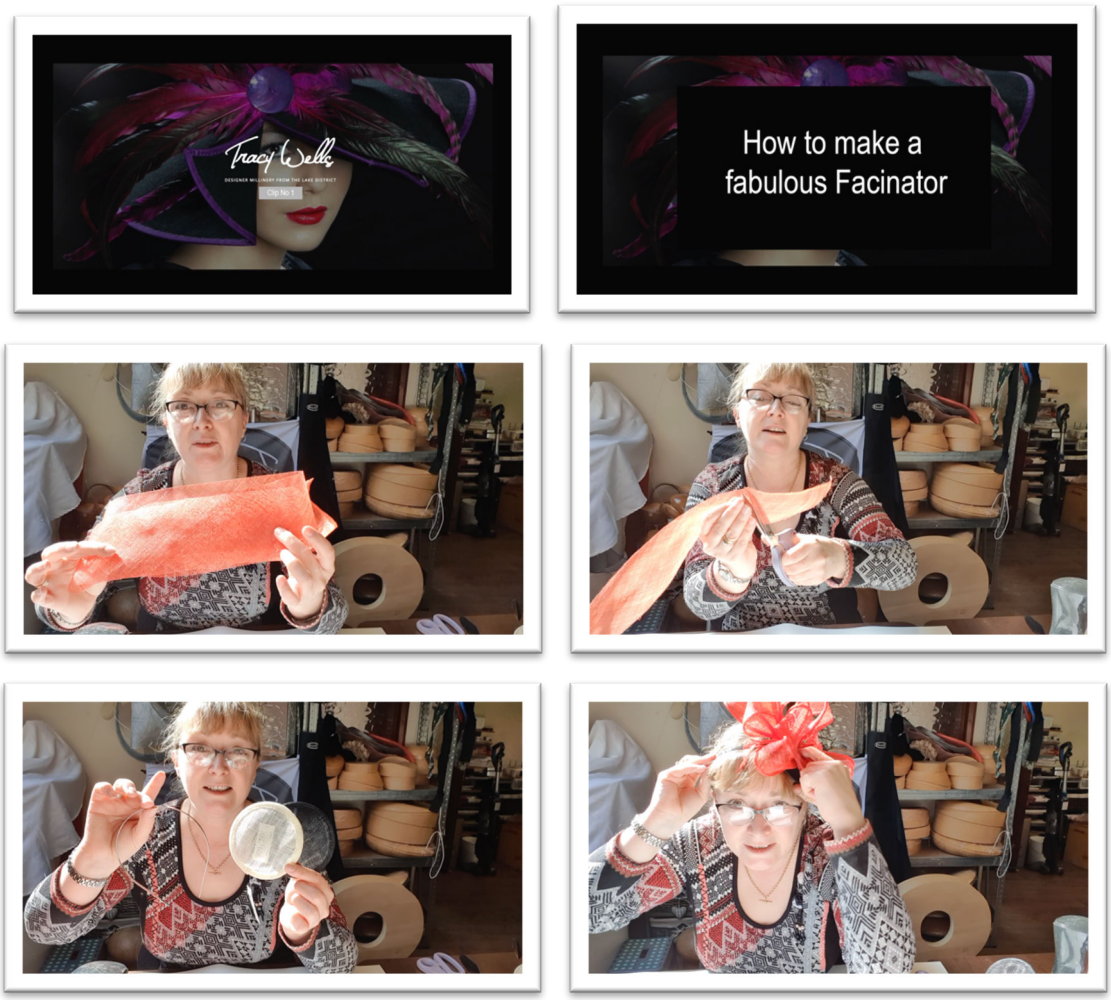

Figure 61, stills taken from Tracy's facinator making online workshop video.

Ripe Google maps (App.2;3 Chap.7. p.67).

Ella is a heavy user of the Instagram platform, not so much on Facebook, she also uses the Ripe website to offer home deliveries. I was involved indirectly in promoting Ripe on Instagram. I created posts on my Instagram site linked to Ella's business feed. I used the Google map web link to demonstrate to Ella how photographic imagery can tell a narrative and be engaging. The Google map search wasn't populated with any images, so I uploaded some of the images from the delivery shoot. This served as a visual reference to the business when potential customers searched for her shop on Google maps. The map service from Google (fig.62) is often overlooked, the address is typically searched from a mobile device and a red marker placed on the map, then the user can click on reviews or photographs of the business, their products or buildings.

Working with the knowledge of the business I had gained previous to lockdown. I wanted to show that the digital platforms were still important and needed maintenance even with the business in tick-over. The success of this small marketing exercise was astounding. The hit

rate was so high that Google emailed to congratulate achieving the 5,000 views milestone mark so fast. It shows the power of just two well-constructed images in achieving a ten month 18 thousand hit rate from a standing start. I hope that in some way, this helped preserve some customer loyalty through this period, translating into to good footfall when the shop is allowed to reopen. As of October 21, there are still only the two images I placed on the Google maps service however the hit count has reached over 34,000. That equates to 63 per day; these are all potential new customers as current ones already know where the shop is. This platform is incredibly powerful and will be part of my practice recommendations in the future.

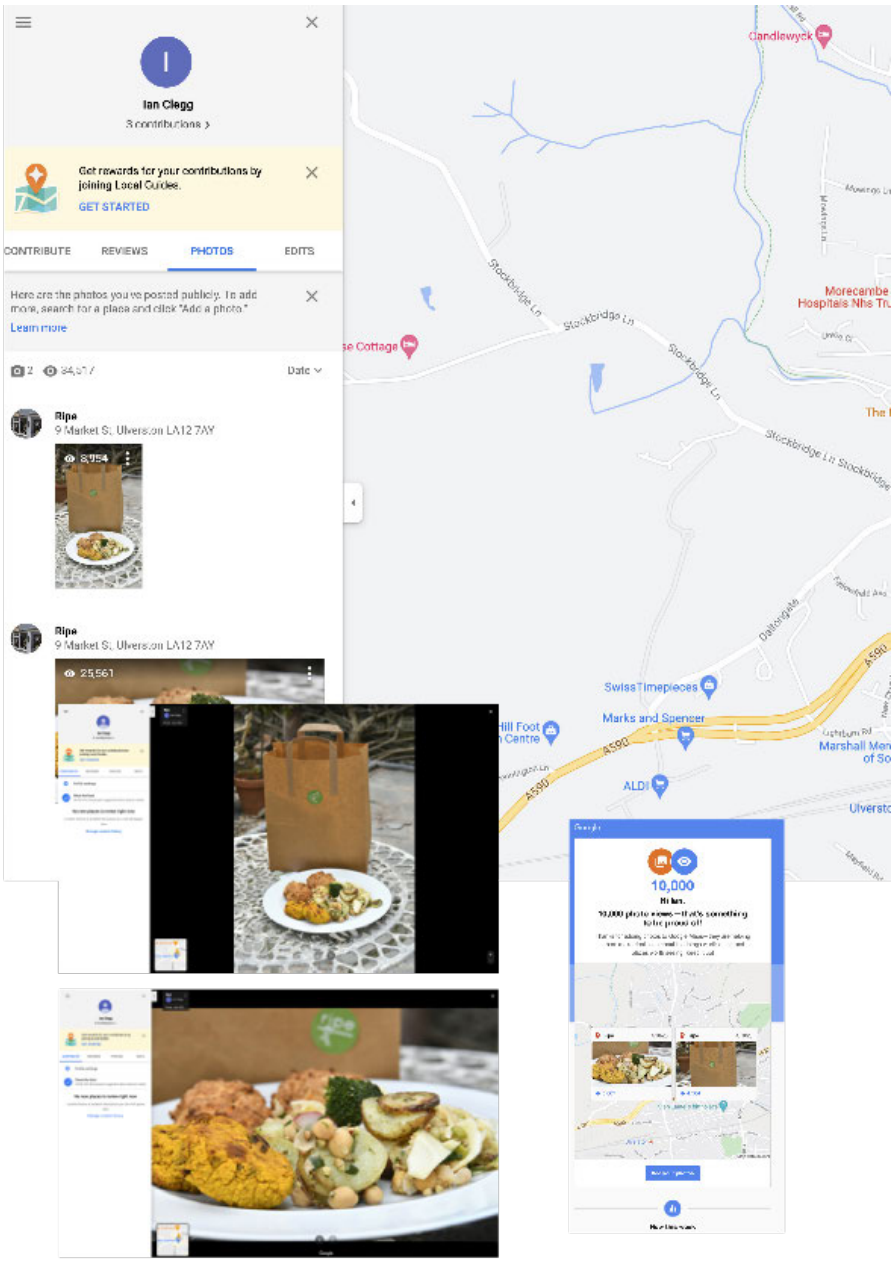

Figure 62, Ripe Google maps search results.

This stage was different for Ella as she preferred to take her own photographs, in addition, communication virtually stopped as business dropped, and priorities of wellbeing over taking photographs became critical. I resorted to ordering food through the website and using my practice to populate Instagram (#Ripeeats). This retained different but effective research levels and allowed me to monitor the key performance indicators[46] through the channel's analytics.

Figure 63, Ripe Food, delivery offer, Instagram feed, Lunch for one.

At first sight, this is a conventional food image (fig.63), but there are signifiers purposefully placed in the shot, evidently the food is the main focus of the image, the food is shown in its prepared form, shot slightly from above so as the viewer might be at a place setting at the table. It is lit with available light (daylight in this case) using reflectors to the left and fill flash to the right. The frame of the camera crops the props to emphasize the product. It also follows the technique of using 'depth of field' to encourage the eye to focus on the main elements of the dish.

4.8 Further images.

The application of methods was kept in the same order with each participant. The image creation was the stage where the intents of the artisans came to fruition. The photography began to diversify to the needs of each business. What follows are some of the images created

[46] *likes and # creations.*

after the participants became at ease utilising the briefing sheets, the stories became more interesting as they realised how the photography could show narratives about their products.

The artisan or small business has always been mysterious to the outsider looking in. The same attitudes were experienced by the researcher. Even Diderot back in 1755 when he tried to investigate the world of skilled making for his Encyclopédie (*Vol.5, p. 647*)

'*criticised artisans who suspected any curious person who asked them questions of being a tax collector or worker wanting to set up a competing shop, the artisans were at times so impenetrable that he suggested that the fastest way of learning would be to enter into apprenticeship or send a secret representative*.'

John R. Pannabecker (1994)

Yet by the time we had produced some images together I seemed to have overcome that hurdle of secrecy and was closely working with them to tell their stories. It was as though the artisans had opened up to the power of the image and allowed me into their underground world, but most of all, it was encouraging to see them exploit and benefit from the authority of photography.

The following examples are selections from some of the photography production.

CTF, after deciding to sell some of their timber stock now had to show the customers the care and time that goes into the preparation. They needed an image that portrayed why their timber was different to the average supplier. The timber must be stored in secure dark rooms drying out slowly to avoid splitting, each plank gently separated to allow the air to circulate. It can stay here for up to ten years until it is ready to be used.

We decided that the rooms had a feel of the warehouses that store ageing whisky barrels. Using the light from the roof window highlighted the grain ends of some of the seasoning planks. There are hints of further timbers in the shadows, signifying even rarer and older stock. This story is of how the wood undergoes this long and quiet process, assuring the customer that they are paying for a considerable investment of time and exclusivity.

Figure 64, CTF, seasoning the exotic and rare timber.

TW had one particular hat (fig.65) which had taken hundreds of hours to make the product had a strong presence as a non-functional and purely decorative hat and was to be presented on a plain and non-interfering background. Cut-out photography or photography on simple unobtrusive backgrounds can elevate the product, where the product is such high quality that it can stand alone on a page. As Bates (2016) describes, the product is solely a thing in its own space, giving it importance and stature.

As with many of the artisan products, the photography needed to show the time spent in the making. This hat has taken hundreds of hours as she handmade each of the 45 leaves all around the brim. A photographic detail shot of the leaves was utilised when the context allowed extra shots.

Figure 65, Main shot, inset detail of the leaves.

As Ella at Ripe takes her own photographs there has been a different collaboration. Although different it has improved/changed the way the stories are told. As the only marketing platform Ripe uses is Instagram, then the photography can be targeted solely for that context.

At the start of this research Ella's photography didn't have clear aims, it tended to wander and make the classic error of assuming the followers were interested in other things than the product. Pictures of cycling trips, walking and unpropped random cakes.

Now Ripe has progressed into photography that shows elements of the initial intent we discussed together at the beginning of the research. The images show human involvement in the product, the packaged products are shown with backgrounds that enhance the narratives. Freshness is constantly referred to with seasonal fruits and vegetables, cupped in the hands that pick them.

Figure 66, A sample of Ripe's latest Instagram postings.

4.9 Conclusion.

There has been a large amount of data created from this research, it would be a tranche of unrelated information without the help of the design analysis documents. They have proved an invaluable way to assess the outcomes of the methods and reflect on each participant. By keeping the three documents to the same structure and chapter headings, the research can make direct cross-comparisons of the feedback and data. The design analysis documents is an ideal medium to record the wealth of photography that has been produced, emerging from the positive and mutually beneficial relationship between artisan and photographer.

5 : Findings.

This chapter brings the discoveries observed in the research together. Here, the answers to the original two research questions are forming. The book's outcome is fed from this chapter as a partial response to the second question.

I have been on an interesting journey, working immersively with creative artisans co-creating photographic narratives and addressing the issues arising when photographing their products. The context of the research has changed significantly over the period. Not only has a physical high street been disrupted like never before, but also my role as a researcher has been far more involved than I ever imagined.

The experience has changed my practice as I find that new skill sets are required as the unpredictable high street throws up new challenges. These challenges have also changed the business strategies of the participants, I don't believe there has ever been such interference in the workings of the high street, and all in a short 18-month period.

This research amid this COVID-19 pandemic crisis has yielded unique new insights that could not have been arrived at in any other way. It has brought to light three significant strands -

5.1

(1) The working environment has shifted.

- Fewer large teams of creatives and production.

There are fewer requirements for large teams, it is now possible to achieve results with comparable impacts with fewer people.

I am moving in different circles, having been used to dealing with a cohort of experts now it's just myself and the artisan.

The artisans are not familiar with the processes of image-making, why should they? They are just people trying to be effective in their own business sector. This context demands different aspects of me as a photographer, I don't have a fellow creative director or designer working with me.

- New mixed methods of working with artisans.

A new way of working

Combining the methods gives a new way of working for artisans and photographers. The mixed-method approach offers a creative procedure that allows the expression of the artisan’s

intent to be revealed early in the process. There are three key new methods that the artisan will not previously have been exposed to. Firstly, photo-elicitation, where the client is given a camera to define their company story or product, is not a normal practice in advertising photography. However, in the research, this method enables an understanding of the intent of the artisan. Secondly, the co-creation of a briefing sheet, which is a new approach, as the advertising sector usually generates this as a responsive independent document. The new method of working involves the photographer sharing and co-creating the briefing sheet as a way of revealing joint intentions and is a methodological change in the relationship between photographer and artisan. The briefing sheet gives shape to the initial intent formed from the photo-elicitation. Thirdly, the design analysis document developed from the advertising agency 'branding document' where its standard usage is as an internal-only guide for the creative teams. In this research, however, this design analysis document is jointly created with the client as an ongoing project assessment tool. These processes combine to give an understanding of the intent of the artisan and photographer leading to the execution of the photography.

- Changing role of the photographer.

The sole trader photographer has absorbed different career skills and become more of a negotiator with a client.

When the intent of the photographer and the client merge, there is a creation of a mutually beneficial outcome, effective photography. The co-design of a briefing document is a manifestation of this. Previously I was just a photographer, a link in the process of creating imagery, joining with other creatives, Art Directors, Copy Writers and Account Managers.

The context with artisans is different in that the photographer has an all-encompassing role (Knudsen, 2016) amalgamating previously separate skills of management, personal relationships and understanding the psychology of the artisan situation.
Another role change applies to working with an artisan. Photography in this instance may be seen as moving away from some of the ideologies of advertising where it is assumed that the photographer will show the product better than it really is. Showing an artisan product is all about revealing its true origins, if made in the artisan way, it is actually better, and the photographer is not required to create deceptive images.

- The total photographer.

A contemporary photographer must be able to offer more of a service than a technical operator.

The finding has surprised me in that it isn't just taking photographs, in the traditional sense. I am a 'total photographer'; as a curator, educator and photographer merged with all the agency creative roles.

> *'The key to commissioning great photography is finding a photographer who understands the vision, and who you think can understand your direction.'*
> Tucker, Keegin, (2021)

The old school attitudes of clients seeing photographers unapproachable as creatives and photographers using clients as commercial exercises must change. Artisans cannot afford to let photographers shoot what they 'think' is right and photographers cannot afford to produce average images that don't speak for the client. I have seen this far too many times where the photographer wants to produce a portfolio shot rather than an image that will actually work hard for the client, just because the product looks beautiful does not mean it will be effective.

Alvardo, Buscombe, Collins (2001, p.17) discuss that even allowing for a photographer's best intentions if the camera operator lacks information or a coherent understanding of production, then any photographs taken by that person must reflect that lack of awareness. I read this as a lack of intent. That person must become, the total photographer, (a modern renaissance person).

> *'We can no longer expect the term photographer as it is most widely understood based on historic fact to accurately explain and encapsulate the role of a professional photographer today.'*
> Scott (2015, p.181)

He goes further, saying that photographers have always been judged by their work, but now they are judged by everyone, I concur that the photographer's images go global fast. Images on social media platforms are publicly mediated. The professional photographer is no longer in the position to set their own pace, a variety of outside forces control them. Both the photographer and the client must understand that working in the digital arena has the potential for incredible opportunity and misfortune in equal measures.

Photographers have been on a roller coaster of change since the 1990s, having to relearn large chunks of their skill base; film to digital, processing electronic files, retouching, prep for print, video clips, these have all become necessary skills for a photographer. The 'total photographer' recognises how the whole business works, supplying a 'package' to the client.

The brief is just an entrée for the photographer to become an analyst, sociologist, and confidanté with human traits capable of creating an informal relationship with a client, resulting in defined outcomes and shared goals.

As a complete photographic solution is sought regarding the product and its creator, we must define how best to use this multimedia environment to tell the artisan story. A ‘total photographer’ can only become a storyteller and co-create a narrative by thinking in this way. Discovering this narrative together involves multi-faceted skills, and understanding business and personal relationships as a totality. This approach has enabled me to discover the complex stories about these products and artisan companies. I am a photographic storyteller working with artisans to co-create a narrative about their products.

- Findings specific to the case studies -

Ripe - Discussions of how to work with photographers has raised the subject of briefing and informing the photographer of intentions before the shoot. Ripe has suffered from this lack of communication leading to inaccurate articles about her company.

CTF - Immersion has led to new skills based around website production and Instagram links. I never thought that linking social media directly to the website would be as successful as it was.

TW - The reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the participant and myself into video production. How else would a small local firm get work from the other side of the world?

5.2

(2) The very language and form of photography itself.

- Questioning the established forms of reading photographs

Semiotics combined with other image-based theories allows the language of photography to be more accessible.

When working with a corporate client a photographer seldom meets and rarely speaks to the product's creators; it is a paradigm shift from my typical advertising and marketing circles to working directly with the Artisan/Maker/Businessperson all in one. In advertising, the brief is usually written by the 'creative' (usually an art director) whose job is to invent ideas, then the photographer uses their technical skills to produce the image.

There is a gap in understanding that the approach to photography should follow a mutually agreed process. I have found that artisans in this research have the perception that the photographer is the expert and images will 'just happen'. They don't have the knowledge to talk marketing or photographic language. It may be beneficial to compare their own skills and methods with a photographer's and draw parallels. For example, an artisan wouldn't make a bespoke item for a customer without trying to fathom out what they had in mind first.

These insights and first-hand primary evidence could only have been gathered by a methodology of immersive research. I am starting to question the established forms of reading images, such as the relationship of the photograph as the signifier and object of its reference – the signified. Can I simplify this for the vehicle, should I even mention it?
How may I approach photography differently from traditional ways of reading images, fuelled by the interpretation and juxtaposition of images from the elicitation sessions? The language of semiotics and rhetoric crosses over into the field of advertising in the telling of the honest narratives of the artisan business.

- A renegotiation about how artisans see photography.

Challenging the perception of photography, can reveal its power of storytelling.

These elicitation sessions provide a methodology that gets under the skin of what the artisan requires for their business. Not just a record, an iconic[47] image, but to suggest with the image what the customer should ‘feel’ (this is what I should offer the artisans) in order to engage with the indexical[48].

[47] *The surface level straightforward image.*
[48] *The associative relationship. The feel of the photograph.*

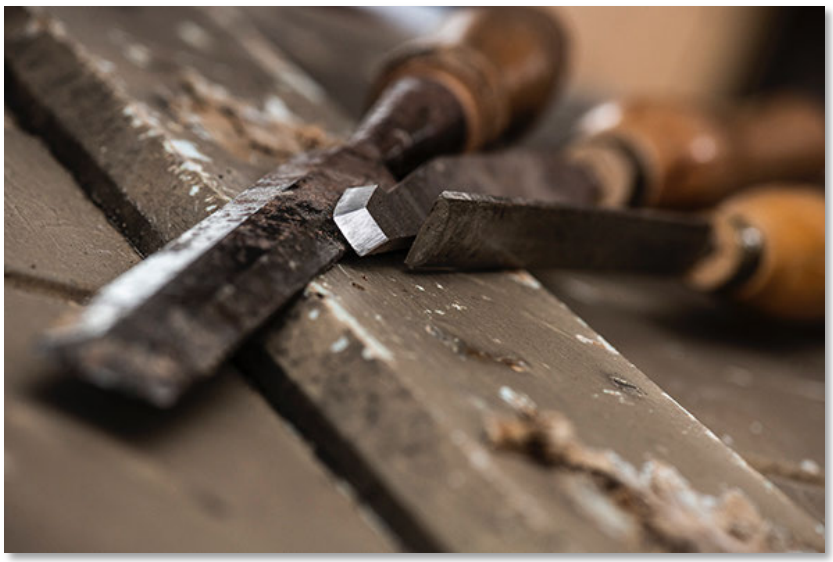

Figure 67, Hand Tools, Chisels.

This was the first image produced for CTF (fig.67*).* The form (the image itself as a sign) is a heap of chisels, but to be effective it must make the viewer feel something, ask them to re-engage with the form emphasising the indexical rather than the iconic. The semiotic relationship between the image and what it represents loosely break down into -
Iconic, Signifier - it looks like a pile of chisels.
Indexical, Signified - hand made, craftsmanship the associative relationship, wear on the blades, the fresh sharpening of the metal, The narrative.
I am re-negotiating how the artisans think about the form (the signified) slightly differently so they can see the imagery more indexically. Asking them to understand the importance of photographic storytelling. If a photographer and artisan can co-create this outcome, combining their intents will increase the customer perception of the artisans' quality offer.
How do I talk to a client about the form of photography when the client has no education in photography and no interest in photography theory but still needs to understand the form and how it works? The book has to lay out a process to do this.

I have to rethink how I talk about the language of photography and engage with other people who don’t have that professional/academic interest in photography. How do I make a new language about the form? The solution to these interim findings is possibly the ‘vehicle’ I create.

- Findings specific to the case studies -

Ripe - Moving to Instagram as a platform has highlighted the need for relevant narrative, pictures of the morning walk do not give the 'backstage' insights that the customer is looking for.

CTF - A realisation that unless they tell a story about their product, they will generate all sorts of unrelated random enquiries. Using photography to narrate the core business has improved the quality of the enquiries resulting in sales.

TW - Leaving out the irrelevant photography (images not directly related to the product) resulting in the Instagram feed being more focused.

5.3

(3) The changing high street – Online.

- The landscape of the high street is in flux.

The look and feel of the high street is shifting with the digital revolution and the economic change.

I approached the research focusing on the 'bricks and mortar' of the high street with digital platforms as a secondary role. To the extent that the decision tree demanded 'physical presence' as a necessity, the case for this is diminishing. The research has highlighted that a photographic-led social media presence is essential for the artisan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants have moved substantial amounts of their products and services online. The fundamental change in the high street has brought the necessity for effective imagery to the fore, the research and involvement with the participants changed with it.

The high street shops became, out of necessity, mini warehousing spaces that stored the goods whilst customers ordered online.

'Retailers are accommodating the shift of shopping from in-store to online by turning their physical locations into so-called "dark stores.'
(Berg 2020)

- The digital platforms have given a new dimension.

The contemporary high street retailer has an opportunity to access a far greater customer base.

The advent of the 'dark store' began with the help of the Apps[49] revolution, where customers became happy with ordering (food especially) online without ever having to visit the outlet itself. Servicing these demands was assisted by delivery companies such as Just Eat and Deliveroo, the dark kitchen was born; food prepared with no customer-facing high street outlet. This is not a new phenomenon, the large retail companies, Amazon[50] for example, could be seen as the world's largest non-food dark store has been doing it for years, but whether by accident or device, small retail outlets on the physical high street have now ventured into this dark retail environment, forced somewhat by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and the move has become exponential. Who knows whether the customers will return to the physical high street in pre-pandemic numbers. If they do then the high street may survive in the manner we are used to, if not then the online revolution will continue and the high street retail closures will resume.

- Findings specific to the case studies -

Ripe - 100% change to online sales and home delivery options.
CTF - Creation of a website from scratch and Instagram presence
TW - Moved to Youtube and other video platforms to generate sales and run workshops

5.4 Further work, route to outcome, conclusion.

i) The 'total photographer' relationship is still developing.
ii) The language and reading of the image are becoming a fundamental element of the 'vehicle'.
iii) The high street is still in upheaval, has not settled into a stable situation, and may never return to pre-pandemic conditions.

I continue to reflect on these three stands from the findings as they are still developing, which feeds into my practice and the 'vehicle'.

I am still evaluating the significant impact on my research by COVID-19 pandemic, collaborating in creating new ways to portray the artisans whose shops have been shut for months. The relationship between photographer and artisan grew and I found myself in the additional positions of business consultant and confidanté. My research into the gap of

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[49] The small program applications found on mobile devices, downloaded from a central server.
[50] Amazon.com could be entering a new phase of its e-grocery business as it opens its first dark store dedicated to Whole Foods' e-grocery fulfilment. (Stern 2020).

knowledge and literature, addressing approaches to photography between the artisan and photographer, has been rendered even more unique by having never been performed in a similar situation.

As photography has become a vital narrative for the artisans I can scrutinise pre-existing and current engagement with photography to assess the effectiveness of the new imagery.

As I complete the action phase of the research and the analysis of the interim findings the results will feed into the 'design analysis documents' forming a bedrock for the 'vehicle' as a creative guide for artisans and photographers. Already the findings have become part of my practice, my editorial work has moved to a higher level of narrative and the advertising work has benefitted from a more formal approach to briefings and translation of the intents of the clients with an open mind as a 'total photographer'.

How would this 'vehicle' be presented to allow the findings to be readable and comprehensible in a way it can be utilised effectively as an accessible enabler? A book with the options of print and pdf.

Practice outcomes personal reflection – My practice.

The methods and findings have pointed the research towards the outcome of the book. Some of the methods developed for gathering data for the research have crossed over into my practice, for example, the briefing sheets and the photo-elicitation will be new procedures helpful for improving photographic projects. Others, such as the decision tree are not appropriate as they are research, not practice methods. Relevant methods for the practice have been abstracted to populate the book as processes for the artisan to use to collaborate with photographers. The result is that the research methods have fed both book and practice in a manner illustrated (fig.68).

Figure 68, how research methods have contributed to practice and outcome.

6 : Outcomes – The vehicle, a book.

App. 1 App. 2 App. 3 App. 4 App. 5

Fig. 69, consult App.1

This section discusses the findings that have informed the content of the book.

The overarching aim of the book is to suggest ways that artisans and photographers can connect with photography and its meaning. Aided by simple navigation through complex photographic methods.

It is not a standalone solution to the marketing difficulties of an artisan or for any small business for that matter, it merely proposes that photography is an essential part of any strategy a small business must employ to succeed. It also identifies the only way a business in the digital environment can present or sell a product is through photography. It creates a guide for artisans and photographers to be used as an enabler for engagement with photography and image-making, simplifying ways of creating a narrative in a photographic medium.

The data from the practice research methods are documented in the design analysis documents. Critical reflections are highlighted in these documents and fed into the construction of the book. The book is aimed primarily at the artisan who has realised that effective photography is key to their adverting and who find approaching photographers difficult. Their sales may have historically relied on passing trade looking at their shop window. Now they recognise the need to use more sophisticated tools to survive on the high street. The book can also guide the inquisitive photographer wishing to improve their relationship with artisans to generate more effective images.

There is extensive use of real-world examples of photographs created through my practice outlining the processes. Taking account of the experiences with Ripe it will also agree that the artisan can create the photography themselves, but with cautions of taking on such a large task. I state a philosophy of introducing artisans to working collaboratively with photographers who have a shared ethos and wish to understand their business. A good photographer can tell a story through their photographs. Endorsing the findings that show straightforward processes can better communicate a narrative to the photographer and consequently heighten the effectiveness of the artisan's own story.

Part of the process reiterates the total photographer (App.1 P.40) and the intentionalised image (App.1 p.37) as terms of reference. I add a small section on finding the right people to work with, this is in response to discussions with the participants and my peers. The artisans feel excluded from the advertising sector so finding the right photographer is seen as a hurdle.

After much self-examination and reflection on how to describe the language of photography, I settled on treating the reader with respect and included a chapter that reveals semiotics in a purely photographic context. The chapter had suffered deletion and reinsertion a few times before the final decision was to keep it in. Anything other than semiotics to describe storytelling seems second-rate; ignoring it would ultimately leave the reader ill-informed. Consistently, I reassure the reader by saying that we want the picture to tell a story that's all semiotics is (fig.70). Even a passing knowledge of this theory of signs has served the case studies well, thus will aid other photographic commissioners.

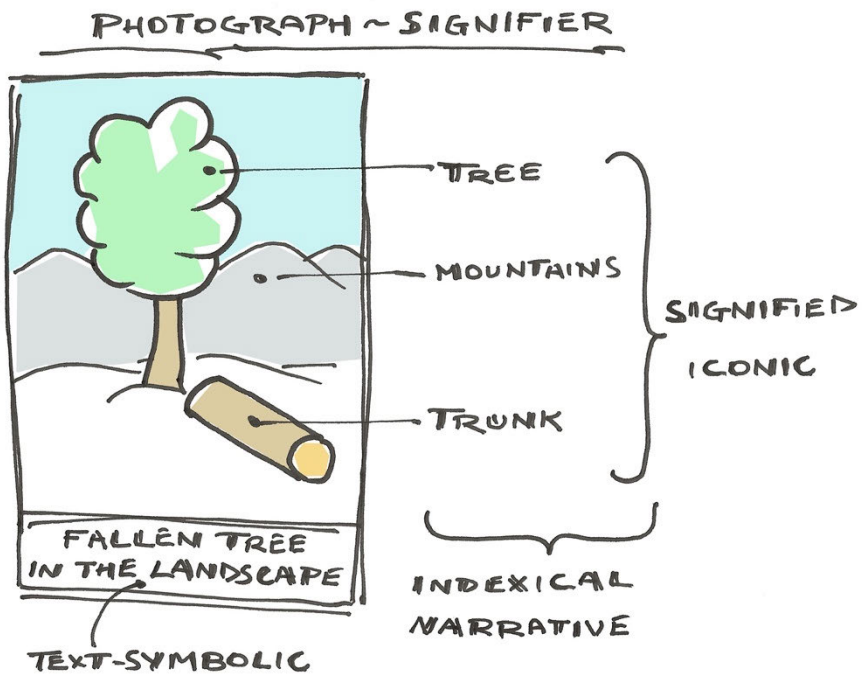


Figure 70, Semiotic diagram from the book, p.31.

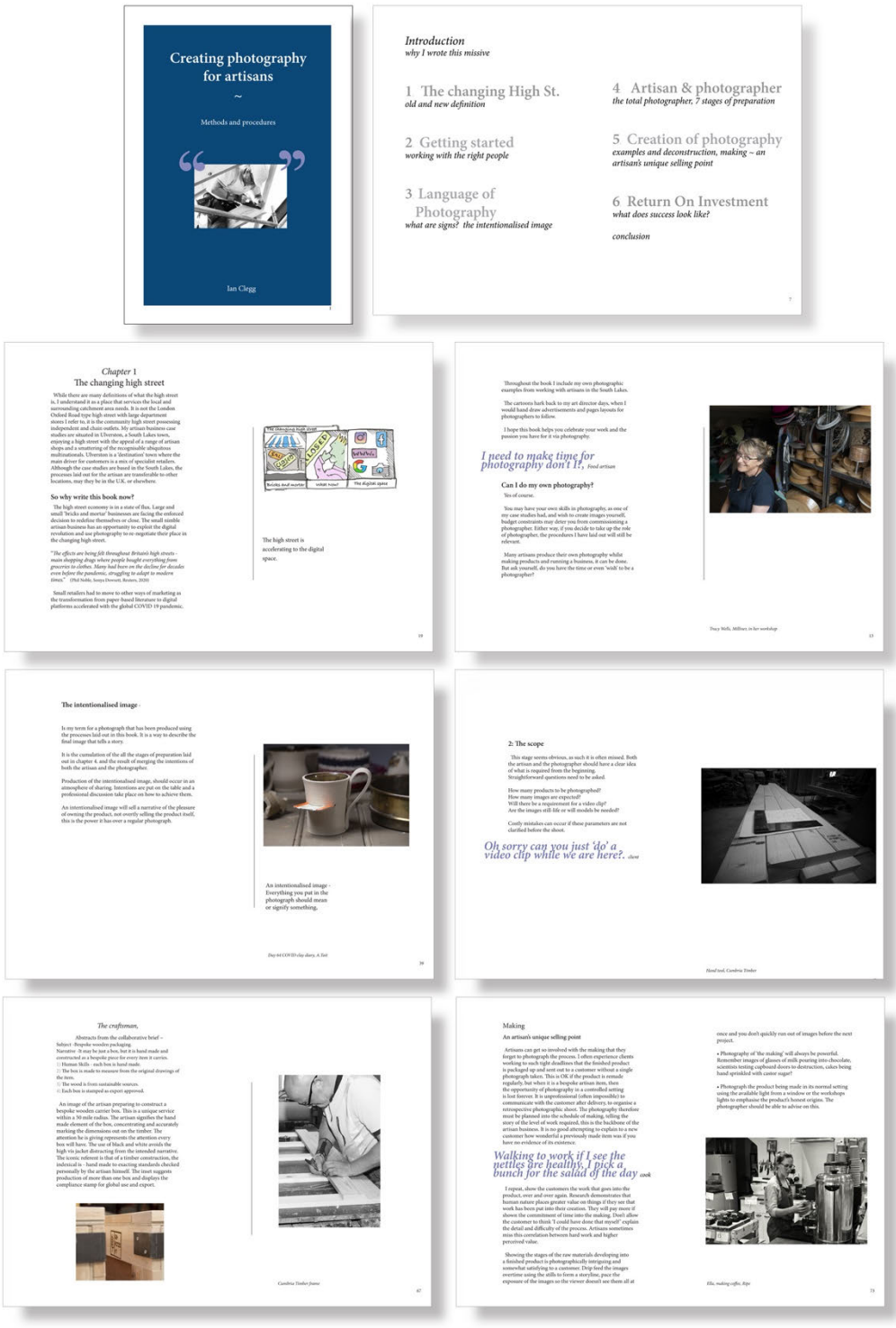


Figure 71, Example pages from the book.

The book is underpinned by theory but written in an accessible language.

The content can be summarised-

1) The high streets' rapid move away from bricks and mortar. Need of online presence.

2) Getting started, working with the right people in the first place.

3) Changing the language of photography itself and the established forms of reading images.

3) The intentionalised image.

4) The seven stages of preparation (fig.72)

5) The translation of intents of artisan and photographer into visual narratives, creation of images, deconstruction of images, 'making' an artisan's unique selling point.

6) Evaluation of success return on investment.

The book's presentation has taken its guidelines from the interim findings (3.13)

Utilising cartoons to emphasise moot points, (fig.73) and introduces the term total photographer as the guiding influence. The cartoon shows a situation where the artisan is confused and frustrated about commissioning photography for their advertising strategy. A total photographer is one who can see through the fog of a multitude of choices, which platform, what format etc. and correctly advise the artisan.

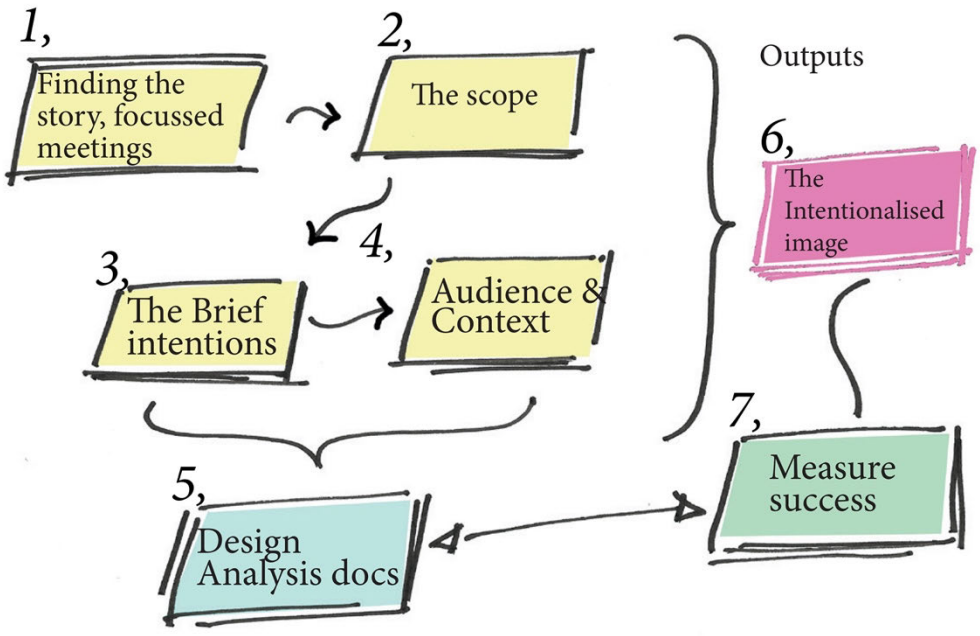


Figure 72, Seven stages of production, p.53.

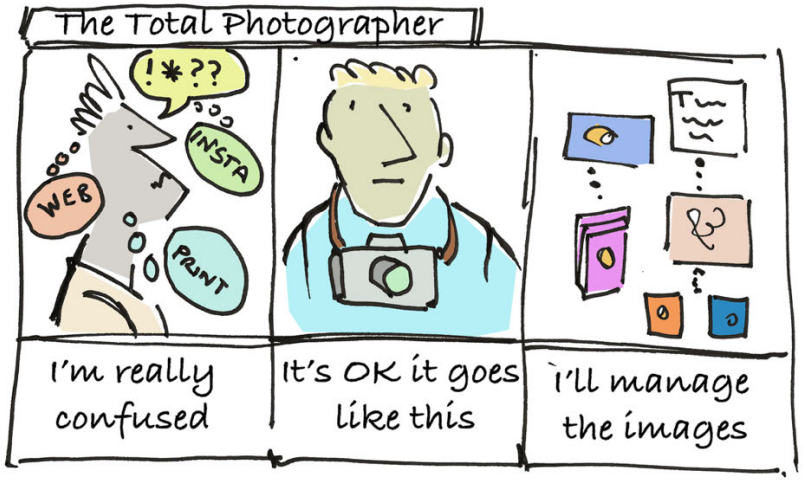
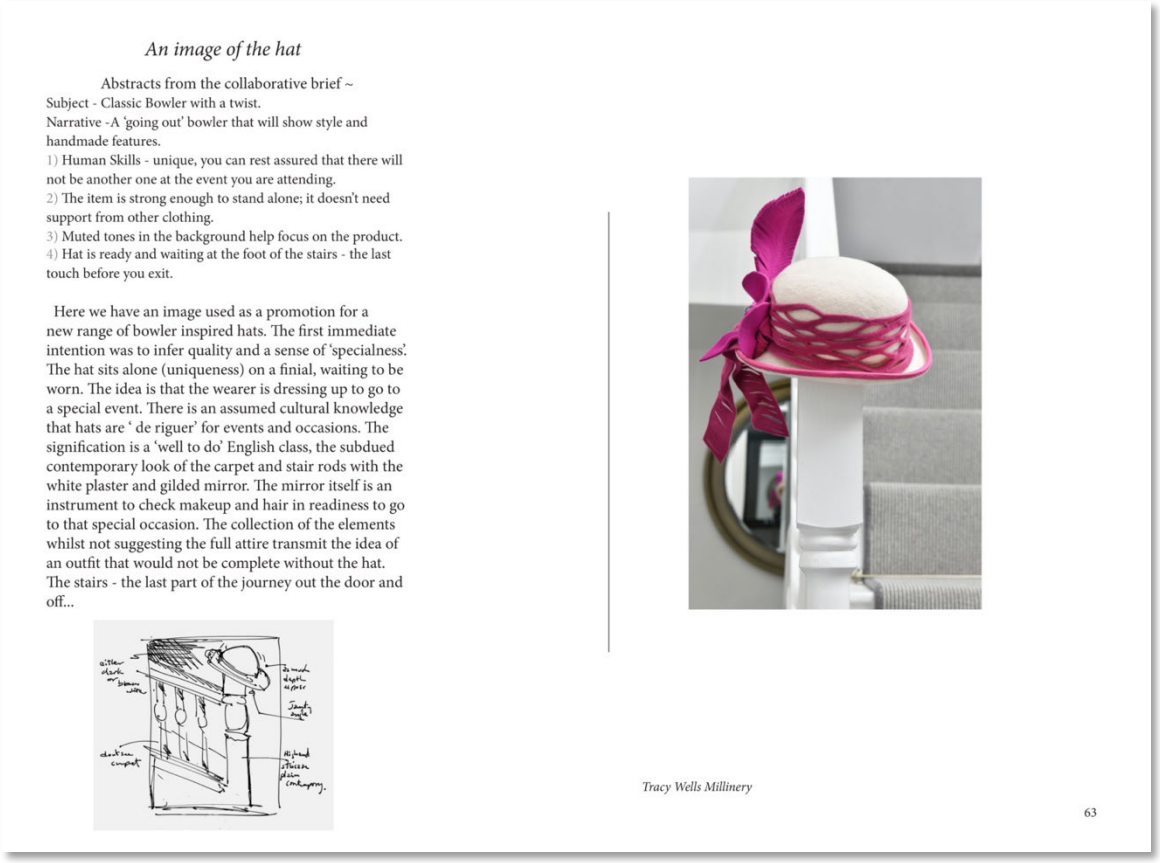


Figure 73, The total photographer, p.43.

Then using supportive text to walk the reader through the stages of creating an intentionalised image. Real-world examples (fig.74) are shown and deconstructed in order to view how the intentions have been displayed using semiotics.

Concluding with the business methods of gauging the success of the projects, and the all-important return on investment of photography (fig.75).



An image of the hat

Abstracts from the collaborative brief ~
Subject - Classic Bowler with a twist.
Narrative -A 'going out' bowler that will show style and handmade features.
1) Human Skills - unique, you can rest assured that there will not be another one at the event you are attending.
2) The item is strong enough to stand alone; it doesn't need support from other clothing.
3) Muted tones in the background help focus on the product.
4) Hat is ready and waiting at the foot of the stairs - the last touch before you exit.

Here we have an image used as a promotion for a new range of bowler inspired hats. The first immediate intention was to infer quality and a sense of 'specialness'. The hat sits alone (uniqueness) on a finial, waiting to be worn. The idea is that the wearer is dressing up to go to a special event. There is an assumed cultural knowledge that hats are ' de riguer' for events and occasions. The signification is a 'well to do' English class, the subdued contemporary look of the carpet and stair rods with the white plaster and gilded mirror. The mirror itself is an instrument to check makeup and hair in readiness to go to that special occasion. The collection of the elements whilst not suggesting the full attire transmit the idea of an outfit that would not be complete without the hat. The stairs - the last part of the journey out the door and off...

Figure 74, spread 62-63 photograph example and deconstruct.

Chapter 7
R O I ~ Return on investment,

Follow these tips and your investment in photography will pay off, converting your personal input of skills and knowledge into sales and funding further work.

1) Work collaboratively.

2) Talk about money very early in the process, especially if you have not commissioned photography before or had a poor return on a previous project.

2) Define narratives/intents/intentionality, invest in the intentionalised image.

3) Celebrate the work of artisans, show what they do with honest photography keeping manipulation and retouching to a minimum.

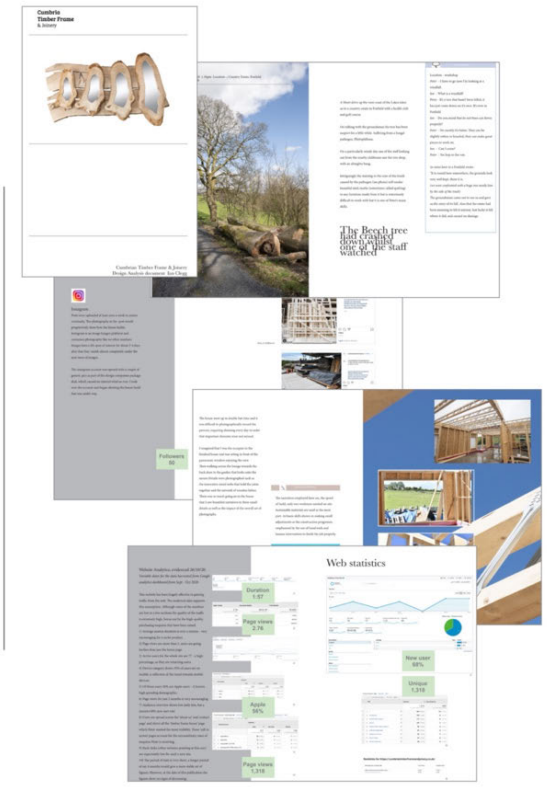
4) Tell the story engage the audience, turn each customer into a small patron of your work.

5) Expand your perceptions of the high street from the physical retail into the digital world of the virtual high street, where photography is the only way to represent your work

6) Embrace photography as a critical part of an artisan's marketing strategy

7) Design analysis document - Keep notes for reflection and analysing of projects, it forms the building blocks for the follow on photographic projects.

8) The 'total photographer' is the person an artisan should commission photography with, not from. It is the person a contemporary photographer should be aspiring to be.



Pages from ~Design Analysis document

81

Figure 75, spread 80-81, Return on investment tips.

7 : Conclusions.

This final chapter looks back at the findings and compares them to the aims and objectives of the research. It maps the outcomes against the two questions and reflects and critiques the book's impact.

Reflections on the model of methods observe the key performance indicators such as analytics to measure the success of the created photography. Key findings are also discussed and form the basis of the book. Further possible research is examined, strengths and limitations discussed to suggest areas of improvement or advancement.

This research has evolved progressively, from initial ideas to genuinely extraordinary outcomes and findings. I somehow expected to meet these case studies and produce photography, discuss their success, perform some structured and informal sessions, collate questionnaires, after which they would be glad to see the back of me. What actually happened was completely different. Two of the participants surprised me as they encouraged me to become further immersed within their businesses, driven to some extent by the pandemic and a general air of uncertainty. I was also astonished as to how much they became interested and reliant on photography. The third member, Ripe, reacted differently in that they temporarily withdrew their business from the marketplace, and our relationship defaulted to the original research position of a somewhat distant observer. Ripe's approach still provided invaluable data on how external forces and processes can affect creative output. I realised that I should not expect every artisan business to commission a professional photographer; however, the book will still be relevant to them if they desire to produce the photography themselves. If Ripe hadn't shown an alternative approach and been one of my case studies, then firstly, I might have never considered artisans that want to take their own photography in the research or reflect that possibility in the book. Secondly, that other factors such as well-being can be more important than the business itself.

As the research developed, participants began to utilise the digital imagery across different platforms. The initial aims of the study did not have expectations other than producing photography and examining the creative interactions. Still, they developed and encompassed a photographic exploration across different media and contexts. This expansion of the creative context gave rise to the terminology of the total photographer, one who moves with the client's requirements and learns new skills. The research widened its gamut into website construction, dealings with google search and maps, video production and social media skills. The participants have benefited from this exploration, opening new opportunities, enabling

them, as artisans, to re-negotiate their place on the high street. Concurrently the new processes have been feeding back into my photographic practice.

The requirement of interaction to result in a satisfactory photographic outcome could be seen as a simplistic view of process; the difficulty arises in choosing the suitable methods, then actioning them in the right manner. The methods have been tested in a logical order with live case studies and critically reflected upon in the design analysis documents. The reflections are often the study of human reactions between people. Such as transferring intents from thoughts into a photographic image. The available literature does acknowledge collaborative work but does not give a clear process to achieve it. Theory has been abstracted from various sources, namely, Flusser (2011), to examine intent and inspiration for the formation of the intentionalised image. Saucerre (1992) and Barthes (1972) being the key foundation for semiotics, Harper (2016) and Oglivy (2011) for grounding the theory in advertising. The research highlights that the field of advertising photography has not been investigated sufficiently from the small business and specifically an artisan point of view. The texts are further limited when it comes to visualising the intents of both artisan and photographer.

The changes in the high street have magnified the already embedded difficulties the artisans were encountering, including creating photography of their products. Whilst I do not say that photography is a 'cure all' for the artisans, it is a vital element of a high street company's survival. Standing as a visual-based outcome, the book plays a part in contemporary understanding of the difficulties in creating imagery for the artisan. Combining the processes in the book with their overall marketing strategy will enable the artisan to have a better chance of challenging what the high street throws at them. The book is a change from technical or one-sided viewpoints and offers a best practice collaborative framework.
The research has increased my interest in the interaction between client and photographer. Small companies create direct feedback and rewarding outcomes, with artisans adding intrigue and wonderful products to the mix. There is little in the way of clear strategies or defined paths and feedback from the participants indicates that they would be helpful.

'I need to spend more time on my photography, don't I, Ian?'
Ripe, 2020.

The physical need for a high street shop has definitely receded as some businesses find that they can trade solely online. The COVID-19 pandemic ironically showcased that a short-term digital-only environment can work for some retail outlets. On reflection, these businesses

may not have survived if they hadn't already built up a high street presence through their shops, utilising this benefit on a digital platform. During the lockdowns, many customers supported their local businesses and continued to purchase online, so did the government with the £10,000 lockdown grants[51] for rateable businesses.

Photography helps the high street sell itself. If the high street were to keep declining, the smells of fresh food and furniture wax would be remembered for some time, but eventually the photographic signifiers would lose their connection to the real items if the customers couldn't touch and feel the products in-store.

I conclude that the consumers and the communities need both; digital and reality work best together. This is how the artisan can renegotiate their place in the high street, cleverly telling their stories through photography and linking them to actual experiences in their shops and workshops. However, the same attention must be given to the digital space as the real shop to ensure success. The large competitors can make themselves look small and friendly online, but they cannot hide their 'corporateness' on the physical high street. Artisans can look special and personable in both arenas. Artisans must engage with photography as it is their best tool to portray their narratives; it is not an expensive luxury, it is essential. The national retailers have and always will be a force to reckon with but an artisan can be nimble in their strategies and keep one step ahead, capitalising on the big brands' jealously of the artisan products.

