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Essay 1: Photo Essay

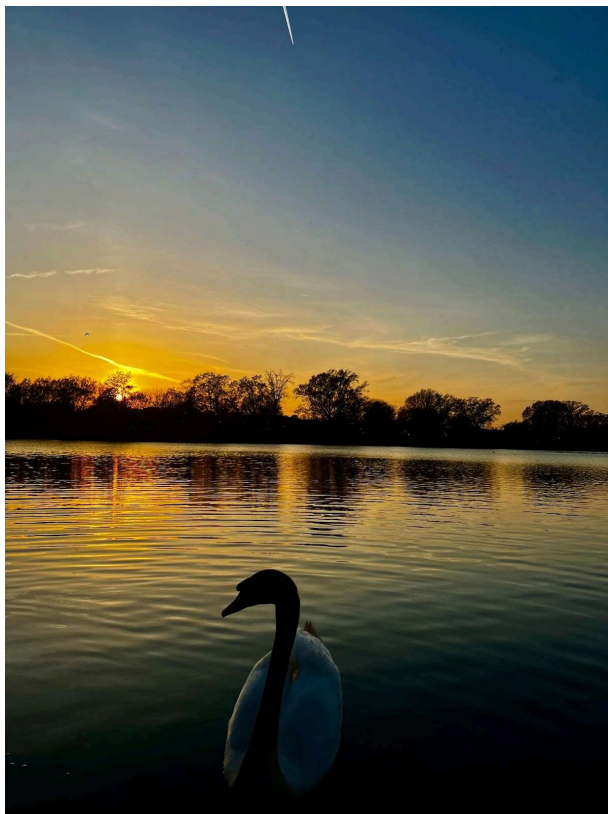
English 1121 (Prof. Scanlan)

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The Beauty of Sunsets

Photography in general means just taking pictures and capturing moments, emotions and even stories. It freezes the moment and lets us take and enjoy those moments more than once again. In this essay, I would like to discuss three photos of sunsets that I took and explain that they represent different narratives. These pictures are all of the sunset. However, the places and the moods of all of them are different but I remember each of them. In relation to these pictures, I will reflect on the emotions and the beauty that each sunset presented.

Photo 1: Sunset Time at Baisley Pond Park



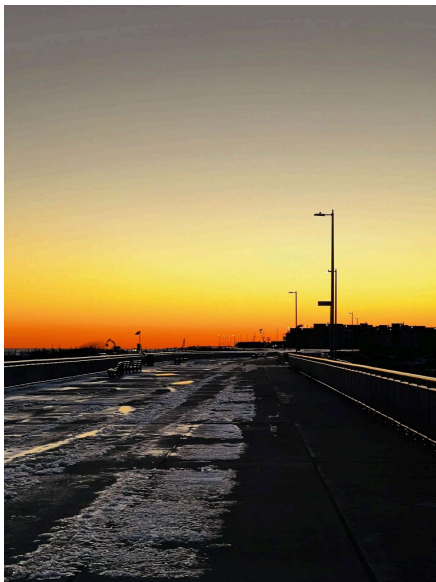
The first photo “Sunset Time at Baisley Pond Park” was captured on one of several beautiful but cold autumn days. My cousin and I were biking in the park and we thought that we would take a break on the side of the pond. We were seated on the benches and as I stretched my hand, the cold mist kissed my face and heard the wind blowing through leaves. Suddenly I noticed a duck which had nicely alighted on water in the lake. On that evening, the sky

was a warm orange, and it looked as if the sun had been set for some time. With no second thought, I pulled out my phone and took the picture.

The picture shows the duck in the foreground together with its outline being black to contrast the brightly painted in orange background representing the sunset. The water is a mirror-like surface of golden colors of the sun setting down, while the duck is gliding a little apart. The trees in the background have shadows so the main scene has a deeper contrast. It was at this precise time that all the movements of the physical world appeared to dovetail. Such scenes as a quiet and calm water, a calm duck and a light glow of the sky prove that the atmosphere on the show was very quiet, as if magical.

