LESSON 3: STILL LIFE

Still Life, Lighting & Composition

Time Needed:
In-person: 1 Session @ 30 Minutes
Out of class: 1 Session @ 30 Minutes
Still life photographs have the ability to tell the viewer a story about the person who arranged the image. In this lesson, students will explore different lighting techniques, choosing between even lighting or dramatic lighting to change the mood of their still life photograph. They will also create visual balance by arranging the objects in their still life, creating an image from items that are important or that tell a story about them.

ABOUT JENNY VAN SOMMERS
Jenny Van Sommers is an award-winning, contemporary still life photographer. She was born in Australia and is based in London. She has created work for several well known clients including Vogue, Dazed, Apple and Nike. Her still lifes draw upon both modernism and surrealism and typically feature bright colors, unique uses of light and geometric shapes in simple compositions.

ABOUT SHARON CORE
Sharon Core is a contemporary American artist and photographer. She is known for her photographic interpretations of famous paintings by artists such as Wayne Thiebaud and Raphaëlle Peale. While Core draws upon traditional still life, landscape and portraiture conventions in her work, she also blurs the line between truth and illusion by first creating real-life objects that look like those featured in the paintings of others and then photographing them to create her own compositions. Core also grows all of the fruits, vegetables and flowers featured in her still lifes.
Even vs. Dramatic Lighting

- A **STILL LIFE** photograph is a collection of things that do not move.
- Lighting is important in a still life because it can change the mood of a photograph.
- **EVEN LIGHTING** means that everything in your photograph is lit evenly, meaning light is coming from several directions and there are very few dark shadows.
- Even lighting will create a cheery, bright photograph.
- To create even lighting, choose a well-lit area indoors that is close to a window, several windows or sliding doors. Avoid areas with sun directly shining in.
- Use a light-colored, flat surface to build your still life on top. You could use a chair, a table or the floor.

**Even Lighting Setup**

**Even Lighting Final Photo**
• **DRAMATIC LIGHTING** means that there is more **CONTRAST** in the photograph; with both dark shadows and bright highlights.

• Typically, dramatically lit still lifes have one bright source of light, which makes the other half of the image shadowed.

• Dramatic lighting can create a moody, dark photograph.

• To create dramatic lighting, you can use an area where bright sun is shining in through a window, using a dark background.

• You can even create your own lighting with a flashlight or a lamp. Experiment with shining it at different angles on your still life until you find a position that you like.

• You might need someone to hold the light for you while you take the photograph.
When you arrange your **composition**, think about where you are placing the objects.

Typically compositions that are **balanced** are a bit more appealing to look at.

When a composition is un-balanced, it typically looks a little off, though it’s hard to pin-point exactly what makes you feel that way.

You can create balance by evening out the arrangement of your objects on both sides of your composition by height, size or even color.

For example, if you have two tall objects, try putting one on the left side of the composition and one on the right side of the composition, instead of randomly placed.
• Color, texture and shape can also help to give your compositions a sense of **unity**.

• When an artwork has a sense of unity, everything makes sense when placed together.

• By **repeating** several items that are the same color, shape or even texture in your composition, you can help to create unity, which will make your photograph more visually appealing.

Core, Sharon. Lipstick Row. 2019. Image from [HERE](#).
Setting Up Your Still Life

- Still lifes have the ability to tell a story about the creator by the content that they include.

- When you choose items for your still life, you can choose items that are important to you, like your favorite toys, items related to a hobby that you enjoy, your favorite candy or items with an emotional meaning.

- Another approach is to collect a group of items that tell a story when placed together. For example, if you saw a collection of sunglasses, sun block and a pail and shovel, what would you think of? Most people might think about someone going to the beach.

- You will also need a flat surface to set your items on. This could be the floor, a table or a chair.

- You can also set up a set, by using a piece of paper or fabric. For shorter items, you can take photos overhead. For taller items, tape a piece of paper to a wall or chair as a background, then place your objects in front of that and take your photos looking directly at the object.

