

## MYSTERY and LIGHT

The widespread use of photography as a documentary medium presents photos that give it all to you 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 a 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 your 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]

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!

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

remove all the unnecessary clutter or distractions from the image

cameras do not have editing filters that the mind supplies for vision

##### [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, or one 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*