

Visual Analysis:

Abstract photography might sound like an oxymoron. After all, we take pictures of things that we see, and that we probably want to remember, like a photo of a cousin standing in the redwood forest, or a beautiful sunset over a lake, or of friends having fun at a party. In other words, most of the photographs that we take aim to record something visually, to create an image that represents what we experienced when we took the photo.

Abstract photography doesn't do that at all. An abstract photograph doesn't try to connect the image in the photo directly to something that exists in real life. "Amir Zaki's Sculpture of Skateparks" says that Zaki's "images contrast sharply with the action-oriented skateboard photography that helped popularize the sport"

Choose one of the photos that accompanies the article. Then find a photo online that is one of the action-oriented photos the article mentions. Make a two-column chart. In one column, list attributes of the *action shot*; in the other, list attributes of the Zaki's *abstract shot*. Compare your chart with that of another student and discuss your insights.

Action Shot ¹	Zaki's Abstract Shot ²

Now, try it yourself. Choose an object that you would like to explore visually. For

example, you might choose a bicycle or a chest of drawers. Take one “realistic” photo of it—that is, a straightforward shot of the object that a viewer would recognize as a bicycle or chest of drawers. Then, take some other kinds of photos, based on looking at the object as something more abstract. Maybe you will take photos of small segments of it, say a close-up of a drawer handle, or a small section of the spokes of a wheel. Take at least five photos, and take more if the artistic spirit moves you. If you have a printer, print your photos, and create a display of the abstract shots. Write a short statement that tells viewers what you discovered in this activity.³



Common Core Standard(s) Met:

CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

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1. Attributes may vary: includes a person; includes an action; depicts movement; correlates to an actual person and skatepark; may appear familiar.
 2. Attributes may vary: no people; no action or movement; difficult to show how it connects to an actual location; may leave an unsettled feeling; may feel more like looking at a painting than a photo
 3. Students may note, for example, that they saw things about objects that they had not noticed before, such as wood grain or color variation.