

# Photography as Fine Art

Compile and Presented by

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This presentation focuses on Fine-Art Photography (FAP). It defines FAP and discusses the range of interpretations of what FAP is. We will discuss the characteristics that are common to all the definitions and the ones that vary and see what the photography masters say about photography. To illustrate the ideas presented, we'll look at images that tell stories and are meaningful, thought-provoking, and expressive. The images cover a range of work from pioneer color photography artists to contemporary street and fine-art photographers. We'll look at photographs that are not usually seen in camera clubs, but are displayed in museums and high-end fine-art galleries. We'll learn how to look beyond the obvious subject in the picture, see what it represents, appreciate FAP, and maybe find a new way to create our own.

## Fine Art

- Create UNIQUELY; make ORIGINAL work.
- This encompasses being able to SEE and MAKE artistic imagery.
- Use lines, composition, colors, perspective, EMOTION.

## Artist - definition

- A person whose creative work shows sensitivity and imagination.
- A follower of a pursuit in which skill comes by study and practice.

Artist – Mark Getlein on the six activities, services, or functions of contemporary artists:

1. Create places for some human purpose.
2. Create extraordinary versions of ordinary objects.
3. Record and commemorate.
4. Give tangible form to the unknown.
5. Give tangible form to feelings.
6. Refresh our vision and help see the world in new ways.

## Inspiring Master Photographer Quotes

### Ansel Adams

- A great photograph is one that fully expresses what one feels, in the deepest sense, about what is being photographed.
- The negative is comparable to the composer's score. The print is the performance.
- There's nothing worse than a sharp picture of a fuzzy concept.
- You don't take a photograph, you make it.
- A great photograph is one that fully expresses what one feels, in the deepest sense, about what is being photographed.

- When I'm ready to make a photograph, I think I quite obviously see in my mind's eye something that is not literally there in the true meaning of the word. I'm interested in something which is built up from within, rather than just extracted from without.
- There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer.
- The sheer ease with which we can produce a superficial image often leads to creative disaster.
- Chance favors the prepared mind.
- Art implies control of reality, for reality itself possesses no sense of the aesthetic. Photography becomes art when certain controls are applied.

#### Freeman Patterson

- The camera always points both ways. In expressing your subject, you also express yourself.
- 36 satisfactory exposures on a roll means a photographer is not trying anything new.
- There's only one rule in photography - never develop color film in chicken noodle soup.

#### Minor White

- One should not only photograph things for what they are but for what else they are.

#### Ernst Haas

- I'm not interested in shooting new things. I'm interested to see things new.

#### William Eggleston, the Godfather of Color Photography –

- When asked what he was photographing, he replied 'life today'

## Performance vs. Content

Every artform requires attention to its content and the way it is presented (i.e., the performance). Some artforms focus on content and others on performance. For example:

- Ballet – performance
- Musical – performance
- Painting – performance
- Book - content, the story
- Movie, Drama - both, but the content is more important
- Photography? Both are important, but some pictures are more about the subject/story and others about the presentation.

Camera club judges usually concentrate on the performance (e.g., focus, composition, exposure, colors/tones, distracting elements, visual impact) and overlook the content.

## What is Fine-Art Photography?

Fine-art photography is photography created in line with the vision of the photographer as artist, using photography as a medium for creative expression. The goal of fine-art photography is to express an idea, a message, or an emotion. This stands in contrast to representational photography, such as photojournalism, which provides a documentary visual account of specific subjects and events, literally representing objective reality rather than the subjective intent of the photographer.

The principal and underlying criteria that distinguishes fine-art photography from other fields in photography is that fine-art photography is not about recording a subject, using a camera to document what exactly appears in front of the photographer.

Fine-art photography, on the other hand, is first and foremost about the artist. It is not about capturing what the camera sees; it is about capturing what the artist sees and feels.

The camera is used to make an art piece that reveals the vision of the artist and makes a statement of that vision rather than documenting the subject before the lens.

So, a fine-art photograph must go beyond the literal representation of a scene or subject. It must deeply express the feelings and vision of the photographer and clearly reveal that it was created by an artist and not by just the camera.

Fine art is about an idea, a message, or an emotion. The artist has something that he wants to have conveyed in his work. That idea or message may be something small, a single word such as abandon, or it may be a whole statement.

The artist's story doesn't have to come from a dark place or joy. It can be about anything.

