

## **Photography Analysis Guide**

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#### **Analyzing Photos and Images**

- What is your immediate impression? Who and what do you see? What feelings does it evoke in you?
- Describe what is happening. Is there anything significant in the background of the image?
- Describe the people. Does the image reflect physical intimacy or distance? Analyze the body language of the individuals and/or the group? What moods or emotions are depicted. Pay careful attention to placement of body parts, general body posture, and facial expressions.
- Where is the place or location of the image? Is it commonly found or unique? Describe the landscape in terms of terrain, climate, vegetation, animal life, and other physical features.
- Personal Connectedness What “moves” you about this image? What memories or experiences does it stir in you? Is there anything that disturbs you? How do you identify with the people in the image?

#### **Site of Production:**

Where and when was the photograph taken?

Who took the photo?

Who was the photo made for?

What technologies were employed?

What was the relationship between image maker and subject?

What was the purpose of the photo?

#### **The Image Itself:**

What is being shown? What is the subject of the photo?

How is the image bordered?

What is the perspective or vantage point of the photo?

Is the photo monochromatic or color?

What is the genre of the photograph?

What are objects arranged? Candid? Staged?

What symbols or figurative elements are represented?

#### **Site of Reception**

Who might be the intended audience of the photo?

Where is the photo viewed? Museum? Web? Photo album?

How is the photo circulated?

How is the photo stored?

What is the relation between subject and viewer? Offer? Demand?

What are the conventions of viewing?

### **Technological Considerations:**

Was the image created digitally or on film?

How does / did exposure affect image?

Was the image manipulated digitally?

Was the credibility of the image put in question by technological means?

### **Consider the Visual Elements of a Photograph:**

- **Focus:** what areas appear clearest or sharpest in the photograph? What do not?
- **Light:** what areas of the photograph are most highlighted? Are there any shadows? Does the photograph allow you to guess the time of day? Is the light natural or artificial? Harsh or soft? Reflected or direct?
- **Line:** are there objects in the photograph that act as lines? Are they straight, curvy, thin, thick? Do the lines create direction in the photograph? Do they outline? Do the lines show movement or energy?
- **Repetition:** are there any objects, shapes or lines which repeat and create a pattern?
- **Shape:** do you see geometric or organic shapes? What are they?
- **Space:** is there depth to the photograph or does it seem shallow? What creates this appearance? Are there important negative spaces in addition to positive spaces? Is there depth created by spatial illusions?
- **Texture:** if you could touch the surface of the photograph how would it feel? How do the objects in the picture look like they would feel?
- **Value:** is there a range of tones from dark to light? Where is the darkest value? Where is the lightest?
- **Angle:** the vantage point from which the photograph was taken; generally used when discussing a photograph taken from an unusual or exaggerated vantage point.
- **Background:** the part of a scene or picture that is or seems to be toward the back.
- **Balance:** the distribution of visual elements in a photograph. Symmetrical balance distributes visual elements evenly in an image. Asymmetrical balance is found when visual elements are not evenly distributed in an image.
- **Central focus:** the object(s) which appears most prominently and/or most clearly focused in a photograph.
- **Composition:** the arrangement or structure of the formal elements that make up an image.
- **Contrast:** strong visual differences between light and dark, varying textures, sizes, etc.
- **Framing:** what the photographer has placed within the boundaries of the photograph.
- **Vantage Point:** the place from which a photographer takes a photograph.

## Consider Photographic Principles:

- **Balance** is created in a work of art when textures, colors, forms, or shapes are combined harmoniously.
- **Contrast** is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through the artwork.
- **Movement** is the way a viewer's eye is directed to move through a composition, often to areas of emphasis. Movement can be directed by lines, contrasting shapes, or colors within the artwork.
- **Emphasis** is created in a work of art when the artist contrasts colors, textures, or shapes to direct your viewing towards a particular part of the image.
- **Pattern** is the repetition of a shape, form, or texture across a work of art.
- **Proportion** is created when the sizes of elements in a work of art are combined harmoniously.
- **Unity** is created when the principles of analysis are present in a composition and in harmony. Some images have a complete sense of unity, while some artists deliberately avoid formal unity to create feelings of tension and anxiety.