ARTHUR NISHIMURA
MYSTICAL LANDSCAPES

EXHIBITION GUIDE

ART GALLERY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE
TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

TREX

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

ARTHUR NISHIMURA
MYSTICAL LANDSCAPES

PRESS RELEASE

ARTHUR NISHIMURA is an Albertan photographer whose medium is traditional black and white, hand developed, film-based photography. He was a professor of art fundamentals as well as photography at the University of Calgary. Nishimura captures images of landscapes as well as depiction of the everyday but in both cases his photographs develop an expressive mood through the use of analog photographic techniques. He has photographed his home province of Alberta extensively but has also done many shoots in international locations.

Nishimura works with the historical process of wet plate photography which was invented in 1851. As a photographer he focuses less time worrying about the format, the composition of each photograph (although these are still important features of his photography) instead he is more interested in what a image does, what the image is saying. This dedication and specific understanding of photography is what makes the images he captures on film so expressive.

This exhibition will focus on the landscapes of Nishimura and consist of 20 works from the collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Curated from the Alberta Foundation of the Arts Collection by Todd Schaber

ARTIST STATEMENT

Born in 1946 in the small rural town of Raymond, in Southern Alberta, Arthur Nishimura is a photographer who works in traditional film-based photography. His parents immigrated to Canada at the start of the 20th century and were among the first generation of Japanese people to settle permanently to Alberta. Following the enduring hardships of World War II, the Nishimura family and other Japanese Canadians obtained the legal right to full citizenship which included voter enfranchisement. In a time when amateur photography was both far less accessible and far less common than it is today, Arthur's father used photographs to communicate his experiences in Canada to family back home in Japan.

Because of his father's photography practice, Arthur was able to learn about photographic processes from a very young age. To this day, Arthur still prefers traditional mediums and uses wet-process photographic development to create his black and white prints. Though his subject matter varies, he focuses on developing an expressive mood through the use of analog photographic techniques in addition to the quality of his compositions. The unique expressiveness in his work has been cultivated through a lifetime of work in wet-process photography, his love of the Canadian Prairies, his heritage and Japanese aesthetics such as wabi-sabi, which has sometimes been described as a singular beauty that is, "imperfect, impermanent and incomplete."[1] His most notable influences are photographers Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Edward Weston, as well as the painter Edward Hopper.

Throughout his career, Arthur has done both commercial and editorial photography. As a professional artist he has held an outstandingly long professorship in the Department of Art at the University of Calgary from 1971 until his retirement in 2010. Arthur's photographs have been exhibited in local and international venues, and his works exist in private and public collections throughout North America.

In his retirement, Arthur continues to create and publish photographs, including many of the works featured in Mystical Landscapes. This exhibition contains many photographs of the Albertan prairie landscapes that Arthur has known intimately since his birth, as well as some scenes photographed on trips to other countries, including England and Japan. Arthur lives and makes art in the city of Calgary, Alberta, near to the prairie landscapes that have inspired his work for decades.

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[1] Koren, Leonard (1994). *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers.* Stone Bridge Press.

15. *DEDICATION SERIES: TO MY FATHER, 17 YEARS IN MEMORIUM, ROOTS UP-ROOTED*, 1976. Silver gelatin on paper.

02. *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES: TINTAGEL, CORNWALL, DEC. 24*, 1982. Silver gelatin on paper.

14. *THE BOOK OF FLATLAND DHARMA: WHEEL OF FLATLAND DHARMA*, 1978. Silver gelatin on paper.
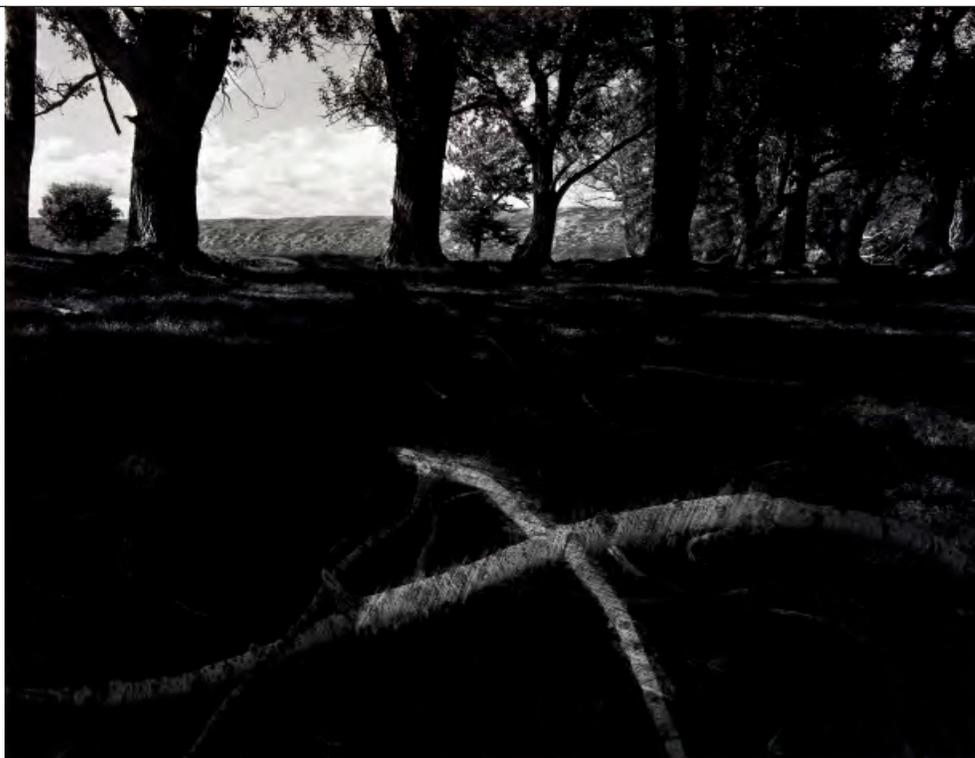

13. *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES: LA ROCHELLE*, 1983. Silver gelatin on paper.

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17. *THREE RIVERS: CASTLE RIVER*, 1985. Toned silver print on paper.

12. *HORIZON: STREET FRONT, BLACKIE (NEAR SUNSET LOOKING WEST)*, 1996. Toned silver print on paper.

08. *HORIZON: STREET FROM STAVELY (LATE AFTERNOON, LOOKING NORTH)*, 1995. Toned silver print on paper.

10. *HORIZON: STREET FROM NANTON (LATE AFTERNOON, LOOKING NORTH)*, 1996. Toned silver print on paper.

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20. *AFTER THE FALL: PACIFIC PATIENCE,*
1978. Selenium-toned, hand coloured silver
gelatin print on paper.

16. *THE BOOK OF FLATLAND DHARMA, THE
SINGULARITIES: FALTERING DAWN - PRESSURE
TEST POINT, 1978. Selenuium-toned silver
gelatin print on paper*

01. *HOMELAND TOURIST:* AFTER THE ARGUMENT,
NISHI HONGANJI TEMPLE, KYOTO, JAPAN, 1983.
Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on
paper.

19. *THE BOOK OF FLATLAND DHARMA, THE
STRUCTURES:* TOWARDS OLD BEGINNINGS, 1978.
Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on
paper.

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18. *THREE RIVERS:* OLD MAN RIVER #2, 1986. Selenium-toned, silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

04. *THREE RIVERS:* CASTLE RIVER #4, 1987. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

05. *THREE RIVERS:* CASTLE RIVER #9, 1987. Selenium-toned, silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

06. *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES:* INISHMORE, ARAN ISLANDS, IRELAND, 1990. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

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03. *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES*: THE TANK, JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN, INDIA, 1990. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper

09. *HORIZON* - AFTER SUNSET, LOOKING NORTH: FORT MACLEOD, ALBERTA, 1991. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on paper.

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07. *HORIZON: NEAR SUNSET, LOOKING WEST: FORT MACLEOD, ALBERTA*, 1991. Selenium toned silver gelatin on paper.

11. *HORIZON: EARY AFTERNOON, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST: WARNER, ALBERTA*1993. Selenium-toned silver print on paper.

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CRATE #1 INVENTORY

01 *HOMELAND TOURIST:* AFTER THE ARGUMENT, NISHI HONGANJI TEMPLE, KYOTO, JAPAN, 1983. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on paper.

02 *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES: TINTAGEL, CORNWALL, DEC. 24*, 1982. Silver gelatin on paper.

03 *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES: THE TANK, JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN, INDIA, 1990*, Selenium-toned silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper

04 *THREE RIVERS:* CASTLE RIVER #4, 1987. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

05 *THREE RIVERS:* CASTLE RIVER #9, 1987. Selenium-toned, silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

06 *MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES:* INISHMORE, ARAN ISLANDS, IRELAND, 1980. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print from retouched negative on paper.

07 *HORIZON - NEAR SUNSET, LOOKING WEST: FORT MACLEOD, ALBERTA, 1991, Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on paper*

08 *HORIZON: STREET FROM STAVELY (LATE AFTERNOON, LOOKING NORTH)*, 1995. Toned silver print on paper.

