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Essay 1: My Photo Essay
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Through My Lens

Photography is the art, practice and process of taking photographs. Photographs capture moments that are impossible to see again, irreplicable. As Sontag (2013) explains, “After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed” (535). Photography helps capture unique moments for eternity that would have otherwise been forever gone. I consider myself a photographer because I enjoy taking photographs of important moments and everything else that catches my eyes. By no means am I professional, however I do try to take the perfect shot. The three photos “Holy New Year”, “ Yikes 20 Candles”, and “Old Money Vibes” are a portion of what my year has looked like and each carry a different story in the same book. While these photos might look basic and random, they carry meaningful moments within.



Holy New Year (2024)

I took this photograph on January 1 2024 at 2:50 AM before leaving my family and I's Baby Jesus behind. For the past two years my family has decided to rent a small party hall or restaurant so we can celebrate New Years together. We have become an overwhelmingly big family and as funny as it may seem, we don't fit in our small apartments anymore. It is a tradition for Catholics to recreate the Nativity of Jesus, which is why there are many Baby Jesus in the picture as almost everyone in my family has one. The composition in this photograph was not necessarily arranged for a photo but rather to admire it while we did a prayer. All of the ladies in my family helped arrange and decorate the table to make it similar to the nativity scene. According to Sontag, "It hardly Matters what activities are photographed so long as photographs get taken and are cherished" (533). Every time I come across this photograph, I cherish and remember the moment warmly. I will always love seeing all of my family members come together and celebrate. Everyone was happy and excited for the New Year. At the end of the prayer my cousin Jessica, was the one who positioned every Baby Jesus randomly, by pure chance ours ended up in the middle.



Yikes 20 Candles(2024)

I was standing in front of my cake while my family was singing “Happy Birthday” to me. I was amazed whilst looking at my cake. I had never seen my cake full of candles because my mom had always bought number candles for our birthdays. I quickly grabbed my phone to take a picture because I knew it would be a beautiful photo for my memory book. As Berger(2013) explains, “The photograph is an automatic record through the meditation of light of a given event” (19). I knew I would remember this moment but I also wanted to be able to look back at it. I wanted my cake to be the dominant impression, I made sure it was perfectly centered. I loved how the picture turned out so I had decided to post it on my Instagram story. Not to brag, it received plenty of hearts! I could not believe I was turning 20 years old. Leaving my teen years behind was a very emotional moment for me. I had thought about this moment for which I purposely bought 20 candles to represent every year I had lived. As I blew every candle one by one, I thought about all the good and bad things I had gone through. It was also a funny moment. I had not realized how many candles I'd be blowing. It took me a little longer than usual but when I got to my last candle, I thanked God for the opportunity of living so much surrounded by my loved ones.



Old Money Vibes (2024)

My family loves spending days off productively and visiting new places, especially beaches during the summer. I took this photo at Coopers Beach in the South Hamptons minutes before leaving. I was admiring the blue sky melting with the color of the ocean. I then realized that the moon was visible even though it wasn't night time yet. I was waiting patiently for the right moment to capture a beautiful image of the beach. My decisive moment was when I noticed the seagull flying close to the moon and instantly took it. I had almost missed it by a second. It was our first time visiting The Hamptons and I can say it was a wonderful experience. We were able to see so many beautiful mansions and a different lifestyle. According to Sontang, "Photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that the fun was had" (534). Many people don't see the point in taking pictures of landscapes. They might argue that it is just a beach that looks like any other. However, I love taking pictures of every place I visit because it helps me remember a day that was perfectly spent with my family. .

Ultimately, I have learned that putting words and images together is very crucial. Not only does it help the reader have a better understanding of what is visible in the image but allows them to compare their own visualization. It allows us to see an image on a deeper level and understand why the photographer decided to press click. Everyone takes photographs depending on what matters to them. According to Berger, one decides what is worthy of photographing (18). It is the photographer who puts the special meaning to any picture. Many people may see a photo and think it is just as simple as any other photo.

However photos contain a certain amount of punctum. A part of a photograph that awakens a personal emotion that connects the viewer to the photo and to the photographer. (1044)

References

Berger, J. (2013). Understanding a Photograph. In J. Dyer (Ed.), *Understanding a Photograph* (pp. 17-21). Penguin.

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