

The Photographer's Eye

John Szarkowski

The Photographer's Eye

- No longer in print, published in 1966
- John Szarkowski was the Director of Photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art from 1962-1991
 - Personally picked by Edward Steichen to be his successor

The Photographer's Eye

- The book is an attempt to define the characteristics of photographs
 - “What photographs look like, and why they look that way.”
 - Argues the importance of looking carefully and bringing every bit of intelligence and understanding as a viewer

Photographs

- Early photographers struggled with the mechanical aspect of photography
 - Many emulated other arts such as pictorial painting
 - Henry Peach Robinson's *Fading Away*
 - *Two Ways of Life* by Oscar Rejlander





Photography Characteristics: Made vs. Taken

- Unlike paintings that were “made,” based on traditional skills and theories, photographs were selected, or “taken”
 - Photography is defined *not* by those emulating traditions of painting
 - It’s characteristics are shown in the work of those who purposely break from tradition, or who are ignorant of previous tradition

Photography: Art by the Masses

- The dry-plate process expanded the base of photographers
- Roll film made photography available to everyone
- Multitudes of photos began to be the sole influence for new photographers
 - With hand-held cameras came new points of view such as *snapshots*
 - Photography created it's own vision

5 Aspects of Photography

- The Thing Itself
- The Detail
- The Frame
- Time
- Vantage Point

The Thing Itself

- Photography deals with the actual
- Clearer, permanent version of aspects of the world
- Photograph appears true, lens is impartial, photographer's role ignored
- Reality is filtered, reduced in size, clarified or exaggerated

RP Ricci
Photography
Untitled



Eric Alan
Pritchard
Trees of Ankgor





Bryce Pincham
Dream Big

The Detail

- Isolating and documenting fragments gives details meaning and significance
- Details in photography often reveal compelling clarity
- Details relevant in photography were too ordinary to paint
- Photographs could be read as symbols



Lorne Resnick
Sisters



Amy Pollard
Market Day

The Frame

- “To quote out of context is the essence of the photographer’s craft.”
- Photographer must decide what to include and what not to include
- The frame creates new relationships between subjects in the frame by cropping
- There are an infinite number of croppings in any given situation



Yuri Dojc
O King



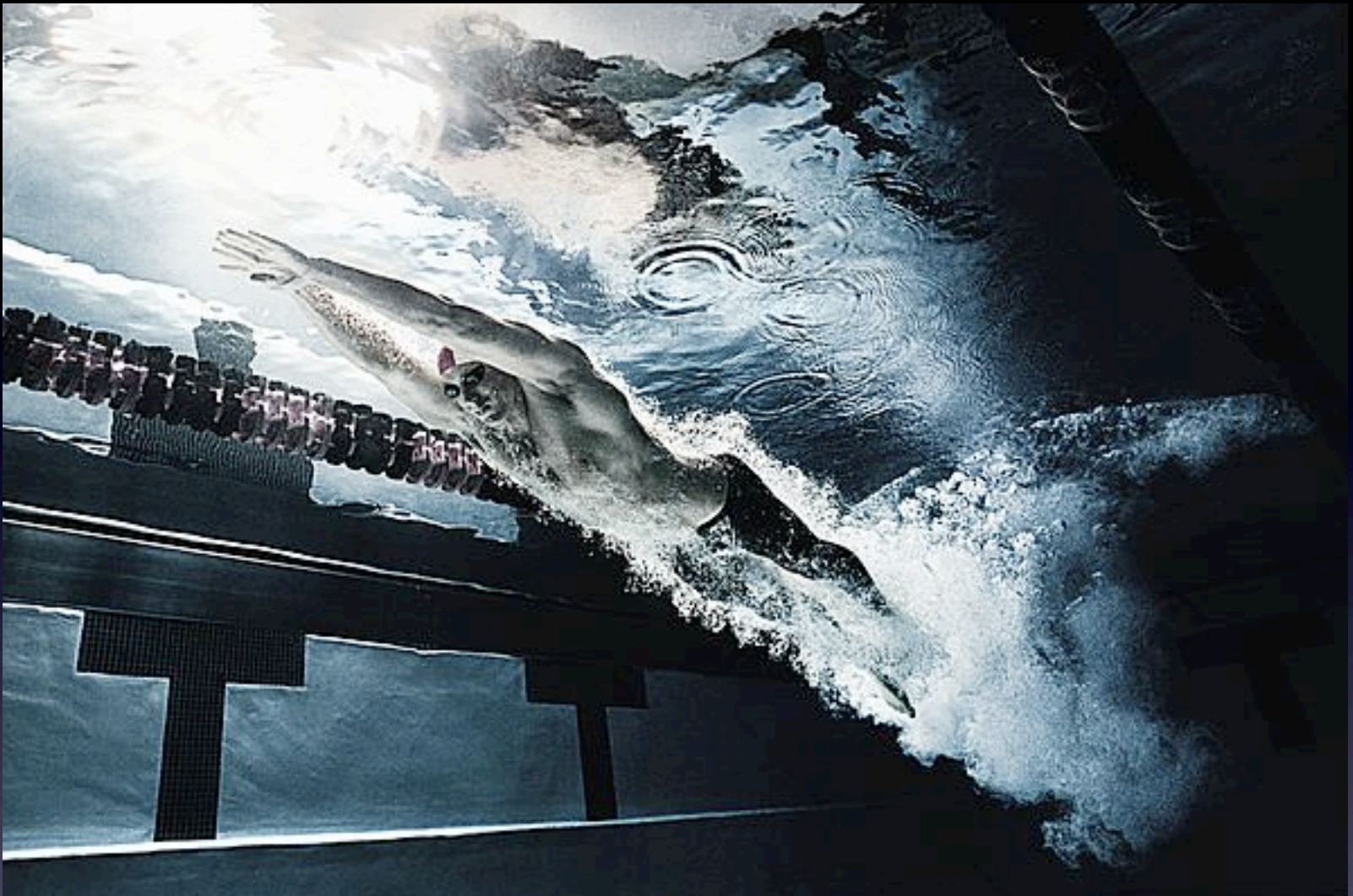
MacDuff Everton
Dawn at Taj Mahal

Time

- Photographs are a record of the *present time* of which they were taken
- Photographs are not instantaneous
 - They describe shorter or longer lengths of time
- The photographer selects a decisive moment to capture the image



Patrick Cavan Brown
Arctic Terns



Marcus Swanson
Jason Lezak

Vantage Point

Photography utilizes unusual angles of view:

- Bird's eye view
- Worm's eye view
- Foreshortening (or not)
- From the back
- Selective focus & depth-of-field
- Ambiguity, obscurity

Onne Van der Wal
*Shaman Ice and
Boots*





Summary

- 'Photographer's Eye' aspects native to Photography
 - The Thing Itself
 - The Detail
 - The Frame
 - Time
 - Vantage Point