09 *HORIZON* - AFTER SUNSET, LOOKING NORTH: FORT MACLEOD, ALBERTA, 1991. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on paper.

10 *HORIZON: STREET FROM NANTON (LATE AFTERNOON, LOOKING NORTH)*, 1996. Toned silver print on paper.

11 *HORIZON : EARLY AFTERNOON, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST: WARNER, ALBERTA, 1993. Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on paper*

12 *HORIZON: STREET FRONT, BLACKIE (NEAR SUNSET LOOKING WEST)*, 1996. Toned silver print on paper.

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13 MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES: LA ROCHELLE,
1983. Silver gelatin on paper.

*14 THE BOOK OF FLATLAND DHARMA: WHEEL
OF FLATLAND DHARMA*, 1978. Silver
gelatin on paper.

15 *DEDICATION SERIES: TO MY FATHER*,
17 YEARS IN MEMORIUM, ROOTS UP-ROOTED,
1976. Silver gelatin on paper.

*16   THE BOOK OF FLATLAND DHARMA,
THE SINGULARITIES: FALTERING DAWN -
PRESSURE TEST POINT, 1978. Selenium-
toned silver gelatin print on paper*

17 THREE RIVERS: CASTLE RIVER, 1985.
Toned silver print on paper.

18 *THREE RIVERS:* OLD MAN RIVER #2,
1986. Selenium-toned, silver gelatin
print from retouched negative on
paper.

19 *THE BOOK OF FLATLAND DHARMA, THE
STRUCTURES:* TOWARDS OLD BEGINNINGS,
1978. Selenium-toned silver gelatin
print on paper.

20 *AFTER THE FALL: PACIFIC PATIENCE*,
1978. Selenium-toned, hand coloured
silver gelatin print on paper.

- FRAGILE WORKS: Carefully review how the works are packed.
- Please refer to the numbering system for each work in the Image Inventory to return each work to the crates.
- Where possible place framed works back-to-back or front-to-front. Avoid placing the wire hanging systems facing the front of artworks to avoid scratches.
- Only remove foam packing that is marked remove/replace.
- Keep all packing with the crate.
- Repacking: Line up the numbers.

Concerns Contact:
Art Gallery of Grande Prairie
Danielle Ribar– Associate Curator,
780.357.7483
Region 1, AFA Travelling Exhibitions

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Table of Contents

How to Look at Art

*What is criticism in art? Note to educators: In everyday speech, the word "criticism" is often used to describe "finding fault" with a person or their work. In the vocabulary of art, criticism has a broader definition: criticism describes looking carefully at, questioning, and forming conclusions about artistic works. The four stages of criticism listed below help the audience viewing the art to spend time analyzing the work and their own reactions to the work. Without spending that time, we may miss important aspects of the work's technical content, its message, or our own connection to the piece.

AGE LEVELS: If age-appropriate language is used to ask critical thinking questions, children of all ages can participate in all four stages of questioning. Further suggestions for age-appropriate questions can be found in the "Educator's Guided Tour" section of this educational package.

STAGE 1: DESCRIPTION

What do we see when we look at a work of art?

Note: In this stage, we list or describe everything that is *literally* in the image. The things that the image implies to our imagination or emotion will be discussed in Step 3. For this stage, it will be useful for students to know the Elements of Art and Design (line, shape, form, colour, texture, value) as they name aspects of the work.

- Describe the subject: What do we see in this image? Landscape, nature, people, animals, flowers, still life, etc.

- Describe media (materials): what is this work made of? Oil painting, clay, sculpture, digital photography, film photography, etc.

- Discuss Elements of Art and Design: (line, shape, form, colour, texture, value)

  o What colours are used (bright, dull, monochromatic, analogous, complementary)?

  o What kinds of lines are used (horizontal, vertical, wiggly, straight, angular, curved…)?

  o What kinds of shapes are used (organic, geometric, large, small)?

o Does the image depict or literally have texture (rough, smooth, wet, dry)?

o Does the work have dark and light areas/values?

- Describe the style of the work: Is the work non-objective (abstract)? Is it experimental or traditional when compared to other works in the same medium? Does it focus on expression, or on documenting the subject (or possibly both)?

STAGE 2: ANALYSIS – OBSERVING RELATIONSHIPS

How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

Note: It will be useful to discuss relationships in the work using the Principles of Art and Design (movement, contrast, harmony, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale and space). With younger students, it may be more effective to discuss the work without first teaching these terms, and instead provide the terms as you discuss different relationships in the work.

- Are there contrasts of dark and light colours?

- Are colours or shapes repeated to create unity or rhythm?

- Is there one object that stands out and is more emphasized than other objects?

- What makes that object stand out?

- What type of balance is it, symmetrical or asymmetrical?

- Is movement implied in the image? How do the lines, balance, and rhythm direct the movement of your eye when you look at the work?

- How does the scale of the objects change how we perceive the space? Does the image seem flat (all the objects are pressed up against the front of the image), or is the image deep (objects recede in space)?

STAGE 3: INTERPRETATION

What meaning or intent did the artist have in making this work?

Note: In this stage, the viewer imagines the meaning or intent behind the technical choices and content that they have observed in the first two steps. This stage can be challenging, because the meaning is often unclear, and it is often left to the viewer to use their own knowledge to formulate the meaning of the work. For this reason, interpretation requires creativity, empathy, and courage. The interpretation is an educated conclusion that utilizes the viewer's observations of the content of the artwork and the viewer's own experiences to imagine the intent of the artist.

- What mood or feeling do you get from this work?

- Does the work remind you of other works, or of other experiences you have had?

- How does this work fit into or respond to historic and contemporary trends in art?

- What does this work tell you about how the artist feels about the world?

- Is the artist trying to solve or comment on a challenge in art?

- Is the artist trying to solve or comment on a challenge in society?

- Is there a narrative (story) that is being told?

- Why did the artist create this work?

- What do you think this work is about?

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers in interpretation; each viewer's experiences will provide a different insight into the work's potential meanings. For educators, instead of approaching students' interpretations as correct or incorrect, it can be helpful to ask the student to explain their conclusion, and then allow others to share why they feel the same or differently about ideas that are being presented.

STAGE 4: JUDGEMENT – CONCLUSION ABOUT WORK

What do I think or feel about this work?

Note: In this stage, we decide what we like or dislike about the work. This decision is subjective, but an explanation for the decisions should be provided. The judgement stage is an important opportunity to practice using art vocabulary and participating in art critiques, potentially discovering ways to improve the work.

- Do you like the work? Why or why not?

- Do you agree with the message the artist is sharing?

- What are the strengths about this work?

- What are the weaknesses and how could they be changed?

- How did your initial opinion change or stay the same after analyzing the work?

Educator's Guided Tour

Arthur Nishimura's "*Mystical Landscapes*" presents a series of black-and-white, wet process photographs that depict a range of subjects. This series of images, though united in their black and white tonality, does not have consistently recurring subject matter; a couple of the images even challenge traditional landscape photography. What components must an image have to be considered a "landscape?" Instead of following of formula for composing a landscape, Nishimura unites this eclectic sampling of works in principle by offering a startling glimpse into a unique scene charged with narrative and the magic that each setting provides.

The expressive power and value that Nishimura brings to his images is testament to his commitment to traditional, silver gelatin process based photography. This power is particularly remarkable when considering that the photographs in *Mystical Landscapes* were taken on multiple continents (North America, Europe, Asia), which depict a variety of urban and natural landscapes, yet remains consistent in their ability to create a dreamlike world that is both familiar and unknown. Much of the expressiveness in Nishimura's photographs is created through the striking contrasts in his black and white values. His blacks are rich and deep, suggesting mystery, melancholy, and perhaps even danger. Sometimes Nishimura uses light to draw delicate forms out of these shadowy depths, lending a fantastical and unsettling beauty to the depicted scene. At other times, the light creates flat planes of brightly exposed architecture or sky: expanses of blank light sitting uncomfortably amidst darkened surroundings creating a pervasive mood in each of his photographs.

In addition to compelling use of lights and darks, Nishimura also often employs heightened contrasts in texture to create dynamic imagery. Natural textures such as grass, clouds, and earth, are sometimes contrasted against manufactured smoothness, such as the flat walls of buildings or the cylindrical forms of pipelines and pressure testing equipment. In some instances, this contrast seems to show the aesthetic intrusion of urban development that appears in natural landscapes. However, there are other images in which Nishimura frames machinery, buildings and urban structures in such a way that they become naturalized, appearing to be striking but plausible features of the landscape or, occasionally, even animate beings. Both the intrusion and naturalization of human-made forms are achieved by manipulating contrast and altering perspective, causing the eye of the viewer to either dissociate or integrate the unnatural with the natural.

Many images in the *Mystical Landscape* series are taken from a perspective that is low to the ground, gazing up at the depicted objects. In combination with his unusually high contrasts in value and texture, this unique perspective allows Nishimura to transform landscapes and scenes that would be otherwise familiar to us into settings that appear fantastical, magical, and storied. Trees, rocks, and horizons loom large ahead of us – the sky stretching out and away from us is

larger than life. Shadows and curves in the landscape conceal from us that which is at eye level, eliciting feelings of uneasiness and curiosity. We find ourselves, almost always, to be small and at the mercy of our own wonder and at whatever unknown laws govern the magical rearrangement of our formerly familiar surroundings.

