Meghan Cappel

Professor Knippling

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It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The work of a professional photographer is proof that this is true. The photographer goes through a certain process to attain the end product. Through the use of color, the photographer directs the viewer’s eyes to the subject. Choice of subject matter and placement in the picture is vital to conveying the photographer’s message. In Kate Holub’s image, “A Celebration of Generations,” the color scheme, choice of subject matter, and subject placement assist the viewer in analyzing the image to better communicate the message of generational love and support.

Initially, the photographer chooses a color scheme to enhance the mood of the picture and help communicate its message. A black-and-white color scheme gives the picture a sense of timelessness. The black and white color scheme of the photo allows the viewer to better analyze the picture. The black background is clean and uncluttered. The viewer’s eye is forced to focus directly on the hands because there are no distractions in the background. The hands of the subjects are different shades of gray. These grayscale variations highlight the physical details of each model and allow for a range of image interpretations. An establishment of this color scheme is the first step in conveying the deeper message of the photo.

The second step of the process, selection of subject matter, is vital for communicating the photographer’s desired message. Ms. Holub’s uses hands as the subject matter. Hands are common images that are frequently associated with genealogy and family bonds. The grandmother, being the matriarch of the family, has the largest hand. The grandmother has old, wrinkled hands which signify years of hard work. Her swollen knuckles indicate the onset of arthritis, and the dark spots on her hands are a sign of aging. While her hands have matured, the grandmother’s nails are well-manicured. Likely retired, she has more free-time to spend on her outward appearance. The grandmother cares about herself and her well-being. She is trying to stave off the aging process. Her outward appearance is very important to her. Although the grandmother’s hands appear wrinkled and worn, they are well maintained and hold the spirit of family.

The second hand is medium-sized and belongs to the young mother. The mother’s hands are beginning to mature. She has thin wrists and fingers, and her protruding veins show her strength. She is very active in her role as a mother. Although her nails are not manicured, they are neatly trimmed. This indicates that the woman has very little free time, and she is living on a tighter budget. She is confident in herself, and she lets her natural beauty show. She is an active, practical, loving mother.

The smallest hand represents the young child. She is playful and has a youthful innocence. The girl has carefully filed fingernails which show her family’s concern for her safety. She is unassuming, unblemished, and natural. Her hands are very chubby, indicating she has a good life where she is cared for and well fed. There are no signs of stress or uncertainty. As a young child, she is carefree. The baby brings a youthful innocence to the family and provides comic relief in times of distress. In the photographic process, the representation of multi-generational hands helps in the communication of the photographer’s message.

The final step of the process of conveying the photographer’s message is subject placement in the image. Examining the placement of each hand is crucial to gaining a deeper insight into the photograph. “A Celebration of Generations” is a close-up of the hands. This technique emphasizes the importance of the subject matter in conveying the photographer’s message. The photo is taken at a level angle which indicates that all subjects are equal in importance in the image. The child’s hand is placed on top because she is currently the center of the family’s attention. The child is holding her mother’s pointer finger, as she looks for direction, love, and nurturing. The grandmother’s hand is placed in the middle as a symbol of her connection with both generations. She longs to be involved with both younger generations. The young mother’s hand is at the bottom indicating she is the support structure for her mother and her child. She is willing to care for all members of her family because her love is so strong. This image shows the unconditional love between the age groups. The three generations place complete trust in each other. The hands are relaxed to demonstrate comfort and mutual respect. Each generation is willing to assist the other. Through carefully planned placement of the hands, the photographer’s message of generational love and mutual respect is effectively communicated.

Every photographer works through a methodical process in order to accomplish a desired result. The chosen black and white color scheme sets the tone of timelessness for the picture and allows the viewer to focus directly on the subject. The careful choice of the subjects’ hands and their placement in the picture are vital to the effective portrayal of the photographer’s message. Alex Haley, the famous author of *Roots*, once said, “In every conceivable manner, the family is our link to our past, bridge to our future.” This is the message that the photographer wants to delivery with her picture. Through the use of color scheme, choice of subject matter, and subject placement, Ms. Holub successfully communicates the message of generational love and continual support in her photograph, “A Celebration of Generations.”

Works Cited

"Alex Haley Quotes." *Find the Famous Quotes You Need, ThinkExist.com Quotations.*Web. 10 Nov. 2011. <http://thinkexist.com/quotation/in\_every\_conceivable\_manner-the\_family\_is\_link\_to/338986.html>.

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