FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 5

Scale

An Afternoon at the Getty, Joshua De Bose, 2018

Grade Levels: 9–12
Duration: One 45-minute to one-hour classroom period
MESSAGE TO EDUCATORS

Everyone has the ability to create and interpret images. This lesson-plan series guides students through the foundational elements of photography, outlines the artistic process, and strengthens their visual literacy skills. The lessons build upon one another and are developed to familiarize students with photography and become comfortable operating the camera as a tool for creative self-expression. Once your students develop an understanding of fundamental photography techniques, their photographic explorations can lead them on journeys that capture the world from their point of view.

You do not need to be practiced in the skills of photography and facilitating discussions about art to effectively lead this lesson, but we would encourage you to try some of the photography assignments included in order to share your experience with students. The Getty Museum is committed to supporting meaningful dialogue through art, and therefore this lesson plan was created with educators to carefully walk you through the steps needed to effectively facilitate and guide your students.

We encourage you and your students to use this lesson to spark ideas and conversations about the world around them.

Student Learning Objectives

• Students examine and analyze photography that uses scale to emphasize key details in a photograph.
• Students create three photographs that experiment with scale in photography using three different techniques: leading lines, diminishing effect, and depth of field.

Students create

• A photograph that uses leading lines to show a sense of scale
• A photograph that uses a diminishing effect to show a sense of scale
• A photograph that uses either a close, medium or long shot

ASSOCIATED STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9–10.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11–12.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible, and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

National Core Arts Standards

Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
Anchor Standard #9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

CA VAPA Standards

Adv.VA:Cr2.1: Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.

Adv.VA:Cr2.2: Demonstrate understanding of the importance of balancing freedom and responsibility in the use of images, materials, tools, and equipment in the creation and circulation of creative work.

Prof.VA:Re7.2: Analyze how one’s understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.

Acc.VA:Re7.2: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

MATERIALS

- Projector/screen sharing on your monitor
- Photographs from Getty Museum collection (provided)
- Photographs from Getty Unshuttered community (provided)
- Getty Unshuttered challenge videos (Linked at the end of this lesson)
- A digital camera or smartphone

VOCABULARY

**Depth of Field (DOF)** A term to describe how much of your scene is in focus. Technically, depth of field is the distance between the closest objects in focus and the farthest point of focus. Images that depict a strong depth of field often have a blurry background with the main point of interest being extremely sharp.

**Diminishing scale perspective** The brain’s process of deciphering a sense of distance within a two-dimensional photograph, based on the relative size of things. When comparing two similar or familiar things in an image, if one is smaller than the other it is therefore understood to be further away. For example, if looking at a photograph of a row of planted trees in an orchard, the trees further away down the line appear smaller than those that are closer.

**Focal Length** Determines how zoomed-in the image will appear. Focal length is always measured in millimeters (mm). The lower the mm number, the wider the angle of view is and the more of the scene will be in your photograph. For example, photographing a landscape would ideally require a lens from 10–28mm for a wide angle while a wildlife photographer would prefer a lens from 85–300mm to take detailed shots from far away.

**Leading Lines** Lines in a photograph that have been framed and positioned by the photographer to draw the viewer’s eye towards a specific point of interest. Common examples are train tracks or a road.

**Negative Space** Parts of an image that don’t attract as much attention, surrounding the positive space and encouraging the viewer to focus on the subject(s) or positive space.
Positive Space Any section of the photograph that stands out. This could be the main focal point such as the subject, along with other noteworthy areas of detail in a photograph.

Ratio The proportional relationship between your image’s width and height. Ratios are important for understanding how to post images online and for framing. For example, social networking platforms or website builders will often force you to fit your photos within a standard size.

(Vocabulary available as Unshuttered Lighting Sheet in Resources below, accompanied by additional specialist terms and details.)

BEFORE CLASS PREPARATION & ACCOMMODATIONS

- Select which Unshuttered photograph(s) and Getty collection photograph(s) you would like to discuss with your class. Depending on your class size and class period length you may want to discuss two or more of each.
- Consider how students will share the images they take. Using Google classrooms, Dropbox or similar platforms can allow students to upload and share their photographs with their classmates.
- If working with students who may require visual accommodations, the website Teaching the Visually Impaired, provides useful resources for educators.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Lesson Description

This lesson explores scale in photography. Students will create three photographs that explore techniques of scale: leading lines, diminishing effect, and depth of field. Then, students are encouraged to digitally enhance images of their choosing from this lesson or prior lesson assignments in preparation for curating a cohesive body of work.