Unlike the images that portray organic subjects from a lowered perspective, the architectural images in *Mystical Landscapes* are seen at a natural, eye-level perspective. This familiar perspective allows us to gaze straight ahead at settings that may be banal when seen in everyday life, but are rendered quaint, curious or even ominous by the use of strong contrast in light and shadow, and by the desolate lack of human activity in the images. These images often seem to suggest that we are the last ones in the portrayed locations, creating a sense of place that suggests recent abandonment and bestows us with a sense of urgent curiosity: what has happened to these neighborhoods, and why have they been left behind? The flat fronts of these photographs may provoke a desire to look deeper: to enter the buildings, to look behind and around them, to call out, "Is anybody there?" Given that there are many small communities on the Canadian prairies that were vibrant at the time of Nishimura's childhood but have since been emptied by trends of urbanization, it is understandable that Nishimura would be drawn to depict the sluggish quiet, and maybe even the desolation, of the prairie villages shown in his photographs.

HORIZON: STREET FRONT, BLACKIE (NEAR SUNSET LOOKING WEST), 1996

HORIZON: STREET FROM NANTON (LATE AFTERNOON, LOOKING NORTH), 1996

HORIZON - AFTER SUNSET, LOOKING NORTH: FORT MACLEOD, ALBERTA, 1991

Indeed, the only evidence of living humans glimpsed in any of these landscapes is in the highly storied "Pacific Patience" (1978) and the semi-self-portraiture in two of the exhibition's earliest works: "Roots Up-Rooted" (1976) and "Wheel of Flatland Dharma" (1978). In these latter two works, Nishimura allows his own shadow to fall into the captured image. This acknowledgement of the self in the created image reminds viewers of the psychological and physical presence demanded of wet-process silver-gelatin photographers throughout the whole creation of each print. Waiting for the perfect moment, handling cumbersome gear, and working with delicate equipment outdoors in varied weather are challenges presented to digital photographers as well as wet-process photographers. However, these challenges are greatly compounded by the time-sensitivity, the limited number of "tries" and the finite opportunities for editing involved with traditional photographic cameras and development processes.

Despite these challenges, many photographers who stand by traditional photography methods, rather than embrace digital technology, explain that they do so because of the time and thoughtfulness that traditional photography forces them to spend on each piece. In an interview about his photograph "Widow" during the Calgary area's 2013 Exposure festival, Nishimura described experiencing revelations about the title and significance of this photograph during the development process. "And it came out, and the first thing I saw when I saw the print coming up in the developer: *Widow*,"[1] he says. It is this curiosity, this openness to revelation and wonder that allows Nishimura's use of the silver gelatin process to bring us the evocative images of *Mystical Landscapes*.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSEAR0Qaiq8

Let's examine a few photographs from this exhibition:

TOWARDS OLD BEGINNINGS, 1978. *Selenium-toned silver gelatin print on paper*

"TOWARDS OLD BEGINNINGS" depicts one of Nishimura's most beloved subjects: the prairie landscapes of his Southern Alberta home. In this image, the viewer's sightline is situated low to the ground. With a startlingly symmetrical use of one-point perspective, the eye of the viewer is drawn from the front edge of the image out onto the horizon, creating a direct sense of movement even in a still landscape. Although the shiny, cylindrical pipeline contrasts with the organic texture of the dry ground and vegetation, the perspective and implied movement of the pipeline almost brings the human-made object to a serpentine sort of life. This animation imbues the viewer with a sense of wonder: where is this seemingly endless serpent going? Or, if it is not a serpent but a path over the horizon, to where does it lead?

ROOTS UP-ROOTED, 1976. S*ilver gelatin on paper*

"ROOTS UPROOTED", the oldest work in *Mystical Landscapes,* is from Nishimura's *DEDICATION SERIES:* TO MY FATHER, 17 YEARS IN MEMORIUM. Again, this image situates the viewer at a low perspective, rendering the grass wild and sharp with organic texture, and the root ball enormous and, at first, unrecognizable in the flat plane of the sky. The title, especially in the context of memorial to his father, may reference the immigration – the uprooting -- of Nishimura's parents to the Canadian prairies from Japan. Nishimura learned photography from his father, who sent photos of life in Canada back to Japan. Contributing to the symbolism of this image is Nishimura's own shadow falling into the frame. This semi-self portrait makes the image personal, and grounds the wildness of the organic objects; the viewer, like Nishimura's parents in the early days of their immigration, is in a foreign landscape but not alone. Perhaps the presence of Nishimura's father can even be suggested by this shadow; without being able to see the true figure we cannot recognize whether the photographer on the prairies is father or son.

PACIFIC PATIENCE, 1978. *Selenium-toned, hand coloured silver gelatin print on paper*

"PACIFIC PATIENCE" is one of the most intriguing images in the Mystical Landscapes exhibition, both for the narrative it suggests, and for its variation from the other works; this image has low tones of colour and is one of only two images that depict the human figure. The figure seated in the foreground appears to be dressed in men's clothing, but we see only a glimpse of him. In a seminal example of Nishimura's unsettling use of perspective, the gaze of the viewer appears to be aligned with the gaze of the man in the corner, almost as if it is the viewer's hand and folded leg that extends into the image. Despite this alignment, it is unlikely that the figure in the foreground is the photographer; it seems barely possible that the figure is holding a cigarette in the visible hand and taking a photo with the other. This figure in the foreground looks down on what appears to be a woman; she does not seem to be aware of his gaze. Thus, we are brought to the unsettling conclusion that we are looking at a photograph taken by a photographer who was watching a man who was watching a woman who was watching the sea. The landscape in which the two subjects are situated is also unsettling. It is as barren as if it were the moon, but the title informs us that the setting is likely on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. The rounded promenade onto which the woman is walking is a perplexing, paved platter in the midst of this desolate, albeit natural, landscape, making the overall scene a comprehensive example of Nishimura's ability to use contrasts in perspective, texture, and natural and unnatural objects to turn what might otherwise be an ordinary landscape into a place of mystery and even absurdity.

The following are questions that may be asked for different ages and abilities when looking at Arthur Nishimura's *Mystical Landscapes* exhibition.

Accessible Questions:

- Have you ever been anywhere that looks like this? Have you seen anywhere that looks like this in a book or movie?

- How does the title help you to figure out what the photo might be about?

- How do you think Arthur Nishimura wanted you to feel when you look at this work?

- How do you feel when you look at this work?

- What is the first thing your eye sees when you look at this photograph? What does your eye see second, and third? Why did you see things in that order? Why do you think that Arthur Nishimura wanted your eye to travel in those directions? (Use this as an opportunity to explain movement as a principle of design).

- What do you think is outside the frame of this photograph? Why did Arthur Nishimura choose to show us just this part of the landscape?

- Do you like this photograph? Do you think you will remember it? Why or why not?

- Which photograph is your favourite? Why?

➢ **Activity Suggestion:** If photographs are arranged on a wall, ask students to stand next to the photograph that is their favourite. Give the groups corresponding to each "favourite" photograph three minutes to discuss amongst one another why they like the photograph, and then explain its strengths to the class.

Complex Questions:

- To what environmental, social, or emotional realities does this image speak?

- What other artists does this work remind you of? If you had to guess what year this photograph was taken, what would you have guessed? How does the photo fit into historic or contemporary trends in photography?

- How does the size and scale of the artwork affect your perception of the work?

- Does the photograph tend towards abstraction in any areas? Do the effects created in development imply other media, such as illustration or painting?

- How has perspective been used in this image? How would a different perspective change the feel of the photograph? Would the photograph still be interesting with a more familiar perspective?

- How has movement been implied in the image?

- Do you think that this work is well done? How could it be improved?

- Do you think photography is any more or less a form of high art than the traditional arts of painting, drawing, and sculpture? Why or why not?

## A Closer Look at the History of Photography

"The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera."

— Dorothea Lange

Seeing the dates on historic photographs can often come as a surprise to contemporary viewers. While photography may seem to us like a modern and even cutting-edge technology, especially considering the ongoing improvements made to digital and smartphone cameras, the first photographs existed decades before telephones or even electric light bulbs, and the origins of photography are rooted in antiquity.

The first known photograph to be taken with a camera was captured in 1826 by French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. He photographed the view from his window in Burgundy, France during the reign of King Charles X of the House of Bourbon, less than forty years after the French Revolution. *"View from the Window at Les Gras"* was created using "heliography", a photography technique invented by Nicéphore Niépce himself in which a silver plate coated with Bitumen of Judea was exposed to light, hardening the Bitumen in proportion to the amount of light striking each part of the plate. When the unhardened Bitumen was washed away with oil of lavender, the hardened Bitumen left an image on the plate.

