

# Getting Started on Your Personal Investigation

# What is it?

The Personal Investigation is in two parts:

- A practical project in which you carry out a personal investigation based on an idea, issue, concept or theme.
- Written material which is linked to and supports your chosen focus for study.

# Think of someone or something that really inspires you....

- You will be creating an in depth study into this subject, theme or artists.
- Make sure it is on something that really interests you as your passion for this subject will shine through.
- Are there any new techniques you want to learn? Any artists/designers/photographers you want to find out more about?

**THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY!**

# The Topic should be something that you are genuinely interested in!

The purpose of your Personal Study is to *teach* you something: to help you develop as an artist and to strengthen your understanding of art-related issues. The most successful Personal Studies communicate '*a strong sense of involvement through personal enthusiasm and a commitment to sustain the investigation*'.

Simply speaking, when you are passionate about a topic, you are more likely to do well.



Artwork by Pat Perry

## Primary Imagery ...

You should choose a topic that allows you to view artwork first-hand. The best A2 Art Personal Studies are produced when students view artwork in the flesh (in a gallery or museum exhibition, for example), and sometimes are able to meet and interview the artist or designer and see their methods of working. This gives opportunity for the work to be understood in great detail (seeing true colours, textural surface qualities and the real scale of the piece) and encourages truly personal responses. Examiners frequently report that lower grade Personal Studies ignore this requirement and depend more heavily on secondary sources: lifeless reproductions from books and the internet.



## Contrasting and Comparing Artists ...

Studying the work of a mainstream or critically acclaimed artist alongside a local artist can be beneficial, especially if the local artist is less established. This gives you the best of both worlds (the enthusiasm and first-hand contact from a local artist, plus the insight that comes from studying historical, contemporary and/or international artists who work in another cultural context). You may, for example, choose to focus on two artists who paint the same subject in a different way, or to discuss the influence of a famous artist on a local painter. It should be noted that the examiners understand that many students will not be able to see all of the artworks they study in the flesh, so supporting first-hand study with those viewed in reproduction is absolutely acceptable.



# *What makes an outstanding Personal Investigation?*

- **In-depth mind map of ideas** (include: key themes, type of Art, methods Artist had used, linking Artists. *Why do you want to look at this Artist? Explain, show....*)
- **A visual mind map-** a mood board, what do you want to LOOK at, do, copy, explore.
- **Background of Artist-** (what inspired them, techniques used in detail!, key themes, where did they exhibit? Why? Beliefs, )
- **Good images!** Images of their work that INSPIRE YOU. Only put in images of artwork you wouldn't mind replicating. Draw these images! Discuss shape, form ,texture, why you like it-be specific, in depth.
- **Observational Drawing –** Draw from life, draw what the artist's inspiration was, draw your own ideas of work you might want to make as you go along
- **Make links-** what artists are linked with them? Same techniques, location, movement,
- **Visit the work in life**, draw it, paint it, document this well. Visit the Artist, studio, interview them.

- **Where are you going to take this research?** What do you want to make create? Draw it plan it, show examples of colour, texture, shape. Bring in your own inspiration, take photos
- **Explore techniques!!!** Try as many different techniques/mediums associated with the artist as you can and other ones you like as well
- **Working in the style of the Artist –** Be as authentic as you can, make notes of how you found this experience, what you discovered, what bits you liked/didn't. who else has worked in this way?
- **Presentation-** present it in a way that suits the type of work you will be doing, sketchbook? Big? Small? Colourful? Neat? Digital?
- **Ask for help!** Most lessons will take the form of individual tutorials. Whilst it is an expectation that you as A2 students should be able to work independently, you must ask us if you are stuck or need help. We do our utmost to see everyone each lesson, but if you need us urgently – grab us!
- **Ask Questions.** You might learn better verbally than on the computer, ask, talk, pester. make notes

