PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE WORLD WE LIVE

Photography Students from the University of the Sunshine Coast were asked to recreate the styles and perspectives of well-known painters or photographers. By re-creating and analysing the works of past-masters, the students establish criteria to decode a photograph or painting, examine techniques used to produce a work of art and can also question the truth behind the image. ‘The essence of photography is history. We press the shutter in the present, and the image recorded instantly becomes the past’ (Stone 2011).

For this project, the idea was for students to take iconic images of the past and revisit them, retaining certain key elements such as composition, feeling, and lighting but making them modern, fresh, and new, while paying respect to the originals. Through this method students can develop an immense understanding through exposure to lives and styles beyond their own, where the narrative of history offers the reflection and perspective of art as they develop their own unique styles. The project enhances for the student artist-photographer enlightenment of their own emerging style by providing context and a foundation for the development of their style. The historical context of past lessons and anecdotes can present themselves as influences within the student work. ‘When we study and contemplate the images of the past we’ll instinctually add context to our own work’.

‘Photography today has become commonplace, and the medium continues to evolve and reinvent itself, as we, the artist-photographer, must too. However in studying the past, we find that present struggles strangely mirror the photographic quandaries of yesterday … In photography, as in life, we build on the foundation of what has come before and we owe a debt of gratitude to pioneers of our field’ (Stone 2011).

References

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Dr Debra Livingston teaches photography and graphic design at the University of the Sunshine Coast and was recently selected as a finalist in the 2016 HeadOn Portrait award, Sydney, exhibited in Sydney, New York and India.

Jaclyn Crane (below) chose to reproduce Max Dupain’s The Sunbaker (1937). Max Dupain was a renowned Australian modernist photographer. His work is currently displayed in the National Gallery of Australia. The Sunbaker is a portrait of one of Dupain’s close friends and is widely considered his most famous image.