Instructions for Educators

Suggested Duration: 10–15 minutes

Essential Question: What is the importance of providing a sense of scale in a photograph?

Set the Stage

Background Information for Educator Scale is important in an image because it is the key in creating a relationship between the elements in any particular scene. This gives the viewer a good idea of the size of the objects in your image. Manipulating scale can create different interpretations or moods in an image.

Classroom Discussion

Tell Students Before we begin taking our photographs and experimenting with new techniques, we will be talking about scale in photography. Scale is important in an image because it is the key in creating a relationship between the elements in any particular scene. This gives the viewer a good idea of the size of the objects in your image.
The camera lens looks at the world differently than our eyes do. Ask your students: Have you ever tried taking a photograph of the moon? What have you noticed happens when we photograph the moon with our phones? Most cameras, from phones to DSLRs, use lenses that are 28–85mm wide. These types of lenses are great for portrait photography, but not for capturing faraway objects in the sky.

We suggest discussing: When taking a photograph of the moon the moon often appears smaller than what we see with our naked eye.

**Ask Students** In your opinion, how does scale influence photography? Think about a photograph you might have seen of mountains or a cityscape, how did the photographer capture the large scale

Students take turns answering the question. Potential answers could include: the inclusion of people or familiar objects to show relative size, by using depth of field to have some of the scene in focus and the background out of focus to accentuate distance, by taking a wide or long shot that shows a lot of the scene or landscape, taking the shot from a low perspective to show emphasize the height.

- How about a photograph of something small? How did the photographer capture its small size?

Students take turns answering the question. Potential answers could include: photographing the subject from a high angle can make it appear smaller, including a person in the scene to show relative size, having a lot of negative space can also make a subject seem small.

**Review the Vocabulary** As a large group review the Unshuttered Scale Reference Sheet. Encourage your students to keep the reference sheet handy either printed or saved on their computer or mobile device.

- 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
- 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
- Transition to next artwork.

**Unshuttered Artworks**

**Tell Students** Let’s take a look at a few artwork examples that used scale in thoughtful ways.

**Examining the Artworks** Project one of the two student photographs shown to the right. Ask students to pause for 30 seconds, to simply observe the image then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.

- 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
- 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
- Transition to next artwork.

**Image 1**
*Untitled, Norma Vidal, 2018*

**Image 2**
*An Afternoon at the Getty, Joshua De Bose, 2018*
About the Artists (Image 1) Norma Vidal grew up in Boyle Heights, graduated from Roosevelt High School, and currently attends the University of California, Irvine. “When I first joined the Getty Photography Program I had almost no experience with photography. I just found it interesting, and always thought it was really cool the way photographs could capture so many meanings at once. As I got more involved with photography, I realized that I really liked to take pictures of my community and things that represented my culture because I was very proud of them. My community is majority Latinx including low-income households, and struggles with multiple issues such as redlining, lack of school funding, the school to prison pipeline, police brutality, and more. All of this has made me who I am today and has really shaped how I view the world and how I wish to spread awareness through my photographs.”

(Image 2) Joshua De Bose is currently a third year student at UC Santa Barbara, and started photography in 2018 as a member of the first Getty Unshuttered class. “In my photos, I focus on having a well composed shot with colors that best compliment the subject/model.”

Suggested Questions for Discussion

• What do you notice first about this image? Let’s talk about what is going on in the image.

Students describe the image, encourage your students to be as descriptive as possible. This is not about interpreting the image but rather simply describing details students notice.

• What stands out to you the most about how this photograph uses scale?

For example:

- Image 1: The photograph shows a person standing in front of a large mural. The size of the mural is made clear due to the presence of the person, emphasized by the fact that the person stands directly in front of the depiction of a woman in the mural, with her arm outstretched. The photograph was taken at a medium distance which gives a more expansive view of the mural wall.

- Image 2: The photograph has a strong vertical division, with the left side filled by a building, and the right side filled by sky and a landscape. People are scattered throughout the scene and their presence amplifies the huge size of the building and the expansiveness of the cityscape, landscape and horizon seen in the distance.

• How does the scale influence the perception of this image?

For example:

- Image 1: The interplay between the person and the mural is captured in a way that highlights the prominence, size and visibility of the mural. Having the person situated off center from the photograph composition allows for the mural imagery to stretch to all the right edges of the frame and suggest that it continues on. Following the gaze of the person in the image also emphasizes this sense of continuation.

- Image 2: The photograph is a long shot, with a corner of the building in the left edge of the scene nearest to the viewer and an expansive vista from the building out to nearby gardens, the surrounding city and the horizon line beyond. The fact that all the visible people are so small in comparison to their surroundings gives a sense of enormity to the place and the city.
Explore Further!

