

How to talk about and write about photographs...

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Talking & Writing about our art and photography is a skill that helps us...

Explain our vision in our art.

Expand our vocabulary.

Learn to see visual clues and organize what we see.

Helps us develop Visual Literacy skill- 21st century skill that future employers look for.

(in a critique) Learn to give feedback to others in ways that are respectful and helpful.

But 1st we need to know...What Makes a Good Photo?

“The most important element of a **good photograph** is the ability of the **photo** to communicate with the viewer. It should be able to tell a story through its **composition, lighting, and most importantly its subject matter.**” Let’s look at those in some photographs.

Photo #1 is telling a story...What is the story here? Look for visual clues.



To know what is being presented here you need to look for visual clues by asking questions:

What is going on here?

What do you see that makes this clear?

What more can you find?

What time period is this? How do you know?

What is the message?



This photo was shot by Bernie Boston. It is an image of a protester placing flowers in the muzzle of a soldier's gun during an anti-Vietnam War rally in 1967. This photo went viral at the time and was called "Flower Power."

The message is clearly one of peace. This photo tells a story but it is also a good photo because of its strong use of the Elements & Principles of design.

Is the balance in the composition Symmetrical or Asymmetrical?

What about Angle? Would it have been as successful if the photographer wasn't standing above the crowd?

What do you think of the lighting? Does it add to the mood/message?

What we just did is an example of Visual Literacy...

Visual literacy is the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of **literacy**, which commonly signifies interpretation of a written or printed text.

In today's world people express things in many different ways and through different methods. You need to see things like graphics (think street signs) every day. If you play video games you are often given visual clues to solve problems...this is another example of how being able to read information helps us day to day and can be fun and challenging.

Photo #2: See the E&P's in the photo.



This is one of many images that photographer Gordon Parks took of Mohammed Ali, one of America's greatest athletes of all time. What makes this photo a great photograph? The Elements & Principles help us to know why...

What element of art stand out to you most?

What principles of design?

What do you think is the story behind this photo and why did the photographer want to tell it?

Do you think this photo would've worked as well without the neutral background? If there were people standing around or other objects would that visual clutter have affected the photo?

Another thing to look at is the composition...is it clear and engaging or just...eh..?

Don't let non-important visual distractions get in the way...

What if you are not telling a story...just capturing someone or something. Then it is more about quality & composition.

Let's think about background quality here...Which photo is better of the dog?



This one right?



It's the same dog. Same backyard, just a different less distracting background and better lighting. So be sure to choose an angle where your subject stands out against the background.

Your subject can separate from your background with a difference in color, a difference in the lighting, or a difference in the sharpness. In the good pic the dog is visually separated from the background because of the difference in color AND the [narrow depth of field](#) (the range of things in sharp focus).

The other photo has too much clutter, the dog isn't engaged with the viewer and the composition is not great...

So try to keep it interesting...How about this photo by David Lazar?



Why is this an amazing candid photo?

The lighting...The color, the sharpness and the happy subject matter are all tied into a balanced, well cropped composition....It is the kind of photo that all photographers strive to take.

David's expert use of color and light draws his viewers in and keeps them there. In 2012 he won the travel category of the Smithsonian Photography Competition, and his work is frequently published in travel and photography magazines.

DAVID LAZAR

“I think there are many important aspects to make a good photograph but the most important would have to be: interesting and engaging subject matter. An uninteresting subject matter for me will still leave a photo with little appeal even if all the other technical aspects are well executed.

One last
thing...watch your
quality...If its blurry
or pixilated...don't
turn it in....



Keep shooting
til it's right!
Unless your
subject is a
hungry bear!!!

So, Before you ask if your photo is okay or before you turn it in, check your photo and look for these:

Clarity, Lighting, Composition, a clear subject matter...



And if you are giving feedback to a fellow student or a class project remember:

Critiques are based on facts, not opinions. So back up what you have to say with why using your Elements and principles and rules of composition.

Ex. "I like this photo, the contrast is cool" means nothing to the photographer. But if you say "I like this photo, because it shows you've thought about the lighting, and the increased the contrast which shows the time & thought you put into your picture," would encourage the photographer to continue putting more work into their lighting. You are saying that they're on the right track, and you're pushing them along.

If the photo needs work...say "I feel like the lighting is too dark and because of that details are hidden and the contrast is lost. Next time play around more with lighting!"

And remember that
cropping can often
take a photo to the
next level.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USxaTITYgfg>

I am passing out a list of things to look at when critiquing photos...We are starting to critique each others photographs as well as our own this week. Be sure to read over the handout so that you will have questions to ask and insight to offer during our first critique of The Elements and Principles of Design which begins our next class.

I hope this was helpful. Use this handout to help you write about your photos. This week we begin to critique photos...read and keep handy. I will grade you on your input so be ready!!!

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Any questions?