Ameena Rojee's Photobook advice

General Advice

- Print everything . This is really important, especially when doing a book, as it's very difficult to visualise how your photographs and edit will flow if it's only on a screen. I use is DS Colour Labs who are really cheap for printing in bulk but still with nice paper.

- Similarly, if you can, make a dummy version of the book you have in mind just using cheap paper and photos printed on your school printer, hand-writing any text you have. This is a really good method to help you visualise the end result and see how it will all work together.

- Take breaks from looking at your images. Sometimes you end up looking at your work so much that you get tunnel vision, and it really hinders progress. So take a day off or more if possible, and you'll be able to come back with refreshed eyes.

- Find books you like and make a list of what you like about them and what you don't like and why. This is an easy way to decide what kind of book you want to do and find out what aspects of book-making that you do and don't like.

- Use social media to put your work out while it's still in progress and ask for opinions on everything - on your edit and how your images all work in the edit that you've put together, what people think about images that you're not sure about, what they think about your dummy if you make one. Instagram stories is particularly good for this. At the same time, it gets people interested in you and your work.

- In a similar vein, try and get in touch with 2 to 3 photographers or industry people who you admire and approach them. Introduce yourself and tell them what you like about them/their work, and approach them about showing them your work.

- As well as that, get others - your friends, family, other teachers etc - to look at your work and tell you what they honestly think. It's important to understand what others see in your work and to get fresh eyes on it. It's also important to get people who don't practice photography to look at your work, as they may see things you don't or they may not understand something that you could better explain or show.

- If you have friends who are good at certain things, get them to help you - for example, is someone you know good at design? See what they think of your book design or ask them for input. If you have text, see if you can find someone who is good at grammar and words to check your writing. When you make a book, you have to become several different kinds of people - a photographer, designer, writer, curator, editor, craftsperson... Use all the resources you have available!

Sequencing & Editing

This is one of the hardest parts of photography. Not only is it something you need to do for professional work or commissions, but you also need to be to be to do so for your own personal work and projects.

A lot of professional and reputable photographers are not able to edit their own work. It's a massively important skill that requires practice: doing it over and over again, making work constantly and looking at other people's work all the time. One of the things I most miss about university is having that community and support from tutors everyday who were able to help and guide my editing and sequencing. Some tips:

- When editing down your work (i.e cutting the bad images and photographs out), be absolutely ruthless. You want to always start with the strongest images, so get rid of every image you're not 100% sure about. You can always add more images in again later.

- Similarly, while a photobook can be made up of a huge number of images, each image should be a strong photograph in itself and should be able to stand on its own. If not, get rid of it.

- When it comes to sequencing and editing your work, it all completely depends on how you like to work and your personal preferences, but there are several ways you can start that will help you develop an edit you are happy with. Here are some ways:
  - Pair all your images up - you can do this by images you think go well together, images that match, images that contrast each other etc. or images that have a link in the stories that they tell.
  - Put them in chronological order
  - Put them in order of something else - perhaps it's a journey and it's in order of the locations you visited, or if it's portraits, put them in order of the people you photographed
  - Choose the image you think is the strongest beginning, and the strongest end. Then slowly fill the middle with the rest.
  - Think about the topic of your work, and perhaps there's a narrative there with which can help you connect your images. For example, in my Camino work I went on a journey but I didn't want to just put the images in chronological order or order of the places I went too - I felt it was too simple and didn't really put forward to the viewers what I wanted it to. Someone suggested to me that I write down a selection of words I associated with the project... 'Heat', 'Pain', 'Tiredness', 'Beauty', 'Solitude'... Write as many as you can think of, then whittle them down to maybe 5 - 10 of the words which most relate to your photographs. Then, choose the images which most match these words and tell the story that you want, and work on making an edit out of those.

- Print every photograph and stick them up on any available space with blu tac etc. Somewhere you can leave them up for a long time. Every day when you get up in the morning or when you come home from school or just before you go to bed, see if there are any changes you want to make - perhaps there's an image you don't think is very strong anymore, or it works better next to a different image. Move things around, remove and add photos back in.

- When you're sequencing and editing your work, don't worry about being too obvious with it and don't feel that you need to start with something complex and "interesting". Simple can be interesting. Start off with a simple method, and eventually you will start making deeper connections and links between your images and realising more and more about each image that will influence your decision. Take it step by step.

- Eventually you will start seeing new connections and ideas, new stories within your photographs. Things you might've totally missed even when you took the photograph. You'll see images that no longer work, or images you thought were really strong that actually weren't and the other way around. And at some point, you will have a sequence that you're happy with - once you think you have your final sequence, get some final thoughts on it from people who haven't seen it before at all. Then take another break from it, and go back to it one last time and see if there's anything you want to change. Keep doing this until you don't want to change anything and you're sure about each and every image.