

Five Self-Assignments That Teach You to see (from a photography standpoint)

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Hello everyone!

I hope you are all hanging in there. If you have scrolled down to the very bottom of the work at home packages page... you have found this along with some of my photos of our beautiful community(s). If you are interested in photography, I have a few fun assignments for you to do in your spare time. Make sure you are done all of your schoolwork first! These are fun activities you can do in your home or in your yard on the weekend or whenever you need a break.

Photography has always been my outlet to creativity and it makes me feel better when I am down. In my six (professional) years of photography, I have seen many different assignments teachers have given their students. Most I have heard, or been given myself from time to time, have centered on learning to use the camera. Things like “Use Only One Exposure Mode”, “Use Only One Lens”, or “Use One Aperture Setting”. The most interesting to me, from a photographic standpoint, involved learning to see. The reason I say this is that simple camera use can be easily learned. It’s basic math when you boil it down. However, learning to see creatively, learning to compose a shot, takes much more than learning buttons, dials, and controls.

These self-assignments force you to look around you, to really see what you are shooting and try to make interesting images. This can easily be done in and around your home. Challenge yourself! You can do all of this with your cell phone!

Take care & stay safe!

Miss Sammons

1. Pick a Colour

Pick up your camera or phone and choose a colour for the day. Go out and make images with that color as a dominant element in the image. Find as many different ways as possible to do this. Here is an example! My colour chosen was orange. To make your photos more interesting – get nice and close! Take an abstract shot! This is a close up (macro) shot of a nut/bolt on an old desk that I have in my garage.



2. Pick a Shape

Choose a shape and create images, use that shape in an interesting way. It could be features in architecture, artwork, or juxtaposition of multiple structures. Squares are relatively easy. Start there, and then search out triangles, circles, or combinations of shape. Again, look for the most interesting composition you can to highlight that shape in your image. This photo was taken through a hole in the wall of my shed. The shape I was going for is a heart.



3. Shoot Something Different

If you are like me, you probably have one type of subject you gravitate to more than any other. However, it is easy to get too comfortable, and miss opportunities to make great images, when you are only looking for one thing. Occasionally it is a good idea to change things up and shoot something different. If you are a sports shooter, try shooting a still life. If you are a landscape artist, try shooting macro. These types of exercises forces you out of your comfort zone and helps you learn to see in a new way. Here is an example of a series of photos I took while my friend and I were baking a cake! I much prefer taking photos of people however, these turned out really well!



4. Shoot Reflections

Reflections are a powerful element in photography, but I am almost embarrassed to admit how long it took me to actually start SEEING them. I had a “lightbulb moment” one day when shooting with a friend of mine, and since then, I am constantly looking for reflections as an element in my work, whether it be portraits, landscapes, or still lifes. Here is an example of a reflection. I thought it was really neat to get the reflection of the clouds/sky in this beaver trail!



5. The 15 Foot Circle

Stand in the center of a room, or wherever you happen to be. Make photographs only of subjects that happen to be within 15 feet (or 10, or 5) of where you are standing. Give yourself a time limit. Exhaust all possibilities. Get as many images as you can using only that area before moving on. This kind of exercise forces you to really look at things and work to compose interesting images. Shake a paw happens very frequently in my house... here is the result!



For beginners, these assignments are great for learning to see. For more experienced photographers, these are great ways to stay fresh, to restart the creative eye when you are feeling blocked, or to just do something different.

What other self-assignments have you tried to refresh your photographic vision? If you would like, send what you came up with to bsammons@sunrisesd.ca I would love to see your work!