Photographic Ethics: Module 2
Composition for Compelling, Ethical Images

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Goals

Improve awareness and accuracy in creating well-composed images
- The relationship of subject to context
- Use of Compositional Elements
- Making the Photograph “speak”
- Lighting

Gain acuity and control over the intended photographic narrative

Engage the ability to craft images that emphasize equity and global health ethics
Key Terms

- **Frame**
  The space of the photograph; the delineating boundaries between what is included in the image and what is not included.

- **Subject**
  The individual, group, or object that is the focus of the photograph.

- **Context**
  The surrounding objects, landscapes, people, etc that help to give meaning to the subject.

- **Excess**
  The items included in the photograph that exist in the image but do not necessarily contribute to the primary narrative.

- **Visual Narrative**
  The story that the photograph tells when it is viewed.

- **Composition**
  The photographer’s layout of the photograph, particularly in relation to how the subject interacts with the context.
Image Composition & Narrative

Subject ➔ Frame ➔ Context
Before Photographing

Get closer
- Move your feet
- Don’t zoom with the camera / phone

Talk to the subject
- Request consent first – see Module 3

Ask yourself
- Is the photograph representative?
- Would you be comfortable with a similar photograph of yourself?
- Would you take this photograph in your own community?
- Does the photograph balance the ‘need to show a situation’ and the ‘humanity of the photographic subjects’?
The position of the subject / context

The location of the subject in relation to the context can determine the story that the image tells.
Foreground, mid-ground, background
Compositional elements: Rule of 3rds
Compositional elements: Diagonals
Make your photos speak: Interaction
Make Your Photographs Speak: Eye Contact
Make Your Photographs Speak: Gesticulation
Lighting does a number of things:

- Tells the viewer where to look / what is important
- Depicts the mood of the image
- Has the power to hide or expose information
- Can make or break the quality and ability to read the narrative of the image

The photographer has control:
- Ability to change one’s position in relation to the light & therefore change the meaning
Vivid, warm colors, long shadows

Vibrant Colors, Good contrast

Strong sun from above = High Contrast

Vibrant Colors, Some shadows and Silhouetting

Silhouettes

Vivid, warm colors, long shadows
Light Types

Flat

Strong Contrast

Optimal
Light and Shaping Meaning
Composition: A Summary

- Narrative
- Position of the subject
- Diagonals
- Rule of Thirds
- How to make the photograph “speak”
- Lighting
Up Next: Consent

Photographic Ethics: Module 3
The Ethics of Photographic Consent