

A2 Art Share Supporting Materials

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A2 Art Share Oral Presentation Outline

1. Introduction
2. Elements of Proficiency in photography
3. Why are these photographs examples of art
4. Creative choices
5. Understanding my creative process/Julia Margaret Cameron

A2 Art Share Oral Presentation Content

Anyone can pick up a camera and take a picture, even my three-year-old daughter can use a camera, and so what differentiates a snap shot from a fine art photograph? It is the intent to visually illustrate a thought or an idea. It is also in the details; a photographer makes many careful and conscious choices when creating a photograph, such as (but not limited to), film type, lens, camera format, composition, subject matter and lighting. The result of these choices is the photographer's creative vision. Fulfilling this vision creates a work that speaks to the viewer,

engaging them and in turn allowing them to draw meaning or experience enjoyment from the piece.

There are many technical aspects to the art of photography. When you work with traditional film as I do, properly exposing film is a key element of proficiency. An understanding of how to use camera settings (aperture, shutter speed, film speed) to control the amount of light that reaches the film plane is necessary in order to produce a negative with mid-tones and detail in both the shadow and highlight areas. This also requires an understanding of light and the proper technique for taking a meter reading. Another area of proficiency is darkroom printing. Even if you are not printing your own negatives, knowing how to produce high-quality photographic prints is important. This knowledge allows you to effectively communicate with the person who prints your work to ensure you will achieve the results you want in the final print. One must also have a command of the principles of composition (balance, rhythm, dominance, unity). Composing becomes second nature with practice and development of an artistic vision. An area of proficiency involved in portraiture is the ability to communicate with people to draw out and capture expressions creating images that meet the artist's intentions.

As a portrait artist, my intention is to capture real emotion and reveal elements of my subject's personality. My film of choice is black and white. I believe the absence of color allows one to truly see a person without distraction. I am showing two portraits that I created. They are examples of art for many of the reasons previously mentioned. The compositions are well thought out; the subject's faces take up a large portion of the frame and the tops of their heads are cropped off drawing attention to the eyes or expression. The clothing in both images is minimal or absent to create a timeless quality and keep the focus on the subject. The resulting images are technically sound and depict universal human qualities with which the viewer can connect.

I would like to discuss each piece, explaining some of the creative choices I made to further illustrate why these pieces are considered examples of art.

My intention for the image of the boy was to illustrate the innocence and openness of children. This shows in the revealing expression of his soft wide eyes. The reflection of the light in his eyes adds to this quality. The lighting also gives his skin a smooth look and milky glow inferring youth and innocence. In this image, the composition draws the viewer to the boy's eyes where the intention is evident and the connection is unavoidable.

My intention for the image of the woman was to illustrate her positive qualities of inner-strength and beauty. To do this, I asked her to close her eyes, symbolizing inward thought, then I asked her to think of overcoming a challenge in her life. I wanted to see how these thoughts would change her expression and hoped they would bring a look of peace or hope to her face. I placed a single light to one side to create a strong highlight on her profiled face and shadows on the right side of her face, neck and shoulder. This lighting choice produces a contrast between her face, the rest of her body and the background and brings immediate attention to her peaceful expression as it emerges from the shadow. This effect symbolizes perseverance and in this context, her natural beauty can be seen as a symbol of resilience.

I find inspiration for doing creative work by looking at the work of others, reading about artists and from everyday occurrences. For this Art Share, I read the article "Julia Margaret Cameron's Women." Julia Margaret Cameron was a pioneer portrait photographer; she began making portraits in 1863 shortly after the advent of the medium. I was naturally attracted to Cameron's work because it is portraiture. And after learning more about her life and the intentions behind her portraits, I appreciated it even more. Looking at these images gave me a better understanding of my own portrait work. When I create a portrait, my goal is to bring out my subject's

personality and reveal some element of their character that is universally human. Cameron's approach was to depict her subjects as classical figures or archetypes; through this process she also revealed the universal human qualities of women.

Through careful reflection on my process of art making, reading about the pioneer portrait photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, and making connections to my own portraiture, I was able to address the assessment criteria of the A2A competence statement and demonstrate competence in this area.