Future support should also come from the government, it must take heed of the high street's vital component of civic life and understand that the retail world is not a level playing field. Taxation, rates and rent are all stacked against the high street shop; online companies are not treated the same. The changing high street does not require a helping hand. It needs the rules of competition to be fair or the community will lose it.

The high street independents have unfortunately not seen digital and photography as their first or even second route to market or how it can support a physical presence. Varley (2020) researched that 40% of consumers felt the high street has been slow to adapt. It has come to the point that people don't think a business exists without a digital connection.

If, or hopefully when, the high street recovers, it will be a different place. It must evolve and take on a fresh look rather than return to the pre-pandemic decline, even if it is heavily supported online. What is for certain is that if the artisans are not part of this evolution, then

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[51] Any business who had a premises on the high street received a £10,000 grant to help through the lockdown closure.

market forces will decide for them. What better way forward is there than using photography to enable their dreams and assert their presence?

Reflections on the questions;

i) In what ways can photographic practice empower artisans to re-negotiate their place in a changing and challenging high street?

The answer is better served by an initial acceptance that a photographic practice in this context must be flexible and undemanding, eager to approach the work with an open mind and a willingness to collaborate. Also, the artisan must acknowledge that their place on the high street is changing, and a re-negotiation is necessary.

The ways that empowerment have been discovered is through the autoethnographic stance of the research. You could say the photographer has as much to gain and learn as the artisan about the methods of collaboration to create narrative-based photography. The re-negotiation element of the question relies on the artisan taking different approaches to working with a photographer and application of photography. Empowerment comes through the successful telling of the artisans' stories, making sure the intentions of what their business stands for are signified in the photography. Having control of the narratives with the photographer's collaboration is true empowerment achieved through the model of methods laid out in this research and reiterated in the book.

I have worked with artisans creating images and developing new approaches but was the question answered for the participants? -

CTF -

They have realised that using photography directly affects their sales and changes the customer base.

'I have had more work in the last two months than the last two years, I am turning work down that I don't like! That's a first! The enquiries from the new website are huge. The new photography is causing that.'

Peter, 2021

CTF's strategy was to accept any work offered even if some of it was not really what they wanted to do. Peter embraced photography and commissioned a website that fed new customers to the high street premises and showcased his more upmarket work. He is now in the position of turning away work that is not artisan. Enjoying life more and doing jobs that he actually likes. Every new piece he makes is photographed throughout the process and as a

finished piece before he sends it to the customers. The products are displayed on Instagram and website with links of how to see them in the shop, his narratives of quality and uniqueness have shown through in the photography.

TW -

Tracy, whilst experienced in commissioning her own photography, previously would never have considered briefing a photographer. Now she can build a brief, talk about what stories each product has to tell and create imagery with a photographer that hits the mark on what her business actually does. She has seen photography positively influence her business.

'Who would have thought I would be running workshops around the world, Liverpool to Melbourne! Because of photography. I liked using photography before. I like it even better now.'
Tracy, 2020

Tracy's business is a dream client for a photographer who wants to make a difference. Through the methods, stories were revealed about the raw materials and the dedication she put into her pieces, which translated into photography that at last portrayed her own intentions and narratives of the business.

Ripe -

The contribution to the research from this participant has been unique and given new perspectives on how photography can enable a small business. Ella has her own views on the value of photography, not least that she wants to take the images herself. The advantage is that in her own head, she knows the narratives, there is therefore no breakdown in communication, the intent of the photographer and artisan are combined into a single person. The downside is that there isn't a second critical eye on the photography. She clearly agrees it is a difficult position at times, but it is similar to many artisans in that if they want a job doing, they prefer do it themselves. On a positive note, it shows the transferability of the methods when applied to herself as the photographer, her photography has noticeably become more focused on the narrative. Ella has used photography to great success in promoting her expansion into a new shop on the high street.

The measurement of success for the case studies was initially just managing survival through these torrid times. The national average of small retail business closure rate is running at 40% (Simply Business, 2020) so for all three of the case studies to pull through the last 18 months is an achievement, outperforming the norm (fig.76).

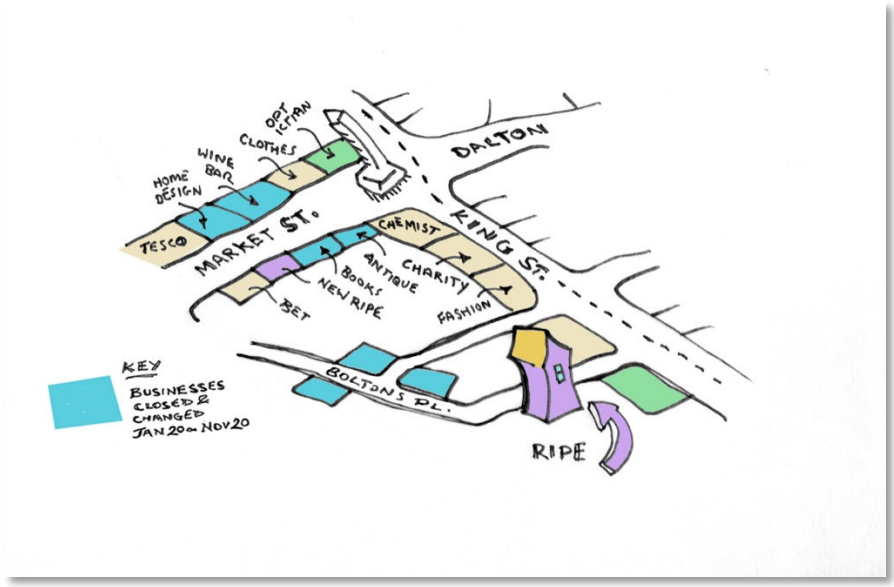

Figure 76, 40% closure rate confirmed in Ulverston, blue = closures.

All the participants have agreed that photography has been a critical factor in keeping them in the spotlight and enhancing turnover. Ripe has expanded and opened a new bigger shop on the high street, the photographs for Google maps hitting 38,000 from zero during the research. Tracy Wells is happy to have endured but pleased to have diversified into areas such as workshops that supplement her core work, made possible through photographic narratives on Instagram and Vimeo video clips. CTF has quotations raised solely because of the photographic stories portrayed on social media and the website, not just for bespoke furniture but for at least 4 new wooden framed houses (App. 2;1, p.70), that's more work than they have ever had.

ii) What scalable transferable vehicle, that encapsulates methods of photographic engagement, can be created to act as an enabler for photographers and artisans alike?

The final form of the vehicle was purposely left undecided until late in the research. The options were a blog, exhibition, film clips and more. The choice of a book was influenced after looking at what other vehicles worked in the marketplace (see 3.13). The participants when asked. all agreed a physical book would be the ideal reference point for a small business especially if it could be 'dipped in and out of'. So, the vehicle became a book, but is it transferable and scalable?

It will be available part or whole as a pdf and elements of the methods are accessible through my website and discussed cross-platform. The methods are transferable to other high streets in the U.K. or abroad useful for both the artisan and the curious photographer.
The key points of engagement can be summarised -
1) The high streets' rapid move away from bricks and mortar. Need of online presence.
2) Working with the right people, collaboration with the total photographer..
3) Changing the language of photography itself and the established forms of reading images.
3) The intentionalised image.
4) Creation of the photographic image. The seven stages of preparation (fig.72).
5) The translation of intents of artisan and photographer into visual narratives, creation of images, deconstruction of images, 'making' an artisan's unique selling point.
6) What does success look like? Evaluation of return on investment.

The book has affected my practice in that it has encouraged me to look at the approach to photography from a client's point of view. It has significantly shifted my working relationship to the artisan; now I feel I should provide much more than just technically adept images, they must perform a function that both myself and the artisan have agreed to long before a shutter is pressed. The COVID-19 pandemic has enforced a more immersive approach to my work than I ever thought possible. Photography being relied upon as the sole instrument for narrative is a huge responsibility on the medium (and consequently the photographer). It is easy to say one should become a total photographer, actually putting it into practice is challenging. Rather than diving straight into the photography using the methods prescribed creates a more professional atmosphere and a joint responsibility for making narrative-based images.

The book takes its place in the gap indicated in the literature review. It centres upon the artisan, addressing the interaction between two creatives and the methods are transferable to other researchers wishing to form objective research data. It informs the artisan that they can tell their stories through collaborative photography and produce beautiful, effective photographs. It is unique because it looks at the problem as a joint responsibility not one-sided as so many other books approach it. Emphasis on the technical is rife in the literature on photography, if it does mention process, then it is from a photographer's standpoint of 'selling' images and creativity to the client. There are very few books that address how to commission photographers with none specifically for artisans. This book is different in that it will impact firstly on the artisan who can realise their stories and secondly on photographers,

both utilising the methods laid out to collaborate and create great photographs for mutual benefit.

The book plans out procedures to follow combined with a smattering of semiotic theory to highlight how artisans can translate their intentions and narratives into the language of photography. Ultimately, when the customers see the photography as authentic, they must be left with no uncertainty that the artisan intended the narratives.

Writing the book in an accessible way has revealed a clear path to engagement with an artisan. It has informed my practice, jointly forming new ideas and methodologies. For example, I previously would not have attempted to discuss semiotics with a client, underestimating their tolerance for such theory, but now I see it as letting them down if I don't.

Time will be needed to fully reflect on the impact of the book, initially feedback will be given from peers through abstracts on my website channel, it will also be presented at peer-reviewed symposia. I will test its sphere of influence, copies will be sent to town councils for possible inclusion in high street regeneration projects, included as part of an information pack for start-up businesses on the high street. Also gaining feedback from funding bodies for urban renewal and town planning departments who are keen to back high street regeneration as part of the 'Build better high streets' strategy[52] (Farrell, 2021).

Economic impact through new approaches.

The research has assumed from the outset that the artisans have businesses that produce good products, but this alone is not enough to survive on the high street. Based on the case studies, each has changed their approach to photography. The research has witnessed more than mere survival it has seen growth, evidenced by the analytics (App.2;1/2/3, chaps. 7).

- CTF expanding into new areas of business (more enquiries than previous three years, via Instagram and website).
- TW, gaining customers outside of the core business (new income streams from education and products, through Instagram and Vimeo).
- Ripe, opening a new shop and employing staff (exponential increase in footfall with the new shop, fed by google maps photography).

All attributable to photographic led strategies.

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[52] *A £335Million fund for transforming spaces in so called 'town deals'.*

Because of the lockdown forcing closure of the shops and all activities moving online, it has been possible to better study the customer base through analytical data and observe that all three of the participants have benefitted. As these digital channels are principally image-based, photography has been the prime lever that has driven growth. Following the new approaches to working with photography has been critical in producing what is clearly effective and successful photography. The book reveals these procedures to the high street artisan enabling them to build a strong photographic led marketing strategy.

New directions and opportunities.

Rather than becoming a run-down archaic shadow of its former self, the high street has evolved to become something else. Customers are now happy to be driven back to the high street via social media, enticed by images that tell stories of unique small businesses. The artisan can exploit the move to digital platforms by collaboration using the proposed methods for their own businesses.

From a practice point of view, photography is having a tough time of its own. The democratised camera certainly influences clients' attitudes to 'professional' photography. It is difficult for them to treat photography other than as a commodity. The total photographer can change this attitude, using all the skills experienced from working with other creatives and combining them to provide a service similar to a small advertising agency. Collaboration from the outset of a project will convince the majority of artisan clients that producing their own photography is time-consuming and diverts them away from their core business. It is a 'win win' opportunity for a photographer to tell great stories and an artisan to enhance their business.

New insights in research and working.

The methods used have transcended from data collection to a large part of the new knowledge elements of the research. Unexpectantly, as they have adapted to outside forces (COVID-19 and economic pressures), they have become a powerful model, allowing them to be deployed in part or whole in others' research. With minimal adjustment, they would work for filmmaking, digital advertising campaigns, music production and other creative industries where collaboration is difficult to attain.

i) The decision tree is a way of ensuring objectivity in selecting from a medium sized sample.
ii) Photo elicitation allows interaction between both parties without the 'expert and client' scenario and is an underrated method of sourcing information about businesses, not just for photographic purposes.
iii) Briefing document, a simple adaptation of an advertising method, applied solely to reveal intentions.
iv) Design analysis document, a reflective document on the whole applied process
v) The book, a vehicle to enable the artisan to deploy the methods.

The methods serve as a model for further research however, methods from ii) through to v) apply to working practice and cross over to the book forming the basis of a clear, mutually beneficial route of how artisans can collaborate with photographers. It is unique because it covers an area previously omitted from photographic literature.

The digital revolution has accelerated, leaving many small businesses such as artisans behind in their photographic marketing. Lack of guidelines or access to practice models was preventing artisans from engaging with photographers.

Exceptional circumstances, an economic downturn overlaid by the COVID-19 pandemic has placed this research outcome in a completely new arena. The high street landscape has changed so rapidly it has created further gaps in the knowledge of how to manage photography.

The difference with the pandemic is that nobody saw it coming. Everyone was in the same boat. So, the positive side was at least it was a level playing field. Or was it? Companies already with an online presence had a huge advantage. Artisans in the majority were not prepared, Smithers (2020) from The Guardian quoting from a Kings Business School survey (2020), highlighted that nearly two-thirds of entrepreneurs, of which most artisans are, felt their businesses might not survive COVID-19 pressures. Each of the participants faced up to the digital challenge differently and with remarkable results considering they were almost from a standing start.

The interaction between artisan and photographer has been tested in the extreme the digital landscape consumes photography at an alarming rate. The only way to achieve consistent, effective imagery is by collaboration. As the research has observed photography taking an increasing role in portraying a small business's narratives. It has revealed new approaches and practical recommendations and presented them within a unique, coherent visual-based vehicle to empower the artisans in a changing high street.

Beyond the remit of this research proposal is an area for further investigation, presenting an opportunity for a different type of research. It would be the study of customer perspectives on artisans through their relationship with photographs. Addressing the issues around the authenticity of the image and the customer liaison with an artisan using photography as the mediator. Possibly investigating the future potential through digital environments of a tripartite relationship (artisan, photographer, customer).

What next?

To take this research further, we should consider if other creative sectors might benefit from the methodologies employed. The book might be an excellent partner to a more extensive marketing strategy, the decision tree method useful to determine suitability for locating a business. For any form of consultation or marketing, photo-elicitation is ideal to source unique information about a business, and it is so easy to administer as most people have access to a camera of some sort. I have regularly found difficulty getting a brief from a client, but these methods seem to work as they are more collaborative and mutually beneficial, with procedures that elicit the information required for an effective brief. Becoming a total photographer is not an endpoint. Creative careers will keep absorbing other job titles and skills, terminologies may change and become an image maker or visual creator, but the outcomes will always need to tell a story. Other creatives who have experienced absorption of differing skills, designers, web developers, graphic artists, and filmmakers would see some of the findings directly applicable to their careers. The research having occurred through the extra challenge of the COIVD-19 pandemic has highlighted that one never knows what is around the corner. Being prepared through the application of process and methods is essential. Bringing the methods together in a flexible, synergetic relationship between clients and in this context, a photographer, will always be a more productive and favourable place to be.

Table 1, Overview of feedback and reflection routes for the book

Source	Critique	Action
Printed Book	Book reviews	Updates posted on website
Pdf	Blog and Instagram	Replies and comments
Website	Direct contact	Replies and conversation
Symposia	Panels and questions	Direct response
Peer review	Direct feedback	Updates and speaking

The research does not stop here; it aims to be enriched by feedback from the book, website

www.ianclegg.com and social media platforms. The table above lays out the channels for feedback from the book, peer reviews can come directly from Instagram via posted abstracts, symposia will give opportunities for peers to add to, and question the findings.

I would enjoy the challenge of applying the methods to other areas such as marketing and brand management. We will see how the book generates other avenues to improve my practice, creating intentionalised images.

Working so closely with the artisans has highlighted the benefit of understanding their stories before taking the photographs. We have created some great images together, which have played their part in encouraging their customers to support the businesses. Short (2011), neatly sums up the positive experience of collaboration.

'If you are clear about why you are photographing your subject then you can choose how to photograph your subject, and in turn this should help your audience interpret the photograph.'
Short, (2011, p.41)

My research has taken me on a path with the participants during probably the most troubled times in their business careers. The methods I employed have allowed me to evoke authentic responses from real-world experiences. The co-constructed research enriched my position as a researcher, enabling mutual benefit, and I thank the participants for giving me the privilege of seeing inside their businesses. The experience has given rich insights into interactions between photographers and artisans, which have fed into my practice and the book.

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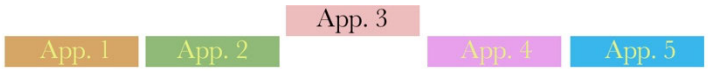
9 : Appendices

The vehicle, the book

No.1/2/3 Design analysis documents

Elicitation and question sheet samples



Collaborative briefing documents

Ethics documentation

Appendix; 1

The Book

Creating photography for artisans

~

Methods and procedures

Ian Clegg

Creating photography for artisans

~

Methods and procedures

Ian Clegg

Creating photography for artisans

~

Methods & procedures

Ian Clegg
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First Published 2021
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Illustrations, Photography & Words ~ Ian Clegg

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Published in the U.K. 2021 by Point Nine Five publishing

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Designed and printed in the United Kingdom using acid free paper,

ISBN 978 1 7397791 0 8

Creating photography for artisans

~

Introduction
why I wrote this missive

1. **The changing high st.**
old and new definition

2. **Getting started**
working with the right people

3. **Language of photography**
what are signs? The intentionalised image

4. **Artisan & photographer**
the total photographer, 7 stages of preparation

5. **Creation of photography**
examples, making ~ an artisan's unique selling point

6. **Return On Investment**
what does success look like?

conclusion

Who am I?

Photographer, Art Director, Designer, Visualiser, Creative Director, Account Manager, Artist, Lecturer are but some of the many job titles I have had during my experience within the advertising world. Throughout the decades I have worked on both sides of the camera, and spent the last 3 years researching the role photography takes in enabling artisans to maximise their presence on the high street.

This book is the outcome of my research. I have worked with live case studies and combined my findings with my own experiences from working with clients.

I believe the way forward for a high street artisan retailer in this digital age is through photography.

Ian Clegg

Introduction

Why I wrote this missive

I have long felt the need to have a handbook, an easy to read summary, laying out procedures to achieve the best photography from relationships between small artisan companies and photographers. A book that is underpinned by theory and research, but reads with an easy 'how to' style.

I wanted to concentrate on small artisan companies, examining which photographic processes worked with some and not with others.

Through intensive research I developed a clear process, enabling artisans to increase the success rate of their photography.

In this book I show process routes and methods for photographic and image-making outputs, and I propose a collaborative approach to producing images that help the artisan survive and prosper on the high street. They are working methods that ultimately achieve creative, narrative-based images that 'sell' the artisan ethos.

Throughout this text I use the terms photography and image-making as interchangeable. Under this terminology I include still image and short video clips. A clip of no more than 30secs is well within the capabilities of a stills photographer. Longer 'filmmaking' processes, however similar, are not within the scope of this book.

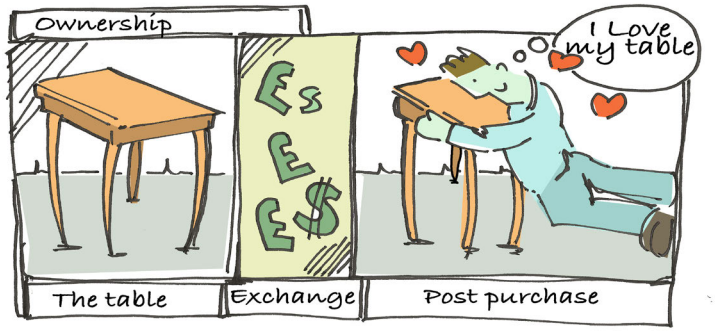
Who is this book for?

This book is aimed primarily at the artisan who has come to realise that effective photography has become a critical part of digital advertising.

I define artisan as a small business offering a bespoke service or product involving a significant element of human involvement into the final output. An artisan product has a high element of 'handmadeness' and is unique. Artisans therefore, have a specific uniqueness that can be exploited by photography.

Sales may historically have relied upon passing trade, shop windows and good, old-fashioned word of mouth. The market's expansion into the digital realm demands artisans use more sophisticated tools to survive. Photography is a critical element of this tool set.

Whilst I wrote this with the artisan in mind, I hope this book can also be a guide photographers. The interaction with an artisan is a specialised process and photographers who have an interest in narrative based photography may wish to observe the processes which have worked for me.



We are not selling the table, we are selling the pleasure of owning it.

Throughout the book I include my own photographic examples from working with artisans in the South Lakes.

The cartoons hark back to my art director days, when I would hand draw advertisements and pages layouts for photographers to follow.

I hope this book helps you celebrate your work and the passion you have for it via photography.

I need to make time for photography don't I? *artisan*

Can I do my own photography?

Yes of course.

You may have your own skills in photography, as one of my case studies had, and wish to create images yourself, budget constraints may deter you from commissioning a photographer. Either way, if you decide to take up the role of photographer, the procedures I have laid out will still be relevant.

Many artisans produce their own photography whilst making products and running a business, it can be done. But ask yourself, do you have the time or even 'wish' to be a photographer?

Tracy Wells, Milliner, in her workshop.

My philosophy

I am introducing artisans to working collaboratively with photographers who have a shared ethos and wish to understand your business. A good photographer can tell a story through their photographs.

My findings show that straightforward processes can better communicate a narrative to the photographer and consequently heighten the effectiveness of the artisan's own story.

The book adds detail to the following methods :

- Being aware of the changing high street landscape
- Understanding that the artisan has a unique offer
- Finding the right photographer
- Recognising that photography uses its own language
- Incorporating your intentions with a photographer's
- Working collaboratively at every stage in creating photographs
- Measuring success

I will take you through these procedures giving examples of how they were applied and the photography that was created. I conclude by discussing how to assess whether or not your images are successful.

This is my philosophy of the total photographer (p.40) and the intentionalised image (p.36)

Glossary of terms used (and misused) in this book

Artisan, a creator of a product or service that has a high level of human input, generally a unique product

Brief, a document laying out the creative path of a project

Client, a paying customer

Dark company, a retailer without a visible high street presence

Deconstruction, breaking down an image into its constituent parts, finding meanings

Digital platform, an area where images can be shared on the web, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

Intent, an idea or a thought that needs to be translated into an image

Intentionalised image, the outcome achieved through a collaborative approach

Library shot, (also called 'stock images') off the shelf pre-shot photography

Making, the process of producing the artisan product

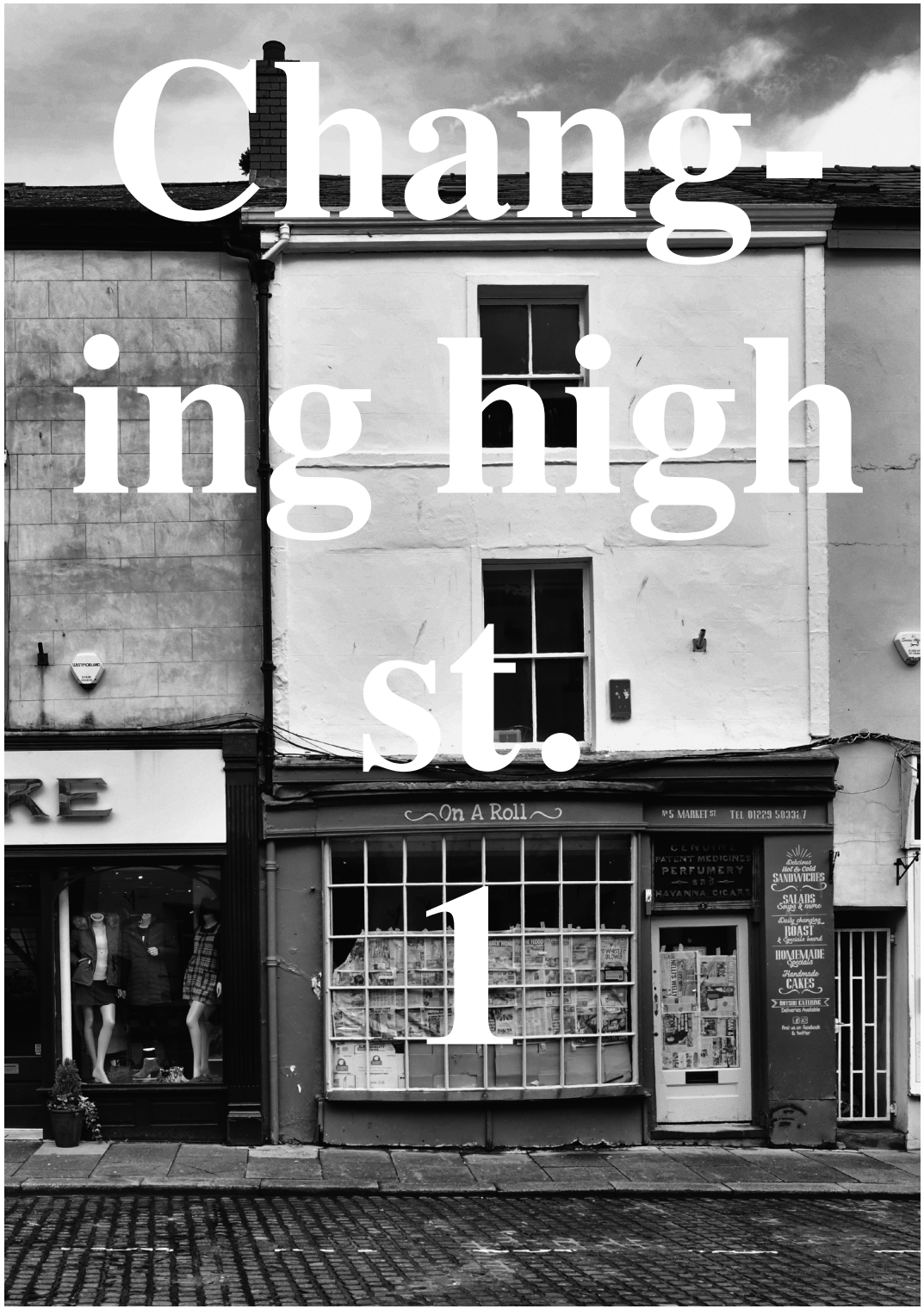
Offer, what the business is presenting to the customer

Photo elicitation, photography created by a client, used to discover the stories within the business

Semiotics, the theory of the relationship between signs and their meanings in images

Total photographer, one who has overall input in the creative process and who embraces a collaborative approach with the client

Changing high st.



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Chapter 1
The changing high street

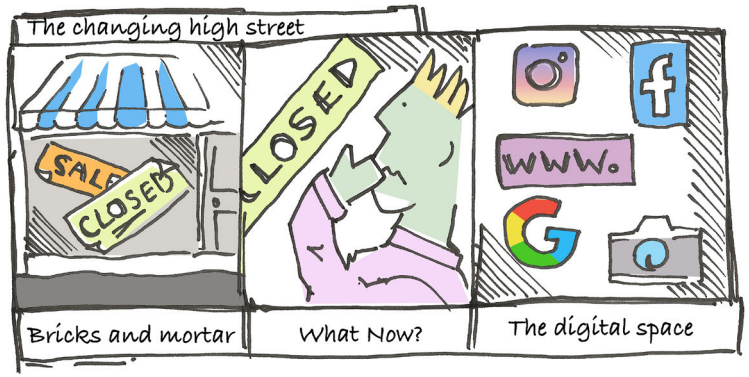
While there are many definitions of the high street, I understand it as a place that services the needs of the local and surrounding catchment area. It is not the London Oxford Road type high street with large department stores I am referring to. It is the community high street possessing independent and chain outlets. My artisan business case studies are situated in Ulverston, a South Lakes town, enjoying a high street with the appeal of a range of artisan shops and a smattering of the recognisable ubiquitous multinationals. Ulverston is a 'destination' town where the main driver for customers is a mix of specialist retailers. Although the case studies are based in the South Lakes, the processes laid out for the artisan are transferable to other locations, may they be in the U.K. or elsewhere.

So why write this book now?

The high street economy is in a state of flux. Large and small 'bricks and mortar' businesses are facing the enforced decision to redefine themselves or close. A small, nimble artisan business has an opportunity to exploit the digital revolution and use photography to re-negotiate their place in the changing high street.

"*The effects are being felt throughout Britain's high streets - main shopping drags where people bought everything from groceries to clothes. Many had been on the decline for decades even before the pandemic, struggling to adapt to modern times.*" (Phil Noble, Sonya Dowsett, Reuters, 2020)

Small retailers had to move to other ways of marketing as the transformation from paper-based literature to digital platforms accelerated with the global COVID19 pandemic.



The high street is accelerating to the digital space.

With shops forced to close for up to a year, the landscape of the high street has irrevocably changed. As it reopens, we all hope it will still serve the community's needs. The new high street will have the same customers but with different expectations. Mobile-assisted purchasing will be a critical element of the new high street. Artisans without a photographic led digital presence will be left behind.

There is a palpable shift as the current generation matures towards acceptance of a virtual high street; we must see this as an opportunity not a threat.
There is a growing group of customers that will only find the door of an artisan with the aid of a mobile device.

The cultural shift has brought about the emergence of the 'Dark company'. A business that would historically have opened on the high street, instead sets up a kitchen, a warehouse or other such hub to service a purely digital customer-facing front. There is no high street shop, no place to visit, the customer will never see the engine room; photography is the only way they can sell products, and tell the story behind the venture.

The way forward is to look at other ways of working with photographers in order to get artisan stories into the high street, wherever that is.

Let's get started.

It is no longer viable
to just have a bricks
& mortar presence.
An image based shop
window on the virtual
high street is critical.

Getting started

2

Chapter 2

Getting started

- Will a photographer take time to understand my business?
- Do they share my artisan ethos?
- Do they see the project as long term?
- Are they prepared to work collaboratively?

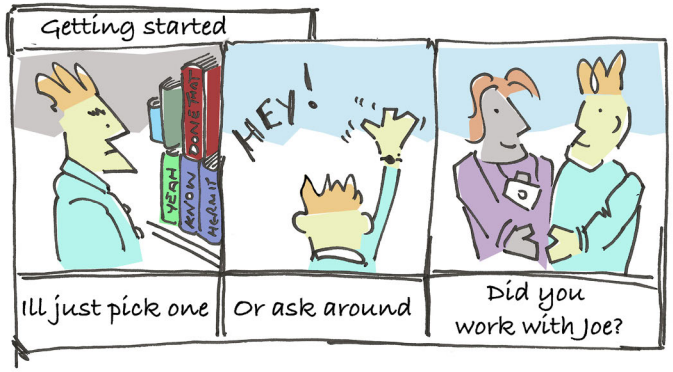
Artisans run their own businesses and are inherently independent thinkers. The majority of photographers are self-employed and produce an end product with a significant element of human input and as such, should be considered artisans themselves. It may seem like common sense but what better way to travel this photographic journey than with two artisan businesses working together?

Finding the ideal working relationship is no mean task, word of mouth is still the best way. Ask your network contacts (not those in direct competition) who they use.

If more than one of you use the same photographer this can bring benefit to the group, as they will have a better understanding of your collective story.

Finding someone without recommendations is more of a challenge. Try posting on your website or media asking for photographers to send a portfolio, request they write a few sentences on how they would approach your work. Look at their site and links, assess if they tell a good story for their other clients.

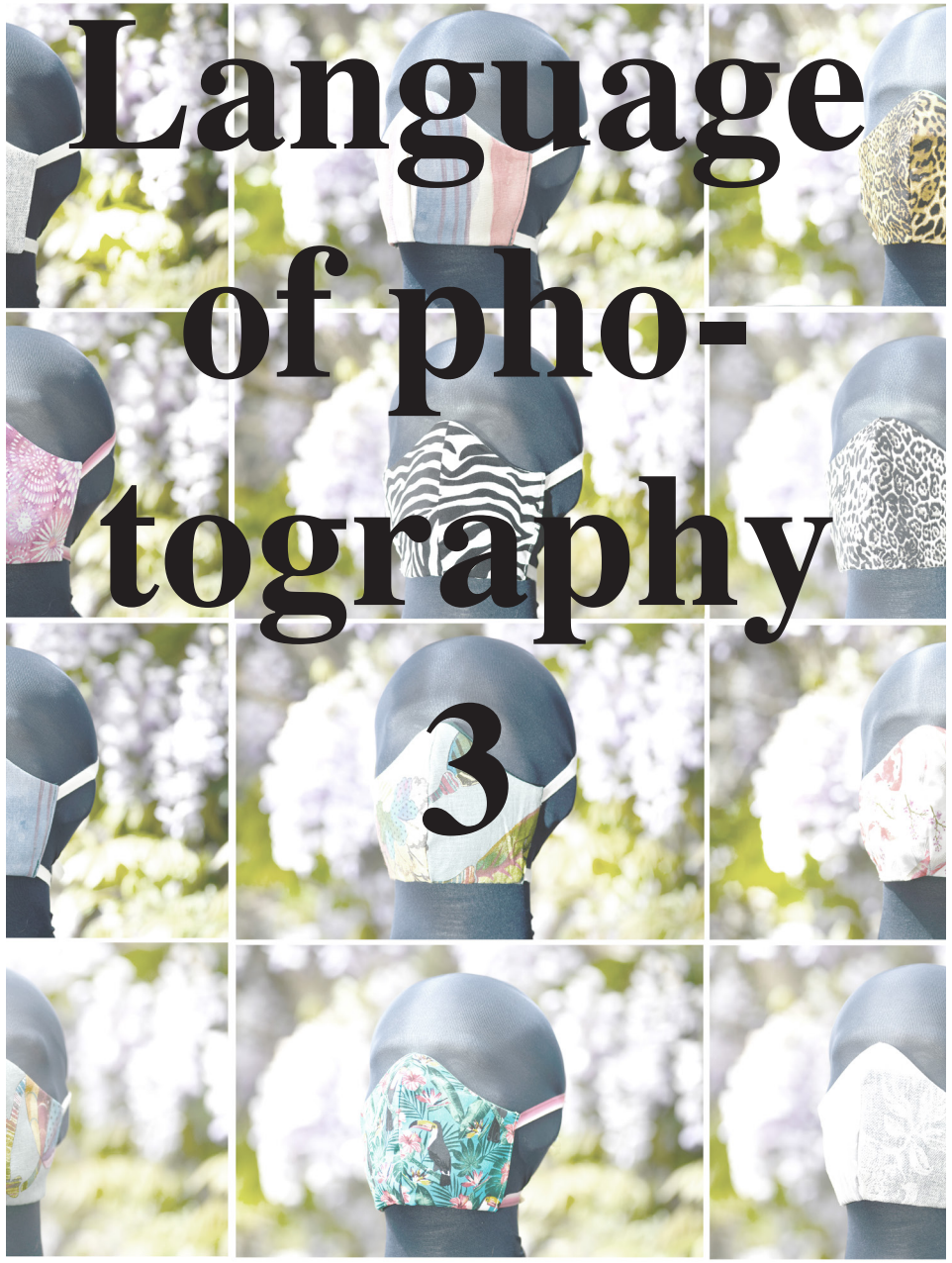
When commissioning a photographer, make it clear that you expect more than technically adept images. Ask that the photography has a narrative that reflects your company and you value their input in achieving this. If they don't respond positively to this challenge then move on.



Word of mouth network, contacts, request a portfolio.

Narrative based photography cannot be rushed; any photographer can point a camera at the products but you are asking for a more collaborative, immersive approach. If there isn't enough time allocated to the photography or there is resistance to getting involved with the product, from either party, the outcome is likely to be inferior or incomplete.

Ripe food, a lockdown walking snack.



Language of photography 3

Chapter 3
Language of photography

- Using the photographic language
- Signifiers, what are these?

Semiotics is the study of signs. My methods use this theory to help the photographer and their client tell stories through the images they create together. This chapter looks at the signs in photography and how artisans can exploit them to make their images more effective.

A little knowledge of semiotics tells us that we can use photography to show more than just the product. Thoughtfully constructed images convey a story to the viewer. Intentionally placed signs in photographs have the power to reveal the culture of the company.

Your customers, whether subconsciously or not, will read these signs and have a better understanding of what the photograph is saying.

The image of the tree

This photograph was made to illustrate the work of an artisan carpenter. They use windfall trees as a sustainable source of timber, each piece of furniture they make can be traced back to a particular tree. The multitude of signs come together within the image to support this narrative.

Fallen tree trunk - *windfall timber in its natural raw form*
The Lake District skyline - *the local countryside*
A mature tree growing next to saplings - *sustainability*
Dark patches on trunk - *an indication of what unique patterns will appear in the furniture*

Fallen tree in the landscape

We want the picture to tell a story, that's all semiotics is.

The Theory

Let's delve a little deeper into how images can tell stories. You can apply this knowledge when commissioning photography to tell your unique story.

Broadly, semiotics is the relationship between the signifier and the signified.
The signifier is the photograph.
The signified is the concept the signifier refers to.

The relationship between the two creates a sign, a narrative giving rise to what we call signified meanings.

With reference to the photograph on the previous page, the meanings appear in 3 categories -

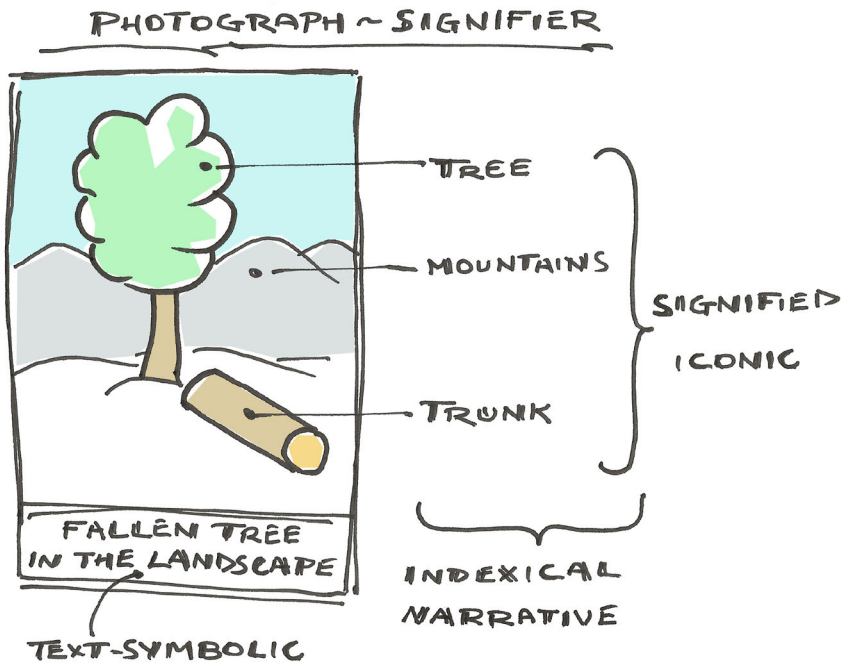
1) *Iconic* -
The signifier looks like the signified
ie., the tree in the photograph looks like a tree.

2) *Indexical* - The signifier has an associative relationship with the signified
ie., the fallen tree suggests that something has happened, a narrative that it fell.

3) *Symbolic* - factual and culturally defined meanings, a sign or supportive words,
ie., 'fallen tree in the landscape'
Photographs are not always accompanied by text.

Iconic and indexical are the strongest semiotic tools available to an advertising photographer.

They combine to create meanings in the photograph which tell your story.



Semiotic sketch of photo, p.29

Ways of using and adding signs to your photography

A photograph should give indications to meanings, not just recognition of an object.
An old chisel will signify a skill.
A rosy apple, freshness.
Somebody closely scrutinising a product, quality.

Good photography uses signified elements so the viewer can converse with the photograph and the product. Semiotics concentrates the mind of the viewer. The signification in photography can be as simple as images of your shop, suggesting a friendly open-door policy.

To employ signs in your photography you must find stories about your business. Begin with the competitive advantage you have against the large companies pretending to 'look' artisan through their advertising strategies. The fact that you are 'artisan' can be one of your stories.

Photography has a historical relationship in portraying a true representation of the world about us. This can work against companies whose products are mass-produced. The beauty of being an artisan is that the photography does not need special effects or ambiguous signification to enhance the story.

You could look at the location of the business, the surrounding landscape, your beautiful old workshop, the source of raw materials or a relationship to the local community. Other more personalised narratives will grow out of these.

Here are some practical tips -

Prop a photograph -
Give scale, recognisable objects act as a representation for size, tools, cutlery, a human hand or face, a building or tree. This is semiotics at its most rudimentary level.

Use nature to reinforce natural products -
We see this a lot in advertising where fresh oranges are placed next to bottles of juice, snow-topped mountains seen behind spring water, fresh hops next to beer, forests of trees seen through the window of the handmade kitchen.

Show your environment -
Workshop, studio and shop indexically represent the human side of the business.

Let the images dominate the final layouts -
Viewers are more likely to read descriptive text if they are interested in the image.

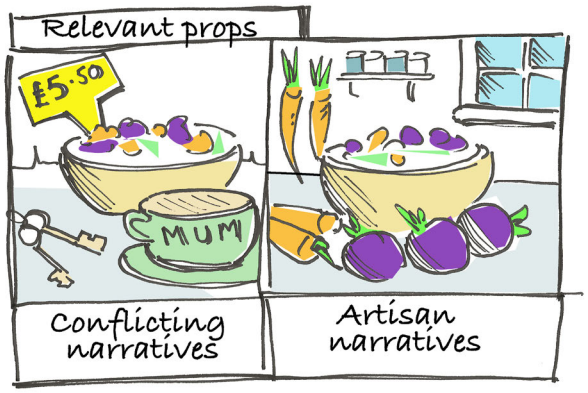
Take account of the context of the image -
Facebook: Probably the most text rich social media platform, a paragraph can clarify the story of a photograph.
Instagram: Image driven, the photograph has to do all the heavy lifting in representing the story.
Printed material: Can be designed to emphasise text and/or images.
Research the destination of the photograph, to see if the publication gives priority to text or imagery.

Avoid library or stock shots -
They don't communicate your unique story. They signify other peoples ideas. Often used images, the staged handshake and the receptionist's beaming face are synonymous with a template built website and can look like space fillers.
They have their place, just don't choose irrelevant or untruthful ones. Be aware that you may incur usage costs with stock imagery if you use them across many platforms, often rising above the price of commissioning your own photography.

Social media and website consistency -
Social media traffic landing on your website should reflect the quality and consistency of messages and signifiers from the original post.

Don't mix messages -
Customers want to engage with your images, that's why they follow you. Irrelevant images send out signifiers as well, the wrong ones. The quick-fire nature of social media breeds a very intolerant viewer base.
If you run a flower business, do your followers want to see photographs of a morning walk, holidays, plates of food? No, they want to see flowers, deviate from the script at your peril, an unconnected photograph can set off a chain of unfollows and set you back months.

Photograph your shop -
Signify you have premises. Show a photograph of you standing proudly in front of the shop or in the welcoming interior.



Prop the photograph,
use nature,
don't mix messages.

The intentionalised image

This is my term for a photograph that has been produced using the processes laid out in this book, it's a way to describe the final image that tells a story.

It is the cumulation of all the stages of preparation laid out in chapter 4 and the result of merging the intentions of both the artisan and the photographer.

Production of the intentionalised image should occur in an atmosphere of sharing. Intentions are put on the table and a professional discussion takes place on how to achieve them.

An intentionalised image will sell a narrative of the pleasure of owning the product, not overtly selling the product itself. This is the power it has over a regular photograph.

An intentionalised image - Everything you put in the photograph should mean or signify something.

Day 64 COVID clay diary, A.Tait.

Artisan & photogra-pher 4

Chapter 4
Preparation, stages and the intent

- Discussion to discover stories
- The scope of the project
- A brief and knowing your audience
- Create the Intentionalised image, and document

The quest for a photographer might seem difficult. You may be bombarded by a series of bewildering options in the form of design studios, web companies marketing, public relations, printers, plus a matrix of other digitally prefixed consultants.

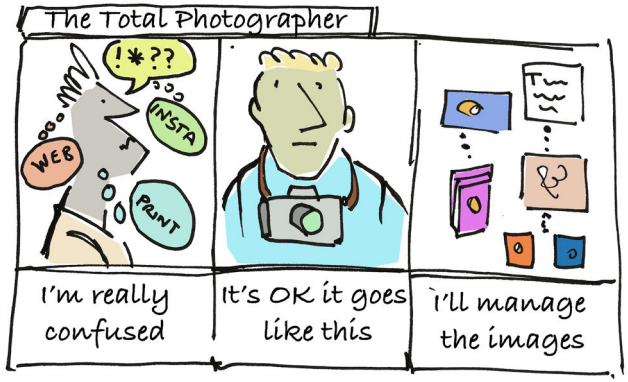
Fear not! Experienced photographers have usually dealt with all of the levels of advertising and as a result they are well suited to have an overview of the whole process (I would say that wouldn't I?). As such, they are often a more acceptable and economical alternative to a larger organisation.

The total photographer

You are looking for what I call a total photographer. One who commits to a collaborative endeavour with the aim of creating the intentionalised images we have just uncovered.

What does a total photographer looks like?

Willing to engage in discussion to draw out stories about your business. Has knowledge of the advertising industry and works with you to create a brief.



The total photographer ~

An image maker

A confidant

An analyst

A sociologist

1: Finding the story

Working alongside a photographer and following these laid-out processes will assist in describing your company's story. There will be no need for advertising jargon or having detailed knowledge of photography.
Initial meetings should be simple discussions about the business, the nuances of the product, and reviewing the product's uniqueness.

During these meetings use questioning, sketches, reference images, anything to find the narratives. I find an extremely effective way of highlighting a story early on in the process is a method of photo-elicitation, which involves taking photographs that best describe your business. It is a difficult task as it must be just 3 images, but it provokes productive discussion with the photographer about what is essential about the business.

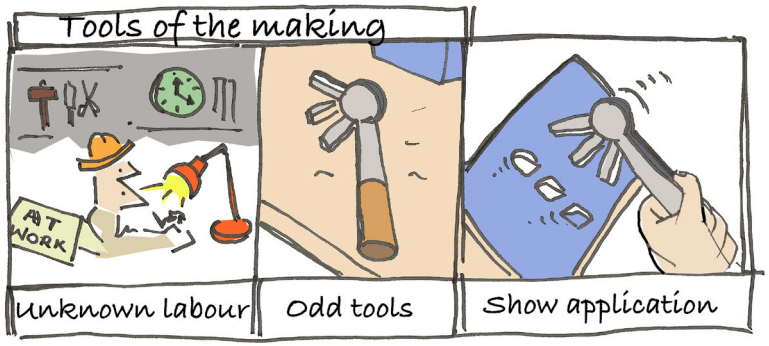
Advertising photography is a bit like art. *artisan*

Getting emotional with the product will motivate the photographer, share your making process, tell them everything about it, just when you think you are boring them stupid, a real gem will surface.

Simple elements can be excellent narrative, describe how you use Chilean pine for the furniture or a special tool that you made for the job. Customers love to know these things and it helps the photographer create unique images.

"The photographer needs to understand my business"

This should be an artisan's mantra, the only way they will have an understanding is if you share and collaborate.



Don't labour in a darkened room.

2: The scope

This stage seems obvious, as such it is often missed. Both the artisan and the photographer should have a clear idea of what is required from the beginning.
Straightforward questions need to be asked.

How many products to be photographed?
How many images are expected?
Will there be a requirement for a video clip?
Are the images still-life or will models be needed?

Costly mistakes can occur if these parameters are not clarified before the shoot.

Oh sorry can you just 'do' a video clip while we are here? *client*

Hand tool, Cumbria Timber.

3: The brief, the intentions

Preparation for creating an image

Build from regular and focused meetings ~

- Knowledge gaining sessions
- Briefs that combine intentions
- Revisiting information to harvest the USPs
- Utilisation of design analysis documents to assess progress

These actions will feed the digital machine you have created.

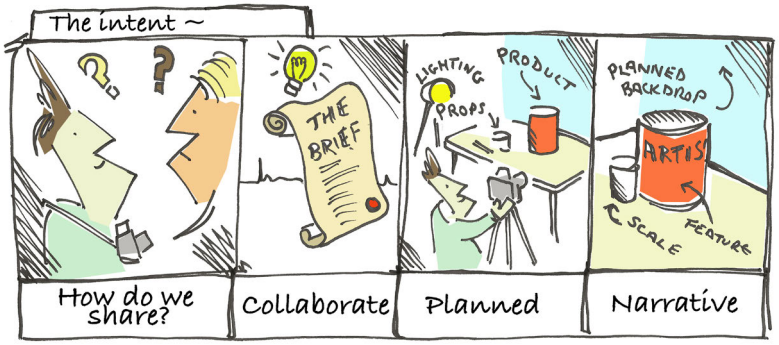
Photographers work best with a detailed brief, the tighter the better. When given a blank page a creative will more often than not, freeze up. As a practising photographer, if I don't get a brief for a job then I write one myself.

I am used to dealing with large companies and being surrounded by packs of creatives fighting for their headroom, placing rules and boundaries upon the work. In these circumstances the brief can become a confusing document and its effectiveness diluted by committee. We want to avoid this outcome.

A one to one relationship with an artisan is more efficient than a committee, it has the potential of developing into a close collaboration, an opportunity to translate the intents of two parties into a workable brief. During this process it is unfair to expect an artisan to express themselves in photographic terminology. They must however, offer as much information as possible about their product so the photographer has something to visualise.

Should I just let the photographer do their own thing? *artisan*

A brief is the cumulation of the discussions between the two parties, it is an agreement of the intents, which will include telling the story of the artisan and their product.



An intent,
an idea or a thought,
translated into an image.

