

Katerin Gonzalez

Essay 1 ; My Photo Essay

10/07/24

ENG 1121- D536 (Prof. Scanlan)







In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger argues that the meaning of images is not fixed, but shaped by the viewer's experiences, emotions, and context. This idea resonates deeply with my photograph titled "Night's Jewel", a picture I captured of the moon during a late-night outing with two close friends. We were at the park, sitting by the swings, discussing the personal challenges we were each facing. As we gazed up, the glow of the moon mesmerized us, and in that quiet moment, an unexpected sense of hope washed over me.

For many, the moon may simply be a natural object in the sky, an everyday sight. But for me, it carries a much deeper emotional significance. The moon, with its soft and steady light, has always felt like a symbol of reassurance—a reminder that even in the darkest moments, there is still light to guide the way. It represents a safe haven, a constant source of comfort during times of uncertainty. This personal connection transforms the image of the moon from just another photograph into a visual representation of my inner world, reflecting feelings of hope and emotional resilience.

Additionally, the photograph captures not only the moon but the serenity of the night itself. I've always found nighttime to be calming, almost therapeutic. There's something about the stillness and quiet that brings me peace, making night walks far more comforting than those during the day. This image, therefore, encapsulates more than just a celestial body—it reflects my preference for the night as a time for introspection and healing. In line with Berger's ideas, this photograph holds a meaning shaped by my own emotional experiences, turning it into a powerful symbol of safety and hope.

Lastly, my last photograph, titled “*Serenity’s Embrace*,” captures the beach at dusk, with a quiet bench nestled between two trees. The scene evokes an overwhelming sense of peace for me—a place where I find calm and clarity amidst the chaos of daily life.

Every time I visit this spot, I feel like I’m stepping into a sanctuary. The rhythmic sound of the waves, the gentle rustling of the trees, and the soft breeze create a sense of stillness that grounds me. This place became my refuge during a time when life felt particularly overwhelming. I remember the first time I sat on that bench, feeling emotionally drained, weighed down by the stress of a difficult decision. As I gazed at the endless horizon, watching the sky blend into the sea, a deep sense of calm washed over me. It was as if the ocean absorbed all the tension, leaving me feeling lighter.

Others might see the beach as just another scenic landscape, a backdrop for relaxation. But for me, it’s more than just a pretty view. It has become a space for healing, a reminder that peace is always within reach, no matter how turbulent life may seem. The two trees standing tall by the bench feel like silent sentinels, offering shade and comfort, as if inviting me to pause and simply be present.

In line with Berger’s ideas, this photograph is not merely an image of a beach—it’s a visual reflection of my emotional connection to a place where I feel safe, calm, and at peace with the world. The bench and trees, while ordinary objects to some, have become symbols of my personal journey toward finding tranquility and balance.

My second photograph, titled “*Grace Beneath the Arch*,” was taken just a few streets away from the beach where I captured “*Serenity’s Embrace*.” In this image, a swan

glides gently across the water beneath an old bridge, embodying a peaceful moment that resonates deeply with me. While others might view this scene as merely tranquil, it symbolizes something far more profound: a sense of grace and resilience.

I first discovered this spot after enduring a particularly challenging period in my life. It seems that I form a unique attachment to places that provide solace during difficult times, and this hidden corner quickly became one of my sanctuaries. The setting is quiet and calm, frequented by people walking their dogs or jogging along the path. I find myself returning here during the afternoons, drawn to the tranquil ambiance that envelops me.

As I sit on the bank, watching the swan glide effortlessly through the water, I can't help but reflect on the strength it represents. The swan, with its graceful movements, serves as a reminder that resilience often lies beneath the surface. Just as it maintains its serene appearance while paddling determinedly beneath the water, I realize that my own struggles and efforts to remain composed are often unseen by the world. I sit by the water's edge, contemplating my own journey and the resilience I've discovered within myself. Each visit reinforces the bond I've formed with this space, reminding me that healing takes time and that grace can be found even in the most challenging circumstances.

In conclusion, I am reminded that strength often lies beneath the surface, a sentiment echoed by Berger when he states, "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe."

These images offer not just aesthetic beauty but also emotional comfort and a means of escape. Each image serves as a visual sanctuary, reflecting my journey through challenging times. They allow me to reflect on my own resilience and growth, reinforcing the idea that nature can provide solace and healing. Berger notes that images serve as objects of contemplation, and for me, these photographs are more than mere captures of light and shadow; they are powerful symbols of my journey toward inner peace.

Ultimately, through Berger's lens, I have come to understand that images are infused with personal meaning, transforming them into sources of inspiration. In this way, "*Serenity's Embrace*" and "*Grace Beneath the Arch*" and "*Night's Jewel*" invite me to pause, reflect, and find strength in the beauty of the world around me.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books, 1972, (pp. 8-9)

<https://archive.org/details/understanding-a-photograph-john-berger/page/n25/mode/2up>