Shahzaib Hafeez

Essay No. 2

Section D391

October 25, 2016

The Field of View

 In his essay “Understanding a Photograph” John Berger, explores the relationship between art and photography, and states that photography doesn’t deserve to be considered as a work of art but rather something that serves the purpose of documentation. John Berger states “Every handbook on photography talks about composition. The good photography is the well composed one” (292). While Berger believes that a composition is what makes a photograph a “good photo,” I think that while composition does play a big part in making a “good photograph” there are other things such as color, frame, and other photographic elements such as the studium and the reality effect that also play a big role. In this essay, I will be comparing two of the photos that I have taken “The Sparrow” and “The Flower” and refute the idea of John Berger that only good composition can result in a good photograph. Also, another thing I would say makes a good photograph is the dominant impression which gives you the mood, color, isolation and that can be achieved through the technique of depth of field.

 The first photo “The Sparrow,” the studium of this picture is a sparrow who is sitting on a wooden roof above an ice skating ring. As I was walking around in central park I saw this sparrow sitting on a wooden roof, not moving at all almost as it was waiting to be photographed. When I pulled my camera, I looked in to the lens and saw that people in the back on the ice skating ring were ruining the color of the sparrow and I was not able to capture its beauty in its entirety, so I decided to zoom on the sparrow leaving nothing but some of that wooden roof. I was satisfied with the photo in the end, since the sparrow can be seen fully and you can see the smallest details of the sparrow such as the beak and claws and its beautiful colors. For my second photograph “The Flower”, the studium of the picture is an out-of-focus flower in the foreground with the focus being the branch. The flower is surrounded by leaves and the same color of flower in the background which are out-of-focus as well, and gives us a totally different picture.

 Comparing these two photographs “The sparrow” and “The flower” they both have something in common which is depth of field. Depth of field gives a photographer the desired blurriness or the sharpness that he or she desires and gives the photo that desired effect. In “The sparrow” I used the depth of field so I can achieve my desired effect for that picture which was to get my subject in full focus and to show the color of the bird and make it the focus of the picture. In his essay John Berger states that “what distinguishes the one from the other is the degree to which the photographer explains the message, the degree to which the photograph makes the photographers decision transparent and comprehensible” (292). In the second picture “The flower” I used depth of field and the rule of thirds so I can position the subject in my picture. Even though it can be said that the main subject of the picture is the flower, it’s the branch that the flower is attached to which is in focus. The reason for me using the depth of field was so show that the flowers color can been seen even if they are not in focus, but focusing the branch gives it a different character or a hint of different color.

 The second characteristic that these two-pictures share are the color. The first picture even thou majorly composed of the grey wooden roof that the bird is sitting on, isn’t much too look at since the bird colors are different then the constant grey of the wood, and gives you a different effect. The bird produces a very vivid image to the eye; through its different colors it makes the picture to a very high upscale. The sparrow wings have layer of color which makes it even more interesting. In the second picture the color of the flower makes the picture pop out even thou the flowers itself are out-of-focus, the color of the flowers is vibrant, which then makes the mood of the picture. Even thou when you look at these two pictures people mostly think of the dominant impression to be nature, but for me the dominant impression would have to be harmonious. The both pictures give us that calm feeling, which is achieved through not only the composition of the picture but the color, mood and isolation.

 To say that John Berger was totally wrong when said he that “Every handbook on photography talks about composition. The good photography is the well composed one” (292), would be wrong, although not entirely right. A picture is not only the subjects that it contains but also the elements within the picture, to say that they don’t matter is false. Elements such as color make up the picture. In Susan Sontag on photography she argues “To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in status quo remain unchanged (at least for as long as it takes to get a “good” picture)” (page 536). Even though I made the composition of the picture myself in both pictures having only the composition wouldn’t have helped the picture, sometimes including some extra element’s help you as well.

Words (937)

 Work Cited

Berger, John “Understanding a Photograph” 1980. *Classic essays on photography*. Ed. Alan Trachtenberg, Newhaven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980

<https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/scanlan-eng1101-sect-d365-spg2015/files/2012/08/John-Berger-UnderstandingaPhotograph.pdf>

Sontag, Susan “On Photography” *ESSAYS OF THE 1960s AND 70s*. ed, David Rieff: The library of America 2013.

<https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/SCANLAN-Eng1101-5377-S2014/files/2012/08/Sontag-On-Photography-2014.pdf>