The Joys of (Film) Photography

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Agenda

• Introduction
• Elements and Principles of Art
• What is a “good” photo?

• Why film?
• How does film change how you take photos?
• The process
Intro

• Took photography for 4 years in high school
• Been interested for a lot longer
• Worked my way up to film from digital
• All the photos in this presentation are shot on film by yours truly

• And lastly, I don’t claim any photos in this presentation are “good”
  • They are merely photos which speak to me
What makes up a photo?
What makes up..... this photo?
Elements of Art
• Color
• Value
• Saturation
• Form
• Line
• Shape
• Space
• Texture

Principles of Art
• Balance
• Contrast
• Emphasis
• Rhythm/Movement
• Proportion/Scale
• Unity
• Variety
• Pattern
Color
Value
Saturation
Form
Line
Shape
Space
Texture
Elements of art are the building blocks,
Principles of art are the goals
Balance
Contrast
Emphasis
Movement
Proportion/Scale
Unity/Variety
Pattern
What makes up this photo (again)?
What makes a good photo?
More specifically, what is “good”?
What makes a photo “good”? 

• You don’t need to respect any formula to take good photos
  • They offer groundwork, not hard rules

• Photos should make you feel something
  • Oftentimes a narrative promotes emotion

• Photos which lack technique can still be emotionally impactful
  • Technique can bring clarity, but sometimes it detracts from emotion
  • Take: blurry marriage pics, grainy blacks, shakiness

• The way a photo is taken tells as much of a story as its contents
Directing focus (literally)

• Treat photos like they’re paintings
  • If something doesn’t matter, it shouldn’t be there

• The best photos are those which have focus, and direct the viewer to what matters
  • Often this is a central subject
  • Sometimes the viewer is directed through the photo by the elements it contains
  • Controlling parts of the image that ARE in focus is critical
Building a narrative

- Some photos have narratives, some don’t
- Humans are social animals, so we latch onto narratives
- Non-narrative driven works offer an alternative form of generating emotion
Well, what about film then?
What would you expect changes when you move to film?
Film is a ton of fun

• The ritual of it
  • Crank that (soulja boy)
  • You have physical stuff, and that stuff holds memories
  • A film for every occasion!
    • “oooh but Kodak has nicer reds than Fuji”
    • “You get different curves if you develop Vision3 in ECN-2”
    • “I always do a 1 stop pull on my color films 😭 😭”
    • The film stock/dev rabbithole has a width measured in light-seconds
• Each frame you hold in your hand saw that image
  • I know this is true for any camera, but it’s still nice, ok?
Film is a ton of fun

• Shake that (film reel/tank in 39C water)
  • I personally find developing film a ton of fun
  • Tanks, reels, all sorts of paraphernalia
  • Plenty of quick-time events!

• Darkroom printing
  • In ye olden days, we’d have to expose photo paper from negatives to get a print you could hold in your hand
  • It’s very relaxing
  • I listened to the entirety of “ghost of the machine” by the police on headphones while doing a set of prints for my friends in an otherwise empty darkroom, and I still remember that day well
Film is a ton of fun

• The community
  • Some snobs
    • “Back in my day we’d roll our film out by hand with a rolling pin and lick it clean before coating it with our palms”
    • Easily ignored
  • Some really chill people
    • Tons to learn, tons of people trying things out and reporting their findings
    • Chat up the clerks at Beau photo, they know their shit (and nab all the best consignment gear before I get to smh)
Film has “a look”

• Things we expect:
  • Grainy ass shadows
  • Desaturated, melty colors
  • Dust/scratches
  • Bloom

• It feels grittier, in a way you can’t place

• Can achieve in digital, but it comes for free with film

• Objectively a worse medium, but hey, it’s art
Film makes you slow down

• You get 36 shots and.... That’s it
  • Better take as many rolls as you need buckaroo

• Limited shots means limited time staring through a camera

• Make every moment count
  • If I put my eye up to the viewfinder and don’t feel something, I don’t take the photo

• You look at the world in a different light
  • Take a step back, appreciate the little things
  • Let yourself observe, and you’ll find a photo anywhere
  • Slow down and just enjoy what you see
How do you develop film anyways?
The chemistry (black and white film)

• Grains of silver halide are the light-sensitive component
  • Suspended in a gelatin emulsion
• Development turns silver halide into silver metal
  • Exposed silver halide reduces faster
• Fixing removes unused silver halide

• Modern BW films have many layers, because it’s possible to “sensitize” the halide to different colors
The chemistry (color film)

• Sensitized halide can have dyes bound to it
  • These dyes are left behind, encode color information
  • Each dye is associated with its respectively sensitized halide layer

• Additional Bleach pass after fix to leave just the dyes, and take out all silver metal

• Remjet is the work of satan
  • Movie picture anti-halation and anti-seize layer made of carbon black
  • Can be removed pre-exposure for lovely effects
  • Destroys typical chemistries
The process (color film)

- In the dark:
  - Reel the film onto a big spool
  - Place into tank
- In the tank at 39C (on penalty of over/under exposure)
  - 3.5 minutes of developer
  - 8 minutes of blix
- In the light
  - Rinse
  - Hang to dry
And now, a challenge!!!
with a prize >:)}