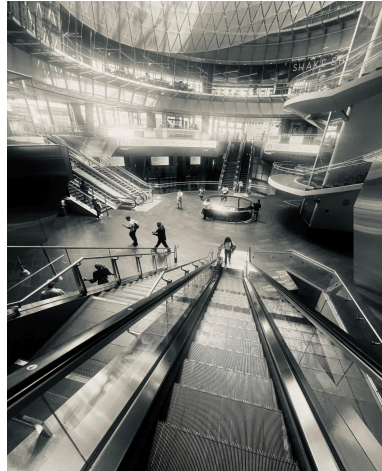


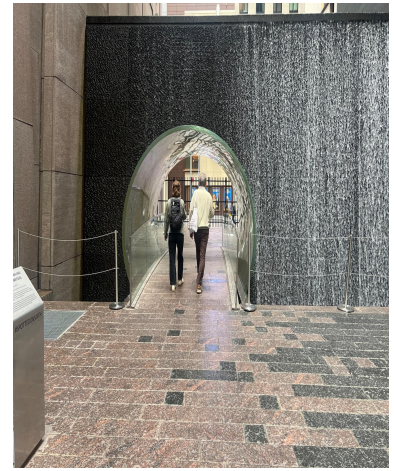
Andy Zhu
Essay 1: My Photo Essay
English 1121 (Prof. Scanlan)
Date 9/24/24



Top of the Trade (2024)



Escalator Ride (2024)



under the water (2024)

Iconic Spots

New York City is a haven for photographers, where every corner and building holds a story. Each snapshot captures the city's deep history, architecture, and vitality, offering a distinct view of urban life. Iconic landmarks like the World Trade Center, the Oculus, Fulton Center, and the McGraw-Hill Waterfall serve as symbols of the city's resilience and innovation, while also providing photographers with opportunities to capture key moments. Through techniques like light and shadow play, framing, and the flow of people, these spaces invite photographers to explore themes of time, space, and movement. Teju Cole's words in **Perfect and Unrehearsed** resonate here: "Every photograph is an opportunity to pause and see the world in all its complexity."

At the core of New York's iconic architecture is the World Trade Center, standing as a symbol of hope and endurance. A photograph of this site can convey not just its physical grandeur but also the emotions connected to it. One such image might show a diverse group of people walking, relaxing, and shopping in the area, bringing it to life. The composition emphasizes depth and balance, with subjects in the foreground and the towering World Trade Center forming an impressive backdrop. As Susan Sontag highlights in *On Photography* "photographs can freeze reality, and this one captures a moment of everyday life in a place marked by profound history. The scene encapsulates New York's capacity to turn tragedy into spaces for community, commerce, and contemplation.

The nearby Oculus, designed by Santiago Calatrava, is another architectural masterpiece, quickly becoming a favorite for photographers. Its clean lines and open design naturally guide composition, creating a sense of scale and motion. The white beams, resembling a bird's wings, symbolize freedom and renewal. From a photographer's perspective, this creates an opportunity to capture both the structure and the interactions within it. Using the rule of thirds, photographers can highlight the contrast between the steady movement of people below and the monumental architecture above. John Berger's assertion that "the camera can capture the world as we see it, but also as we might never have seen it before" rings true here. The interplay

of light from the central skylight and the flow of commuters creates a visually striking and meaningful photograph.

The Oculus's significance goes beyond its design; the natural light that fills the space is particularly moving on September 11, when it aligns with the building to honor those lost in 2001. This blending of architecture and light creates what Sontag calls a "reality effect," where the emotional and visual impact of the space is captured in a photograph. Through line, shape, and space, photographers document the harmony between the building's form and function, crafting images that reflect both its beauty and deeper meaning.

Similarly, the Fulton Center in Lower Manhattan presents rich photographic opportunities with its interplay of light, space, and human movement. A black-and-white photograph of this busy transit hub might focus on the geometric lines of the escalators, balconies, and glass dome, enhancing the contrast between the sleek design and the dynamic flow of commuters. The stark use of light and shadow creates a dramatic composition that emphasizes the station's grandeur while imparting a sense of calm amid the hustle. Berger's observation that "photographs are a way of seeing the world in a new light" is evident here, as an image of Fulton Center transforms a practical space into a work of art. The soaring "Sky Reflector-Net" channels natural light deep into the station, imbuing the scene with both modern and timeless qualities.

A photograph of the Fulton Center also captures the energy and movement that define New York City. As a key part of the city's transportation network, it connects several subway lines and serves thousands of commuters daily. Opened in 2014, the Fulton Center was designed to modernize the transit system while preserving the city's historical essence, incorporating the historic Corbin Building. This integration of old and new speaks to the city's efforts to maintain its heritage while embracing progress. As Teju Cole notes, "Photography is about allowing reality to reveal itself," and a photograph of Fulton Center does just that, highlighting both human activity and architectural beauty.

In contrast to the busy atmosphere of the Oculus and Fulton Center, the McGraw-Hill Waterfall offers a serene moment of calm amidst the city's rapid pace. A photograph might show two people walking through a glass tunnel beneath the waterfall, the gentle flow of water creating a soothing backdrop. The depth of field directs the viewer's attention from the figures in the foreground to the cascading water behind them. The interplay between the natural movement of the water and the sleek modernity of the glass and stone creates a powerful visual. The image captures what Berger refers to as the "punctum," the small, poignant detail that gives a photograph emotional weight. Here, it's the quiet figures, momentarily shielded from the city's rush, that create a sense of tranquility.

The McGraw-Hill Waterfall, part of the public plaza at 1221 Avenue of the Americas, exemplifies how urban design can create spaces for reflection. Completed in 1972, with the waterfall feature added later to enhance the plaza, it offers an immersive experience that contrasts with the rigid lines of Midtown Manhattan's skyscrapers. As Sontag points out, photographs capture moments that might otherwise go unnoticed, and an image of the McGraw-Hill Waterfall does just that—freezing a rare moment of quiet reflection in a fast-paced city.

Through these photographs—of the World Trade Center, the Oculus, Fulton Center, and the McGraw-Hill Waterfall—photographers capture the essence of New York. Each image tells a story, whether it's about resilience, movement, or peace amidst chaos. Using techniques like balance, composition, and light, these photographs transcend mere documentation and invite viewers to explore the deeper meaning behind each image. As Berger suggests, “The photograph offers a way of seeing,” and these images reveal New York not just as a collection of buildings and people, but as a dynamic space filled with countless untold stories.(999 Words)

References:

- Berger, John. *Understanding a Photograph*, (1972), p. 22.
- Cole, Teju. "*Perfect and Unrehearsed*", (2017), p. 44.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*, (1977), p. 85.