

Visual Movement through Multiplicity

Content & Structure

Photographs of a singular subject die quickly, especially if they are easily identifiable. If a viewer can easily identify the subject of a photograph they say, "Oh it's a picture of a...", and they are finished with it. It's about **content**. In a similar manner, if a photograph has a singular visual focus point, then there's nowhere for the viewer's eye to go. There is no movement, and therefore there is no interest. This is more a matter of **visual geometry** otherwise known as **structure**.

STRUCTURE = FORM; FORM SUPPORTS CONTENT

The solution to the first problem regarding **content** is to make photographs that have a sense of **mystery**. If you can get the viewer to say, "What the heck is that?", you are getting closer to success. Make people use the clues that are embedded in the photograph to figure out what the subject is. The harder they work the more interaction there is between artist and audience. This makes the image more interesting, as long as it is not so obscure that the viewer never comes to any conclusion. Although, if they walk away and continue to ponder the photo, then you have become part of their memory.

The solution to the second problem regarding **structure** is to have more than one thing going on in the photo. This is multiplicity. The worst case is when a singular subject is centered in the frame. The viewer's eye goes to the middle of the frame and there is nowhere else to go so the energy in the photograph dies. If there is more than one focus of energy in the frame then the viewer's eye can move back-and-forth between them. This provides the opportunity for the viewer to make comparisons between elements in the photo.

Space & Time

There are a number of visual tools that can be used to set up a spatial hierarchy of this multiplicity. **Depth of Field** is the most obvious. This tool **manipulates space** by bringing specific details in or out of focus. The more clear something is, the more attention it demands.

The other basic tool is the **Shutter Speed**. This is used to **manipulate time**. Time establishes relationships between elements in the frame and presents a temporal hierarchy. This is where the content expands from object to event. Here the idea is to make the viewer analyze the time-based clues embedded in the frame to determine, or at least question, what happens before or what follows what, etc.

Context & Environment

An even better goal is to get the viewer to respond to the photograph by asking, "What the heck is going on here?" Now the whole thing opens up by including a context for the objects or events in the frame, an environment in which the subject exists. This is known as **context**.

Implied Information

An even greater goal is getting the viewer to consider things that are not even in the frame. How can you reference external elements? It can be someone's gaze or gesture, movement into or out of the frame, repeating structure, etc., any element that references or implies information beyond what is pictured in the frame. This can be called **scope**.

The bottom line is to make a photograph that can create an experiential envelope the viewer can enter, share information with the artist, and come out inspired enough to continue thinking about the subject. If the photograph is really powerful, and resonates with that particular viewer, there is the opportunity for that 'image' to become part of the viewer's consciousness that they will carry through life. At this point the artist has changed that person forever and that image will be used to evaluate future experiences.

The word 'genius' should only be used for people who do thing that change the way the world thinks or acts. We all walk around with that Jackson Pollak painting in our minds. It is not about fame, it is about changing the world. Geniuses only come around once in a while. But if you can influence even a small group of people you are doing well. This is were the Three Disciplines extend into the fourth...

CONCEIVE > CONSTRUCT > COMMUNICATE >> CHANGE

aka

CONCEPTUAL > PHYSICAL > EMOTIONAL >> SPIRITUAL