Although Joseph Nicéphore Niépce is often credited with the invention of modern photography, the discovery of the basic principles that allowed for Nicéphore Niépce's invention date back thousands of years. It is possible that even prehistoric humans visiting caves could have been witness to the "camera obscura" effect if light from outside passed through a small enough opening to project an image on the cave wall.
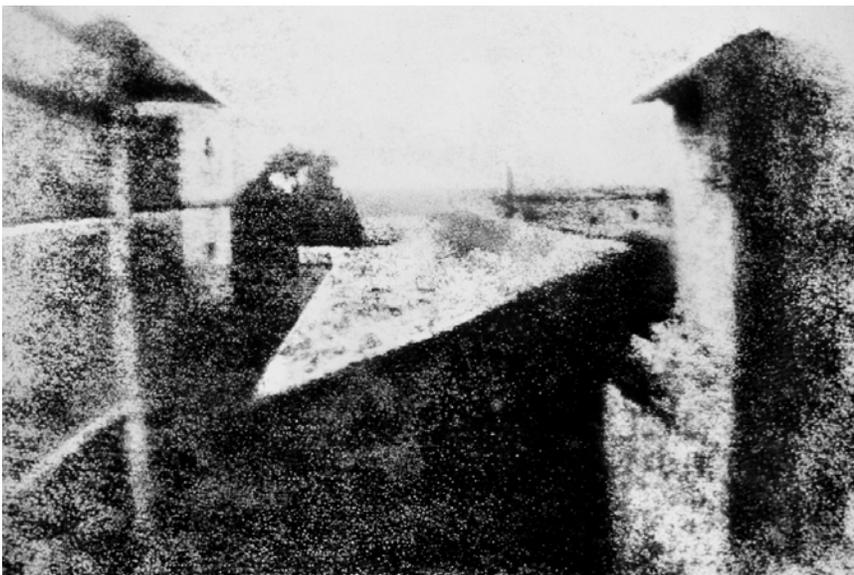
"View from the Window" at Les Gras, 1826 or 1827, by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce

The camera obscura effect occurs when the light reflected off objects intersects as it enters an opening that is small enough to direct the light rays and prevent them from diffusing. The rays, having crossed upon entering the opening (in a camera, the aperture), will project an upside-down image of the original objects when they land on a surface.
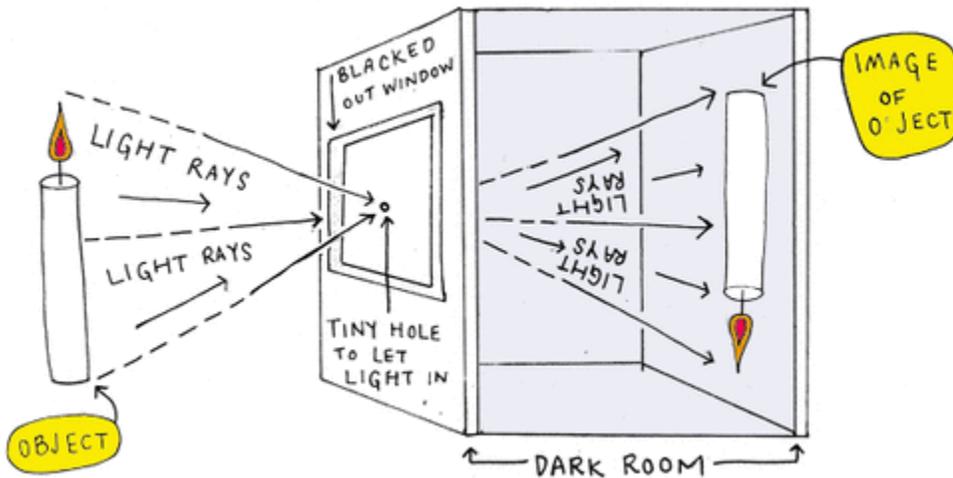
Diagram from "The Camera Obscura" at http://www.photopedagogy.com/camera-obscura.html

The human eye functions much like a camera obscura, with the pupil changing shape to allow in varying amounts of light, and the lens redirecting the light so that the rays cross and project a focused image on the retina in the back of the eye. Our brain then flips the image to be right-side-up.
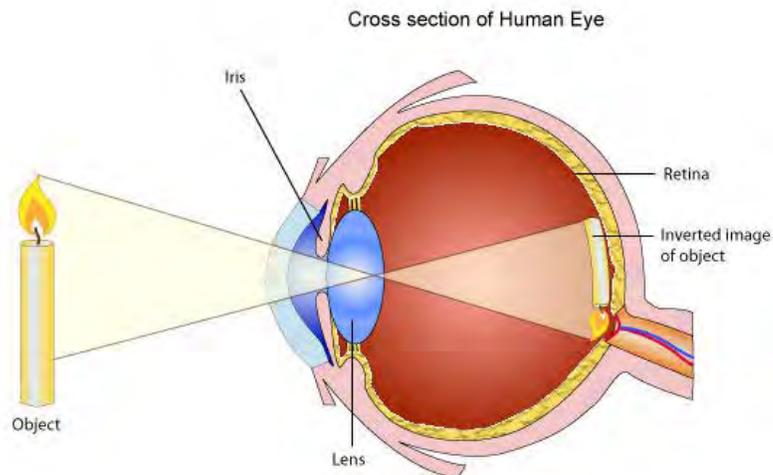
Diagram from the Fort Worth Astronomical Society at http://www.fortworthastro.com/beginner4.html
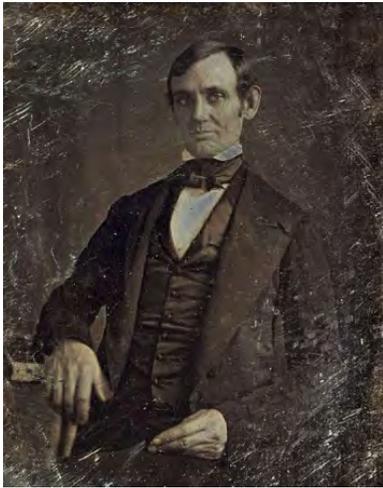
The first recorded description of how an intentionally constructed camera obscura functions was written by the Han Chinese philosopher Mozi in the 4th century Before Common Era. The camera obscura was discovered independently of Mozi's writings in many other societies around the world around or after that ancient date, and was often used by astronomers to project images of celestial bodies. The camera obscura found its use in high art beginning in the sixteenth century when European painters began to project and trace the reflected images of the camera obscura in order to create highly realistic paintings and drawings. Exactly which famous artists from this period employed the camera obscura is a highly debated topic in art history, with perhaps the artist of most interest being the seventeenth century Dutch virtuoso Johannes Vermeer. Though the use of a camera obscura leaves behind no physical evidence, many critics and historians believe that certain quirks of scale and perspective, as well as Vermeer's lack of extensive under painting, reveal that he used an optical device to paint his masterpieces. [2]

Shortly after Joseph Nicéphore Niépce's invention allowed him to create the first modern photograph, he was joined in his research by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre. Although Nicéphore Niépce died within a few years of this research partnership, Daguerre went on to invent the daguerreotype in 1838. The daguerreotype process, which involved exposing a silver iodide-coated plate to light in a camera obscura and then revealing the latent image with mercury vapors, was vastly more efficient than heliography, requiring an exposure of only about thirty minutes in strong light whereas heliography took days for the plate to be sufficiently exposed.[3] Although easily ruined during and after processing, the daguerreotype was the primary form of photography in the twenty years after its invention, and allows us to see portraits of such historic figures as President Abraham Lincoln, poet Emily Dickinson, and, of course, Daguerre himself.

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[2] "Vermeer and the Camera Obscura" from *essential Vermeer 2.0* at http://www.essentialvermeer.com/camera_obscura/co_one.html#.W0U8atVKjIU
[3] "The History of Photography" from Maison Nicéphore Niépce http://www.photo-museum.org/photography-history/

Left: Abraham Lincoln from https://www.forces.net/news/border-control-mexican-american-war-redraws-map

Centre: Emily Dickenson from https://www.amherst.edu/library/archives/holdings/edickinson/dickinsondag

Right: Louis Daguerre from https://onphotography.me/2017/04/20/louis-daguerre-he-did-it-with-mirrors/

In the decades following Louis Daguerre's invention, innovations in the science of photography were made, and, one at a time, the material of the plates, their coating, the chemicals used to develop them, and the chemicals used to seal them were all replaced with more efficient and, sometimes, less toxic materials. In 1871, Richard Maddox discovered that gelatin could be used to adhere light-sensitive silver bromide to glass plates. The use of gelatin vastly improved photographic technology, as plates coated in gelatin and silver could be stored before and after exposure and could still be developed when dried. In addition, silver gelatin coating required exposure of only a fraction of a second, leading to the development of the shutter. The silver gelatin process is still used by most traditional photographers today. The following video from the Photographic Process Series by George Eastman Museum describes technical aspects of the silver gelatin process and how its discovery and popularization changed the history of photography: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqWyJstBSoo (2014).

An in depth history and technical description of the silver gelatin process can be read at https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/pdf/atlas_silver_gelatin.pdf.

