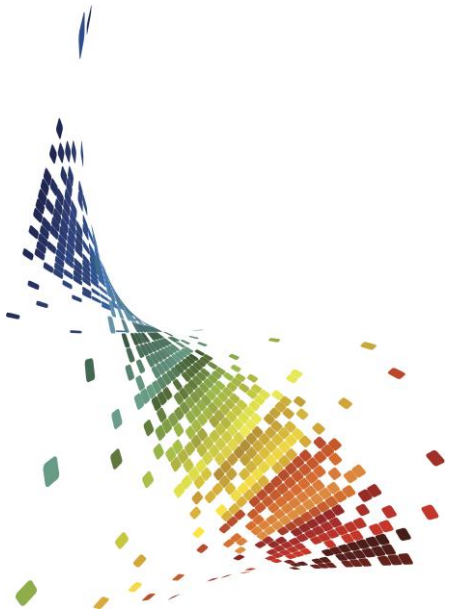
Cambridge Assessment International Education

Sample Answer: Example portfolio
Component 1

Cambridge International AS & A Level
Digital Media & Design 9481

For examination from 2019



Cambridge Pathway

Version 1

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Introduction

This portfolio makes up part of the specimen submission for Component 1.

It seeks to demonstrate how the learner has collated and organised their preparatory work to shape their proposal for their final submission.

Portfolio

Starting point: Theme 5 – travel

Google image search – Portrait on a train

I really like the images on the train. The portraits look natural and un-posed, I find this fascinating. Most people find watching people when they are unaware interesting, it is almost like they let their guard down. The two girls looking out of the window are in my opinion really lovely although a little cliché. The reflections add depth and additional interest. The layers of reflections and landscape which are in different focus draws your attention.

I don't like this image as much as the girls looking out of the window despite the similarities in them. The photographer has cropped the piece across the neck and this deters from the image. She has also not included any element of reflection. It is a self-portrait and I find it a little dull and self-absorbed rather than well shot and reflective. The image taken from a film still of '*girl on a train*' is also cropped but I think it is successful as the photographer had cropped the face and included layers but has taken the piece from a different viewpoint. The vertical crop works better. Shooting through the glass includes the element of rain drops which create depth and pattern.

Nan Goldin '*Self-Portrait on the train*', 1992. The piece is owned by the Tate Modern collection.

Screen shot taken from the film *'girl on a train*'

I really like the selection of images by photographer Thorge Berger. The variety and creativity of the angle enhances the subject matter which is, in some cases everyday. His ability to shoot at a low angle like through the fishing net, frames the character and focuses the viewers eye. The image to the left is so lovely and peaceful in my opinion. The combination of perspective, movement and lighting is perfect. He captured that moment and it would be impossible to recreate.

Interesting Angles by Thorge Berger

Images from Sebastiao Salgardo '*Migrants*' series

I particularly like this series although I feel uncomfortable saying this as they are reflections on the human condition when thrown into difficult situations out of their control. The migration series focuses on people travelling to find a better life, often fleeing very horrendous situations but it also includes traditional migration, e.g. following herds. The photos include a variety of travel methods and also reflect different cultures and emotions. They way that Sebastiao composes the pieces makes them interesting and beautiful images despite often depicting hardship.

Steve McCurry
My assessment of photographs by Steve McCurry which I feel depict the theme of travel.

I love this image and the repetition of the window frames against the flat colour of the train gives the impression of a row of photographs on a wall in a gallery. Each frame looks like its own little art piece. They contain such variety of human life. I really like how each portrait is well composed and the small elements, such as an arm or head scarf which break each frame add additional interest.

Both these images are photographed from high angles which enhances the perspective. The strong element of one point perspective creates visual lines which encourage the viewer to look past the subject matter and into the distance exaggerating the movement of the piece.

The use of layers in this image is wonderful. It gives the viewer the sense that they are the person sat in the taxi, screened off from the outside. The woman's hand almost looks like she is trying to connect to the viewer / passenger. I am drawn to the child's eyes as they seem to be looking straight at me. The image could be black and white except for the dress of the woman, once again drawing all your focus.