This photo might not be classified as a 'break,' but it makes me remember how even the unlikeliest of scenes involves nature being peaceful sometimes. This photo is a mixture of portraits and art. This is a good background to remind us that every photograph is made at the apex of a conscious decision to capture an event. According to John Berger, "A photograph is the outcome of the photographer's decision that it is worth documenting that such an event or that such an object had been observed" (Understanding a Photograph, p. 18). That is why the image of a duck floating on water appeals so much. The moment when this bird and the water are significant enough to be captured is depicted here.

Photo 2: Sunset Time at Far Rockaway Beach



The second photo Sunset Time at Far Rockaway Beach is quite different in terms of mood. Look at this second picture which was taken in winter. This photo is much more emotional than the first one in my opinion. That day, I had just come back from sociology class and I tended to feel a bit depleted in my mind. I wanted to relax and eventually glanced at my phone only to learn that soon it will be time for sunset. I wanted to see the

sunset so I went to Far Rockaway Beach in order to change my mood.

The color of the sky was perfect orange and above which was yellow because the sun was just setting. This is an art type photo. The small path to the shore was powdered with snow and the wind touched my face sharply as I was walking. The roads were icy and all sorts of seasons but the view gave me a warm feeling. In this photo, there is the elongated pier, the dark lampposts piercing through the photograph and casting shadows on the snowy path. This time the warm colors of the sky are reflected against the cool color of the snow on the ground.

This picture is close to my heart because it is rather hard to search for beauties in this life when the days are extremely cold and unyielding. Graphic of the Sun setting that day very bright, suggesting that no matter how weary we are or how bad it may seem, nature has the ability to comfort. It is important to note that taking this particular photograph did not require much consideration. This shot was taken at the break of the extreme winter poles in this world of chaos. As Berger discusses, “There is no transforming in photography”. (Understanding a Photograph, p. 21). This essentially summarizes the very fundamentals of photography that is choosing what to bring into clear vision when things get difficult especially in times of struggle.

Photo 3: Sunset from 35,000 Feet Above the Ground



The third picture, entitled “Sunset Time from 35, 000 Feet Above the Ground, reveals an entirely unique angle of the sunset. This photo was captured by the window of an aircraft during my return trip from a trip to Texas. Because I had a two hour flight delay I was able to watch the sunset at about 35000 feet and this was a memorable moment.

The horizon in this photo is perfectly straight, dividing the dark sky above from the golden glow of the setting sun below. The wing of the airplane is visible, adding a sense of scale and reminding the viewer of the immense height from which this photo was taken. The sky above is a deep blue, almost black, while the horizon glows with warm orange and yellow tones, fading into darkness as the sun disappears. This unique viewpoint made the sunset feel even more majestic.

This image captures a moment of reflection for me. Being so high up in the sky, I felt a sense of awe at the beauty of the world from such a great height. It was a reminder of how vast the world is and how small we are in comparison. Photographs like this one often serve as a testament to reality showing us what we might otherwise not believe. As Susan Sontag points out, "Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it" (On Photography, p. 531). Without this photograph, I might forget the sheer scale and beauty of a sunset viewed from such heights, but the image brings that experience back to life.

Conclusion

These three sunset photos have their own message, meaning, and learning point. From the quiet stroll at Baisley Pond Park to the freeze frame icy resolve of the Far Rockaway Beach at sunset, to the magnificent sunrise over a landscape from 35,000 feet in the air, these are differing moments, feelings, sentiments, and even stories. The goal when being a photographer is not just to explain the world visually but to express an emotion. Not each photograph is an aimless shot of the sunset. Each picture is a glimpse into what I was feeling and living at the specific moment.

This is especially so when creating this photo essay. Looking at my own pictures has been a very enlightening experience. Looking at these three pictures, I explore how I feel nature impacted my life through giving me hope, serenity and appreciation. Fundamentally as Berger, Sontag and Cole argue that it is about decision making, where, what is focused and offering the proof of this or that experience. Finally, photography makes it possible to talk to memories and feelings, erasing time to transform it into a number of stories that can be explained to other people.

References

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