

As Photography Key Skill Essay:
Compare Two Photographs by Two Different Photographers

The first photograph I'm going to analyse was taken by Bill Brandt in 1938. The photograph is composed of a policeman or what seems to be a policeman standing in a dark alley way in Bermondsey, central London.

Bill Brandt was born in London in 1904; his parents were both partly of Russian descent. In 1929 he left a Swiss tuberculosis sanatorium to study with Man Ray in his studio for 3 months then continued to see him regularly for the next 2 years. Man Ray and his circle influenced Brandt profoundly and taught him the value of experimentation.

After working freelance for Paris Magazine in 1930, Brandt returned to London and worked for magazines such as Lilliput, Harper's Bazaar, and the News Chronicle for which he documented the life of Britain in the very depths of the depression, post World War I. He photographed English middle - and upper-class life, publishing *The English at Home* in 1936, *A Night in London* in 1938, and *The Camera in London* in 1948. Working as a photojournalist his photography was both individual and idiosyncratic, a mix of the norm with a little added flavour, slightly eccentric to the age – the age of surrealism.

Brandt lost interest in reporting towards the end of the war, and focused all his attention towards expressionism and surrealism. He worked extensively with the nude, and often with figural distortions.

Also very important to his work were portraits of famous writers and artists. He liked the everlasting natural landscapes and seashores of the British Isles as well as the sky at dawn and twilight. Brandt was well known for his wide-angle, distorting photographs, often strangely lighted, and printed for high contrast.

On a personal note I really like this photograph, the technical quality of lighting and composure is amazing. I think what Brandt is trying to get across to the audience is maybe a feeling of reassurance or quite frightened. From the photograph Bermondsey seems quite a horrible, dark and miserable place to live. The policeman is the protector and will keep danger at bay. But you could also be thinking to your self the policeman is so small in the ever-growing gloom of the ally way how is he going to protect me. But there is light coming from the background, a sign of hope something of which to hold onto. But in my opinion you get a feeling of reassurance when looking at the photograph. You get the feeling this photograph was taken at quite a sad time in British history, post war. Other photographs taken by Brandt are clearer to what they refer to, and quite obvious what they mean. One of Brandt's earlier photographs is of a tube station being used as a bomb shelter during the war, people sleeping on the cold floor whilst bombers fly directly over head.

The structure of the photograph is fairly simple; the viewer is directed towards the policeman by: one, the viewpoint is directed because of the direction of the bricks. Two, the policeman is silhouetted therefore highlighted, sticking out from the rest of the photograph.

The low lighting makes it hard to say whether the photograph is in focus or not. I would say that the photograph was probably taken during the day since the light in the distance is soft and very dull, therefore natural. Then again from the outlook of the photograph it looks like it was taken at night, so I think Brandt took the picture on quite a high shutter speed therefore less light would enter the camera.

The low light creates a very calm, slightly lonely feeling to the image. The photography has quite a low key using a very restricted range of colours. There isn't a lot going on in this picture which may help you understand it better and appreciate the subtle tones.

I think this photograph relates quite a lot to my initial ideas for this project. Brandt has used a very natural environment to create mood and atmosphere. He has hardly played with the photograph at all, leaving it to itself. Looking at the photograph you really feel as if you're there, in that dark miserable alleyway, with your sworn protector.

I think as a whole this photograph could be interpreted in a number of ways. I feel that the light brings a lot of mood to the photograph, adding atmosphere. But there is also an underlying meaning.

The next photograph I'm going to analyse was taken by Lady Harwarden in 1864. I found the picture in a British photography book. I think the photograph was taken for personal reasons.

The photograph is composed of two girls lying fairly close to each other almost on top of each other, next to a window.

Lady Hawarden's career spanned about seven years producing about 850 photographs. Her work mainly centred on the activities of her family. She began photography in Dundrum in late 1857 or early 1858. She used a wet collodion negative-albumen print technique, which she used exclusively. She began with a stereoscopic camera, but was soon using various formats. Her photographs demonstrate the affection and rapport shown within her family. Lady Hawarden exhibited her photographs as studies of life. Her photographs built up a document of her life based on observation and reflection. She brought out the truth in her photography.

In many of Lady Hawarden's landscapes her husband and children act as figures in the landscape. Lady Hawarden is not known for taking any pictures of social or political relevance. But her photography must be linked in some way to the social atmosphere of the late 19th century.

This image is of her two daughters, Clementina usually taking the role of a male, trying to court a female. The sharp edges of Clementina's legs, bent pointing towards Isabella Grace, thrusts her toward her. Isabella Grace's crossed arms portray disgrace towards the offer.

This image puts across an uncertain view. The image is of a personal nature. Since Lady Hawarden's images are a series of personal studies. Therefore I think the image has different meanings to different people. For me this picture is about the strong bond between her family. But I think there is also a sexual side to the photograph, which I think is quite disturbing.

The focus is on the two girls, there is a shallow depth of field, directing the viewer's eye straight onto the two girls, making them the subject of the picture. Lady Hawarden has used a lot of natural light, coming in from the window, to illustrate this. The light is focused directly on the subject causing a large shadow beyond. There isn't a large variation of tones in this photograph; I think the picture is more focused on mood than photographic quality.

This picture is based around mood more than anything else. The photography is using the subjects to explore emotions between her family. Only the photography will understand the true meaning of the picture.

This photograph although it was set up by the photography using two of her daughters to act as the male and female. The photograph shows a simple drama between a man and a woman, where the man in this instance gets turned down. This is quite a normal occurring thing to happen in everyday life, it could also tell us something about middle-class domestic life in the 18th century. So I think this photograph again could be linked to my social photograph ideas.