The ‘intentionalised image’ becomes a result of the collaborative planning. Co-creation of stories about the artisan’s business is core to the photographic project. A small business must understand that the customer has no clue about the level of preparation work and skills required in making the products unless you tell them. Repeatedly put this intention in the brief. This is why big brands have such strap-lines as ‘lovingly crafted’, ‘matured over years’, that signifying the input of time which adds to the product’s worthiness. If the artisan labours in a darkened room and nobody knows, then the time, skill and expertise will not be adding value to the product. The photography must echo

The timber for the table is seasoned for 3 years before I can use it *artisan*

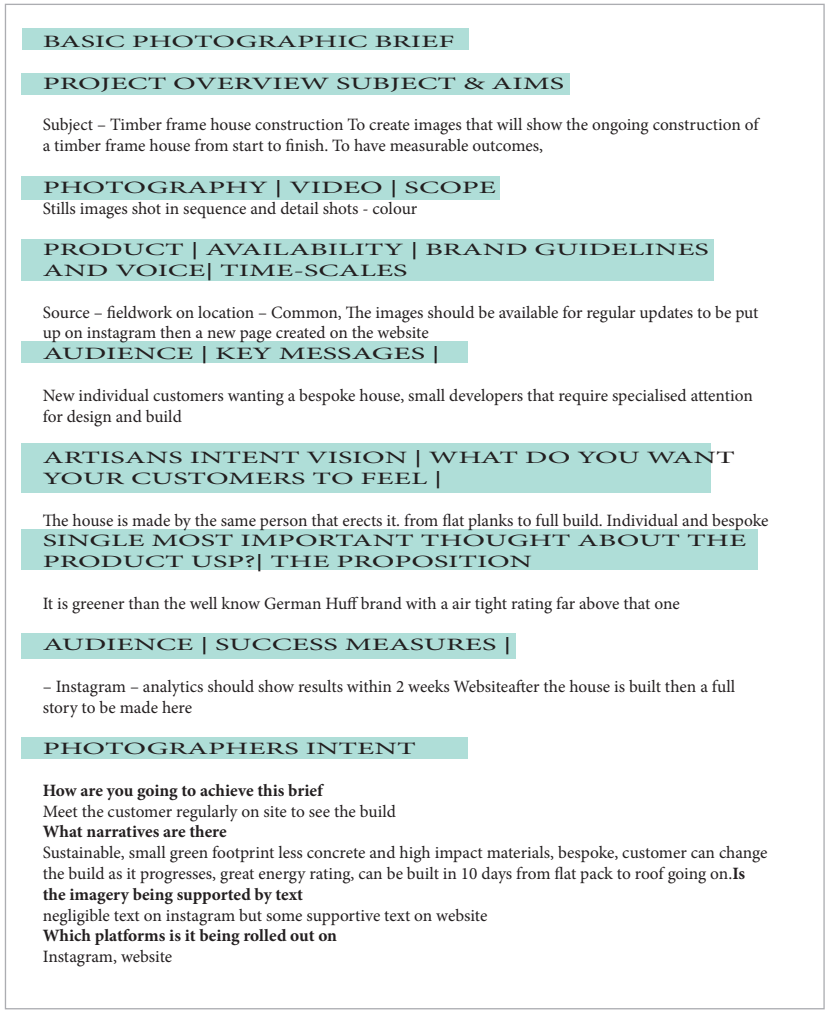
the hard work and skill. Photographic signifiers that refer to the investment of time are used everywhere in product advertising, an ancient oak tree behind the whisky bottle, clocks, mountains, wise old sages, tradespeople in well worn clothing and more…

Artisans run their own businesses, create products, manage deadlines; above all they put time into their product which has to be translatable into the photographic image.

4: Audience and context

Know the context of the image before photography commences as it will affect the way the story is told. There is little point in creating a complex photograph that requires explanatory supporting text if it's going on Instagram. In a printed magazine you can use images that benefit from wordy descriptive texts. The images should be different in each context as they are different audiences.

As an artisan you probably already have intimate knowledge of your customer base as you deal directly with them, so this part will be relatively easy. It is good practice to revisit who the audience is on every brief sheet.



BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Timber frame house construction To create images that will show the ongoing construction of a timber frame house from start to finish. To have measurable outcomes,

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images shot in sequence and detail shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – fieldwork on location – Common, The images should be available for regular updates to be put up on instagram then a new page created on the website

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

New individual customers wanting a bespoke house, small developers that require specialised attention for design and build

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

The house is made by the same person that erects it. from flat planks to full build. Individual and bespoke

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

It is greener than the well know German Huff brand with a air tight rating far above that one

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks Websiteafter the house is built then a full story to be made here

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Meet the customer regularly on site to see the build
What narratives are there
Sustainable, small green footprint less concrete and high impact materials, bespoke, customer can change the build as it progresses, great energy rating, can be built in 10 days from flat pack to roof going on.**Is the imagery being supported by text**
negligible text on instagram but some supportive text on website
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, website

Briefing sheet, Cumbria Timber Frame. House build.

It will remind you that the Facebook demographic may be a little older than the Instagram, or the glossy magazine is your high end customer and the shop window is passing trade. This all affects the way photograph should look.

I use Instagram as contemporary example of a tool for business as it encourages daily updates, great for following a build or the creation of an artisan product. Still, we all know that this is a rapidly changing environment where today's platform can be tomorrows abandoned ship. Consequentially, the processes laid out in this book should be regarded as transferable to future image-based platforms.

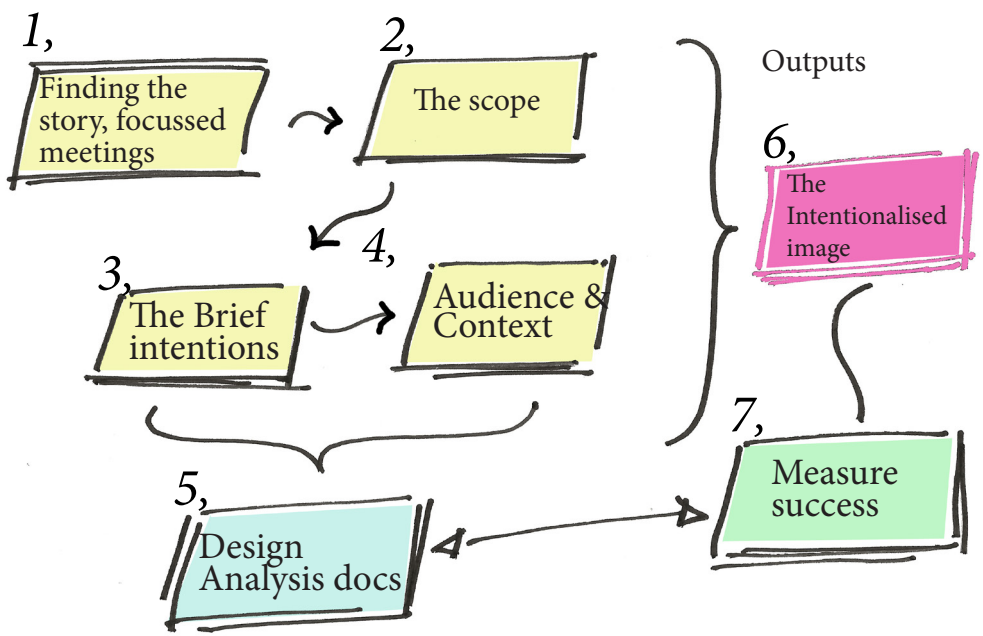
5: Design analysis document

This is a grand name for a document which looks at each project and reflects on its photographic impact. It is an adaptation of a method advertising agencies utilise to learn from their successes and failure of each job. It is sometimes used to feed back to the client, but I suggest it is used more as a collaborative document.

As the relationship between artisan and photographer is a partnership then this live document should also be a transparent look at the project. It does not have to be a wordy tome, it can be just bullet points (see p.79 for example). It should be started at the same time as the brief and built during the project, noting changes of direction, things learnt or any surprises. I have found it to be a fantastic vehicle for reflection and retention of clients. It forms the building blocks for future photographic projects. What better way to approach the next job than having learnt from the last?

The remaining 2 stages in the process are outputs formed as a result of the preparation, the 'Intentionalised image' and 'Measure success' are covered in the two following chapters.

Stages of preparation to creating an intentionalised image, the photograph.



Creation

Chapter 5
Creation of intentionalised photography

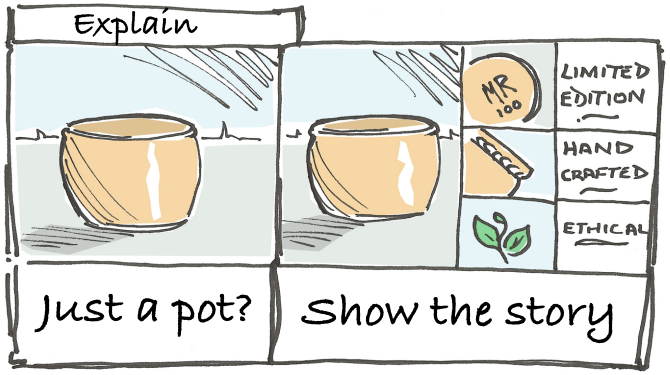
- Finding the story and ideas
- Examples of real world case studies
- The origins of the product
- Making, an artisan's unique offer

Customers are largely risk-averse and will quickly default to their standard products if they are not convinced of the benefits of yours. Ask yourself what the unique qualities of your products are, it is within these qualities that you will find your story. The image's narrative is initially formed by the information given by the artisan to the photographer. So, provide as much detailed information as you can, don't assume the photographer will just find out themselves..

Ideas formation, finding more stories

The photographer can create a beautiful and highly effective image from your own back garden allotment or workshop, if this is where the product originated, this creates authentic photographs. Feature details and aspects of the product to show its artisan nature. Products can look familiar and commonplace if these features are not highlighted: they are what makes the artisan product superior to the competition.

The artisan's best attributes can be hidden in plain sight. For example a hand-tool, used every day by the artisan can be overlooked but could be a key factor in the uniqueness of the product. It maybe a chisel or harvested herbs from the garden, otherwise thought as a part of the artisan's routine that can tell an interesting story to the viewer, it is here that the photographer can advise and suggest what may be visually effective. The work area may be an embarrassing mess to the artisan, photographed sympathetically it becomes a place where the magic comes from. No one



Your product isn't mass produced. So show all the details you can.

expects the artist's studio to be tidy but they do expect it to be creative. It can be a fascinating space giving an insight into the making of the product and a view backstage for the customers. Large corporates seek to gain this competitive advantage from the artisan by persistently suggesting through photography that their mass-produced products are made in such environments. The artisan should hold on to this advantage by celebrating the uniqueness of the product by commissioning their own photography.

I like the old chisels they just stay sharper longer. *artisan*

If the 'making' instruments are ugly and plasticky, then photograph what they 'do' rather than the items themselves. Close up photography of the curly wood shavings rather than the shiny new power tool, finely diced herbs scattered on a plate rather than the gaudy plastic handled chopping knife. Do not assume that the most expensive and modern machine or piece of equipment is the best way to 'sell' your artisans skills. Your expensive CNC cutting machine probably does a fantastic job of one of the stages of 'making' but showing it can depersonalise the product. As an alternative, photograph what the machine performs, show the intricate cuts or detailed stitching.

Don't overcrowd a photographic background, if it is a complicated background consider putting it out of focus so as not to distract from the product. Ensure that you show the features of the product, if this can't be achieved in one photograph then use separate shots or insets. The brass handles, the dovetail joint, the detail of the embroidery. The insets can be shown alongside the main feature photograph. Descriptive still life photography can support the larger overall shots giving a fuller story. Showing the materials and craftsmanship of the item can significantly impact the customer. 'Oh, it's all hand-stitched!' 'Solid yew wood, just look at the grain!'

Peter's chisels.

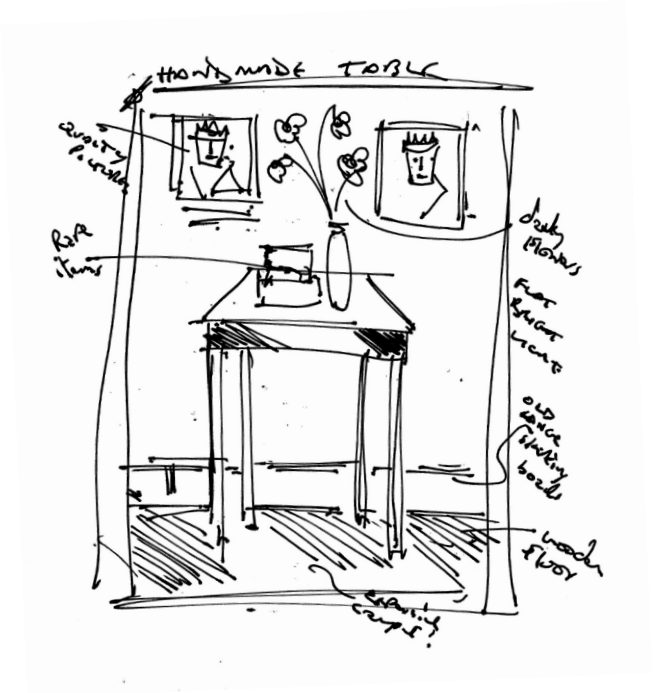
Find locations and props that convey the narrative highlighted from the brief. Which forest did the tree come from, are those the fields where the sheep graze, is the water from that lake used in the process? Working together as artisan and photographer co-creating the brief will draw out these narratives.

We all visualise a concept differently, some of us need explanatory text, some a visual marker. Be prepared to make sketches and diagrams to support the brief.

It takes me an hour to make one flower, and there are nearly a hundred on this hat. *artisan*

Ask the photographer to sketch it out if you are unsure how to describe an intent or rough it out yourself. I have used stick men drawings in the middle of a board meeting to unpick the intentions of those present, it doesn't matter if they are basic, it can even break the ice and make people smile during a heavy creative session.

The following pages show real world 'intentionalised' images created in collaboration with artisan businesses. The text is abstracted from the photography briefings, included are small descriptors of how the signs and signifiers in the photographs were intended to be understood by the viewer.



Rough sketch for table photograph (p.67), Cumbria Timber.

An image of the hat

Abstracts from the collaborative brief ~

Subject - Classic Bowler with a twist

Narrative - A 'going out' bowler that will show style and handmade features

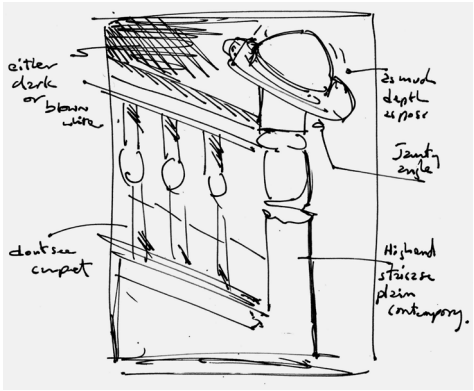
1) Human Skills - unique, you can rest assured that there will not be another one at the event you are attending

2) The item is strong enough to stand alone; it doesn't need support from other clothing as props

3) Muted tones in the background help focus on the product

4) Hat is ready and waiting at the foot of the stairs - the last touch before you exit

Here we have an image used as a promotion for a new range of bowler inspired hats. The first immediate intention was to infer quality and a sense of 'specialness'. The hat sits alone (uniqueness) on a finial, waiting to be worn. The idea is that the wearer is dressing up to go to a special event. There is an assumed cultural knowledge that hats are 'de riguer' for events and occasions. The signification is of a 'well to do' persons hat, the subdued contemporary look of the carpet and stair rods with the white plaster and gilded mirror. The mirror itself is an instrument to check makeup and hair in readiness to go to that special occasion. The collection of the elements whilst not suggesting the full attire transmit the idea of an outfit that would not be complete without the hat. The stairs - the last part of the journey out the door and off...



Tracy Wells Millinery.

The artisan in the workplace

Abstracts from the collaborative brief ~

Subject - The artisan in the workplace

Narrative - A hands-on artisan approach to making food

1) Human Skills - An exhaustive knowledge of seasonal food

2) The daily menu reflects the changing seasons and seasonality of the food

3) Cross reference to the home delivery which has the same attention lavished upon it as in store

4) Hand written ingredients, attention to detail mirroring the labelling on the food parcels

The image shows the artisan busy preparing the day's handwritten menu. The photograph iconically shows a recognisable cafe and a menu, but indexically its signification is that of the artisan's personal involvement in the business space, from the preparation and presentation of the menu board to the final food offer. The second shot shows that the in-store expertise is available in a home delivery pack. The branding is subtly shown out of focus in the meal presented outdoors. The customer will have a part of the experience of sitting in-store - at home. The signified is the excitement of a prepared meal as good as the ones expected from the shop.

The inset shot was used as a lead image on Google maps, signifying the quality and healthiness of the food.

Ripe food. Daily menu.

The craftsman,

Abstracts from the collaborative brief ~

Subject - Bespoke wooden packaging

Narrative - It may be just a box, but it is hand made and constructed as a neatly fitting piece for every item it carries

1) Human Skills - each box is different
2) The box is made to measure from the original drawings of the item
3) The wood is from sustainable sources
4) Each box is stamped as export approved

An image of the artisan preparing to construct a bespoke wooden carrier box. This was a unique service within a 50 mile radius of the business. The artisan signifies the hand made element of the box, concentrating and accurately marking the dimensions out on the timber, giving every box the same attention. The use of black and white avoids the high vis jacket distracting from the intended narrative. The iconic referent is that of a timber construction, the indexical is hand-made to exacting standards checked personally by the artisan himself. The inset suggests production of more than one box and displays the importance of the compliance stamp for exporting.

Cumbria Timber frame.

The table

Abstracts from the collaborative brief ~

Subject - Sycamore table, a unique piece

Narrative - Unrepeatable item, production of bespoke furniture

1) Human Skills - Using spalted wood is highly skilled work, requiring many hours of cutting and ensuring that the harsh patterns improve the aesthetic of the piece

2) It is a delicate item, almost non functional, doesn't have a drawer or much of a surface area

3) High value

4) Grain and pattern ensures exclusivity

With the main photograph the intention was to make the environment surrounding the table a high quality and period setting. Minimal props signify that its purpose is not really as a true table. It is for display to be admired as a piece on its own. The subtle low-key lighting enhances the shape of the delicate tapering legs. The table is to be regarded by the owner and guests as a statement piece not just a table. The inset shots can be used as supporting the narrative of the main shot. We are selling the pleasure of owning such a beautiful piece with the knowledge of the work that has gone into it. It's not just a table, it is an artisan art piece, that is what the intentionalised image indexically suggests.

Cumbria Timber frame.

The porcelain headdress

Abstracts from the collaborative brief ~
Subject - Porcelain flowered head piece
Narrative - Distinct item for a special event

1) A head dress that is made to compliment an outfit
2) To show that a piece can be designed to be worn for a particular occasion
3) The item has many hours in its construction

With the brief and planning there was an intention to show the head dress in a setting that could be seen as a special occasion, such as on a bridesmaid at a wedding.

The model looks to one side as though speaking to the other guests at the event, signifying social acceptance. She is happy and talking to others 'off camera' who are also enjoying the event. Customers want to feel that their outfit is going to be 'just right' for the occasion they are attending. The demeanour of the model is indexically suggests that all will be fine.

The background operates twofold, that of a special calm area the photographer has chosen at the wedding and as a natural relationship between the green fresh leaves and the floral item. The signification is that the porcelain flowers are not out of place and are almost real!

For the inset shots reiterate that it is hand made and a one off. No one else will have the same headdress.
The shots provide evidence of the detailed hand work in the production. The artisan is seen in her place of work, offering the constructed flower up to us as though to say, can you tell the difference between this and a real one?

Tracy Wells Millinery.

Making

An artisan's unique selling point

Artisans can get so involved with the making that they forget to photograph the process. I often experience clients working to such tight deadlines that the finished product is packaged up and sent out to a customer without a single photograph taken. This is OK if the product is remade regularly, but when it is a bespoke artisan item, then the opportunity of photography in a controlled setting is lost forever. It is unprofessional (often impossible) to communicate with the customer after delivery, to organise a retrospective photographic shoot. The photography therefore must be planned into the schedule of making, telling the story of the level of work required, this is the backbone of the artisan business. It is no good attempting to explain to a new customer how wonderful a previously made item was if you have no evidence of its existence.

I repeat, show the customers the work that goes into the product, over and over again. Research demonstrates that human nature places greater value on things if they see hard work has been put into their creation. They will pay more if shown the commitment of time into the making. Don't allow the customer to think 'I could have done that myself'; explain the detail and difficulty of the process. Artisans sometimes miss this correlation between hard work and higher perceived value.

Walking to work if I see the nettles are healthy, I pick a bunch for the salad of the day. *cook*

Showing the stages of the raw materials developing into a finished product is photographically intriguing and somewhat satisfying to a customer. Use the images on social media to form a storyline, pace the exposure so the viewer doesn't see them all at once and you don't quickly run out of images before the next project.

- Photography of the making will always be powerful. Remember images of glasses of milk pouring into chocolate, scientists testing cupboard doors to destruction, cakes being hand sprinkled with caster sugar?

- The product can be photographed being made in its normal setting using the available light from a window or the workshops lights, emphasising it's honest origins. The photographer should be able to advise on this.

Ella, making coffee, Ripe.

• The photographic technique of shallow focus will obscure any complicated backgrounds. For example, modern items such as plastic boxes in the workshop can be blurred from the photograph's main subject , becoming less distracting.

Photographing the human skills required to make the product is an essential element, if a part of the product takes hours of fine painting and manipulating then show it.

I see the table in the tree trunk before I take the saw to it *carpenter*

If you don't, the customers will think those hundreds of beautiful handmade porcelain flowers are just ready-made off the shelf items. Even though you spent hours creating them from scratch and placing them individually on your masterpiece. The customers needs informing via signification about the skill, sweat and tears that have gone into the production of your artisan piece, which will ultimately allow you to charge a premium.

Peter, hand finishing the timbers.

• Photographically crop into the products, don't always show the whole thing. This adds a little mystery to the item, encouraging further investigation, such as coming to the shop and seeing the real thing.

• You must suggest and give approval to the use of props, an artisan knows which tool goes with each stage, not the photographer. Introduce these simple significations into the photograph, remove any random items that don't support the narrative.

• Look at competitors' images and critique them. Do they look expensive, natural, well-made, old, crafted? Do their signifiers represent quality? Do yours? Have a collaborative deconstruction of the images with your photographer.

Tracy, spending hours making the clay sunflowers.

ROI6

Chapter 7
R O I ~ Return On Investment,

Follow these tips and your investment in photography will pay off, converting your personal input of skills and knowledge into sales and funding further work.

1) Work collaboratively.

2) Talk about money and fees early in the process, especially if you have not commissioned photography before or had a poor return on a previous project.

2) Discuss with the photographer what you expect from the project. Define narratives/intents, invest in the intentionalised image.

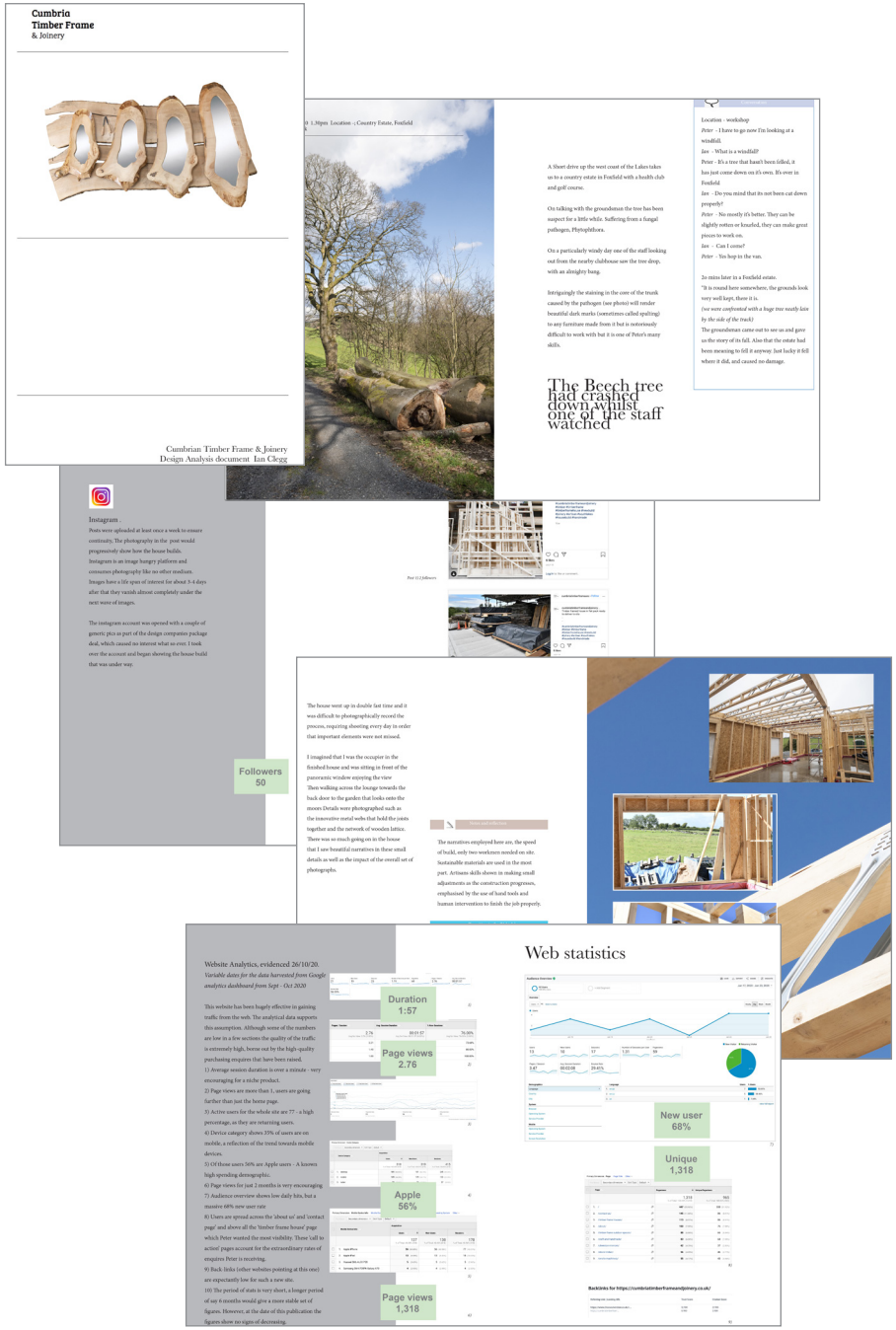
3) Celebrate the work of artisans, show what they do with honest photography keeping manipulation and retouching to a minimum. Engage the audience, turn each customer into a small patron of your work.

4) Expand your perceptions of the high street from the physical retail into the digital world of the virtual high street, where photography is the only way to represent your work.

5) Embrace photography as a critical part of an artisan's marketing strategy.

6) Design analysis document - Keep notes for reflection and analysing projects, it forms the building blocks for future photographic projects.

7) The 'total photographer' is the person an artisan should commission photography with, not from. It is the person a contemporary photographer should be aspiring to be.



Pages from ~Design Analysis document.

What does success look like?

Whether you commission photography or spend your own time creating it yourself you'll want to know whether it was worth it and reflect upon how to improve the next project.

I can't operate unless I have created a design analysis document, it becomes a record or journal for the benefit of both parties. It can be a document, sketchbook or a blog, as long as it's a reflection of the project. It's not required for a small project but essential for a large one.

Engagement with the digital environment is normally gauged solely on volume of likes and followers; question whether this engagement is genuine. Followers and likes must be converted to visits to your shop and paying customers.

I see low level data as, Instagram - likes, followers. Facebook - likes, comments, followers. Google maps - volumes of clicks. Websites - hits and clicks

Higher level indications of customer response to the photography can be assessed using analytics. They are readily available for free or very low cost. Currently (it changes as data laws change) we can see which pages customers linger on, which images they click on, what type of devices they use, how often they return. There is a plethora of interesting data sources that can help you decide how well the photography is performing.

You must keep refreshing your 'offer' and check that it's working or interest will fall away rapidly. An artisan should regularly feed the digital platforms with narrative-based photography. Photograph every product you have for your channels; no image, no narrative, no sale.

Poor images will do your brand a disservice. Invest time or money in great photography.

Conclusion

In writing this book, I am naturally biased in treating photography as the prime language of the advertising world. For these processes to work for you as an artisan you must first acknowledge the importance of photography in your advertising strategy.

Although it has involved delving into theory, hopefully you came out the other side and agree that a basic knowledge of semiotics is pertinent to understanding images. My process routes and methods for photography production have required new terminologies, such as the intentionalised image and the total photographer. You now have a framework of photographic process on which to build and improve your business.

If these ideas work as well for you as they have for me then splendid!

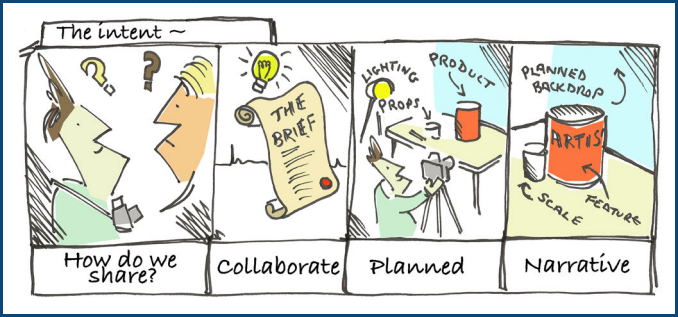
Good luck out there, keep making beautiful things, keep using photography and above all, keep being artisan.

Thanks to ~
All the participants within my research -
Peter Mawson, Cumbria Timber Frame
Ella Cheeseman, Ripe, Seasonal food
Tracy Wells, Millinery
Critical friends and technical experts -
Erik Knudsen, UCLan. Jim Ingham, UCLan.
Angela Tait, University of Salford.
Harry Tait. Alice, Model, p.69. Benjamin Clegg. Louise Clegg.

Go to my website for copies of blank briefing sheets, more examples of projects, feedback and any other material that springs to mind.

ianclegg.com

The power of the digital world can expose ineffective material openly and mercilessly. Yet if the social media is handled with a process, the control can be back in the hands of the artisan.



This handbook aims to be an easy to read summary, laying out procedures to achieve the best photography from relationships between artisan companies and photographers.

It contains a smattering of photographic theory supported by examples from real-world case studies.
Special attention is given to planning and collaboration, offering practical tools that enable artisans to tell their stories through photography.

ISBN 978-1-7397791-0-8

Appendix; 2

Design analysis documents ~

1/ Cumbria timber frame
2/ Tracy Wells millinery
3/ Ripe seasonal food

Ian Clegg

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Chapters:

Introduction
Selection, Decision Tree 1
Paperwork-Ethics & consent 2
Photo Elicitation 3
Photo deconstruction, Semi structured interviews 4
Building a briefing document 5
Co-creation of bespoke imagery 6
Digital platforms 7
Further images created 8
Findings 9
Reflection 10

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Introduction

The immersive fieldwork and primary research are recorded comprehensively in this 'Design Analysis document' individually and for each artisan evidencing timeline, process, photos, reflections and transcriptions of interviews. There is a range of interactions documented, including phone calls, meetings, emails, and sessions. Bringing them together all in one place will allow comparative findings and new methods to be singled out, abstracted and placed into 'the vehicle'. These documents are a core and unique output and cumulate the research and findings for each participant. This document, along with the other two Design Analysis documents, will act as the basis for the creation of 'the vehicle' in the form of a 'Creative Guide for artisans and photographers'. This document flows chronologically from when the field research began in October 2019, with initial enquiries, and has carried through to December 2020, plus cross-references to 2021.

The chapter headings follow the methods laid out in the thesis. The reflection takes place in discussion and action in practice, then assessment of success. Through this methodology, we will see if a photographic practice can empower the artisans' businesses.

All images and illustrations in this document ~ created by Ian Clegg unless otherwise stated

Phone conversation

January 2020

Ian - Hi Peter. We have seen each other around the town, I was wondering if you might be interested in becoming part of my research into artisan businesses around the South Lakes, I will explain in further detail but loosely it would involve us talking about how you produce your imagery for your business.

Peter - Oh I don't see why not. I don't really use photography but I have thousands of shots I have taken on my phone and we tend to use them. But the website isn't up and running and I don't produce leaflets or advertise much

Ian - Well could we just have a no obligation chat and see whether we can proceed?

Peter - Yes of course, pop down the workshop when you want

Ian - OK how about tomorrow?

1) Situation of the retail outlet right in the middle of the High Street

Key to sub headings :

Ongoing notes and reflection on the outcomes of the methods

Notes and reflection

Communications between researcher and participant

Phone conversation

Email communication

Findings to be reflected upon and transferred into the 'vehicle'

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

Overview

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery is a business located in the town centre of Ulverston, Cumbria, in an interiors and furniture retail shop on King Street called ‘Cumbrian Interiors’. It also has workshops located at Canal Foot which is 2 miles out of town on a modern industrial estate where the products are hand-crafted.

The customer will never see the workshops and can only find and purchase the product in the retail shop. Although sounding like a big company, it is owned and run purely by Peter Mawson. It has had employees in the past, but now Peter is the maker, and there are self-employed sales staff at the shop. For this reason and the purposes of this document, Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery will be referred to as CFT or just Peter.

Ulverston Interiors,
31 King Street, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 7DZ
sales@ulverstoninteriors.co.uk
www.ulverstoninteriors.co.uk

1) Peter inspects the end grain of a piece of timber
2) The signage on the High Street outlet of the hand made goods

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

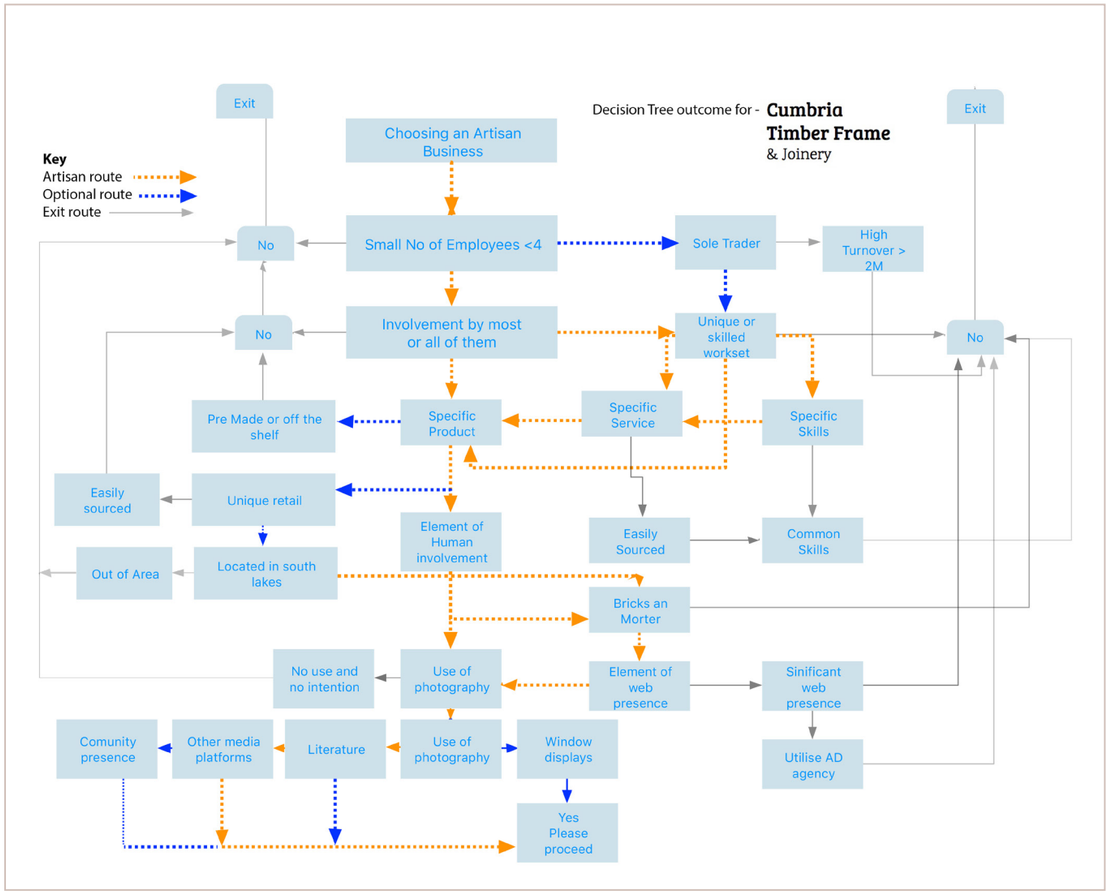
Chap 1)

Selection

Using the specifically designed decision tree

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Case study report Ian Clegg

Decision Tree-
Objective selection



Overview of Specific Decision tree

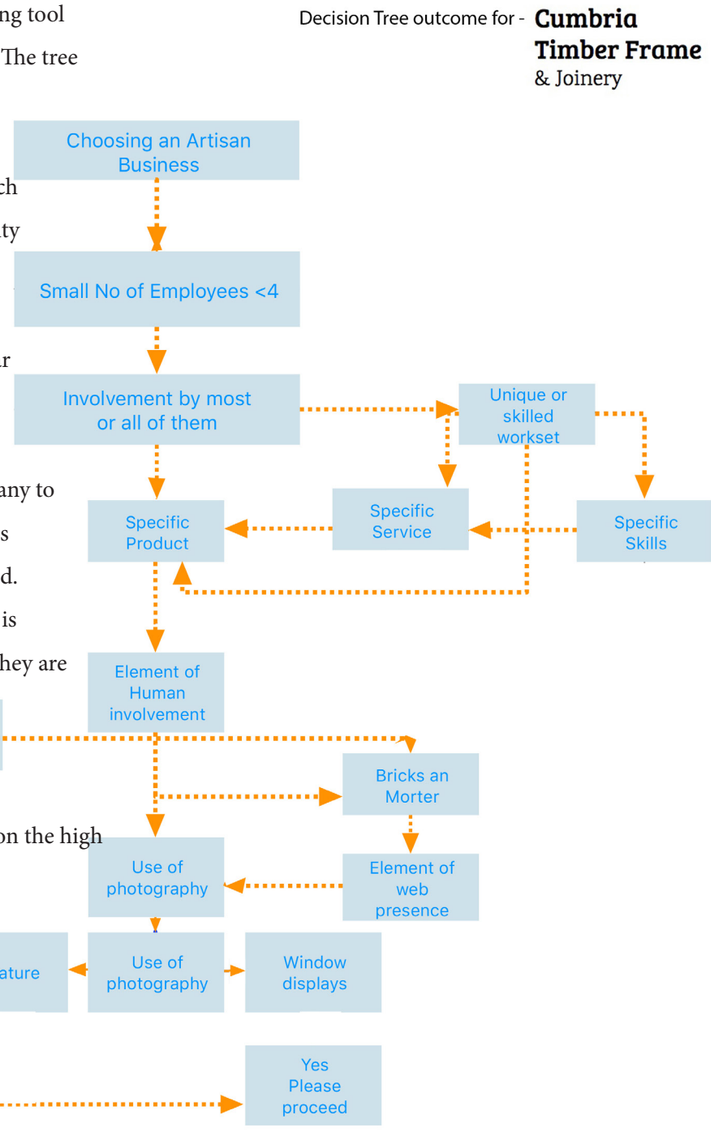
This diagram shows the extent and different pathways that could have been taken.

To test a business the questioning begins at the top and cascades down through positive (orange) arrows, blue arrows to show a maybe alternative and grey are a no route to an exit of the tree. If the orange arrows lead to the base and final 'yes proceed' box then the business is artisan.

CTF is showing a positive outcome for an artisan business, the orange arrows show positive pathway through all the layers of the tree.

Cumbria Timber ~ Outcome is 'Yes proceed'.
'.

Decision trees are usually used as a predictive managerial and machine learning modelling tool and are a form of multiple effect analysis. The tree could be said to be the graphic interface built on top of an algorithm. It is used in this research because the heuristic approach classifies an outcome and reduces ambiguity it keeps my choices in perspective and avoids subjectiveness. There are no complex formulae, and the decision is clear to see and can be reflected upon by the viewer without expert knowledge of the sector. This method will not allow a company to be selected if any major parameters such as 'unique or skilled worksets' are not satisfied. CFT has less than 4 employees; the owner is hands-on. The products are all unique as they are handmade in the workshops with specific crafted skills. The company has a retail presence on the high street.
They do have a minimal web exposure and see a use for photography, if not now then in the future. This simple decision technique allows me to proceed with this potential participant as an artisan based business.



Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Chap 2)

Sign up and paperwork

Ethics and consent forms

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Case study report Ian Clegg

Sign up Ethics&, Methods

Qualitative methodologies have been employed, and adjustments made due to COVID19 pandemic - shown in italics

Outline topics and open questions for semi-structured group discussion/workshops/focus groups – participants of up to four (adjusted to a maximum of 2)

1) Initial interviews – Semi-structured – Topics

Background of how the business began
What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique Selling Points)
Where the business wants to go in the future
How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies
Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–

Overview of the session,
An Introduction of how to portray your business,
My aim is to discuss photography's perceived views in promoting the narrative, which is not always obvious and can be hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

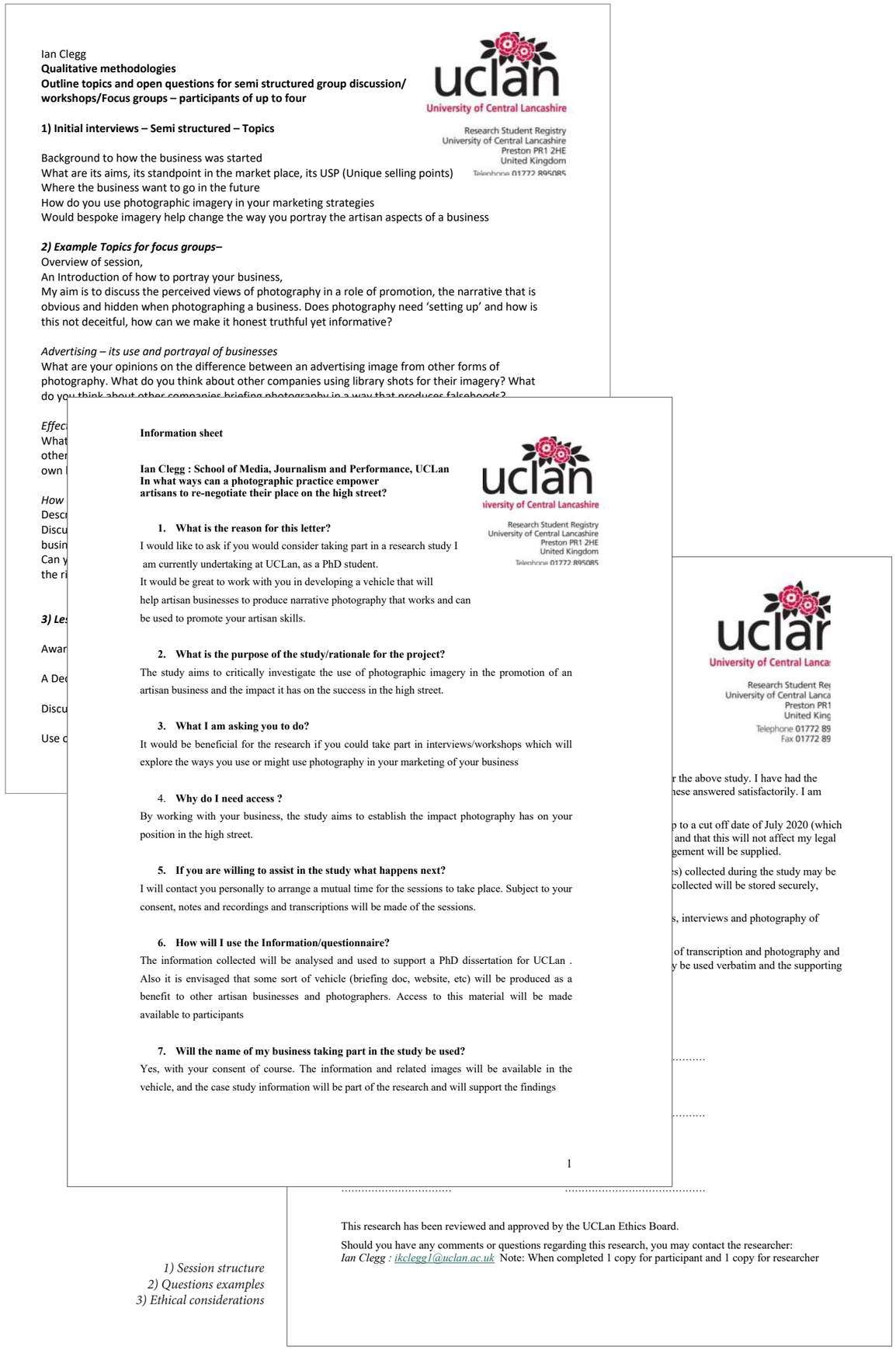
What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

Effectiveness of advertising photography
What do you think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?
How would we set up a product and editorial photoshoot?
Describe any experiences with dealing with photographers or imagery before?
Discuss the usefulness of a 'guide' to creating images that create a narrative to support your artisan business. In what ways do you consider photography can benefit your business?
Can you describe any challenges you have with creating imagery for your business?
How do you find the right people to work with?
How would we write a brief for a photoshoot?

3) Create an unstructured, workshop, combined focus group session- topics (absorbed into the other workshops and sessions)

4) The Ethical considerations were taken into account - presented to, and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board. Full documents in the appendixes.

Changes to initial plans of having the artisan present at the studio photo shoots and utilising models on set have been stopped. Focus onto still-life and outdoor shoots when involving people. Most of the communication has been taken online, email, phone calls and my cloud site to appraise images and progression of photographic shoots. As the artisans have very low staffing levels, safe distancing and good practice has been possible.
I do not believe the ethical stance laid out in the original documentation has changed with the pandemic. The digital platforms have become more significant, to the detriment of the actual high street, as we see retail shops closing during lock-down and a high percentage not reopening. The change in emphasis has created the absolute necessity for the artisans to have a significant digital footprint. The digital domain by its nature satisfies most of the pandemic safety guidelines.



Ian Clegg
Qualitative methodologies
Outline topics and open questions for semi structured group discussion/ workshops/Focus groups – participants of up to four

University of Central Lancashire
Research Student Registry
University of Central Lancashire
Preston PR1 2HE
United Kingdom
Telephone 01772 895085

1) Initial interviews – Semi structured – Topics

Background to how the business was started
What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique selling points)
Where the business want to go in the future
How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies
Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–
Overview of session,
An Introduction of how to portray your business,
My aim is to discuss the perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

Advertising – its use and portrayal of businesses
What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography. What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

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Information sheet

Ian Clegg : School of Media, Journalism and Performance, UCLan
In what ways can a photographic practice empower artisans to re-negotiate their place on the high street?

University of Central Lancashire
Research Student Registry
University of Central Lancashire
Preston PR1 2HE
United Kingdom
Telephone 01772 895085

1. **What is the reason for this letter?**

I would like to ask if you would consider taking part in a research study I am currently undertaking at UCLan, as a PhD student.
It would be great to work with you in developing a vehicle that will help artisan businesses to produce narrative photography that works and can be used to promote your artisan skills.

2. **What is the purpose of the study/rationale for the project?**

The study aims to critically investigate the use of photographic imagery in the promotion of an artisan business and the impact it has on the success in the high street.

3. **What I am asking you to do?**

It would be beneficial for the research if you could take part in interviews/workshops which will explore the ways you use or might use photography in your marketing of your business

4. **Why do I need access ?**

By working with your business, the study aims to establish the impact photography has on your position in the high street.

5. **If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?**

I will contact you personally to arrange a mutual time for the sessions to take place. Subject to your consent, notes and recordings and transcriptions will be made of the sessions.

6. **How will I use the Information/questionnaire?**

The information collected will be analysed and used to support a PhD dissertation for UCLan . Also it is envisaged that some sort of vehicle (briefing doc, website, etc) will be produced as a benefit to other artisan businesses and photographers. Access to this material will be made available to participants

7. **Will the name of my business taking part in the study be used?**

Yes, with your consent of course. The information and related images will be available in the vehicle, and the case study information will be part of the research and will support the findings

1

University of Central Lanca
Research Student Re
University of Central Lanca
Preston PR1
United King
Telephone 01772 89
Fax 01772 89

r the above study. I have had the
hese answered satisfactorily. I am

p to a cut off date of July 2020 (which
and that this will not affect my legal
gement will be supplied.

s) collected during the study may be
collected will be stored securely,

s, interviews and photography of

of transcription and photography and
y be used verbatim and the supporting

.....

.....

.....

This research has been reviewed and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researcher:
Ian Clegg : ikclegg1@uclan.ac.uk Note: When completed 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

1) Session structure
2) Questions examples
3) Ethical considerations

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Chap 3)

Photo Elicitation

Response from the – Three images that could describe your business

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Case study report Ian Clegg

Photoelicitation

*Photographs made by the participants with their own accessible cameras, or supplied with an instant Fuji camer*a.

CFT was asked to represent the businesses in just 3 images. They were given a couple of days, and then we discussed the images via semi-structured interviews where we questioned their choices. In a model of collaborative research, we analysed if the photographs portrayed meanings and whether they placed objects into the frame or omitted them to make the image more pertinent.

Images discussed via semi-structured interviews questioning their meanings in a model of collaborative research.

These reference points are an opportunity to represent their reality to myself and vice versa
(Nelson, 2013, p68).

“It is very hard to describe my business in 3 shots.”

As a general introduction to the session, we discussed competitors such as ‘Rusland Movement group’ who are a bespoke furniture workshop only a couple of miles away. Peter commented that they don’t impress him; they don’t tell the company’s story, or the making and the process behind the work.

Peter honestly added, that he isn’t happy with his website (it is purely a static page with some gallery shots), also hasn’t got the time to progress it or keep it up to date. Peter agrees that he hasn’t developed a presence on the social media platforms and doesn’t have the time to fulfil this.

He has tried to employ apprenticeships in the past who don’t seem to be interested in learning the a rtisan skills of carpentry; he blames the “semi-skilled” tutors at the colleges and the courses that have only options of two paths, site or joinery woodwork. This comment certainly broke the ice and suggested an open and forthright conversation would follow.

Peter’s opener to looking at the images - ‘It is very hard to describe my business in 3 shots’ which also intimated that he had some interesting opinions regarding imagery.

‘First image’

Hand tools

Notes and reflection

The workshop is populated by some incredible machinery, gleaming metal boxes with extractor fans and perspex covers, loud expensive and very complicated.

Yet Peter has chosen a couple of hand tools that one would assume most people have in their garages or sheds, yet when we enquire further and look closer, they tell a story.

“The old steel in the old tools is far superior to todays.”

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- Do not assume that the most expensive and flashy machine or piece of equipment is the best way to ‘sell’ the artisans skills. Get personal.
- Take note of the way the artisan was trained or learnt their trade - these events however long ago can still have a big influence on their attitude to the business.

Hand tools, Android, camera phone-

“I use a lot of hand tools, I have machinery but I still use hand tools. You still have to use proper hand tools. Probably had these for 20 years, the old steel in the old tools is far superior to todays metals, if you get an edge on an old chisel or plane then it lasts for ages.”

“You can buy really expensive tools but the regular ones in a store – well the steel is just pants.”

The wooden mallet (Peter made this mallet) could be 27 years old.

“When I went to college, you were taught to make things by hand. Where as now you get taught on CNC (computer numerical control) machines.”

“When I look at a piece of wood I know before I touch it or plane it, which way the grain is going to tear, everything is now done with power tools and they (the contemporary wood workers I presumed) don’t understand the timber. If you use hand tools you even get bigger bits of shavings, if you turn the wood around it will just tear.

That’s what I am trying to say in the image.”

‘Second image’

Spalt wood

Notes and reflection

This small sample of wood is clearly an important piece.

From the considerable stock of seasoned timber reaching to the ceiling, this tiny piece the size of a keyring was singled out by Peter. A symbol of his recognition of spalted wood at the early stages of the process - sometimes Peter can tell a tree is spalted even before it is felled and planked. This observation is an exceptional skill, an artisan skill.

His comments reveal how he thinks like an inspired sculptor.

If I can bring this out in my photographic images, they will be loaded with narrative. Peter does not indulge in conversation, but this seems to have brought him out of himself and is a unique part of his business. It may seem too personal to him to celebrate, but his competitors would only dream of having such commitment to the products.

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- Speak openly about the product, don’t assume either party knows what the other means.
- Keep talking! Obtain a unique viewpoint and work with it.

“The black parts are where the wood is just becoming rotten.”