A fine-art picture has a subject, the thing that we **see**. Then, there's the underlying statement that makes us **feel**.

Becoming a Fine-Art Photographers is a journey. The ability to express your thoughts and feelings through imagery requires more than following composition rules and technical skills.

FAP is not about seeing something and taking a picture. It's a process that starts with forming an idea, defining a project, and executing it. In most cases, it involves the creation of a body of work, not a single image.

## Fine-Art Photography Project Steps

Getting your ideas together

- What topics do you feel passionate about?
- What messages do you want to convey?
- What subjects do you like to photograph?
- What techniques are you interested in?

Refining on your topic

Working out your message, or the motivation behind it

Finding the subject for your photos

Working out your technique – The technique isn't so important, it just has to be the same for all the images.

Creating your body of work

Writing your Artist Statement

For more information about artist statements read:

<https://pdnonline.com/features/fine-art-photography/conquering-dreaded-artist-statement-expert-advice-writing-art-photography/>

The work should be about you, and what you are passionate about.

If you are just making lovely images without any of the above, then chances are you aren't creating fine-art photographs. However, if you have a vision or message, and have ideas that you want to convey through your work then you are more likely to be creating fine art.

Some define it in a simple statement: The creation of something simply for its beauty without any further purpose.

**- The artist must be able to connect with the viewer.**

**- The viewer must be able to open up and receive.**

## **Photographers** (discussed in the presentation)

- Well respected; recognized as significant contributors
- Represent a range of subject matters, styles, and techniques

### William Eggleston

Widely credited with increasing recognition for color photography as a legitimate artistic medium. His work is characterized by its ordinary subject-matter. Eggleston considered each of his images to stand on its own and not tie to other images. He considered them to be all equal in terms of importance.

### Joel Meyerowitz

An American street, portrait and landscape photographer. He began photographing in color in 1962 and was an early advocate of the use of color during a time when there was significant resistance to the idea of color photography as serious art. He is the author of 26 books including *Cape Light*, considered a classic work of color photography. Meyerowitz photographed the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, and was the only photographer allowed unrestricted access to its Ground Zero immediately following the attack.

### John Pfahl

Known for his innovative landscape photography such as *Altered Landscape*, his first major series of un-manipulated color photographs on which he worked from 1974 through 1978. In these pictures Pfahl manipulates the optics of the camera and plays tricks with perspective by using cleverly placed manmade objects in the landscape to mislead the eye of the viewer. For the past thirty years, Pfahl has been creating images of nature that transcribe the forces of nature and how humans affect it.

### Stephen Shore

Along with others, especially William Eggleston, Shore is recognized as one of the leading photographers who established color photography as an art form. Known for his images of banal scenes and objects. Shore embarked on a series of cross-country road trips, making "on the road" photographs of American and Canadian landscapes. Shore photographed fashion stories for *Another Magazine*, *Elle*, *Daily Telegraph* and many others. Commissioned by Italian brand *Bottega Veneta*, he photographed socialite Lydia Hearst, filmmaker Liz Goldwyn and model Will Chalker for the brand's spring/summer 2006 advertisements.

## Ruddy Roye

A Jamaican born photographer living in Brooklyn. He has photographed Jamaican dancehall musicians and fans, the Sapeurs of the Congo, the Caribbean Carnival J'Ouvert, and recent political protests in Ferguson, New York and Dallas. Upon moving to New York in 2001, Roye worked as a freelance photographer for the Associated Press. His photography has appeared in the New York Times, The New Yorker, Vogue, Ebony, Fast Company, BET and ESPN. Roye promotes the idea of Street Photography with Purpose.

## Brooke Shaden

Brooke explores the darkness and light in people, and her work looks at that juxtaposition. As a self-portrait artist, she photographs herself and becomes the characters of dreams inspired by a childhood of intense imagination and fear. Being the creator and the actor, Brooke controls her darkness and confronts those fears.

## Summary

FAP is original work that expresses the photographer's creative idea.

Try to look for the vision of the photographer and recognize why the message in the photo was important to the photographer.

Recognize the way the photograph touched you.

Some photographs made you comfortable, others uncomfortable. It's about feelings.

Look at a wide range of artwork to learn from other artists. You don't need to love it all.

Explore fine art in general using available resources, such as books, museums, galleries, and websites.

Create your own art. The passion for photography is yours. Commit to your message, style, and technique, even if you encounter criticism and push backs.