

CDES 396: Intermediate Photo Communication and Digital Imaging



Summertime: eleven days, an accordion book of daily photographs, May - August 2006, 4.25" x 68"

EVERYDAY : A POETIC NARRATIVE

Description

Photography could be defined as the act of distilling the whole of the world down into visual emblems – little parts that stand for the whole. But making effective emblems is hard to do for several reasons, not the least of which is that you've got to sift through the complexities of life to figure out what's important, then use a complicated machine to make visible that which is often intangible. Photography - at least the kind of photography we're going to practice with this project - is ultimately a process of accumulating a range of observations and experiences (pictures) then editing them back down. It will be an act of constructing meaning out of the wealth of experiences we have every second of our waking lives, but can't possibly remember.

This is a project which will require you to change the way you live your life – at least for the remainder of the semester. At its most basic, you will spend time actively looking for and making visually compelling pictures on a *daily* basis. That doesn't mean that you'll be photographing every free moment – that's neither realistic nor likely to be productive. Certainly, the photographs you make will come from your daily life, so in that sense it will be a journal. But this is a visual journal you're intentionally making for an audience, and that's both an important premise and distinction. Unlike most journals, though, you're not simply listing a strict record of your activities, instead you're crafting a poetic narrative - a loose affiliation of experiences, emotions, and observations.

Objectives

To actively practice a creative *process*. To grapple with the challenges that arise when making visual representations of that which is often intangible and invisible. To refine your skills at responding to emotional cues with visual ideas. To confront head-on those imponderable questions - *what should I photograph*, and *where do ideas come from?* To become more proficient with your camera. To work with multi-layered photoshop files that require color and contrast correction. To refine printing technique. To create a poetic narrative for a specific audience that's initially assembled as an accordion style booklet of photographs. To gather imagery to then edit for a final book publication.

Instructions

Starting today, and for the rest of the semester, I want you to keep your camera with you as much as possible, and work to make at least one interesting picture every day. For very practical reasons, the pictures should come out of your daily activities. This is a project where you should shoot first and ask questions later. Avoid spending too much time sitting around planning. If you're short of ideas, then pick up your camera and start walking around and pressing the shutter button. Eventually, you'll stumble across something that's worth a picture - and once you find it, spend the time it takes to work that idea into a realized photograph.

We will download and proof pictures during our Thursday lab sessions. At the end of our ten days, we'll edit the work down and create a short accordion style booklet of pictures. You'll continue to make daily pictures for the rest of the semester that you'll use for our final project: a self-published book.

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An exercise

In addition to making your daily pictures, I have a mental exercise I want you to perform starting tonight. At the end of every day as you're lying in bed about to fall asleep, spend one minute reflecting on the events of the day. Practice remembering, in chronologic order, every single event and sensation from the day. Try to recall – with perfect precision – every phone call, every conversation, every sight, every sound, every smell, and every taste. Think about the bird you saw shoot across the sky, or the leaf you saw pounded into the sidewalk. You won't remember everything, of course, because your brain has already done some serious editing for you. But some things will surface in your consciousness that were tucked away, likely to be forgotten forever until you pried it out with this crowbar of an exercise. *These memories are the emblems of experience. If you could re-live the day again exactly as it happened, what could you do to make pictures of those experiences? Where would you stand? How would you frame it? What could you use as a visual representation of a non-visual sensation? This is an exercise that if practiced long enough, will start to change the way you respond to your world, and you'll likely find yourself in the middle of an experience thinking "this is one of those things that needs to be photographed!"*

Deadlines and evaluation

Your work will be evaluated primarily on the degree to which you embrace the process of this project (as indicated in your daily contact sheets). I will also look at the visual strength of your imagery, the compelling qualities of your narrative, and the overall craft of your pictures and book.

There will be further details and specifications outlined in upcoming classes, but for now, just start making pictures.

TUESDAY the 26th:

Please read the introduction to **Everyday: A Yearlong Photo Diary** by yours' truly.
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/EverydayEssay2.pdf>

Please read Ted Kooser's **Writing for Others from The Poetry Home Repair Manual**. This essay is perfect for photographers who are interested in making pictures that communicate with an audience – just substitute “photography” whenever you read the word “poetry.”
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/WritingForOthers.pdf>

Please read three Billy Collins' poems: **This Much I Do Remember**, **In the Room of a Thousand Miles**, and **Introduction to Poetry**. These get at the spirit of creating a poetic narrative.
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/BillyCollins.pdf>

TUESDAY the 4th:

Please listen to **Sleep** from *Radio Lab*. Pay particular attention to 28:50 - 40:00.
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/SleepRadioLab.mp3>

Please listen to **Life Bytes** from *Living in Earth*, 1-20-2006
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/060120bytes.mp3>

TUESDAY the 11th:

Please read *I, Mercator* from **You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination** by Katherine Harmon
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/IMercator.pdf>

Please listen to *Blame it on Art* from *This American Life*. Listen to the whole thing, but be careful not to skip out on 57:55 - 58:22
<http://byronwolfe.typepad.com/73BlameItOnArt.mp3>