Spalt beech keyring, Android, camera phone-

“This is a piece of spalt wood. It is from a beech tree. You have to look at the tree and see what is happening on the inside. When the sap rises through the resin it gives this amazing look to the finished piece. The conditions need to be just right, temperature and damp. The black parts are where the wood is just becoming rotten. Different woods react differently.

(This is only 10cm square so the scale does not come across at all in this image)

I find myself driving along and seeing trees that would make good specimens for furniture. There is an oak tree in the dip in Ulverston which would make a great project. It is knurled and bent, not what other people might think is good but great for my projects.

This piece was used to make key fobs for a client.

I see a tree or a log and like a sculptor I can see the piece of furniture inside it. I am thinking of setting up a part of the business to log trees and make timber from them. Then sell the usable timber.

People don’t realise that I start from the tree, season the wood and then make the furniture from it. It is a whole process.”

‘Third image’

Wooden Hinges

Notes and reflection

The countertop was an innocuous part of the office reception for the workshop. It lifts to allow passage through to the other rooms and was covered in papers, letters, and hidden from view. It highlights Peter’s eye for detail, yet an almost ‘matter of fact’ attitude to finished work. I think this attitude is a method that helps him to move on to the next job in his busy schedule. So it is intriguing that the small hinges seem worthy of note, not the large solid wood worktop they are attached to. This attention to detail is an excellent example of how photo elicitation can bring forth ideas and elements of the client’s thought processes that would otherwise be missed.

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- Ask daft questions you never know what the answer might bring
- Always, always look for the detail
- Some of the most interesting parts of the business may be situated in plain sight and become almost matter of fact to the artisan.

“It took me a whole day just to make two hinges. I made it wrong the first time.”

Wooden hinge, Android, camera phone.

“During constructing this counter top took me a full day just to make the hinges. The centre of the hinges are made from Lignum Vitae,* the centre bit is oak, and a pin gives it a double action. I made it wrong the first time. I had never seen anything like that before so I thought I would make it.
I use it as a display, and customers can see it. The timber came from leftovers from another job.”

**An extremely hard wood sometimes called ironwood, as it is self lubricating and doesn’t need grease, it was even used in ships propeller bearings! also for Lawn green bowls and legend has it - Merlin’s wand.*

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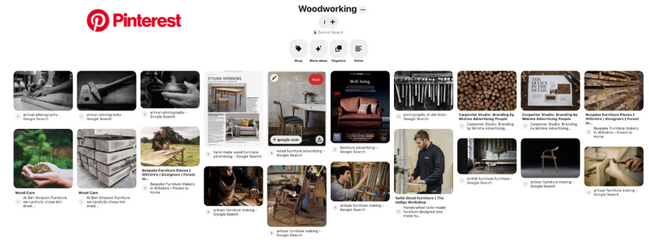

Chap 4)

Photo Deconstruction

A visual document was created from the jointly gathered images

Case Study report –
Meeting -; Location -; Workshop - Ulverston
Reason for meeting - Photo review

Notes and reflection

The images are a selection from a shared collaborative 'Pinterest' style board. Myself and Peter uploaded images as 'likes and dislikes' for our discussions.

This session has highlighted that images almost make Peter feel uncomfortable. It was challenging to draw him to comment at all. The formal questioning and putting him under the spotlight does not get the best from him.

Fig. 1

He immediately spotted that it was not an actual woodworking shot and that it was more of a blacksmith image. He perceives it as a 'simple' shot and has no opinion whether it benefits by being black and white rather than colour.

Fig. 2

Straight away he again says it isn't a woodworking shot it is an upholstery image. Because the tool used is not suitable for wood. This is a common situation I find myself in, where a client cannot always perceive that an image from another sector such as upholstery making can influence or be relevant to their own.
It can be quite frustrating that a beautiful shot of a hand tool showing a blacksmith's skills cannot be perceived as a further influence as photography of a hand tool for a carpenter. This is a problem more aligned to the photographer than the artisan. The communication of other sources of inspiration needs to be addressed or images will begin to look the same if ideas are sourced 'safely' close to home.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Try to see the reference shots out of their own context, not the details of the specifics.
- Don't continue to use phrases that are clearly not working,
- Images that do not relate to the participants skill sector specifically - if the participant cannot relate to these images change them or present them in a clear manner in a way that the images are seen as ideas and that ideas can come from a variety of sources.
- The point can be made that to show an image from 'their sector' would not normally inspire an original new concept for their own photography.

Ian – What do you think this picture is trying to say?

Peter - It's a hand tool, traditional, hand-crafted, it does say blacksmith, this looks far more traditional than the next one, the lighting helps. It's a simple shot.

Ian – What do you think of using black and white photography?

Peter - Don't mind the black and white.

Fig. 1 Stock, www.mediabakery.com Mint images

Ian - Compared with the other shot what do you feel the story is here?

Peter - This is obviously a new tool, it shines and is an upholstery hammer doesn't have the same impact, the human element is OK.

Fig. 2 https://www.dautlichphotography.com/, April Dautlich

Notes and reflection

Peter was coming to the end of his interest in the session, even though there were two more images. I endeavoured to keep asking open questions

Fig. 3

If this advertisement had any effect on Peter, it was subliminal, and he didn't wish to acknowledge anything other than the Ad's technical viewpoint. The transcript is a summary after I described to him that the chair was almost an objet d'art in this situation, the pure minimalist set intimated long days in a warm villa, comfortable chair and hours of creative writing. Yet, Peter would still have liked to see more of the chair. Peter is speaking as a maker, of course he would see the value in the hours spent on an object, the days of hard work spent making the chair will become the main subject of any image (he has a personal investment in the object). It is hard for him to break away from that and condone narratives in the image that do not make it look like a pure, iconic reflection of the chair.

Fig. 4

Peter had no time for this image; he asks why is he planing wood in a field, on a trestle table, that's not what you would use, and in a field?

I understand his frustration towards the image, but the content is there and is explainable, even if the image's execution is rather crude. On further discussion, Peter did acknowledge what was being suggested. Locally sourced wood, natural products and a connection to the environmental sources. However, it was encouraging that he reacted to the poor construction of the image.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Use props and objects that the artisan approves of, they can give the wrong impression to the customer, without the photographer being aware.
- Introduce semiotics in a clear simple and structured manner.
- Look at competitors' images and critique them, repeatedly.

Ian – What are they trying to say here?

Peter – I haven't got a clue, it is minimal
what is in here, its all about the chair
A little bit more of the chair would be good
I would have the back moved round to front and side as a better viewpoint.

Ian – From what viewpoint specifically?

Peter – Well I don't want to see the back
I want to see the front.

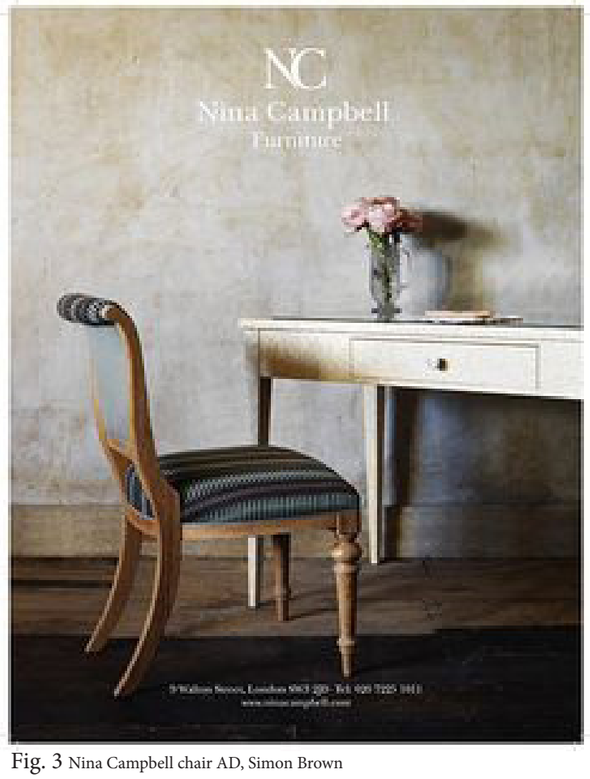

Fig. 3 Nina Campbell chair AD, Simon Brown

Ian - What do you think the woodworker is trying to tell us with this image?

Peter - Looks like he is planing a piece of wood, bizarrely in a field. He has no inside space! I don't know what he is trying to say.
I get it is potentially saying that it is locally sourced products, not sure why you would setup a trestle table outside.

Ian - Are they trying to say the products 'come' from trees? But you think they have not done it very well?

Peter - Well yes to me it is a bit of a joke, its not a great picture.

Fig. 4 https://foresttohome.com/bespoke-furniture-makers-wiltshire/

Notes and reflection

Peter is at his most comfortable, talking about the process. By sheer serendipity, I asked how the wood could be worked and who were his main influences, which I did not expect an answer to, especially not with an actual person. It seems that he has admired John Makepeace for some time. So as it was an informal interview, we looked at John Makepeace's website, and the table with the brass inlay was one of his favourites.

He is impressed by his work and somewhat subliminally respects the narrative of the imagery on his site. It generates an emotion.

Unexpected progress was made from the rather protracted previous conversation about the images.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Listen intently to the clients.
- Draw them on what they enjoy talking about.
- Make no assumptions.
- Do not stick to set questions, allow the conversation to drift and other areas of interest will appear.

"The way he uses different materials is genius. Look at the metal in his leaf table."

Mulberry 2, www.johnmakepeacefurniture.com

"Have a look at John Makepeace a carpenter, this guy to me is a legend.

His website shows interviews, press cuttings and products, some of the stuff he does is sensational, it all flows and is unbelievable, a very clever woodworker. It is a work of art."

Notes and reflection

Reflection on the questionnaire answers -
Interestingly, Peter acknowledges it is difficult taking pictures of mass-produced items - He recognises that some products on the market are boring and have nothing to say, compared with his. So, why not celebrate this difference?
,Interestingly Peter says that the does not take enough images of the products he produces, they have often left the workshop before he has thought of, or had the chance to, photograph them.

1) Peter has a hidden admission that some images need props to convey narrative - he says it enhances them (when they are an essential part of an image).

2) It surprised me that he previously used a professional photographer some time ago. From this experience he concedes that lighting plays a crucial role.

3) Peter understands that library shots* are often used and agrees that it is deceitful to use props that are not directly related to the main product.

4) Peter thinks it would be difficult for companies to photograph mass-produced products and make them attractive. Therefore he is suggesting that his would be easier to present photographically.
We shall look into this opinion further as the root of the artisan product is that it does have a better narrative, it has the care and skill inherent in itself - unlike a mass produced item.

5) Peter thinks he has enough images to use for his company (this is up for debate and will be revisited later in the document). Unfortunately most of the images are below par technically and are of uninteresting stages of the process, and if used may do more harm than good.

6) When he considers out loud other companies' imagery he has inadvertently come up with an amazing strapline of 'seed to home'. He is also thinking a lot more about what photography can do for him. Possibly photography is starting to become a part of his artisan strategy.

"It is hard taking photographs of mass produced products."

**Images bought from a bank of pre-shot photographs from Getty or Alamy or other library, some of these images get reused over and over again and can become banal and familiar*

Questions to the artisan

The perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business.
Paraphrased answers

1) Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

Certain things do, certain photography needs, props, depends what you are taking, what the central or focal point is. If you have to add a couple of props to enhance it then fair enough.

2) What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography.

I used photographer Antony Wright, for images in the past so better lighting makes a difference.

3) What do you think about other companies using library shots* for their imagery?

I have enough images to work with so I don't need them. I don't see the point, I do get why they use them but again I have enough. It is deceitful if they shoot hand tools
when they don't use them.

4) What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

A little bit yeah, Its up to them really. In the case of Ikea for example then it is hard taking good photographs of mass produced products.

5) What do you think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high end imagery from large companies to be attainable?

I can actually say from 'seed to home' because of the trees I source. I wish I had taken better pictures of work I have Done in the past, as I had gone along. I made a particularly hard to make staircase the hand rail was all curved. I installed it but didn't take any pictures. I have made all sorts over the years, and often think ' *I should have taken a picture of that.*'

6) How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?

Re work the website, maybe use some text to support the images, use more range and specific imagery to show different skills of the company.
Take more pictures of work that has gone out to the client
Before it becomes unattainable.
Perhaps Peter has begun to think about a photographic strategy.

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Timber Frame
& Joinery

Chap 5)

Building a Briefing document

Discussions of current competitive strategies, co creation of a briefing document.

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Case study report Ian Clegg

‘The co-created brief’

The briefing document is an instrumental part of the creative process and enhances the approach to image creation.
It is a method taken from advertising agency procedures where there are many people involved: the brief is a go-to document and a reference point for the client and agency for the whole creative journey.

Its use here is specifically aimed at the image production section of the journey, not the overall advertising campaign.

If created collaboratively, it allows the client and the photographer to engage and discuss image-making outcomes. Then during production it becomes a reminder of the original aims and objectives - ‘the intents of both artisan and photographer.’

General comment about the aim of the imagery can be as simple as ‘to gain customers’ but should be more specific such as, ‘gain customers in the timber house sector’, or new awareness of a skill

A reasonable question that avoids confusion, and out of the blue comments in the field -
“Oh, I thought while we were shooting, we could also do a video clip?”

Depending on how the meeting is going this should be straight forward, But when should it be ready? Where is this going? are major factors.

It is always a question that arises in advertising; if you don’t know who you are talking to, how can you say it? This is a more difficult assessment. Many artisans don’t know who their audiences are. The key messages may only come about from a discussion like this or develop as a project progresses.

Is the intent to make the customer ‘feel’ something or react to something? If this is not known at the outset, it cannot be added or rectified later.

Sometimes there is an obvious answer, but this strangely can come from the listener, the photographer, so does anyone else do this? Has it been done before? Is there another one?

The photographer must have an idea of the ‘intent of the artisan’, does that marry with both of their intents? If it doesn’t or is unclear, repeat the above questions until there is a mutual agreement.

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief

What narratives are there

Is the imagery being supported by text

Which platforms is it being rolled out on

Effectiveness of the images can be measured to some extent by -
Sales? Clicks? Feedback?
Which now on digital platforms are readily available through Analytics but it is helpful to know at the beginning where we are looking for this success.

Examples of 3rd party and Peter's imagery used and produced over the 18 months previous to this research.

It is always easy to criticise imagery taken by other parties. I will try to be constructive. Peters' images have at best, been documentary in approach. Merely images to record the output with no consideration for their end-use. It is only mildly relevant that the images have been taken on a camera phone; more importantly, it shows that the images have been hurried. They are not considered and the position props lighting or lack of, do not do the products justice.

I highlight the example of the tree stump sculpture, which took 3 years to make, while it was seasoning and being gently carved and varnished.

It was an opportunity to show the artisan craft in its best light. It was commissioned and installed into the reception of a new build development in Pomona Wharf, Manchester, unfortunately its progress up to that point has not been photographed. The missing imagery is from the field where the tree was located right through all of the 3 year-long process of getting it ready for display. What a story what a narrative!

As with many small businesses and artisans, time just runs out, and before they know it, the delivery deadline arrives and there is no allowance left for photography, the product just needs to 'go out'.

"By the time I think about getting the product photographed it is too late, I have to deliver it."

Here we see the item installed and Peter has done a quick phone shot - the crafting of 3 years is just not shown or represented by the image, the image devalues it, the image is doing more harm than good for the provenance of the art piece.

Whilst there may be an opportunity to revisit this piece in-situ and photograph it, its journey to this stage is not available in image form and This approach is reflected in the majority of the examples I give on the facing page. The other pieces shown have long gone to inaccessible destinations, and the photographic evidencing has not been embedded in the process of making.

1) Collection of images taken by 3rd parties and Peter himself - Tree trunk installed in apartments, Bench seat constructed from planks, Matching cornicing, Small build outhouse, Gable end decoration, Finials, Cantilever staircase, Timber pods.

The COVID19 effect &

Participants' response & research reaction

The horrendous COVID 19pandemic has temporarily or permanently changed almost everything in the contemporary world.

My initial thoughts were ;

Should I be carrying on with my research amidst these times, is it worthy?

Am I just getting in the way of my artisan participants whilst they are trying to keep their businesses afloat?

On discussions with my peers and supervisors, I was reassured that I should continue with the research provided that the artisans were in agreement.

I will give specific details of the actual responses from each participant.

They all agreed to proceed with the research, but their reactions to the COVID19 pandemic were different, unique and to be frank, extraordinary in each their own way.

As to my response, I made the research more adaptable to the ever-changing circumstances. The rules put forward by the government changed on a weekly basis, shops were closed for long periods and customer access became difficult to say the least. Add to this, as of March 2020, the High Street as we know it changed, possibly forever as non-essential shops were ordered to close. (The Health Protection (Corona virus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020).

My initial approach was to contact each participant and assess via specific meetings what we could do together to carry on with the research, in parallel, and without sounding too pompous, benefit them. And maybe just maybe play a part in the business's survival.

At Peter's COVID meeting he assured me that he had contingency funds as all small business's should. But as we were both concerned that the lockdown could be for a very long time then we should discuss some ideas

i) Make small product that could be sold via the internet, still based on his skills, as a carpenter

ii) Push the Timber Frame house part of the business as its construction was still an 'allowed' business activity during lockdown.

iii) Make the website live and ensuring it can generate leads

All this is photography dependant!

1) Hastily prepared notices where put up all around the high street as retail went into free-fall
2) This is the window of Peter's shop

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Chap 6)

Co- creation of bespoke imagery

Utilisation of the brief and the data gathered in the previous stages

Cumbrian Timber Frame & Joinery
Case study report Ian Clegg

A brief - ‘The felled beech’

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing a method to show intent of both parties.

Peter received a call that informed him that a tree had ‘come down’ a mere couple of miles from his workshops.

Although this work was spontaneous, as a project, it created an opportunity to start making images from the very start of the process ‘Seed to table.’
This random phone call was the beginning of Peter realising the value of planning. Thinking of how he was going to show the narrative of some of his pieces, now he would demonstrate the timber/tree in its natural surroundings, and the photography would give the products a permanent reference to the original site location.

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Felled Beech tree
To create images that will excite the end customer with the knowledge of the original source of their product, giving it local and sustained provenance.
To have measurable outcomes,

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Summarise the extent 6 images stills - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – fieldwork on location – Foxfield, The images should be available before the new Instagram product launch preferably a week before, the budget should be allocated in time of approx. 2 hours

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Customers link to the local sourcing and sustainability of the timber

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

Knowledge of the individualness off the product. Hand sourced hand crafted

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Sustainable Lakeland Sourced timber

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

Website – Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Go with customer to site and shoot during the interaction
What narratives are there
Windfall tree, no harm to the environment, relationship to nature, the act of recycling timber that would go to landfill or logs
Is the imagery being supported by text
negligible text on instagram but some supportive text on website
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, website

Site Visit–
Date of meeting -; 20 th Mar 20 1.30pm Location -; Country Estate, Foxfield
Reason for meeting - Fieldwork

A Short drive up the west coast of the Lakes takes us to a country estate in Foxfield with a health club and golf course.

On talking with the groundsman the tree has been suspect for a little while. Suffering from a fungal pathogen, Phytophthora.

On a particularly windy day one of the staff looking out from the nearby clubhouse saw the tree drop, with an almighty bang.

Intriguingly the staining in the core of the trunk caused by the pathogen (see photo) will render beautiful dark marks (sometimes called spalting) to any furniture made from it but is notoriously difficult to work with but it is one of Peter's many skills.

The Beech tree had crashed down whilst one of the staff watched

Conversation

Location - workshop

Peter - I have to go now I'm looking at a windfall.

Ian - What is a windfall?

Peter - It's a tree that hasn't been felled, it has just come down on it's own. It's over in Foxfield

Ian - Do you mind that its not been cut down properly?

Peter - No mostly it's better. They can be slightly rotten or knurled, they can make great pieces to work on.

Ian - Can I come?

Peter - Yes hop in the van.

2o mins later in a Foxfield estate.

"It is round here somewhere, the grounds look very well kept, there it is.

(we were confronted with a huge tree neatly lain by the side of the track)

The groundsman came out to see us and gave us the story of its fall. Also that the estate had been meaning to fell it anyway. Just lucky it fell where it did, and caused no damage.

The mighty tree was still an imposing thing even though it was felled by the track. The huge trunk lay in 2 massive cylinders the groundsmen had already taken off the branches so Peter's job was made much easier as he could assess the volume of timber and give a price accordingly.
He used the ancient method of 'huxing' which gives a formula based on measurements that allows a calculation of waste from the taper of the trunk and an estimate of 'usable timber. Peter did this in minutes, using a tape measure and a great deal of experience.

Notes and reflection

The narratives employed here involve the Lake District landscape, the rural maintainable environment, and human assessment skills. There is also a message of sustainability, the fungal infected tree would be seen as firewood to most people, yet Peter sees its value in providing unique patterns for his furniture. There is traceability attached to the produced furniture as the wood can be traced back to the actual tree it came from. This style of marketing is part of many advertising strategies small to large.
Customers are becoming interested in the origins of the products they buy. If the product has this back story then the rich narratives can be publicised through photography.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Use the context of the situation, it can be interesting, in this case the surrounding landscape of the hills and rural setting
- Find a story about the business that can be translated into a visual narrative
- Follow that story through to the end even if it seems that it is wavering, it often becomes bigger and better than the original thought.
- Human skills are a good addition to a business strategy, in this case, experience, knowledge of wood spalting, and traceability back to the original tree.

1) View of the local environment where the tree crashed
2) Peter eyes up the trunk and measures it for volume

After a few weeks the three trunk was delivered to Peter's yard. It will lie there for up to 2 years until he thinks the fungus has matured enough.

Then it will be ready to saw into planks, but even Peter says it is a hit and miss business. If he gets the timing wrong then the whole trunk can be wasted. A trunk may look ready to cut but the only real test is when the planks are sliced and Peter can properly examine the grain.

Note the trunks are placed on blocks to allow air circulation. In the shots we also see some older wood that has started to look blacker and is almost ready to saw, there is a blue kiln dryer, which is where the seasoning of cut planks can be accelerated.

Although Peter feels traditional seasoning is still the best way - evidenced in the background by the stacks of timber drying in the scaffold shed.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Even the most bland images in the eyes of the artisan can tell an interesting story to the viewer, it is here that the photographer can advise and suggest what nay be visually effective.
- Take images all along the process and at all opportunities . The whole story can break down if stages are missed.

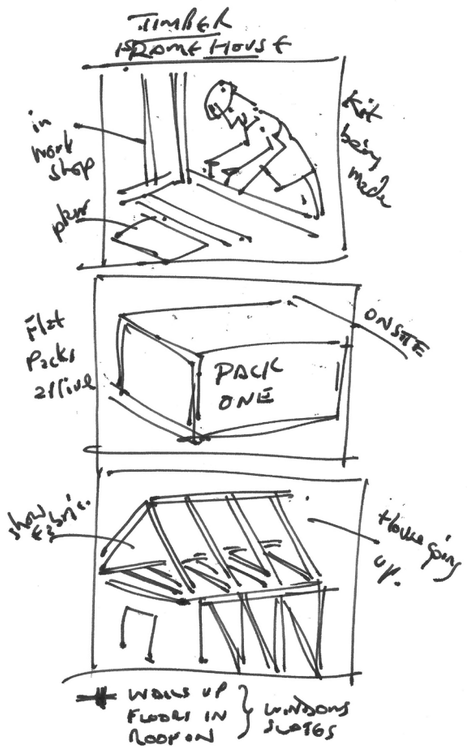
1) The chopped trunk of the beech arrives at the workshop
2) The wood is too fresh to be planked, it will lie outside in all weathers for as long as 2 years

‘Timber frame house’

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing a method to show intent of both parties.

This project was a remarkable and responsible job, as it was to produce a complete house from scratch, virtually on his own!

Peter was not fazed at all,
“I’ll just make a house from the plans and nail it together.”
He had produced a house before but had very few images of the construction, so this was an opportunity to get at least one shot from each of the stages and present them as a sequence showing the stages of build.



1) Sketch made by the researcher to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet, completed

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Timber frame house construction To create images that will show the ongoing construction of a timber frame house from start to finish. To have measurable outcomes,

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images shot in sequence and detail shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – fieldwork on location – Common, The images should be available for regular updates to be put up on instagram then a new page created on the website

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

New individual customers wanting a bespoke house, small developers that require specialised attention for design and build

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

The house is made by the same person that erects it. from flat planks to full build. Individual and bespoke

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

It is greener than the well know German Huff brand with a air tight rating far above that one

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks Websiteafter the house is built then a full story to be made here

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Meet the customer regularly on site to see the build
What narratives are there
Sustainable, small green footprint less concrete and high impact materials, bespoke, customer can change the build as it progresses, great energy rating, can be built in 10 days from flat pack to roof going on.**Is the imagery being supported by text**
negligible text on instagram but some supportive text on website
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, website

The concrete footings were installed by another contractor, Peter worked from the architect drawings and produced all the house in kit form in his workshop.
The theory is that no sawing or readjusting of the timbers required on-site, it should all go together like a kit model.

The kit sections are made in the workshop, sometimes whole walls are pre-assembled.
The kits sections are wrapped in plastic to give some semblance of waterproofing (proved invaluable on this job)
The packs are numbered at the workshop to ensure that once they are on site they are assembled in the right order.

Notes and reflection

Efficiency and labour saving are key here. The customers need to see the advantage over a standard built house. Where a brick house can take weeks or months to get to roof level a timber framed house of this size should take 5-6 days!

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Show the whole of the story, if there is a time line then make such that it is recorded at critical stages.
- Use different platforms to the static website route. Employ instagram or facebook to drip feed the images over time to make the stills form a storyline.
- Instagram by its nature can give stills a feeling of motion and continuity. The narrative comes from the rapid fire uploading of photography

1) The kit house arrives at the edge of the concrete footings
2) The gable ends part assembled
3) Small wooden pieces and wedges are prepared in case of minor on site alterations
4) Each kit block is numbered according to the plans and these numbers are followed in order when assembly begins

The house went up in double fast time and it was difficult to photographically record the process, requiring shooting every day in order that important elements were not missed.

I imagined that I was the occupier in the finished house and was sitting in front of the panoramic window enjoying the view
Then walking across the lounge towards the back door to the garden that looks onto the moors Details were photographed such as the innovative metal webs that hold the joists together and the network of wooden lattice. There was so much going on in the house that I saw beautiful narratives in these small details as well as the impact of the overall set of photographs.

Notes and reflection

The narratives employed here are, the speed of build, only two workmen needed on site. Sustainable materials are used in the most part. Artisans skills shown in making small adjustments as the construction progresses, emphasised by the use of hand tools and human intervention to finish the job properly.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Small detail photography can support the larger overall shots and give a fuller story.
- Unfamiliarity of the process will allow the photographer to see interest in the banal and see objects with a new eye.

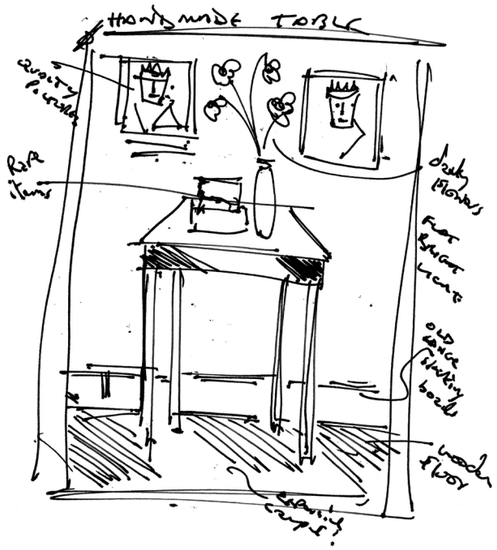
1) Background shot of the innovative joist hangers
2) First floor goes up despite the rain
3) The glorious view the downstairs room will have
4) Extra help is required due to the lack of dry days available

1) Peter using his trusty hand saw to make minor adjustments
2) An ancient one handed jig tool still comes into play
3) Ugly but necessary insulation blocks
4) The all important steels for the roof fit perfectly
5) The wonderful position of the new house

‘Handmade table’

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing a method to show intent of both parties.

This project was an opportunity to show the artisan skills of making handmade bespoke furniture. The unique pieces are often a ‘lead in’ to bigger and more complicated projects. So Peter puts more time into these than he probably should, he sees them as signature items that show his skills off that can be applied to bigger and more lucrative work that may follow as a result.



1) Sketch made by the researcher to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet completed

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Sycamore bespoke table. To create images that will exude the uniqueness of this hand-crafted piece.

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images shot in sequence and detail shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – possibly room set or on location - the images will be used on social media and in advertisements for the Interiors shop.

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Customers who want individual pieces for their homes. Demographic A-B.

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

The piece is made for them, handmade, locally sourced wood and above all high quality

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

The only one of its kind.

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Printed advert then website and Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks Website, page landings will be noted. Printed advert will be a long lasting 2 year campaign in an interiors leaflet for a property company, so the success will be judged by generation of enquiries.

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Research bespoke furniture images, magazines and Pinterest
What narratives are there
Quality, uniqueness, hand-crafted, one off
Is the imagery being supported by text
Small tags in the advert, negligible text on Instagram but some supportive text on the website
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Print, Instagram, website

Notes and reflection

The briefing document allowed the input of the photographer and the artisan to be discussed and examined.

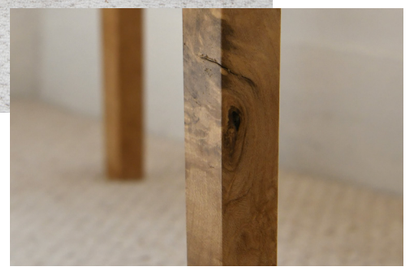
Here we see the translation of the intent of both parties. The artisan had spent time in choosing the right wood for the job, Sycamore. It was a compliant material to carve and manipulate allowing for the artisan to taper the legs slightly in the style of the Parthenon columns making them appear optically straight, the length and height is also accentuated. The joins have slight gaps to allow for movement and the knots and imperfections of the wood are displayed as part of the uniqueness of the piece. It can be assumed that this item is much more expensive than a mass produced table and must portray to the viewer that it justifies this expense.

Therefore with this input from the artisan the photographer was able to utilise the knowledge and install the piece in a period house setting, the Edwardian mouldings of the bay sash window and the suggestion of a high end English period home setting exudes quality.

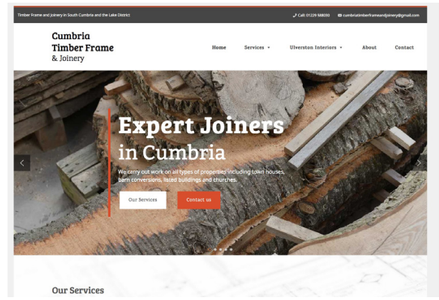
The props are collectors pieces, worthy of more than just a table, an item to be treasured as a future item with longevity and plinth like as found in an art gallery or museum. The piece takes on a presence, it is not a functional table in the sense of storage, it is a support with a tiny top surface, it doesn't even have a shelf or drawer .So the image has to work harder to show how beautiful it is rather than functional.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Use locations and props that convey the narrative highlighted from the brief
- Feature details and aspects of the product to show the artisan nature, objects can look familiar and ordinary if these aspects are not highlighted, and hence do not convey any reason to choose over the run of the mill products
- Get involved emotionally with the product
- Show the pleasure of owing the table not the table itself.



1) Main shot on location in an Edwardian house
2) Hand made tenon joints
3) Dainty tapered legs
4) Burls and oddities of wood retained as personalisation of the item



Chap 7)

Digital platforms

Imagery utilised in social media website and Instagram, and redesigns

Email communication

Are you good?
Hope I am not pestering you ?
Are you stuck at home or performing essential business out there?
Me?
All my location work has been called off - and look at the weather!
Meanwhile I have shot some of your tools look at the cloud link they are there with the Beech tree shots, could work as a slider header.
Let me know if we can do anything together?
You can use these images for your site for example
Regards
Ian

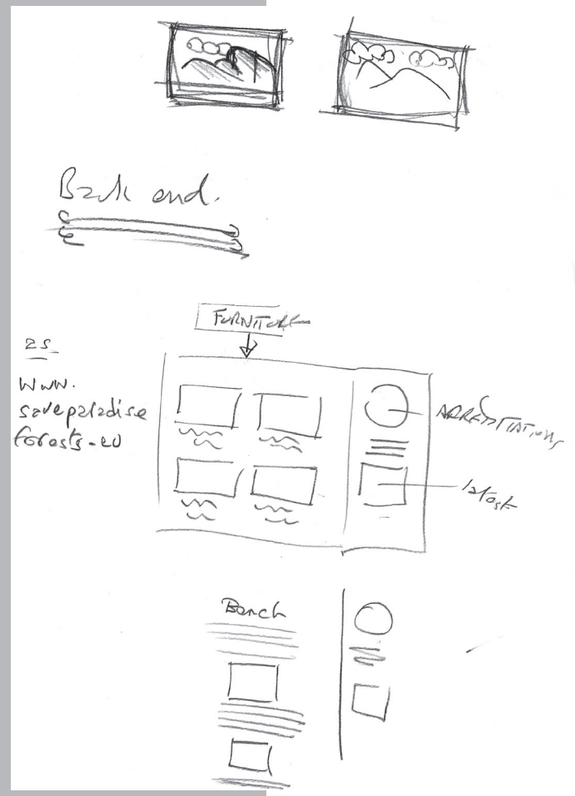
Hi Ian.
Many thanks for your email.
I am busy making things for the shop which is great.
I have not had chance to look at the website stuff but will do it over Easter weekend.
It is not a great situation for most companies and am sorry your work is on hold.
I will be in-touch soon.
Thanks
Peter Mawson
Cumbria Timber Frame and Joinery

Whats your next plan?
I am happy to produce some wire diagrams for the re structure of the website,we can use this to instruct the web builder as how the hierarchy should run.
Ian

That sounds great, I am planning to look at the website this weekend and get back to you
Peter

OK I am good to help at any stage, even with the words.
Ian

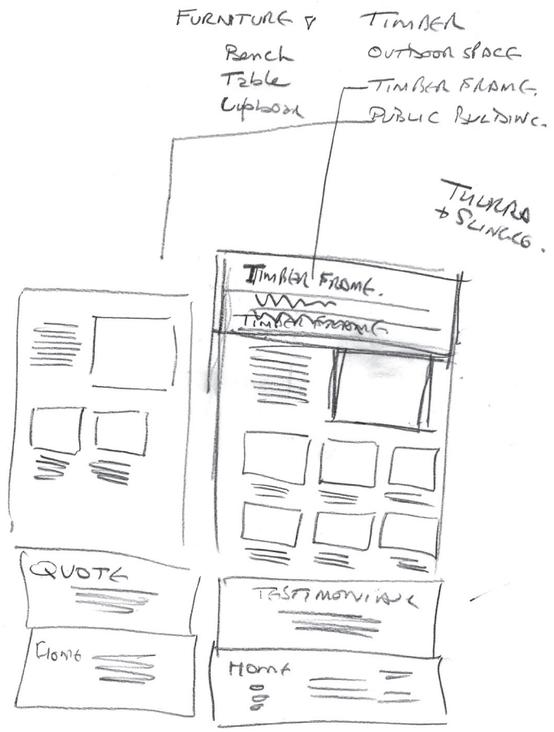
Yes - thanks
Peter

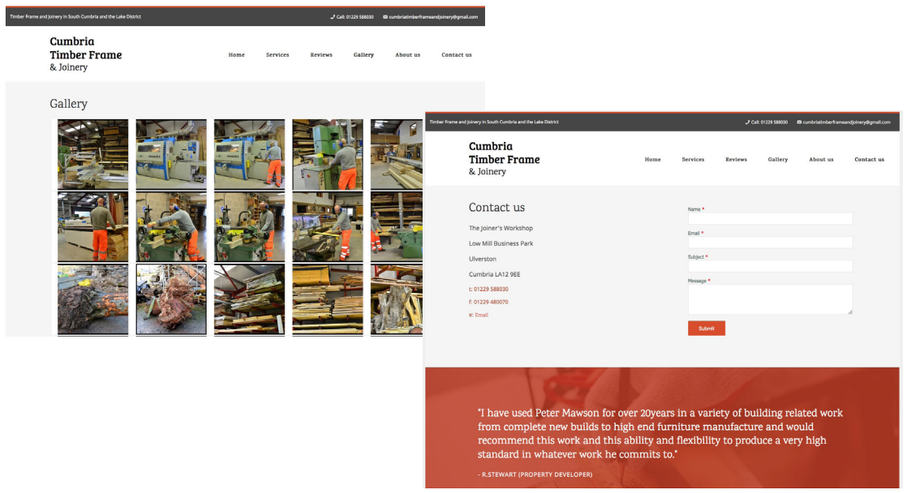


I created the sketches to discuss the layout and hierarchy of the new site The old site had long ‘click throughs’ and was complex, so the answer was to reduce landing time and simplify the sub menus, utilise a few good images rather than lots of mediocre ones. By laying it out in a wire diagram we can see the fixed routes that viewers will have to take to reach their destination.

1) Ideas sketched out by the researcher for the new product pages
2) Simple hierarchical click routes
3) The Beta pages from the original site, gallery and contact page showing a regimented and uncreative layout

Notes & sketches from the Hierarchical website meeting. There are far too many click points and modes of entry. localised web uplift is clearly not functioning and tags and SEO not present





Website .

CFT did not have a live website, there was only a beta site started by a Design company, this had a number of issues.

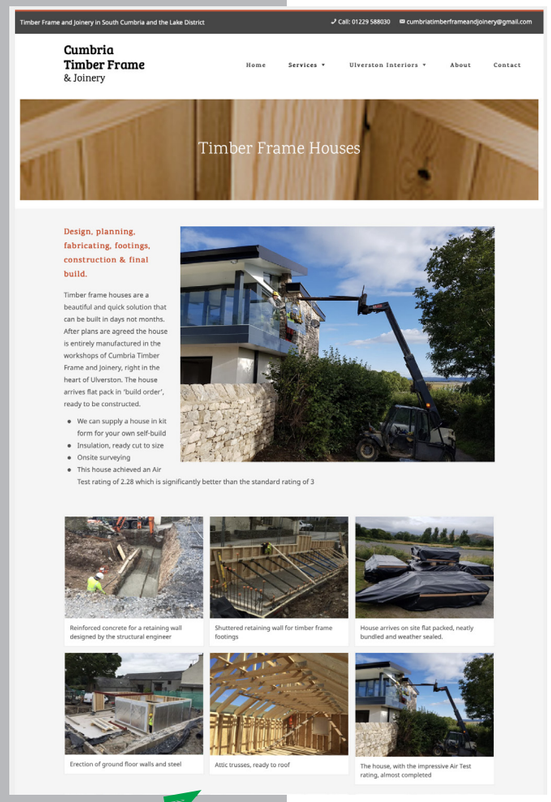
The upshot was little web or online presence at all!

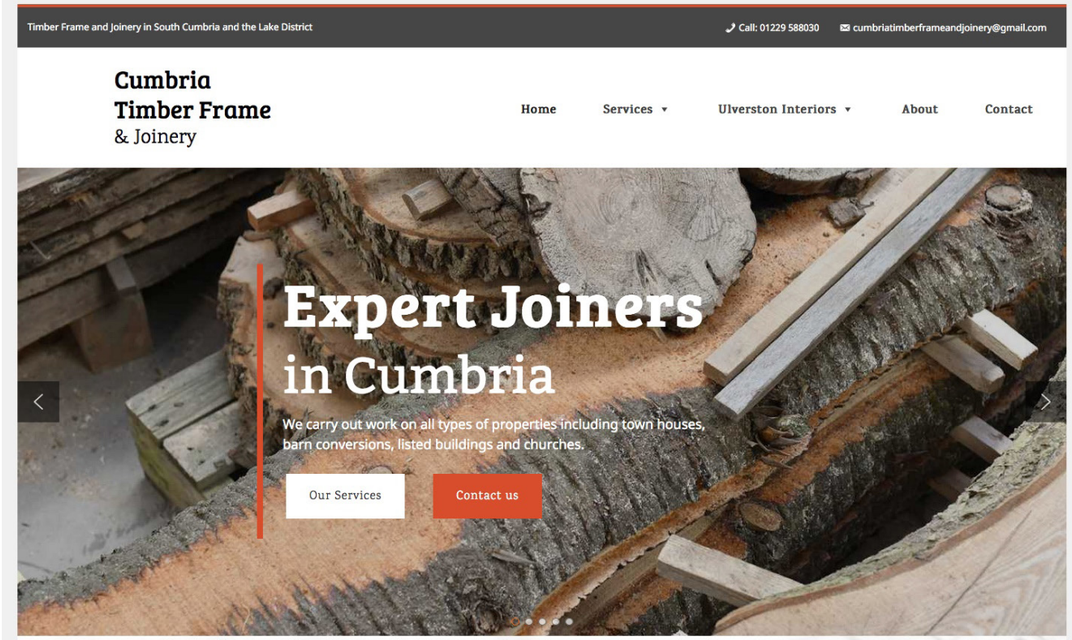
The content was all over the pace and not well written, there was no hierarchy or easy path through the site.

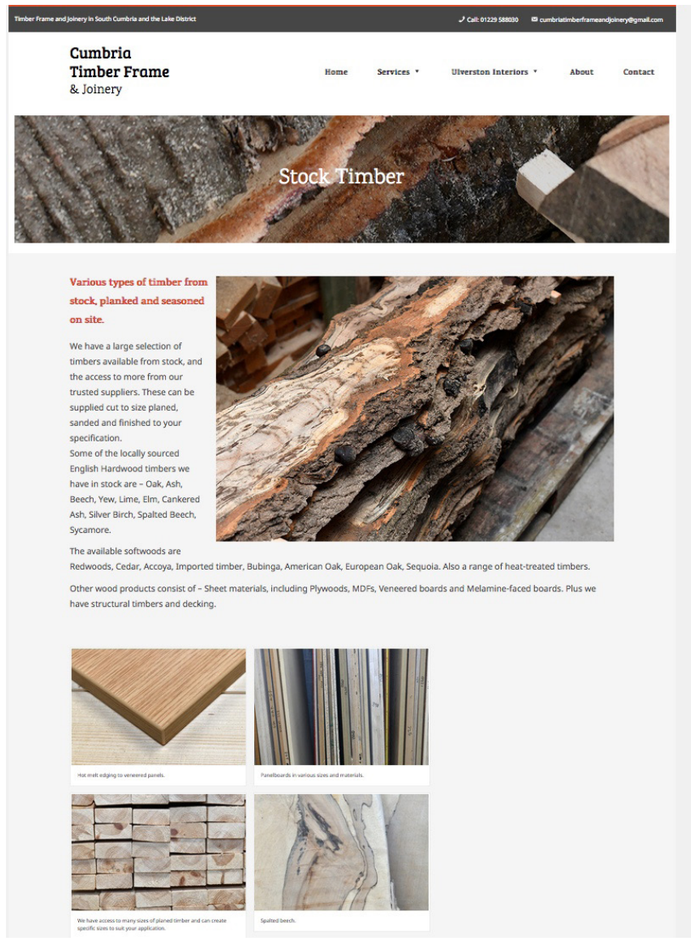
The imagery used on the key part of the pages was stock photography and had little relationship to the business.

There was a gallery but this was a mix of imagery - some very poor and others very old and no explanation or key words.

It needed a total re design and new photography.







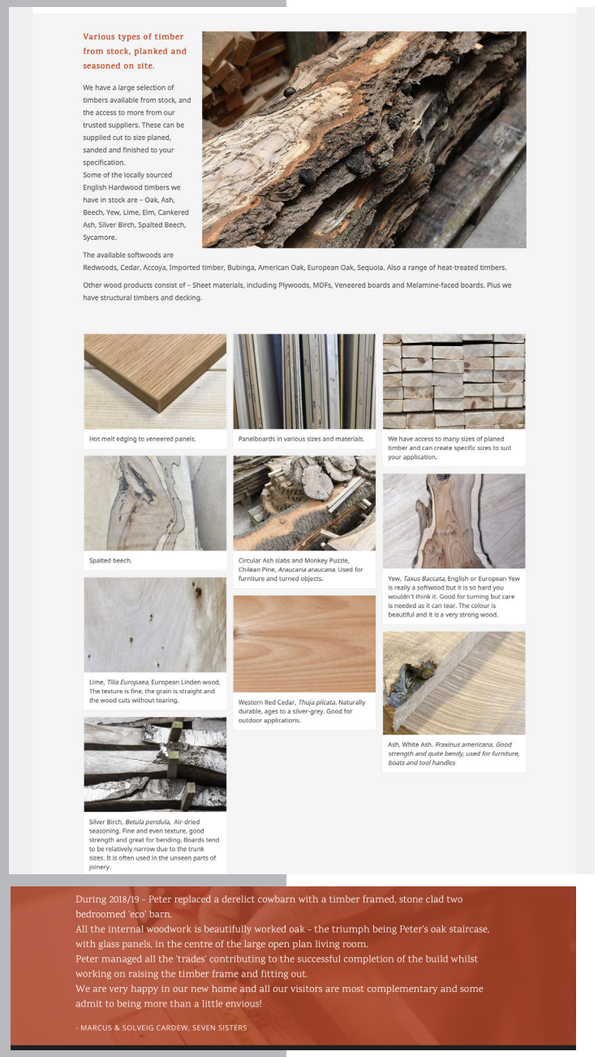
1)&2) Sketches have developed into the final web page
3) Landing page now supports what Peter does. The images enhance the text, a visual story of wood and timber
4) The descriptive pages have a small amount of supporting text but the images drive the viewer

New photography was utilised were possible, the only re used photographs were of items long gone and not available to photograph resulting in 95% new images.

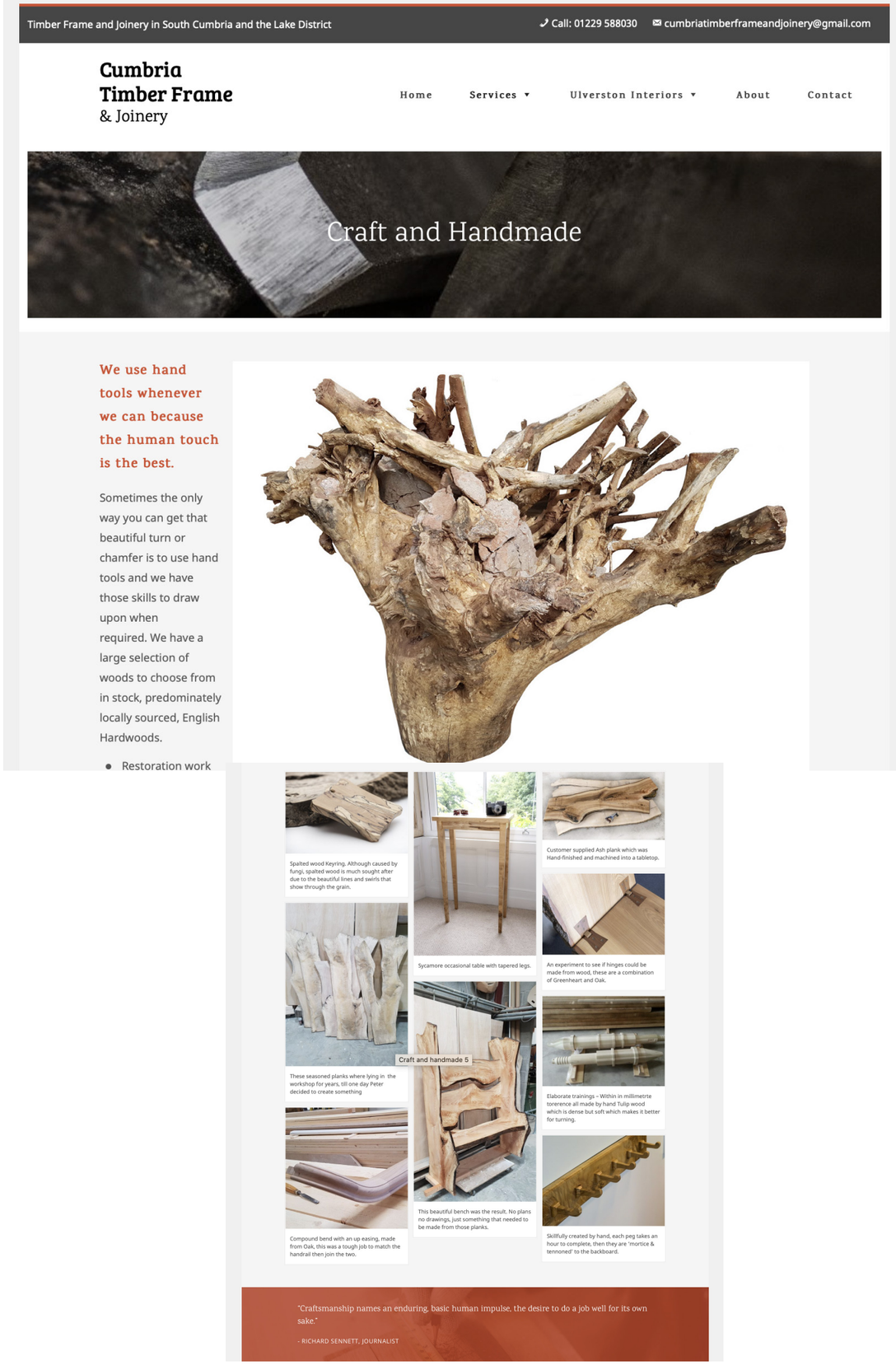
The sharp edges of one of Peter's hand chisels was used as a slider image. Some of the old images could be used for the time being if they were cut out from their fussy backgrounds.
Close ups of the large range of exotic timbers he has in stock were taken and provides a very informative and interesting specification page.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Poor images do more harm than good on a website or digital platform
- Photograph every product you have for these platforms, no image no sale
- Use methods to convey to the artisan that they understand, artisans tend to have an aversion to the web and see it as more of a hindrance than an essential part of their business .
- Let the images speak for themselves and dominate the layout, viewer will scroll down to the descriptive text if they are interested by the image.



1) Specification page for the exotic timbers, the images are supported by a brief description of the uses and benefits for each type of timber
2) Straight forward pull down header
3) Each specification page retains the same layout so viewer can stay familiar to the way the products are presented



Web statistics

Website Analytics, evidenced 26/10/20.

Variable dates for the data harvested from Google analytics dashboard from Sept - Oct 2020

This website has been hugely effective in gaining traffic from the web. The analytical data supports this assumption. Although some of the numbers are low in a few sections the quality of the traffic is extremely high, borne out by the high-quality purchasing enquires that have been raised.

1) Average session duration is over a minute - very encouraging for a niche product.

2) Page views are more than 1, users are going further than just the home page.

3) Active users for the whole site are 77 - a high percentage, as they are returning users.

4) Device category shows 35% of users are on mobile, a reflection of the trend towards mobile devices.

5) Of those users 56% are Apple users - A known high spending demographic.

