Sabrina Messam

Essay 2 Final Draft

English 1101 (Prof. Scanlan)

October 29, 2016

Days in Autumn

Photography has different purposes for everyone. As Susan Sontag states, “photography has become of the principal devices for experiencing something.” While many use photography as a way to brag, gain popularity, and create untrue personas of themselves, I use it as a way to get your thoughts going. In this essay, I plan to show my personal purpose in using this art form, letting the audience see two photos, “The Aspects of Fall” and “Dip-Dyed Tree,” that will wake up your inner art critic.

“Dip-Dyed Tree” was taken on October 18. I was walking home from school, after a morning class that left me drained of all energy. I was dragging my feet, with my shoulders hunched over, the mantra in my head repeating, “one more step, one foot in front of the other and you’ll be home.” The moment that I decided to lift my head up, was when I saw it. “It” was a tree that was in its natural element. The colors caught my attention first. The red and orange, combined with the green, making the tree look like dip dyed hair. The homes in the lower right hand corner of the foreground, have a majority of red features. That aspect of the homes, make them match with the red leaves in the tree. The cloudless sky in the background, makes it look even better from the distance in which I was standing. The contrast between the blue of the sky, with the red and yellow of the tree is very interesting. There are more trees in the lower left foreground of the photo, that are blurred out. The same thing is happening to those trees, but the color was not very eye-catching. Similar to the trees in the foreground, the tree that we are focusing on has leaves that are changing. It was very beautiful, so naturally, I stopped to capture a photo. I reiterate what John Berger said in his essay, *Understanding a Photograph*, “A photograph is the result of the photographer’s decision that it is worth recording.”

The Pro-filmic event was me walking home, which had to happen regardless of taking a photo. The irony in this, is that the photo shows something as natural as death, being shown in a beautiful way, death often thought of as dark and saddening. I agree with one of Sontag’s ideas of photography stated in her essay, *On Photography*, where she states, “An ugly or grotesque subject may be moving because it has been dignified by the attention of the photographer.”The leaves are dying, but we aren’t disturbed seeing it. This is also a documentary photo, because the way it’s seen now, is exactly the way it was on that day. The frame of the photo is worth considering, because I had to crop out an unfortunate woman who just happened to walk by. Resulting from that, the tree trunk was also cut out, which I feel would have helped the photo make a better statement.

The second photo I took is very simple, titled “Aspects of Fall.” I was walking home again, on October 13. I had walked past a new strip mall on the corner of Kings Highway and Utica Avenue. With my earbuds in, head down, I tried to unlock my phone, unsuccessfully, opening the camera instead. As I realized that I was on the camera app, I saw that the image of my legs, the sidewalk and the leaves, made a pretty cool potential picture. This is an art photo, because I manipulated the environment, walking back and forth, to the corner and back, to try and find the perfect ratio of legs to leaves. On that day, I wore black leggings, and black sneakers with pink details on them. My shoes were made by Keds™, and they are very worn out. I’ve had them for almost three years, due to the fact that I’ve never found a pair of sneakers that were to my liking. The leaves on the ground looked like they fell off the tree a long time ago, because some of them were already turning black. The sidewalk looks recently redone, because it’s gray, and not brown like the rest of the sidewalk. The reality effect of this photo is at a medium level. I say this because it really happened, however it’s not a candid shot, by definition, where nothing is staged.

The photos “Aspects of Fall” and “Dip-Dyed Tree” both exploit the most obvious sign of the autumn season. Dead leaves. Leaves are really pretty, but they can also be really annoying. Most people take pleasure in stepping on crunchy leaves, but raking leaves often loses its novelty after the fourth time you do it. Both photos show that leaves can complement the majority of photos, and make them look aesthetically pleasing.

(826 words)

Works Cited

Berger, John. "Understanding a Photograph." Classic Essays on Photography, edited by Alan Trachtenberg, New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980, pp. 292.

Sontag, Susan. “On Photography.” Essays of the 1960’s & 70’s, edited by David Rieff, Library of America, 2013, pp. 534-538.