- Try out arranging your still life a few times, until you settle on a composition that you’re satisfied with.

- It’s okay to add or take away items until you find a composition you like.
ASSIGNMENT

• Set up your still life using your choice of objects.

• Use what you’ve learned about lighting to choose whether to use even or dramatic lighting. You can try both!

• Use what you’ve learned about composition to try out balanced compositions. Try to create unity by repeating colors, shapes and textures.

• Once you have taken a number of still life photographs, look back through your work.

• Use the provided handouts to record your still life choices.

• Choose one still life photograph that best uses lighting and composition. Enter it into the still life page of the Google Slides document, following the directions given.

National Core Arts Standards

STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

VA.Cr.2.1

Anchor Standard #2
Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

How do objects, places and design shape lives and communities?
Two famous STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS are:
1. __________________________
   ______________________________
2. __________________________
   ______________________________

A __________________________ is the SUBJECT of a __________________________.

Important ELEMENTS of photography are __________________________ and __________________________.

EVEN LIGHTING

DRAMATIC LIGHTING

NOTE: __________________________

NOTE: __________________________

BALANCE

UNITY

NOTE: __________________________

NOTE: __________________________
K-7 STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

NAME:_______________________________________________  CLASS:___________________________

Answer questions 1-3 during class, before your photography session.

1. WHAT objects will you select?
2. WHY did you choose those objects?
3. WHAT camera will you use?

Answer questions 4-5 during your photography session.

4. The LIGHTING is (circle one): EVEN LIGHTING      DRAMATIC LIGHTING

5. Take a VARIETY of photos. Check the boxes as you try each of the ideas below.
   Composition, Balance:
   - Arrange your objects
   - Rearrange your objects so they are balanced
   - Take away a few items

   Composition, Unity:
   - Many objects are a similar color
   - Many objects are a similar texture
   - Many objects are a similar shape

Answer question 6 when you are looking at your photos after the photography session.

6. Choose one still life that best uses LIGHTING and COMPOSITION. Write about your still life photograph below:
   I selected this still life photograph because __________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

DEEP SPACE SPARKLE & THE SPARKLERS CLUB 10
Today I will learn about **STILL LIFES** so that I **CAN** arrange and create my own still life photograph.

Today I will learn about **LIGHTING** so that I **CAN** choose to use **EVEN LIGHTING** or **DRAMATIC LIGHTING** to create a **MOOD** in my photograph.

Today I will learn about **BALANCE** and **UNITY** so that I **CAN** create a composition that is visually appealing and uses **REPETITION** to create a feeling of cohesiveness.

Today I will learn about **LIGHTING** so that I **CAN** choose to use **EVEN LIGHTING** or **DRAMATIC LIGHTING** to create a mood in my photograph.

Today I will learn about **STILL LIFES** so that I **CAN** arrange and create my own still life photograph.

**I Can Statements:**

I **CAN** create a composition that is visually appealing and uses repetition to create a feeling of cohesiveness.
Teacher Assessment

Student Name:__________________   Class:__________   Project: Still Life Photography

Did the student create a still life photograph?

Did the student use lighting to create a mood in their still life?

Did the student create balance and unity by the arrangement of their objects and repeating elements in their composition?

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K-7  STUDENT ASSESSMENT  K-7

Student Name:__________________   Class:__________   Project: Still Life Photography

Time to evaluate your work! Review your project and check the box with your answer.

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Progressing</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you follow all steps?</td>
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<td>Composition</td>
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<td>Were you satisfied with the end result?</td>
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<td>Craftsmanship</td>
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<td>Did you use the supplies correctly?</td>
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<td>Effort</td>
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<td>Did you do your best?</td>
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Balance

Composition

Sharon Core
Dramatic Lighting

Even Lighting

Lighting
REPETITION

JENNY VAN SOMMERS

STILL LIFE
UNITY