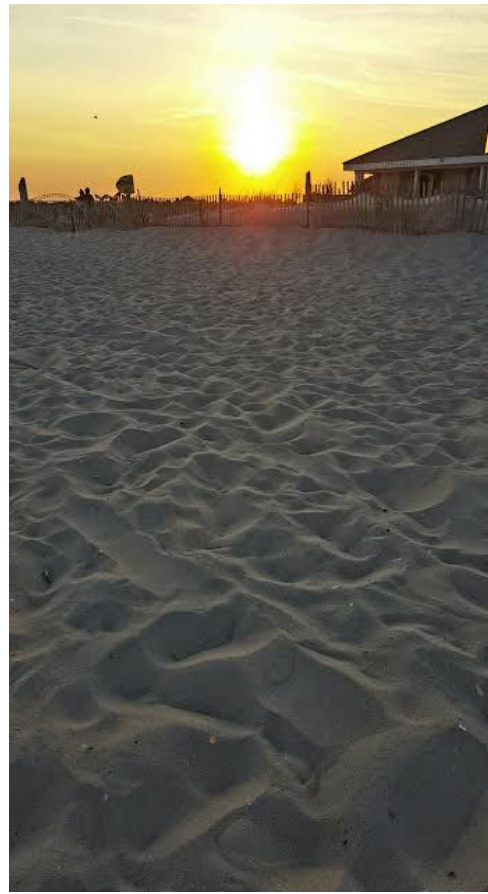


“Boat Lost”
Delaware River, PA



“Sandy Mess”
Robert Moses Beach, Field 5, NY



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A Way to Remember

Keychains, mugs, bracelets, ornaments, and sometimes even currency, all come to mind when thinking about souvenirs. But how often do we consider photographs as a souvenir? In her essay "On Photography," Susan Sontag states "A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened...the Polaroid owner for whom photographs are a handy, fast form of note-taking, or the shutterbug with a brownie who takes snapshots as souvenirs of daily life," (531) which shows how photography truly is a widely practiced activity. Through examination of the pro-filmic event and studium of both photos, I plan to concentrate on why we take pictures as souvenirs.

Photograph one titled "Boat Lost" was taken while canoeing on the Delaware River in Pennsylvania. In a canoe for the very first time, along with another three hours of paddling before getting back to the campsite, my cousin and I decided to pull over and take a break. While sitting in the heat of the sun eating Kit-Kat bars that melted between our fingers, I looked around and suddenly felt nervous. The other canoers were nowhere in sight and I worried that we steered off track. I was essentially told to "shut up and relax." When I looked around for the second time, I began to actually notice how peaceful everything was. No buildings, cars, or people, just a clear sky with vibrant green foliage, calm navy water, and even the smooth, gray, irregular shaped rocks left me awestruck. So what did I do about it? I took a picture. As Susan Sontag

states “Photographs document sequences of consumption carried on outside the view of family, friends, neighbors.” (534) I wanted to remember this moment, to share it with my mom and friends when I got back to New York. More particularly I wondered if anyone else ever stopped at the exact spot we did and witnessed nature's harmony in the way that I saw it.

Photograph two titled “Sandy Mess,” was taken one summer evening at Field 5, Robert Moses Beach, NY, after a game of football with a random ball my cousins and I found nearby. Running around and tackling each other in sand is extremely tiresome, so after a few hours we finally decided to quit and go home. As we packed our belongings, I looked back at the mess we made, saw the sunset and snapped a quick photo. The sun rises and sets everyday, it’s nothing uncommon or worth taking a picture of when I’m walking home from school, or looking out my window. But in that moment of noise and confusion, the sense of an end to a long wary day made that sunset worth capturing. The varying shades of golden brown and orange sunlight shining on the warm, grainy, sand mess that we made all came together in harmony. Teju Cole's essay “Perfect and Unrehearsed” says “But the reality is that there is usually a much more improvisatory and flexible mathematical order at play in a successful photograph.” (2) In other terms, a successful picture doesn’t require every element being controlled, sometimes they just happen to be. The footstep filled sand that take up nearly three quarters of the picture *is* a perfect and unrehearsed mess. It is the aftermath of the joys of that day. Imagine an image with just the sand, no skyline, fence, white building or sunset. Without the entire context of the photo this photo wouldn't have been quite interesting.

The overall context of an image may explain why it exists. For example, picture one is obviously taken by someone who does not find this scene particularly common and chose to

remember it. Photograph 2 on the other hand was taken as a reflection of the photographers emotions at that time. John Berger's essay, "Understanding a Photograph," states, "A photograph is a result of the photographer's decision that it is worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen." (292). Each of these photos were taken because I saw something that I wanted to share, they represent an emotion, an activity, and a reminder of the events that occurred on that day. I didn't walk away with some sand in a jar or a rock from the river, but the souvenirs I did capture on camera tell a story far better than these items could.

Ultimately one major reason we take pictures is to remember. It is impossible for the photographer to see every element in the photo at first, but it's key factors such as the profilmic events that lead to a photo existing. If it wasn't for going canoeing or spending a day with my family at the beach, these images would not have ever existed. Whilst participating in these activities it was my emotions and intentions, that made the scene worth capturing. These images were perfect, and unrehearsed scenes in nature that I wanted to share with others.

(819 Words)

Works Cited

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