

Creativity in Photography

Let's talk about "snapshots" and "photographs". Within these two groupings are smaller subdivisions such as portraits, landscapes, sports, etc. In this class you will learn to take photographs rather than snapshots.

Snapshots are the simplest type of picture made with a camera. They require no talent, simply the ability to hold a camera and push a button to open the shutter. (Snapshot is actually two four letter words placed end-to-end) Snapshots are often candid though certainly not all candid are snapshots. Some primary reasons for a picture to be classified as a snapshot rather than a photograph include:

- 1) lack of creativity
- 2) lack of planning and preparation

Creativity separates "snapshotters" from "photographers"! The former sees the subject as it exists then points the camera, shoots, and goes to Wal-Mart or Kroger with his film. The photographer sees the same subject, but sees it in other ways than just the obvious. The finest photographers imagine the same subject at a different time of day, with different lighting, with additional or fewer subjects, turned differently, shot from an unusual angle, etc. They know how to make ordinary subjects and photos extraordinary.

This creative ability may be instinctive in some people, but all of us can improve our pictures through the use of careful preparation before we take the picture rather than after. Very few excellent photographs are "lucky shots." Even the occasional news shots that make the front page are almost always taken by pros who prepared themselves with the proper equipment, correct focus and exposure and an advantageous position. Therefore, though these impressive shots may be candid - very few are actually just "lucky."

HOW DO YOU IMPROVE YOUR PICTURES?

First of all, before you take any more shots, make a mental checklist of things you must check before you can get a good photograph. Include in this checklist:

- 1) focus
- 2) aperture / f-stop
- 3) shutter speed
- 4) film speed - ISO
- 5) camera and/or subject motion
- 6) background
- 7) foreground
- 8) subject placement within the frame

If any of these aspects are ignored you'll quite likely find you have a snapshot - not a photograph.

After you've completed this checklist you can change a variety of things to make your picture different. With the camera you can:

- 1) use an unusual angle
- 2) change the light on the subject

- 3) vary the exposure (freeze the action quickly or blur the motion through time exposure)
- 4) change the lens (telephoto, wide angle, macro, etc.)
- 5) change the arrangement or composition of the subject
- 6) add a filter (different colors, soft focus, vignette, multiple image, star effect, split prism, etc.
- 7) we can even move the camera as in panning - follow a moving subject - thus blurring the background and foreground, but leaving the moving subject in fairly good focus

Once the picture has been taken it can be:

- 1) overdeveloped or underdeveloped as a negative or as a print
- 2) solarized or reticulated
- 3) made very low or very high in contrast
- 4) cropped to show only a portion of the frame or simply cropped unusually
- 5) double or triple exposed
- 6) toned or treated with chemicals not normally used (sepia toning, bleaching, water coloring, color toning, etc.)
- 7) distorted by tilting the paper during enlargement

You can and should train yourself to look for the unusual even when you don't have a camera. And finally, remember, the best photographs are usually carefully planned and creativity is a major factor in their creation.