Exhibit Experience

Art Institute of Pittsburgh: "Non - Traditional Photographic Media" March 1992

Silver Center for Photography: "Polaroid Transfers" February 1994

Gallery Art Brut: "Poetics" December 1994 • One-person show

Brew House Space 101: "Violence to Vision" October 1995

Lascaux Gallery: "Breast" March 1996

Inside Art: "The Surface Sublime" February 1999

Las Manos Gallery: "Eros" April 1999

Thirteenth Floor Gallery: Grand Opening Show June 1999

Thirteenth Floor Gallery: Around the Coyote Show September 1999

Thirteenth Floor Gallery: Fall Show November 1999

Thirteenth Floor Gallery: Winter Show February 2000

Flat File Gallery: "Been There Done That" December 2000

Flat File Gallery: "Man/Woman/Child" *featured artist* February 2001

Flat File Gallery: "Auto Muse" March 2001

Flat File Gallery: "Prosaic Beauty /Everyday Sacred" June 2001

Flat File Gallery: "Concealed / the enigmatic image" September 2001

Flat File Gallery: "Botanica" December 2001

Flat File Gallery: "Each Other" February 2002

Flat File Gallery: "Devotion" July 2002

The Peace Museum: November 2002

Orleans Street Gallery: November 2003

Speaking Engagements

Silver Eye Center for Photography: "Café Silver Eye" February 1996
Jane Adams Center: Stock photography lecture January 2000
Flat File Gallery: Panel discussion/ lecture on stock photography October 2000
Flat File Gallery: Panel discussion/ lecture on portraiture February 2001
The Peace Museum: Photographing in India November 2002

New City Review

Review published in: *New city*
Issue: September 20, 2001
newcitychicago.com

→Flatfile

"Concealed: the Enigmatic Image" group show. Veiled and layered images dominate the photo-works of the sixteen artists in this group show devoted to photography as an agent of mystery. Less than legible photographs are frustrating when they have no point but to confound the viewer, yet they can be intensely alluring when they reveal enough of their subjects to prompt meditation and imaginative association. The erotic sensibility has always thrived on a measure of concealment, and the best images here exploit the attractions of the provocatively distant body. [Student's name deleted] steals the show with her post-feminist black-and-white diptych, which finds her standing naked behind a gauze curtain, shot first from the front and then from the back. The absence of any delineated features makes her bold and powerful stances emanate maximum seductive energy, stimulating desires that we know we will not be able to satisfy.

(Michael Weinstein) Through Oct 13. 119 N. Peoria, 312-491-1190

Reading Analysis Worksheet

Article Title: “Julia Margaret Cameron’s Women”

Please answer all questions in one or two complete sentences

1) What is the article about?

“Julia Margaret Cameron’s Women” by Sylvia Wolf takes a critical, chronological look at the life and career of the pioneer portrait photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815 -1879). The article discusses the ways in which her knowledge of classic literature, strong religious beliefs and the circumstances of her own life influenced her work and specifically explores the significance of her portraits of women.

2) What is the main point?

Julia Margaret Cameron’s portraits of women are distinctly different in style and intention from her portraits of men. Cameron’s images reveal much about the roles of women in Victorian society and uncover her complex view of these roles. At the same time, her images contain distinctly modern elements of composition and possess a timeless quality (she often draped her subjects in cloth to conceal the ornate dress of the time) that allows today’s viewer to make a connection to them.

3) How do you know that?

The author confirms the main point of this article through analyzing and interpreting Cameron’s portraits of women and contrasting them to her portraits of men.

4) Who is the intended audience?

“Julia Margaret Cameron’s Women” is contained in a book by the same name. It was published in conjunction with an exhibit of her work; it is written for the general public, and those who wish to further appreciate the medium of photography.

5) What did you learn from reading the article?

Through the history of photography, details about Julia Margaret Cameron's life and Victorian society, I gained a better understanding of the significance of her work in both her time and today.

Article Title: "What is Art?"

1) What is the article about?

This article explores the purpose and evolution of art in an ethological sense. It questions the human desire for aesthetics asking why humans are drawn to decorate, embellish and create order in an aesthetic manor, and why this activity should be called art.

2) What is the main point?

Many non-aesthetic experiences in life have elements of the defined functions of art (sense of meaning, therapeutic catharsis, emotional freedom, escape from reality, self-expression) or they produce the same reaction as art does (joy, sorrow, transcendence, enlightenment). This being the case, the answer to "what is art?" remains uncertain.

3) How do you know that?

The main point of "What is Art?" is stated in the beginning, and reiterated throughout the chapter. After reading the chapter, I took time to reflect, then returned to the text to find passages that illustrate this point. Here are several excerpts that emphasize the point: "If indeed art encourages the exercise of vital abilities, this may be less because of its uniquely aesthetic properties than because of qualities that it shares with play and with exploratory or curiosity behavior..." "...art is not the only activity to aid dishabituation – play, dreams, fantasy, ritual all do the same", "Is the art in the arts necessary?"

4) Who is the intended audience?

“What is Art?,” a chapter in Ellen Dissanayke’s book What is Art For? is written for an educated audience with knowledge of the fields of anthropology, art and psychology. I know this because the references made throughout this chapter are not commonly known, the language is complex and the tone of the writing implies that the reader has a base of knowledge on the topic discussed.

5) What did you learn from reading the article?

I learned that to look at the ethological evolution of art one must take aesthetics out of the equation, put aside the traditional definition of art and attempt to look at the subject in an objective scientific manor. Because humans seem to have an unexplainable draw toward the aesthetic that does not always have an obvious function, the question of “what is art?” is unanswered.

SAMPLE