

Making the Ordinary Extraordinary

Photography

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Photography has a tendency to feel like a passive art form. People will spend hours walking around with their camera, but never get close to and influence their subjects visually. They take whatever the world gives them, and never attempt to figure out something better. For this assignment, the subjects for your photographs are not defined, but you must interact with each one, and change how the light is falling on it. You will need to find an ordinary everyday object, and using lighting and composition; you will take it from ordinary to extraordinary.

The trick to being successful with this assignment is two-fold. First off is to find an *interesting* object. It doesn't have to be exotic or exceedingly rare, just interesting - old parts off a car, tools, old and colorful glass, a cool musical instrument, that sort of thing. Look for something that has a lot of lines, curves, or other features that will throw shadows and give the object a more interesting sense of form and space. The focus of this project is really the lighting and the composition of the object, but a good subject will start things off right.

Also, be careful how small the object is. Getting closer usually make things more interesting, but your lenses are limited as to how close they can get, so a very small object is probably not a good idea.

Here are some suggestions on how you can begin to change an ordinary photograph into something that could be called *extraordinary*...

- 1) **Move the subject:** Don't just accept the light the way it is. Begin to see what your subject *could* look like, if the light were better. Every subject will look best in a different lighting situation. So just one setup won't work for everything. This includes moving your subject to a completely different light source, closer to an existing light source, or simply turning it one way or another to change the way the light falls on the object. You can also add or subtract light using white or black cards.
- 2) **Change your POV:** Get closer. Lower the camera. Look at the subject from an angle you normally don't see it from. (Oh, by the way, POV = Point of View.)
- 3) **Change your composition:** Put your subject off-center. Use the "Rule of 3rds". Or *break* the rule of 3rds. Or come up with a rule of 5ths!
- 4) **Add a light:** Bringing in another light (even a desk lamp) to add to or change the lighting can be perfect. But watch your contrast – lights like that will fool your camera's light meter, and you'll probably overexpose the highlight areas.
- 5) **Watch your background:** Make sure the background doesn't compete with your subject. That can take an otherwise-extraordinary photograph and make it quite ordinary.