Topic Identification:

Fine Art Photography

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My main area of interest for my Senior Studio project is fine art photography, with a focus on creating intentional and visually constructed photographs that combine photography, styling, costume, lighting, and storytelling. I am interested in photography as more than a way of documenting what is in front of the camera. I want to explore how I can use the camera to create an image that communicates an idea, feeling, or story. I enjoy photography that has a strong sense of atmosphere and composition and makes the viewer spend time looking at the image. My interest in fine art photography has developed through my own work with nature, animals, landscapes, portraits, and different forms of photography. I am also interested in fashion and costume and how clothing can change the identity, time period, or story represented in a photograph. Which can also have a big influence in the field of fine art photography.

Another direction I am considering is exploring the concept of time through photography. I own and have access to a variety of cameras, including older film cameras and newer digital cameras, and I am interested in using those cameras as part of the creative process rather than simply displaying them. I could use different cameras and photographic processes to create different bodies of work or explore how the camera and its technology affect the final image.

I am still considering the exact direction my project will take, including possibilities such as fantasy, Western-inspired photography, historical imagery, fashion, and other forms of fine art photography. What interests me most is having the freedom to experiment and find a visual direction that feels like my own as well as combine the different aspects and types in fine art photography. Fine art photography encompasses a wide variety of photography styles and sub-genre, which enables the photographer to create artworks with the camera instead of merely documenting her surroundings. Fine art photographers can set up scenes, manipulate with lighting, add costumes and props to photographs, alter photographs digitally, and build different environments. This is appealing to me, because it's a way of getting more control of the final images as well as a way to communicate ideas that perhaps couldn't be expressed through standard descriptive, documentary photography.

One of the photographers that has had a huge influence on what I want to look at is Candice Ghai. I am doing an internship with Candice and have been able to experience her creative process a little closer. Her styling, lighting, atmosphere, storytelling, has influenced what type of photography I want to create because I think that is what is most important. When I observe how the photograph is planned and constructed, and its end result reminds me of a painting or a scene from a story, I gain insight into that. Her work will have influence and inspiration in my Senior Studio project, not only will I be studying her at a distance, but I am influenced by her work all the time. This is a process I'm learning first hand behind the scenes of creating this type of photography.

Another photographer whose work relates to the direction I'd like to explore is Natalia Le Fay. I am interested in exploring her work. She uses fantasy, styling, atmosphere, and carefully

constructed visual environments throughout her photography. I am interested in how her photographs create a sense of another world while still using recognizable photographic elements. Her work demonstrates how costumes, locations, lighting, and post-production can work together to create a strong visual identity.

Dani Venen is also an important reference for my research. I am interested in the way her photography combines fashion, fantasy, dramatic styling, and fine art elements. Her work shows how photography can become highly constructed while still maintaining a photographic quality. I am particularly interested in the relationship between the subject, costume, environment, and lighting in this type of work. These elements can transform a photograph from a simple portrait into an image that communicates a larger story or idea.

The work of these photographers gives me a starting point for understanding how I want my own photography to develop. While their work is an important influence, I do not want to simply reproduce their styles. I want to identify the elements that interest me and use them to develop my own visual language. Some of the subjects I would like to examine and investigate include dramatic lighting, different environments, the style and form of carefully selected costumes, nature, symbolism, and painterly compositions.

I also have an interest in the connection between photography and painting. Often the same elements that make a successful painting successful can be used for photography such as composition, color, lighting, texture, symbolism and mood. One of the things that I love about photography is that I'm able to make the image as realistic as possible and still use imagination to build or modify what could be included in that image as we are gauging. Digital editing takes this one step further, as I can mix photos, alter environments, manipulate colors and create imagery that doesn't have to occur in the real world!

Fine art photography is my favorite genre in photography, because I can make images that aren't so realistic. I like attractive pictures that stimulate the imagination of the viewer as to what may have happened. Great images can present a compelling idea, but not always. I don't want to go and do something which is only aesthetically appealing. I want to use visual components to enhance a story, feeling or idea. My internship with Candice Ghai has also brought me insight on the significance of planning and intentionality when creating this type of work. For myself, I'm going to merge the realism of photography and the imagination and control of painting. I would like to make staged and constructed images using Nature, Styling, Lighting and Digital manipulation to convey ideas and stories. My intention with the process is to create a body of work that will be both my own and one that will allow me to expand my photographic skillset while retaining the best of my influences.

I believe that fine art photography is strongest when the visual elements of an image have a purpose beyond simply making the photograph look beautiful. While I appreciate highly styled and digitally manipulated photography, I think there is a risk of focusing so much on aesthetics

that the meaning or story behind the image becomes less important. For my Senior Studio, I want to challenge myself to create work where the styling, costumes, lighting, setting, camera choice, and editing all contribute to the idea behind the photograph. I want the viewer to be interested in the image visually, but I also want them to question what they are seeing and create their own interpretation of the story or meaning. I see my role as a photographer as more than capturing an image. I want to construct an experience for the viewer and use photography as a way to explore ideas that cannot always be communicated through documentary photography. Through this project, I hope to find a balance between technical skill, visual beauty, and meaningful artistic expression while developing a style that is distinctly my own.

My Examples:

(All Images included as examples are taken by; Celina-M. Kuehne)