With silver gelatin technology came the ability of photographers to travel with their prepared plates, leading to sweeping new opportunities in the fields of both documentary and expressive photography by the 1900s. Documentary photographers like Jacob Riis (1849-1914) and Dorothea Lange (1895-1965) used their work to advocate on behalf of the poor and demand social change. Other photographers, such as Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), Man Ray (1890-1976), and Edward Weston (1886-1958), explored the more avant-garde possibilities in the relatively new medium of photography. Many photographers fell somewhere in-between documentary and high art photography – Ansel Adams (1902-1984) is an example of a famous photographer who used highly expressive photographs to document landscapes as art and insist on their protection.

Today photography has become a medium for the masses – almost everyone who owns a camera phone creates documentary photographs to record aspects of their lives, and many people also consider their pocket or phone cameras to be a means to making art. It is curious to consider how Joseph Nicéphore Niépce or Louis Daguerre would feel about the enormous evolution and success of their inventive work. How do you think they would feel?

SHADOW PUPPETS

Art Activity for Kindergarten to Grade 4 Students

Photograph from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hL28SkHf1g

PURPOSE

To explore the uses of light in art making, and to explore the art elements and principles of contrast, form, and line.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand that rays of light shine in a direction and can be blocked or reflected by objects.

- Understand the importance of simple elements and principles of design.

- Explore intersections between visual and dramatic arts, and the use of narrative in both.

DISCUSSION AND MOTIVATION

Explain to students in simple language how photographs work: Some chemicals react when the light lands on them. This makes some parts of the picture light and some parts of the picture dark, so we can see the different shapes. Light is an important part of making photos. Light can also be used in other types of art, like shadow puppets!

Explain how shadow puppets work: Light rays shine out of the light source (light bulb, projector). If you put something in to block rays of light coming from the source it creates a

black shadow. Rays of light are clear and when they land on the wall they create a bright spot. Where the rays are blocked, it casts a shadow because light cannot pass through objects like paper or people, that's why we have a shadow when our bodies block the light.

Watch "Dr. Binocs Show" video about shadows (includes example of shadow puppets): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOIGOT88Aqc

MATERIALS

- Black cardstock printed with shapes of animals/characters (Option: White cardstock to be coloured; option: allow students to draw the outlines of their own animals/characters)
- Dowels
- Scissors
- Contact cement (to be used by the teacher) or duct tape (to be used by the teacher)
- Projector on a trolley or table
- Blank wall or whiteboard

Project (K-4): Shadow Puppet Theatre

1. Discuss what shadows are, and how light is used in art making. Demonstrate an example of a shadow puppet to students (you can use your hand to make a silhouette for the demonstration).

2. Hand out black cardstock with printed outlines of animals, humans, or monsters. You can also trace outlines using a white pencil. Option: allow students to draw their own character outlines.

3. Have students cut out "character" shapes.

4. Help students tape wooden dowels onto cardstock. If making crafts over multiple classes, the teacher can use contact cement to permanently attach the dowels when students are out of the classroom (breathing hazard).

5. As some students are finishing, turn on projector, or turn off the lights and let the sun shine onto a window. Allow students to play with making shadows with the puppets as they finish.

6. Sit students in their desks. Discuss the role of contrast in a shadow puppet performance (light and dark). Discuss shape as an element of design and ask them why the shape of their puppet is so important. Ask them what kind of animal/character their puppet is.

What will they name it? What is its personality like? Give them one minute to tell their neighbor about their puppet.

7. Split students into small groups and have them act out (not in the light stream) what their puppets would do if they met one another. Would they be friends? Would they fight? Would one try to chase or eat the other?

8. If students have the attention for it, let the groups that introduced their puppets to one another act out the meeting of the puppets for the class. Let these "plays" be limited to a minute in length to get through all the children.

➢ Activity Suggestion: Make a shadow puppet center to be used during Centre Time, or when students have finished work early. This station could be made using a dark space in the classroom like a large cubby or closet, or inside a pup tent with dark fabric draped over it to block exterior light, and a flashlight inside.

➢ Activity Suggestion: Students who finish early can make a "stage" for the puppet show. Video: Making a Cardboard Box Stage https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hL28SkHf1g

➢ Or, collaborate with an older grade to help younger students make a stage, write a play, and put on a performance.

CYANOTYPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Art Activity for Kindergarten to Art 30 students

PURPOSE

To experiment with light-sensitive materials as a means of creating art, and to explore an historic form of photographic processing through an understanding of scientific methods involved in the development of an image.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand traditional photography as a reaction between light and chemicals (K-Art 30)

- Learn about the historic and scientific methods involved in the development of a photograph (Grade 5-Art 30)

- Explore principles of composition (Grade 5-Art 30)

DISCUSSION AND MOTIVATION

- This project will allow students of all ages to explore the idea of light sensitivity as a chemical property, and to participate in an historic form of photography without a dark room.

- Discuss the principles of art and design using Nishimura's photographs as examples.

INTRODUCTION

Nishimura's use of wet process photography: "Arthur Nishimura has been taking photographs since before your parents were born. Were there smart phones or digital cameras before your parents were born? How do you think that people took photographs before there was digital technology? Before smart phones, people took photographs using chemicals that changed colour or shade when exposed to the light. We call this being "light-sensitive" – even us humans are light sensitive! We get tanned because our skin makes more of the chemical "melanin" when we go into the sun. When your parents and even your grandparents were born, they could buy rolls of light-sensitive chemicals on clear plastic called "film". They took their photos on a film camera, and then they brought their film to a store and the store would transfer it to paper. Movies are also shot on cameras; movies are sometimes called "films" because they are made up

of hundreds, sometimes thousands of photographs shown quickly one after the other. Before there was film, though, photographers had to put wet chemicals on glass plates, and use more wet chemicals to make the photograph show up, and even more wet chemicals to make the photograph stay the same when it went back into the light. We call this "wet process" photography, because wet chemicals are used to make photographs. Some photographers, like Arthur Nishimura, still choose to do wet process photography even though it is very complicate because it creates very expressive images. Would you like to try using chemicals to make a photograph?

Cyanotype "film" development process (for Teacher OR Art 8 – Art 30)

MATERIALS

- Flat wood brush or sponge

****Do not use a brush with a metal head as it may react with your chemicals)

- Water and Cyanotype solution

*** Wear a face mask and rubber gloves when prepping the cyanotype solution***

Cyanotype solution can be ordered online, the one used in this example is the "Jacquard Cyanotype Sensitizer Set" from Opus Art Supplies (www.opusartsupplies.com). The two chemicals (Potassium Ferricyanide and Ferric Ammonium Citrate) come in powdered form, each set will have its own specific instructions for prepping. When mixed with water and each other, the solution can be used to set paper or fabric with the light sensitive chemicals.

To treat materials with cyanotype solution, simply brush the solution with a large brush or sponge onto the material. Feel free to play with the density of solution applied, as it will affect the shade of blue produced after exposure.

- o *** Pre-treated cyanotype fabric sheets can also be purchased as well, these are much easier to use, as you do not need to treat your own materials. However, they will be much more expensive, per print, than preparing your own fabrics with the solution.

SILOUETTE CYANOTYPE : Project (K-7)

MATERIALS

- Thick fabric or paper, we suggest 100% cotton or watercolour paper on which to print.

***Avoid synthetic fibers like polyester since the chemicals won't stick to the fibers in the fabric.

- 60 watt UV lamp, or a sunny day

- Plate of glass or plexiglass ***Must NOT be UV filtering

- Binder clips

- A variety of materials to create "silhouettes" or photographic negatives. Flat plant materials work well for this activity

- Water with a capful of hydrogen peroxide in paint trays

- Water in paint trays *** Distilled water is recommended for the best results

- Spatula to lift paper/fabric from tray

- Parent or Educational Assistant to help small groups of students

1. Show students an example of a cyanotype. Explain that when the treated paper/fabric is exposed in the sunlight, the sunlight turns every part of the paper that it touches into a dark blue. If there is anything lying on the paper to block the sun, the paper underneath the object will stay white, leaving a white shadow or "photographic" image transfer of whatever was lying on the paper.

   See Example image on following page

2. **Optional:** Take students on a walk to gather items that they can use to make their cyanotype. Flat, natural materials like leaves, grass, and catkins will work. Scraps of paper and even garbage are good too! Transparent materials like plastic or mesh, etc. will filter the amount of light that goes through them creating different shades of blue. If it is too cold to go outside, bring a large selection of materials for students to choose from or allow students to bring their own materials for next days class.

3. Once students have selected their materials, have them arrange the materials on an untreated piece of paper. Go around while the students are arranging and ensure that each student has thought about their composition. How did they choose their items, and how did they choose the arrangement of them? Are they thinking about balance, rhythm, contrast, pattern and unity?

4. Take students into the boot room and have them bring their materials with them. Turn off the lights in the boot room before starting. If it is bright, cover the windows so that the room is dimly lit, this will prevent the cyanotype paper from becoming overexposed too quickly (it does not have to be completely dark, you will still need enough light to work).

5. Have students sit on the floor with their materials. Pass around sheets of plexiglass, and then a sheet of treated paper or fabric. Have students arrange their items on the treated paper as they had practiced in class. Place another sheet of Plexiglas over each composition, and clip it in place with binder clips (this will keep the materials from moving while the photograph develops).

