



Final Major Project Proposal

Jeff Hicks

PHO750: June 2023

Fig. 1: Hicks 2023. *Untitled*

Introduction

The theme of my Final Major Project (FMP) will be to explore and show the conflict created and encountered, on the River Stour's journey from its source to its eventual convergence with the sea.

I will focus on two main areas: The first is to document the life of the river itself, as it follows its course through the region. It silently influences so many areas of our lives. Where we can travel, dictated by the roads and paths that follow and cross it, and bridges that span it. Where we can live and work due to flood plains and run-offs required to cope with exceptional weather circumstances. And, of course, to record the constantly changing aspects that the seasons generate.

Secondly, the adversity that the Environment Agency (EA) encounters in managing and taming the river on its journey. There are conflicts that must be conceded, allowing rural spaces to become temporary reservoirs to protect residential areas. The work is relentless and mostly hidden from view.

I will be delving deeper into the use of film in the style of gonzo journalism. My work places me at the centre of this story, in a personal and participatory manner and allows me to tell it from an inside perspective. I'm also able to access places that are prohibited to the public and offer insight from that unique viewpoint.

I will continue to use vintage cameras and techniques that I have trialled, with great success. In previous modules, there was an element of experimentation that I would like to further explore and pursue in this FMP. The cardboard box camera produced exciting results that I will revisit, with the added unknown of 'movement' that inextricably exists when capturing the river. I will also be exploring an element of moving imagery to complement the static representation of flowing water.



Fig. 2: Hicks 2023. *Untitled*

Display of Work

I'm lucky enough to live in a town that promotes itself as an Art School (fig. 3). There is a Creative Quarter with artists' studios and many exhibition spaces. There are also event venues, and small retail units within the Creative Quarter that can be rented for short periods and have great footfall. I have approached a number of possible spaces but am still to decide which would work best, considering budget and logistic constraints.

I will produce and display a body of work that records and represents the life of the River Stour on its journey from source to sea. It will educate and inform the public of the vital work of the EA in managing the river and mitigating situations that might adversely affect residential areas. This work will be displayed in a way that attracts public interest, promotes discourse, and encourages feedback.

I plan to find a space that will allow me to create an immersive experience for the visitor. Displaying moving imagery on multiple surfaces to suggest the feeling of being under a bridge with the river flowing by. Dappled light bouncing from the ceiling and walls and the constant sound of the water's movement as it passes by. This will create an atmospheric 'backdrop' for my finished work when displayed.

I'd also be keen to show the work during the summer of 2024, as a series of rotating images on the large screen, that is permanently sited on The Harbour Arm in Folkestone (fig. 4).



Fig. 3: Bal 2017. [Sign at Folkestone Railway Station]



Fig. 4: Unknown maker. Date unknown. [The Harbour Screen]



Fig. 5: Unknown maker. 2022. [F51 Event space]

Development

My role within a field team at the EA takes me to many different places along the waterways of Kent. The work changes according to the season. Ground conditions and vegetation vary, and water levels fluctuate. It's difficult work, but hugely rewarding.

The weather influences and controls the response required from the team. During periods of good weather, we are preparing and planning for the rain. When the rain arrives, we must become more reactive. Micromanaging the water levels, whilst taking into consideration the safety of the team. Most of the risks have been mitigated with thorough training but they are still present, due to the inherent danger of working in or near water.

I will be taking various cameras on location with me whilst working, and this will present another series of obstacles. There is a small window of time to set up and take a photograph before or after work. Plus, the remote locations and lack of access to a dark room or studio mean that I'm only able to produce one exposure a day, with certain cameras. Early trials, however, have enabled me to expedite the process with the 110-year-old 1/6th plate camera. I will be inserting sheet film behind the glass plate holder. This will significantly improve the workflow.

There are no waterproof housings available for vintage (or cardboard) cameras, which is a very big concern especially if taking photographs while in the river, which I aim to do. I will also be exploring an element of moving imagery to complement the static representation of flowing water. I'm hoping that this will create an atmospheric 'backdrop' for my finished work when displayed.



Fig. 6: Hicks 2023. *Ancient*



Fig. 7: Hicks 2023. *Glass plate holder*

Sustainability

The project will have a very low carbon footprint. I will be collaborating with the EA for my FMP and traveling to locations for reasons of work only - bringing one or more cameras and shooting while there. This reduces any extra travel but also is a true representation of my work and the variations that occur in the river. I will continue to photograph the river, the team of workers, and the people that the river affects for the foreseeable future adding to the sustainability of this project.

The cameras I've chosen to use are all old and have been repaired by me to bring them back into use. This means that they have been saved from landfill and negated the need to purchase new cameras. To further reduce waste, I have a bulk film loader and a large collection of empty 35mm film canisters that I have been refilling and reusing when working with my reconditioned 35mm cameras.

Using film as the medium means no unnecessary use of computers and, therefore, the cloud storage of the images and the power that entails. I will be attempting to use eco-friendly chemicals and will use the river water itself in the developing process.



Fig. 8: Hicks 2023. *Untitled*

Impact Assessment

When assessing the impact of this project I have reviewed its suitability and considered any costs involved. In both, it performs well with a low carbon footprint and minimal expenditure. Where there are costs incurred, they will be for essential items only. I believe the value of the project in terms of education and information will far outweigh these costs.

