

Proposal: Light

By Jimmy Ha

Before I started this semester, I wanted to try another project. I was bored with my Renaissance series. I believed I had done all there was to do, any any new picture I made would not contribute anything new or meaningful.



"Push" - Pete Turner (1970)

Lately, I have been more interested in using color as a compositional element. For example, I find the above picture by Pete turn very facinating for its strong usage of primary colors. Additionally, the picture is strong because of the symmetry and forced perspective of the trash can lid against the horizon. There is no sense of scale. We know the horizon is far away but the picture looks very flat, with no depth.



"Selfie" - Jes Azner (2017)

In late December, as I was becoming increasingly bored of my series, I came across the above picture. Its compositional elements are more in the Baroque style of painting versus my Renaissance-based pictures, but many aspects of this picture are still highly related to what I've been trying to accomplish.

Additionally, there is a wider social context. This wedding took place in Marawi during the middle of a civil war in the Philippines. However, war or not, weddings still need to happen. These figures are full of joy despite what is going on around them. The photographer has achieved not only creating an amazing photo but sent a powerful message.

The figures in this picture are dressed for a wedding, and their poses definitely create a narrative. There is a very strong directionality of light which creates a lot of drama. One's intuitive reaction to this picture is one might say it looks like a painting. That goal is what I've always wanted to achieve - make photos that appear indistinguishable from paintings.

In admiring this picture, my realization was that I had not become bored of my project, but I had just reached a plateau and was not artistically able to advance any further. In looking back at my pictures that I have created so far, I felt a sense of disappointment, because there were so many details that I missed which would have elevated my pictures to a level of which I could be proud.



"Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife" - Jan van Eyck (1434)

My proposal for this semester is to continue the same exact work I've been doing, which is creating photos in the style and composition of Renaissance paintings. The difference this time is I will try spend much more time planning each shot. Everything has to be intentional. I want to focus how light affects my subjects. Does lighting them bring them together, or isolate them?

One of my main sources of inspiration are paintings by Jan Van Eyck because everything in the picture is so purposeful. As a painter, he was able to control the lighting, the colors, the background, and the figures. I can't hope to achieve that level of power with photographs, but I hope to closer this semester.

I still want to incorporate some aspects of color that I find fascinating in Pete Turner's work, if I can. I may experiment with slide film to find stronger colors.