

Banigo Victor Gordon

Course: MA Communication, Culture and Media

Module: Post Photography

Class Sessions

30th April, 2015

Summary of Class Sessions

SESSION ONE

Introduction to the module and orientation: the tutor explained the Learning Outcomes and briefed us how the classwork will be. We had a general introduction of our names and why we are taking the module. Then, we were asked to mail our Social Media Accounts: Twitter accounts, Gmail addresses and Blog Addresses.

We looked at the definition of a photograph as “is a two-dimensional picture of an actual object or event”. Photograph is fixed in time and in space. It is bounded by frame. The question on who is more powerful in a photograph, I think it is the photographer because without his work, the subject will not be seen as significant for the publisher to publish and made available to the audience.

Task: “The story of my journey to school” – unphotographable (See Project Review and victorgbanigo.wordpress.com)

SESSION TWO

From the news: Presented by Victor Banigo



Half masting of British flag

It was reported in the Guardian that the honour given to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia by flying flags in Whitehall at half-mast was criticized by MPs of which Douglas Carswell described as “extraordinary misjudgment” in view of Saudi’s abused of human rights. I brought up this picture because I felt that Great Britain which supports neoliberalism should not accord such tribute to a King who did not allow freedom of rights of citizens. Moreover, the photograph is significant and speaks for itself as it is usual for the British flag to be lowered.

Lecture on “Narrative, Power and Responsibility” by David Campbell.

Campbell explains the reason for bad pictures, linking it to poor reading. He said pictures are synonymous to history and that it takes reading to get good pictures. He also said pictures are seen as series of context because understanding is not automatic but in the words of Feldman “...the event is that which can be narrated”. So, narration entails presenting our work in the language that the audience understands because individuals see images from different perspective. Narrative must have an angle which spells out the relationship between images, politics and the world that can lead to societal change.

SESSION THREE

Lecture by Fred Ritchin “Bending the Frame”

Ritchin notes that photography records activity while documentary photography organizes events. Technology has changed photography to Photoshop because the “digital photography makes the world malleable to conform to our own image”. Ritchin explains that digital photography is creating a different look of the natural world; which was popularly known as as “...picture of actual art” is now losing its credibility. He also notes that photographs should not be distorted because “... is a quotation of people’s work”. Pictures are supposed to be used to back a story and defend a course because people seek for the truth in pictures. In conclusion, photography focuses on changing policies and behavioural pattern not necessarily celebrating its artistic presentation.

SESSION FOUR:

Review of Chapter 1 of After Photography: Group task – My notes are blogged at victorgbanigo.wordpress.com

Lecture: Fred Ritchin and Stephen Mayes

The lecture touches on comparison between the mainstream media and the online media. According to Ritchin, we should reinvent the older media because we cannot stop at the front page of the magazine, which is common with websites. The discussion emphasized that we need to understand the story by reading it beyond its caption. Reading the content of the story is necessary because the front page serves as a form of control that focuses readers' attention on the headline and excluding other meaningful details.

On his part, Mayes notes that commerce has affected how documentary is produce; which aims at enriching sponsors rather than producing knowledge. He however acknowledges the role visual journalist, stressing that they deal with the contextualization of photos while the photographer is concern with producing portrait. He added that a photographer's creativity is seen in the composition of events that tells a story.

SESSION FIVE

Lecture: Stephen Mayes

Mayes notes that he enjoys encouraging photographers to tell rich stories. He narrates his experience with Richard whom he said observed the limitation of steel photographs as static that does not show what happens before or after. However, the digital photography provides tools to enhance photography.

Richard believed in curiosity, an understanding of events and a bridge between knowledge and the audience. He also believed in honesty and imagination.

A photographer is a communicator with the camera his primary tool who shares information aims at changing society. Mayes recommends that photojournalists can use trans-media (the same message in books, magazines and on the internet) to engage the audience and make them active participants.

SESSION SIX

From the news: Lecture by David Campbell “Why does manipulation matter?”

Campbell’s article springs from the images disqualified on the grounds of manipulation in the 2015 World Press Photo contest. It is true that we can hardly separate manipulation from the photography process because all photography stages involve humans and man is prone to be subjective. Moreover, we all have our different point of view which may not necessarily be objective. This is visible in the “editing, selection, tagging and captioning of images...”. This underscores the point that all photographs in one way or the other are “aesthetically and politically” manipulated.

Campbell recalls that the analogue era saw the camera “as a picture-making device” but the camera in the digital era is “a data-collection device” the former produces an actual event while the latter processes the data to suit its producers; a thing described as “computational photography”. However, for photographs to be valid as real documents, then the issue of manipulation should be addressed as to ensure “the integrity of the image”.

Lecture: Marcus Bleasdale

Bleasdale, winner of FotoEvidence Book Award for Central African Republic coverage describes photography as a creative adventure than a business venture. Literature inspires and sharpens photographers’ narrative. So, the concept of narrative should affect the photographer because the photographer’s work should tell a logical story, sometimes, spanning to years of compilation. Of course, it takes risk and courage to produce such projects.

However, most of the photographs uploaded on the internet can be described as bad photos because they do not produce meaning. A good photo documentary should spread positive message that can influence policies and contribute to development. Passion shapes documentary as Bleasdale notes “you need to be that angry...” In a nutshell, photography is not about taking pictures but understanding the people and been involved in their daily activities. Photo documentary is a journey into life that represents all aspect of what you are documenting.

SESSION SEVEN

Following an observation that the tutor is not gender sensitive, he introduced Dalia Khamissy, a female photographer. Khamissy project on Lebanon title “The Missing” reveals how personal research can contribute to significant project. Research alone cannot cover all aspects of a project as Khamissy notes that her personal experience of the war enriched her photo essay. Moreover, experience of events also helps photo editors to use the right photographs.

Khamissy is an example of a “window photographer” Ritchin (2008) as she used her project to speak for those whose voices may not have been heard. Her project reveals that “the whole Lebanese soil is planted with mass graves”.

SESSION EIGHT

Lecture: Fred Ritchin and Lars Cuzner

The conversation describes photography as a “jazz band” in view of the fact that everyone is participating in it. Cuzner project on Bradly Stokes War Memorial is dedicated to people who had not yet died in wars not yet happen. Unlike other monuments, the war memorial will make provision for the names of future war heroes to be inscribed on it. This project springs from anxiety: the fear of the unknown always bring out the best in people and changes things.

There is no limitation of possibility in the world of imagination which is stronger than reality. Humans do not have a control over the future; so anxiety merges our needs and abilities to be creative and progressive.