

## FRAMING and COMPOSITION

The widespread use of photography as a documentary medium presents photographs to the public that give it all to the viewer without requiring a response. This is one-way communication. The goal in this case is to impart information quickly and cleanly. These pictures will not keep the viewer's attention for very long. People are happy just to identify what it is a picture of and then move on.

In the Art world we are interested in two-way communication. It is important, therefore, to make images that raise questions that involve the viewer in a conversation. Meaningful images inspire their audience to compare their personal experiences with those of the photo-artist, using the photograph as linkage.

This end is achieved by creating images with a sense of **mystery**. Photographs that are filled with clues rather than facts are far more interesting. The artist must be clear about the questions their photos raise. If the motivation behind a photo is confused then the best one can hope for is a confused audience.

In general, the assignment for the semester is to make photographs with **mystery, passion and meaning**, using **light** as the paintbrush. The first endeavor is to imbue your photos with a sense of mystery using a whole series of visual tools.

### Extrapolation

An interesting technique is to take whatever you are doing and figure out the most extreme example of that. Extrapolate it out to its logical conclusion. Below are some shooting strategies, followed by extrapolations to their extremes.

### *MYSTERY through composition & framing*

#### COMPOSITION

##### [STRATEGY >> CLOSENESS/ PROXIMITY]

- remove all the unnecessary clutter or distractions from the image
- cameras do not have editing filters that the mind supplies for vision

- look carefully at you subject - take your time!

- position the subject inside the viewfinder

  - get close enough to remove all unwanted background

  - make sure you fill the frame with only meaningful content

- moving closer eliminates any undesired elements

  - if you can step closer and remove unnecessary things from your image

    - and the image is no worse, it has been improved, by default!

  - this is called "economy of means" - saying much with few words

##### [EXTRAPOLATION >> FRAGMENTATION]

  - get so close that you literally fragment the subject,

    - making it more abstract

  - focus on the geometrical structure of the subject

##### [STRATEGY >> UNIQUE ANGLE OF VIEW/ ATTITUDE]

- establish a good shooting angle

  - never shoot from eye level

  - much of our lives are spent looking at the world from 5' 6" off the ground

  - this is where most people see the world from, i.e. the most boring viewpoint

  - put a new perspective on things that may be somewhat ordinary

- shooting from a unique angle shows the photo is through the photographer's eye,

  - not just about the appearance of the subject

##### [EXTRAPOLATION >> BIRD'S EYE/ WORM'S EYE VIEW]

  - find an extreme viewpoint that is rarely seen

[STRATEGY>> LUMINANCE]

light is the bottom line in photography

a camera is merely a box that captures light!

if you are shooting in flat light you will get a flat picture

search for great light

*"if the light sucks, the photo will suck". It is that simple.*

sometimes it is possible make photographs that are just about the quality of light

look for things that either reflect or refract light in peculiar ways

water is a good example of something that both reflects and refracts water

the other side of light is shadow - the absence of light

find things hiding in shadows, or emerging out of the shadows

[EXTRAPOLATION >> DRAMATIC LIGHTING/ DEEP SHADOW]

shoot at dawn, shoot at dusk, or in any unusual or unnatural light

shoot at night and find shadows or hidden features

FRAMING

[STRATEGY>> CORNERS HAVE POWER]

look at the CORNERS of your subject

place important elements of the picture near a corner

*"if the corners are great the rest of the picture will take care of itself"*

a face pushed up into a corner looking across the page can be inspiring

[EXTRAPOLATION >> CUT THINGS AS THEY ARE PUSHED INTO THE CORNERS]

[STRATEGY>> EDGES HAVE POWER]

look at the EDGES

place important aspects of the picture close to an edge

align horizons or prominent lines with the edge of the frame

crooked pictures show a lack of attention

[EXTRAPOLATION >> PUSH HORIZONS TO THE VERY TOP OR VERY BOTTOM OF THE FRAME]

this open up the space and extends the vision

make a painting out of your subject

*"But for me the greatest joy is geometry. Its a sensuous pleasure, an intellectual pleasure at the same time to have everything at the right place. It's a recognition of an order that is in front of you." -HCB*

shoot a picture that is blank except for the edge(s)

Shooting with Intuition

take several shots of each subject

you are not allowed to crop your photos

if you could you would not look carefully, thinking, *"I can fix it later"*

sometimes the best picture is over and inch or down two, and a second later...

