Focus Group

*August 15, 2019*

*Group 18, 8 participants, 2 leaders. Subject: Shock and awe*

Leader 1: I’m going to pass around a series of photos now, each one showing a single technique used in the past year, and then I’m going to ask for your comments to a variety of questions about each of the photographs. I want you to answer thoroughly and honestly, without worrying about what we might think. Try to keep in mind that we’re just consultants in this process, and that we neither judge you nor our clients. We record anonymously; you’ll each simply be referred to by the number on the card in front of you. Try to speak clearly and without interrupting anyone, so that our camera and microphones will know which of you is speaking. Ok, I want each of you to look carefully at the photos, pass them on when you think you’ve got a handle on each one, and once you’ve had a chance to look at them privately, we’ll put up a slide of each one on the screen to my left as we discuss it. We do it this way because we want your reactions both to the shot as it would appear in a news story and on a tv news show. *Photos passed around for several minutes. No chatter worth noting here.*

Leader 2: Ok, has everyone seen all five photos in the first batch? Yes? Good. Ok, here’s the slide of Photo 1. I’d like to go around the table, starting with you, One. We’ll begin with your general impressions of the entire collection, then we’ll discuss each one. Ok, One, what’s your immediate and gut reaction to the collection you’ve just seen?

One: Well, they seem pretty generic, you know, like I’ve seen so many of this type of thing, and I guess I’d have to say after like so many hours of news shows they don’t do much for me, but I can see how they’d freak someone out that was like right there at the time.

Leader 1: Thanks, One. And your impressions, Two?

Two: Um, you know, I kind of have to agree with this guy, because some of them are like pretty strong I’d say, but some of them just don’t do anything for me, and overall I’d have to say that they could be a lot better, you know in terms of composition and colour, but the truth is I know nothing about photography.

Leader 1: So you assume these are photographs?

Two: Well, who can tell these days? It’s not like any of the shots you see are real.

Leader 1: I understand. For now, let’s assume for the sake of discussion that these are real photos, not because the necessarily are, but for our purposes, we want your reactions to them as if they were.

Two: Ok, then I think most of them are pretty cool.

Three: I don’t agree at all. I think they’re so generic that they have no impact.

Leader 2: Generic how?

Three: Because they seem so composed. And anyway, it’s obvious that they aren’t photos, but if they were I wouldn’t be impressed.

Leader 1: Why not?

Three: No colour or life. Just shit happening, you know.

Leader 2: Ok, we’ll come back to that. Four?

Four: I think they’re good.

Leader 1: No other comments?

Four: Well…I’m a professional imageer, so if I was producing them, I’d be proud of my work. I disagree about the colour. I know we’re all used to big orange flames and fireballs and stuff, but you can’t always go totally over the top.

Leader 1: Yes, I see from the profile you gave us that you have some experience in the field, but I’d still like it if you pretended these were simple photos and not manufactured images. If they were…are…how would you react to them?

Four: Well, calling them photos doesn’t change my opinion, I know they’re not, but if they were, they’d be some incredible work. Do you want to know why? I have reasons…

Leader 2: No, we’ll get to the details in the next round. I want to get all the way around the table first. Ok, Five, you’re up.

Five: Pretty good. I’m not as impressed as Four here, but I disagree with three. I think they’re pretty lively. And I like, totally don’t care what they are, they’re just good, and congratulations to the guy that made them.

Leader 2: Anything to add to that?

Leader 1: No, that’s good, we only have an hour here, so let’s move on.

Leader 2: Oh, Ok…um…so, Six? Comments?

Six: Um…you know, um, I never watch the news or read the papers, so I don’t know why you even picked me for this group…

Leader 2: Well, we see that from your profile, and I guess you were picked to provide us with a sort of outsider’s perspective. You can give us a clean reading of what you see.

Six: Oh. Well, they, um, look, um, pretty much like the photos in history books. Not that I’ve seen a history book since high school. Is that ok?

Leader 2: Absolutely. These are just first impressions. Ok, Number Seven, what’s on your mind?

Seven: Excellent work, but I’m pretty inured to such things. Good composition, though.

Leader 1: No other comments?

Seven: Uh, well, I have some technical ideas.

Leader 2: Ok, keep those in mind. And now, to finish off the round, go ahead Eight.

Eight: I hate them!

Leader 2: Ok! That’s what we’re looking for. What else?

Eight: I’m not into violence.

Leader 2: Excellent. You’ll have a good angle for us.

Leader 1: So that’s the end of round one. Take a moment to fill your coffee cups, cream and sugar are on the table. We’ll start the next round as soon as you’re ready.

*Break.*