

You can learn photography by 'reading' the pictures

Did you know you can benefit from photography books without actually reading them? In fact, you can learn a lot about photography without reading a single printed word.

I'm referring to the importance of looking at photography picture books and developing the skills to "read" the photographs in them. You don't need words; you've got your mind to interpret the pictures.

Drop by your local camera shop, nearest bookstore or local library and look through the many photography books you'll find there. It doesn't matter if you prefer landscapes, street scenes, abstracts, people pictures, color or black and white.

The important thing is to start looking at pictures and to begin to understand not only what the photographer is trying to communicate but, more importantly, how he is doing it and what the picture is doing to you.

By tuning into your own emotions as you "read" a photograph, you'll gain insight and technical skills that will help you in taking your own pictures.

WHEN YOU LOOK at a photograph, begin to ask yourself some important questions.



photography

Monte Nagler

What is the subject or main theme of the picture?
Does it move you? How do you respond to it?

How do you suppose the photographer felt about it?

Study the lighting. Is it soft or harsh? What direction is it coming from and what time of day do you suppose it was?

Ask yourself also what the photo would be like if the lighting were different.

What about the camera position: near or far, low angle or high?

Why do you think the photographer chose that particular camera position and what does it do for the picture? How might a different camera location effect the photograph?

What lens do you think was used and

why? Was it a wide angle, normal or perhaps a telephoto?

As you know, a lens' focal length and aperture greatly affect depth-of-field. Is there a lot of depth-of-field or little in the picture? How would a change in depth-of-field alter the final image?

What about shutter speed — slow or fast? Is the subject blurred in movement or frozen sharp? Look for use of filters or any other special effects, too.

STUDY THE composition. How are the elements of the picture arranged?

Is the picture telling a story? If so, tune into your feelings of it. Try to interpret what the photographer was trying to say and what your responses to this message are.

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Judy Kaller's prize-winning photo, taken at Cranbrook House, shows good elements of composition. The glass doorway, windows and hanging

plant complement and frame the white chairs, which almost seem to be talking.

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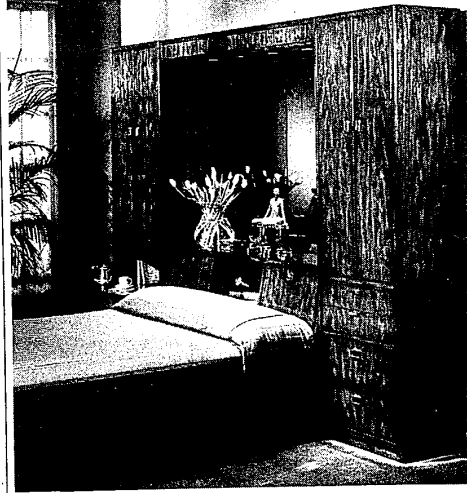
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