6) Page views for just 2 months is very encouraging

7) Audience overview shows low daily hits, but a massive 68% new user rate

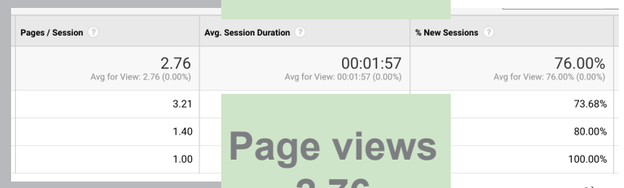
8) Users are spread across the 'about us' and 'contact page' and above all the 'timber frame house' page which Peter wanted the most visibility. These 'call to action' pages account for the extraordinary rates of enquires Peter is receiving.

9) Back-links (other websites pointing at this one) are expectantly low for such a new site.

10) The period of stats is very short, a longer period of say 6 months would give a more stable set of figures. However, at the date of this publication the figures show no signs of decreasing.

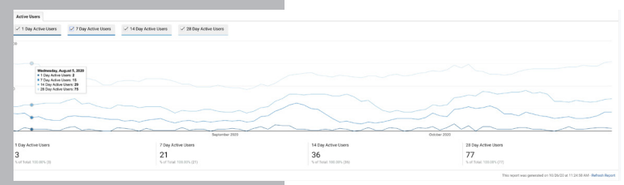
Duration 1:57

1)

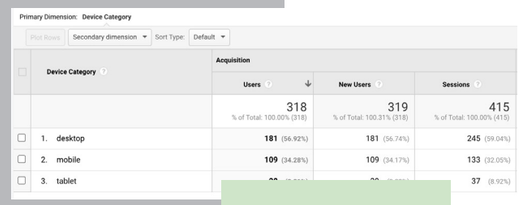


Page views 2.76

2)

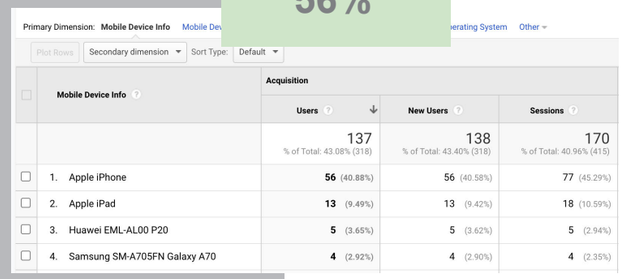


3)



Apple 56%

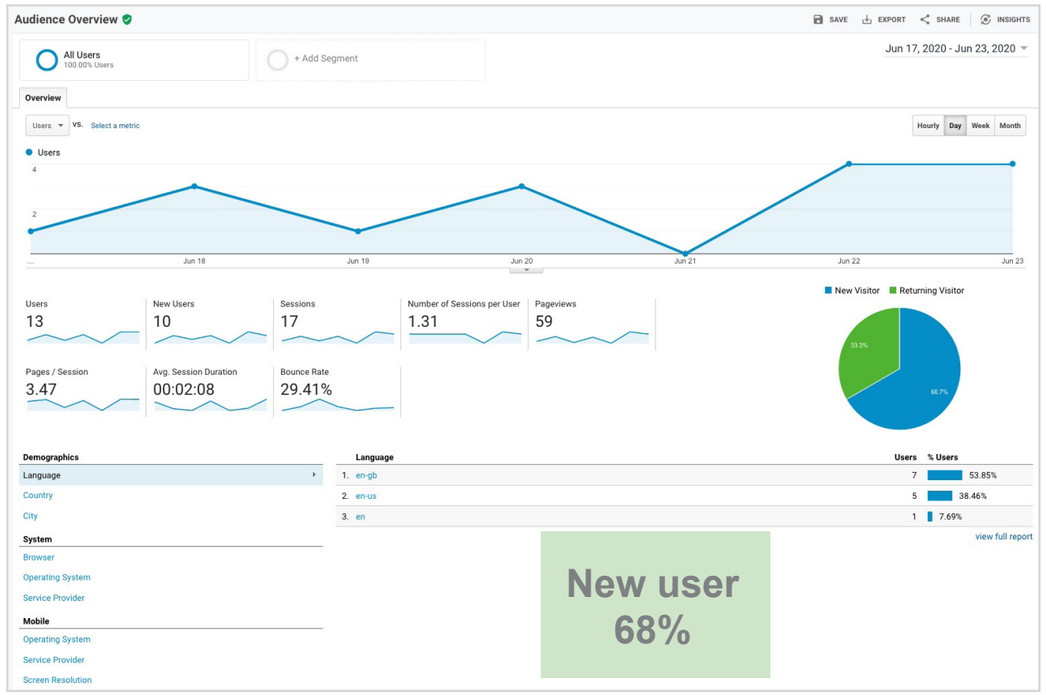
4)



5)

Page views 1,318

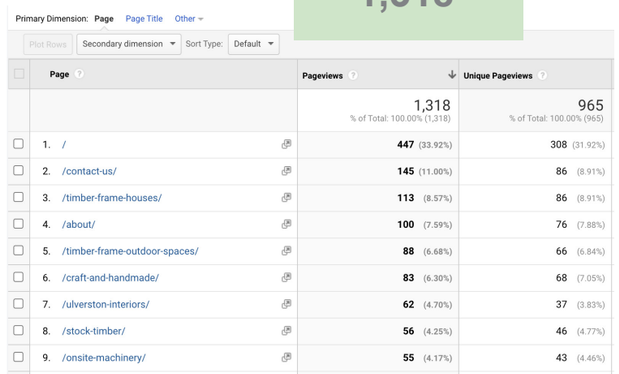
6)



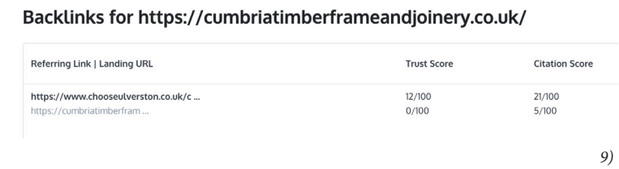
New user 68%

7)

Unique 1,318



8)



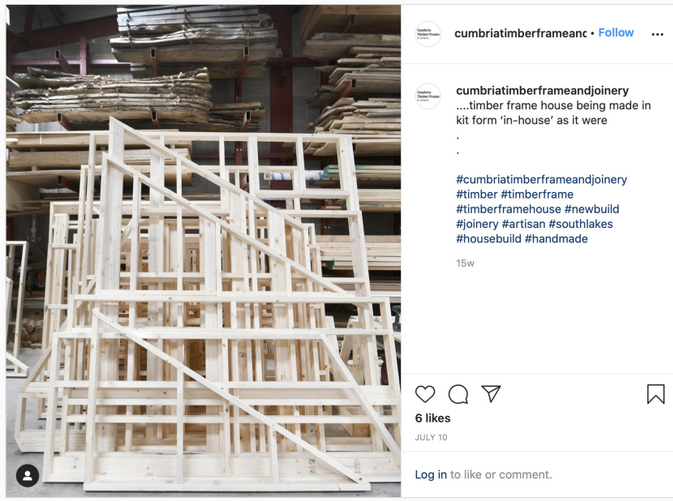
9)

Instagram .

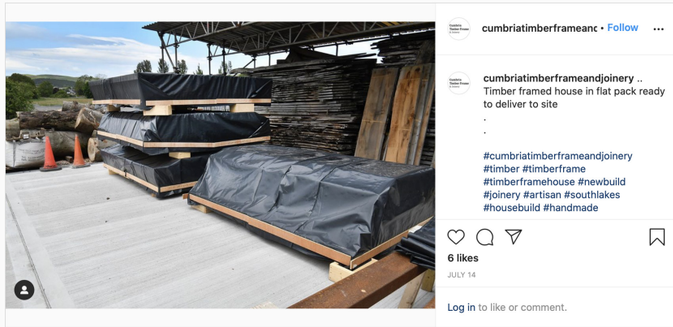
Posts were uploaded at least once a week to ensure continuity, The photography in the post would progressively show how the house builds. Instagram is an image hungry platform and consumes photography like no other medium. Images have a life span of interest for about 3-4 days after that they vanish almost completely under the next wave of images.

The instagram account was opened with a couple of generic pics as part of the design companies package deal, which caused no interest what so ever. I took over the account and began showing the house build that was under way.

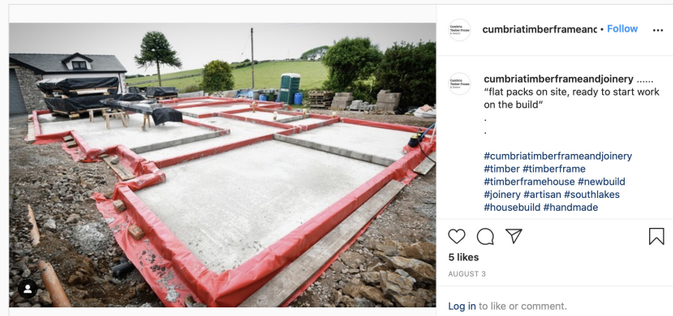
Followers 50



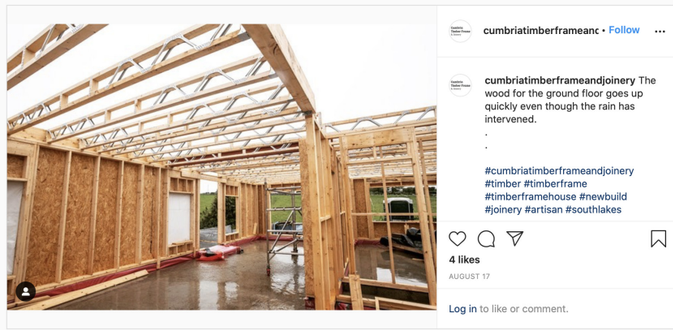
Post 1) 2 followers



Post 2)



Post 3) 50 followers



Post 4)

The ‘likes’ began to slowly increase but still in single figures, what was amazing was the amount of followers the account gained, within 2 weeks there were 50 followers building to 88 after only 4 posts. The quality rather than quantity of the followers can be evidenced from the Instagram sector listings ~

Building restorers

Carpenters

Stone masons

Timber specialists

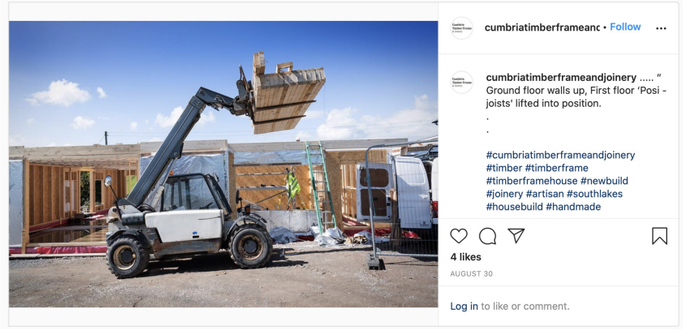
Renovators

This quality of followers is supported by the Google analytics on the website showing that traffic to the website is being fed by links from the Instagram platform.

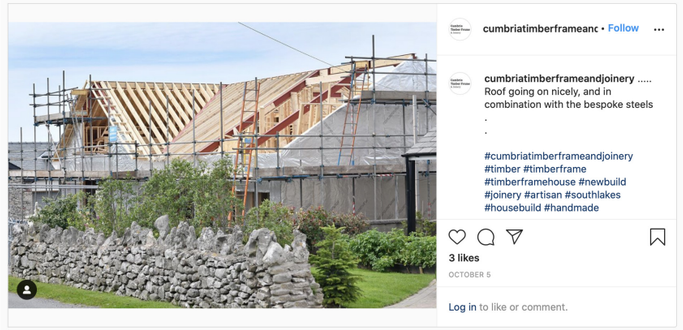
Peter also confirms that he is getting phone call enquiries from the contact page in the website.

After 9 posts the followers rose to 92

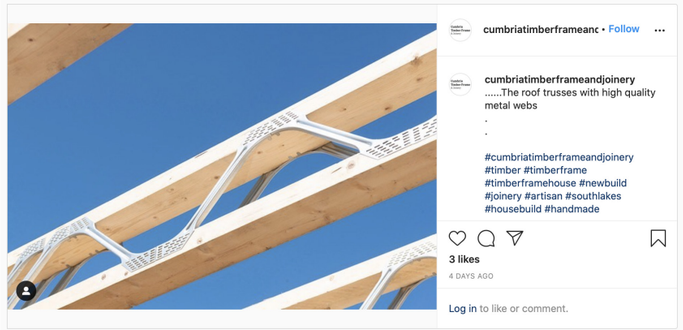
Followers
88



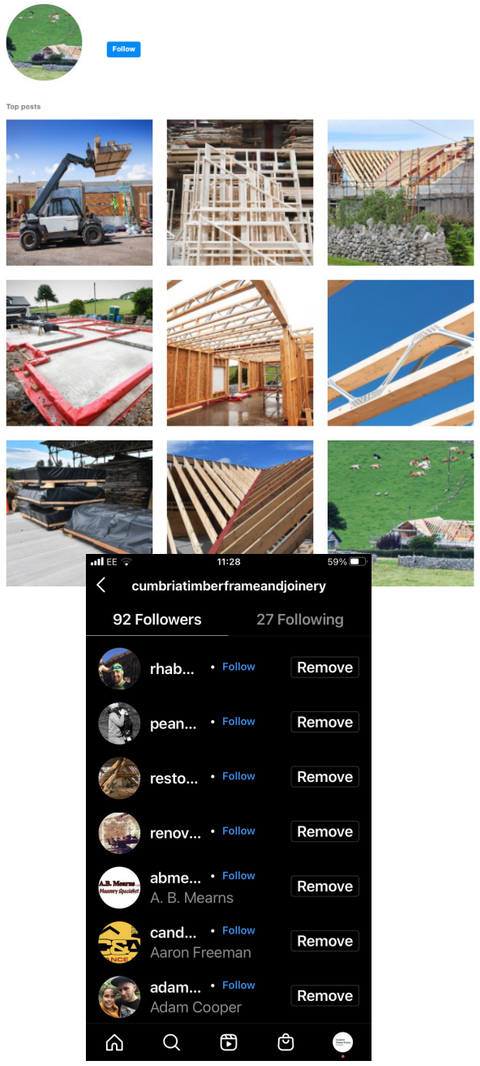
Post 5)



Post 6)



Post 7) 88 followers



1) Timber frame house posts overview, 92 sector relevant followers after just 9 posts, without any previous Instagram history

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Chap 8)

Further images and relevant projects

previous stages

Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - bespoke mirrors created out of slices of Beech trunks.
Narratives - Each mirror unique but all from the same tree, The shape and feel of the mirrors comes from the raw material (the planking) slices utilised as props positioned beneath the products.

- Human Skills employed - signs shown are the hand tools lying on the raw material

- Scale of the products - by shooting the range of mirrors together then scale comes from a comparison to the hand chisels placed in-between the mirrors.

- The colour of the worked wood is almost the same as the raw material, showing that the artisan is not adding stains or coloured varnishes it is lightly oiled to preserve its natural state.

- Could be some improvement on scale - chisels are a difficult to see straight away.

Nikon D850, 14mm, 1/100, f8, ISO 200, 2 x Profoto B1 Flash octobox, open head

Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - Ash tree sourced from the local area.
Narratives - The tree was felled 3 years before, has been in the yard 'maturing' like an old cheese, Hence the black lines running through the rings and end grain. It can be cut into valuable planks and used for beautifully spelted furniture..

- Incredible skills required to know when to cut the wood into planks.

- Present the raw material in its pre cut state to show how the product is literally 'from woodland to table'

- Show how special it is to have seen the tree at this stage.

- Scale in this particular image is not apparent - other shots show the artisan hand sawing the edges which then is a scale reference to the massiveness of the trunk.

Nikon D850, 50mm, 1/400, f11, ISO 800, available light, reflector

Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - Single plank tables

- Human Skills employed - recognising which pieces of timber will suit a conversion into a table

- Using only 2 cuts to create a table

- Showing the raw planking in the shot give a grounding to the source material.

- Original sourcing of the material, 2 years seasoned wood in the background, finished pieces nestled in foreground, workshop floor.

Nikon D850, 24-70mm, 1/150, f8, ISO 200,
Profoto B1 Flash octobox, fill A1 dome diffuser

Chap 9)

Findings

Interim Findings

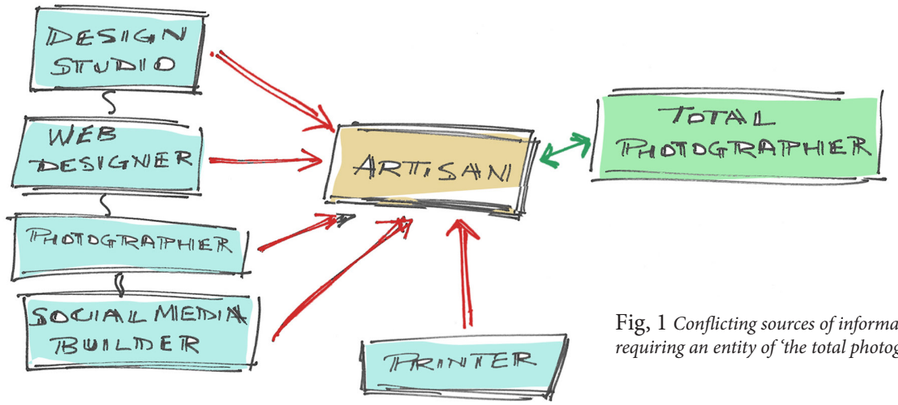
Specific to this participant

I have found that old skill sets have needed to be adjusted, and new ones found to get the best out of this participant's relationship.

I am moving in different photographic circles in that I do not have a team of creatives around me, I have to fill the gaps of knowledge between say - an Art director and Advertising accounts manager, Web designer and finally a Photographer. A business of this size does not want, or is capable of working with, a one-source Advertising agency. The closest they can get is with a Design studio. It is here that the continuity between the client and Design studio breaks down. Peter specifically worked with a Web orientated design company, and I would describe the relationship as distant, with little time spent at the briefing stages. The designer never visited the workshops and communications were solely by email. The outcome is that neither party gets to know each other. Because the medium they are working in is online and digital, does not mean that the work can be performed remotely, which may work when marketing for another digital-based company but not for an artisan.

There is an expectation of the studio's knowledge base, from the artisan, which forms an apprehension from the artisan causing them not to question what the studio says.

In this research, I find that there is contradicting advice coming from (See fig.1)



Fig, 1 *Conflicting sources of information requiring an entity of 'the total photographer*

The design studio

The web studio

The photographer

The printer

The intentions tend to flow one way and result in the artisan taking no part in the decision making. The artisan becomes nervous attempting to filter the mass of conflicting advice coming from all quarters, all pertinent but rather overwhelming.

The difficulty of this type of relationship is that the studio does not have the time to learn what the artisan needs and sometimes do not have all the skills necessary for a project under one roof. They cannot form a full collaboration, and their knowledge of pure image-making is limited to their distant relationships with photographers.

The benefits that a 'Total Photographer' can bring are that they can overview the project and suggest a complete solution that is image-based and therefore highly relevant to contemporary advertising. Once a particular trust with each of agenda (that of photographer and artisan) has formed, then the discovery of the narrative is an enjoyable and productive experience. Making the co-creation of stories about the artisan's business a core part of the photographic project.

The shift to working with the actual creator of the products gave a direct uninterrupted line of reference. The artisan's ethical thoughts of how a business should be run fed directly into creating the images. The elicited images' feedback showed immediately what the artisan thought relevant to the business, an almost unconscious acknowledgement of what was important about the business. I saved hours of writing and rewriting proposals second-guessing what the core parts of the business were.

In this case

i) Hand crafted, using hand tools , supported by the highest tech machinery saving time not quality

ii) The sourcing of truly local materials - from tree to product

iii) Immense knowledge about the different types of wood and their application.

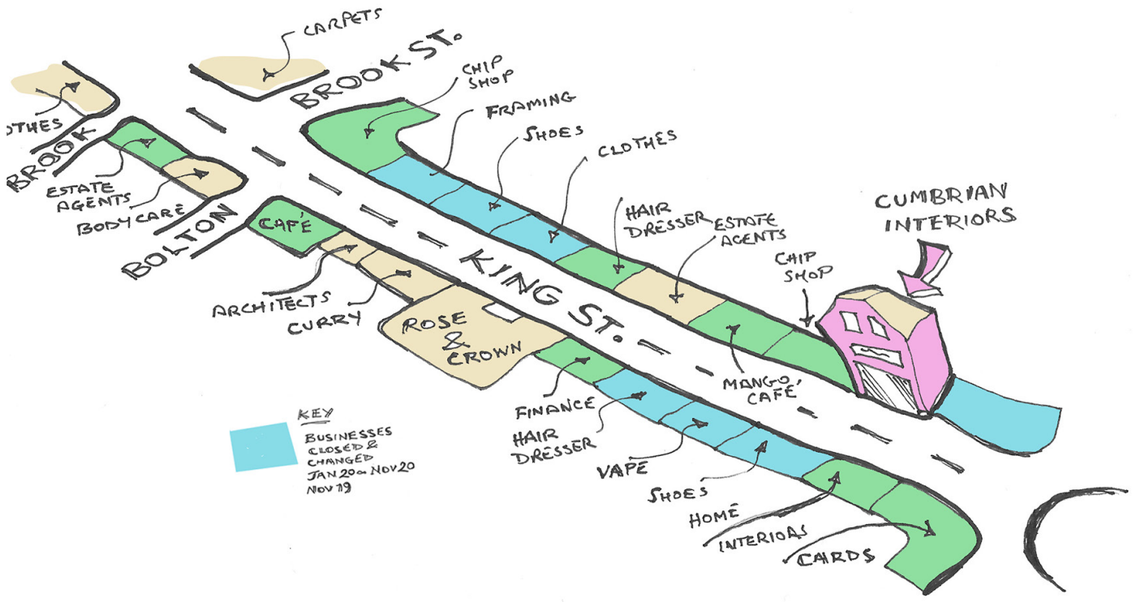
iv) Pride from the artisan in producing product following this ethic.

We came to a mutual understanding that the photographic image was crucial in getting these narratives across (I didn't use the language of semiotics, but presented in an accessible manner, meanings and narratives of images).These findings will feed directly into the proposed, accessible vehicle.

The considerable outside change in the research context was the arrival of the COVID 19 pandemic, which has affected my research and the world at large. The context of being on the 'High Street' has been radically changed upon the announcement of lockdown. The permanent closures on this particular High Street have are at 30% (see fig,2). There has been an accelerated move by retail into the digital world, the research started with the requirement for these artisans to have a bricks and mortar presence on the high street, but with necessity, this has become much less important.

This participant had a minuscule digital footprint at the beginning and now has a fully-fledged Website supported by social media streams. Ironically it has also made their high street store very productive and the staff making terms like 'click and collect' or 'hashtags' a part of their daily vocabulary. The customers who do visit the shop have to book a slot to maintain social distancing. This paradoxically has created focused customers, rather than a passing, browsing and more often than not a non-buying customer.

The research has highlighted that a photographic led social media presence is an essential requirement for this artisan,s business.



1) Map showing Part of Ulverston high street revealing a 30% turnover of businesses during this research period

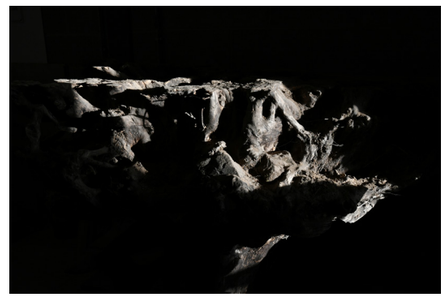
During the COVID19 Pandemic, this participant has moved substantial amounts of the products and services online. Also showing products and services that weren't visible in the High Street shop.

The fundamental change in the High Street has brought the necessity for compelling imagery to the fore. With closed shops during the lockdowns, the 'only' way to approach customers was through online platforms. Photography is now more pertinent than it has ever been. The massive churn rate of businesses in the High Street has only allowed the most resilient to survive, see fig.

The National average of businesses statistics show a 40% risk of permanent closure (Simply Business, 2020). With these sort of figures Peter's shop has done well to stay the course.

These are specific findings related directly to this participant; however it is clear that some link to all of the participants. Nonetheless, each project and brief will be different as the stories will vary, yet the fundamentals of negotiating a fruitful approach between an artisan and a photographer will remain the backbone of successful collaborations and co-creation of great photography.

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery



Chap 10)

Reflection

Reflection

How do I assess the success or not of the images and the interaction of approach. From a raw standpoint of new business? Well from a new business standpoint Peter is overwhelmed by the success of the enquiries, Requests for quotes in the first 4 weeks include ~

Dunblane house - Conservatory

Silecroft Beach cafe - New build timber structure

Penrith - 12 Chalet pods of bespoke design Lakeside

Lamplugh - Parish Hall timber frame

Parish Hall - Bouth

Finsthwaite - Pods

Bespoke - Tables, chairs, gates, worktops, mirrors, chopping boards and more.

These have all occurred in the first month of the new website fed by the image-driven social media platforms, especially Instagram. The more I have interacted with Peter, the more work we have produced and instigated together. From an initial slow start, Peter's suspicion of a narrative based image has changed. Also, I have realised that my approach as a more inquisitive person has benefited in producing the final imagery output. Having little to no knowledge of the business at the outset, I now see as an advantage; I can listen and learn from the artisan.

Consequently, I realise don't need to know the details of sharpening a straight edge or carving a mortice joint. But what I do need to know and keep myself ready to acknowledge is unique parts of the business that will help give the narrative to the imagery through these shared pieces of knowledge about the business. Small things to the artisan can be critical points for the prospective customer. For example, Peter is the only company in the North West that has sustainable wood accreditation, it is a crucial feature to convey in the imagery. If I had not persisted in asking questions and engaging to the whole process, then I/the business would not have highlighted this USP.

Successful research will be judged by various parameters, one of which is, is it new knowledge? The literature that examines the interaction between a photographer and an artisan is almost non-existent. Therefore, I can conclude this examination is 'new' but is it relevant?

When I scrutinise the interaction outcomes and see if the interplay between the two parties has been effective, my previous reflection on the methodology's results says, yes. The other overriding factor is that this research has occurred during a Pandemic; this alone would make it unique knowledge. Still, only rigorous dissemination of the findings from the Design Analysis Documents into my vehicle can make it worthy as well as exclusive.

.

I have had more enquiries this month than in the last 3 years

The future?

I have incorporated newly learned elements of method directly into my practice. Collaboration is key, and gaining knowledge about the artisan's business at an early stage is critical. Creating a brief together, rather than on my own or worse still not at all, has improved the success rates of photography. I have employed the following elements ~

- Knowledge gaining sessions
- Briefs that combine intentions
- Revisiting the business to harvest USPs
- Utilisation of Design Analysis Documents to assess progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the work
- A realisation that a photographer must offer more than just image making, the effect context and application of imagery must be conveyed to the client, they must be made aware of the effects of good photography and poor or non-existent photography on their business, the digital platforms must be regularly fed with narrative based photography.

"I think I have some images on my phone shall I 'wats app' them to you?"

The journey has been has been a bumpy one for Peter. From the initial questions through a slow immersive introduction to each other we have come a long way from his initial random pictures off his phone. Peter is now fully committed to planning good photography that can tell his story and understands the importance of the right approach. This approach needs to be reciprocated. It may be anecdotal that I believe this is a success but it is backed up by hard evidence through the analyitcs and the real work that has come through the images placed on the digital platforms. He can now control to an extent the way images can portray his artisan skill, you may say he has been enabled.

1) Seasoning wood in the workshop lit by the setting sun
Leica M10, 28mm f11 ISO 800

University of Central Lancashire
UCLan

Cumbria
Timber Frame
& Joinery

Tracy Wells, Millinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Chapters:

Introduction
Selection, Decision Tree 1
Paperwork-Ethics & consent 2
Photo Elicitation 3
Photo deconstruction, Semi structured interviews 4
Building a briefing document 5
Co-creation of bespoke imagery 6
Digital platforms 7
Further images created 8
Findings 9
Reflection 10

Tracy Wells, Millinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Introduction

The immersive fieldwork and primary research are recorded comprehensively in this 'Design Analysis document' individually for each artisan evidencing timeline, process, photos, reflections and transcriptions of interviews. There is a range of interactions documented, including phone calls, meetings, emails, and sessions. Bringing them together all in one place will allow comparative findings and new methods to be singled out, abstracted and placed into 'the vehicle'. These documents are a core and unique output and cumulate the research and findings for each participant. This document, along with the other two Design Analysis documents, will feed the creation of 'the vehicle' in the form of a 'Creative Guide for artisans and Photographers'.

This document follows chronologically from when the field research began in October 2019, with initial enquiries, and has carried through to December 2020, plus cross-references to 2021. The chapter headings follow the methods laid out in the thesis. The reflection takes place in discussion and action in practice, then assessment of success. Through this methodology, we will see if a photographic practice can empower the artisans' businesses.

All images and illustrations in this document ~ created by Ian Clegg unless otherwise stated

Phone conversation

January 2020

Ian - Hi Tracy.
I have never been in a millinery shop
We haven't met before but I was wondering if I could interest you in taking part in my research into artisan businesses?
I will explain in further detail but loosely it would involve us talking about how you produce your imagery for your business.

Tracy - Sounds great , I use photography from professionals and from my customers to put on my social media, when can we start?

Ian -Lets organise a proper meeting so we can run through the initial paperwork?

Tracy - Yes just drop me a text to say you are coming and we can meet in the shop.
Ian - OK it will be in the next week, Thanks

1) On Location shoot of head bands

Key to sub headings :

Ongoing notes and reflection on the outcomes of the methods

Notes and reflection

Communications between researcher and participant

Phone conversation

Email communication

Findings to be reflected upon and transferred into the 'vehicle'

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

Overview

Tracy Wells, Millinery is located on a small side street only a few meters off the main high street in the town centre of Ulverston, Cumbria.
It is a sole trader business with Tracy herself making all of the product.
The workshop for the business is above the shop.
Tracy's experience with image making has been through using professional photographers from Barrow and Kendal, which involves her having experienced all the production stages. making, styling, hair and makeup, photographer, prints and digital media.
The workshop is not open to customers; however, the products are displayed in the ground floor shop retail space with a window onto the high street.
Tracy is the owner and moved 3 years ago from Barrow in Furness to Ulverston, where she felt the customers would prefer the location.

https://tracywellsdesignermillinery.com
17 Upper Brook St, Ulverston LA12 7BH
Tel: 07895 780200
Email: info@thehatbox.net

1) Tracy shows off a 'Topper'
2) The high street outlet

Chap 1)

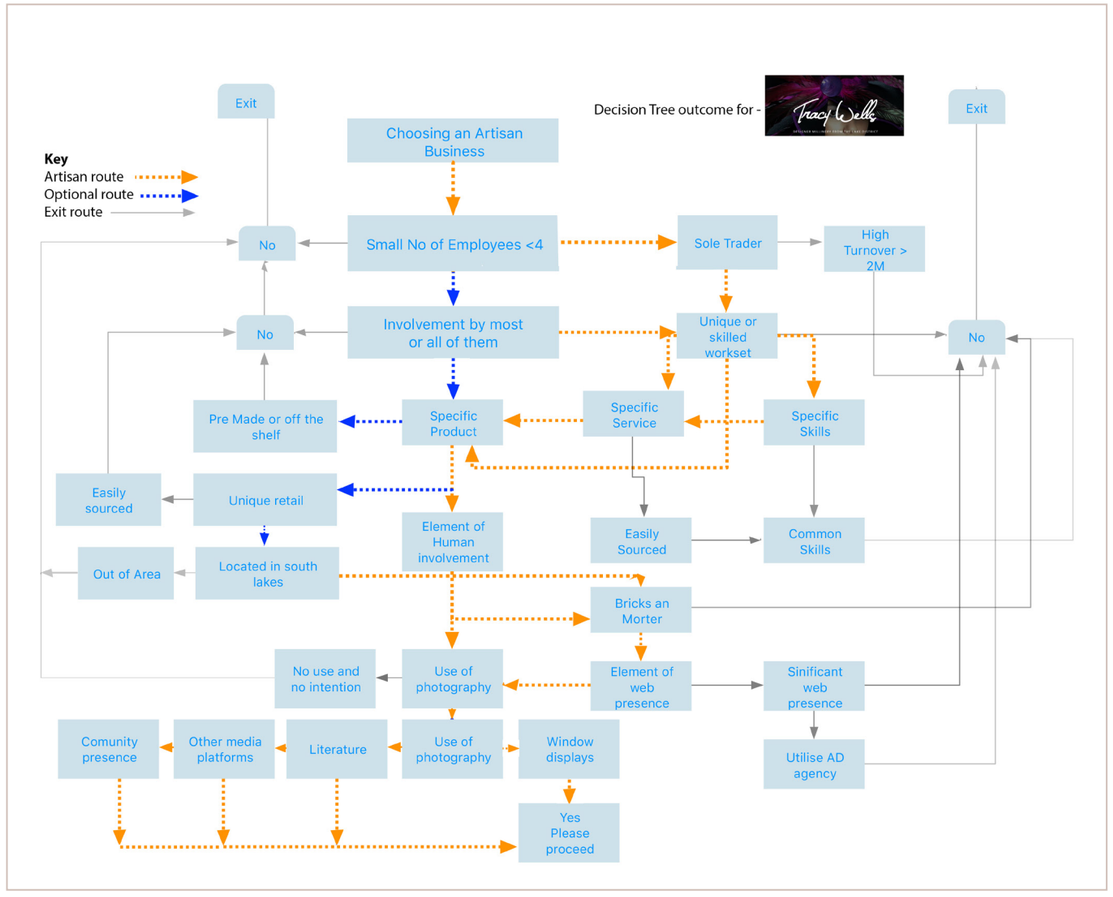
Selection

Using the specifically designed decision tree

Tracy Wells, Millinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Decision Tree

Objective selection method



Overview of Specific Decision tree

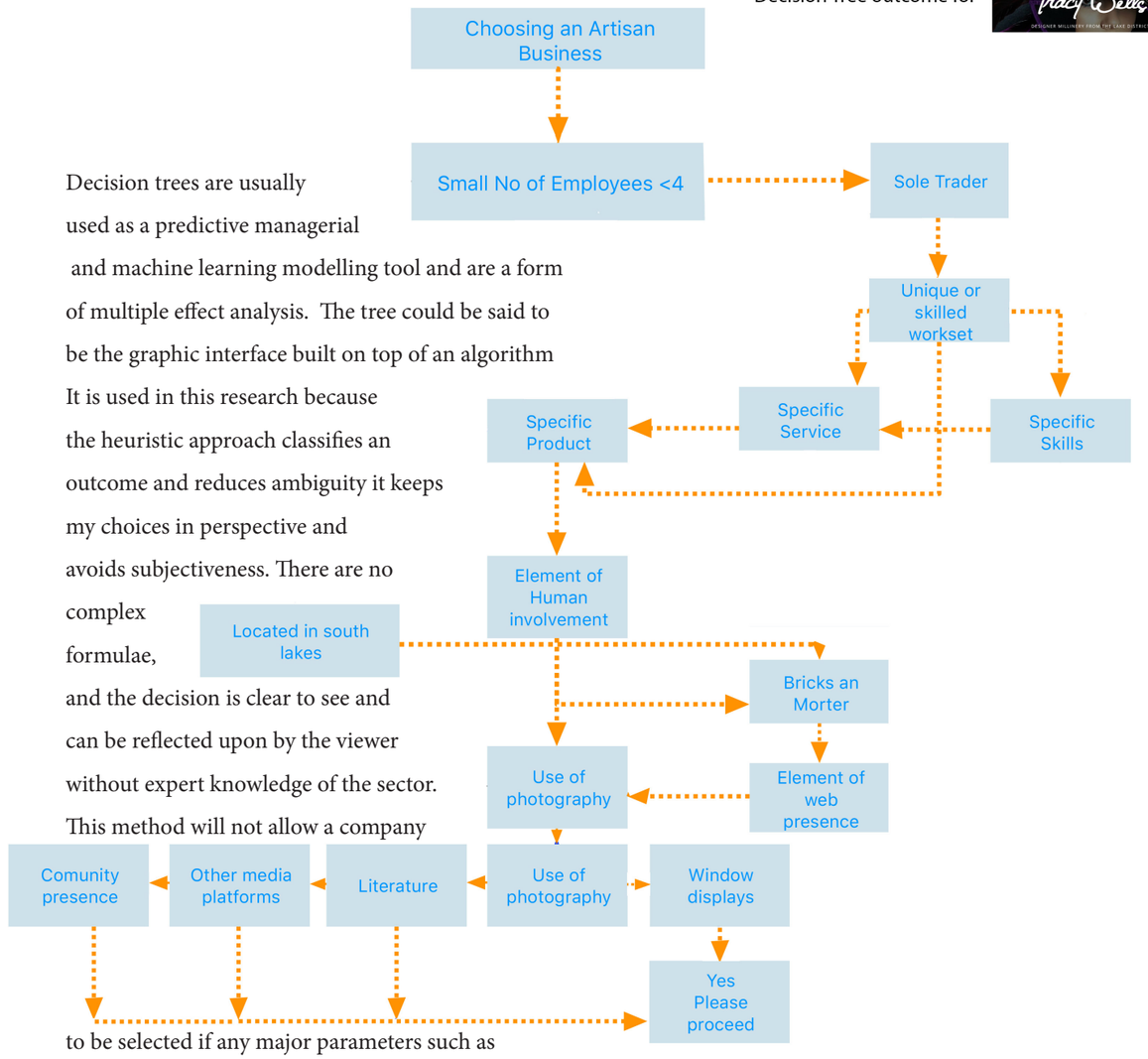
This diagram shows the extent and different pathways that could have been taken.

To test a business the questioning begins at the top and cascades down through positive (orange) arrows, blue arrows to show a maybe alternative and grey are a no route to an exit of the tree. If the orange arrows lead to the base and final 'yes proceed' box then the business is artisan.

Tracy is showing a positive outcome for an artisan business, the orange arrows show positive pathway through all the layers of the tree.

Tracy Wells ~ Outcome is 'Yes proceed'.

Decision Tree outcome for -



Decision trees are usually used as a predictive managerial and machine learning modelling tool and are a form of multiple effect analysis. The tree could be said to be the graphic interface built on top of an algorithm It is used in this research because the heuristic approach classifies an outcome and reduces ambiguity it keeps my choices in perspective and avoids subjectiveness. There are no complex formulae, and the decision is clear to see and can be reflected upon by the viewer without expert knowledge of the sector. This method will not allow a company to be selected if any major parameters such as 'unique products' are not satisfied.

Tracy Wells is a sole trader and is a milliner who hand makes all the hats from scratch. So, she has both a relatively unique Professional skill set and provides exceptional service. The products are so specific that each one is unique; the element of human involvement is enormous as it takes many hours to produce one hat from rolls of flat material. Her company has a presence on the high street by way of a shop. Tracy does have a substantial website which feeds off photography, and she has an active presence on Facebook and has produced some literature combined with a prolific involvement in the community.

This simple decision technique allows me to proceed with this potential participant as an artisan based business.

Chap 2)

Sign up and paperwork

Ethics and consent forms

Sign up Ethics&, Methods

Qualitative methodologies have been employed, and adjustments made due to COVID19 pandemic - shown in italics

Outline topics and open questions for semi-structured group discussion/workshops/Focus groups – participants of up to four *(adjusted to a maximum of 2)*

1) Initial interviews – Semi-structured – Topics

Background of how the business began

What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique selling points)

Where the business wants to go in the future

How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies

Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–

Overview of the session,

An Introduction of how to portray your business,

My aim is to discuss photography's perceived views in promoting the narrative, which is not always obvious and can be hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

Effectiveness of advertising photography

What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?

How would we set up a product and editorial photoshoot?

Describe any experiences with dealing with photographers or imagery before?

Discuss the usefulness of a 'guide' to creating images that create a narrative to support your artisan business. In what ways do you consider photography can benefit your business?

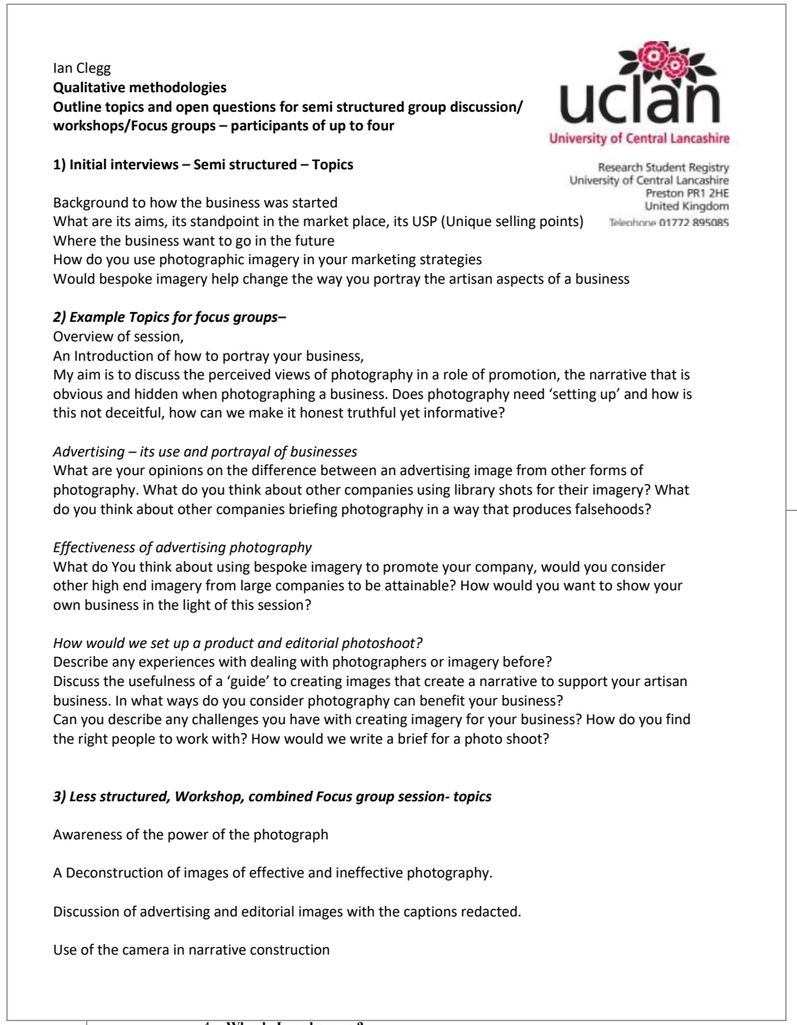
Can you describe any challenges you have with creating imagery for your business? How do you find the right people to work with? How would we write a brief for a photoshoot?

3) Less structured, Workshop, combined Focus group session- topics (absorbed into the other workshops and sessions)

4) The Ethical considerations were taken into account - presented to, and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board. Full documents in the appendixes.

Changes to initial plans of having the artisan present at the studio photo shoots and utilising models on set have been stopped. Focus onto still-life and outdoor shoots when involving people. Most of the communication has been taken online, email, phone calls and my cloud site to appraise images and progression of photographic shoots. As the artisans have very low staffing levels, safe distancing and good practice has been possible.

I do not believe the ethical stance laid out in the original documentation has changed with the pandemic. The digital platforms have become more significant, to the detriment of the actual high street, as we see retail shops closing during lock-down and a high percentage not reopening. The change in emphasis has created the absolute necessity for the artisans to have a significant digital footprint. The digital domain by its nature satisfies most of the pandemic safety guidelines.



Ian Clegg
Qualitative methodologies
Outline topics and open questions for semi structured group discussion/ workshops/Focus groups – participants of up to four

uclan
University of Central Lancashire

Research Student Registry
University of Central Lancashire
Preston PR1 2HE
United Kingdom
Telephone 01772 895085

1) Initial interviews – Semi structured – Topics

Background to how the business was started
What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique selling points)
Where the business want to go in the future
How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies
Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–
Overview of session,
An Introduction of how to portray your business,
My aim is to discuss the perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

Advertising – its use and portrayal of businesses
What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography. What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

Effectiveness of advertising photography
What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high end imagery from large companies to be attainable? How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?

How would we set up a product and editorial photoshoot?
Describe any experiences with dealing with photographers or imagery before?
Discuss the usefulness of a 'guide' to creating images that create a narrative to support your artisan business. In what ways do you consider photography can benefit your business?
Can you describe any challenges you have with creating imagery for your business? How do you find the right people to work with? How would we write a brief for a photo shoot?

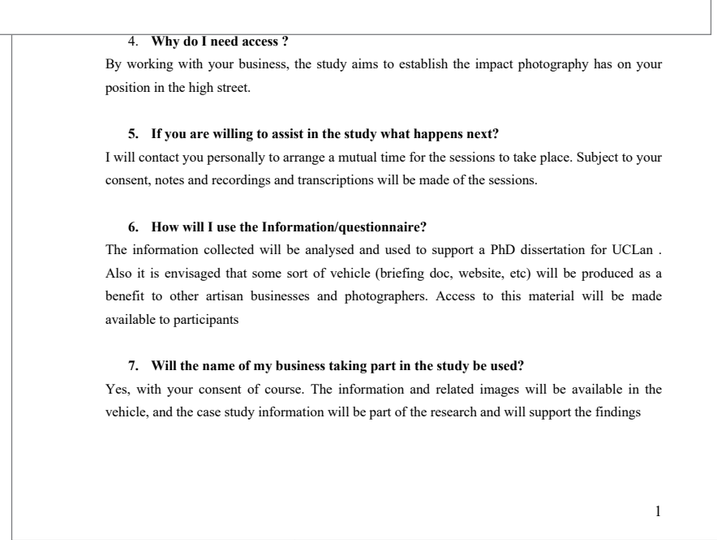
3) Less structured, Workshop, combined Focus group session- topics

Awareness of the power of the photograph

A Deconstruction of images of effective and ineffective photography.

Discussion of advertising and editorial images with the captions redacted.

Use of the camera in narrative construction



4. **Why do I need access ?**

By working with your business, the study aims to establish the impact photography has on your position in the high street.

5. **If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?**

I will contact you personally to arrange a mutual time for the sessions to take place. Subject to your consent, notes and recordings and transcriptions will be made of the sessions.

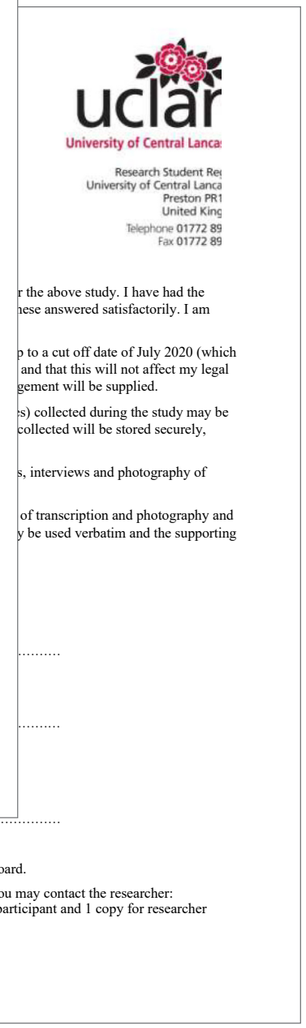
6. **How will I use the Information/questionnaire?**

The information collected will be analysed and used to support a PhD dissertation for UCLan . Also it is envisaged that some sort of vehicle (briefing doc, website, etc) will be produced as a benefit to other artisan businesses and photographers. Access to this material will be made available to participants

7. **Will the name of my business taking part in the study be used?**

Yes, with your consent of course. The information and related images will be available in the vehicle, and the case study information will be part of the research and will support the findings

1



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r the above study. I have had the
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y be used verbatim and the supporting

.....

.....

....

This research has been reviewed and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researcher:
Ian Clegg : ikclegg1@uclan.ac.uk Note: When completed 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

1) Session structure
2) Questions examples
3) Ethical considerations

Chap 3)

Photo Elicitation

Three images that could describe your business

Tracy Wells, Millinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Photoelicitation

Photographs made by the participants with their own accessible cameras or supplied with an instant Fuji camera.

Tracy was asked to use the Fuji camera and was very happy to do so. Her task was to represent the business in only three images.

Tracy was given a couple of days to complete, and then we discussed the images in a semi-structured interview were we questioned her choices. In collaboration, we analysed if the photographs portrayed meanings and whether they placed objects into the frame or omitted them to make the image more pertinent.

These reference points are an opportunity to represent their reality to myself and vice versa (Nelson, 2013, p68).

As a general introduction to the session, we discussed competitors such as 'S. B. Millinery' who make hats a little further up the Cumbrian coast. Tracy commented that she speaks to most of her competitors via social media and at events, and that they all have something different to offer. Tracy adds that she is probably the only one in the group that begins from the raw materials, without using pre-cut templates or formers. Tracy sees herself as genuinely bespoke creator of hats.

The shop is positioned in a town where the location attracts the higher spending demographic from the South Lakes, and being close to the Racecourse at Cartmel where unusual hats are De Rigueur at the horse racing events.

"I moved from Barrow a couple of years ago, it has a better High Street and is closer to Kendal".

‘First image’

Hats in shop

Notes and reflection

Tracy’s workshop is at the top of the building, reminiscent of the old cotton industrial age cottages where all the work was produced with hand spinning machines on the top floor lit with tiny windows. Tracy is proud of using sustainable and natural fabrics for her hats *(Strange that it is not mentioned in her advertising)*. This ‘sustainability’ is one of the USPs that we may return to in the future.

“All my hats are made out of a totally natural substance.”

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- The most banal things can become a USP, interestingly they can become forgotten by the artisan as they are to ‘close’ to the production. They could be a major tool in describing the provenance of the product.
- Unseen areas such as the back of the workshop that looks like a dumping ground to the artisan can hold keys to the product’s uniqueness.

The raw materiel Fuji Instax, Tracy Wells

“I mainly use a material called Sinamay fibre, which is a banana based fabric. It is called ‘stock’ which is a basic structure of the hat, and it is an all natural substance.”

‘Second image’

Tools of the trade

Notes and reflection

In this instance, the tools of the trade are Tracy’s hands as most of the work is in the forming and stretching of the base fabric.
There is no need to keep using the heavy old fashioned steam irons to allow the material to become soft and malleable the modern plastic ones are much safer, faster, and reliable.

“I wear out alot of irons.”

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

• If the craft tools are modern and ‘too contemporary or even ugly then photograph what they do rather than the items themselves.

Hand tools, Fuji Instax, Tracy Wells

“ These are my day to day tools, they don’t look very exciting or specialised but without a steady supply of steam I can’t shape the fabric for the hat, it needs to be hot and damp to form round the complicated shapes. When the fabric cools it stiffens up and the shape becomes permanent.

I have three irons, which produce steam, so if one or even two give up the ghost I have fall backs.

I wear out alot of irons.

I never make two hats the same, it would be a catastrophe if a lady saw the same hat on someone else in the room or at an event! ”

‘Third image’

Wooden formers

Notes and reflection

Tracy is a self-motivated person; she was originally in hairdressing but decided to expand her career. Using some of the space in the hair salon she began to offer rented hats to compliment the hair designs she was creating. She then began to learn how to make the hats, and signed up for a part-time course in the Cotswolds, taking it further she gained a City and Guilds qualification at Kendal college.
She was a Milliner!

“I studied all the.way down in the Cotswolds at weekends for whole year.”

