

Project 2 – Foil Me Once: A Constructed Something

6 Best (combination of photo and video); Due: Thursday, March 12, 2015



James Welling, *Gelatin Photograph 45*; Craig Cutler, *Still Life Ice Cubes*; Liz Hickock, *San Francisco in Jello*

INTRODUCTION

The traditional still life has a long history dating back to ancient Egyptian renderings. As such, still life photography takes its cues from painting by depicting inanimate subject matter, often familiar commonplace objects that become more interesting by the way they are lit and grouped together. This strategy gives the photographer more control and leeway in the arrangement of the composition; the photographer shapes and constructs the forms through awareness of the material and the way light shapes the material. This is a further investigation of the difference in ‘taking’ versus ‘making’ pictures.

In our previous project, you were asked to observe your surroundings and shape an aesthetically effective photograph through your lens by **observing** a single location. You looked through the viewer of your camera to capture compositions already existing in space—the glow of a light source, the color shift on a wall, the unintentional still life left in a room through the act of living. For this next project, you will do something quite different and **construct** a still life purposely for the camera. Your work will be made up by both the mechanical operation of ‘taking’ a photograph (lens type, framing, lighting, focus, aperture, exposure, ISO, etc) and also by the construction of something that bears the mark of the artist’s manual operations on material (draping, folding, tearing, crumpling, throwing, stacking, etc).

ASSIGNMENT

For your second project using your DSLR, you are asked to restrict yourself to ONE thing. You will collaboratively shoot a minimum of 72 digital still files and 10 motion shots (video) from varying and challenging perspectives using a single light source (key light) to alter the shape and composition of your object. Time your “Long Photos” to be 40-90 seconds in length. Do not exceed that time.

Working in teams, choose one of the following mutable things to use in your construction: aluminum foil, brown paper bag, clothing/fabric, ice, or jello. Using the lighting studio, set-up a construction for the camera. Use one light source as the primary light. You will move the light around and compose through the lens to create SIX (6) strikingly different photographs that convey the drama of being a thing (bring life to the inanimate).

Use lighting, constructing, and a conscious consideration of camera angle to emphasize 1) the shape and contour of the object and 2) the surface and texture. Add TIME to emphasize 3) motion—how your chosen material moves.

Consider these questions when constructing your still life with artificial light:

1. What are the properties of my chosen material? (Jello is smushy and colorful and semi-transparent. Paper bags can crinkle, tear, get soggy when wet. Foil reflects light and can be smooth or wrinkled. Etc.)
2. What do I want to construct in front of the camera? Reference a landscape? A traditional still life? A portrait? (This might help you think horizontally vs vertically.)

3. What is in the background of my shot? How can I use the background to make viewers aware of the foreground? Is my background distracting?
4. Did I try all the different lighting set-ups reviewed in class? Flat frontal lighting, Side light, ¾ light, back light, high-angle (from above), low-angle (from below), bounced / fill light?
5. What property of my material can best be conveyed in motion? Paper tears. Ice melts. Jello squishes and wiggles. Lights can be moved while shooting to change the perceived shape of an object.
6. What props do you need to bring to help support your material (or “break” your material) and contain (as in keeping clean) your material?
7. What is the difference between still and motion? Between a frozen slice of time and a ‘long photograph,’ one that has duration? How can I use this shift in time to further explore my material effectively?

All 72 photos will be turned in as a contact sheet. From that and your 10 movie files, you will edit a series of SIX related images and movies (choose six best, correct the exposure, contrast, and color balance in bridge/photoshop/mpeg streamclip). TURN IN at least ONE of each category (1. Shape, 2. Surface, 3. Motion) the other three can be from any category and should convey what you think was most successful from the shoot. **Your “Long Photograph” must have a duration between 40 – 90 seconds.**

Present / Critique in power point, preview slideshow, or on-line. Upload to Flickr—yes both of you will upload the same 6 images/videos.

Note: You are responsible for keeping ALL of your work in this class. At the end of the semester you will turn-in a data DVD (with re-sized jpegs and .mov files) and an on-line archive of all your work for final grading. Use your external drive for back-up and storage!!

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve control with DSLR: depth of field and equivalent exposure
- Adjust exposure and focus manually
- Use camera as selective framing device: composition, shot size, camera angle, perspective
- Understand composing with light and motion
- Play with the differences of observing versus constructing.
- Knowledge of basic workflow with Photoshop and Bridge
- Basic correction with digital editing software

Artists for Further Research:

James Welling: <http://jameswelling.net/projects/3>

Liz Hickock: <http://lizhickok.com/>

Craig Cutler: <http://craigcutler.com/#>

Eat Pes: <http://www.eatpes.com/>

And for a little history of still-life photography, look up Edward Weston:

http://www.edward-weston.com/edward_weston_natural.htm

Helpful Tutorials:

Remember the Egg You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qM7CcUrUD2g>

Three Rules of Lighting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJWNQv01VtI>

Basic Lighting Techniques: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7r_Yi7MnJFs

Shading Light and Form Basics (Language): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3WmrWUEIJo>

Getting Started with Still Life Photography: <http://photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/10-tips-to-get-started-with-still-life-photography--photo-8278>