Photography Enrichment

Lesson 2 : Keeping it Simple.

In the last lesson we looked at two photographers. They had very different approaches to the subject, but they had one important thing in common; they developed simple ideas until they were very, very good at them and developed a distinctive style of their own.

This is a very important concept to get hold of. If you want to be good you need to stand out, but the vast majority of those who do stand out actually do something that looks simple. The reason they stand out is that they're very good at what they do.

Today we're looking at a contemporary artist who applies a simple idea to great effect. What I particularly like about his work is that he uses very simple equipment—but with a brilliant idea.

Slikachu

Quote from Slikachu.com. "My 'Little People Project' started in 2006. It involves the remodelling and painting of miniature model train set characters, which I then place and leave on the street. It is both a street art installation project and a photography project. The street-based side of my work plays with the notion of surprise and I aim to encourage city-dwellers to be more aware of their surroundings. The scenes I set up, more evident through the photography, and the titles I give these scenes aim to reflect the loneliness and melancholy of living in a big city, almost being lost and overwhelmed. But underneath this, there is always some humour. I want people to be able to empathise with the tiny people in my works."

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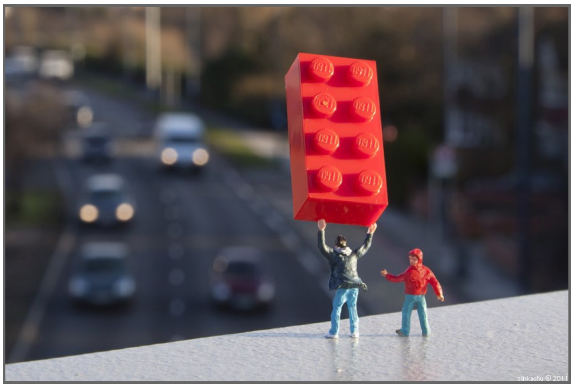
Slinkachu examples



Having researched Slinkachu for your sketchbook (remembering to annotate the photos), the next step is to use this as a step to developing your own ideas.

I used the idea of 'little people', combined with Michals' ideas about annotating photos, to produce my own works.

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My 'Small voices of protest' project

Small voices of protest # 1

Small voices of protest # 2

Small voices of protest # 3

Small voices of protest # 4

Small voices of protest # 5

Assignment.

Try this yourself. Get some small figures and photograph them in different (and incongruous) settings.

Sketchbook Guide.

For your sketchbook, you should have the following:
Annotated photographs by the artist.
Biographical notes about the artist.
Development ideas to pursue.
Examples of how you have developed the ideas (annotated).
Examples of final pieces inspired by this artist's work.

Photography Enrichment

Lesson 2 : Keeping it (not so) Simple. The Technical Stuff.

The Aperture.
The Aperture of a lens allows light to get into the camera. It is expressed in 'f-stops'. The maximum aperture of a lens is it's focal length divided by it's internal diameter. A 50mm lens with an internal diameter of 25mm would have an aperture of (50/25) f2.

The numbering system of lens' looks a bit strange. This is why. To cut down the light entering by 50% we do not reduce the diameter of the aperture by 2, but by the square root of 2 (roughly 1.4).

So for the example of a 50mm/f2 lens the diameter needs to be reduced from 25mm to 17.8mm to cut the light by 50%. That is the same as 50mm/2.8. To halve the light again, we need to divide 50mm by 4, and so on.

The sequence we get goes something like this. (Starting at f1)

1, 1.4, 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16, 22, 32, 44, 64, … each letting through half the light of the previous number.

So, the higher the number, the less light enters the camera. Got it?

However, ….

To let in half the light and keep the correct exposure, I need to double the time the shutter is opened for—which can lead to problems. So why bother?

Photography Enrichment

Lesson 2 : Keeping it (not so) Simple. The Technical Stuff.

The Aperture (continued).

Control of the aperture is essential to control of how much of the photograph is in apparent focus.

f—stops 1, 1.4, 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16, 22, 32, 44, 64,

Going back to the Playmobil figures.

Each of these images were taken with a 200mm lens, in Aperture Priority.

The top image was at f5.6, the second at f11, and the third at f22.

In each case the point of focus was on the nearest figure (actually, there are good arguments for not doing this, but hyperfocal distance is for another day).

As the aperture decreases (number increases, remember), the amount that appears to be in focus increases.

This can be very useful for landscapes, but you will find yourself needing a tripod to hold the camera steady very soon.

Assignment.

Try this for yourself and put the results in your sketchbook.

Sketchbook Guide.

Write up an explanation of f-stops in your own words.