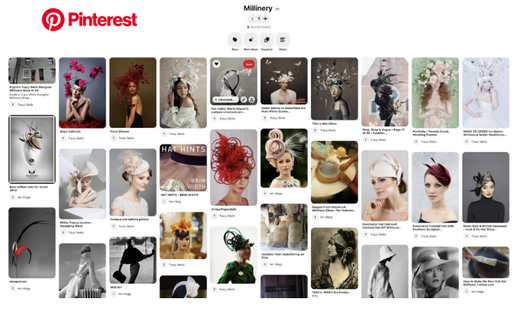
Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- Showing most expensive and flashy machine or piece of equipment is not always the best way to ‘sell’ the artisans skills. A favourite hand tool may be a better photographic prop and signifier for handmadness.
- Take note of the way the artisan was trained or learnt their trade - however long ago, it can still have a big influence on their attitude to the business.

Hat blocks, Fuji Instax, Tracy Wells

“These are shelves of wooden hat blocks which are made to a specific head size (that of the customer) also the flatter ones are for the facinators blocks (these are minimal head wear worn as pure decoration they flatter the face when combined with a supporting hairstyle) I started my millinery business making facinators, in my hairdressing shop. The blocks are made of wood and are similar tools to the cobblers lasts. A new hat can be formed and manipulated around the shape extra curves and edges are added to create classical or contemporary hats.

I wanted to learn how to make them properly so I studied all the way down in the Cotswolds at the weekends for a whole year.”



Chap 3)

Photo Deconstruction

A visual document was created from the jointly gathered images

Tracy Wells, Millinery
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Notes and reflection

Images were collected collaboratively by Tracy and myself and shared on a 'Pinterest' style board. We had been compiling and uploading images as - likes and dislikes over a two week period.

This session has spotlighted Tracy's thoughts on what photography does for a product. The comments regarding the professional images she has commissioned in the past show that although they are quality photographs, they show little in the way of narrative. Tracy's frequent comment to me is that that the photographer knows what they are doing, "*so I let them do it*".

This comment recalls similar meetings I have had with large companies where the Marketing Director in trying to 'brief' the photography, makes comments with the same undertones -

"*You are the creative people, do something creative.*"

This type of unhelpful comment passes the buck to the photographer to produce a successful image without a pre-determined brief. The resulting image is invariably weak and misses the key narratives, often requiring a re shoot as the client doesn't know what they want until they see what they don't want.

Whereas this approach in a large company is a diversion from having responsibility for the project - with an artisan it is mainly borne out of being unsure of the best process.

Tracy was not as chatty as the last meeting, this is not her comfort zone and she is not at ease in telling, or communicating with a photographer to get the best image.

It is encouraging that she has chosen one of her own commissioned images to use in this session.

Fig. 1

Although this is a video, it is utilised as a feature image 'for' the clip. There are clear narratives here which Tracy does recognise (if pushed). She is more interested in the process that one of her peers uses to form the hat rather than what the narrative will say to the customer, Handmade, lovingly sculptured one-off, and all the other artisan attributes.

Fig. 2

The narratives are conflicting in this image, and Tracy seemed to feel this, but could not express it. The lighting and colour balance suggest a natural and warming location, yet the messiness and disregard to order in the background spoil this effect. It is an almost successful image.

Ian - So this is a pull from a video and is the prime still image to click on in their website, What do you think it is saying?

Tracy - Well they are preparing the base to put material on it and form the hat.

Ian - Do you think the situation, with the piles of felt in the background suggests anything?

Tracy - That it's in a workshop ?

Fig. 1, Video still,
https://royalhats.net/2013/11/28/how-its-made-suzanne-newman/

Ian – What do you think is interesting about this photograph?

Tracy - I do like it but the shape of the hat isn't very good from that angle.

Ian – What do you think it is showing?

Tracy - Well it's on a hat stand and there is a bit of a moulding in the corner,
in the workshop maybe.

Ian - Do you think its a shame that the background on the left is too fussy, almost messy.

Tracy - Well yes, I didn't notice that.

Fig. 2, Kate Hill Headdresses, ETSY, Manchester U.K.

Notes and reflection

The session was becoming somewhat protracted. It seems Tracy isn't used to de-constructing images. She relies on an intuitive approach, being more comfortable talking about the product itself rather than the narratives of the image.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Be wary of criticism of details as it can be an indicator of being unsure of the overall narrative comment
- Don't assume that the artisan knows knowledge about influential elements such as lighting. Help them to understand and be aware of these effects on the image
- It is unfair to expect that an artisan can express themselves photographically if they resort to talking about the product and the skills of the product making then it may indicate other issues.
- Don't use phrases that are clearly not working,

Fig. 3

Tracy's reaction to this photograph was she seemed subconsciously to understand that is was a poor image, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. Her remark that the lighting in the background was better and shows she can see it isn't working but doesn't know how to correct it. This critique is promising for future discussions about the atmosphere or ambience of images.

Fig. 4

This image is placed in the context of an advertisement; therefore, it has more functions to perform. Tracy has not considered using still life photography for advertising.

Still life photography will be pursued to see if the hats can survive such scrutiny as it is very unforgiving to a product. However, I am sure that the quality of Tracy's hats will be more than up to such inspection.

Ian – What is happening here?

Tracy - The hat just looks plonked on

Ian – Can you see what is in the image, is there anything that suggests why it is there?

Tracy - Its in a garden, on a horrid plastic table.

Ian - And the lighting?

Tracy - Most of the light is on the background on the plants

Fig. 3 https://www.jaynealisonmillinery.co.uk/photographic

Ian – How do you think this image works?

Tracy - Its quite clever and doesn't need a model

Ian – Do you think is gives the story of the hat

Tracy - You can place the hat on the head in the correct way without relying on the real model.

Ian - Would you think still life images would work for your business,?

Tracy - I've never tried it really, I'm OK to give it a go, bit I don't use advertisements like this one

Fig. 4 http://tolentinohautehats.es/ Magazine Advet

Questions presented to the artisan

The perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business.
Paraphrased answers

1) Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

I can supply the hats and organise the dresses and models but the photographer should do what they are good at, .some of the hats out there are rubbish and fall apart or are made of inferior materials. Mine aren't but that just the way it is.

2) What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography.

I suppose an advertising shot should make you think - I want to fall in love with it
"I need it" " I want it"

3) What do you think about other companies using library shots* for their imagery?

I don't agree with that it should be photographs of the actual items legitimate and transparent.

4) What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

It's up to them really, they will get found out buy the more discerning clients,
which I hope are my sort of clients.

5) What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high end imagery from large companies to be attainable?

I can't afford that sort of photography

6) How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?

I realise that I don't get enough shots of my hats, some go out to clients and I don't even photograph them. I do rely a lot on pictures sent in by my clients themselves.
Maybe I could look at shooting more.*!*

Notes and reflection

Reflection on the questionnaire answers -

1) Tracy has good knowledge regarding what is important in making the hats; this needs imparting to the customers. The shoots are well organised but do the rest of the team know the product narratives that the images must convey?

2) This is fantastic; Tracy must convey this enthusiasm to the image-makers. If a photographer had these sort of comments in a brief, they must not fail to be excited about making images of these hats.

3) Tracy understands the use of library shots* throughout the industry and has the right attitude to their irrelevance to the artisan sector.

4) This is a common perception that advertising photography is too expensive, it is affordable to all levels of the retail industry, it is a case of shooting to the budget and allocation of sufficient, not exuberant, funds to make it happen. A great image is worth doing properly and is an investment Which I trust will be shown by this research.

5) The age-old problem of a small business, is how to 'plan in' the image-making. They can get so involved in the 'product making' (which is the evidence of the artisan's personal investment into the product), that they forget to photograph it. How then can future customers be enticed by the brilliance of the product that 'just went out' and there is no photographic evidence of the fact it was made by the artisans or even existed?

6) Tracy is aware of the range of photographic styles she has on the website, and she cannot ignore the images sent to her by the customers, maybe these should be kept to Instagram where it is more accepted to have 'candid' 'honest' photographic approach. She is at least acknowledging the issue.

"I rely a lot on my clients sending me photographs"

**Images can be purchased from a bank of pre-shot photographs from Getty or Alamy or other library, some of these images get reused over and over again and can become banal and familiar*

Chap 5)

Building a Briefing document

Discussions of current competitive strategies, co creation of a briefing document.

Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

‘The co-created brief’

Tracy markets her products with only the knowledge of her millinery sector. When commissioning photography she has total reliance on others’ skills (and honesty). A brief should help clarify intentions at the outset.

The briefing document is an instrumental part of the creative process and enhances the approach to image creation.
It is a method taken from advertising agency procedures where there are many people involved: the brief is a go-to document and a reference point for the client and agency for the whole creative journey.

Its use here is specifically aimed at the image production section of the journey, not the overall advertising campaign.

If created collaboratively, it allows the client and the photographer to engage and discuss image-making outcomes. Then during production it becomes a reminder of the original aims and objectives - ‘the intents of both artisan and photographer.’

General comment about the aim of the imagery can be as simple as ‘to gain customers’ but should be more specific such as, ‘gain customers in the bespoke hat sector’, or new awareness of a skill

A reasonable question that avoids confusion, and out of the blue comments in the field -
“Oh, I thought while we were shooting, we could also do a video clip?”

Depending on how the meeting is going this should be straight forward, But when should it be ready? Where is this going? are major factors.

It is always a question that arises in advertising; if you don’t know who you are talking to, how can you say it? This is a more difficult assessment. Many artisans don’t know who their audiences are. The key messages may only come about from a discussion like this or develop as a project progresses.

Is the intent to make the customer ‘feel’ something or react to something? If this is not known at the outset, it cannot be added or rectified later.

Sometimes there is an obvious answer, but this strangely can come from the listener, the photographer, so does anyone else do this? Has it been done before? Is there another one?

The photographer must have an idea of the ‘intent of the artisan’, does that marry with both of their intents? If it doesn’t or is unclear, repeat the above questions until there is a mutual agreement.
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BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief

What narratives are there

Is the imagery being supported by text

Which platforms is it being rolled out on

Effectiveness of the images can be measured to some extent by -
Sales? Clicks? Feedback?
Which now on digital platforms are readily available through Analytics but it is helpful to know at the beginning where we are looking for this success.

Notes and reflection

The facing page shows examples of 3rd party and professional photographers' imagery used and produced over the 24 months previous to this research.

It is always easy to criticise imagery taken by other parties. But I will try to be constructive.

The imagery is confusing, ranging from professional (technically at least) high production to the candid amateur and the self-produced.

There is little brand control and the professional images are mixed in with the others. Tracy has used two professional photographers in the past, the images stand out on the website and in her printed literature However they §§are looking dated.

Understandably, there are old, favourite, images that Tracy is loath to edit out, so they could be viewed as an archive page as reference to the long established business.

Tracy should use her celebratory client images, although they are far from perfect they capture the 'moment' and show the customer that these high profile people such as 'Boy George' or 'Gok Wan' are in touch with her. These should be in a separate section on the site and dropped into the social media platforms.

The Ascot image is excellent, yet the wedding hat image probably does more harm than good. A common error is repeated here in that the social media platform gets mixed up with personal images (that do not relate to the artisan's trade). Images of a countryside walk get thrown in-between photographs of beautiful hats. It is a temptation beyond endurance (especially with the convenience of

"I've made hats for some really famous people"

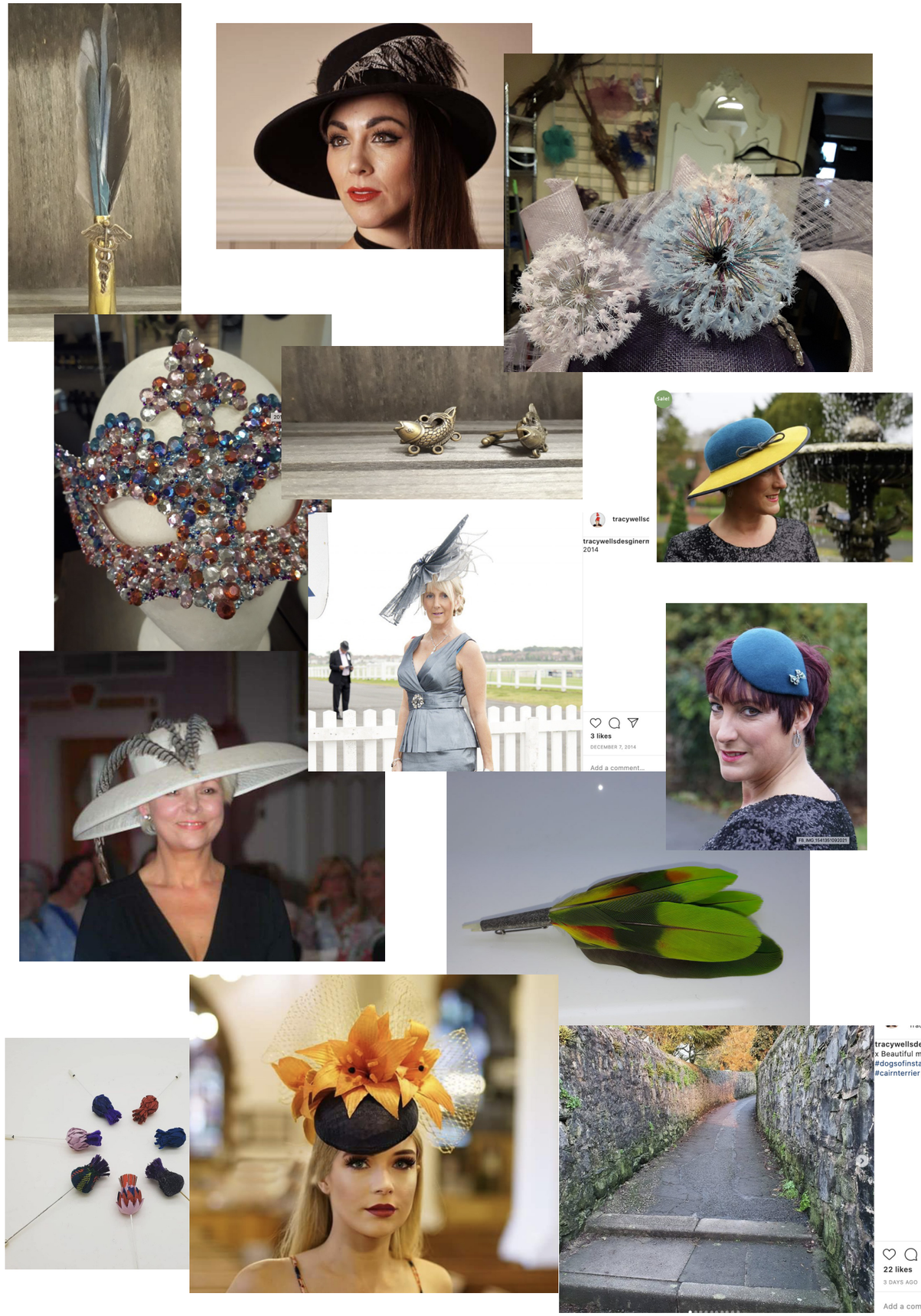
camera phones) to photograph everything but these shots should be dropped on the personal feed, not the business feed.

Overall the narratives are not clear enough, and the products do not command 'a presence'. In addition it Tracy receives variable quality images taken by the customers.

The approach going forward is to photograph one product at a time and extract the narrative at the brief stage so we can exploit the product and Tracy's talents in a photographic story.

1) Tracy supplies hats to some high-profile clients and moves in high circles. Here she is with the fashion consultant and TV presenter Gok Wan

2) Collection of mixed images taken by 3rd parties from Tracy' Instagram and website, accessories party masks, hat pins, brooches, all add to her range of hats



The COVID19 effect &

Participants' response & research reaction

The horrendous COVID 19pandemic has temporarily or permanently changed almost everything in the contemporary world.
My initial thoughts were ;
Should I be carrying on with my research amidst these times, is it worthy?
Am I just getting in the way of my artisan participants whilst they are trying to keep their businesses afloat?
On discussions with my peers and supervisors, I was reassured that I should continue with the research provided that the artisans were in agreement.
I will give specific details of the actual responses from each participant.
They all agreed to proceed with the research, but their reactions to the COVID19 pandemic were different, unique and to be frank, extraordinary in each their own way.
As to my response, I made the research more adaptable to the ever-changing circumstances.
The rules put forward by the government changed on a weekly basis, shops were closed for long periods and customer access became difficult to say the least. Add to this, as of March 2020, the High Street as we know it changed, possibly forever as non-essential shops were ordered to close. (The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020).
My initial approach was to contact each participant and assess via specific meetings what we could do together to carry on with the research, in parallel, and without sounding too pompous, benefit them. And maybe just maybe play a part in the business's survival.

The COVD meeting with Tracy was a think tank to see if she could diversify so that product could be sold online rather than in-store, the following ideas came forth ~

i) Make a small postable product that could be sold via Instagram, based on her making skills, brooches, masks, pillow covers
ii) Create and market a public workshop idea where a fascinator, for example, could be made at home
iii) Approach an online education platform and offer to teach millinery.
These ideas will be supported by photography.

1) Signs from the High Street
2) Tracy's sandwich board before it had to be taken in as the High Street retail went into free-fall.

Chap 6)

Co- creation of bespoke imagery

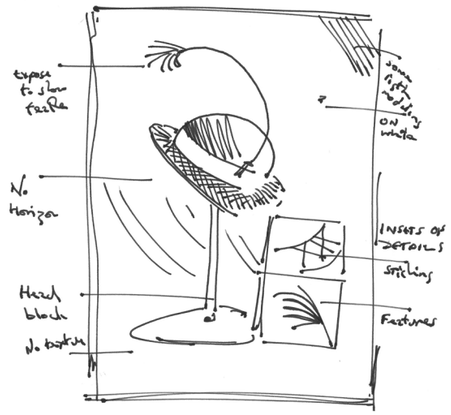
Utilisation of the brief and the data gathered in the previous stages

A brief - ‘A fascinator’

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing on a method that shows both parties’ intents

This project was an opportunity to start as we meant to carry on.
I was amazed at how long it took to make one of these fascinators - Tracy commented that they took as long as a hat! They had to be perfectly shaped or they would just fall off.
She said, with conviction, that her fascinators are amongst the best and draw lots of comments at events. Many are sold to her current hat customers as they wanted the same quality and attention to detail as the hats they had previously bought.
Although a fascinator is defined by having no brim, of course, Tracy has made one with a decorative non-functional lace brim, artisans!

The visual narrative to be noted is the material is very top end, silks, feathers and handmade flowers. A photographic still life is a great way to show this detail.



1) Sketch made to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet built

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Facinators - defined as anything on the head smaller than a hat without a crown or a brim. Therefore decorative rather than functional -To show the quality of Tracy’s product

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images shot in sequence and detail shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – Studio , The images should be available for regular updates to be put up on instagram

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

New individual customers wanting a bespoke look, current customers who would like to see more of a range

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

These items are each unique and are made form high end materials. You wont see a similar one

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Well made and will hold up under close examination, you won’t be shown up for wearing one of these

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Follow the Artisan through the production process
What narratives are there
Well made, handmade, fabric and material will allow close scrutiny high quality, costly
Is the imagery being supported by text
negligible text on instagram but to the point and erudite
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

After I had mastered the angle that the fascinator should be on my own head, I ran back through the brief then took the product back to my studio.
The item's fabric would 'stand up' to close up photographic detail shots as it was so rich and high quality. Made of real materials not faux.

The hat was shot un-cropped to give the whole shape and context of the fascinator on a head. The detail shots are used to compliment the main image and show that the material still looks fantastic on close inspection. Similar to photography of a high end watch, the photography can get in close and show the internal workings and excellent workmanship.
Shooting on a white background we show the item on a perceived pedestal and that it is worthy of an almost art like presence. It doesn't need props it can stand alone and we can focus on the product itself.

It is valued, admired, and inspires a tinge of jealousy and of wanting.

"I use real coque feathers from the tails of roosters"

Nikon D850, 56mm, 1/125, f18 ISO 200,
Studio flash heads, Profoto soft box, back lit spill head and A1 dome head fill in.

Conversation

Location - shop
Ian - I don't even know how to put one of these on a head

Tracy - Oh yes, I get photographers putting them on all sorts of ways, sometimes upside down!

Ian - Would you show me how to do it please? (Tracy puts it on her own head).

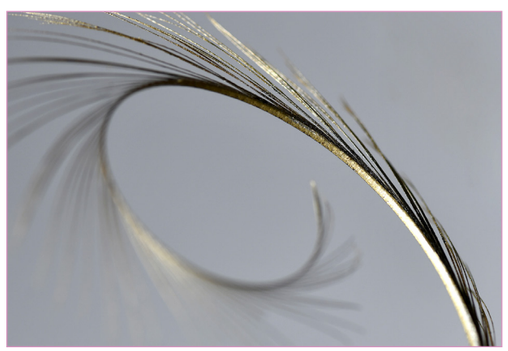
Ian - Would you ever show it on one of those blank heads?

Tracy - Yes I'd put it in the window like that.

Ian - Can we use one so I can practice, have you got other ones less plain?

Tracy - Yes I have fabric ones with patterns.

Ian - Let's have a look,
Oh yes that will work, now lets see if I can put it on properly.
Yes that works.



The same approach was shown to a minimalist hat that Tracy had designed and made. Its brim was purely decorative.

The photography needed to show the time spent in the making. This hat has taken hundreds of hours as she handmade each of the 45 leaves all around the brim!

Cut-out photography or photography on plain unobtrusive backgrounds can be used to elevate the product, were the product is such high quality that it can stand alone on a page.
As Bates (2016) describes, the product is solely a thing in its own space, giving it importance and stature

“Each leaf is individually hand stitched

Nikon D850, 56mm, 1/125, f18 ISO 200,
Studio flash heads, Profoto soft box, back lit spill head and A1 dome head.
Insets 105mm, 1/160, f8, ISO 250 A1 Flash and bounce .

A brief - ‘PPE Masks’

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing to a method to show both parties’ intent. Talking with the artisan brought out these qualities of the products and a quick sketch was made to clarify what we were both thinking. This covers both visual and text based briefing.

This project was the start of Tracy’s diversity venture during the national lockdown. Tracy’s first thought was ‘masks’ and she turned her skills to producing them for the NHS (for free) as at the beginning of the Pandemic there was a shortage of what became to be known as PPE (Personal Protection Equipment).

It was an incredibly Philanthropic gesture, and she made hundreds of them. As the NHS got up to speed with supplies, the need for the masks tailed off.

As an extension of this project, Tracy began making ‘fashion’ masks out of high-quality material samples she has accumulated over the years.

It was a great move as the local community had already seen Tracy supporting the NHS, and they were now happy to buy the masks. The local COVID resilience group spotlighted local businesses (including Tracy’s) on Facebook if they were doing anything unusual or altruistic. The community had seen that Tracy was supplying masks to the NHS, now they wanted ones made in Tracy’s workshops, as they knew they would be high quality and unique - just like her hats.

All Tracy required now were images to put out there.

1) Sketch made to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet built

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – COVID Masks
-To show the quality of Tracy’s product, individuality , fashionable

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images , maybe 15-20 showing differences and usage

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – on location , The images should be available for posting on instagram and Facebook

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Current custtomers that know Tracy’s hat products, that want to support her, and who need masks during this shortage and with a bit of fashion flair

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

These items are made from high end materials. Give a bit of jollity in these hard times

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Well made and will last numerous washing and they are individual and can match your hat!

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – Facebook - analytics should show results immediately

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Keep to Tracy’s quality brand image even though these are ‘just’ PPE facemasks
What narratives are there
Well made, handmade, fabric and material will allow close scrutiny high quality, shows you care anyone can wear them, accessible, local business support, natural sustainable fabrics
Is the imagery being supported by text
negligible text on instagram but to the point and erudite
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

As there were so many masks to photograph, we decided to show as many as possible and celebrate the many different styles. An outdoor setting signifies fresh air and clean air, which enforces the function of the mask.

A simple featureless and neutral coloured head model was made; this showed off the mask itself and stopped any customer confusion or referencing that a more detailed head – or a real person's head would cause.

The mask's quality shows through, using pulled focus (in camera) we see the detail in the stitching and fabric rather than a sharp background. The green leaves and flowers further add to the fresh outdoor smell of summer.

Some masks had patterns on the inside as well, so insets where shot on a neutral white tissue background to emphasis the detailing.

Notes and reflection

Photographically a simple idea can work; it doesn't have to be complex or challenging.

An altruistic gesture can work well for the business even if that wasn't the intention. In this case making masks for the NHS for free was good PR and developed into versions that the public wanted and could purchase.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Don't overcrowd a background, if it is an atmospheric background consider blowing it out of focus so as not to distract from the product. *A method of controlling the depth of field of a lens so that only the product is in focus and the distracting background is still there but becomes a smooth suggestion of itself.*
- Ensure all the features are somehow shown, if it can't be done in one shot then use an inset
- Work with the platform, which is the context of the image. The gridded style here lends itself perfectly to the Instagram way of displaying images.

1) Inset of rear pattern on mask
2) Gridded version of all the masks used complete for Instagram

Nikon D850, 85mm, 1/250, f5.6, ISO 400,
Profoto A1 dome head fill
Insets 60mm, 1/150, f11, ISO 250, B1 Flash Octobox.

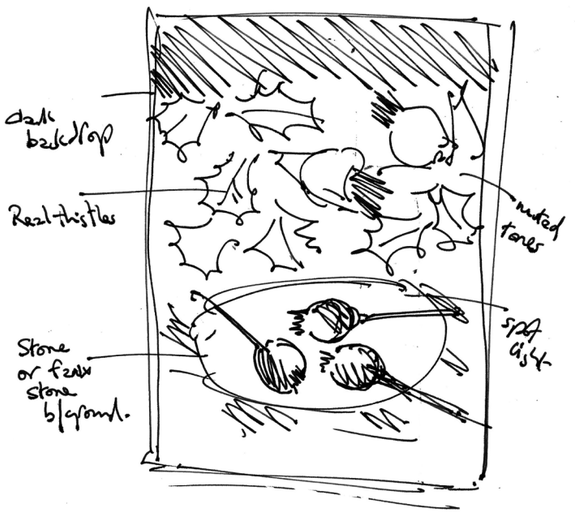
A brief - Tartan Thistle brooch

As part of Tracy's diversification plan for lockdown, she produced items that could be delivered by easily by post, were affordable and unique.
Although small, these brooches are representational for the skills of millinery. They will be suitable for current hat customers who are aware of Tracy's high quality work. Any new customers will impressed with the brooches' quality and will become involved with the brand for the future.
The fabric is genuine Clan Scottish tartan, and each brooch comes with a certification of the Clan's name.

Although each thistle can take as long to make as a complete hat, Tracy is investing this time in preserving the brand, keeping it visible by making low cost/high quality items whilst the shop is closed.

The essential narratives to be told by the photography are: handmade, high quality, based on an interpretation of the 'real' Scottish Thistle.

Talking with the artisan highlighted these qualities and a sketch was made to clarify what we were both thinking. This visual can be cross referenced to the text based brief.



1) Sketch made to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet built

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Hand made material Thistle hat pins/brooches
-To show the quality of Tracy's product, individuality , fashionable

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images , maybe 3-4 showing the detail of the designs

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – in studio, The images should be available for posting on instagram and Facebook

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Current customers that know Tracy's hat products, that want to support her, and who want items for themselves or be able to post an item as a gift without coming in-store

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

These items are made from high end materials. Completely unique - feel special

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Well made utterly one off, never been seen before

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – Facebook - analytics should show results immediately

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Keep to Tracy's quality brand image and the attention to the smallest detail, relate the hand made thistles back to their Scottish origins of the actual thistle plant.
What narratives are there
Well made, handmade, fabric and material will allow close scrutiny high quality, local business support, natural sustainable fabrics accessible price without investing in a expensive hat,
Each thistle takes at least 3 hours to make, Scottish origins as the fabric is tartan, each tartan is 'clan' named in the supporting paperwork,
Is the imagery being supported by text
negligible text on instagram but to the point and erudite

Real thistles were sourced from the moors (unfortunately not Scottish). It was better to get the older dried sprigs of thistle as the newer 'green' plants would clash too much with the product. The subdued browns of the plant set highlight the vivid colours of the brooches. A neutral base is a signifier for the granite stones on the moorland of the Scottish Highlands. A main shot of the three brooches shows scale, and the single inset images display the structure of the pins. The side lighting shows the thistles' detail and demonstrates how Tracy has teased the purple plumes out of the tops of the brooches. The natural thistle in the background provides a comparative marker emphasising how realistic the created fabric ones are. This image symbolises the products link back to nature and how it may even be an improvement on nature yet differs in its permanence.

Notes and reflection

Photographing an item with a prop that relates back to the original material is an excellent marketing method, a way of showcasing the skills of the business in emulating nature. It is often used in advertising, oranges behind juice bottles, almonds in front of face cream and in this case thistles behind brooches.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Place scale into a shot if possible, will be disappointed when a product arrives smaller than it seemed in the photograph.
- Spot a unique feature quickly, get it out there.
- Utilize nature to reinforce natural products, which by signification represent their origins, and underlying natural sources.

1) Focusing in on one product leaving the other to go soft, this pulls the viewers eyes into the main item
2) A good sense of scale is achieved when comparative products are placed in the same image
3, 4, 5,) After the main shot the items can be singled out, now that the viewer has a sense of scale.
Nikon D850, 60/105mm, 1/150, f8, ISO 200,
Profoto B1 Flash softbox, fill A1 dome diffuser

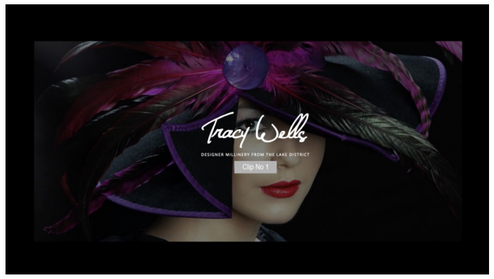
Chap 7)

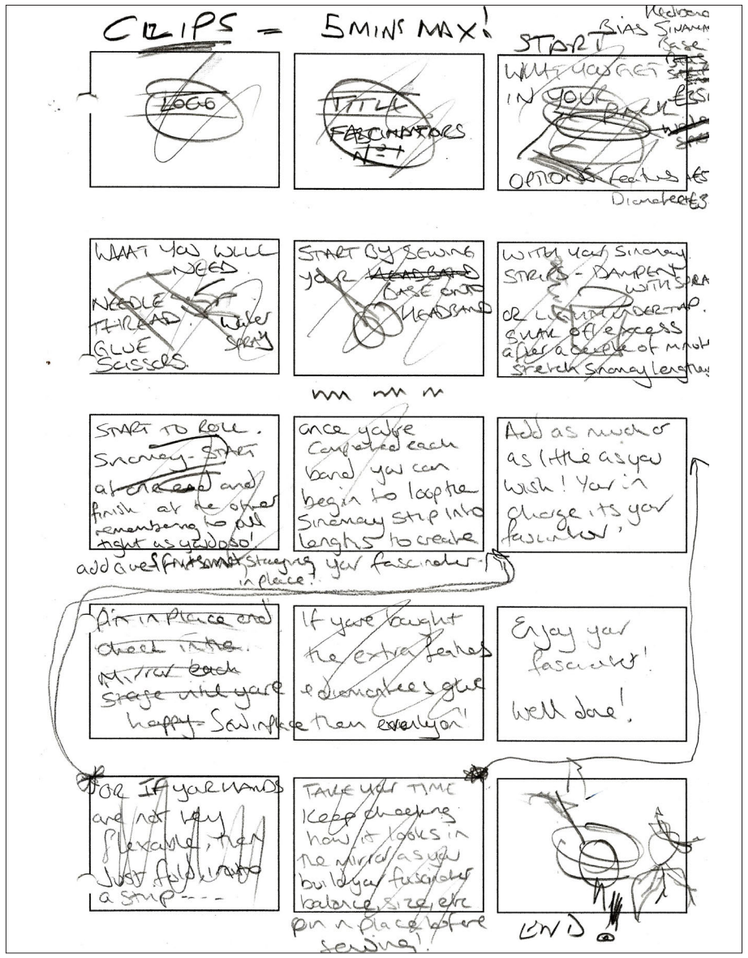
Digital platforms

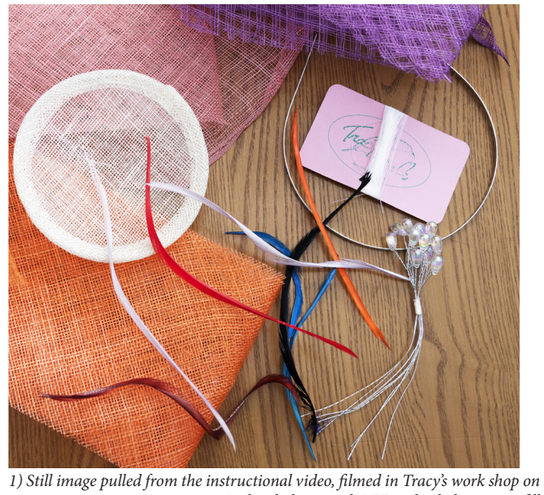
Imagery utilised in social media website and Instagram, and Video clips

Part of Tracy's plan during the COVID pandemic to keep in touch with her community and remind them of her business. Apart from the other ideas, she wanted to progress into making a video workshop.
The strategy would include promoting the workshops on Instagram and Facebook.
As the workshop is monetised, the standard Youtube channel would not suffice, so we would email MP3 clips via Facebook, keeping the video securely off the 'free to view' platforms. Upon payment, the customer would be posted a 'work pack' containing all they needed to make a 'Fascinator' at home. Then Tracy would email the 'How to' clip. The customers were encouraged to share their experiences online and maybe take some shots of the final pieces.

A brief was co-created in the form of a storyboard. The materials require some clear and accessible photography to show the packs' good value. The next stage was a video of the 'making of the fascinator' complete with title and branding. We co-created a storyboard, so Tracy had a plan, a time limit and a visual script to follow. I gave her some lighting lessons and lent her my Video lighting. I photographed the raw materials that were in the pack. Storyboard to edited video clip and selling on Instagram took just five days.







1) Still image pulled from the instructional video, filmed in Tracy's work shop on an Android phone with LED video lighting as infill
2) Rough storyboard brief for Tracy to follow to keep under 5minutes
3) Still life of the materials sent out in the pack

Nikon D850, 50mm, 1/250, f8, ISO 800, Natural window light and gold reflector fill

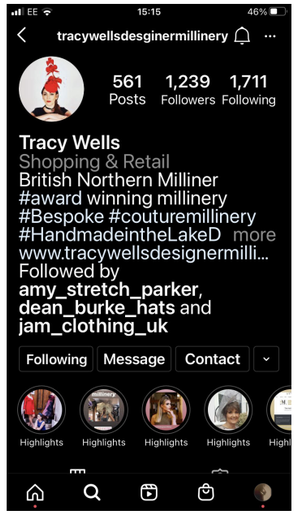
Firstly, we posted the still life photography of the components on Instagram. The image received a reasonable amount of interest. Then Tracy posted on Instagram the outcomes that could be accomplished with the kit. The text showed links to images of finished articles.

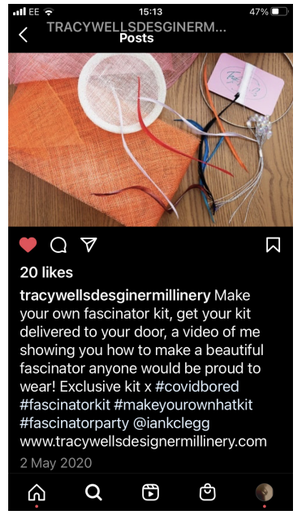
Tracy received a reasonable amount of orders, mostly from current customers. Quick initial feedback was expected on Instagram platform, building new contacts takes time so the initial sales are from existing followers.

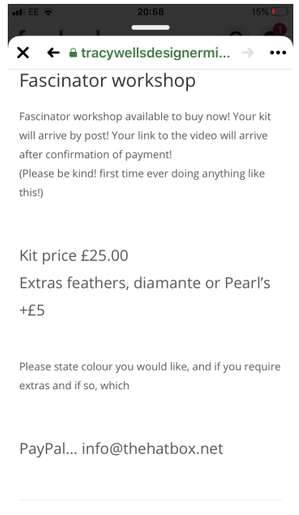
Was this new product and style of launch successful?

The project was a good test in the use of still life photography combined with the short clip. The ability to create a video clip should be part of the 'Total photographer's' skill, the clip as opposed to the short film is becoming part of the everyday requirement. A video clip of this length (5 mins) should be well within the stills photographer's capability, the narrative is similar to stillst, and the lighting and technical skills are transferable.

This video workshop's profile was noticed around the globe and opportunities opened up as a result. Tracy performed sessions at Melbourne University, Australia and Liverpool University U.K.







1) We checked that the crop for viewing on a smart phone was correct
2) Still life of Kit was posted on Instagram
3) The Instagram references were duplicated onto Facebook

The Global influence of instagram is staggering

Chap 8)

Further images and relevant projects

previous stages

Case study report Ian Clegg

Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - Classic Bowler with a twist.
Narrative, a ‘going out’ bowler that will show style and handmade characteristics.

- Human Skills - unique, you can rest assured that there will not be another one at the event you are attending.

- The item is strong enough to stand alone, it doesn’t need support from other clothing.

- Muted tones in the background help focus on the product.

- Hat is ready and waiting at the foot of the stairs - a last touch before you exit.

Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - Made at the same time as the bowler this hat is comprised of fish skins!

- More of a fascinator than a hat it will be the talk of the party, especially when one mentions the fish!

- Although it is an unusual material the origins need never be mentioned.

- We used the just going out look again here and the upmarket brightly lit hall way.

- The depth of filed is narrowed to emphasise the hat and merely suggest its locale. Keep the background an indistinctly soft feel.

The Location shoot, with another photographer

Notes and reflection

Tracy had a date booked to have a photographic shoot of her headbands. Tracy spent a lot of time, making the headbands, getting in touch with the models, a dressmaker and a jeweller, for accessories. But no pre-brief with the photographer, who had just set up a business and opened a studio in Ulverston. Tracy kindly invited me to the shoot to observe its progress and document the proceedings for my research. Also I would like to thank the photographer (Victoria, Marmalade photography) for being OK with me being on the shoot. I shall not critique or show the photography itself (all the images on this page are mine as a record of the shoot) creatively or technically. My research was the interaction between the parties and the effectiveness of the imagery to set parameters. The group consisted of – 3 models – 1 Dressmaker -1 Accessories and stylist, 1 Hair and makeup Tracy (the client) and photographer, 8 in all.

The weather was dry and bright, with arrival at the workshop @10 am. There wasn't a briefing sheet, and the group members had not had a prelim meeting. The photographer had only met Tracy once before to ask if she could perform a shoot with her.

There was a lot of questions asked, what dress with which model? Which accessories? And where shall we shoot it?

These aspects had not been finalised beforehand; the photographer had not been immersive in their approach to the shoot, which replicated how Tracy worked with other photographers.

Just a simple brief sheet to circulate beforehand would have made the whole event more planned and relaxed. The term singing from the same hymn sheet was never mooter.

Do not see this as criticism of individuals; the pressures upon creatives to perform 'on the day' are immense and seldom successful. Following a basic pre-formulated approach to the job will reap the rewards.

Images can be superb technically, the models immaculate, the props perfect, but if the narrative is not that of the artisan and intentions are not aligned, the photography can appear directionless.

The individual photographs are great, the photographer has images for their portfolio and Tracy to use on her Facebook. Still, they have missed out on creating a body of images showing a story or collaborative intent.

1) Ian's documentary images of the shoot, Nikon D850 24-70mm

Location shoot, with Ian Clegg photographer

Notes and reflection

For this shoot, Tracy had a pre-meeting with me, and we co-created a brief; this brief took into account the context of the final images.

The main points were ~

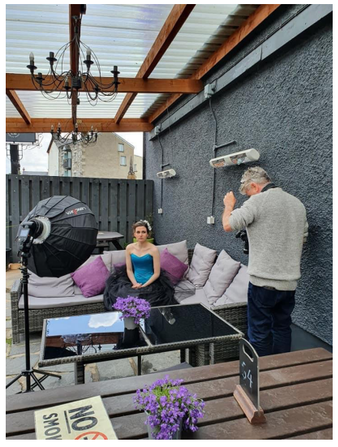
1) The new pieces were all made by hand and from scratch. The flowers are all porcelain and made from raw materials.

2) The images were to initially to go out on Facebook and Instagram as prelims to the possible lockdown relaxation to allow weddings, events and outdoor gatherings for the summer.

3) The images are also to be used for an article in Cumbria life as an advertorial about handcrafting in the South Lakes.

The locations were predetermined together, and a wet weather alternative booked. The model was an experienced person used to dealing with Tracy and we used an assistant and makeup and hair person.
The three most important shots were ascertained
We also agreed that the images on location needed support from still life studio shots showing detail - plus some images of Tracy making the flowers from raw clay, then the whole process could be visually covered, and the customer would be in no doubt of the handmade element and the story of the product

1,2) Hair prep, Alice gets ready, location in secluded garden provides possible rain cover
3) Co created brief
4) Sketch to clarify objectives



BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Hand made headband - minimal beautifully finished headpiece.-To show the quality of Tracy's product

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Model shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – on location, preferably outside, alternative wet weather option to be booked

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Those not wanting a full hat, just a headpiece feature, ideal for weddings and mall events where a large hat might get in the way.

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

Proud of their one off unique head piece

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

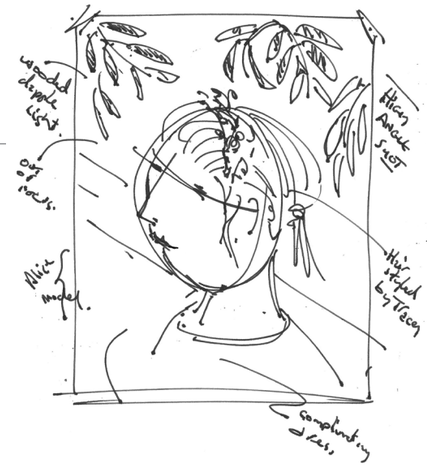
Well made, only one in existence, talking point at the event,

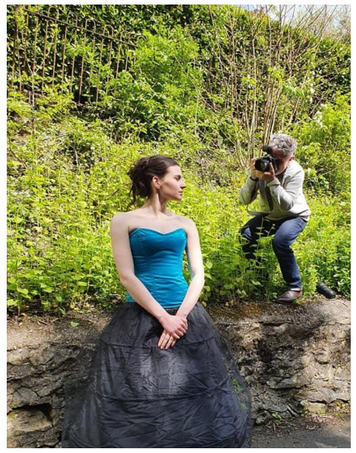
AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

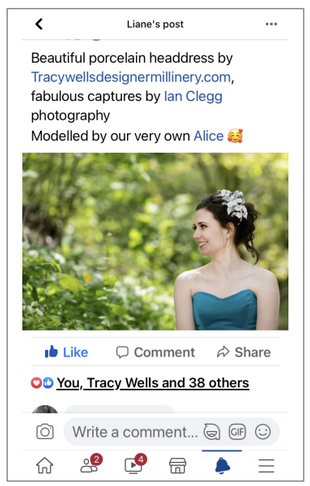
Likely to be wedding attendees that would wear this not the main party
Facebook most approriate platform for this - should show results within 2 weeks

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
examine the making progression, what is handmade, what are the raw materials
What narratives are there
Well made, handmade, affordable, unique
Is the imagery being supported by text
Facebook responds better to text than Instagram, so yes some text will be supportive
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Facebook







1) Getting some soft back drops to the image
2) Photographer (author) balances on a wall for a better angle on the head dress
3) Instagram image gets 38 likes in an hour
4) Final shot

Chap 9)

Findings

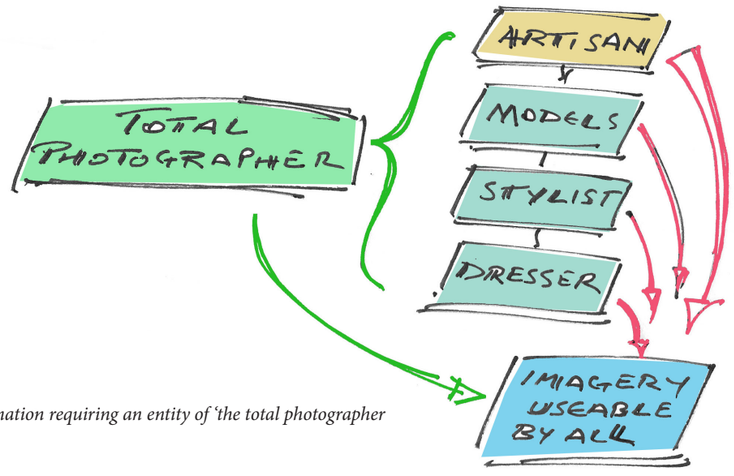
Case study report Ian Clegg

Interim Findings

Specific to this participant

Current skill sets have needed to be adjusted, and new ones found to get the best out of this participant's relationship. I am moving in different circles because I do not have a team of creatives around me; I have to fill the knowledge gaps between, say - an Art director and Advertising accounts manager. This size business does not want or is capable of working with a one-source Advertising agency. The initial images that we created involved her millinery narratives; however, this developed into a different narrative as the COVID 19 pandemic broke. Tracy's approach to photography is very like the way my large clients dealt with imagery. There is a trepidation to delve into the area of visual storytelling. She feels out of her comfort zone. A combination of the photographer not being able to ask the right questions and the client having little understanding of photography can result in average outcomes.

She doesn't have the situation of having a design company or Ad agency to guide her through the stages of visual narration, and her default reaction is to leave the project entirely up to the photographer.



Little or no sharing of information requiring an entity of 'the total photographer

Two points to note

i) Photography is mainly a sole trader profession resulting in a similar ethos to that of an artisan. They see it as a personal skill, handcrafted and creative. Therefore it is surprising that the two parties shouldn't gel much better. Artisans should be able to brief photographers!

ii) Photographers should see it as their mission to get the narratives from the artisan and translate them into a visual language. Photographers should be able to understand they need a brief from artisans!

Photographers should have a curious mind to draw out the needs of the image. Both parties should get to know each other's skills, as I have done with Tracy, yet with the other photographers, she just 'winged it', which made me wince after spending months with the artisan learning the detail of their business that otherwise may be missed.

Tracy, strangely enough, does not expect the photographer to have a knowledge base of her business. Yet she makes no moves to change that; this is when a simple brief sheet would help, increasing her business's effectiveness, which would give her a clear advantage on the high street. It seems very few of the businesses are.

Unlike Participant 1, there is no conflicting advice from the website design studio or other photographers. I have used still-life imagery to enable Tracy to project her brand outside of their retail shop on various digital platforms. I use my fashion shoot as an example to show the interaction that needs to take place to take the photography up a level in its narrative depiction. This scenario (that of the fashion shoot) is where the 'Total Photographer' comes into play and is highly effective in ensuring both engaging and compelling images.

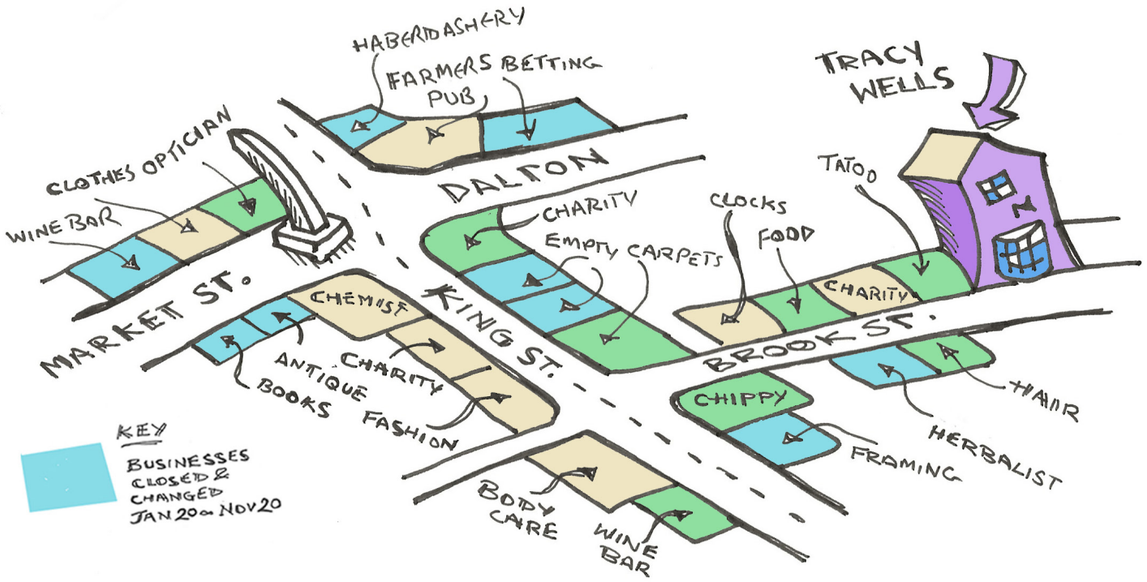
Through my practice, I built trust (between artisan and photographer) and used brief sheets discussions and referral back to the artisan in creating effective photography. Effectiveness can be evidenced to a certain extent by recording the number of increased likes on the platforms and the improved sales as a direct result of the images. Also, the knock-on effect has been that Tracy has gained further employment in teaching her skills truly on a global scale as far as Melbourne, Australia.

Once confidence and trust with each of our agendas (that of photographer and artisan) have formed, then the narrative's discovery was an enjoyable and productive experience. Making the co-creation of stories about the artisan's more effective

I had a direct line of reference back to the creator of the products. The way the artisan ran her business influenced the imagery, the challenges that arose from the elicitation of the image were met and overcome. The collaborative approach saved many hours of wasted time creating photography that would otherwise be of no use to Tracy. Her three images of the business were very telling, there was pride in making a hat and an interest in how the hats are used, this genuine connection with the customer would have to come through in the created imagery.

Tracy was not interested in semiotics' language but did want to know why some images worked and others didn't. So I presented the new work in an accessible way, citing colour lighting and propping to create interesting framed pictures for the customers.

This knowledge will feed directly into the proposed vehicle emphasising the requirement for upfront discussion, planning, and mutual interest. The considerable change in the research context is the arrival of the COVID 19 pandemic, which has not only affected my research but the world itself. The context of being on the high street' has been radically changed upon the announcement of lockdown. This has accelerated the retail move into the digital world. The research started with the requirement for these artisans to have a bricks and mortar presence on the high street, but this has become much less important with necessity.



1) Map showing Part of Ulverston High Street revealing a 35% turnover of businesses during this research period

This participant had a reasonable digital footprint with a decent website and Facebook presence at the start of this research. The high street shop has been closed for the majority of 2020/1, but Tracy's response to the problem has been magnificent. The products she has been making have been selling online, and I trust that the new photography has gone some way in enabling that.

The digital platform as a selling place is competitive and fast-moving; however, similar to the other participants, the customer base has become more loyal and focused. If an enquiry comes through Facebook or Instagram, then they are likely to buy. The still life photography we have produced is ideally suited to distance selling, the product can be made king, and there is no need to use live models, which can be a distraction.

