PHOTOGRAPHY CRITIQUE 101:

When talking about each others photos…ask the following in each other’s work as well as in your own. These questions can help your composition and understanding of what makes a photo successful.

Consider these questions arranged by topics:

**Visual Elements within the photograph–What You See  
light and shadow**  
Does the light seem to be natural or artificial? Harsh or soft? What direction is the light coming from? Describe the shadows. Are they subtle or do they create strong contrasts?  
**value**Is there a range of tones from light to dark? Squint your eyes. Where is the darkest value? The lightest?  **focus/ depth of field**  
What parts of the image are clearly in focus? Are some parts out of focus? Note: The range between the nearest and farthest things that appear in focus define the photograph’s depth of field.  
**motion**If there is motion, is it shown as blurred or frozen? how does that choice affect the image?   
**space**  
Do overlapping objects create a sense of space? Is the space shallow, deep, or both?  **shape**  
Do you see geometric or organic shapes? Are there positive shapes, such as objects, or negative shapes that represent voids?  **line**  
Are there thick, thin, curvy, jagged, or straight lines?  **color**  
What colors do you see, if any?  **texture**  
Do you see visual textures within the photograph? Is there an actual texture on the surface of the photograph?  
**contrast**  
Are there strong visual contrasts–lights and darks, textures, solids and voids, etc.?  **repetition**  
Repetition of visual elements can create unity–a sense of order or wholeness that holds the work together visually. What elements are repeated? Do they contribute to a sense of unity?  **variety**  
Variety often creates interest. Can you see a variety of visual elements such as values, shapes, textures, etc.?

**Design of the photograph–How Things Are Arranged–Active Choices  
angle**From what vantage point was the photograph taken? Imagine the photograph taken from a higher or lower angle or view. How does the angle affect the photograph?  
**distance and lens choices**what is the distance from the subject? what is the scope of the image…zoomed out or wide angle or human eye equivalent? how does that choice affect the image?   
**forground, middleground, and background**has the photographer created space by putting things different distances away? or are most or all objects the same distance? how does that choice affect the image?   
**framing**Describe the edges of the view. What is included? What does the framing draw your attention to in the photograph? Can you imagine what might have been visible beyond the edges of the picture?  
**dominance**Close your eyes. When you open them and look at the photograph, what is the first thing you notice? Why is your attention drawn there? Are there other centers of interest? How are they created? How do the focal points help move your eye throughout the photograph?  
**rule of thirds**where is the subject/focal point and how does it related to the rule of thirds?  how does that choice affect the image?  
**eyespace**is eyespace shown or is it cut off?  how does that choice affect the image?  
**balance**Is the visual weight on one side of the photograph about the same as the other? How about top to bottom and diagonally.

**Originality** – Is the artwork fresh or new in its style, execution or approach? Is it something you haven’t seen before in its particular genre? Does it surprise you?

**Technique** – Was the artwork skillfully created? Does the artist exhibit advanced knowledge of the medium and/or bring special focus to the craft of the medium used. is the exposure off resulting in a too light or too dark image? is the white balance correct or are their color casts in the image? has the photo been photoshopped in a way that helps the look, mood, or meaning of the image? how is the noise/grain of the photograph?

**Vision** – Does the artwork present or reflect a point of view, theme or idea?

**Impact** – Does the artwork resonate with you or evoke strong emotions? Does it make you think? Does it blow your mind?

**Some prompts for talking about each others work: question, respond and make suggestions:**   
*Examples:*

Could you explain why you…  
Would it make more sense for you to…  
It seems like this work is really about….  
My eye goes directly to this area, then …..  
The most important thing about this work is….  
Would you consider changing….  
My first reaction is X, and then I noticed Y.  
If this were my work, I would consider…  
Have you seen X’s work?

**Some prompts for talking about your OWN work: You, the artist are responsible for preparing appropriate introduction/questions about the work:**  
*Default examples:*

This work is about……  
I am struggling with…..  
Do you think I should….  
When it started, it was about X, but now….  
I want to show X.  
Do you think it’s working?  
While I was working, I was thinking about….  
What would you do to make ….  
Am I done?