

REFINING YOUR SHOOTING

FRAMING / COMPOSITION

Identification

If content (an object or event/space or time) can be easily identified, your viewer will walk away from your photo in 2 seconds flat. This is the function MYSTERY has in your photos. You want your viewers response to be, "What the heck is that?" It is at this point that you have captured their attention. Then you have to have other stuff in the photo to given them clues as to what is going on. It is better if the photo poses questions without the requirement of presenting any answers.

Multiplicity/ Positioning

Pictures of singular objects (with no environment to add extra meaning) are simply not interesting. It is even worse if that singular subject is in the center of the frame. Don't center you content. Your viewer's eye will go to the center of the photo and there will be nowhere else to go. If there is only one focus point in the photo, then the movement dies at that spot.

The point is to guide your viewer through the picture space. There has to be more than one interesting place within the frame to keep the viewer's eye moving around. Multiple subjects lead to relationships, either visual, or emotional, or even conceptual. And as their eye is moving around, so will their mind be working to figure out how all of these things interrelate. Try moving the visual centerline to extreme locations in the frame [corners have power/ edges have power]

Content in Context

After you have played around with the concept of *Fragmentation through Close Focusing*, try backing away from the subject to include some environment. This will introduce CONTEXT and add more meaning to the photograph.

Cropping/ Lazy Eye

DO NOT CROP YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS. You have to learn how to compose the photograph in the fame. You have to look carefully and get exactly what you want into the frame before you push the shutter release button. If you have the ability to crop your photographs later you will never learn this. What happens is that you will develop 'Lazy Eye'. This is where people shoot quickly without composing the shot, then go back to the studio and crop everything to get rid of the parts of the photo they do not like. This is something that should have happened when shooting!

The best shot probably should have been shot from an inch over, and an inch down, and a second or two later. And you will have missed it with that quick-shot technique. Framing & Composing is the art of making a good photograph. Take responsibility for what you capture and display is as it is shot. It is a matter of photographic integrity. And it is my challenge to you.

> [FramingComposition.pdf](#)

Contact Sheet Syndrome

Take the time to shoot numerous shots of any single subject. Investigate it to the fullest. But then, **ONLY PICK THE BEST SINGLE PHOTOGRAPH OF THAT SET** to post on your blog page. It takes several shots of anything to actually get to the best shot. You have to adjust your shooting angle, your distance from the subject, get the light just right, and you have to get the timing right. Otherwise you are making snap-shots, and this is a

class in 'How to Make Good Photographs', not how to make snap-shots. These are two completely different aesthetics.

> [PhotoCliches.pdf](#)

If you display several shots of the same subject, you end up with 'Contact Sheet Syndrome'. Start editing down to your best shots. Remove any that are similar, i.e. all shot at about the same time. A 'contact sheet' is what used to be made when shooting film. All the photos on a roll would be exposed onto a single sheet of photo paper so we could easily see the whole roll and select which shots were the best, and then, which shots would be enlarged. Looking at photos in your Camera Roll on a Smartphone is now the analogous activity. What you don't want to do is show people your working process, you want to show them the *results* of your efforts. And that is the single best shot of any subject.

Content Bleed

The other side of the coin from Contact Sheet Syndrome is Content Bleed. This is where you have several shots of related subject material that all fit together; visually, conceptually and/or emotionally, yet there is some distance between them. When these photos are displayed together, each one starts to effect how the others are viewed. The content of one bleeds into the content of another, and changes or adds to its meaning and impact.

Personal Vision

In the end, all photographs should not be about the appearance of things but, rather, about your interest in these things. The photos are about you and your artistic vision. They should be subjective, not objective like Photojournalism.

> [PassiveActiveShooting.pdf](#)

Reminder about Photo Clichés

No pets, no drooling babies or cute kids. No posing (pretentious = snapshot) No pix on TU campus (too easy, unless we really can't tell...) No photos of sculpture or iconic Center City buildings (someone else has already made the art). Remember to also avoid the new Smartphone photo clichés: selfies, pictures of food, lights and sunsets.

I'm not telling you totally what not to do. I'm just trying to steer you clear of things that will almost automatically generic and therefore mediocre photographs.

> [PhotoCliches.pdf](#)

Pictures of your feet are NOT self portraits! Pictures that look like snapshots are not self-portraits. They are snapshots. If you are posing for the photo it will probably look like a snap-shot.

All photographs have to be taken during the current semester. This proves they are in response to the current topics being taught.

Photo Hunting

Get out of your apartment and stalk the streets for good photos. See what you are drawn to intuitively. Collect those pictures, organize them into sets, and then go hunting for more pictures to fill out or expand the set.

> [IntuitiveVsDirectedShooting.pdf](#)

Self-Evaluation

Make a score sheet that includes the above-mentioned topics and concerns: closeness (proximity), angle of view (attitude), dramatic lighting (illumination), mystery, etc. Then see how many of your photos have all or most of them. These will most likely be the best photos of the lot.

ADVANCED TECHNICAL POINTS

There is some nice use of space in the photos currently posted. Now see if you can get something to happen in those spaces. Although a couple are about emptiness itself! That is great.

There is also some nice use of light. Sometimes a photo can just be about light and the feel that it invokes.

DEPTH OF FIELD

Some of you are experimenting with shallow depth of field (even if inadvertently). This is where the camera lens is wide open and only certain small parts of the subject are in focus. If you are doing close-focusing then there is a greater likelihood that this will happen. There always has to be one place in the photographic frame that actually IS in focus, however. Otherwise there is no place for the viewer's eye to settle, and you lose their attention.

CONTRAST

Some of you have discovered that by applying a red filter the contrast is raised making it unclear if the photo is shot during the day or at night. [or maybe the app you are using doesn't say how it is working, but you are getting this dramatic contrast effect.] This kind of ambiguity is good and it adds Mystery.

SHADOW DETAIL

There is supposed to be detail even in the darkest shadows. If there is no detail there is no picture. But sometimes nighttime shots are of places where at least part of the scene is unlit. This is the exception to that rule.