

Photo Essay

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Photo II – Cecil

A photo essay is a set or series of photographs that are intended to tell a story or evoke a series of emotions in the viewer. Photo essays range from purely photographic works to photographs with captions or small notes to full text essays with a few or many accompanying photographs. Photo essays can be sequential in nature, viewed in a particular order, or they may consist of non-ordered photographs that may be viewed all at once or in an order chosen by the viewer. All photo essays are collections of photographs, but not all collections of photographs are photo essays. Photo essays often address a certain issue or attempt to capture the character of places and events. Used by world class photojournalists such as **Lauren Greenfield, Bruce Davidson, Jan Sochor, Peter Menzel, James Nachtwey, and Joachim Ladefoged** to name a few, the photo essay takes the same story telling techniques as a normal essay, translated into visual images.

4 EASY Photo Essay Tips

1. Find a topic: Photo essays are most dynamic when you as the photographer care about the subject. Whether you choose to document the first month of a newborn in the family, the process of a school drama production, or even a birthday party, make your topic something in which you find interesting.

2. Do your research: If you document a newborn's first month, spend time with the family. Discover who the parents are, what culture they are from, whether they are upper or lower class. If you cover the process of a school's drama production, talk with the teachers, actors and stage hands; investigate the general interest of the student body; find out how they are financing the production and keeping costs down. If you photograph a birthday party, check out the theme, the decorations they plan on using, what the birthday kid hopes to get for his or her gifts. All of these factors will help you in planning out the type of shots you set up for your story.

3. Find the "real story": After your research, you can determine the angle you want to take your story. Is the newborn the first son of a wealthy family on whom the family legacy will continue? Or does the baby have a rare heart condition? Is the drama production an effort to bring the student body together? Or is it featuring a child star? Is the birthday party for an adolescent turning 13, or the last birthday of a dying cancer patient? Though each story idea is the same, the main factors of each story create an incredibly unique story. **DIG DEEPER AND DISCOVER WHAT IS BELOW THE SURFACE!!!**

4. Plan your shots: Whether you decide to sit down and extensively visualize each shot of the story, or simply walk through the venue in your mind, you will want to think about the type of shots that will work best to tell your story. I recommend beginners first start out by creating a "shot list" for the story. Each shot will work like a sentence in a one-paragraph story. Typically, you can start with 8-10 shots. Each shot must emphasize a different concept or emotion that can be woven together with the other images for the final draft of the story.

DIRECTIONS AND DUE DATES:

1. Brainstorming Page turned in and Master Example on a Mahara page titled Photo Essay - **DUE 5/14**
NO DIRECT / GENERAL / CLICHÉ TOPICS ALLOWED
2. SHOOT film and/or Digital (at least 50 exposures total - 2 "rolls") Contact Sheets **DUE 5/30**
3. Final Photoshop spread of photographs **DUE 6/5**
4. Edited iMovie final presentation **DUE 6/5**

