Visual Literacy: What's in the Frame?

A GUIDE FOR VISUAL ARTISTS

by
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What is Visual Literacy?

Visual literacy is the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of literacy which commonly signifies interpretation of a written or printed text.

You might know visual literacy by its other name:

"Quick! I have to take a pic of my art for social media!"

Fun Facts About Visual Literacy in Marketing

•60% of all learners are visual learners, which doesn't mean that they don't read or learn from text, but rather that they gain the most meaning from visual content.

•Most people only read 20-28% of the words on the page.

•**Click here** for a total of 29, not just fun, but what I call *uber essential facts* about visual marketing. You can't leave home until you've packed these essentials first.

Some Common Places for Images

- Social media content; profiles
- Reviews: put a face to the quote whenever possible. Curate 3-5 of your most meaningful (and specific) reviews with a great quality, smiling/happy/joyful photo of the reviewer, with or without the product they purchases.
- Websites; show varied views as the storyteller of your product
- Business cards and other collateral
- Email account profiles and signature lines

5 Ways to Elevate Meaning in Your Photos

- Tell a story in a progression using images
- Deconstruct the process and ideas behind your products and explain in images
- Bring your products to life by placing them in unusual & engaging settings
- Place other objects in the scene to compliment, create narrative, and show scale
- Create visual interests by pairing products/services with objects that are similar in shape, color, or size, texture, etc (combine any of the elements of art & principles of design). Showing similarities, contrasts, and differences are all ways to create interest.

Techniques for Presenting Better Image Content

- **Directional text and text emphasis:** present text in order of importance from to left to right, top to bottom, also via color, and varying font sizes/styles (tread lightly on font style variation). Think UP…an upward slant for a line of text is more engaging than a downward point or slant.
- **Off center focal points**
- **Lines of perspective** that lead our eye to the main subject or to an interesting area
- **The power of two:** two unlike objects placed together to generate a compare and contrast, which may not always create a complement between the two objects
- **The power of three:** three unlike objects placed together to generate a visual relationship between the likeness of two or more, which may cause one to stand out. When placed in a vertical or horizontal arrangement, the center object is typically a feature, so you can use this to your advantage.
- **Overlaying text** onto an image, using different fonts and font sizes to draw attention to key words or phrases
- **Lighting:** use dramatic lighting, convert to black and white, and natural lighting
- **Perspective change**: mix it up, changing the viewer's perspective from traditional or anticipated to unusual and surprising. Ex; foreground, background, planes, depth of field interest, aerial perspective, etc. Think bird's eye views, and worm's eye views.
- **Micro, macro views.** Micro: the big picture. The **difference** is simply **in the** words. "**Macro**" refers to something large, where "**micro**" means small. This photography style lets the subject fill all or most of the frame so that you can get an incredible amount of detail. In other words, you'd get a "**macro**" shot of a "**micro**" object when you zoom in on the detail to show texture and detail.
- **Arrangement of objects:** place objects in pattern like designs and arrange to form interesting shapes.
- **Multiplicity and volume:** show multiples of the same object arranged in an interesting way or multiple, or objects that are related but not the same

Take a peek at the following images for reference of techniques…….

IMAGE OF ART PRODUCTS BY <u>THE ART OF KEVIN PEDDICORD</u>, PHOTOGRAPHED BY <u>THEA FOTIU HOWELL</u> TO SHOW NARRATIVE AND SCALE OF OBJECTS

IMAGE OF ART PRODUCTS BY <u>THE ART OF KEVIN PEDDICORD,</u> PHOTOGRAPHED BY <u>THEA FOTIU HOWELL</u> TO SHOW DRAMATIC LIGHTING

IMAGE OF ART PRODUCTS BY <u>THE ART OF KEVIN PEDDICORD</u>, PHOTOGRAPHED BY <u>THEA FOTIU HOWELL</u> TO SHOW DEPTH, VARIED PERSPECTIVE, AND OBJECT NARRATIVE

Big No-No's

- Introducing unusual terminology or phrasing in an image or text without further explanation in an image or text
- Promos that don't lead to the details of who/what/where/when/why. Be sure to provide info on how to acquire the product or service and important details.
- Poor quality images- blurriness, visual obstructions caused by overlapping objects, lighting, etc.
- Subject matter in the frame that isn't related to you or your product.
- Improperly cropped images.
- Stock photos that look like stock photos.
- Stock photos in place of your actual products and materials.
- Stock photos that don't represent your product, the people who use them, or the ideas behind your brand (your brand).
- Stock photos in general. I don't recommend them, especially for creatives…(can you tell?) … But, if you must… I've listed some sources at the end of this doc.
- Images that don't focus on the main subject due to other visual distractions.
- Illegible text that is obstructed by background imagery, too light of a contrast, too small of a font size, or too complicated of a font style

Additional Resource Links

Visual Thinking Strategies- in teaching and conversation about art: https://vtshome.org/

Etsy's Seller's Handbook has many great articles in the "Photography" section, including this one: 7 Essential Types of Product Photos

Stock photos: Unsplash and Pexels are two of many sites with modern, authentic looking photography.

These are just a few of many, many, many… ask me for me for more or follow on FB