

Stina Arstorp, Matt Baszucki, Spencer Tsang, Thomas Magovern

Professor Pappas

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## Milestone 5

### Essay

As we live through the COVID-19 pandemic, loneliness and social isolation have become omnipresent topics. We have lost the normalcy of human connection to sheltering-in-place and stay-at-home-orders (Berg-Weger 2020). As result, loneliness has been significantly higher than normal this past year (Killgore 2020). A public health study found that loneliness was the main risk factor for depression and anxiety during the Covid pandemic (Palgi 2020). Fortunately, it has also been proven that loneliness is a necessary component of creativity, as an individual requires solitude to create a genuine work of self-expression (Tick 2008). Therefore, it is essential to understand loneliness through art, as it helps us navigate our own identity during this difficult time.

The title of our photography exhibition is *Loneliness Barefaced*. Exclusively featuring landscape photographs, this exhibition seeks to connect art to loneliness and therefore the pandemic. It is envisioned for installation at the de Saisset. The de Saisset is a museum of art and art history at Santa Clara University. Its mission is to educate museum visitors through engaging objects and diverse programs that highlight the art and history of the area. The museum's audience ranges from SCU staff, students, faculty to local residents and greater Bay Area communities. The de Saisset is accredited, which signifies a commitment to excellence in education and public service. Because the de Saisset is accredited and located on a college campus, exhibitions need to have an educational component. Research has shown that museums can contribute towards an inclusive environment and create communities in this space (Overgaard 2015). By connecting our topic to loneliness in reference to the pandemic, we hope to give museum-goers a unifying experience, in which they can safely share their contexts and opinions.

We will make three comparisons here: Ansel Adams' *Adams Yosemite* and Laura Gilpin's *Sacred Mountains*, Dugan Aguilar's *Stone Mother* and *Erosion* by an unknown artist, and *Mission District*, also by an unknown artist, and Mark Klett's *Camp 3*. From each, we draw conclusions about loneliness, the pandemic, and how pertinent ideas manifest in photography.

### **Ansel Adams, *Yosemite Falls* & Laura Gilpin, *Navaho Sacred Mountain of the East***

First, we look at Ansel Adams' *Yosemite* in contrast with Laura Gilpin's *Sacred Mountains*. Adams' photograph of the momentous waterfall stands, first and foremost, as a reminder of the overwhelming power of nature. Its power is an embodiment of the power of nature just as is the pandemic. Also, the upward focus of the camera reminds the viewer of her insignificance. Similarly, Laura Gilpin's *Sacred Mountains* demonstrates a deep understanding of landscape. The mountains lie far in the distance, reflecting the significance of *space* (in this case, the distance between the mountains and the viewer). We draw a parallel between two elements of nature: the "in your face-ness" of the waterfall and the distant, untouchable "far-ness" of the mountains.

### **Dugan Aguilar's *Stone Mother* & Unknown Artist's *Erosion***

Dugan Aguilar's *Stone Mother* and *Erosion*, artist unknown, present questions about texture. In *Stone Mother*, the foreground is wrinkled rock, just as is the earth in *Erosion*. These unstable surfaces are difficult terrain. Things are not always even. They are a reminder that life is not always smooth. Things are uncertain. And these sentiments plague loneliness: anxiety, nervousness, fear, etc. Fear of the future is a key component of loneliness. The impression of these photographs is one of grit and difficulty.

These two pictures are put together because of their similarities. Both *Stone Mother* and *Erosion* look relatively plain and bleak. Although *Erosion* is slightly darker in tone, they both share similar textures and distinctive features when it comes to the landscape itself. On the other hand, *Erosion* also illustrates loneliness. We see this not only in the overall bleak nature but also the overturned tree by the cabin and the trees lacking leaves.

The photographs are also evocative in texture and style. The uniform color of each seems to bring out textures and themes, presaging a dark tone. We see that loneliness is, in fact, deeply related to one's environment.

### **Unknown artist's *Mission District* and Mark Klett's *Camp 3***

The Mission District is one of San Francisco's most famous areas. Seeing this bleak picture of the Mission reminds us of the loneliness that many feel due to this pandemic. The photograph depicts a lack of energy and life. Perhaps it reminds one that even if external circumstances are exciting, loneliness is still a very possible mind frame. Comparatively, Mark Klett's *Camp 3* also evokes bleak feelings, though in a different sense. Though not identical in its symmetry, it is nonetheless aesthetic since the figures in the photo are isolated. We are, therefore, reminded of the despondence of isolation surrounded by a wide berth of emptiness.

These photographs share similarities in geometry. Though not identical in geometric style, they reflect a close adherence to geometric principles. *Mission District* pinpoints geometry in the lines of the boards: triangles, squares, etc. Mark Klett's *Camp 3* offers a different geometric perspective, but one that is, nonetheless, just as precise. Here, we see the shadows of the rocks playing an important role, as well as their curvatures. Furthermore, the photographs play with different shades of gray. In *Mission District*, we see a darker panel to the right and lighter panels towards the center. In *Camp 3*, the rocks and shadows take on a darker tone, contrasting starkly with the sky and water.

These photographs draw conclusions about loneliness in its most naked form. Fear of the future, of bareness, and separateness: these are the staples of loneliness. We looked at what it means to be surrounded by space and the anxiety this situation causes. We realized loneliness takes many forms, and that the components of its makeup are varied. We inspected photography, searching for clues about the human condition.

We conclude: photography energizes the already lonely spirit. It is Matthew 25:29: "for whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." Photography serves both as a catalyst for our awareness of nonexistent individual insignificance and for inspiration to do more. In essence: *the meaning of a work depends on the perspective of the viewer.*

### Bibliography

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