** Getty Collection Artwork(s)** Project one of the three Getty Collection photographs shown below. Ask students to pause for about 30 seconds, to simply observe the image then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.

1. **30–45 seconds examining the artwork.**
2. **2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.**
3. **Share the artist’s description with your students.**
4. **Transition to the next portion of the lesson.**

**About the Artist** Anthony Hernandez walks the streets of his native Los Angeles observing inhabitants of the city. In order to work quickly and intuitively, he would pre-focus the camera and then wait for subjects to come into the zone of focus—only briefly bringing the camera to his eye as he walked past them. In the 1980s Hernandez became interested in photographing places that were lacking human subjects—although their presence is felt.

**About the Artwork** For this series, Hernandez photographed vacant lots and automobile repair shops around Los Angeles, a city famous for its car culture. This photograph depicts a junkyard, with scattered piles of vehicle carcasses and automotive debris. It shows the afterlife of cars, abandoned and scrapped once they’re no longer useful.

**About the Artist** William Eggleston is an American photographer. Much of Eggleston’s work documents “ordinary” subject matters in the Southern United States, highlighting the complexity and beauty in mundane objects.

**About the Artwork** William Eggleston explains the radical perspective he used in this photograph of a child’s tricycle, which seems to dwarf the houses and car in the background. “Sometimes I like the idea of making a picture that does not look like a human picture. Humans make pictures which tend to be about five feet above the ground looking out horizontally. I like very fast flying insects moving all over and I wonder what their view is from moment to moment. I have made a few pictures which show that physical viewpoint...The tricycle is similar. It is an insect’s view or it could be a child’s view.”
About the Artists Virginia Beahan and Laura McPhee are American photographers who collaborated on a project entitled *The Country Between Us*. Beahan explains, "We concentrated on the richness and diversity of America, continuing to explore the reciprocal ways we relate to our environment and the implications of our actions upon the places we inhabit."

About the Artwork In this photograph, Beahan and McPhee capture an orchard of almond trees being flooded for irrigation. The flood irrigation method is an ancient way to irrigate or water crops, although not without debate. While it can seem inefficient or even wasteful, there are arguments that when done correctly it can be effective and low waste. The precise rows of trees are a product of people cultivating and impacting the land and are in contrast to the curving, sinuous lines of water flowing.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

- What do you notice about this image?
  
  For example:
  
  - Image 1: There is an old ice cream truck in what appears to be a junkyard. The truck is in a large field with other debris. The photograph is black and white and the photographer seems to have taken the photo from a high angle and as a long shot, with a distant, cloudy horizon line in the far background.
  
  - Image 2: The photograph is taken from a low angle; the children’s bike appears enormous.
  
  - Image 3: The scene appears to be not a wild landscape but an orchard, with lines of trees extending into the distance. The top half of the image is filled by the trees, with even the sky obscured by their branches and in the bottom half, the foreground of the photo is filled by the ground which has water flowing over it. The picture has strong symmetry with the vanishing point in the center and the trees getting smaller in size as they extend further into the distance.

- What artistic scale choices did the photographer make?
  
  For example
  
  - Image 1: The viewer is given reference objects that emphasize the scale of the yard, giving a sense of the volume of trash and car debris scattered around. In the lower right corner, we see a corrugated fence that is nearest to us. In the middle distance is the dilapidated “Eastside” dairy farms truck, its white shape and central location draw your eye. Beyond that is the retreating landscape, emphasized by the vertical telephone poles that get shorter as they get further away.
  
  - Image 2: We know the child’s tricycle is small, but because the photograph was taken from a low angle and close-up, the tricycle fills up most of the frame, and creates the illusion of towering over the house behind it.
  
  - Image 3: The artists used a long shot and a diminishing scale perspective that emphasizes the large scale of the orchard. Leading lines draw your eye down the open path that stretches out between rows of trees into the distance. The trees remain in high focus, while the water spilling and pooling into the landscape seems in motion and blurry—likely an effect of a low shutter speed-like it is out of focus due to movement.
Transition to the practice portion of the lesson  Depending on how much time you have or if you are teaching in a hybrid model, you may want to provide students with additional time to take photographs at home.

PRACTICE

Suggested Time: 35–40 minutes + At Home Practice

Students create

• Students create three photographs that experiment with scale in photography using three different ways such as leading lines, depth of field and either a close, medium or long shot.

Let’s begin!