*A photograph is an "...Immediate sketch done with intuition and you can't correct it. If you have to correct it, it's your next picture." -HCB "The difference between a good picture and a mediocre picture is a matter of millimeters- small, small differences, but it is essential." "And if I take the picture from there it's another arrangement of that. And it's very small moves I'm doing." -HCB*

refine your vision with each shot

take a shot, move closer, change your angle of view, shoot again, repeat

*"You have to be yourself and you have to forget yourself so that the image comes much stronger, and what you want and what you say." "And sometimes there's no picture. Alright there's no picture." -HCB*

## PASSION

### Relationships -

show connections between objects, the spaces they inhabit,  
and the people with whom they interact  
indicate active situations rather than passive  
force people to compare their emotions with those of the photo

follow this with the description of Passive vs. Active shooting : appearance vs. personal vision

shoot what you are drawn to

this is an intuitive exercise

after collecting a good number of photographs, organize them into groups

consider the groups as chapter in a book.

the book is this semester.

grab the text from the Portfolio document

Also::

look into the consideration of  
and align them with

Space,  
Mystery,

Time,  
Passion,

???  
Meaning

## MEANING

### Ideas -

put forth concepts not to prove a point

but to indicate other possible paths of thought

if something is "not right" in the picture, the viewer will have to figure it out

if a viewer has to think about the picture

they might realize that there is someone alive behind it

This is the "Why?" of the photograph.

## INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION

### PHOTOS & INFORMATION

	<u>SNAP</u>	<u>PRESS</u>	<u>MUSEUM</u>
<u>information</u>			
where is it ?	photographer	photograph	photographer, photo, perceiver
what is it ?	personal	public	philosophical
<u>communication</u>			
	nonologue no communication	monologue one way	dialogue an exchange of information

SNAP shots are images that trigger personal memory. If the viewer has no connection to the content of the image then no impact is made. The photograph is not interesting. Some snap shot style photographers use this "look", but put things that are universal into their pictures that are accessible to most people. Photographs at the family barbecue or company picnic are common examples.

PRESS shots are mostly interested in providing as much information as possible in as direct a way as possible. They do not want you to have to stop and ponder. These images provide answers to questions. The picture on the front page of the newspaper showing today's major event or the picture on the back page telling you to buy today's product are good examples.

MUSEUM shots ask questions. They want you to stop and think and feel how they relate to your life. Successful images make you reach into your personal experience and compare your life with that of the photographer who took the shot. The photograph is not an end in itself, but rather, serves as linkage to connect the audience and the artist.

### IMAGEMAKING

philosophy - to establish a personal point of view, to have something to say

problem - to define a particular set of points that can be discussed through images

process - to create a language, both aesthetic and technical, to discuss the problem

product - to present a body of work that articulates the philosophy of the artist

### THE FOUR DISCIPLINES

h a n d - VISUAL  
h e a r t - EMOTIONAL  
h e a d - CONCEPTUAL  
w h o l e - SPIRITUAL

Images that present only the visual do not go far enough. If your photographs look nice and do nothing else, then you are just decorating the world, and that will not suffice. The point is to evoke a meaningful response from a viewer – one that evolves emotions and ideas. You have to feel something and think something about the subject, and then try to get this into the photograph. It does not have to be something pretentious or monumental. It just has to be honest. The visual is necessary to get you to this point, because it serves as the platform from which the content is presented.