During COVID19 Pandemic, Tracy has moved all her products and services online. Even products and services that weren't even visible from the High Street presence. The fundamental change in the High Street has brought the necessity for compelling imagery to the fore, and this action led research and involvement with the participants changed with it. With closed shops during the Lockdowns, the 'Only' way to approach customers is through online platforms, creating a necessity for photography and making it more pertinent than it has ever been. The massive churn rate of businesses in the High Street has only allowed the most resilient to survive, as the fig above shows, with the small business permanent closure rates National average running at 40% (Simply Business, 2020). Tracy's shop has done well to stay the course.

These are specific findings related directly to this participant; however, some will link to all of the participants. Nonetheless, each project and brief will be different as the stories will vary. Yet, the fundamentals of negotiating a fruitful approach will remain the backbone of successful collaborations and co-creation of great photography.

Chap 10)

Reflection

Reflection

How do I assess the success of the images, interaction and approach? Tracy has diversified more than she has ever done. The new enquiries for her skills and product have overwhelmingly been from new customers, she has fortified her brand and branched out into teaching.

Some key moments in the last 14months -

Creating Masks for the NHS

Fashion masks

High-end accessories

New styles of headbands

Supply of Kits for homemaking

Teaching Millinery, Higher Education, Liverpool University, Melbourne University, both online.

Partnership opportunity with a U.K. fashion designer

Tracy did not falter; she embraced the new challenges immediately the Government actioned the 1st lockdown. Whilst she has taken a long time to be interested in the briefing side of the process, her enthusiasm to get great images remains undiminished.

The more I have interacted with Tracy, the better the photography has become, she has been able to use the images cross-platform. She has created an online following and a community that supports her business.

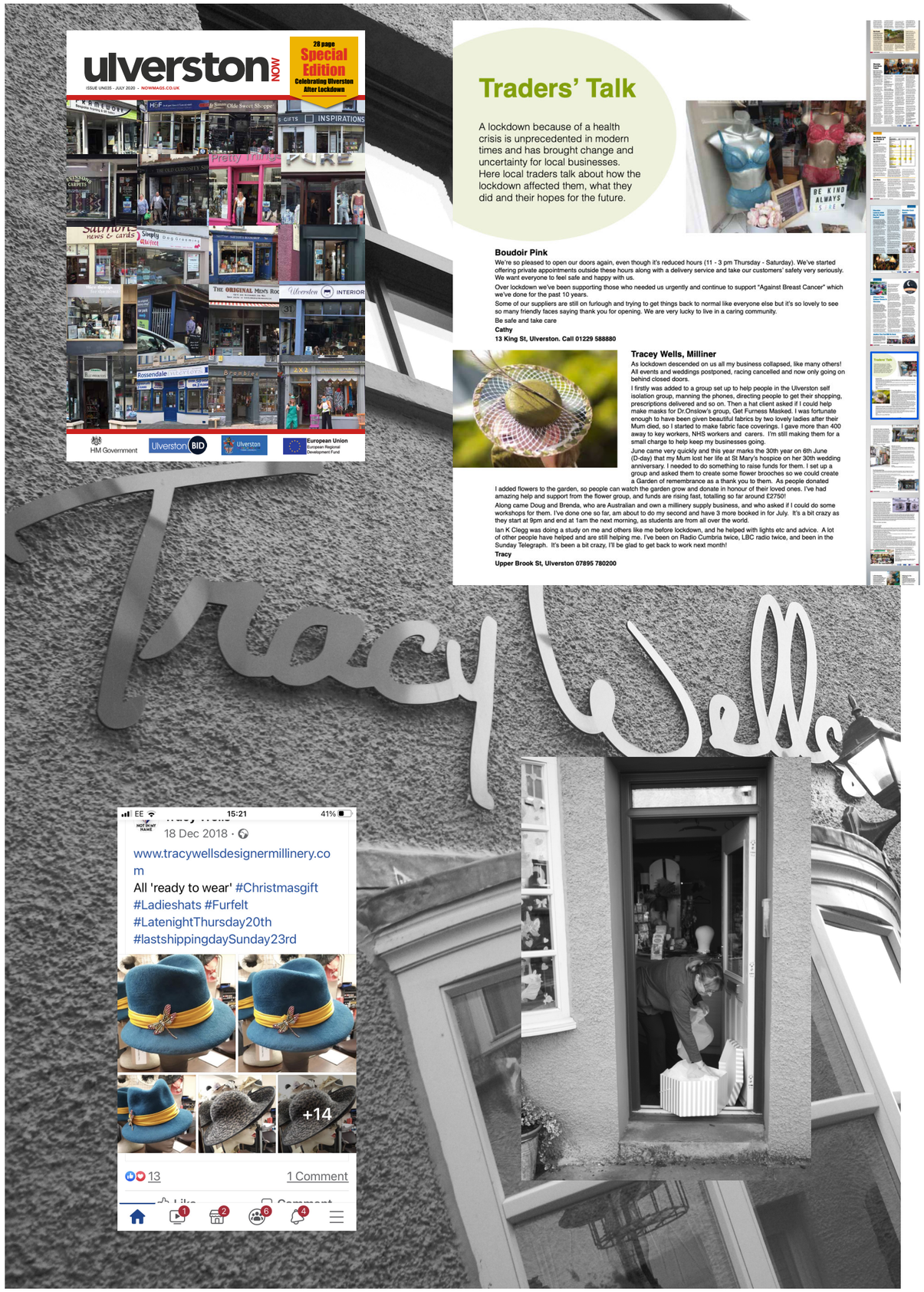
Also, I have realised that my approach as a more inquisitive person has benefited in producing the final imagery. Having little to no knowledge of the business initially, I now see as an advantage because I must listen and learn from the artisan.

Consequently, I don't need to know the minute details of making a hat or a mask, but I need to know and keep myself aware of new parts of the business that can give a fantastic narrative to the photography.

Small things to the artisan can be critical points for the prospective customer. For example, the thistle brooches are unique, and they are the only ones in the world that does not come along every day. Larger businesses would dearly wish to have such a claim for their products. Yet, as it seems the case, the artisan does not communicate these small yet critical details that only appear through a collaborative approach to briefing and creating photography.

Research is judged successful by various parameters, one of which is, is it new knowledge? Literature that examines the interaction between a photographer and an artisan is almost non-existent. Therefore, I can conclude this examination is 'new' but is it relevant?

When I scrutinise the interaction outcomes and see if the interplay between the two parties has been effective, my previous reflection on the methodology's results says, yes. A major factor is that this research has occurred during a Pandemic; this is unique knowledge. Still, only rigorous dissemination of the findings from the Design Analysis Documents into my vehicle can make it worthy as well as exclusive.



The future & practice

I have incorporated elements of method directly into my practice. Collaboration is key, and gaining knowledge about the artisan's business at an early stage is critical. Creating a brief together, rather than on my own or worse still not at all, has improved the success rates of photography. I have employed the following elements ~

- Knowledge gaining sessions
- Briefs that combine intentions
- Revisiting the business to harvest USPs
- Utilisation of Design Analysis Documents to assess progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the work
- A realisation that a photographer must offer more than just image making, the effect context and application of imagery must be conveyed to the client, they must be made aware of the effects of good photography and poor or non-existent photography on their business, the digital platforms must be regularly fed with narrative based photography.

Tracy has had a difficult time managing her business through the Pandemic. But she reacted immediately by diversifying her products
Tracy does understand the importance of good photography and tries to get images taken at regular intervals.
With the diversification came some dilution of the brand which will need to be addressed at a future stage.

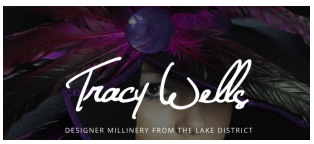
"I can't understand why some of the other shops have just shut down during COVID"

One can only hope that when the business is through the other side of these turbulent times, then she can return to the core product - her hats. Where she is more comfortable, from that comfort, she will take a step back and make some bespoke designs and commission some professional photography.
I believe she now has the tools to brief in what she wants rather than leave it solely to the photographer.

I think she is sick of me saying the word collaboration.

1) One of Tracy's unusual Toppers, Nikon 850 Studio, Profoto B10 and A1 fill, 105mm, f9, 1/125

1828
University of
Central Lancashire
UCLan


Tracy Wells
DESIGNER MILLINERY FROM THE LAKE DISTRICT

Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Chapters:

Introduction
Selection, Decision Tree 1
Paperwork-Ethics & consent 2
Photo Elicitation 3
Photo deconstruction, Semi structured interviews 4
Building a briefing document 5
Co-creation of bespoke imagery 6
Digital platforms 7
Further images created 8
Findings 9
Reflection 10

Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Introduction

The immersive fieldwork and primary research are recorded comprehensively in this 'Design Analysis document' individually for each artisan evidencing timeline, process, photos, reflections and transcriptions of interviews. There is a range of interactions documented, including phone calls, meetings, emails, and sessions. Bringing them together all in one place will allow comparative findings and new methods to be singled out, abstracted and placed into 'the vehicle'. These documents are a core and unique output and cumulate the research and findings for each participant. This document, along with the other two Design Analysis documents, will feed the creation of 'the vehicle' in the form of a 'Creative Guide for artisans and Photographers'.

This document follows chronologically from when the field research began in October 2019, with initial enquiries, and has carried through to December 2020, plus cross-references to 2021. The chapter headings follow the methods laid out in the thesis. The reflection takes place in discussion and action in practice, then assessment of success. Through this methodology, we will see if a photographic practice can empower the artisans' businesses.

All images and illustrations in this document ~ created by Ian Clegg unless otherwise stated

Conversation

February 2020

Ian - Hello.
Could I have a decaf. Black coffee and ask you a couple of questions?
Ella - Yes I'm sure that will be fine
Ian - I am researching artisan businesses and am supported by UCLan in Preston, would you be interested in helping me by becoming one of my three participants? It would involve me asking about photography and how you commission it and whether you think it is part of your business strategy. If we produce some photography together you are welcome to use it for the business
Ella - The other businesses, are they in the same line as me?
Ian - Good point, no they aren't they are quite diverse, a carpenter and a milliner.
Ella - O.K. That would be alright, I do most of the photographs myself though.
Ian - Great, that is an interesting approach I will be able to use that, I'll bring round the forms to proceed.

1) Ripe's menu board, changed on a daily basis

Key to sub headings :

Ongoing notes and reflection on the outcomes of the methods — Notes and reflection

Communications between researcher and participant — Phone conversation; Email communication

Findings to be reflected upon and transferred into the 'vehicle' — Transition to the 'Vehicle'

Overview

Ripe is a specialist food and bakery shop based in Ulverston.
The majority of the food is made on-site, using seasonal and natural ingredients, pure and 'ripe'. They use real grains and whole flours, raw nuts, unrefined sugars and fats. Eggs from local hens that are free to roam. Fresh fruit, herbs, vegetables and edible flowers that are home-grown or as local as possible. All from organic and sustainable sources. Their products are cakes, salads, bites, bread and more, produced with these principles in mind.
Ripe serve a selection of hot and cold drinks and have a small seating area.

Ripe is owned and run by Ella Cheeseman.

https://www.ripeeat.co.uk/

1 Bolton's Place, Ulverston LA12 7FE

Email: info@ripeeat.co.uk

1) Ella makes a coffee
2) The high street outlet

Chap 1)

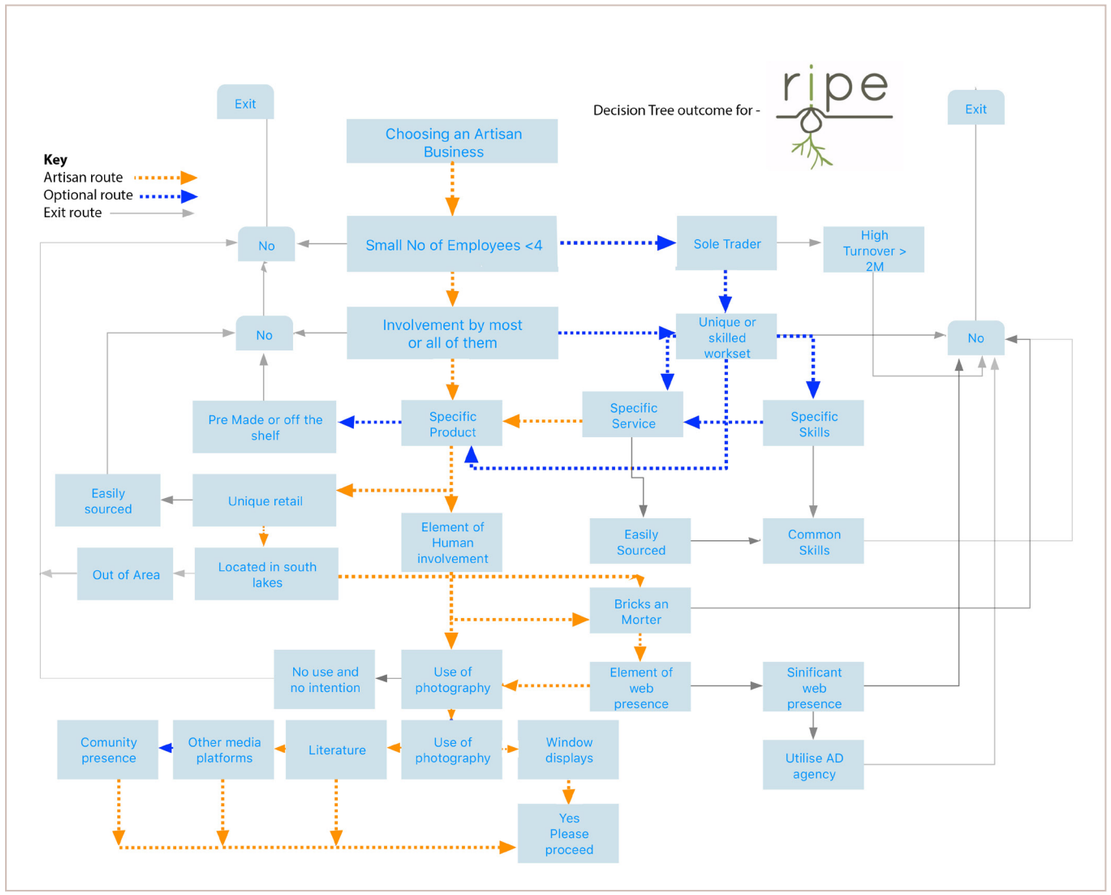
Selection

Using the specifically designed decision tree

Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Decision Tree

Objective selection method



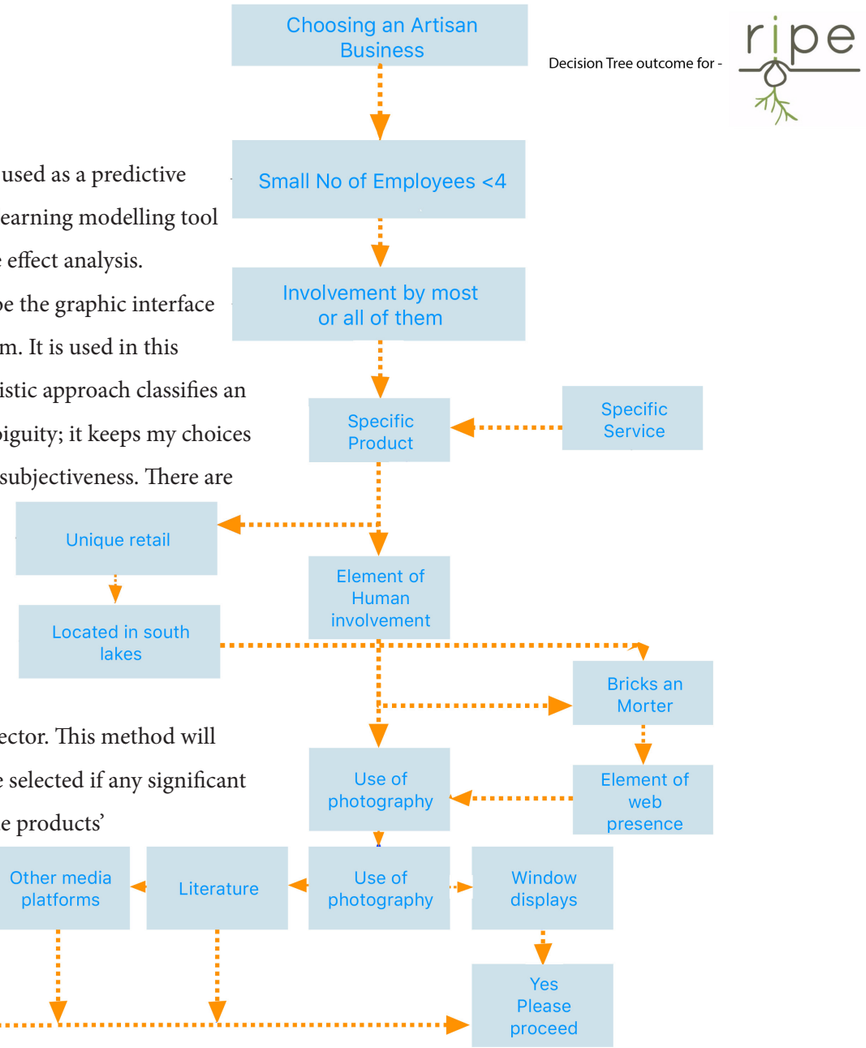
Overview of Specific Decision tree

This diagram shows the extent and different pathways that could have been taken.

To test a business the questioning begins at the top and cascades down through positive (orange) arrows, blue arrows to show a maybe alternative and grey are a no route to an exit of the tree. If the orange arrows lead to the base and final 'yes proceed' box then the business is artisan.

Ripe is showing a positive outcome for an artisan business, the orange arrows show positive pathway through all the layers of the tree.

Ripe ~ Outcome is 'Yes proceed'.



Decision trees are usually used as a predictive managerial and machine learning modelling tool and are a form of multiple effect analysis.
The tree could be said to be the graphic interface built on top of an algorithm. It is used in this research because the heuristic approach classifies an outcome and reduces ambiguity; it keeps my choices in perspective and avoids subjectiveness. There are no complex formulae, and the decision is clear to see and can be reflected upon by the viewer without expert knowledge of the sector. This method will not allow a company to be selected if any significant parameters such as 'unique products' are not satisfied.

Ripe is a small company with Ella at the helm, they produce seasonally based food with as much as possible locally sourced. The food is all made from scratch and is vegetarian and is gluten-free and vegan where appropriate. Ella doesn't have a unique skill set, but what she produces is a unique service that provides locally sourced seasonally related food that is accessible to the people visiting the high street. The products themselves are specific and unique and the amount of human involvement is immense as the food is prepared from scratch. Some of which take hours of involvement to produce. Her company has a physical presence on the high street by way of a cafe and a shop. Ella does not have a substantial website but she is very active on Instagram.
This simple decision making method has allowed me to proceed with this potential participant as an Artisan based business.

Chap 2)

Sign up and paperwork

Ethics and consent forms

Sign up Ethics&, Methods

Qualitative methodologies have been employed, and adjustments made due to COVID19 pandemic - shown in italics

Outline topics and open questions for semi-structured group discussion/workshops/Focus groups – participants of up to four (adjusted to a maximum of 2)

1) Initial interviews – Semi-structured – Topics

Background of how the business began
What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique selling points)
Where the business wants to go in the future
How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies
Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–

Overview of the session,
An Introduction of how to portray your business,
My aim is to discuss photography's perceived views in promoting the narrative, which is not always obvious and can be hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

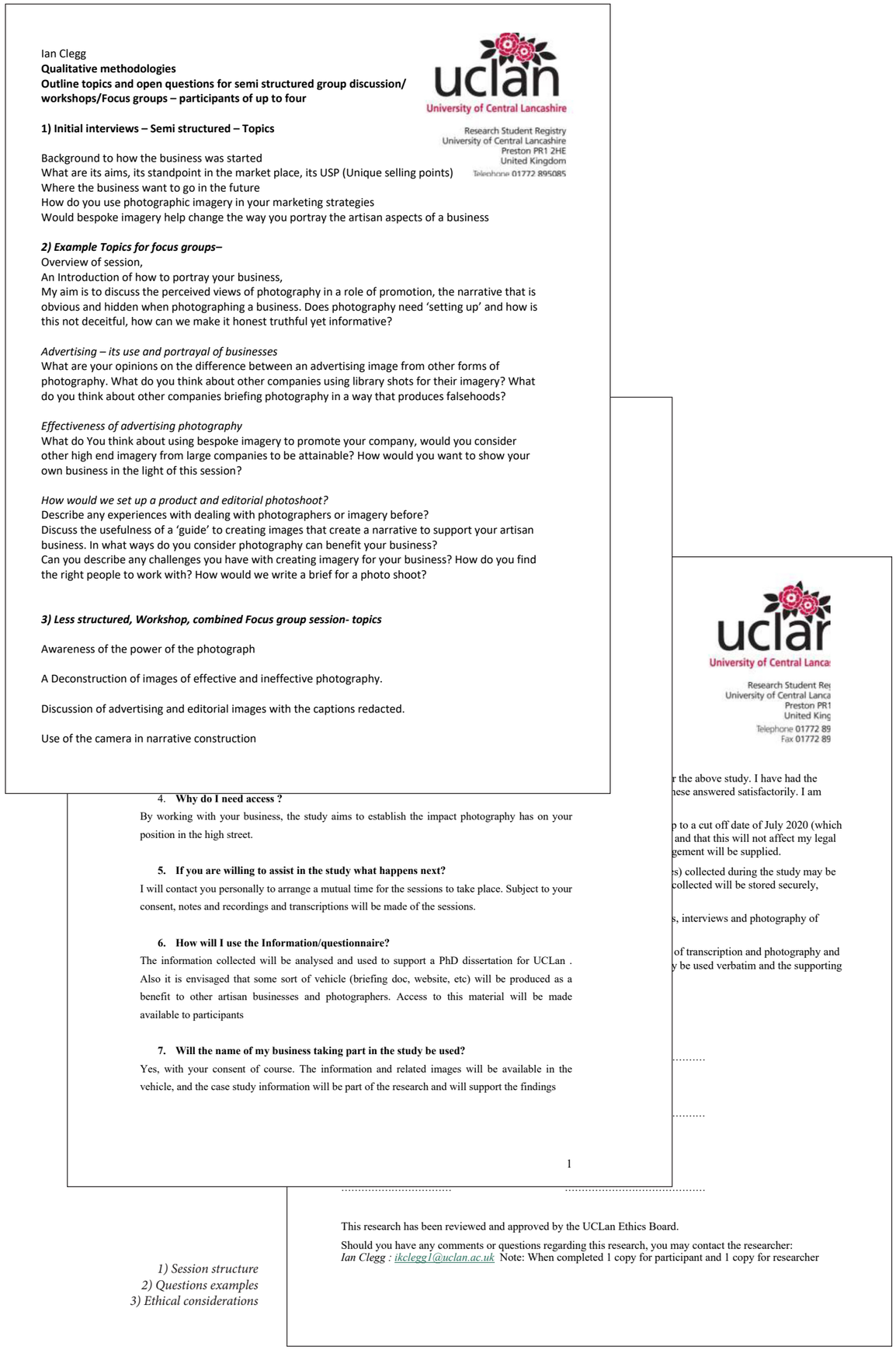
What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

Effectiveness of advertising photography
What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?
How would we set up a product and editorial photoshoot?
Describe any experiences with dealing with photographers or imagery before?
Discuss the usefulness of a 'guide' to creating images that create a narrative to support your artisan business. In what ways do you consider photography can benefit your business?
Can you describe any challenges you have with creating imagery for your business? How do you find the right people to work with? How would we write a brief for a photoshoot?

3) Less structured, Workshop, combined Focus group session- topics (absorbed into the other workshops and sessions)

4) The Ethical considerations were taken into account - presented to, and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board. Full documents in the appendixes.

Changes to initial plans of having the artisan present at the studio photo shoots and utilising models on set have been stopped. Focus onto still-life and outdoor shoots when involving people. Most of the communication has been taken online, email, phone calls and my cloud site to appraise images and progression of photographic shoots. As the artisans have very low staffing levels, safe distancing and good practice has been possible.
I do not believe the ethical stance laid out in the original documentation has changed with the pandemic. The digital platforms have become more significant, to the detriment of the actual high street, as we see retail shops closing during lock-down and a high percentage not reopening. The change in emphasis has created the absolute necessity for the artisans to have a significant digital footprint. The digital domain by its nature satisfies most of the pandemic safety guidelines.



Ian Clegg
Qualitative methodologies
Outline topics and open questions for semi structured group discussion/ workshops/Focus groups – participants of up to four

uclan
University of Central Lancashire

Research Student Registry
University of Central Lancashire
Preston PR1 2HE
United Kingdom
Telephone 01772 895085

1) Initial interviews – Semi structured – Topics

Background to how the business was started
What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique selling points)
Where the business want to go in the future
How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies
Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–
Overview of session,
An Introduction of how to portray your business,
My aim is to discuss the perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

Advertising – its use and portrayal of businesses
What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography. What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

Effectiveness of advertising photography
What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high end imagery from large companies to be attainable? How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?

How would we set up a product and editorial photoshoot?
Describe any experiences with dealing with photographers or imagery before?
Discuss the usefulness of a 'guide' to creating images that create a narrative to support your artisan business. In what ways do you consider photography can benefit your business?
Can you describe any challenges you have with creating imagery for your business? How do you find the right people to work with? How would we write a brief for a photo shoot?

3) Less structured, Workshop, combined Focus group session- topics

Awareness of the power of the photograph

A Deconstruction of images of effective and ineffective photography.

Discussion of advertising and editorial images with the captions redacted.

Use of the camera in narrative construction

4. **Why do I need access ?**

By working with your business, the study aims to establish the impact photography has on your position in the high street.

5. **If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?**

I will contact you personally to arrange a mutual time for the sessions to take place. Subject to your consent, notes and recordings and transcriptions will be made of the sessions.

6. **How will I use the Information/questionnaire?**

The information collected will be analysed and used to support a PhD dissertation for UCLan . Also it is envisaged that some sort of vehicle (briefing doc, website, etc) will be produced as a benefit to other artisan businesses and photographers. Access to this material will be made available to participants

7. **Will the name of my business taking part in the study be used?**

Yes, with your consent of course. The information and related images will be available in the vehicle, and the case study information will be part of the research and will support the findings

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uclan
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Research Student Re
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Preston PR1
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Fax 01772 89

r the above study. I have had the
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and that this will not affect my legal
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y be used verbatim and the supporting

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This research has been reviewed and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researcher:
Ian Clegg : ikclegg1@uclan.ac.uk Note: When completed 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

1) Session structure
2) Questions examples
3) Ethical considerations

Chap 3)

Photo Elicitation

Response from the – Three images that could describe your business

Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Photoelicitation

Photographs made by the participants with their own accessible cameras or they were supplied with an instant Fuji camera.

Ella was asked to use the Fuji camera; she seemed concerned about this and asked if she could do a trial shoot in the shop. She set up a cake and was about to take a shot; I said that the minimum focus distance was .3m (she was closer than that to the subject) and it wouldn't be in focus. This is interesting as she sees the business from a close-up point of view, I sensed she wished to use her own camera. After lots of questions about lighting and use of flash and super close focus, I asked if she was unhappy to use an instant camera and if so she could use hers instead; there was noticeable relief.

Her task was to represent the business in three images only.

I asked Ella to complete the task in a couple of days, and then we discussed the images via semi-structured interviews where we questioned the choices. In a model of collaborative research, we analysed if the photographs portrayed meanings and whether they placed objects as props into the frame or omitted them to make the image more pertinent.

These reference points are an opportunity to represent their reality to myself and vice versa (Nelson, 2013, p68).

Point to note for me – I was already imposing my thoughts on the participant on how to use photography? If they want macro focus shots to portray their business, why should I stop that by insisting they use a camera incapable of creating macro photography.

"Ella wants to preserve an element of secrecy in her food".

Ella seemed keen to talk about the technicalities of photography. We could work together later in the research to progress her interest in this area.

‘First image’

Banoffee cake

Notes and reflection

This image was photographed in the shop, using one of the display plates from the counter; Ella commented that the customers (the new ones, I suspect) need to taste this cake and only afterwards be told what it is actually made out of. This suggests that a lot of customers are wary of what they perceive as, ‘out of the ordinary’ ingredients. The faux cheesecake, for example, is on display on the front counter, yet many customers go for a more conservative item when they make a final order; this is where the chocolate cake is available as a ‘safer option’.

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- The customers, moreover the new customers have not tasted some of the things she makes and will default to standard foods. More free samples on the counter?

- This elicitation has allowed Ella to shoot an imaginary advert for her company showing a chocolate cake is part of her core business.

- Human nature can be risk averse.

“I think most people would quite happily dive into a piece of this”

Chocolate banoffee cake, Canon EOS, Ella Cheeseman

“The food is so unusual that it needs to be tasted before an opinion is made, so some traditional looking items are in disguise as ‘normal’ cakes and other foods.
I’d go for image this image to represent taste/health. Tasty food is of course pretty essential but the healthy/whole foods/non processed aspect is at the forefront of what I am trying to do, in a subtle way. Hence why I picked chocolate cake (based on cacao powder) as I think most people would quite happily dive into a piece of this, non the wiser than it’s made from what they may deem weird/more unusual. And I suppose I also chose it as it’s the best selling cake, people just recognise what it is.”

‘Second image’

Cookie dough

Notes and reflection

Ella said customers don’t know that she makes branded goods, chocolate, energy bites, and others. Ella wanted an ‘outsdoorsy’ look. A few customers (on Instagram) have said the packaging looks too professional.

Although Ella was to present just 3 images, she actually couldn’t manage that. She shot 50 or 60 photos then edited them down to 10 and asked me to reduce them to 3. This missed the point of spontaneity. However, it shows her mindset; she wants to get the images right and is used to the digital work flow of taking lots of images and editing them down in post-production. As a professional photographer, I find it best to get 3 good well thought out shots rather than 50 average ones of which none actually meet the requirements.

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

- Just because an artisan has spent their own time sourcing great ingredients the customer has no clue all this work has gone into the products unless you tell them. Repeatedly!
- Items with very specific research and input must be celebrated in the marketing - Ella’s recycled packaging is a case in point

“The environmental aspect is integral to, how I operate.”

Cookie dough bites, Canon EOS, Ella Cheeseman

“I’ve taken this second photo to represent ‘environment’ the environmental impact of the business (shot in the Lake District on the top of a hill looking at a famous ridge line) is integral to how I operate. The product featured is made by hand and then packaged in a recycled and recyclable box with a compost-able label, something which took me along time to source but something that is important for me to use”.

‘Third image’

Home grown beetroot

Notes and reflection

Beetroot is grown in Ella’s market garden; the nicely patinated table and trowel are also from the garden. She also grows herbs and flowers (edible ones), but is aware that she can’t produce enough food to supply the shop adequately. She shares the images on Instagram to make the customers aware of what food is available through the seasons. Most of Ella’s outsourced food is from the U.K. Items such as Lemons, Pomegranates etc., are the obvious exceptions.

Transition to the ‘Vehicle’

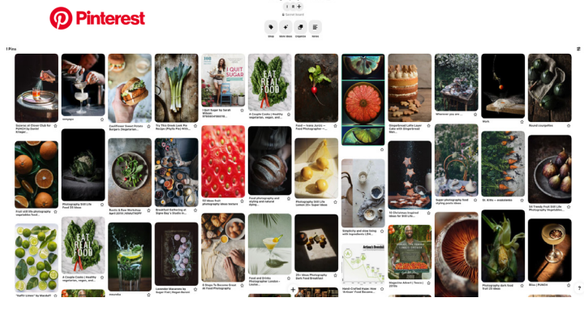
- If you grow your own vegetables or source your own materials - tell the customers.
- Don’t underestimate the power of knowledge and skills, that is what makes the artisan product stand out. A beautiful image can be created in your own back garden or workshop.
- Keep referring to the work that goes into making your product, customers will pay more for it as they it as an investment in time.

“The seasonal aspect is important to the business”

Beetroots from the garden, Canon EOS, Ella Cheese-

“The seasonal aspect is important to the business Please (Ian) have a look at the other images and some ‘drafts’ as requested in my email. I think I’d select the photo with the trowel to use, but I don’t really mind.

I chose this image in the series to represent where ‘real’ food comes from and how it is grown, as this is an essential part of my business”.



Chap 3)

Photo Deconstruction

A visual document was created from the jointly gathered images

Case Study report – Location -; Shop - Ulverston

Reason for meeting - Photo review

Photographic deconstruction

Notes and reflection

Images are taken from a collaborative online 'Pinterest' board created and shared by Ella and me. We had been compiling and uploading photos as - likes and dislikes for over two weeks.

We looked at some editorial articles about Ripe that appeared in the Lake District periodicals.

Ella thinks most of them look horrible. "The photographer made me sit on my counter, he didn't ask for my input or get involved in the process."

Fig. 1

A photographer, can see that it is a studio shot but not everyone. Ella is very perceptive of images like this, saying it has been constructed. I would agree, the olives are placed around the base, and the bottle is not held by hand but clamped out of shot. This is encouraging for the plans of the research in showing truthful imagery of her genuine artisan skills.

Ian - If they had communicated, then you would have had a better result?

Ella - I have only had one shot of the shop when it first opened; the periodical asked for two bars of chocolate, then produced a very low-key article on the product.

Pictures do sell, but they haven't used them correctly. I do like having them, but none of the journalists even visited the shop, and yes, they didn't communicate, at least the photographer came. They have all got the information wrong in the articles. The Evening Mail got it completely wrong, talking about expansion rather than just increasing opening hours.

Ian - Should we do a press release together?

Ella - Yes – a quality magazine, not the newspaper, as my offer has changed, and we have something to say.

(Action - Ian)

Bring in the Lakes magazine we could do an article with

(Although this all went south when COVID hit)

Fig. 2

This image I took during a project to portray an 'in gallery' restaurant which employed a very committed chef. He insisted on specific ingredients to compliment the food and was particular in the presentation, every vegetable on the plate was placed with purpose.

Ella liked this shot and we had a conversation about the weary-looking fingers of the chef. However, what was more interesting was that she believes that angles and a vignette are a manipulation. This brings up all sorts of questions of truth and art regarding advertising images. Watch this space.

Ian - (describes image to E) Is it telling the right story?

Ella - I haven't got the time to take photographs like this, getting props and setting up (this is her acknowledgement of it being shot in a studio).

Ian - What do think this image is projecting?

Ella - Looks staged and they are trying to be too prescriptive.

Fig. 1, Claire Winkle, https://blog.intact-systems.com/fighting-food-fraud-vaccp/

Ella - I like this better it looks more of a natural setting – I quite like black and white.

Ian - Why?

Ella - I don't know, but I notice the Chef is a he, and quite clean?

Ian - Do his nails look clean?

Ella- Ummm maybe not, I get Turmeric in mine it makes them yellow, looks genuine though, it's OK to crop it in shows action, it's about working with your hands and being involved.

Ian - Has it been manipulated? *(it hasn't)*

Ella - Yes with the angle and the vignettes.

Fig. 2, Ian Clegg,The Whitaker Museum restaurant

Notes and reflection

Ella - When I was first taking pictures, I used my garage at home as a studio. I would take them outside as well.

Ian - Yes, the sky is a great lightbox. Do you see things in photographs and ask yourself – Why do they shoot it like that, because that clearly isn't how they make it?

Ella - It's more that we see things as more of a work of art as the pictures are beautiful rather than actually what is happening.

Ian– Do you see a difference between advertising photography and other photography?

Ella - I don't know if I come into contact with advertising Photography (well obviously I do). Still, I am so used to advertising imagery, so you don't take much notice of it. When I see things on Instagram they are more individual than on a poster. But I don't see any difference between the two.

Ian - The irony is that with Facebook and Instagram one doesn't always know whether the images are produced by an individual or a large corporate - So you don't see your own pictures as advertising?

Ella - I guess they are, but how people advertise is different.

Ian – Do you think your own are more honest?

Ella - Yes, sometimes they are too honest. Instagram is an album of nice images, sometimes I have to put images on that I don't like- I would say most people use filters, but now I don't.

Ian - What do you think of stock images?

Ella - I don't think I see a lot of that, especially on Instagram.

Ian - I would think you might notice them more, being in the business

Ella - I don't, Well maybe I should.

Ian - If I was to give you 6 months of free access to a stock library, would you use it?

Ella - The only time I have used them before was for my newsletter that I just needed to get out, for speed and convenience, I would prefer not to.

Ian - Would you use a plain shot on white or one with a farmer's hand holding the vegetables

Ella - Well I would not use the farmer's hand.

Ian - So you would use a neutral descriptive image.

Ella - Yes.

Fig. 3

Ella has a connection to the image via a friend who lives on the next street. The nostalgia intimated may be missed by her as she is so close to the image. But she seems to understand the honesty of her business is her strength, especially competing against the big concerns in the town, such as Costa and Greggs.

Fig. 4

This image highlighted that Ella is certainly a perfectionist. This, however, is stopping her delegate to a photographer, resulting in key aspects of her business not being represented by images.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Artisans have a good eye for their own business and the skills of an artist, these skills can easily be used in critiquing and briefing photography if the artisan is willing to make that small step.
- Not making this step may indicate other issues with marketing or commissioning creative.

Ella - Yes, I know where it is; it's trying to tell me that it has been around for a long time and is made near this little street. It is nostalgic. It is shot in Dorset. I know someone who lives in the street nearby,

Ian - Is it completely untrue?

Ella -Yes!

Ian - In your business, you can compete with this huge budget campaign by simply photographing how you actually make it.

Ella - Yes, I see what you mean.

Ian - You can be more honest.

Ella -Yes, and shaped by hand, people do come in and are surprised when they ask if I make everything, and I say yes. I gather the vegetables seasonally, and the cakes are not just frozen like some of the other food outlets.

Fig. 3 Hovis, Boy on the Bike,Collett Dickenson Pearce
Jack Bankhead Ridley Scott

Ella - Maybe in a studio, all the tomatoes are supplied in nice baskets; he actually picks them himself?

Ella - It's not a standard kitchen fresh quality, made in a kitchen, the text qualifies the image, I know how I want to do it, but I haven't got enough time (why aren't I doing it Ian ?) it's good to discuss why.

Ian - How would you get across to a professional photographer to do what you want?

Ella - I would prefer to do it myself or maybe heavily direct it, I am too involved and possibly a perfectionist, I look around the shop and don't like a lot of the fittings and the door, for example.
Maybe you could talk to my staff and listen to their opinion on the images and the ideas. Maybe I'm too close.

Ella -There are too many colours and not pretty things to shoot in the shop. Black and white may work better.

Fig. 4 Ashley The 'Tender' Tomato Grower | Tesco Food Love Stories
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4uFWFrY4nc

Questions posed to the artisan

The perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the obvious and hidden narrative when photographing a business.

Paraphrased answers ~

1) Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest, truthful yet informative?

Yes it can be deceitful, especially with Photoshop, then you don't know if it is real or not.
Ella does not like to alter images – or shoot with the 'effects' in-camera, maybe crop them –
The lighting ~" I would like always to use natural light"

And doesn't use filters

2) What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography.

I see advertising more as a work of art than an accurate image.

3) What do you think about other companies using library shots* for their imagery?

I don't normally notice stock imagery, but I suppose out of convenience a neutral image would be OK to use, say something fairly innocuous such as herb leaves or flour.

4) What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

The public is taken in by imagery in supermarkets, such as fresh food shots but
then find the item is only available as frozen.

5) What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?

I don't think I have the time. Too busy running the business and making the food.
"You are going to tell me to make the time aren't you Ian?"

6) How would you want to show your own business in light of this session?

The photographer needs to understand my business, the editorial ones who have taken images for the magazines just get things wrong and don't understand what I am trying to do here

**Images can be purchased from a bank of pre-shot photographs from Getty or Alamy or other library, some of these images get reused over and over again and can become banal and familiar to your competitors and even customers.*

Notes and reflection

Reflection on the questionnaire answers -
Ella is keen to produce her own photography for the business. She only uses natural light, a reason sometimes given by photographers who don't feel comfortable using flash or think it can't emulate natural light.
She does see the advertising world as closer to being art, yet criticises them for manipulating the image, These two points will be explored during the research.

1) Ella has concerns about the use of Photoshop's yet does not acknowledge that photography has always been manipulated - and photography can be used 'without' deceitful manipulation rather than 'with' deceitful manipulation.

2) She does criticise advertising for manipulating the image. Yet she holds advertising images with such great regard even classifying some Ads as works of art.

3) Ella has clear knowledge of the use of imagery and thinks that library shots have their place, as long as they are not portraying an untruth. But she comments that herbs and flour are innocuous. The fact that she uses organic and seasonal individually sourced base foodstuffs like this is surely proof that they are far from innocuous.

4) There is an acknowledgement that other large outlets falsify imagery, and it is an excellent point that is missed by most. Portraying frozen food as fresh being an acceptable face of this is a great example.

5) How often does one hear that a small business or sole trader doesn't have the time to address important issues? Ella clearly understands this. She must make time for making good imagery, and she wouldn't leave her shop window empty and unchanged. But she is doing just that, by not producing frequent and relevant imagery for her social media platforms (virtual shop window).

6) Ella has had some poor experiences when working with photographers, the experiences seem to (ironically the people who should know better about narratives) be with editorial photographers. They come and shoot then don't show her the images or let her proofread the text. As a result, she showed me two articles where the narrative was incorrect, and she wasn't happy with the images. The research will take this into account. Ella just wants the photographer to understand her business.

"You are going to tell me to make the time aren't you Ian?"

Chap 5)

Building a Briefing document

Discussions of current competitive strategies, co-creation of a briefing document.

Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

‘The co-created brief’

The briefing document is an instrumental part of the creative process and enhances the approach to image creation.
It is a method taken from advertising agency procedures where there are many people involved: the brief is a go-to document and a reference point for the client and agency for the whole creative journey.

Its use here is specifically aimed at the image production section of the journey, not the overall advertising campaign.

If created collaboratively, it allows the client and the photographer to engage and discuss image-making outcomes. Then during production it becomes a reminder of the original aims and objectives - ‘the intents of both artisan and photographer.’

General comment about the aim of the imagery can be as simple as ‘to gain customers’ but should be more specific such as, ‘gain customers in the healthy food sector’, or new awareness of a skill

A reasonable question that avoids confusion, and out of the blue comments in the field -
“Oh, I thought while we were shooting, we could also do a video clip?”

Depending on how the meeting is going this should be straight forward, But when should it be ready? Where is this going? are major factors.

It is always a question that arises in advertising; if you don’t know who you are talking to, how can you say it? This is a more difficult assessment. Many artisans don’t know who their audiences are. The key messages may only come about from a discussion like this or develop as a project progresses.

Is the intent to make the customer ‘feel’ something or react to something? If this is not known at the outset, it cannot be added or rectified later.

Sometimes there is an obvious answer, but this strangely can come from the listener, the photographer, so does anyone else do this? Has it been done before? Is there another one?

The photographer must have an idea of the ‘intent of the artisan’, does that marry with both of their intents? If it doesn’t or is unclear, repeat the above questions until there is a mutual agreement.

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief

What narratives are there

Is the imagery being supported by text

Which platforms is it being rolled out on

Effectiveness of the images can be measured to some extent by -
Sales? Clicks? Feedback?
Which now on digital platforms are readily available through Analytics but it is helpful to know at the beginning where we are looking for this success.

The facing page shows examples of 3rd party and professional photographers' imagery used and produced by Ripe over the 24 months previous to this research.
It is always easy to criticise imagery taken by other parties. I endeavour to be critically constructive. The only professional engagement with photographers that Ella has had is through the editorial press. These include 'Cumbria Life' and 'Taste' magazine amongst others. This scenario is where a photographer/journalist creates images and copy for the magazines and is submitted generally on a speculative basis to the editor. They get paid a page rate for the photos and a word count for the text. The variable income from this way of working brings its own issues. The photographer sometimes receives little information about the business beforehand. However, client is not charged for the page space. It is free advertising. The client (artisan) needs to be proactive and make the photographer's job quicker and easier by providing pre-written information about the business that they would like to be featured, a shooting list of what is important to photograph and something interesting about the business that will make the article stand out. If this is all supplied beforehand, then the photographer will have more time to give to the shoot, concentrating on making good images. Unfortunately, neither parties seemed to have communicated to achieve this. The business was very new, so Ella was inexperienced, and the photographer failed to

"They printed things I didn't say and I hate the photographs"

extract what was important to Ella and what was important to the business.
Photojournalists like this need to be efficient as the remuneration is exceedingly low and time-sensitive, but approached correctly articles like this can be achieved in quick time and be worthwhile for every party.

The collaborative parties involved are ~ photographer/journalist, artisan, magazine.

A win-win collaborative process benefits all three parties. The magazine will be happy with a good quality article, the businesses will get better exposure, and the photographer will get more work.

1) A range of articles produced by photo journalists on behalf of Ripe, Magazines - 'Taste' 'Cumbria Life'

The COVID19 effect &

Participants' response & research reaction

"The importance of eating well, has never been more crucial"

The horrendous COVID 19pandemic has temporarily or permanently changed almost everything in the contemporary world.

My initial thoughts were ;

Should I be carrying on with my research amidst these times, is it worthy?

Am I just getting in the way of my artisan participants whilst they are trying to keep their businesses afloat?

On discussions with my peers and supervisors, I was reassured that I should continue with the research provided that the artisans were in agreement.

I will give specific details of the actual responses from each participant.

They all agreed to proceed with the research, but their reactions to the COVID19 pandemic were different, unique and to be frank, extraordinary in each their own way.

As to my response, I made the research more adaptable to the ever-changing circumstances. The rules put forward by the government changed on a weekly basis, shops were closed for long periods and customer access became difficult to say the least. Add to this, as of March 2020, the high street as we know it changed, possibly forever as non-essential shops were ordered to close. (The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020).

My initial approach was to contact each participant and assess via specific meetings what we could do together to carry on with the research, in parallel, and without sounding too pompous, benefit them. And maybe just maybe play a part in the business's survival.

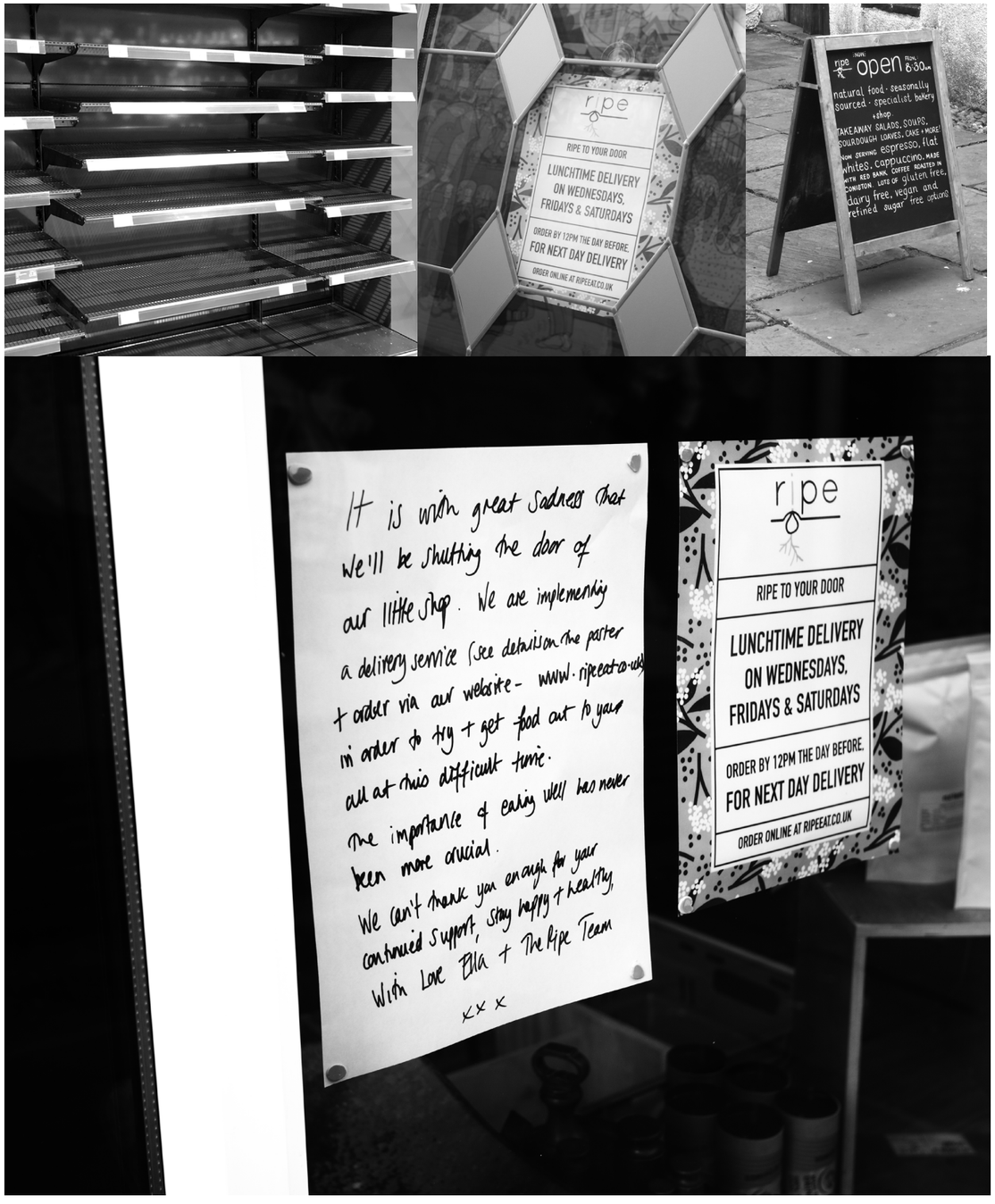
The COVD meeting with Ella was a discussion to see if she could diversify so that that product could be sold online rather than in-store. Still, Ella had her own thoughts already decided upon, which is entirely her prerogative as it's her business, not mine. I had a feeling that the next stages of collaborative image creating would be difficult. It was becoming hard already to organise meetings and intrude on her business, with the added problems of COVID and her living out in the sticks- it just got more complicated.

Ella's plans seemed to be ~

i) No change in the product offering

ii) Accept that deliveries would probably happen, so maybe offer the menu on the website

iii) Ride out the storm and trust it would come good soon



1) Empty shelves and signs from the high street
2) Ella's note on the shop window as the high street retail went into free-fall.

i) Ride out the storm
ii) Home deliveries
iii) Just update the website

Chap 6)

Co- creation of bespoke imagery

Utilisation of the brief and the data gathered in the previous stages

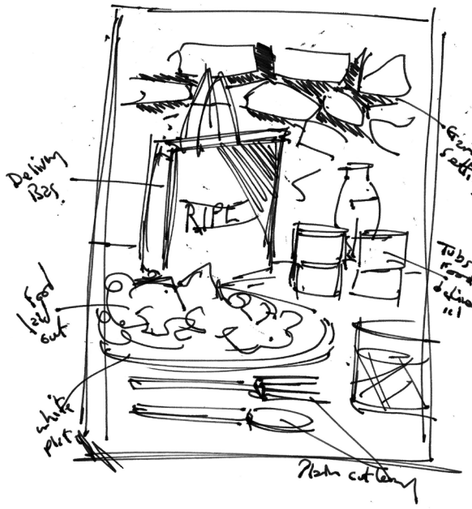
Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

A brief - ‘Home Delivery’

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing a method to show both parties’ intent.

