

## MEMORY / VINTAGE

### TIME

Creating a sense of **SPACE** in a photograph constructs an environment in which your viewers can spend time. Once you have this, you have the potential to present evidence of **PAST** events in this location. Or the possibility of **FUTURE** events can be hinted at. Or even the absence of time, aka timelessness, can be the point. In this way nothingness can be something. [re: Zen Philosophy]

In all of these instances we are using **TIME** as the main variable. Many beginning photos are about how things appear in present time, but time stretches in both directions. Time in the past resides in our **MEMORY**. Future time is in our dreams and is a product of our **IMAGINATION**. Timelessness can be a strong emotional state if one feels suspended in it.

The term **VINTAGE** refers to the past. The Vintage Effect in photography is becoming very popular with Smartphone and Lomography photographers. But first we must understand the meaning of the word vintage. Some definitions of the word Vintage include:

- representing the high quality of a past time; classic: e.g. vintage movies.
- of, imitating, or being a style or fashion of the past; retro: e.g. vintage clothing.
- old-fashioned or obsolete.
- too old to be considered modern, but not old enough to be considered antique.

### MEMORY

The word **VINTAGE** has both good and bad connotations, but since this all has to do with images from the past, it all has to do with **MEMORY**. When organizing the content in your photos you have to think about how we remember things, places, events, people, etc.

It is said that we only remember the good sides of things. Maybe vintage implies some kind of positive emotional attitude. But there are also nightmares – bad memories. You could follow this course of thought as well.

For example, I had a student who went back to the sites where significant and usually traumatic things happened in her life. She shot self-portraits at those locations. You never knew what the exact story was, but the feelings were strong. Another student went back to her high school steps and superimposed a current self-portrait over a shot her friends had taken before they graduated. Each photograph was made translucent (by lowering the opacity of each image) so neither really seemed 'real'.

Another way to create translucent people is to shoot with a long shutter speed and have the subject person move slowly through the frame, or stand still for half the exposure time and then quickly move out.

### LEGACY

In the photographic world, **VINTAGE** is often used to refer to photographs shot on film that are usually at least 20 years old. These prints are now fading and the colors have shifted. Another variation of the vintage look is the Instant Film look a.k.a. Polaroid. These prints also have their own peculiar color balance and the color of these prints shifts through time in a different direction from that of conventional film. Yet another variation is a technique known as cross-processing. This is when positive color film (for slides) is developed in the chemicals for negative film (for prints), or vice versa. This creates unusual color shifts that are somewhat unpredictable. Other photographers have found

old film that has been damaged and have made prints from these negatives. I had a student who would boil her film and then freeze it, producing a 'damaged' or broken look. This gets into the territory of 'marks made from process', aka intuitive, or improvisational, or unintentional, all of which are part of another conversation that we will get to...

The key point in all of these examples is that the colors are not "normal". There is a precedent in the amount and direction of the color shifting because all this came from chemical film processes. In digital photography we often try to emulate chemical processes. After all, this is our legacy. This is where the vocabulary of photography comes from. Digital technology now gives us the power to push things a little bit further and in directions that were not previously possible. But you have to be careful. If you push things just enough you get really interesting looking photographs because they are within the realm of believability. If you push things too far you get photos that just look weird or worse, fake, aka unbelievable.

#### VINTAGE / RETRO

We return to the question: What is the vintage look and, more importantly, **why** would one want to use it? If you answered, "Because it looks cool", then you are missing the point. Vintage refers to photographs that look old. What are the attributes of old photographs other than the technical described above? The colors are faded, the edges are bent, the saturation is reduced, the details are unclear, and so on. How do these attributes line up with potential content? The **FORM** of any piece must reflect or support the **CONTENT**. If you are making photos that deal with the past, then you should have a specific memory or type of memory of a kind of situation in mind when shooting. If you are making photographs about faded memories where the details are less clear, and the feeling has gotten softer and fuzzier, then maybe the vintage style supports this content.

You should go through the list of fx that are attainable with various Photoshop strategies and experiment with them to see what visual modifications they produce. When you have some of that under your belt, stop and think about what photographic content would be best expressed using these appearances. Then make those photographs. And you may not be able to just walk around and wait for the world to hand you photographs. You may have to make them happen. This is where the photographer moves from being a 'gatherer' to being a 'hunter', aka a person who makes photographs happen. [ref: [Intuitive vs. Directed Shooting](#) ]

Remember to share your experiments with your classmates. Please let the class know early if you find any other process that work well. People are encouraged to find new ways of doing things that are different from what is prescribed. These people will get better grades. Share any discoveries and how you have used these tools by posting entries to the **CLASS BLOG** site.

note: be sure to avoid the obvious photo clichés, e.g. the expressive hands of old people, aka pictures of your parents or grandparents, the gnarled roots of mighty trees, old things such as old trucks and classic cars, etc... Don't just take pictures of old things - this has to be done through Ambience and Feel.