







Entry Information

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Title: Upward and Onward

Medium of the artwork: 2-D Photography

Research Notes

Research Problem Statement:

While I was traveling overseas, I knew I wanted to take a picture of a total stranger and somehow tell a story through that photograph with just a single camera and lens. I wanted an engaging and interesting photograph of someone that was more than just a photograph. So often people travel to new places and meet new people, but only end up taking a typical selfie and then never looking back at it again. I wanted a photo that kept people looking and that had a bit of mystery involved in order to grow my skills as a photographer and to push myself to think more creatively.

Communication Objective:

The main objective of the project was to let the color, composition, and subject matter tell a story. I decided to take a photo at the local climbing gym to capture a photo of someone climbing as I stood on the ground looking up. I wanted the color to draw the viewer in and entertain the eye. This color would also serve as a means of contrasting the fun, playful environment with the strength and determination required to conquer such a wall. The composition of the photo was important in helping illustrate the story, because I wanted the climbers to look impressive and high off the ground. I also had to overcome the challenge of making the cramped space of the gym's interior look open and large to show the expanse of the terrain, so to speak. Finally, I wanted the subject matter to be the primary solution to tell the story. I needed a skilled climber who was agile and who looked unique. I wanted the determination to show through their body language.

Visual Solution:

I started with the first photo of a girl near the top of the wall. I positioned myself so that her leg would lead up to her face and upper body. By showing the wall behind her, I was able to capture the maximum amount of light and make the route she was climbing look more interesting and more difficult. This not only helped achieve the goal of making the gym look more open, but the light also

helped aid to shadow her muscles and contrast her dark clothing against the light background of the wall. This first photo told a simple story of a girl climbing, but I felt that there was more potential to be had, so I started playing around with other ways of composing the shot.

I then captured the second photo, which has her partner looking up at her from the ground as she looks down at the placement of her foot. There is a better sense of movement, as though the image is from a story suspended in time. The slight blur of her foot, the motion of the man's hand, and the strain visible in her muscles all add to the story. Also, this time I wanted to show more of her face so I could better portray what she may be thinking and how she was overcoming the challenge set before her. I used elements such as the wall's structure to serve as a means of directing the eye. I wanted to have the eye circle from her face, down to her leg, following the line of the wall down and around to the man and then up to his face. His gaze brings it full circle. In addition to adding more leading lines for the viewer to follow, I also shifted the composition to be vertical to show how high she was in relation to the ground. Though this was certainly a more engaging shot, I wanted more drama. I also wondered what the photo might look like if I played with the lighting of the dreary and dim-lit gym.

To do this, I switched my focus to a different, more skilled couple. They were working in the more dark and cramped space of the gym. Taking what I had learned in the last photo about using leading lines and shooting low from the ground, I did the same here. I used the stripe of yellow and the dark shadows of the wall to help guide the eye. The gazes of the climbers also convey a sense of an illusionary leading line, though in this case, I cropped off where they were looking to add a sense of mystery and invite the viewer to feel curiosity. The dark lighting fading into a bright light up top helps create the sense of drama I had hoped for, because it added to the story. She looks as though she is climbing up out of a dark whole into the light, and the desperation and anticipation is more evident. The light again helps to highlight her muscles, so the viewer instantly has an appreciation for her technique and obvious skill. Yet the image is presented almost casually, with her friend simply standing with arms

crossed and leg cocked. I wanted the viewer to question whether or not she makes the next move, to question what kind of hold she has to prepare to reach for, and to even question why they do what they do. Since the viewer cannot directly see what the move is, this adds to the suspense of the photograph. Upon taking the shot, I knew I had the photograph I wanted – the photograph with a story.

How It was Produced:

While overseas, I was climbing with this couple at a little climbing gym. I had with me my FUGIFILM X-T20 camera with a 18.0-55.0 mm f/2.8-4.0 lens. I wanted the photo to not necessarily show the small cramped feeling of the gym, so I shot it so that it would open up the bottom of the frame by getting low to the ground and using the frame to crop out the lowermost corners so the eye cannot see where the walls stop. Also, by shooting from a lower angle, this helped create the illusion of more space as well as play into the story of the climbers climbing upward from the known into the unknown. The idea of shooting the final piece sideways played into the idea of creating mystery around what hold she is going for and where the climbers are both looking. I used a 3.7 aperture, 1/60 exposure time, with a 6,400 to account for the poor lighting in the gym and the fact that I was taking the photo hand held. I used a focal length of 35.8 mm to give the illusion that the viewer is peering into the scene from a distance but still lend the photo to having enough detail and depth desired.