# Along with a written essay, 1000-3000 words (with supporting images)

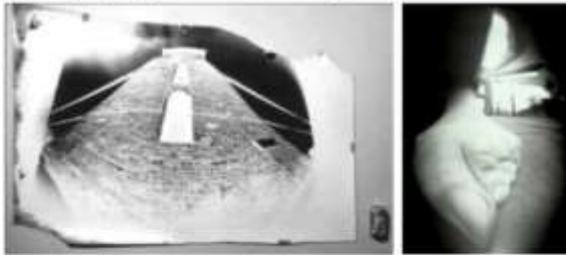
Hannah Rewbury

## A2 Photography Proposal Documentary Photography

For my first project of the A2 year I have decided to do something more challenging, with my confidence of various techniques and skills being built from the first year, for example pinhole photography, film techniques, darkroom skills and Photoshop features. With a wide decided theme of documentary photography, it will allow me to explore and expand various ideas and experiment with the different ways in which "personalities" are expressed through body features and style. As I develop through this independent study onto the second half of my project, I hope to advance on from the first half into more depth within the second half developing fresh techniques that I will have learnt during workshops within class such as liquid emulsion, selenium toning, flashing, and a variety of film formats.

My first idea to begin the project is to revisit the basics of photography through expanding my knowledge of pinhole photography by creating a 360 degrees pinhole. I will do this by transforming a round tin to make a pinhole camera through various stages, for example making the Pinholes and also a round barrel within the centre of the camera to attach the paper (explanation of stages within sketchbook). My aim is to document people's feet, by placing the tin within a crowded area and documenting not only their style but also their whereabouts throughout the day.

Justin Quinnell is a professional pinhole photographer who often visits the college and I hope to receive some information, facts and feedback about the creation of my pinhole camera and my images. After a visit within AS photography last year Justin Quinnell showed us a portfolio of his own images and the different angles and paths that images can be created through pinhole photography. Here are some examples of his work...



This is what I love about pinhole photography, the idea that you can capture an image with amazing quality through something as simple as a beer can. These are examples of Justin Quinnell's work; I really like the image of his foot next to the Clifton Bridge, and may develop this idea.

However I also want to get more use out of the college studio, experimenting with various lighting techniques suiting and matching the main feature within the composition. An idea I have for this style of photography would be to document different peoples shoes. This would relate well to my initial idea of expressing people's personalities through an angle of fashion. With the use of the studio and a range of cameras I would like to experiment with large format film, enabling the maximum quality to be shown within my images.

With an upcoming trip to Bristol visiting Martin Parr's exhibition at the M Shed gallery, this would be a perfect opportunity to collect information first hand about documentary photography especially when viewing Martin Parr's style and techniques within his images.

Hannah Rewbury

After visiting the exhibition I would like to create my own images within the style of this photographer, taking my digital camera around the city of Bristol documenting people around the city. This would give me a range of images to edit using the programme Photoshop, enhancing my images to the way that I feel an audience viewing my images should feel, complimenting the personality expressed by the subject within the composition of the image.



The two images above are images taken by the photographer Martin Parr. These two images are two of my favorites, with the reason being the relation to my project about documenting people's personalities. Both images may look simple, however they allow the audience to view their personalities mainly in a comical way.

With all of these ideas I want to experiment with various techniques within the darkroom process with tonners such as sepia and selenium as well as weak bleach helping to tweak my images enabling contrast to be added and a slightly over exposed print to be corrected slightly. I will demonstrate within my sketchbook my experimentations as well as my development in ideas from various photographers that I like the style of giving my own interpretation.

After viewing and researching the photographer Steve Pike, I really like the idea of combining portraiture with documentary photography. With this I would combine the portraits of various peoples faces with a feature that expresses a lot of things about that persons personality and life. A feature that I am considering is the hands, by photographing the hands of a person a lot can be said or interpreted about the person. This is one of my strongest ideas and something that I will hopefully develop by capturing the face and hands of various people that I will pick randomly on the street. This way I will have a variety of different ages, genders and most of all personalities. I would like to capture this through the use of the Bronica camera a medium format film, enabling quality to be given to the image, allowing me to extend my uses within the darkroom.