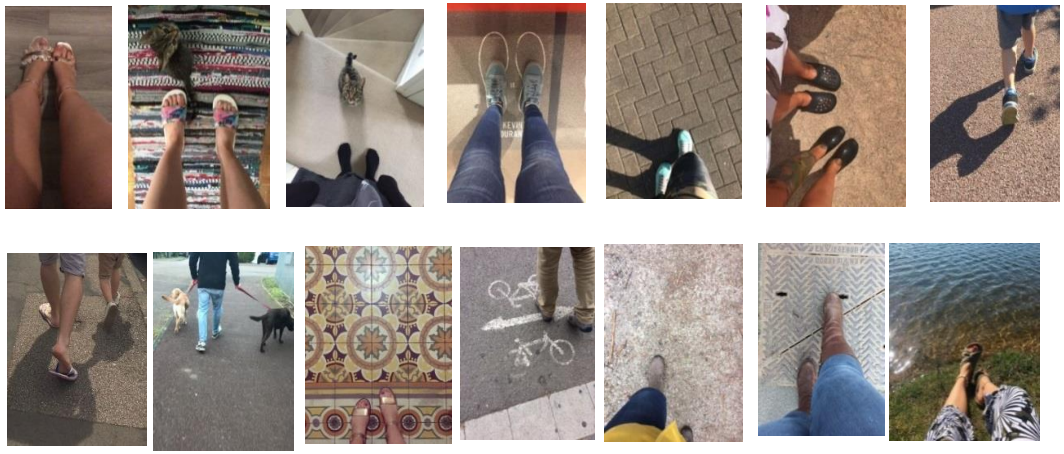
The use of depth of field in this piece enhances the subject matter. The iconic building in the background helps the viewer to understand the location. You could be fooled into thinking this was taken hundreds of years ago as it includes a steam train rather than electric however the use of steam trains is still common in India. This type of travel is often accompanied with a sense of romance. The inclusion of the fog and golden light emphasises this.

I find this image fascinating, as it is so unusual to see. This shot has been taken at such a precarious moment. Although I can imagine that the two workers would not consider this unusual. The camera is situated on the train so that the shutter speed is suitable for the slow-ish movement of the two men but that the ground underneath is passing in a blur. This highlights the movement and also frames the subjects.

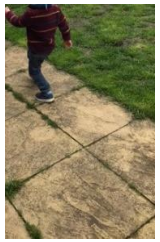
Fig 1

Fig 2

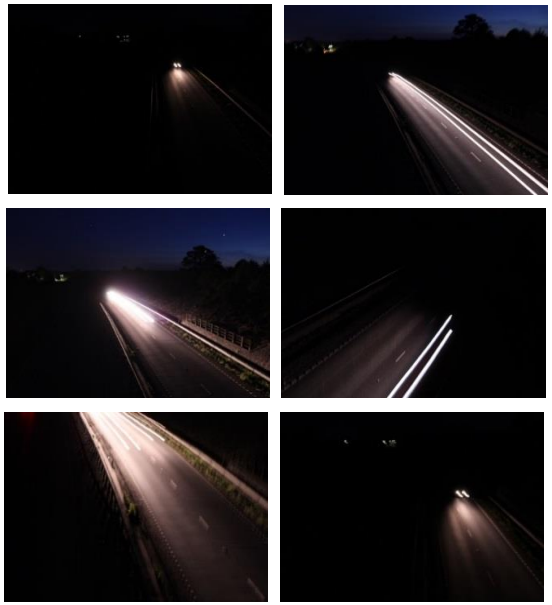
I really liked the image (Fig 1) which I found during my initial research and whilst out photographing at a small train station I took the image (Fig 2) of the lady looking out of the window. The composition immediately reminded me of the research image. Although mine is not as clear I prefer mine as it is natural and not set up. It has made me realise that you must be out shooting a lot to ensure you capture natural situations as they are really down to chance.



