

Part 1:

Many 16th century “Renaissance” painters created marvelous paintings of common objects such as flowers, fruits, vegetables, books, jars, shells, jewelry, etc. In Holland especially, some artist’s work approached photo-realism in its execution. That is, the paintings looked perfect, as if photographed. Indeed, some of the paintings were “helped along” with the use of the camera obscura. Whereas some artists were actually quite talented and had no need for the camera obscura, other artists were fine technicians, tracing the image the camera provided with great skill. Both the artists and technicians were kept very busy to fill the consumer’s appetite for this type of painting called *Still Life*.

The important consumers were wealthy merchants (Holland basically controlled all sea trade at the time). The merchants commissioned still life paintings of their personal belongings and prized collections, often of rather exotic things found when traveling and trading throughout the world, so that they could show off what they had. The symbolism of an object was sometimes considered when deciding where to place it in the composition or to leave it out entirely (to be used in another composition where it would fit in better). The Dutch middle class, also having expendable money, and not wanting to be outdone, clamored for still life paintings of their own. These were invariably done using the more inexpensive camera obscura method. Finally, the masses caught on to the “fad” but, they could only afford to buy cheap prints, maybe of some famous gentleman’s collection, or a generic composition.

Google **Dutch Still Life Paintings** to see images.

Photograph a still life of the things around you. Maybe the objects have meaning, maybe not. Be considerate of the light they are in - how it creates form using shadows and highlights.

Part 2:

Buildings are photographed every day, some much more than others (for rather obvious reasons). But what sets apart the “interesting” photo from the “plain?” It’s simply a matter of taking the time to find an angle of view (a perspective) that makes the composition pop - to take the geometry of the building, its lines, shapes and forms and arrange them in a way that’s visually strong. Often there’s a time of day, or season even, that casts a dramatic light on the subject. Noticing this, or waiting for it to happen (shooting at sunset, for example) can make all the difference in your shots. If you are shooting interiors the light will also play a big role - often interiors are lit artificially, with lighting equipment brought in for the shoot. But, like outside, natural light can and does stream in at different angles with varying intensity throughout the day.

Architecture Photograph: Shoot a building, or part of a building, or interior of a building that you find interesting. Consider its relationship to the surroundings (or not). Create or look for drama, and geometry in your compositions, using lines, shapes, textures, forms, and light.

Photography appears to be a simple matter, but it demands powers of concentration combined with mental enthusiasm and discipline.

- Henri Cartier-Bresson