With various workshops being held within my classes I hope to develop the ideas taught and shown relating them back to my idea and theme. For example one of the main focuses within the A2 year is the demonstration of both medium and large format film as well as the way the cameras function. With all of this information enabling processed and documented within my sketchbook I want to expand this knowledge and practice using the cameras and the film.

# Practical sketchbook investigation



REVERSE

One of Saville's other paintings, 'Reverse' (2003), portrays a woman's face who appears to be dead, however it is not the same as her earlier paintings, with yellow-grey skin, it is by contrast a painting full of colour, the most noticeable being the unexpected, again like blood, 'What makes the figure seem dead is the glazed, staring look in her eyes and the glossy/dewy effect appearing on the skin surface, it is also highlighted by the fact that there is a reflection of the face, suggesting the woman is either lying or has fallen on her floor, or is again, as I suggested before, on one of the tables in a morgue (which are usually metal).

This woman's face does in fact share some similarities, in colour and the use of paint, to that of Bower's face painted by Ferial. Both artists portray the flesh in these paintings, using heavy brush strokes which help to create the form and contours of the face - the paint is applied quite liberally, although it is often thinned in those by Saville. The colours are again, very similar, they both tend to use red, yellow, white, with hints of blue and green showing through to create the realistic tones of human skin.

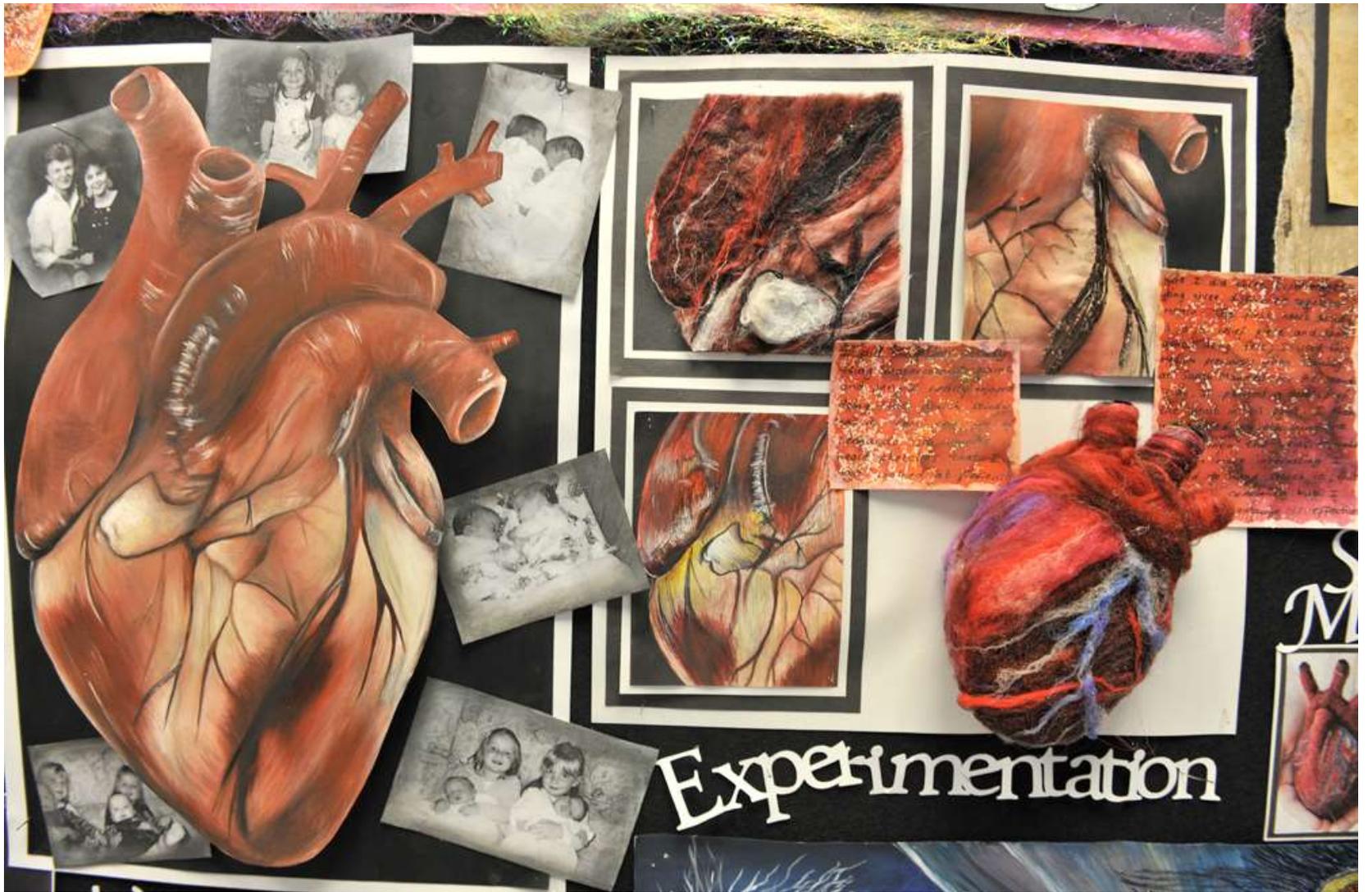
PAUSE

However, just work from last year (2011), shows her starting to experiment more with red tones. The painting 'Pause', has been done using the same yellow tones for the upper body and the underwear, contrasted with the broad, loose brush strokes, leaving the two to merge, appearing only as flesh or hair glazes, but if you study the picture you discover that the woman does in fact have some hints of glazing on. Whereas, the hands and the face have been painted with red tones and will still draw attention to detail, and are therefore the most pronounced feature within the painting as a whole making the figure appear as if she could be sweating blood.