6. When the students are all ready, have them carry their plexiglass with the paper/fabric out into the sun. Let the treated papers sit in the sun for 15 minutes.

7. Once the treated papers have spent 15 minutes in the sun, have the students bring their papers back inside and lay their sheet in a tray filled with water and hydrogen peroxide. They can move the sheet around with a spatula to rinse out all the extra chemicals. After 5 minutes, they can use the spatula to lift their sheet out of the peroxide water, and rinse their sheet in a tray filled with just water.

8. When the cyanotype has been washed clean place on a drying rack or use string to hang your prints on clothespins in the window to dry.

Notes:

- Working in the boot room is tricky since you need to move quickly after the cyanotype treated paper is exposed to light. It might be frustrating for younger students to transfer their materials quickly, make sure you have the assistance of a parent or Educational Assistant to help with smaller groups.

- Because it may be hard to fit all students in the boot room at once, or to find enough sheets of glass or plexiglass, let students expose their cyanotypes in smaller sets. Students who are waiting to expose their cyanotypes can draw in sketchbooks, watch a video about photography, etc.

Activity Suggestion: Blank white bandanas can be purchased at most craft stores and online in bulk. Students can create a "matching" class set of cyanotype blue bandanas, each with varied silhouettes!

All photographs in the Silhouette Cyanotype lesson plan were produced with the assistance of Grande Prairie artist Carol Bromley Meeres.

**Cyanotype Print from a Film Negative: Project (Art 8 – Art 30)**

MATERIALS

- Paint smocks or aprons

- Digital or phone camera

- Plastic transparency

- Printer

Note: The greatest challenge with this project is discovering what edits to the negative will print best on various school printers. Different printers may have different setting that are helpful (ex. some printers can regulate the amount of ink transferred to the paper), but may also apply edits to the digital photo differently when printing. Prior to introducing this project, the teacher will need to create a few experimental transparency negatives to discover what works best.

*** Inkjet printers are preferred to laser printers, be careful as some industrial photocopiers may melt transparencies. It is best to use a home office printer for these transfers.

1. Show students examples of cyanotype photographs. Explain that when the treated paper/fabric is exposed in UV light, the light turns every part of the paper that it touches into a dark blue. If there is anything lying on the paper to block the sun, the paper underneath the object will turn white, leaving a white "silhouette" of whatever was lying on the paper. Explain that the first cyanotypes were used to reproduce architectural drawings, called "blueprints" because of the blue "cyan" colour. Later, it became a way to create positive photographs from negatives. What is a negative in photography? It is the mirrored opposite of the original image, light areas are dark and dark areas are light, when the negative is transferred onto paper they are flipped back again. This process of photographic development is similar to our eyes, except our brains do this flipping within fractions of a second.

2. Use Arthur Nishimura's photographs to discuss the principles of art and design in photographs (balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, and unity/variety).
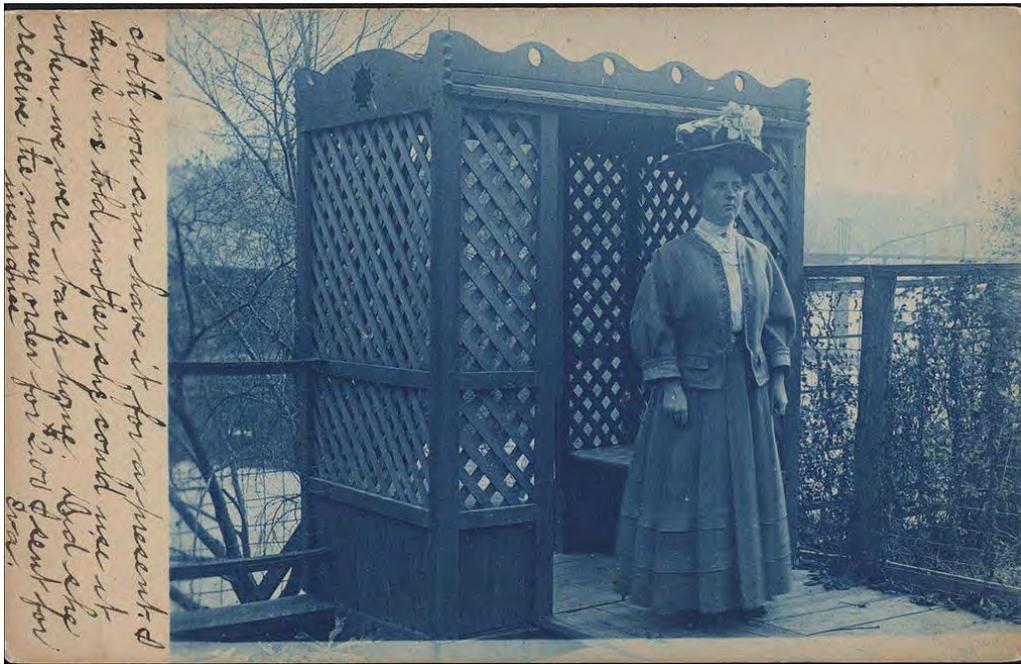
Example: Cyanotype photograph created from negative c. 1910

3. Take students outdoors to create photographs using the cameras on their phones. If there are students who do not have camera phones, lend students cameras from the ComTech lab, or ask them to take turns with a friend. The cyanotype process will be easier if students take photos of single objects with high value contrast, areas of light and dark. Chose images that pop off of a solid background, surface or wall.

4. <u>Have</u> students edit their images on the computer, using the free app, "LunaPic" (https://www167.lunapic.com/editor/) to edit their photograph.

Photo from:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyanotype#/media/File:Cyanotype_postcard,_Racine,_Wis.,_ca._1910,_front.jpg

Example: This cyanotype was made from a digital, high contrast photograph of a shell by MP Photography (link to blog in step 7).

The negative should be yellow, as shown in this example from the MP Photography blog (link in step 7).

5. Have them select the Black and White filter under the heading "Filters". Two rows of options for "black and white" filters will appear above the uploaded photo. Select "blue tint", so that the uploaded photo appears in "bluescale" (as opposed to black and white or grayscale). From the "Filters" heading select Negative to apply the "negative" filter to their image. The uploaded photo should now be yellow in colour. This yellow negative will act as a colour appropriate negative to the blue cyanotype that will be created. Tell students to apply any other edits that you have found useful in printing your own transparencies.

6. Students can use the toolbar to Crop, Cut, Copy/Paste, Remove & paint, Erase or add Effects like Blur, Thermal or others to a selected area. Play around with the composition until you are happy with your final image.

7. Print edited images on transparencies.

    This blog provides advice for editing and printing images on transparencies: https://mpaulphotography.wordpress.com/2011/02/17/cyanotype-digital-negatives-a-basic-how-to/

8. **Optional:** Have students treat their own paper with the cyanotype solution in a darkened room (the room doesn't need to be completely black). Paper must be dried in the dark and stored in a dark box (a pizza box works well). If there isn't time or if students are not capable of preparing their own paper, the teacher can prepare paper in advance. *** see Cyanotype "film" development process

9. Have students lay their transparency on a treated piece of paper and clamp it between two sheets of glass or plexiglass. If the school has a UV lamp of 60 watts or greater (possibly for an aquarium or in a shop), use the UV lamp to expose the image. Otherwise, use the sun.

10. Have students wash their exposed cyanotypes in a bath of water containing a capful of hydrogen peroxide, and then in distilled water for best results. Once washed, lie the cyanotypes flat to dry or hang them from string on clothes pins in the window to dry.

PROMPTED ART MAKING

Art Activity for Kindergarten to Art 30 students

Purpose:

To practice using existing works of art as reference to creating new works in diverse mediums.

Objectives:

- Explore methods of simulating new works that reference, challenge, or draw inspiration from existing works.

- Practice finding narrative in existing artworks and developing narrative in new forms of work.

