"Reaching a 'creative' state of mind through positive action is considered preferable to waiting for 'inspiration'."
Minor White

"Not that it's difficult to photograph mundane things, but it's difficult to see them as significant. ... The hard thing to do of course is to find a way to photograph a mundane subject or a mundane event in a way that makes it exciting."
Brooks Jensen

Paper, Egg & Still Life Assignment

- Your goal is to apply IMAGINATION, EXPERIMENTATION, LIGHTING, and composition to make an engaging photo using mundane objects - eggs & paper - for the subject. For still lifes, you should also apply some KNOWLEDGE OF ART HISTORY and SYMBOLISM.

- Photograph from multiple angles and think about what camera settings and lighting might make your vision stand out. Shoot a minimum of 24 exposures <u>outside of school</u> each week for an average score. More is better.

- Get rid of everything in the background you do not want. Move things, or move to a location with a suitable background and light.

- Use a low ISO and a tripod or some other way to brace your camera when photographing. The technical quality of the image should be as high as possible.

Paper things to try
- **Required** - at least a couple dozen shots of plain white paper on a plain white background. You can only vary the paper's form, texture, placement, the nature of the white background, the lighting, and the camera position and settings.

- Materials - plain copy paper, art paper, notebook paper, newspaper, paper bags, old books and magazines, maps, receipts, old homework and assignments/handouts, toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, etc.

- Alter the paper - cut, fold, bend, rip, wrinkle, wad, pierce, curl, spiral, tie, staple, clip, tape, burn, wet, mark on, write on, spill on, smear, stain, abrade, frottage

- Size & Placement - stack paper, lean paper, cover things with paper, make paper fill the photo and seem huge; bury, throw, float, drop, wash, hang, balance; juxtapose paper in an interesting way with something else

- Use - as a screen (think shadow puppetry with light projected from behind, or movie screen with light projected from in front), as a backdrop, as a "flag" (something that throws a shadow), as a frame or border, as a container, as a mask

- **Light** - front light it, side light it, back light it, top light it, bottom light it

Avoid paper clichés – hearts, paper airplanes, cranes, boats, hats, cut-out cutesy stuff, burning paper (burnt can be okay), etc.

Egg things to try
- **Required** - at least a couple dozen shots of a plain unbroken and unmarked egg on a plain white background. You can only vary the egg's placement, the nature of the white background, the lighting, and the camera position and settings.

Avoid egg clichés - drawing cartoon faces on eggs, balancing them between forks, etc.

Still Lifes

- Use NATURAL LIGHT FROM A WINDOW OR DOORWAY as the main light source for at least half of your photos. Directional light from a phone/flashlight/clamp light or other light that you can move can work, but pay attention! Avoid creating super-bright blown out areas. Use paper or fabric to diffuse harsh light. Use something white (paper, cardboard, fabric, etc.) to reflect light back into shadows if desired, or something black to darken the background or shadows.

- Compose at least four different still lifes and shoot them from multiple angles, vary the lighting, etc. More will give you more of a chance to develop your skills and increase your chance of getting good photos.

- Compose objects in different layers - some in front, some in the middle, some in back - build up depth

- At least one of your still lifes should be a vanitas (see below) and make use of symbolism

Types of traditional still lifes
- Flower arrangements, banquet arrangements, breakfast arrangements (Ontbijtjes)
- **Xenia** - edible items representing offerings from the host to guests (a motif from Roman mosaics)
- **Natura mortem** (dead nature) - game animals taken in a hunt, also a way to study/show animals and anatomy
- Arrangements tied and tacked up on a wall board
- **Pronkstilleven** (Dutch for 'ostentatious still life') - depict an abundance of objects, fruits, flowers, dead game, often together with living people and animals
- **Vanitas** (warnings against vanity) - arrangements of riches/goods that also included symbolic elements reminding of the brevity of life and earthly pleasures - skulls and bones; burning or snuffed out candles, matches, cigarettes in ashtrays; hour glasses and other time pieces; fruits or flowers that have faded or partially spoiled; flies, hornets, butterflies and caterpillars, dragonflies, spiders; etc.

Things:
- Unprepared foods and pantry items, preserves, wine & drink bottles, eggs and eggshells, breads and baked goods
- Kitchen utensils, pots and pans, tableware, serving ware - things related to food preparation, serving and dining
- Musical instruments and sheet music, books, globes, letters, writing implements, chess boards and game pieces
- Shells, mineral specimens, other natural specimens, mementos, collections
- Fabrics and furs - lace, velvet, satin, sheets and blankets, towels, linens
- Scientific instruments
- Tools, garden tools and pots, weapons
- Boots and shoes, gloves, hats, luggage, ribbons and ties, masks, canes
- Antique items including furniture, things with history/that show age

Settings, backdrops, things to set items on:
- Kitchens, dining room tables, sideboards, countertops, desks, fireplace mantels, workbenches & workshops, hothouses & garden sheds, labs, art studios, bedrooms, blank walls, corkboards, chalkboards, pegboards, window sills
- Cutting boards, bowls and baskets tilted over/on their sides, pails and colanders
- Wooden boards and planks, floor tiles, pieces of stone, pieces of glass and mirrors

AVOID:
- Bedsheets draped right under and behind your arrangement. Try to either use fabrics that fit the scene (tablecloths for food and tables, curtains and drapes for walls, etc.) or have the fabric back far enough that it can be dropped out of focus and just provide a smooth tone.
- Carpeted floors and beds as backdrops (unless it works/makes sense)
- Putting things in places that don't fit or make visual or common sense - for example, food on the floor without some context as to why it's there. Your arrangements should look cool and create a bit of story or mood, not unintentional confusion and the look of you didn't bother to create a real photo, just something to kinda pass for an assignment.