The face has obviously been painted using a woman who has recently endured plastic surgery, and as a result she has yellowing around and blood running down her face. Which is in a way ironic, as the closely went through all that to appear more beautiful or younger, but has ended up probably looking far worse than she has ever done before. The features of the face are full of anguish, it is clear that this woman is in agony, her eyes are shut tight (perhaps due to swelling), and her mouth is open, the viewer would almost certainly feel sorry for her, as it is society that has forced her to make these huge changes to her body and put her through such pain.



BOWER'S FACE



Experimentation

## Your Title ...

Word your title so that it captures the essence of your personal study and indicates a well-chosen focus.

For example:

*'The Portraiture of [artist name]:  
An Appreciation of Light and  
Colour'*

is more appropriate than

*'Portraiture in Art'*



This excerpt from an 100% A Level Art Personal Study by Yantra Scott entitled

## ‘An investigation into gender roles in contemporary art’

I first encountered Sarah Lucas whilst briskly strolling through the crowded rooms of the Tate. Amongst oils and finely crafted sculpture my eyes were transfixed in a two-way glare with a slightly butch, totally intense woman, with eggs for \*\*\*\*\*. Ever since then I’ve been hooked.

It is evident that Yantra not only visited and viewed artwork in the flesh, but had a strong personal reaction to it. It could never be assumed that this segment had been reworded from a textbook: it is absolutely the words of a passionate high school Art student. Although Yantra uses coarse language within her study (something which should be emulated with caution) this project is an exceptional example of an intelligent and personal response to a topic.