1. Tell Students It is important to remember that photography is all about the process. Today you’ll begin experimenting with three photography examples particularly focusing on playing with the scale in the image. Let’s look at a few videos that experiment with scale in different ways.

2. Show the following video Extreme Close Shot, Close Shot, Medium Shot, Long Shot, and Extreme Long Shot.

3. Begin Creating Grab your cameras, take photographs with intention and have fun.

   • Take a photograph that uses leading lines to show a sense of scale: The lines in your photograph should draw the viewer’s eye towards a specific point of interest. For example, traffic lines on the street, electric power lines, or window panes.

   • Take a photograph that uses a diminishing effect to show a sense of scale: Your photograph should emphasize the sense of depth in a landscape or space you are capturing. Patterns (for example in floor tiles or stairs), repetition, and a horizon line can accentuate the sense of depth in an image.

   • Take a photograph that uses “depth of field” to show a sense of scale: This refers to how much of a photograph is sharply in focus. A deep depth of field has everything in focus (often used for landscapes), but a shallow depth of field shows the subject(s) in the foreground in sharp focus (often used for portraits) while the background is blurred.

4. After You Create Ask your students to sit down and select five of their own photographs that are thoughtfully curated into a series. These five images will be their final portfolio.

   We recommend having students devote 10–15 minutes at home looking through the images and jotting down and generating 3–5 ideas or themes that they have noticed during the last three lessons.

   • Students should consider what themes they notice throughout their body of work.

   • Students narrow down their photographs to their select top 5. These images are to be shared with the class. Students are encouraged to digitally enhance their images, if they’d like to.

5. Curate Students can share their portfolios with each other in a slide deck. You may want to consider having students share their portfolios in a classroom presentation or in an in-person group show.
6. **Write (Optional)** Artists often have an artist statement that accompanies a body of work. Students are encouraged to write 4–6 sentences about their selected photographs. They may discuss the themes of the photos, their thought process and the photography skills that they used to achieve their intended vision.

7. **Reflection** Suggested Time: 5 minutes

   We encourage you to take the last five minutes of class to check in with students to learn about what techniques worked, did not work as well, and what can be improved for the next class. Reflection can take place in the group setting or individually, it can be verbal or written. Encourage your students to continue taking photographs and experimenting with scale. Students should come prepared to discuss one of their photographs.

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**THANK YOU...**

...for your commitment to inspiring young people to create art and tell their stories.

Please adapt and improve upon this lesson plan to meet the needs and age range of your group

**OTHER RESOURCES**

**Related photography video skills**
- Extreme Close Shot
- Close Shot
- Medium Shot
- Long Shot
- Extreme Long Shot

**Resources**
- Unshuttered Scale Reference Sheet
- Condensed Instructional Sheet
- Practice Sheet
FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 5

UNSHUTTERED SCALE WORKSHEET

**Ratio** The proportional relationship between your image’s width and height. Ratios are important for understanding how to post images online and for framing.

For example, social networking platforms or website builders will often force you to fit your photos within a standard aspect.

**Focal Length** Focal Length is how zoomed-in the image will appear. Focal length is always measured in millimeters (mm). The lower the mm number, the wider the angle of view is and the more of the scene will be in your photograph. For your reference:

- **10–28mm** = *Ultra-Wide Angle Lenses* These lenses are mostly used by landscape photographers to get as much of the scene in front of them fit into the shot.

- **28–85mm** = *Normal Lenses (most common)* These are generally found on most cameras from phones to DSLRs. Lenses around 85mm are favored by portrait photographers.

- **85–300mm** = *Telephoto Lenses* Usually for wildlife and sports photography, these lenses allow the photographer to stay far away from their subjects so they don’t disturb the scene.

- **300mm+** = *Super Telephoto Lenses* This type of lens is used mostly by wildlife photographers.

**Positive Space** Any section of the photograph that stands out. This could be the main focal point such as the subject, along with other noteworthy areas of detail in a photograph.

**Negative Space** Parts of an image that don’t attract as much attention, surrounding the positive space and encouraging the viewer to focus on the subject(s) or positive space.

**Depth of Field (DOF)** Depth of field in photography describes how much of your scene is in focus. Technically, depth of field is the distance between the closest objects in focus and the farthest point of focus. Images using a shallow depth of field often have a main point of interest in the foreground in sharp focus while the background is blurred, and a deep depth of field shows everything sharply in focus.
Lesson 5

FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 5

CONDENSED INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Student Learning Objectives

• Students examine and analyze photography that uses scale to emphasize key details in a photograph.