Ella’s reaction to COVID was very low key; she closed the shop and concentrated on her own well-being, not the business’s.
As the long days of lockdown carried on with little hope of an end in sight, Ella began to think that it would be prudent to offer a limited home delivery service.
Ella planned to market it through her following on Instagram plus sending emails to the current subscribers of Ripe’s newsletter (normally used for recipe suggestions). This pool of customers numbers is not high, and I suggested we place some of the images on the Google maps review and locator site. This is a hugely popular service (which is mobile device based). If a search is made for a business or sector such as ‘food takeaways’, then a red pin is dropped onto the map location, simultaneously a pop-up microsite is generated to show reviews and photographs of that business.
If images aren’t uploaded, then Google spiders do not generate a microsite for the business which is an opportunity lost.
Ripe had only one image on the Google maps, a bland reference shot produced by a member of the public on a grey day. No products were shown.

Refer to p.58 for the outcome and assessment of this work



1) Sketch made to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet built

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS
Subject – Home Delivery - To create images that will show the benefits of the new delivery service, the convenience and the retained quality of the foods To have measurable outcomes,

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE
Summarise the extent - three or for of a delivery package, stills - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES
Source – location in household setting, The images should be available before the Instagram and possibly Facebook, but especially on the Google maps review page the budget should be allocated in time of approx. 1 hour

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |
Message to customers that the normally available food from the shop is now offered as Home delivery during Lockdown

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |
Still specially made, fresh, local but that the business is valuing the customers through these difficult times

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION
Healthy seasonal food delivered to your door

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |
– Instagram – analytics should show results immediately with likes and views
_ Google maps and reviews - likes and views will be evidenced through Google analytics.

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Act as one of the customers and order food to the location shoot
What narratives are there
We are still here and producing Seasonal, natural, healthy, tasty, unique foods
Is the imagery being supported by text
Negligible text on Instagram or Google - Reviews may be posted but unlikely
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook Google Maps

“Open wed tue thur and order before 12 the previous day”

The order procedure on the website was tested, it was still in its Beta stage.
The customer had to order in advance for the following day. This may exclude some of the lunchtime customers, who only order on the day for their lunch and are not organised enough to advance order. (a substantial number of the customer base). Also there was no clear impulse purchase route within the site.

For photography the home delivery pack arrived well-presented and well branded with a personalised handwritten message on the box. This was a nice touch and would look great for the photography and enhance the artisan message. During photography the portions were arranged on a white plate to avoid distraction from the food and portray the amount and contents of the package honestly.

Conversation

Ian - Hi Ella, I think I have missed the order window by 10 mins.

Ella - That’s OK. I’ll put it on the list, and you will still get it tomorrow.

Ian - I ordered before, and it didn’t work; I clicked on the photograph of what I wanted, and I thought I’d paid, there wasn’t a confirm button.

Ella - Yes, you have to pay first, then scroll down and double click; I can’t take Paypal, so it’s a bit complicated.

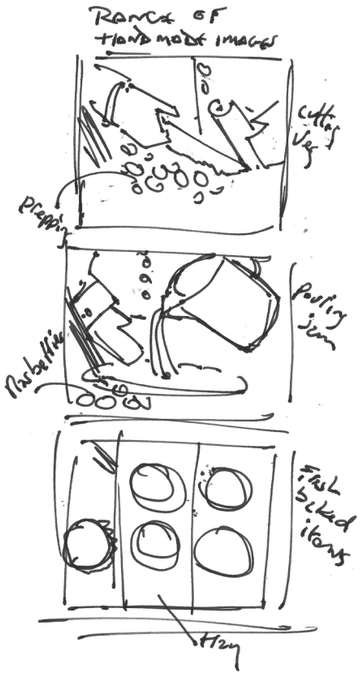
1) The open package with the food laid out
2) The presentation is very neat and give a good impression of healthy food and sustainable packaging

A brief - ‘

A range of images to show the ‘making”

A co-creation of a brief - a document that relies on mutually agreeing to a method to show both parties’ intent.

The whole point of this brief was to show the making of the food. This was a major selling point as all the products apart from the bread are made in house. So, we wanted to produce a range of images that could be used cross-platform to show the human involvement and the high input at the creation stage. We show lots of hands and human elements, emphasising the time and care that goes into the making. It is essential to visualise the many stages, the raw ingredients, the attention to detail, such as hand baking the almonds and creating the jam filling for the cakes from fresh fruits. The photography should show the involvement with the ingredients, get in close as though the viewer was standing next to the cook, utilising tight crops and natural lighting.



1) Sketch made to clarify objectives
2) Briefing sheet built

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – To make images that show the hard work behind the scenes, even the jam for the cakes is made in house, this is not currently portrayed to the customers

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Summarise the extent - a good array of images for constant use over a long period - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – location in the kitchen - hands on - The images should be available before the Instagram and possibly Facebook, the budget should be allocated in time of approx. 1 hour

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Message to customers that virtually everything is made in house - from the baked nuts, through jam and chocolate

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

Very bespoke, if it can be made by us then we will make it, as then we know exactly what ingredients have gone into it

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Made from the ground up, by our skilled staff

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results immediately with likes and views but more as a supporting role to other photography the finished items

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Get into he kitchen and let the cooks perform their tasks, photographer as an observer
What narratives are there
Hand made, hand grown, knowledge of ingredients, natural
Is the imagery being supported by text
Possibly, but the images themselves will be used as a narrative to support other photography of finished items such as cakes, salads
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

The overall intent is the imagery must tell a story of 'making'. The significant difference to the other food outlets in this high street is that almost everything is made from scratch in house and by hand.
Ella consistently says that the customers do not realise that she makes even the jam in the cakes. This needs to be shouted out! And the only way on the digital platforms is to show it with photography.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Tell the customers the work that goes into the product, then tell them again
- Photography of 'the making' will always be more powerful than just text.

Lunchtime soup

Fresh nuts ready for roasting

Hand sieving the fruits

Constant serving of coffee to customers

Preparing the potato pesto salad

Storing the newly made preserves

Separately baking the nuts and apple slices

A brief - Cake of the Day ~ Cheese Cake

One of the best sellers is the 'Cake of the Day', which is used as an order builder for the lunchtime menu, relying on the customer wanting a cake to go with their lunchtime snack. Presentation in is 'king,' an ugly cake will not sell no matter how it tastes, photography will find it difficult to make a poor looking cake look great. It is presented on the front counter on a - 'once it's gone, it's gone' basis, which encourages the lunchtime customers to order early in the day.

The cheesecake is a beautifully prepared item, and the cheesecake is her most recognisable cake, it is topped off with fresh pansy flowers. It is low sugar and has local ingredients. Also, it is on the home delivery menu.

By using the more ubiquitous cakes such as this cheesecake and sometimes the chocolate cake then customers can be gently and gradually introduced to the more unusual items, orange bites, nettle salad, wild garlic pesto, to name but a few.

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Cake of the day - Cheese cake - To create images that will entice the end customer suggesting the origins of the ingredients and the uniqueness of the product, and order build with counter-top settings. Giving it local and sustained provenance.
To have measurable outcomes,

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Summarise the extent 6 images stills - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – outside on location – natural setting, The images should be available before the Instagram and possibly Facebook, the budget should be allocated in time of approx. 1 hour

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Customers made aware of local sourcing of the ingredients

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

Hand sourced hand crafted, specially made, fresh, local

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Healthy seasonal food

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results immediately with likes and views

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Interact with the client to find out the makings
What narratives are there
Seasonal, natural, healthy, tasty, unique
Is the imagery being supported by text
Negligible text on Instagram
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, possibly Facebook

The products are displayed in layered shelving in the shop and this must be reflected in the photography. It gives a feel-good factor as online - the customer can relate to when they went physically into the shop; it may remind them of the freshness, the smells, and the cleanliness of the experience. This must be reflected through the photography and cross relate to the customer (even subconsciously) when they open the home delivery on their kitchen table. Photography is the very first point of contact when ordering on line and sets the scene for the physical home delivery encounter.

To achieve this, the product, the photography, and the presentation must support each other- all adding a little bit to emulating this experience.

Transition to the 'Vehicle'

- Showing the product in its natural setting often works. If it is packaged in a quality box then show it.
- Available light (or emulated by flash) can emphasise the naturalness of the product.
- Use pull focus to obscure any complicated backgrounds.
- Crop into the products, don't show the whole, this adds a little mystery to the item. The customer can be pleasantly surprised in the final reveal. Presentation and other details such as the hand written message are important to record.

1) Layered shelving on the shop front counter.

2) Cheesecake in its delivery box, ambient daylight, Nikon D850, 105mm, 1/250, f8 ISO 400.

Chap 7)

Digital platforms

Imagery utilised in social media and website

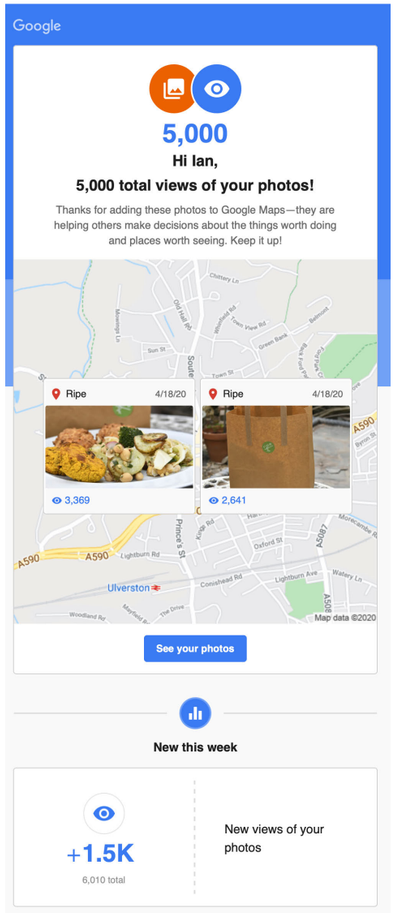
Notes and reflection

Ella is a heavy user of the Instagram platform, not so much on Facebook, she also uses the Ripe website to offer home deliveries

I was involved indirectly in promoting Ripe on Instagram. I created posts on my Instagram site that directly fed back into Ella's business. I used the Google map web-link to demonstrate to Ella, how photographic imagery can tell a narrative and be engaging. The Google map search wasn't populated with images, so I uploaded some of the co-created images from the delivery shoot as a visual reference to the business.

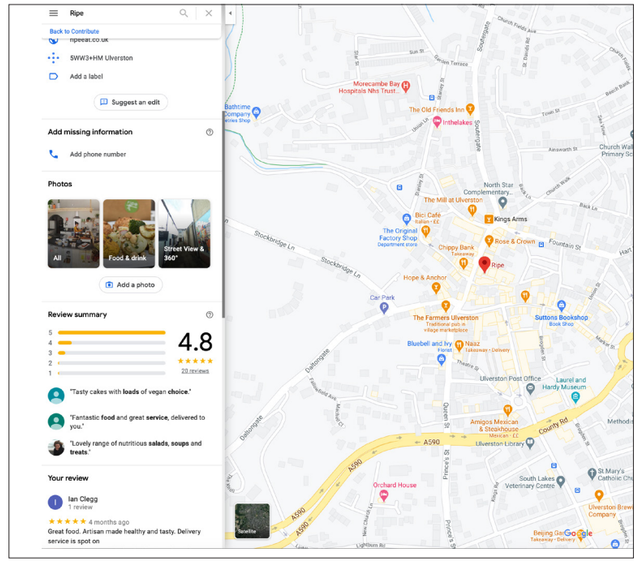
As retail went into full lockdown, Ella made a personal decision not to diversify the company. Her own well-being and mindset were taken as a priority over the business. From a selfish point of view, the research was affected by her decision; I choose to adapt the methods as much as I could to continue to research this participant.
As she lived some distance away, personal visits were out of the question, and contacts were not provided to directly keep in touch. Only - 'info@' as an impersonal email was supplied. So I ordered various online meals from her website, which were delivered to me, and I photographed them working with the knowledge of the business I had gained previous to lockdown. I wanted to show that the digital platforms were still important and needed maintenance even with the business in tick over.

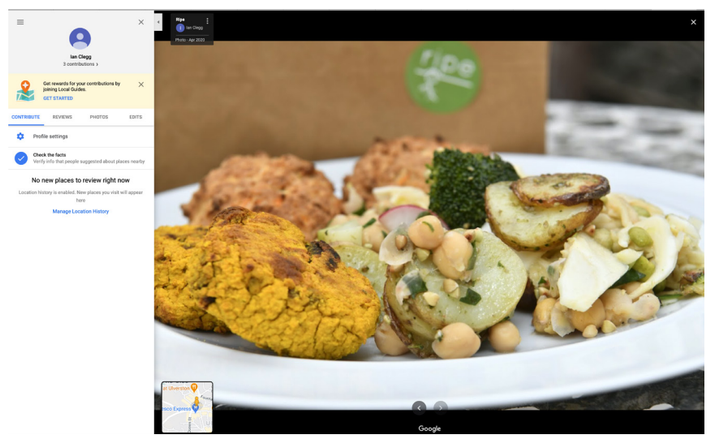
18,288 views in 10 months!



The success of this small marketing exercise was astounding. The hit rate was so high that Google themselves emailed me to congratulate hitting the 5,000 views milestone mark so fast. It shows the power of just 2 well constructed images in achieving a 10 month 18K hit rate from a standing start. I hope that in some way, this helped preserve some customer loyalty through this period which will translate to good footfall when the shop is allowed to reopen.

1) Google email showing 5,000 views
2) Google map search for Ripe
3) 1st Image uploaded
4) Second image uploaded





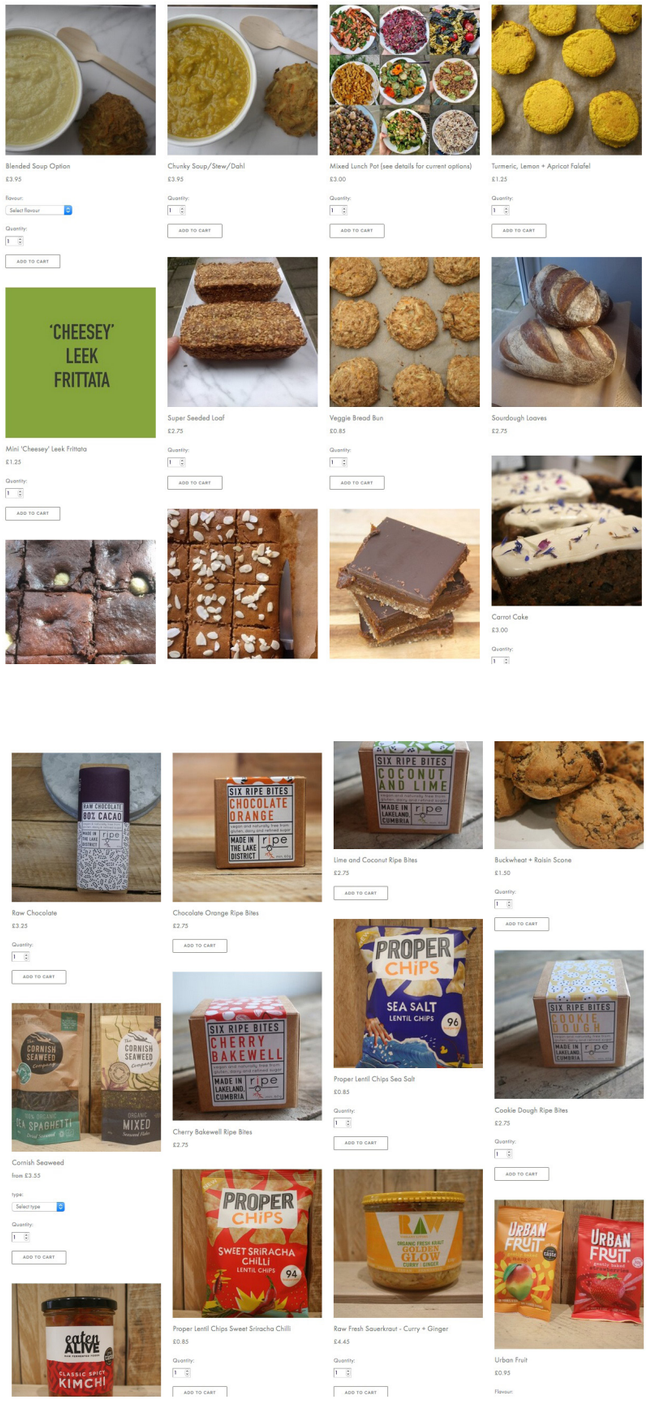
Notes and reflection

Ella reused her existing imagery from around the website to create a new delivery menu. The product range was understandably small as she was now doing all the making herself, as her part-time staff were laid off on furlough. A government scheme introduced during the pandemic to allow staff to be laid off and paid 80% of their wage for the duration of the situation as long as they didn't return to their original job.

The ordering system was very clunky as the site was not built to support a transactional platform. The delivery times were not customer-focused; however, there was a lot of support and encouragement from her incumbent customers but not much new business.

This was a chance to create new photography to populate the delivery area of the site, but alas, Ella produced quick tabletop shots of the online food. The images did not reflect the high-value prices that the product demands and looked somewhat hurried. It was maybe an opportunity lost, but I must acknowledge that it is Ella's business, and she decided to keep the low company profile till allowed to reopen.

A basic menu & ordering presence was created on the website

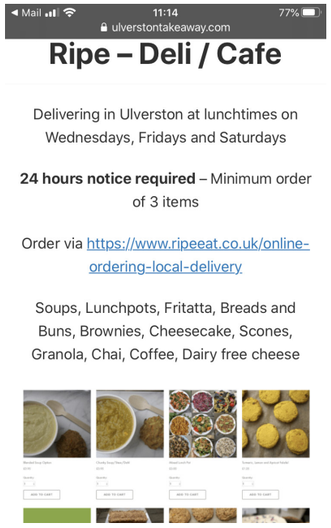


1) The ordering page from the website, expensive but not inspirational

Ella used images her own to populate the Instagram platform. The images were varied in success and quality; on the opposite page are samples of the posted photography.
The great thing about Instagram is that it is image-led - yet this is also its weakness; the image must have immediate impact and narrative as the time span of effect is 'Instant' - correspondingly, viewers do not post or read more than a few words with each image. Ella supports her image with lengthy text which unfortunately goes against the style of Instagram and isn't read by the average user. This approach is more suited to a Facebook platform which is seen as a little old fashioned for Ella.

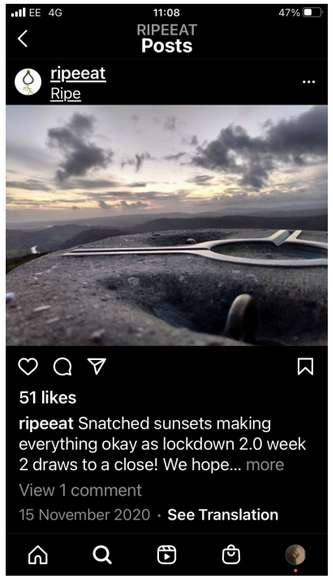
Some of the images on the opposite page work, and most do not. Ella would benefit from a critical friend acting as an image consultant. Pictures out of context are a real turn off for viewers on Instagram, There are probably a lot of people who like images of a bike ride or views of the Lake district, however if customers have made the effort to follow a food company then the new (buying) customers expect images of the lovely food. For a business on Instagram, the customers 'follow' to see offers and the product. They do not 'follow' to see a stranger's personal life. For example, if you have 2K followers and your posted images only get 50 likes, there is something wrong. It is likely that the posts/ images are not about your business or are very poor technically and missing the point narratively.

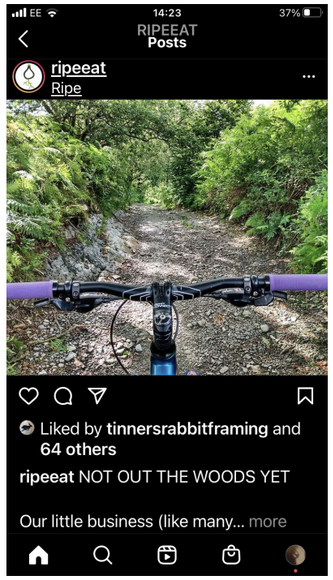
Faily regular Instagram postings steady but few likes

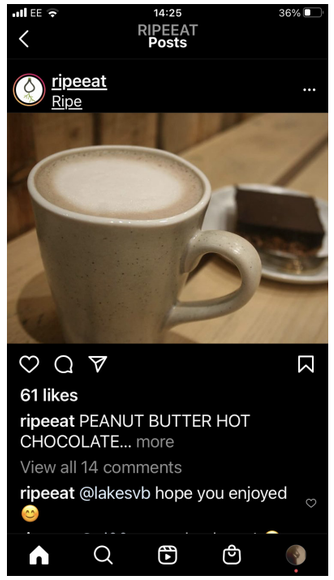


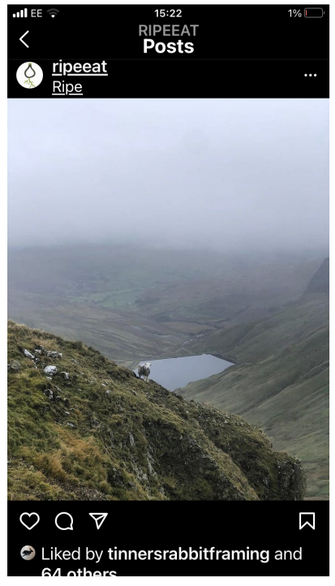
The consistently low numbers of 'likes' compared with followers on Ripe's food based account support this theory.
The number of likes of the food images are nearly 50% less than the scenic posts, which is a concern.

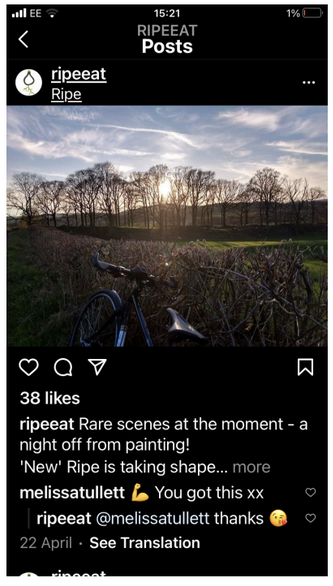
1) Email was used to send to the customers that had previously supplied details
2) Samples of Instagram posts showing not all posts are directly related to the offer; food











Chap 8)

Further images and relevant projects

previous stages

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Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - Chocolate bites, box of 6, not too sweet, great for snacks and walks.

•Hand made, unique, healthy, low sugar.

• Bites are a fairly new offer, so scale and unusual texture needs to be shown.

• Convenient and don't need to eat them all at once, can be kept fresh in the cardboard box.

• Focus on the product and make a suggestion of the brand packaging.

Notes and reflection

Brief overview of the intent of the image

Subject - Mini Picnic pack.

• Great size for a typical lunch, not too heavy or too bulky.

• Still has the varied food textures of a 'meal deal' supermarket lunch but the crisps are healthier.

• Great for the outdoors and a meal for those COVID exercise walks.

• For the 'on the go' lifestyle and a bonus that it is now delivered straight to your door.

Chap 9)

Findings

Ripe Natural Food
Design Analysis document Ian Clegg

Interim Findings

Specific to this participant

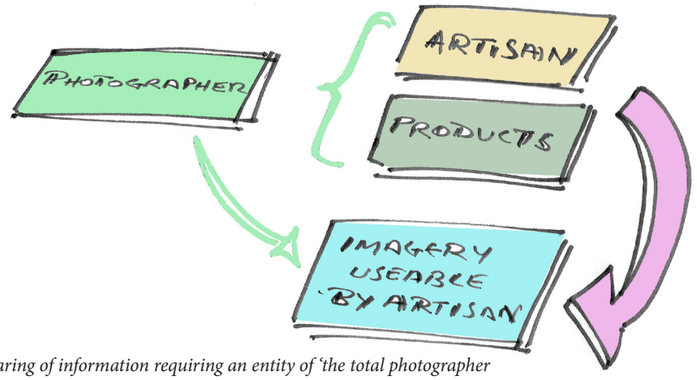
This participant has been a different challenge to the other participants. Ella's insistence on using her own photography has put a different emphasis on the research. There is no reason that she shouldn't do that, but in a professional situation what would a photographer do? This participant highlights that an artisan can turn themselves into an 'artisan' photographer but at some stage the professional decision has to be made, what is your core business? I believe Ella would benefit from discussions with a professional image maker or even an art director. Ella is a creative in her own field and her old art college days have clearly come in useful, even now.

Commercial questions raised ~

i) Would she pay for the help from a visual art director?

ii) Is a photographers role redundant in this scenario?

A standard practice photographer would certainly find it difficult to monetise a situation like this, a 'Total Photographer' would have more chance. The vehicle/book will be of use to Ella, as a maker of images as well as a commissioner; she can take both roles.



Little or no sharing of information requiring an entity of 'the total photographer

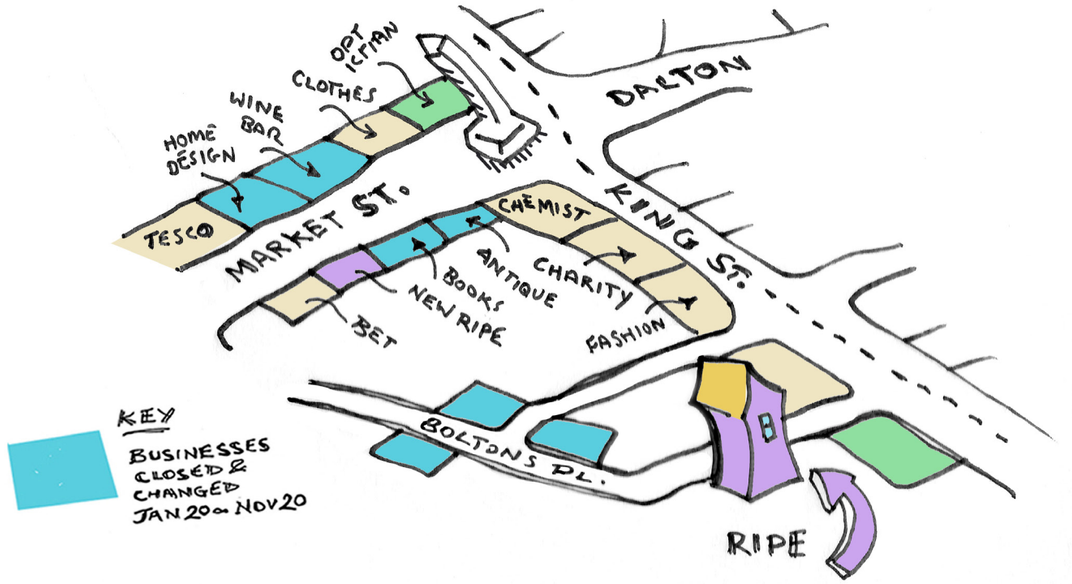
As a photographer with other skill sets in a role as a researcher, I found my advisory role to be the most productive. I did come to reflect that what Ella would most benefit from would be a critical friend if not a full blown 'Total photographer'. Small steps maybe?

It was challenging to get Ella to open up to the research, photo-elicitation went some way in breaking the ice. I detected that she thought she would never require the use of a photographer and would prefer to take the shots herself. A self-proclaimed photographer is still an interesting aspect of the research the vehicle should be as valuable to Ella taking her photographs as much as artisans and photographers as separate entities. We must all accept that the camera has been democratised to an extent, an artisan must realise that having the tools does not make a skilled practitioner. In this context, owning a microwave does not make somebody an artisan cook.

Ella has the advantage of some experience at Art school, so yes, she has skills that would transfer to photography, and if she has the time, then yes, use them.

The business itself is genuinely artisan, and the imagery we could create with such a wealth of subject matter would be incredible. Her stories of producing the products from source, from local foraging and local farms are immense. However, with her other commitments it is not fully exploited.

Ella's 3 images for the photo-elicitation task showed she is clearly interested in the photographic image. She is a perfectionist and of course, wanted these images to be immaculate and accurate, this took away the spontaneity of the event. This may have been a briefing issue from myself, with reflection I should have asserted the



1) Map showing Part of Ulverston high street revealing a 38% turnover of businesses during this research period, Note new location of Ripe, now in a central place on the high street.

requirement of only 3 images and also that they were a starting point not a final output.We had good discussions about the language of photography, and we disagreed on the presence of pre-planned semiotics in an image, yet she did see advertising as an art which is a lovely point of view.

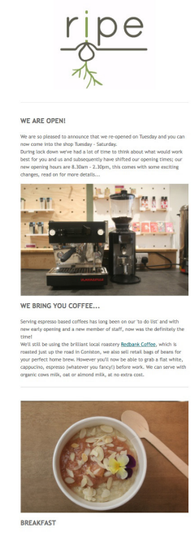
The pressure of the pandemic on a small, newly formed business is immense. I fully understand her choice to put the business into a semi-sleep mode and just dabble at 'home deliveries' and careful to manage her own well-being. It was and still is tough times in retail. Unfortunately, the research was not as data-rich for this participant as the others. Yet, it was an opportunity to obtain perspective on a business that wanted total control of their own images to the extent of not using an external photographer. Additionally, it gave me a healthy perspective on the way advertising image-making is always changing.

Her intuitive skills at image-making are excellent but relying on this alone without any form of reflection is risky and will often let you down. This is highlighted by areas such as Instagram, where images not related to selling the business or product get in the way of effective selling images, images that talk about the business to the customers. Instagram is a harsh environment and time sensitive, if a customer signs up to follow a food site then they expect to see food or food related images. Again, this perspective has allowed me to re-examine the large corporates methodologies where they try, through photography, to look approachable and small; comparing this to Ella's method, they would spend a small fortune to be able to look like Ella's business, and not like the large factory producers they really are.

This is something Ella could exploit and Ripe's substantial untapped area for photography is the handmade element. As Arierly (2021) discussed on Radio 4 - *Worth of business*, customers place higher value on products that show the skill, time and care that has been invested in that product.
The amount of care and time that is put into Ella's product is not achievable by any of her high street competitors, let alone the large corporates. Ella could take photographs of her process, show them everywhere, print them large in the shop, put them online, send fully written and illustrated articles to the magazines. The visual opportunities are limitless.

So, in what ways can this business be empowered by photography?

Photograph everything in the process, be honest about the route from garden to plate,
and blow the competition away!
Will it renegotiate Ripe's place in the high street? Absolutely. Get these images out and get the new customers in, now Ripe has a new shop to launch then now is the time - No other shop within 10 miles can boast such an offer.
And yes, although not fully formed the research into this participant has given some excellent insight into methods of engagement to put in a book - 'Images that talk'.



Chap 10)

Reflection

Reflection

Ella has made a very bold decision with Ripe; she has moved the shop into the central area of the high street. It is a bigger premises, and she will increase her staff to four. Now more than ever, she must concentrate on marketing, especially photographic promotion to increase the footfall to sustain the extra overheads. However, this is an opportunity to take the visibility of the shop to the next level. She must now see imagery as the critical aspect of part of an integrated marketing system. The opposition is from the established brands along the street, Greggs, Costa, CO-OP, and Tesco are all present, and all offer value lunchtime meals. The home delivery market has also taken a foothold as an outcome of the successive lockdowns due to the COVID pandemic.

The high street has changed immensely in just 18months, and new ways of retail selling have become more acceptable; the dark companies at here to stay, and their only way of promotion is through photography-based campaigns. Ripe must accentuate their personal service and their USP offers and promote through photographically led marketing.

Practice

The contribution to the research from this participant has been unique and given new perspective on the way some artisans reason. Ella has her own interesting views on the value of photography as an enabler; her past experiences with photographers has been unsatisfactory. Like many other artisans, she becomes frustrated by a lack of competence from other professionals resulting in her trying to do it herself. Artisans easily become unimpressed by other professionals not being good or interested in their jobs they believe they should have passion like themselves.

I had not considered this negative aspect of the interaction between photographer and artisan before embarking on this research, and I now see it as a vital aspect to acknowledge. Ella has highlighted this perspective for the research and her approach will be discussed in my outcome and treated as a surmountable issue.

The briefing and collaboration is a vital element in bridging this gap, producing photography that is acceptable by both parties, the artisan and the photographer.

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1) The new shop on Market Street
2) Signage
3) Hand written menus are kept

The future

Onward and upward as Ella opens her new shop. As the high street sees many closures, it is a breath of fresh air to see a business with the confidence to expand.

“I’m moving my shop to a more prominent place on the high Street.”

Whether Ella embarks on a photographic campaign to launch and sustain the business, we will have to wait and see. Meanwhile, it’s all hands on deck as new food counters are completed and painting and decorating take precedence, as she wishes to do a lot of the work herself.

From a marketing and promotional point of view, the advertising should be working the hardest now - when the business is expanding. Hopefully, with extra staff Ella will finally have time to take a step back and look at the business and reassess what Ripe in reality, sells, which is healthiness and the experience of a unique product not just food
And with regards to a comment she made on creating effective photography -

“You are going to tell me to make the time aren’t you, Ian?”

Well, now you may just have that time, Ella.

1) Tracy & Ashleigh working and serving in the shop, Leica monochrom, 50mm available light

1828
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Central Lancashire
UCLan

ripe

Appendix; 4

Collaborative briefing documents

Ian Clegg

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – Timber frame house construction To create images that will show the ongoing construction of a timber frame house from start to finish. To have measurable outcomes,

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images shot in sequence and detail shots - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – fieldwork on location – Common, The images should be available for regular updates to be put up on instagram then a new page created on the website

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

New individual customers wanting a bespoke house, small developers that require specialised attention for design and build

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

The house is made by the same person that erects it. from flat planks to full build. Individual and bespoke

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

It is greener than the well know German Huff brand with a air tight rating far above that one

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results within 2 weeks Websiteafter the house is built then a full story to be made here

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Meet the customer regularly on site to see the build
What narratives are there
Sustainable, small green footprint less concrete and high impact materials, bespoke, customer can change the build as it progresses, great energy rating, can be built in 10 days from flat pack to roof going on.**Is the imagery being supported by text**
negligible text on instagram but some supportive text on website
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, website

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – COVID Masks
-To show the quality of Tracy's product, individuality , fashionable

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Stills images , maybe 15-20 showing differences and usage

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – on location , The images should be available for posting on instagram and Facebook

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Current custtomers that know Tracy's hat products, that want to support her, and who need masks during this shortage and with a bit of fashion flair

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

These items are made from high end materials. Give a bit of jollity in these hard times

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Well made and will last numerous washing and they are individual and can match your hat!

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – Facebook - analytics should show results immediately

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Keep to Tracy's quality brand image even though these are 'just' PPE facemasks
What narratives are there
Well made, handmade, fabric and material will allow close scrutiny high quality, shows you care
anyone can wear them, accessible, local business support, natural sustainable fabrics
Is the imagery being supported by text
negligible text on instagram but to the point and erudite
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHIC BRIEF

PROJECT OVERVIEW SUBJECT & AIMS

Subject – To make images that show the hard work behind the scenes, even the jam for the cakes is made in house, this is not currently portrayed to the customers

PHOTOGRAPHY | VIDEO | SCOPE

Summarise the extent - a good array of images for constant use over a long period - colour

PRODUCT | AVAILABILITY | BRAND GUIDELINES AND VOICE| TIME-SCALES

Source – location in the kitchen - hands on - The images should be available before the Instagram and possibly Facebook, the budget should be allocated in time of approx. 1 hour

AUDIENCE | KEY MESSAGES |

Message to customers that virtually everything is made in house - from the baked nuts, through jam and chocolate

ARTISANS INTENT VISION | WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL |

Very bespoke, if it can be made by us then we will make it, as then we know exactly what ingredients have gone into it

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT ABOUT THE PRODUCT USP?| THE PROPOSITION

Made from the ground up, by our skilled staff

AUDIENCE | SUCCESS MEASURES |

– Instagram – analytics should show results immediately with likes and views but more as a supporting role to other photography the finished items

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTENT

How are you going to achieve this brief
Get into he kitchen and let the cooks perform their tasks, photographer as an observer
What narratives are there
Hand made, hand grown, knowledge of ingredients, natural
Is the imagery being supported by text
Possibly, but the images themselves will be used as a narrative to support other photography of finished items such as cakes, salads
Which platforms is it being rolled out on
Instagram, Facebook

Appendix; 3

Elicitation and question sheet samples

Ian Clegg

Case Study report –
Date of meeting -; 21st Nov 19 3.30pm
Location -; Workshop - Ulverston

#Cumbrian Timberframe and carpentry (Ulverston interiors)

Reason for the meeting - Photo Elicitation overview
Response from the – Three images that could describe your business

The way you use a hand tool shows skill

"I use a lot of hand tools, I have machinery, but I still use hand tools. You still have to use proper hand tools. Probably hand these for 20 years, the old steel in the old tools is far superior to todays, if you get an edge on an old chisel or plane, then it lasts for ages. You can buy really expensive tools but the regular ones in a store – well, the steel is just pants" Peter.

The wooden mallet (Peter made this mallet) could be 27 years old.

"When I went to college, you were taught to make things by hand. Whereas now you get C&C machines.
When I look at a piece of wood, I know before I touch it or plane it which way the grain is going to tear, everything is now done with power tools, and they don't understand the timber. If you use hand tools, you even get bigger shavings; if you turn the wood around, it will just tear. That's what I am trying to say in the image."
Peter

Sometimes I have to just go ahead and make something

'This counter took me an entire day just to make the hinges. The centre hinges are made from Lignum Vitae, the centre bit is oak, and a pin gives it a double action. I made it wrong the first time. I had never seen anything like that before, so I thought I would make it.
I use it as a display, and customers can see it. The timber came from leftovers from a job." Peter

Its not possible to know what's inside the trunk

"This is a piece of spelt wood. It is from a beech tree. You have to look at the tree and see what is happening on the inside. When the sap rises through the resin, give this look. The conditions heed to be just right, temperature and damp. The black parts are where the wood is just becoming rotten. Different woods react differently.
(This is only 20cm so the scale does not come across)
I find myself driving along and seeing trees that would make good specimens for furniture. There is an oak tree in the dip in Ulverston, which would make a great

project. It is knarled and bent, not what other people might think is good, but great for my projects. This piece was used to make key fobs for a client.

"I see a tree or a log, and like a sculptor, I can see the piece of furniture inside it. I am thinking of setting up a part of the business to log trees and make timber from them. Then sell the usable timber.
People don't realise that I start from the tree, season the wood and then make the furniture from it. It is a whole process"
Peter

Notes.
Peter has worked with a photographer who portrayed the workshop and some of the carpentry skills (about 3 years ago). Also, he has assigned Furness web company to look at his site and a designer in Ulverston but has not made much progress as they are asking him to create the content.
People come to his workshop and constantly say they didn't realise he had so much equipment or so much capacity.
He has made kitchens and windows in the past, but they hold no interest for him.
He wants to make skilled work and has seen other companies work, such as [redacted], and they don't impress him; they don't tell the company's story, the making, and the work's process.
He isn't impressed by his website, peter hasn't the time to develop it or keep it up to date, agrees that he hasn't got a presence on the social media platforms, again he 'hasn't got the time to fulfil this.
He has tried to employ apprenticeships in the past, but there doesn't seem to be much interest in learning the Artisan skills of carpentry; he blames the 'semi-skilled' teachers at the colleges and the courses that have only two options, site or joinery routes, which is too restrictive for him.

Questions to the artisan

The perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business.
Paraphrased answers

1) Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

Certain things do, certain photography needs, props, depends on what you are taking, what the central or focal point is. If you have to add a couple of props to enhance it then fair enough.

2) What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography.

I used photographer Antony Wright, for images in the past so better lighting makes a difference.

3) What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery?*

I have enough images to work with so I don't need them. I don't see the point, I do get why they use them but again I have enough. It is deceitful if they shoot hand tools when they don't use them.

4) What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

A little bit yeah, Its up to them really. In the case of Ikea for example then it is hard taking good photographs of mass-produced products.

5) What do you think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?

I can actually say from 'seed to home' because of the trees I source. I wish I had taken better pictures of work I have Done in the past, as I had gone along. I made a particularly hard to make staircase the handrail was all curved. I installed it but didn't take any pictures. I have made all sorts over the years and often think ' *I should have taken a picture of that.'*

6) How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?

Rework the website, maybe use some text to support the images, use more range and specific imagery to show different skills of the company.
Take more pictures of work that has gone out to the client Before it becomes unattainable.

Peter has begun to think about a photographic strategy.

Case Study report –
Date of meeting - 10th Nov 19 4.00pm
Location -; Site of shop – Bolton's Street Ulverston
https://tracywellsdesignermillinery.com
17 Upper Brook St, Ulverston LA12 7BH
Tel: 07895 780200 Email: info@thehatbox.net

#2 Tracy Wells, Milliners, Ulverston

Shop and web presence Handmade Hats
Owner – Tracy Wells
Reason for meeting - Photo Elicitation overview
Response from the – Three images that could describe your busines

Tracy's workshop is at the top of the building, reminiscent of the old cotton industrial age cottages where all the work was produced with hand spinning machines on the top floor lit with tiny windows.
Tracy is proud of using sustainable and natural fabrics for her hats (Strange that it is not mentioned in her advertising). This 'sustainability' is one of the USPs that we may return to in the future.

Sustainable materials are important

"I mainly use a material called Sinamay fibre, which is a banana-based fabric. It is called 'stock' which is a basic structure of the hat, and it is an all-natural substance."
Tracy

I never throw a block out, they are a direct link to the customers

“These are shelves of wooden hat blocks which are made to a specific head size (that of the customer) also the flatter ones are for the fascinator blocks (these are minimal headwear worn as pure decoration they flatter the face when combined with a supporting hairstyle) I started my millinery business making fascinators, in my hairdressing shop. The blocks are made of wood and are similar tools to the cobblers lasts. A new hat can be formed and manipulated around the shape extra curves and edges are added to create classical or contemporary hats.
I wanted to learn how to make them properly so I studied all the way down in the Cotswolds at the weekends for a whole year.” Tracy

Irons are my main tools, I need more than one

“ These are my day to day tools, they don’t look very exciting or specialised but without a steady supply of steam I can’t shape the fabric for the hat, it needs to be hot and damp to form round the complicated shapes. When the fabric cools it stiffens up and the shape becomes permanent.
I have three irons, which produce steam, so if one or even two give up the ghost I have fall backs. I wear out a lot of irons. I never make two hats the same, it would be a catastrophe if a lady saw the same hat on someone else in the room or at an event! ” Tracy

Notes: Tracy is a self-motivated person; she was originally in hairdressing but decided to expand her career. Using some of the space in the hair salon she began to offer rented hats to compliment the hair designs she was creating. She then began to learn how to make the hats, and signed up for a part-time course in the Cotswolds, taking it further she gained a City and Guilds qualification at Kendal college.
She was a Milliner!

Questions presented to the artisan

The perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business.
Paraphrased answers

1) *Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?*

I can supply the hats and organise the dresses and models but the photographer should do what they are good at, some of the hats out there are rubbish and fall apart or are made of inferior materials. Mine aren't but that just the way it is.

2) *What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography.*

I suppose an advertising shot should make you think - I want to fall in love with it; "I need it" " I want it".

3) *What do you think about other companies using library shots* for their imagery?*

I don't agree that, it should be photographs of the actual items, legitimate and transparent.

4) *What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?*

It's up to them really, they will get found out buy the more discerning clients, which I hope are my sort of clients.

5) *What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?*

I can't afford that sort of photography

6) *How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?*

I realise that I don't get enough shots of my hats, some go out to clients, and I don't even photograph them. I do rely a lot on pictures sent in by my clients themselves.
Maybe I could look at shooting more.!

Case Study report –
Date of meeting -; 1st Nov 19 3.30 pm
Location -; Site of the shop – Bolton's Street Ulverston
https://www.ripeeat.co.uk

#2 Ripe
Vegan and vegetarian café and food supplier, Ulverston

Reason for the meeting - Photo Elicitation overview
Response from the – Three images that could describe your business

The seasonal aspect is important to the business

"Please see the above images and some 'drafts' as requested, I think I'd select the photo with the trowel to use, but I don't really mind.
I chose this first image in the series to represent where 'real' food comes from and how it is grown, as this is a really important part of my business."
Ella
Notes ;
Beetroot grown in Ella's market garden, the rusty table is also from the garden. Ella's own trowel also grows herbs and flowers (some edible), But she notes that she can't grow enough food to completely supply the shop. She uses the images on Instagram to make the customers aware of what food is available due to the seasons. Most of Ella's food is sourced from the U/K. Lemons, Pomegranates etc. are the obvious exceptions.

Outdoors suggesting the environmental part of the business

"Please see the images to make up part two in the series. I'd go for image 1 and reject the others.
I've taken this second photo to represent 'environment' the environmental impact of the business (shot in the Lake District top of a hill looking like a famous ridgeline) is integral to how I operate. The product feature is made by hand and then packaged in a recycled and recyclable box with a compostable label, something which took me a long time to source but something that was important for me to use."
Ella

Notes;
“Customers don't know that I make branded goods, Chocolate, Energy bites and some others.”
Ella wanted an 'outdoorsy' look. A few (probably not many) have said the packaging looks too professional on Instagram.

The food is so unusual that it needs to be tasted before an opinion is made, so some traditional looking items are in disguise as 'normal' cakes and other foods.

"Number three in the series here I'd go for image 2.

This last image is to represent taste/health. Tasty food is, of course, pretty essential, and the healthy/whole foods/non-processed aspect is at the forefront of what I am trying to do, however, in a more subtle, non suspecting way. Hence why I picked chocolate cake (based on cacao powder) as I think most people would quite happily dive into a piece of this, none the wiser than it's made from that, they may deem weird/more unusual."
Ella

Notes;
Shot in the shop, using one of the display plates from the counter, commented that the customers (the new ones, I suspect) need to taste and then be told what it is actually made out of.

Questions posed to the artisan

The perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the obvious and hidden narrative when photographing a business.

Paraphrased answers ~

1) *Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest, truthful yet informative?*

Yes, it can be deceitful, especially with Photoshop, then you don't know if it is real or not. Ella does not like to alter images – or shoot with the 'effects' in-camera, maybe crop them – The lighting, I would like always to use natural light" And doesn't use filters.

2) *What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography.*

I see advertising more as a work of art than an accurate image.

3) *What do you think about other companies using library shots* for their imagery?*

I don't normally notice stock imagery, but I suppose out of convenience a neutral image would be OK to use, say something fairly innocuous such as herb leaves or flour.

4) *What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?*

The public is taken in by imagery in supermarkets, such as fresh food shots but then find the item is only available as frozen.

5) *What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high-end imagery from large companies to be attainable?*

I don’t think I have the time. Too busy running the business and making the food.

“You are going to tell me to make the time aren’t you Ian?”

6) How would you want to show your own business in light of this session?

The photographer needs to understand my business, the editorial ones who have taken images for the magazines just get things wrong and don’t understand what I am trying to do here

*Images can be purchased from a bank of pre-shot photographs from Getty or Alamy or other library, some of these images get reused over and over again and can become banal and familiar to your competitors and even customers.

Appendix; 5

Ethics documentation

Ian Clegg

Ian Clegg

Qualitative methodologies

Outline topics and open questions for semi structured group discussion/ workshops/Focus groups – participants of up to four

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1) Initial interviews – Semi structured – Topics

Background to how the business was started
What are its aims, its standpoint in the market place, its USP (Unique selling points)
Where the business want to go in the future
How do you use photographic imagery in your marketing strategies
Would bespoke imagery help change the way you portray the artisan aspects of a business

2) Example Topics for focus groups–

Overview of session,
An Introduction of how to portray your business,
My aim is to discuss the perceived views of photography in a role of promotion, the narrative that is obvious and hidden when photographing a business. Does photography need 'setting up' and how is this not deceitful, how can we make it honest truthful yet informative?

Advertising – its use and portrayal of businesses

What are your opinions on the difference between an advertising image from other forms of photography. What do you think about other companies using library shots for their imagery? What do you think about other companies briefing photography in a way that produces falsehoods?

Effectiveness of advertising photography

What do You think about using bespoke imagery to promote your company, would you consider other high end imagery from large companies to be attainable? How would you want to show your own business in the light of this session?

How would we set up a product and editorial photoshoot?

Describe any experiences with dealing with photographers or imagery before?
Discuss the usefulness of a 'guide' to creating images that create a narrative to support your artisan business. In what ways do you consider photography can benefit your business?
Can you describe any challenges you have with creating imagery for your business? How do you find the right people to work with? How would we write a brief for a photo shoot?

3) Less structured, Workshop, combined Focus group session- topics

Awareness of the power of the photograph

A Deconstruction of images of effective and ineffective photography.

Discussion of advertising and editorial images with the captions redacted.

Use of the camera in narrative construction

‘ Consent Form’ to be read and completed by participant in tandem with receipt of ‘Information form’

In what ways can a photographic practice empower artisans to re-negotiate their place on the high street?

Researcher - Ian Clegg: School Journalism and photography, UCLan, PhD candidate

University of Central Lancashire

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1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. I am aware of the topics to be covered.
2. My participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at anytime, up to a cut off date of July 2020 (which is the proposed date for analysis/publication), without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights. This can be by written or verbal means to which an acknowledgement will be supplied.
3. I understand that any personal/business information (including images) collected during the study may be used and published in the research vehicle. I am fully aware that data collected will be stored securely, safely and in accordance with the ‘Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR’.
4. I agree to take part in the above study, which will include focus groups, interviews and photography of myself and my business activities.
5. I understand that the interview focus group will documented by means of transcription and photography and I am happy to proceed. I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim and the supporting photography published in cross media platforms in future .

Name of Participant ……

Date Signature

…… ……

Researcher : Ian Clegg

Date Signature

…… ……

Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)

Date Signature

…… ……

This research has been reviewed and approved by the UCLan Ethics Board.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researcher:
Ian Clegg : *ikclegg1@uclan.ac.uk* Note: When completed 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

Information sheet

Ian Clegg : School of Media, Journalism and Performance, UCLan
In what ways can a photographic practice empower artisans to re-negotiate their place on the high street?

University of Central Lancashire

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1. **What is the reason for this letter?**

I would like to ask if you would consider taking part in a research study I am currently undertaking at UCLan, as a PhD student.
It would be great to work with you in developing a vehicle that will help artisan businesses to produce narrative photography that works and can be used to promote your artisan skills.

2. **What is the purpose of the study/rationale for the project?**

The study aims to critically investigate the use of photographic imagery in the promotion of an artisan business and the impact it has on the success in the high street.

3. **What I am asking you to do?**

It would be beneficial for the research if you could take part in interviews/workshops which will explore the ways you use or might use photography in your marketing of your business.

4. **Why do I need access ?**

By working with your business, the study aims to establish the impact photography has on your position in the high street.

5. **If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?**

I will contact you personally to arrange a mutual time for the sessions to take place. Subject to your consent, notes and recordings and transcriptions will be made of the sessions.

6. **How will I use the Information/questionnaire?**

The information collected will be analysed and used to support a PhD dissertation for UCLan . Also it is envisaged that some sort of vehicle (briefing doc, website, etc) will be produced as a benefit to other artisan businesses and photographers. Access to this material will be made available to participants

7. **Will the name of my business taking part in the study be used?**

Yes, with your consent of course. The information and related images will be available in the vehicle, and the case study information will be part of the research and will support the findings