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Essay 2 Draft
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Different Bridges

I took these two photos because there were an interesting and different perspective of places I travel weekly, but very rarely see from a different angle like the ones depicted in the photos. In his essay “Understanding a Photograph” John Berger describes a photograph as “. . . a result of the photographer’s decision that is it worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen.”(Berger, pg.292). I found it important to record these particular objects because seeing both of these bridges from different angles and not just driving over them represented a certain beauty in objects that are accepted as everyday life but in a different context can be admired and looked at differently. In this essay I will describe these two photographs and compare them with each other and different terms I learned in class.

Both photos have a very similar studium, both being documentary photos and showing bridges crossing bodies of water. Both photos are in similar times of day with the sun in the sky and clear weather, and both mainly focus on the bridges. But the picture of the Verrazano Bridge has less colors than the picture of Dingman’s Bridge due to being in an urban location, between Brooklyn and Staten Island. The photograph “The Verrazano on a Sunny Day” is primarily blue, with the blue sky and the blue water of the New York Harbor underneath it, the lighting even gives the bridge a blue tone. However the photograph “Dingman’s Bridge on a Sunny Day” has more colors because of its more remote location, connecting the New Jersey and Pennsylvania coasts of the Delaware River. The trees and their reflections show different tones of green that

frame the brown and white bridge, with less blue than the other picture, smaller portions of the sky and blue water on the top and bottom of the picture. The second photo shows more of both shores because the significantly smaller bridge allowed more to be framed into the photograph.

Also easily visible in the photos is the bodies of water under the two bridges. Under the Verrazano Bridge runs The Narrows which connect the Upper and Lower bay of New York and services thousands of ships a day carrying cargo or people under the Verrazano, which towers above the water to allow high clearance for the ships travelling underneath. Dingman's Bridge offers much less clearance over the Delaware River, where watercrafts with engines are scarcely seen, and is more commonly used by canoers and kayakers, or even fisherman.

The Dominant Impression of the first photograph is the vastness of the bridge from the angle along the Bay Ridge Promenade. The second photo has a calmer and more organic Dominant Impression of a smaller bridge from the view the nearby Boat Access port, which allows people on kayaks and canoes to ride along the Delaware River, Instead of the large tankers and cargo ships that travel between the New York Harbor and across the rest of the world.

Though both photos look similar, the bridges are very different in their background and construction. The Verrazano bridge stands as a double-decked suspension bridge and is one of the longest suspension bridges in the world. But Dingman's Bridge is much smaller and more modest, with only two tight lanes and still being privately owned with a fair of only \$1, not owned by a large corporation like the Triborough Bridge and tunnel Authority. The actual floor of Dingman's Bridge is only made out of planks of wood, that is changed out a couple of times a year and that fact always made the bridge stand out to me personally, even if it isn't directly seen

in the photo. Susan Sontag in her essay titled “On Photography” brings to light the idea that a photograph is an “. . . imaginary possession of a past that is unreal . . . ” (Sontag, pg.533) and something a person has to hold onto the past or use to remember an important part of one's life, I will probably think about the photographs I’ve taken of these bridges and more everytime I cross them and remember the events of that day and the personal importance of them to me.

Berger describes photographs as having “. . . little or no property value because they have no rarity value. The very principle of photography is that the resulting image is not unique, but on the contrary reproducible.”(Berger, pg.291) and although I agree with him to some extent, I think that punctum plays a large roles in photographs that people take themselves even if they are not extremely unique. The punctum for me from both photographs are bridges that I often use to travel with the rest of my family and have some sort of deeper meaning or memories unique to me. I remember when I was younger and we would travel across the Verrazano Bridge and I would look off the side amazed at the view and the ships in the water, although it is not as impressive to me anymore, I still understand the feelings I had as a child. The Dingman’s Bridge holds a different type of memory for me, where as a kid I would open my window while crossing and laugh as my younger sister would be terrified at the rattling of the wood against the iron of the side of the bridge, while I trusted the sturdiness of the wood. I learned that when reading photographs both punctum and studium are important and not just what the naked eye can see.

Work Cited:

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