

MUSEUM TOUR & REVIEW ASSIGNMENT Friday March 7th 2008:

Museum of Photographic Arts *"The Photographer's Eye: A Way of Seeing"* Jan. 19th--April 20th
Curated by Carol McCusker Photographs from MoPA's permanent collection.*

Our visit does not afford enough time for you to fully appreciate the exhibition. **Please return on your own time to create a thoughtful review.** The last pages of this assignment has a quote from each chapter in Szarkowski's book, The Photographer's Eye.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to create a review of the exhibition and make some art yourself! Your critique involves 4 activities: describing, interpreting, evaluating and theorizing. It can be thought of as seeking answers to questions like: What is here? What is it about? How good is it? Is it art? Etc. Follow up your visit and review by making your own examples that illustrate the ideas from the chapters in Szarkowski's book.

Materials needed: Notebook, pen/pencil. Typewriter or computer w/printer, paper. Camera and a means to get a print--professional lab, Costco, your inkjet printer, Kinko's, school darkroom if you are already enrolled in a class using the wet lab or digital lab.

Procedure: There are 3 Parts to this Assignment! Get busy! Do not Procrastinate!

Part 1 **Note:** *all images in white frames are John Szarkowski's.
His photos are on loan from the Peter Fetterman Gallery.
If you get a copy of his book you will notice that the images in the exhibit are from the museum's permanent collection and are not necessarily the same the images in the book.

In the exhibit, "The Photographer's Eye", you will see how it is divided into chapters as in Szarkowski's book, The Photographer's Eye (*The Thing Itself, The Detail, The Frame, Time, Vantage Point*).

Pick 2, of the 5 chapters and find 2 to 3 images each, that you really like and tell us why.

Example: , Time --- Alexey Titarenko, 1993, St. Petersburg "Crowd #2". --- Henri Lartigue "Primier Vol..." 1904.

Make notes describing the work: Give the artist and title, what medium is it, (color, B/W), size, subject matter/ content, design elements, (light/dark, line, shape, texture pattern, color, tonality, contrast). How do the other images you chose relate or compare to each other? Do these images describe/ illustrate the chapter's title? Why do you think the curator chose these images? Any personal reasons why the work resonates? These are suggestions of what you might write about, feel free to use them or add your own. Remember, it's about *seeing* photographs--put in your own words.

Part 2

Your Review: Over all look of the exhibit--- is the work sequenced well? (the manner in which the work is hung and how it relates to the neighboring pieces and the flow of the exhibition). Are there enough photos ? Are there too many? Is there enough text information or not? Do some pieces depend on the text? How do you like the overall color scheme and the way each “chapter” looks? Does this exhibit successfully represent seeing photography?

Part 3

Create some of your very own photographs based on the 2 chapters you selected (so photograph examples of : *The Thing Itself, The Detail, The Frame, Time, or Vantage Point*). Please make one print from each of the 2 chapters you have selected to write about. Hey photo students, no recycled images, I want to see new work!

Note: Those who do not own a camera, pick up a disposable camera, get the film processed at Costco if you are member or at a camera shop or drugstore, pick one image from each of your selected “chapters”, get enlargements made from negs or have negs scanned and output digital prints.

Turn In: **In an envelope** that will fit everything please include--

Review Paper---A minimum of two, 8.5” x 11” pages, or more, type written in 12 pt. type, double spaced, plus this assignment sheet.

Photographic Prints: Two, 8x10 or 8.5 x 11 size prints, unmounted/ unmatted.

Grading: **Worth 4 grades---**
The review paper counts as 2 grades: Based on your description and interpretation of the work in your own words. Photos count as 2 grades, based on interpretation of “chapter” titles, your creativity, and technique (yours or a pro lab--bottom line--they should be properly done, neat and clean).

Frequently asked questions:

Web site? **www.mopa.org**

What’s the admission price at MoPA? **\$4 students w/ ID.***

When can I visit the museum ? ***Tues. - Sun. 10-5.***

**** Every 2nd Tues. of the month is free.*** (next free days --March 11th, and April 8th)

Any issues, questions, please bring them up in class, come by my Friday 9-12 Photo 102 class in T-206 or e-mail me. **melfoto@att.net** **Have fun!**

The Thing Itself

More convincingly than any other kind of picture, a photograph evokes the tangible presence of reality. Its most fundamental use and its broadest acceptance has been as substitute for the subject itself--a simpler, more permanent, more clearly visible of the plain fact.

Our faith in the truth of a photograph rests on our belief that the lens is impartial, and will draw the subject as it is, neither nobler nor meaner. This faith may be naive and illusory (for through the lens draws the subject, the photographer defines it), but it persists. The photographer's vision convinces us to the degree that the photographer hides his hand.

The Detail

Once he left his studio, it was impossible for the photographer to copy the painter's schemata. He could not stage-manage the battle, Uccello or Velásquez, bringing together elements which had been separate in space and time nor could he rearrange the parts of his picture to construct a design that pleased him better.

From the reality before him he could only choose that part that seemed relevant and consistent, and that would fill his plate. If he could not show the battle, explain its purpose and its strategy, or distinguish its heroes from its villains, he could show what was too ordinary to paint: the empty road scattered with cannon balls, the mud encrusted on the caisson's wheels, the anonymous faces, the single broken figure by the wall.

Intuitively, he sought and found the significant detail. His work, incapable of narrative, turned toward symbol.

The Frame

To quote out of context is the essence of the photographer's craft. His central problem is a simple one: what shall he include, what shall he reject? The line of decision between in and out is the picture's edge. While the draughtsman starts with the middle of the sheet, the photographer starts with the frame.

The photographer's edge defines content.

It isolates unexpected juxtapositions. By surrounding two facts it creates a relationship.

It creates the shapes that surround objects.

The photographer edits the meanings and patterns of the world through an imaginary frame. This frame is the beginning of his picture's geometry. It is to the photograph as the cushion is to the billiard table.

Time

Photographs stand in special relationship to time, for they describe only the present.

Exposures were long in early photography. If the subject moved, its multiple image described also a space--time dimension. Perhaps it was such accidents that suggested the photographic study of the process of movement, and later, of the virtual forms produced by the continuity of movement in time.

Photographers found an inexhaustible subject in the isolation of a single segment of time. They photographed the horse in mid stride, the fugitive expressions of the human face, the gestures of hand and body, the bat meeting the ball, the milk drop splashing in the saucer of milk.

More subtle was the discovery of that segment of time that Cartier-Bresson called *the decisive moment* : decisive not because of the exterior event (the bat meeting the ball) but because in that moment the flux of changing forms and patterns was sensed to have achieved balance and clarity and order---because the image became, for an instant, a *picture*.

Vantage Point

If the photographer could not move his subject, he could move his camera. To see the subject clearly--often to see it at all--he had to abandon a normal vantage point, and shoot his picture from above, or below, or from too close, or too far, away, or from the back side, inverting the order of things' importance or with the nominal subject of his picture half hidden.

From his photographs, he learned that the appearance of the world was richer and less simple than mind would have guessed.

He discovered that his pictures could reveal not only the clarity but the obscurity of things, and that these mysterious and evasive images could also, in their own terms, seem ordered and meaningful.