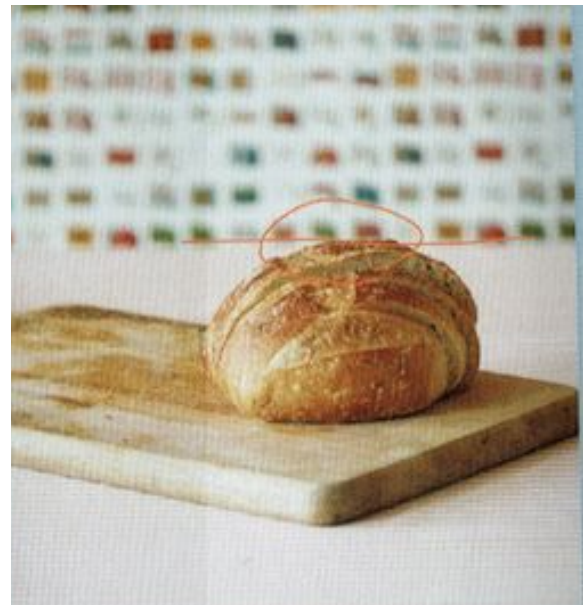


# REMOTE LEARNING ASSIGNMENT: MAKING A SCENE - STILL LIFE

**Arrange first, then add lights.** Many of the previous pages feature studio shots of arranged objects. Here's a demo of how a typical studio shot might come together. As a rule of thumb, it's usually best to start by looking through your camera's lens at the arrangement of your subjects. After you come up with a pleasing composition from the camera's point of view, it's time to explore lighting options. If you arrange the lighting before the composition is set, you will probably have to re-aim the lights after your subjects or camera angle have been moved.

**Start simple.** An initial viewpoint is explored using minimal elements. Here, a bad tangent between the loaf and the table's edge will need to be fixed by lowering the camera's viewpoint. Window light is used to illuminate the scene at this stage.



**Add.** Props are loosely fitted to the scene. Problems: items seem too spread out; the tops of the props from a line that slants out of the scene (this could be fixed by adding something along the left edge); backdrop is too blurred.

**Coming together.** Dishes have been added to the left to bring the overall composition into a strong triangular arrangement. The backdrop has been brought into sharper focus by moving the objects closer to it or by closing down the camera's aperture (depth of field) if your camera has that option.



**Light it.** A lightbulb is used to warmly light the scene from the right. A reflector (a white piece of paper taped to cardboard) has been placed to the left of the frame to return light into the scene. The background will need to be darkened since it seems to be competing with the subjects for attention.



**Fine-tune.** The light has been re-aimed to darken the background. Now the subjects stand out better than before. The rear half of the table still seems a bit bright and the reflections on the bottles are too stark.



## **The finale.**

A piece of cardboard was placed out-of-frame to the right to shield the rear of the table from direct light. A diffusion panel (a flashlight pointed at the bottle with toilet paper taped to the end) was used to soften the reflections on the bottles. Now the main subjects stand out well in the midst of their surroundings and the scene has a warm, comforting look that seems appropriate given the subject matter. Take your time when setting up a shot like this. Begin simple and add props, lights, and reflectors as you go.

## **RUBRIC:**

1 STILL LIFE PHOTO

1 SELF-CRITIQUE / REFLECTION (*at least a paragraph*)

**TOTAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE TO EARN = 4 points**

## Before you start:

- Decide on the stylistic result that you will be aiming for (maybe collect some sample images ahead of time to use reference). DO NOT COPY!
- Think of a theme...dinner party for 10 or romantic dinner for two. Your still life could be about your remote learning...include things like your laptop, books (stack them up), paperwork, pens/pencils, erasers...etc. You can use items from your bedroom, kitchen, garage, or even ones that you find outside in your yard. The possibilities are endless...you will be able to find something...I believe in you...you will believe in yourself and do this...like soon...before it is too late.

## As you arrange elements and during shootings:

- Strive for the strongest compositional arrangement for your scene.
- Be on alert for bad tangents between elements.

*Tangents* = a straight line or plane that touches a curve or curved surface at a point, but if extended does not cross it at that point.
- **Visual Hierarchy.** Make whatever changes are necessary to give clear dominance to the important elements of the shot. See to it that elements such as props and backdrops are supporting, rather than competing with, your main subject(s) for attention!

*Visual Hierarchy* = Visual hierarchy refers to the arrangement or presentation of elements in a way that implies importance. In other words, visual hierarchy influences the order in which the human eye perceives what it sees.
- **Explore lighting options thoroughly.** Use reflectors (*For example, a white piece of computer paper taped to a piece of cardboard*) or secondary lights (*For example, a flashlight*) to fill in “dead” shadow areas. Watch out for subjects that are casting unsightly shadows on others.

- **Take advantage of window light.** Think about where the window is located...the light is different depending on what time of year it is (what season is it) and what time of day it is. For example, a window on the north side of your house will give you a more diffused, overall light with no shadows throughout the day and a window on the south side of the house will give you more of a direct light that will cause shadows, but it depends on that time of the day it is as to what side the light will show up on your still life. In the morning the light will light up the left of your still life and in the afternoon, the right side of your still life. Even then, the earlier the morning, the softer the light and the later it is in the afternoon, the softer the light. Photographers call this the "Sweet Light", because the light makes almost everything look good. Noon time will produce the most harsh light that creates the strongest shadows. The problem with that is that the sun shines straight down from the sky and usually doesn't shine into a window. So what I am trying to reiterate (*explaining / saying something again or a number of times, typically for emphasis or clarity*) is that you need to decide what you want your still life to look like first, then make choices as to when and where you will shoot the picture.
- **Examples of Light Sources:** a lamp with or without a lamp shade, a utility/work/shop light from your shed or garage, a flashlight, interior ceiling lights, holiday/festive/decorative lights (plug in or battery operated). Dim, diffuse, re-aim or reflect lights that are casting too much harsh light
- **Take pictures as you go and inspect your images carefully.** Fix whatever needs fixing and keep checking your shots until everything is as it should be. Do not just take one picture and think that you are done, it just doesn't work like that...and if it does, then you can teach this class instead of me.
- **Bracket your shots to improve your chances of success.** In photography, bracketing is the general technique of taking several shots of the same subject using different camera settings. Bracketing is useful and often recommended in situations that make it difficult to obtain a satisfactory image with a single shot, especially when a small variation in exposure parameters has a comparatively large effect on the resulting image. Given the time it takes to accomplish multiple shots, it is typically, but not always, used for static subjects. Auto-bracketing is a feature of many modern cameras. When set, it will automatically take several bracketed shots, rather than the photographer altering the settings by hand between each shot.

# STILL LIFE EXAMPLES



NOTICE HOW JUST BY MOVING THE OBJECTS AROUND AND CHANGING THE ANGLE OF THE CAMERA, YOU GET A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PICTURE.