My intention is to document the life of the river and the work of the team that manages it. Public opinion of EA is low as I believe that most are unaware of the conflict that occurs daily when managing rivers. When my images are displayed, I hope to sway negative opinions that the public may hold and promote the work of the EA.



Fig. 9: Hicks 2023. *Untitled*

Influences & Research

I've hugely enjoyed the research element of the previous modules. It has led me to discover photographers whose work has been influential and inspiring to me. For this module, without a reading list, I plan to start my research by reviewing the work and writing of photographers that I have found empathy with and allow their work and influences to organically open new directions for further research.

I will explore ideas connected to Yang Wan Preston's 'Mother River'. Roseanne Lynch, Joseph Wright, Olafur Eliasson, and Andreas Gurski all interest me, and I will be looking to evolve my practice by researching their work.

Susan Derges inspires me to push my methodology and experimentation. Over twenty years ago she began a series of river prints, capturing the continuous movement of water by submerging photographic paper into rivers. Working at night, she used the light of the moon and a micro-second of flashlight to expose images directly onto light-sensitive paper. My manual cameras and hours of work may not allow me to be as ambitious as Derges, but like her, I aim to incorporate the physical elements of the river into my practice.

JH Engström's ability to capture people in their own environment is astonishing. His work is semi-autobiographical but shows his connection with others and the importance of community. This is my aim. The images will be about me, but also my place as part of a team and the work that we as ordinary people perform every day unseen by the public.



Fig. 10: Hicks 2023. *Untitled*

Timeline

June/July

Initial Research
Development of methodology
Test shooting and location scouting
Source and book
Exhibition location

August

Confirm viability of project
Start shooting and exploring locations

September

Continue shooting
Selection and editing of initial photos
Introduction of CRoP

October

Revisit locations re: Season change - are the photos better?
Selection and editing of additional photos
Write CRoP

November

Revisit locations re: Season change - are the photos better?
Selection and editing of additional photos
Finalise CRoP

December

Exhibit
Submit

Risk Assessment

Student Name:	Jeff Hicks
Programme:	MA Photography
Activity/Equipment being assessed:	Photographing in or near water
Location:	River Stour, Great Stour, Little Stour, East Stour and Upper Stour, Kent

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	Inherent risk score (before control measures)	Control Measures What are you already doing?	Residual risk score (after control measures)
Slips, trips and falls	Everyone	6	Explain the dangers of the area and point out typical hazards.	4
Hyperthermia	Everyone	6	Make sure all persons are well hydrated, in shade and wearing appropriate clothing.	4
Drowning	Everyone in or near water	15	Everyone in or near water to wear life jackets and have current water safety training. 2x Spotters to carry throwlines and keep public away.	5
Hidden sub surface objects	Anyone in the water	9	Wear correct PPE, Safety chest waders S5, use of wading poles to feel for objects	3
Being carried away in the current	Anyone in the water	3	Do not enter fast flowing water or over thigh depth	1

Risk Assessment: Continued

Assessment carried out by:	Jeff Hicks	Assessment shared with:	Falmouth University
Date written:	6-6-2023	Date of last review:	

Likelihood of occurrence	Likelihood Level	Severity of harm	Severity Level
Very Unlikely	1	Very minor injury	1
Unlikely	2	Minor injury - less than 3-day injury	2
Possible	3	Major injury – over 3-day injury	3
Likely	4	Severe injury – RIDDOR Reportable	4
Very Likely	5	Fatality	5

Risk Assessment: Continued

Likelihood	Severity				
	Very minor injury	Minor injury - less than 3-day injury	Major injury - over 3-day injury	Severe injury - RIDDOR Reportable	Fatality
Very Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5
Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
Possible	3	6	9	12	15
Likely	4	8	12	16	20
Very Likely	5	10	15	20	25

Score	Risk Level
1-5	Low Risk
6-12	Medium Risk
15 - 25	High Risk



Fig. 11: Hicks 2023. *Untitled*

Bibliography

HORN, Roni. 1999. *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example): Images G, H, and N*. Available at: <https://www.artnet.com/artists/roni-horn/still-water-the-river-thames-for-example-images-g-1SYQZoj2fmM8DeqVS3PGUg2> [Accessed 8 Jun 2023].

PRESTON, Yan Wang. 2023. *Mother River Photobook by Yan Wang Preston*. - Yanpreston. Available at: <https://www.yanwangpreston.com/book-shop/mother-river> [Accessed 8 Jun 2023].

Figures

Figure 1. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 2. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 3. Bal 2017. *Unknown Title*. Available at: <https://www.creativefolkestone.org.uk/news/2018/08/fiaas-panel-2018/>

Figure 4. Unknown maker. Date unknown. *Unknown Title*. Available at: <https://folkestoneharbourarm.co.uk/the-harbour-screen/>

Figure 5. Unknown maker. 2022. *Unknown Title*. Available at: <https://f51.co.uk/EVENT+SPACE>

Figure 6. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 7. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 8. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 9. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 10. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 11. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

Figure 12. Hicks 2023. *Untitled*.