Materials:

For creative writing:

- Pencils

- Paper

For drawing:

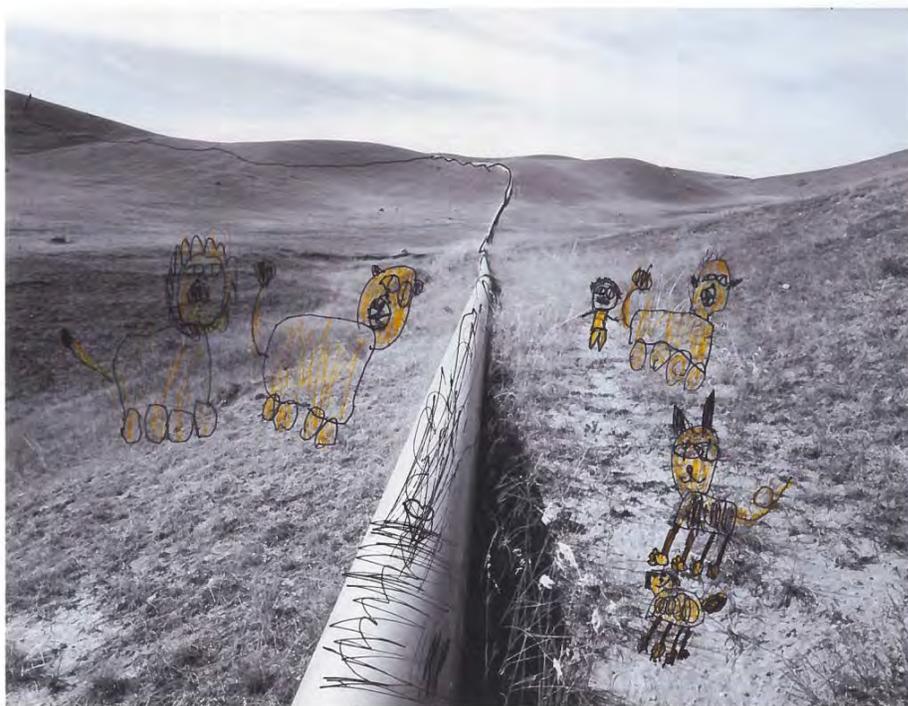- Pencils

- Paper

- Colouring pencils

For collage:

- Magazines

- Photographs

- Scissors

- Glue sticks or rubber cement

- Printed photos from Mystical Landscapes

- Cardstock backing

Discussion and Motivation:

Many artists draw inspiration from other artists or from other periods of art production to create their own new works. Some artists create new works that challenge other artists or periods in art history. Artists may references works that were created in another genre. For instance, Arthur Nishimura was influenced by documentary photographers Dorothea Lange and Edward Weston, but also by the brooding realism of paintings by Edward Hopper which depicted modern American life in the early 20th century. Many artists draw on narratives, sometimes from written literature but also from artworks, and respond to those narratives when creating their own works. Discuss what a narrative in an artwork looks like. Do any of Arthur Nishimura's artworks contain narratives? Do any of his artworks inspire you to create a narrative?

Project: Creative Drawing Prompt (K-3)

"Lions by the River" in Nishimura's "Towards Old Beginnings", Prompted Drawing by Octavia Fehler, age 6.

1. Choose one of Arthur Nishimura's photographs as a creative drawing prompt. Provide students with paper, pencils, and pencil crayons. Give them a few prompt questions to choose from. For younger students, fewer prompt questions will be less overwhelming. For older students or more capable students, a choice between a few of Nishimura's photographs may be nice.

Suggested Prompts:

- o What kind of imaginary animal or creature might live in this dark forest? Draw it.

- o Who might live in this building? Draw them.

- o If you went over this hill, what do you imagine you would find? Draw it.

- o Draw your own Mystical Landscape – your own imaginary world. What colours will you use? Is it outside or inside? Do people live there? Animals? Imaginary beasts?

➢ **Activity Suggestion:** Provide students with a printed photocopy of a Nishimura photograph and allow them to draw the answer to their prompts into the photo.

Project: Creative Writing Prompt: (Grade 3-Language Arts 30)

1. Select a few of Arthur Nishimura's photographs that strongly suggest a narrative context, and project these images on the SmartBoard or on the whiteboard using a projector. Giving a choice of two or three photographs will allow students some freedom, but also provide sufficient parameters for their prompt.

2. Ask students to use the photographs as a writing prompt. Students at advanced writing levels can write a short story using the landscape portrayed in the photograph as a setting. Students may also be given the option to write a *scene* from a longer story using the photographs as a setting. Students with lower writing abilities can follow a directive such as:

- Come up with a creative backstory to explain why all the people in this town are gone.

- Imagine a fantastical or unusual discovery you might make if you went into or out of this dark forest.

- Come up with a backstory for how the figures in the photo, or the photographer and the figures, know one another.

- Describe what you would do if you found yourself in this landscape. Where would you walk? What would you be looking for?

> ➢ **Activity Suggestion:** Younger students and students with lower abilities can combine the Creative Writing Prompt and Creative Drawing Prompt by writing or orally storytelling to a peer or adult a short response to one of the creative directions, and then they can draw their response, or draw themselves into the landscape.

> ➢ **Activity Suggestion:** Students can use characters from a class novel or story, and describe what those characters would do if they found themselves in one of Nishimura's landscapes.

Recommended Photographs:

Project: Creative Collage (Grade 4-Art 30)

Surrealist Collage in Nishimura's "The Tank, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India" by Mielle Fehler, age 10.

1. Discuss the devices used by Arthur Nishimura to make landscapes appear mysterious, foreign, or fantastical to the viewer. Why did the curator of this art show decide to call it "Mystical Landscapes"? What does *mystical* mean?

2. Discuss surrealism as an art movement, and its goals of portraying things that are mysterious, foreign, or fantastical. What are the connections between Nishimura's photographic style and surrealism? Show examples of early surrealist collage artists, such as Hannah Höch. Because of the almost limitless access to images on the internet and in print materials, the medium of collage has grown in popularity. Show students examples of works by Sarah Eisenlohr, a contemporary artist who creates surrealist landscapes images through collage. Read more about Eisenlohr and view other works by contemporary collage artists at

   https://lonewolfmag.com/contemporary-surrealist-collages/

Da-Dandy, 1919, Hannah Höch
https://www.artsy.net/artwork/hannah-hoch-da-dandy

Collages by American artist Sarah Eisenlohr
https://lonewolfmag.com/contemporary-surrealist-collages/

3. Discuss with students the ways that the elements and principles of design are used in collage, as well as the technical aspects of collage (ie. cutting out images, using rubber cement).

4. Allow students to select which of Nishimura's photographs they would like to use as the background for their collage. Glue this photograph to a cardstock backing to strengthen it.

5. Give students access to print materials such as newspapers, magazines, and catalogues. Students can cut out found images and arrange them (without gluing) on Nishimura's photograph to create a surreal landscape.

Options:

- Allow students to find images on the Internet and print them off for use.

- If students want their whole collage to be in black and white, allow them to photocopy found images into black and white on the printer.

6. Once students have arranged their composition, have students engage in an informal peer critique by asking a friend for suggestions. When students are satisfied with their composition, have the teacher approve it for gluing. Students may then glue down their collage images.

➢ **Activity Suggestion:** For a Communications Technology version of a prompted collage, consider using Nishimura's photographs as a digital background and using photo editing technology to create a digital collage with images from the Internet.

Art History / Media Lesson on Documentary Photography

Note: This lesson is for students at a Junior High level or higher, and is applicable to Visual Arts, Language Arts, and Social Studies curricula.

Purpose:

To help students to understand the history of documentary photography as a medium for social change, and to help students analyze documentary photography and the use of photographs in contemporary media.

Objectives:

- Understand the differences and crossover between documentary and expressive photography
- Understand the history of documentary photography as a medium for social commentary and change
- Develop competencies in analyzing and evaluating documentary-style photographs shared through online news sources and on social media

Materials:

- Photographs (recommended photographs listed in this document)
- SmartBoard or projector
- Technological devices such as phones with internet capabilities or laptops

Discussion and Motivation:

- This lesson is intended to enhance student's ability to analyze sources in print and online materials through an understanding of historic and contemporary intentions, uses, and techniques for documentary photography.
- In this lesson, students will discuss documentary photography and photojournalism. They will analyze documentary photographs that they have seen in print or online. After analyzing sources as a group, students will use technological devices to locate an example of documentary photography

Background Information:

What is documentary photography, and is it different than photojournalism?

Documentary photographs are photographs that record, or document, environments, societies and cultures. The most famous example of a documentary photography publication is National Geographic. Many people consider documentary photography to be the same as, or to be part of, photojournalism. However, others argue that documentary photography is intended to create long-term or historical records of people, places, and cultures while photojournalism is intended to relay information about events for short-term, mass consumption in mainstream publications such as newspapers or, in social media and online news outlets. For the purposes of this lesson plan, the term "documentary photography" will apply to all photos used to document places, peoples, cultures, and events, including those photographs that some would say are journalistic rather than documentary.

How is documentary photography different from expressive photography?

The purpose of documentary photography is to archive an event or document aspects of a society or place. The purpose of expressive photography is to convey emotion or create meaning through a particular image. Expressive photography has typically been more aligned with the goals and standards of fine art. Many artists create images that cross between or combine the two genres.

How did documentary photography begin?

John Beasly Greene is known as the earliest documentary photographer. From 1853 to 1854 he attended an archaeological trip to Egypt and photographed ancient Egyptian architecture.

French-American John Beasly Greene, "Ibsamboul. Spéos de Phré", 1853-54

http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/38643/john-beasley-greene-ibsamboul-speos-de-phre-american-1853-1854/?dz=0.5000,0.5000,0.50

In the United States, the Civil War (1861-1865) was one of the earliest wars to be documented by photography. The photographs produced by the Civil War photographers became the first documentary photographs in a contemporary sense because they were both created as archival or historical documents, and distributed to a large audience.

Photo by American Timothy O'Sullivan, from his series on the Spotsylvania Battlefield during the American Civil War, 1864

As urbanization occurred in Europe and America, some photographers began to use photographs to document the lifestyle, including the suffering, of the working class.


"Boy in a Glass Factory", ca. 1890, by Dutch-American Jacob Riis

http://monovisions.com/jacob-a-riis-light-in-dark-places/

How is documentary photography related to social movements?