Instructions for Educators

Suggested Duration: 10–15 minutes

Essential Question: What draws your eye’s attention in a photograph?

Set the Stage

Background Information for Educator

Scale is important in an image because it is the key in creating a relationship between the elements in any particular scene. This gives the viewer a good idea of the size of the objects in your image.

Classroom discussion

• Tell Students Before we begin taking our photographs and experimenting with new techniques, we will be talking about scale in photography. Scale is important in an image because it is the key in creating a relationship between the elements in any particular scene. This gives the viewer a good idea of the size of the objects in your image.

  The camera lens looks at the world differently than our eyes do. Have you ever tried taking a photograph of the moon? What have you noticed happens when we photograph the moon with our phones?

  Students take turns answering the question.

  We suggest discussing: When taking a photograph of the moon the moon often appears smaller than what we see with our naked eye. Most cameras, from phones to DSLRs, use lenses that are great for portrait photography, but not for capturing faraway objects in the sky.

• Ask Students In your opinion, how does scale influence photography? Think about a photograph you might have seen of mountains or a cityscape, how did the photographer capture the large scale?

  Students take turns answering the question.

  How about a photograph of something small? How did the photographer capture its small size?

  Students take turns answering the question.

• Review the Vocabulary As a large group review the Unshuttered Scale Worksheet. Encourage your students to keep the worksheet handy either printed or saved on their computer or mobile device.

• Transition to the conversation and examination of Unshuttered artwork(s) and the Getty collection artwork(s).

• Tell Students Let’s take a look at a few artwork examples that used scale in thoughtful ways.
Examining the Artworks

- **Unshuttered Artwork** Project one of the two student photographs shown below. Ask students to pause for about 30 seconds, to simply observe the image then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.
  - 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
  - 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
  - Transition to next artwork.

- **Transition** to the practice portion of the lesson. Depending on how much time you have or if you are teaching in a hybrid model, you may want to provide students with additional time to take photographs at home.

- ** Getty Collection Artwork** Project one of the three Getty Collection photographs shown below. Ask students to pause for about 30 seconds, to simply observe the image then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.
  - 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
  - 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
  - Share the artist description with your students.
  - Transition to the next portion of the lesson.
FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 5

PRACTICE SHEET

Student Learning Objectives

• Students create three photographs that experiment with scale in photography using four different ways such as leading lines, depth of field and either a close, medium or long shot.

Suggested Time: 35–40 minutes + at home practice

Students Create

• Students examine and analyze photography that uses scale to emphasize key details in a photograph.

• Students create three photographs that experiment with scale in photography using three different ways such as leading lines, depth of field, and either a close, medium, or long shot.

Let’s begin!

1. Tell Students It is important to remember that photography is all about the process. Today you’ll begin experimenting with three photography examples particularly focusing on playing with the scale in the image. Let’s look at a few videos that experiment with scale in different ways.

2. Show Your Students the Following Videos: Extreme Close Shot, Close Shot, Medium Shot, Long Shot, and Extreme Long Shot.

3. Begin Creating Grab your cameras, take photos with intention and have fun!

   • Take a photograph that uses leading lines to show a sense of scale: The lines in your photograph should draw the viewer’s eye towards a specific point of interest. The lines can be, for example, patterns in clothing, traffic lines on a street, or the frames of a window.

   • Take a photograph that uses a diminishing effect to show a sense of scale: Your photograph should emphasize the sense of depth in a landscape or space you are capturing. Patterns (for example in floor tiles or stairs) and a horizon line can accentuate the sense of depth in an image.

   • Take a photograph that uses depth of field to show a sense of scale: This refers to how much of a photograph remains in focus. A deep depth of field has everything in focus (often used for landscapes) but a shallow depth of field shows the subjects in the foreground in sharp focus (often used for portraits) while the background is blurred.

4. Ask your students to sit down and select five of their own photographs that are thoughtfully curated.

   We recommend having students devote 10–15 minutes at home looking through the images and jotting down and generating 3–5 ideas or themes that they have noticed during the last three lessons.
· Students should consider what themes they notice throughout their body of work.
· Students narrow down their photographs to their select top 5. These images are to be shared with the class. Students are encouraged to digitally enhance their images, if they’d like to.

5. **Curate** Students can share their portfolios with each other in a slide deck. You may want to consider having students share their portfolios in a classroom presentation or in an in-person group show.

6. **Write (Optional)** Artists often have an artist statement that accompanies a body of work. Students are encouraged to write 4–6 sentences on their selected photographs. They may discuss the themes of the photos, their thought process and the photography skills that they used to achieve their intended vision.