

Carmencita & Kodak Grant

Synopsis

My practice is concerned with the exploration of community, connection and identity. The project that I am proposing is to look at my own family histories in order to highlight the ways in which we perceive the idealised version of a *gemeinschaft* – personal and emotional connection to family - through the lens of nostalgia versus the actualities and concrete realities that confronts us all.

My own family is disparate, uncommunicative, alienated and the various parts rarely come together, only for larger occasions, such as weddings and funerals – and even then this is not always the case. The only family members who attended by wedding were my parents and one of my brothers, who left shortly after the ceremony. My own family histories are also ones that are deeply rooted in the working class demographics and low aspirations. Through education, I have managed to technically escape being working class but I have not manage to escape the feelings it encapsulates within me. These feelings still prevent me from taking risks – risk that my comfortable middle class wife would take without a second thought.

Mine is the extremity of a spectrum on which all families exist. A spectrum on which all families also construct their own narrative and create a vision of the idealistic: the nostalgic verging on romanticism.

Central to this, is the family album, which creates the nostalgic aesthetic in which we view the past and the constructed family narrative. As Jo Spence noted, we never have an independent thought in our minds and judge everything based on a prior knowledge of the world. Much of this view and learned knowledge built via the way that it has been photographed and the vernacular family album is central to this education. Photography creates the space that makes this happen but also provides the tools to challenge it.

My project would be an exploration of my disparate family that explores key themes of social mobility, class, and imposter syndrome. I want to reengaged with long lost relatives and understand why we are no longer entwined in each other lives. Through photographs and interviews, I will reengage with people who share my genetics but potentially little else. I want to tell this story with portraiture, which is my strength as a photographer but also because portraits tell the most powerful stories, connecting with us on an emotional level. The project would primarily be created using medium format colour negative film and my intention is to create this work utilising the emotive quality and power of Kodak Portra film. I believe that the qualities of the medium will accentuate the concepts that I am aiming to create with this project

The completed project will be used to educate. I will create a series of talks and lectures that I can use to support my own teaching practice where it has the potential as a discussion point for those who also struggle in similar situations. And for those who do not, I hope to create a discourse around the idea of what it is to be socially mobile.

Goals

My aim for this project is to create a body of work that has the potential for exhibition and publication. It has been an aspiration of mine to realise an in depth project that is uncompromising in its scale and potential and created using film photographic techniques.

The project will also form part of my personal and professional development and will be conducted alongside my MA studies in photography. This grant will provide the materials and resources to create a body of work that I would be unable to achieve without the support of Carmencita and Kodak. There will be multiple opportunities throughout the duration of the project to show the work, including Falmouth University 'Landings' international exhibition.

I will also use some of the portraits that I create during the project to submit to a number of high profile portrait awards, which would support the goals of my project and also Carmencita and Kodak. As discussed in my synopsis, I would also use this body of work to create learning opportunities that would support my current teaching practice. I work at a local college and in the first instance; I would create talks and workshops around this project. Additionally, my plan is to broaden this approach by offering talks at institutions such as the Royal Photographic society and at Universities, where I already have some connection.

Project Scope

This project will require a period of research and development to ensure that the outcome matches the goals and aspirations of what I aiming to achieve. In the schedule, I have allocated an initial period of two months to engage with the subject. It is important to note that this time will be fully mentored by my peers and MA tutors who are all prolific photographic practitioners in their field. With their support and guidance, I expect to create an effective and innovative approach to the project that will also include the reading of key texts and research into the visual aesthetic of my work. This research and development will continue throughout the duration of the project and is expected to create an evolved and ongoing developmental approach to the work. The second phase of the project will start to focus the research into a more practical exploration and I will then start to create work and images. I anticipate that I will utilise roughly a third of the film available for the grant to develop and create a visual language for the project that will inform the final outcome. This visual language is

closely tied to the qualities of the Kodak Porta film stock that I intend to use however, there are opportunities to test methods of using this film in innovative ways to realise my project.

The intention of the project is to remain focussed on the idea of family history and connection. It is also an exploration of class, social mobility and a sense of imposter syndrome. This will remain the core of the project throughout. There will be opportunities to share the progress of this project with all of the stakeholders at regular intervals to create opportunity for feedback and reflection. After each of the phases that I have created in the schedule there will be natural opportunities for this.

The themes covered in my project although a personal body of work, have a relatability to how we all understand the idea of what a family is. I believe that there is a defined audience for this kind of work existing within the world of photography, for example, similar to the work of Pat Martin who won the Taylor Wessing portrait prize in 2019 by looking at his own family. There are also opportunities to disseminate the work outside of the photographic community through a sociological and anthropological lens, which is where I see the basis for talks and workshops to sit.

The ongoing global pandemic has placed the importance of family into our minds. There is a pathos in exploring the themes of my project, which is a re-evaluation of values and considering the importance of connection. This will resonate with audiences and ensure that the works will be disseminated and discussed, which is important for me and aligns with the values of Carmencita and Kodak.

Project Schedule

Stage	Timeframe	Note
Phase One	January – February 2021	Initial Research and development phase. Fundamental to the success of this project is the initial research phase. I will use this time to build relationships and also research the wider topics to underpin and inform my project
Phase Two	March – May 2021	Practical development phase. This time is where I will start to develop my approach to the work and inform how it will be presented. Test shooting and exploration of technical approaches will be made during this time to inform how the aesthetic will underpin the conceptual ideas of the work. Work will also begin on outcome planning and development.
Phase Three	June – August 2021	I will use this time to create the final work for the project. It will also be a time to start preliminary sharing of some of the outcomes and testing audience response. In July is the Falmouth Landings exhibition, which will be one of the first opportunities to highlight imagery from the project.

Technical Data Sheet

My intention is to use ISO 400 for consistency and can manage lighting situations using Neutral density filters and lighting if appropriate. I want to use Kodak Portra owing to its emotive quality and recognition to the viewer of the work.

The project will be photographed using a Pentax 67 medium format camera with a 105MM 2.4 lens.

To support, I am also able to borrow Mamiya RB67 cameras from my college, which also have some additional lens options.

Breakdown of film use:

50 Rolls of Kodak Portra 120 Roll Film ISO 400:

15-20 Rolls – for initial exploration and experimentation into aesthetic and visual language to realise concepts

25 Rolls – Main body of work production

5 Rolls – Contingency