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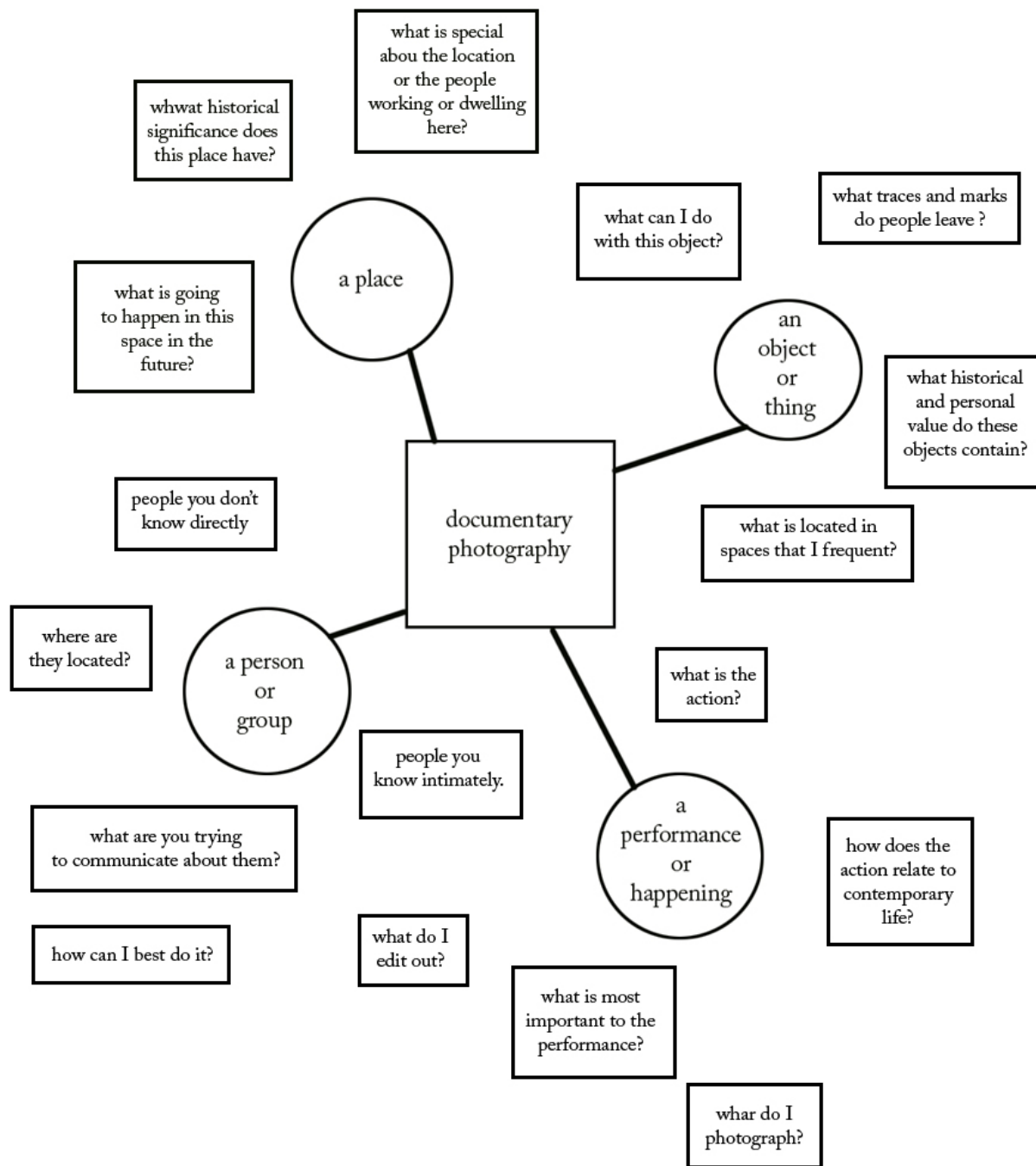


Photo Essay

A photo essay, or picture story, is a photographer's way of showing a more complete story than is possible with one image. It is a collection of images that work together to tell a story. Generally, there are between 5 and 15 images, although more or less images are sometimes appropriate. Sometimes these images have captions, other times they do not. While there are no concrete rules for how photo essays must be created, there are several common ways that a photo essay can be developed.

- **Time Sequence**

Time sequence is the very beginning of a photo essay. Photo essays began as photographers began showing a sequence of photos to chronicle an event. This is often like looking at a series of still images from a movie. This type of photo essay is best used where there is an obvious path of time. Illustrations of linear events in compact areas such as cliff diving, fire fighting, and a bird hatching are all examples of this type of photo essay. Time sequence photo essays can also be expanded to cover longer amounts of time in more compact areas. These essays have much larger gaps of time between images than do basic time sequence essays. Concepts such as police chases from crime to capture or a life from birth to death can be covered in this type of essay.

- **Location**

Location photo essays seek to capture the feel of a location through glimpses of people and places within a set location. Locations can be compact such as a school or garden, or vast such as a country. This type of photo essay is often non-linear from a chronological standpoint but does not have to be non-linear. Location essays often start at one physical point and travel outward, much like a tour of the area in question would progress.

- **Idea**

Idea essays often feature very diverse images that all have a common thread of one theme or idea. Topics such as hope, love, and work can be covered under idea essays. Because idea essays do often feature diverse subjects it is a good idea to have a common thread travel through the images. Using a common prop or following a color scheme can help to visually bond the images together. For example, a photo essay on breast cancer might use the familiar pink ribbon symbol in the form of a pink headscarf worn by a subject in each image to tie the set together. Or an essay on work might tie images together by flowing commonality. That means the first image might be a ditch digger with a restaurant in the background. The second image would then be a cook. From there the third image might continue the food service theme and show a waiter serving the meal to a man in a nice suit. The fourth image could then pick up on the customer in the previous image and move to a lawyer in a courtroom. Each image suggests the next.

- **Event**

Event essays tend to incorporate ideas from the other categories. Event essays cover a specific happening (such as a building fire or a wedding) but are not bound to a specific method of image sequence. Many event essays follow a time sequence outline but some are more fluid in their presentation. Event essays should at least show the major parts critical to the event. For example, a wedding essay without a bride or groom would not be complete.

Like any art, photo essays have basic guidelines but some very successful pieces deviate drastically from the "normal" rules. A photo essay basically puts a photographer in a director's chair. The story is there, the photographer must creatively decide how to best convey the story to others.