I took a series of images of feet. I came up with an idea which I wanted to try out about focusing on people moving through different environments. Although I like the idea and the collection there is not enough variety of composition or angle due to the nature of the subject and I have decided to not develop it further. However, exploring travelling through different environments and different cultures is definitely something I want to come back to.

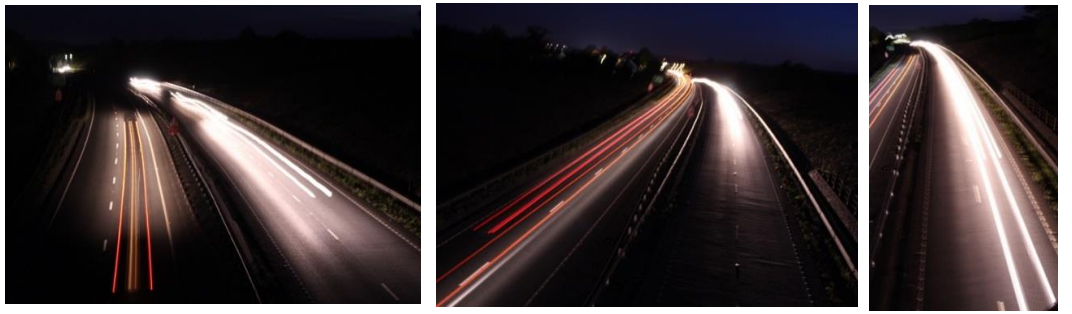


Developing ideas



Images taken at TV 1/3

Moving car images



Images taken at 3”

These images were taken on a canon DSLR camera. The camera was set to TV so that I could experiment with the length of the shutter (the longer the shutter is open the more movement it would capture). I was able to set the camera at a very long exposure time due to the fact that I took the images in the dark. My initial images were taken on AV 32 (aperture 32 = very small aperture opening) and TV 1/3 (a third of a second). This may sound like fast time but the normal shooting speed is 1/125. It was not until I extended the time to 3 whole seconds that I really captured movement that I found interesting. The cars seemed to disappear at this speed and all that remained was the line of light created by the headlights.

Slow motion images inspired by Bob Collins

2" (whole seconds)

1/3 (third of a second)

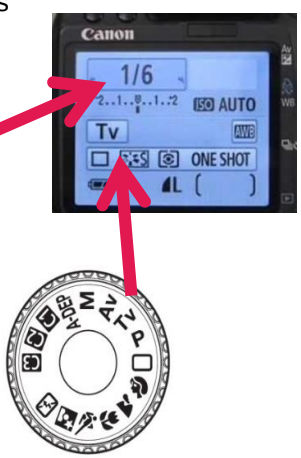
Experimental train shoot with slow shutter speed. I set the camera on TV and shot these at 1/15. I really wanted to take them at a slower / longer shutter but it was a bright day. To help I also adjusted the light compensation filter to darken the image as the slower shutter speed time meant that the image was being over exposed. I am happy with the two larger images as the train movement and angle show a successful movement blur whereas the smaller one the train was too far away and going directly away from me.

The images which have a longer exposure time have started to blow out / over expose, making them too white with little detail. The images taken at 1/3 of a second have a better exposure time for the lighting. The images are affected by the speed of the moving people and also what colour they are wearing. The camera has seen more detail in people wearing darker colours. I would like to have experimented more with more figures and a higher camera angle. I think inside a train station your shutter speed could also be longer due to less daylight. To help you could also compensate on the light meter.

Bob Collins: Life is a blur. Using techniques ahead of his time such as a slow shutter speeds, the photographer bestowed new depth on scenes like this one in 1960 at Victoria station.

Shutter speed will be displayed as the following:

1/1000s
1/500s
1/250s
1/125s
1/60 s
1/30 s
1/15 s
1/8 s
1/4 s
1
2"
3"
4"



I have decided I want to explore how people travel and find some way of showing not only them travelling but including elements to show where they are travelling to. I have continued to shoot at the train station and have further images which include people.

