

Matty Spicer
Professor Julie Jones
VAP 101
Written Assignment #1
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The Photographers Eye, John Szarkowski

When reading through *The Photographers Eye* by John Szarkowski, I was able to understand what to look for when thinking about my subject matter as well as how to take the photograph. When I began taking photographs, I did not quite understand the different ways that photographers look at the medium. After I read the *The Photographers Eye* I was able to understand that certain photographs looked more appealing than others due to the five issues John Szarkowski talks about, which are the thing itself, the detail, the frame, time, and vantage point. During my second roll of film, I had a better grasp on the camera and was able to really explore the different criteria.

The category that I found most interesting and most enjoyable was framing. I really enjoyed how pleasing photographs looked when they were framed by objects around them. I was able to construct a visual story with the objects in the photograph and use the viewfinder in my camera to share the relationship of the objects with the viewer. Frame was also the most enjoyable for me because some of the photographs I have for frame are not completely recognizable. I was able to construct a photograph that took the viewer, and even myself the photographer, a minute to figure out what that was a photograph of. I believe this also gives the viewer and photographer a deeper relationship with the medium because you are sharing an experience of understanding and solving with the photograph and the objects that are photographed. The frame photograph that I used is of the side of a building that contains about three frames. The photograph is framed by the window, which is framed by the building, which is framed by the foliage surrounding the building.

The category that I found most challenging was the thing itself, or subject. I found this most challenging because I am very used to taking photographs of objects using an interesting vantage point or by framing, so it was difficult for me to recognize the subject, and then construct a photograph with objects, lights, and shadows that complemented the subject. I have many effective photographs for subject, yet not many that contained only elements that would complement the subject. For my “The Thing Itself” photograph, I took a picture of stairs that had many shadows and shadows of the railings as well. The railings and the shadows are able to complement the subject, which are the stairs. Despite my difficulty with the thing itself, I do enjoy complementing the subject with objects that surround it, such as the railings and shadows that fall on the stairs.

Completing the assignment using the five criteria gave me the opportunity to explore and understand how I am used to taking photographs, and understanding how to shift my methods in order to complement the subject as well as create a composition that is more visually appealing. The five criteria also allowed me to have a deeper relationship with the medium because I was looking for certain principles that I had to extract from the subject or create using the objects surrounding me. This assignment also helped me recognize what I really enjoy, such as framing, detail, and perspective, and what I need to work on, such as the subject.

Choosing between which photograph to print was the hardest part of this whole assignment, and also my least favorite part because I worked hard to create different compositions and became so attached to every single one of my photographs that I wanted to print them all. In the future, I need to work on picking the correct photographs for each requirement and also remembering the criteria instead of getting very attached to a photograph because of the meaning that it has to me.