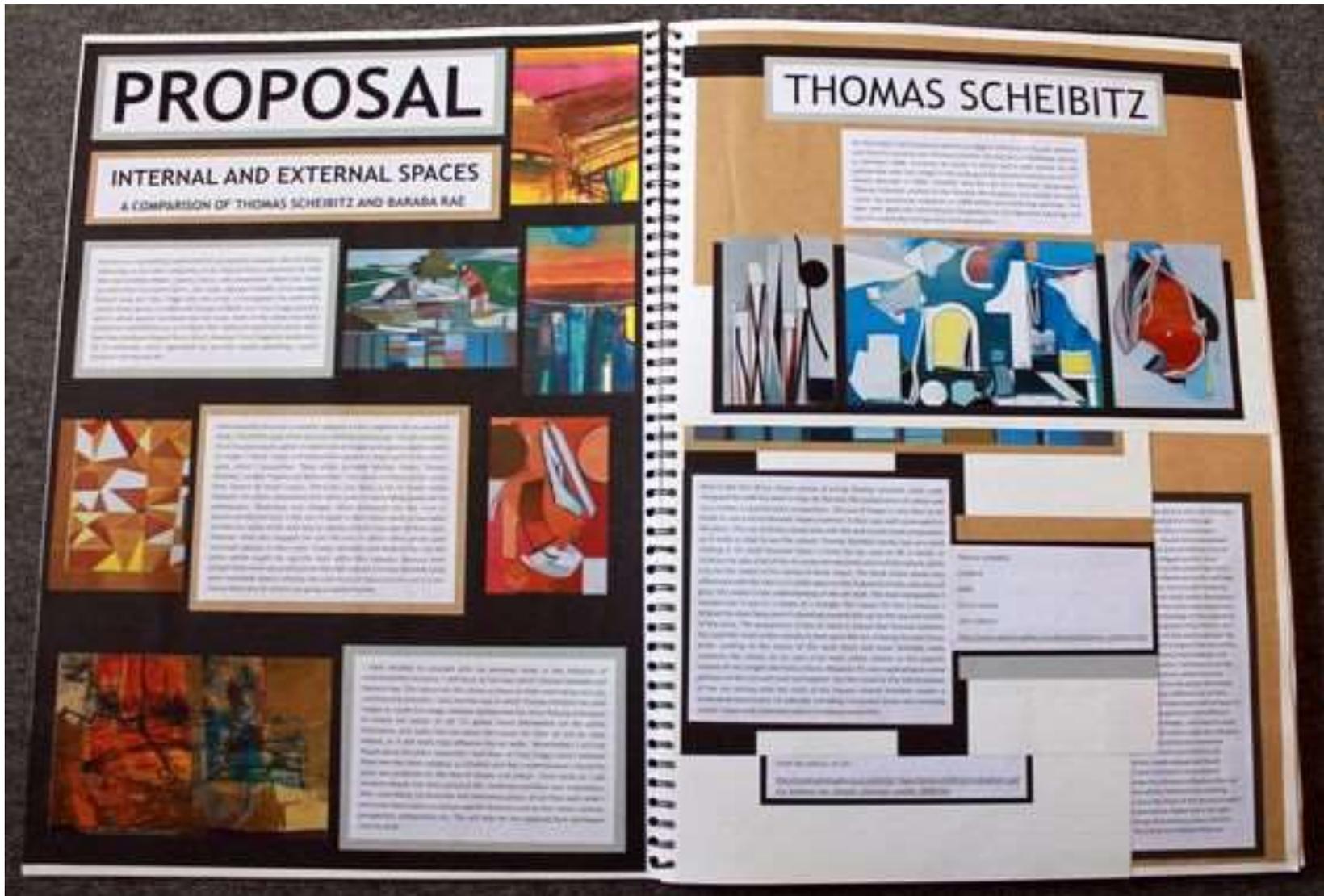
Similarly, this quote from an 88% OCR A2 Art Personal Study (one of the examples given in the OCR A2 Art Exemplar Work – Personal Study document) shows a personal response integrated within the analysis of Damien Hirst's work, illustrated below.

**“ A study into conceptual art focusing on the work of Damien Hirst’**

The glass is thick, so thick that it is intimidating. It is as if it is holding something terrible back. It makes you question the formaldehyde and query, what if the tank did break? The formaldehyde is not clear as I expected but is quite strongly coloured by a blue and green pigment. This colour is very clinical and has the connotations of a hospital...



# INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SPACES



# YOUR TASK FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS

- You will need to complete an in depth investigation into your chosen artist/subject. You must first think about who you want to study and complete a page on your thoughts on the work **PRE STUDYING IT IN DETAIL.**  
How do you think it will make you feel?  
What size is it?  
What is the texture like?  
What emotion does it portray?
- **You need to find a virtual tour to see the work to gain understanding of it.** Then once again complete a page on your feelings and investigation, how has this now changed?
- You must record all your findings and complete at least 4 observations on the work.
- This must be presented in a handmade or shop bought book.