Stop motion experimentation: travel theme

I decided to experiment with moving image but still including photography. I viewed p-motion photography and thought about the idea of flick books. During my research I found an iPhone app called iMotion. This app allows you to create stop motion mini films relatively easy.

The app allows you to set if the shots should be taken manually or automatically. It also has the option that you can change the frequency of the image. For my stop motion I set it to take one image every 30 sec, so effectively 120 images an hour as I was taking a 4 hour journey.

You are also able to pause and also to save in mid-film allowing you to move location or angle.

Important things to consider when using this app

1. The film uses a lot of storage and memory – my film is 480 images
2. The camera picks up on any shaking and will not change focus mid film unless you pause the film and allow the camera to focus.

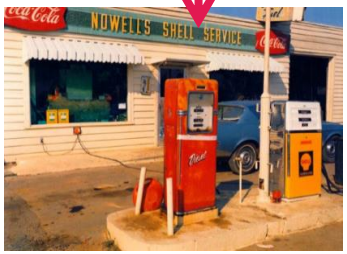
Further artist research

I really like Martin Parr's gritty documentary images of British seaside towns. His style is bold, harsh and often embarrassing in the way it shows people in all their crassness. I think service stations have a similar feel. We crave the quick cheap food and the sugars and salts are addictive. The service station which was there to ease our travels almost works against you as they try to entice you to stay. People now visit them even when not travelling. I want to explore the groups of people and the journeys they are taking and I would like to include this in my work.

Martin Parr

Berenice Abbott – *Gasoline Station*

Webb, Mississippi by William Eggleston

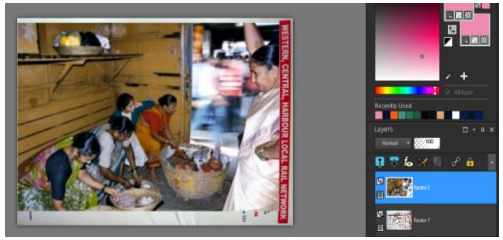


My images inspired by the work of Steve McCurry

Here are a selection of images that I took whilst exploring India. I took over 300 images but I have selected the images which I feel depict the theme travel. I love the colour and vibrancy of the country and the contrast in the images, which I would see if I did a similar task somewhere else. My intention is to carry out this task in different countries and present them alongside each other to visually demonstrate the differences and similarities.

I have layered photographs with maps, tickets and receipts

Experimenting with image transparency



I have experimented with layers and transparencies using Paint Shop Pro

The images here show how the transparency of the layer dramatically effect the overall appearance of the image

The image on the left has a transparency of 10% (this means that the underneath layer is only slightly visible). The one on the right has a 40% transparency (you can see that the map is much more visible).

Image 1: I have selected the outside space using the selection tool. I have the used the eraser tool and using the rubber at 100%, I have deleted the top layer.
Image 2: I have used the magic wand tool and changed the layer transparency. I think this is effective as it is subtle.
Image 3: I have layered three images (a map, receipt and the photograph).

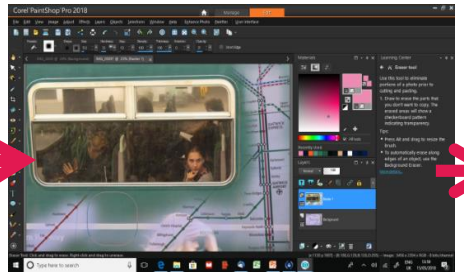
Train stations contact sheet

Images taken on Canon Eos Digital SLR camera. I set it on TV (shutter priority) and set a fast shutter in order to ensure that I captured any movement of passengers without blur.

Contact sheet from shoot at village train station. I like the variety of images from stills, location and portrait. I think this is interesting as it documents the whole environment including how it is used. As you are unable to set up the image you are subject to the events and compositions that happen. Although I was able to place myself in the best possible location to view the disembarking passengers, you cannot predict the number of people coming off or their actions. I have realised that I will need to revisit in order to build a collection of images I am happy with from over a number of shoots.

