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### Moods of a Mannequin

In the essay “Understanding a Photograph” by John Berger, the relationship of art and photography is explored. Berger states, “I have said that a photograph bears witness to a human choice being exercised. This choice is not between photographing x and y: but between photographing at x moment or y moment”(293). He also adds that photos are not about form. Form meaning but not limited to the items in the photo, color, shadows, or poses. While I believe that timing is important in a photo, I also think that what is included or chosen to be in the photograph has a significant effect on the outcome. In this essay I want to demonstrate how two photographs of a mannequin are not only affected by time, but also by their form and how that impacts the overall mood of the photograph. The photographs that I will be comparing are named “Running form Work” and “Dance Move: tan -(x)”.

To prove my thesis I will compared the scenes of what is in the photos. I will then describe how each photo relates to categories such as rule of thirds, color scheme, and the meanings behind the photos in correspondence to their relation to time.

In the first photo named “Running from Work”, the studium shows a mannequin in a running position. Displayed in the photo from right to left, the different stops to which the mannequin is running from work are being displayed. At the far right are the slopers used for patternmaking. That would be the “work” being displayed in the photo. As the eye shifts to the left, the stops that are being taken to run from work are shown. Following the slopers, there is an open sketchbook showing a drawing of a girl. Then is the mannequin. He is wearing a necklace

with the word “inspire” inscribed in it and he is positioned between the sketchbook and an open standing Ipad playing a video of an anime, which would be his next stop in running from work. Underneath all of the items, is dotted pattern paper, which would have been used with the slopers to create the patterns. The background is a white popcorn wall. The second photo is named “Dance Move:  $\tan^{-1}(x)$ ”. In this photo the studium includes the mannequin in an abstract dance pose that resembles the mathematical equation of  $\tan^{-1}(x)$ . He has a flower on his neck. The flower is dry and a red-wine color. The mannequin is inside the back frame of a canvas. There is a shadow of the mannequin showing from behind him. The shadow is slightly off-center to the right and casts beneath.

Both “Running from Work” and “Dance Move:  $\tan^{-1}(x)$ ” follow the rule of thirds. The rule of thirds refers to the way in which things are positioned in a photo. It states that if a photo were to be divided into thirds, the focal points could be found at either the intersections of the horizontal and vertical lines or at the sections created by these lines. In “Running from Work” and “Dance Move:  $\tan^{-1}(x)$ ” the mannequin is in the central section and thus drawing the viewers eyes into that point of focus. While in “Dance Move:  $\tan^{-1}(x)$ ”, the only item displayed in the photo is the mannequin, “Running from work” includes more in the photo. Accompanying the mannequin on the left side is an Ipad, also within one of the sections provided by the rule of thirds. On the right, are the slopers and the sketchbook, which falls into the last section provided by the vertical lines of the rule of thirds. Because the position of the remaining items, under the definition of the rule of thirds, it can be argued that the sketchbook or the Ipad were meant to be the focal point of the photo.

The color schemes play a meaningful part in both photos. In “Dance Move:  $\tan^{-1}(x)$ ” the color scheme is made up of warm colors including red-wine, beige and cream. This provides a

clean and relaxed look for the photograph. The flower also helps create an impact and gives a break from the beige and cream tones, which are close in composition. Because these are warm colors, the image also gives an aura of comfort and is inviting. In the photo “Running from Work”, the photo is in a cool gray-scale. That is to demonstrate the boredom of the work environment and the effort in attempting to escape the humdrum setting.

In his essay Berger explains that a “photograph is already a message about the event it records” (292). Therefore, a photograph in itself explains its occurrence but not why it is being recorded. Berger also informs “Photography is the process of rendering observation self-conscious” (292). This means that through a photo an attempt to understand the thoughts of the photographer can be made. This is true for both “Dance Move: tan -(x)” and “Running from Work”. While what is shown in the photo does not allow for a complete view of the environment, it provides a little window into the reality of the setting. The photos portray my feelings through out a workday, which is why timing was vital to the creation of these photos as well as the meaning behind them. “Running from work” was taken during before my day was over at work around 6:00 pm. It represents my feelings when the workday is almost gone and how I long to be inspired and draw instead of repeating that cycle. It also shows some of my personal inspiration, which can come from shows or movies. In contrast to “Running from Work”, “Dance Move: tan -(x)” was taken at home after returning from work. The photo conveys a happier and more relaxed mood. The mannequin displays whimsy and happiness because it is at home. This feeling is portrayed by the dance pose. The sequence of these photos shows how time affected their outcome. Without the influence of the settings or times, the photos could have been completely different in expression or form as well as had different meanings.

Through examining these photos I have learned the value of timing in photography. I believe that if I had taken the photos of the mannequins at different times of the day the outcome would have been completely altered. For example, if I had been on my way to work when I made the decision to take a photo, the shot could have been of a mannequin sitting with its legs crossed on a train seat. It could have never been either of the scenes that they are now. Even if the outcomes had differed, my thesis would still be proven because the effect time would have on the photos would not only change what the photos were but ultimately the mood that they portray and their form.

(1163 words)

## Works Cited

Berger, Jonh. "Understanding a Photograph." 1980. *Classic Essays on Photography*. By Alan Trachtenberg. New Haven, CT: Leete's Island, 1980. N. pag. Print.