Documentary photography has been largely connected to two initiatives: exploration, and social justice. At times, these have intersected. Photographers like Jacob Riis brought the nighttime experiences of the urban poor to the attention of middle class citizens who may otherwise have been blind to the uncomfortable scenes of poverty and malnutrition portrayed by Riis. While there are elements of exploration in Riis's photography – Riis went to locations where men of his class generally would not venture – the intent of Riis's photos were to illuminate the suffering of the urban poor in hopes that their lives could be bettered. This tradition continued in America with the documentary photography initiative spearhead by the Farm Security Agency during the Great Depression. The Farm Security Agency hired photographers to document the plight of the rural poor in order to garner support for the "New Deal" a series of social programs launched by then president of the United States of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Dorothea Lange is one of the most well known photojournalists to be commissioned by the FSA. In addition to documenting the Depression-era she went on to document the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
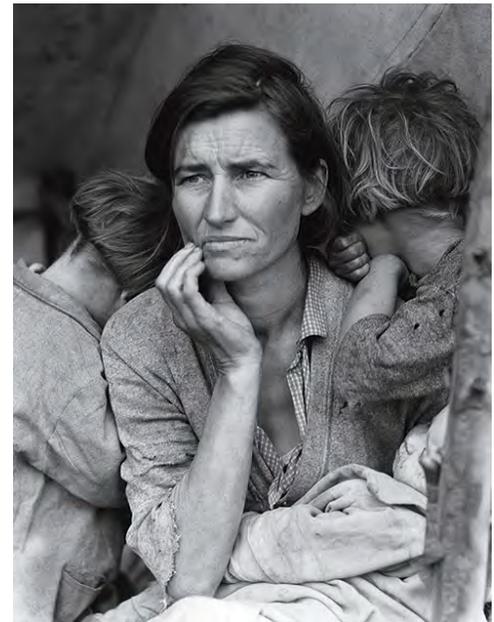
Left: "Migrant Mother", 1936 by Dorothea Lange.

Right: "Hayword, California", 1942 by Dorothea Lange.

Further curricular examples:

- o During the war in Vietnam (Nov 1, 1955 – Apr 30, 1975), photographs were a staple of the anti-war movement, demonstrating to the world the injury to civilians and the futility caused by the war. See: "Photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phuc" by American-Vietnamese photographer Nick Ut. Kim Phuc who has been a resident of Canada since 1996. (content warning for photo: Nudity, War)
- o Photo of Hector Pierson from the Soweto Uprising in apartheid-era South Africa, which engaged the world in the anti-apartheid movement. (content warning: Death)
- o The landscape photography of Ansel Adams. Through his works of expressive landscape photography, Adams sought to encourage environmental protection.

Today, documentary photography is regularly used as a means of bringing images of poverty, disease, and war from developing countries to the developed world, or across class barriers, with the intention of improving social justice.

What are the positive outcomes of documentary photography?

From its origins, documentary photography has allowed people to see events, societies, and cultures that might otherwise be hidden by distance or societal barriers. This has given people the opportunity to better understand and empathize with other cultures, and to grasp a broader sense of the variety of human experience. In some instances, it has led to audiences of documentary photography actively working to connect with or help the environments or persons portrayed in the photographs. Because of the inevitable bias with which documentary photographs are taken and viewed, perhaps documentary photography is most valuable as an archive of the past – both as an archive of the content it records and of the worldview of the photographer and the photographer's society.

What are the negative outcomes of documentary photography?

Documentary photography, from its earliest days, has typically allowed people to document the world around them, using photographic technology to investigate and record the lives of individuals from all walks of life. While documentary photography has allowed people to investigate and record the lives of people in developing countries, both photo journalism and documentary photography have skewed the narrative at times; sometimes presenting graphic or sensationalized images can exploit or represent a population negatively or in an inaccurate manner. Example: National Geographic has recently begun to investigate the racism or cultural bias present in their historic publications and in the style of their photography (link in "Resources" section). In other instances, political motivation has tried to capitalize on fears and anxieties directed towards specific groups of people through photography to create a narrative that is simply inaccurate.

The use of photographic images in the news media landscape became more commonplace with the use of digital formats that allowed us to create a social platform through the use of images that are accessible to all. However, while using photographs to convey ideas has led to massive social change and the sharing of information, it has also produced work that has skewed the public perception of the truth through omitting details or through the use of digital manipulation. In an age where photographic images are widely distributed we need to be sensitive and aware of the way in which we read photographic information and the bias involved in how and why they are produced. We will be exploring historical or archival documentary photography, which does not have as many troubling cultural effects that the advent of digital photography proposes but it is important to be aware of this historical change in the current media landscape. Consider how the image on the previous page can be read in a variety of contexts. How does public perception change the way we read this image either negatively or positively as a representation of Canadian values? Is this alternative use of the flag disrespectful or does it show how Islamic or Muslim communities are part of the 'fabric' of the nation?

How do we analyze the documentary photographs that we see online or in print?

Above: Photo taken from social media and published in the Toronto Star on December 14, 2015.

https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/12/14/q

Criteria for a evaluating or "reading" a photographic source:

1. The photograph was made by a person from the community, culture, or geographic area that it documents.

   Note: This criterion is not necessary. Sometimes an outsider can take photographs with less bias than an insider. However, there are many instances in which an insider documenting their own surroundings or community can increase insight and reduce the risk of photographic exploitation.

2. The photograph was published by or retrieved from a reliable source.
3. The photographic series contains a multi-faceted look at the human experience or landscape it portrays.
4. The photograph is captioned with an accurate date, location, and context.

Criteria for a critical viewer:

1. I understand the historic, geographic, or cultural context of the photo.
2. I understand the bias of the photographer and the publisher. Some bias is inevitable, but it is important to recognize bias.
3. I understand that this one photo cannot portray all aspects of the event, society, or landscape it documents.

Time Frame	80 minutes	Enduring Understanding	Students will...understand the historic origins of documentary photography, and be equipped with skills for analyzing documentary photo sources.
Critical Challenge		Discern the positive and negative effects of documentary photography in history and in contemporary use. Analyze documentary photographs that are seen on social media or in contemporary publications and news stories.	
Questions of Inquiry		How did documentary photography begin? How is documentary photography related to social movements? What are the positive outcomes of documentary photography? What are the negative outcomes of documentary photography? How do we analyze the documentary photographs that we see online or in print?	

Value and Attitude Outcomes	Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes	Skills and Process Outcomes
Commitment to understanding a multitude of perspectives as a viewer of photographs	Historic origins of documentary photography	Practice analyzing well known photos for narrative and bias. Practice analyzing documentary photos that found on social media.

Introductory Activity/ The Hook	1. Show students Arthur Nishimura's photographs. Explain documentary and expressive photography to students and ask which photographs could be considered documentary. Ask students why Arthur Nishimura likes to photograph small towns in Alberta. Is Arthur Nishimura more qualified than an "outsider" photographer to document these places because he comes from a small Albertan town? Show students famous documentary photographs. Ask students if they have seen the photographs before. Ask students if they can guess the context or narrative of the photo. 2. Watch: Ted Talk x: Two Views in Documentary Photography (Billy Weeks) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uecTqOVfKkk
Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	1. Explain the historic origins of documentary photography. 2. Show students a documentary photograph that relates to their curriculum. *Example:* Students studying the Social Studies 10 curriculum learn about apartheid, show Hector Pierson's photographs of the Soweto Uprising in South Africa as related content. *Example:* Students studying the Social Studies 30 curriculum learn about welfare policies in capitalist societies, and about Japanese internment during the Second World War, so the photographs taken by Dorothea Lange are related content. 3. Guide students through an analysis of the source. Discuss how the source itself meets criteria for a good source (it is okay if students find the photograph to not meet criteria), and come up with strategies for students to meet viewer criteria for the discussed photos. 4. Have students go on social media and find a documentary photograph. You can treat the definition of "documentary photograph" loosely; students can use an image from a news story, or even an image posted by a celebrity of an event. Have students who are struggling search "news" on their social media app. Students who do not have social media can pair up with a friend to analyze, or can analyze photographs in a print source like National Geographic or Time Magazine. Ask students to fill out the worksheet analyzing their photograph, then discuss with the class. If the technology is available, have students email you a link to their photo and bring the photo up on the projector of SmartBoard while they explain their analysis.

Resources	*Mystical Landscapes* Exhibition by Arthur Nishimura Dorothea Lange: http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/bios/dorothea-lange/ Jacob Riis: https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/jacob-riis?all/all/all/all/0 National Geographic Analyzes Racism in their Coverage: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/04/from-the-editor-race-racism-history/ Analysis of National Geographic: curriculuar content: Scramble for Africa, colonization https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/01/national-geographic-righting-racist-wrongs-slow-in-coming List of 10 Famous Contemporary Documentary Photographers: http://www.dewitzphotography.com/photography-product-reviews/top-10-modern-photojournalists-and-documentary-photographers/
Formative Assessment Strategies	Peers can respond to analyses presented and offer suggestions. The teacher can respond with verbal approval or verbal redirection to analyses presented.