All manipulations have been carried out in Photoshop
I have started all the manipulation experiments by selecting the two images that I want to layer. In some cases I have adjusted the brightness or contrast and / or cropped the image before experimentation to ensure I was happy with the initial image. For all three experiments I have layered the train station image on top of the ticket or map. Depending on the image I have either selected an area I wish to erase with smart edge / magic wand tool or freehand – this depended on whether the area I wanted to make transparent was a single or similar colour for example the pathway on image two. With the brick wall in image three I needed to select the area I wanted to erase freehand.

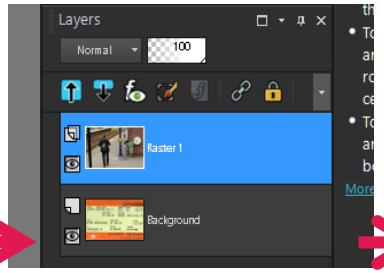
All images taken on Canon DSLR, 28-80 lens



Creative experimentation for final proposal

Original one

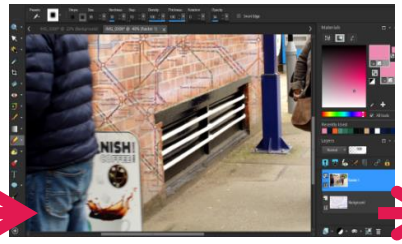
Image showing layering and selected area eraser tool

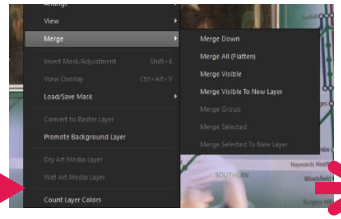


The eraser tool has changed depending on the image, and the area of the image involved. Ensuring the opacity is variable and the edge is feathered allows the image underneath to be hinted at and not to be too harsh.

Original Two

Image showing the two layers (ticket layer underneath). Selected area eraser to expose the ticket image





I really like this idea. I think it could be very exciting to not only visit a number of train stations and take further images. I could source the second layer image so that it is associated with the journey.

Original Three

Underground map and original image. Once layering and image manipulation is completed, it is important to merge both images so that they become one.

Large example of creative experimentation

Self-evaluation

Proposal: *To produce a selection of still images that would be digitally manipulated to explore and document how people travel. I want to show the direct connections to the work of Steve McCurry and Martin Parr.*

Assessment criteria	How I have met this in my preparation work
AO1 Research and record	*Self-assessment 20 marks out of 25* *Although I am really pleased with the selection of appropriate resources and also pleased that I have a range of images I feel that I need to take further images of my own to improve the record element of this assessment criteria. The artists I have chosen are varied, relevant and informative. I am also pleased with the method of image analysis and photographers research.*
AO2 Explore and select	*Self-assessment 17 marks out of 25* *I feel I have met the specific assessment level which states:* • *Confident exploration and selection of relevant media and materials.* *I feel that I have tried a number of creative manipulation methods and that they have been documented with detail. I have reviewed and refined and tried and selection of methods to show layered images and combine the digital collage images and street photography. I have given myself this grade as I feel that I would like to carry out some further practice pieces prior to producing the outcomes to ensure that I am confident in the desired series of images.*
AO3 Develop ideas	*Self-assessment 19 marks out of 25* *I feel I have met the specific assessment level which states:* • *A confident development of ideas* • *Analytical and critical understanding* ***confidently*** *demonstrated through thorough and careful referencing* *I feel that my analysis of the work of artists as well as my own work is thorough and comprehensive. Where I have used varied developmental ideas I think I have documented them well for example using screen shots and labelling step by step activities.*
AO4 Produce	*Self-assessment 16 marks out of 25* *I feel I have meet the specific assessment level which states:* • *A* ***confident*** *realisation of intention demonstrated through a personal digital response* *Within my preparation work. I have analysed some of experimental outcomes and they also show a clear connection to the theme. I have used medium creatively but appropriately. I feel that my outcome proposal images are personal and show a clear idea of how I would develop the theme to produce a series of images.*

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