

PHOTO ESSAY

A photo essay is a form of visual storytelling using a series of photographs. The power should be in the images, though text captions can be added.

TYPES OF PHOTO ESSAY

A SIMPLE SERIES

each image has something unique, unifying quality that makes the viewer want to see more. Eg Kate Kirkwood Cow Spines.

HIGHLIGHT PHOTO ESSAYS

journalistic and centres on an interesting event. Focus on key characters and stages that may or may not be in linear sequence.

TIME-SEQUENCE PHOTO ESSAYS

an event, a series of events, a process, a 'day in the life of', a journey.

LOCATION PHOTO ESSAYS

can be thematic or linear eg a walk, a typology, presenting different perspectives or points of view.

IDEA PHOTO ESSAYS

a series of photos around a more abstract idea. This is more difficult to sequence.

DECISION STAGES

WHAT IS THE CONCEPT?

write this in one sentence.

LINEAR SEQUENCE: IMAGE SELECTION

First edits: narrow down to 100 shots. It is more important that these should work in the context of your essay rather than being the best images. Print these out and experiment with different sequences.

Second edit: 20 images. Again experiment with different sequencing.

Final edit 10-15. Be ruthless, make sure you are aware of the implications of each image and do not duplicate information.

CREATING A SERIES

- lead photo: needs to be a strong image in terms of composition because it is the shot that will 'sell the story' and draw the reader in.
- scene-setting shot: shows where the story is and the main characters and other core elements.
- sequential shots: form the main core of the story. These do not necessarily have to be in time sequence.
- portrait shots: portraits of individuals and groups important to the story – mix of posed and candid shots. Or environmental shots.
- panoramic shots: with context shots stitched together
- interactive shots: include incidental information and broadens the understanding of the story.
- detail shots: close-up shots that help to round things out and add drama.
- summing up shot: pulls things together and shows the final result. Not necessarily the most important shot, but it needs to be clear.
- concluding shot: an image that says definitively 'the end!'