Beyond the Frame: Collaborating on an Undergraduate Research experience

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Originating from a project supported by the University of Manitoba’s Undergraduate Research Award program, this study is based around a book-in-progress on the intersections of photography and design. It examines the concept of cooperative exchange between advisor and advisee that evolved as the research progressed. Specifically, in our mentorship, the research assistant developed as an independent researcher, which enabled a more egalitarian collaboration. While in part calling for conventional research activities, our agenda extended beyond database searches and literature reviews. Uniquely, the structure of our alternative photographic research positions participants in a context favourable to advance research skills, competence in critical thinking and reading, and independent agency for future studies. Three transformative factors of this procedure include an open, anti-hierarchical approach, foundational instruction in visual literacy, and, lastly, affordance for project growth. Our exploration considers forms and guiding principles for use as a model for other alternative photographic research studies. Informed by the methodology of cultural analysis and feminist theory, our work highlights the writings of Mieke Bal, W. J. T. Mitchell, Roland Barthes, and Susan Close as a framework. Our investigation draws on concepts of interdisciplinarity, agency, and collaboration. The final outcome of the project was a voice for this research in the surrounding design communities.
• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):
Dr. Susan Close is Associate Dean (Research) at the Faculty of Architecture and Acting Dean of Studies at St. John’s College, both at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. Close’s book *Framing Identity: Social Practice of Photography in Canada (1880-1920)* addressed how Canadian women at the turn of the twentieth century made photographs as a social practice to establish identity. Her current teaching includes interdisciplinary courses about design history, theory and photography. She has presented at art history, history and design conferences nationally and internationally. Close is also a photographer with work in both national and international collections. She is currently working on a manuscript on the intersection of photography and the built environment. This study contains three central themes: ‘Histories and Narratives,’ ‘Decategorizing and Metaphor’ and ‘Issues and Agency.’ Each section provides a close reading informed by a cultural analysis perspective of photographs concerning concepts that include placemaking, mise-en-scene, narrative, settlement and surveillance, as well as issues such as photographic social activism and its relationship to the built environment.

Lindsay Mamchur has worked as a research assistant for the last two years on a book-in-progress related to the intersections of photography and design. Mamchur co-designed and manages the project website and social media. In 2019, she won first place in the Creative Works category at the Undergraduate Research Award Poster Competition for her entry, *Reading Photographs: Robert Adams’ Sunday School*. Currently, Mamchur is a fourth-year student in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba who will graduate in the spring of 2021 with a Bachelor of Environmental Design. Since the outset of a research mentorship with Dr. Susan Close, her interest in photography, history, and critical theory has grown immensely. She looks forward to continue developing as a researcher and photographer in graduate school.