Zion McNichol Essay 2

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English 1101

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“Gentrification”

Describing and comparing go together; they are two important ways of understanding the world around us. A photograph is an image focused onto film or other light-sensitive material and then made visible and permanent by chemical treatment, or stored digitally. Within photography are a lot of details and comparisons. Every photo holds a significant importance to a person, situation, or place in time. In this essay, I will give an elaborate description of my two photographs and compare their differences and how it has changed my neighborhood.

The first photograph I took was of an apartment building across the street from my home on Lincoln Road. The photo was taken around 3:00 pm on 11/5/17. This building was built in 1926 and has 6 stories. The bricks are different shades of color because the building is old and starting to rust. There is a green cover over the front door of the building which was very useful because it was raining the day I took this photo. There’s a little red incline by the entrance of the building and to the right is a bunch of trash cans for garbage. Sometimes when I walk by the building, I can smell the garbage which is disturbing. The reason why I chose to take this photo was to show a bit of my neighborhood and how it has drastically changed. My dominant impression of the building was that it was cost efficient to live in the building.

The second photograph I took was of another apartment building located on Flatbush Avenue. This photo was taken around 1:00 pm on 11/5/17. The building was recently built about 5 months ago. The building is 8 stories tall and has a garage for parking. The exterior of the building is two different shades of grey. There is a big tree in the front of the building blocking the view of some of the windows but located by the 7th floor is a patio where people can stand and have a nice view over the neighborhood. The street and the sidewalk were both redone to give the building a more “fresh” look. The reason why I chose to take this photo was to show the gentrification taking place in my neighborhood. My dominant impression of the building was that it was going to be very expensive to live in such a building.

In Susan Sontag’s essay “On Photography,” she states, “A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened” (531). In the first photo, I can tell by the darker color bricks that there was a fire in the building. When comparing the two photos, I can see the change going on in my neighborhood. The studium in both photos are the buildings. Both photos have very gloomy colors. By building these high-rises, rent will start to increase. And in doing so, people of low income will have no other choice but to move out of their homes. This is known as gentrification. Gentrification is the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents.

The depth of field of a photo is the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear acceptably sharp in an image. In both photos, the main focus is the buildings. However, in the first photo, there are two orange cones, about four garbage bins, and two black cars. In the second photo, right in the front of the building, are 3 parked cars, a big tree, and a yellow traffic light that say go. The depth of field allows me to focus on the bigger picture while keeping the little details intact.

The dominant impression given to me by the first photo is the feeling of preservation and hope for my neighborhood because of how long the building has been there. Sontag also stated “After the event has ended, the picture will still exist” (535). Even if the building were to be destroyed and rebuilt, it will always be there in memory. The dominant impression given to me by the second photo is the feeling of change and false hope. It might look like the neighborhood is changing for the better, but in actuality, it is changing the lives of many for the worse.

There’s more to a photograph than what is in plain sight. A photographer can capture many stories in just one image that will live forever .Using techniques such as Studium, Dominant Impression, and Depth of Field, I learned how to describe photographs from different views as well as compare them. Every photo holds a significant importance to a person, situation, or place in time. It helps us better understand the world around us.

(801 Words)

Work Cited Page

Sontag, Susan. “On Photography.” Essay’s on the 1960’s and 70’s: *Against Interpretation / Styles of Radical Will / On Photography / Illness as Metaphor / Uncollected Essays*, edited by David Rieff, The Library of America, 2013, pp. 531-539.