

advanced photo assignment brainstorming list

camouflage

Take series of photos where the subject blends in with the background. A white dog against a snowy ground, someone wearing a green floral print standing in front of green foliage, a blue car parked in front of a blue building. If you keep your eyes peeled and always have your camera you might get lucky, but you should also set up some clever shots of your own. For example, a guy wearing a blue shirt and tan pants standing in front of a beach, and you take the photo so the line where the sand meets the water lines up with where his pants meet his shirt. Get creative.

plethora photo

Create series of photos where the subjects are non-everyday-arrangements of multiple everyday objects that create some sort of sculpture or unified whole. A bunch of lipstick tubes arranged to form a pair of lips; a bag of clothes pins clipped to each other creating some crazy form; dozens of shoes piled into a pyramid and shot from an ant's eye perspective; etc. Your penny/change collection in a random pile would not work: your penny collection laid out to form a portrait of Abraham Lincoln would be better. A photograph of a lawn (a plethora of grass), the leaves on a tree, a sand or pebble beach, a bunch of parked shopping carts, or other everyday arrangements of objects might hold some interest for one reason or another (it's not impossible), but for this assignment, seek to create something less usual. Fallen leaves arranged in a square around a bare tree, sand combed into an interesting grid and side-lit, broken parts arranged into an image, etc. Investigate the work of Andy Goldsworthy and Wayne Thiebaud for starters.

levitation

Make people and things appear to float by using a tripod, taking and then combining multiple images. For example, with your camera locked down on a tripod, take one photo of a background. Without moving the camera, add a person standing on a stool in front of the background, then take another photo. In Photoshop, place the photo with the person on a layer over the background image, then simply erase the stool in the person photo so that only the empty background shows from the layer underneath. Endless possibilities (and clichés) are possible doing this, check the internet for cheesy ideas, things to avoid and maybe a spark of inspiration.

real-world photo of/within a photo (Droste effect)

Take a photo, print it out, take another photo with the first one in it, print that out, repeat as needed. The interest could be in creating that infinite wormhole of recursive images, or in how a printed out image contrasts or plays with its surroundings.

indirect self portrait

Create a series of self portraits without being directly in the photograph.

- Using shadows: You can place and photograph your shadow as it falls on the ground, on furniture, buildings, other people, etc. With outdoor light behind you, you can photograph a glass window and see the reflected outside world in the glass and what is behind the glass in your shadow.
- Using reflections: You can photograph your reflection in unusual reflective surfaces - window displays, polished walls, etc.
- Using objects and settings: Photograph the spaces and things (your messy bedroom, your shrine to Justin Bieber, the apparel and appurtenances of your sports and hobbies, etc.) that speak to who you are.

See Vivian Maier's self portraits.

double exposures

Double exposures are combinations of two or more photos taken or stacked on top of each other. Traditionally, when done with film, the lighter parts of each image will be visible through the darker parts of the other image. For example, you could take a picture of a jar of black ink against a light background, and another picture white seagulls flying in a gray sky. When combined, you would have a jar full of seagulls. There are two ways to do this: "in camera" and when editing and printing. In camera means you take two+ exposures without advancing the film,

or your digital camera records both images together (check your camera manual to see if yours can do this), and all the magic is done when taking the images (arguably cooler). A more versatile method is combining two or more negatives in an enlarger or two or more photos in Photoshop - this allows you to use all your images as puzzle pieces to create new things with. See the work of Jerry Uelsmann, Dan Mountford, Fontas Nicolas, Harry Callahan, Ray K Metzker, and others.

printing on alternate materials

Instead of printing or sensitizing plain paper, you could try using newspaper, book pages, charts, maps, graphs, journal pages, old homework, poems or lyrics (your own), graph paper, letters from friends/family, diagrams, doodles, etc. etc. Ideally, the thing you are printing on relates visually and/or meaningfully to the picture you are printing so the combination forms a pleasing whole.

altering prints

You could also start with a print (on drawing paper, on watercolor paper, on photo paper - whatever fits your idea) and then add to it by drawing, painting, cutting, burning, folding, weaving, stitching, etc.

collage - see the work of Peter Beard, off the top of my head

cyanotypes

van dyke brown prints

wetplate (tintype and ambrotype) photography

documentary

diptych, triptych, multiple image story

image + text

large format film

Learn to use large format or view camera to shoot film with. I have some 4x5 and even a couple 8x10 cameras for studio use and for checking out if you pay your dues and know your stuff.

independent work in studio lighting

high dynamic range (HDR) photography

time lapses

creative darkroom printing - altering film or prints or using non-standard materials and processes to add creativity to images.

The Photographer's Playbook - a good resource for assignment ideas, pick one and go.