

# Chuck Ivy

## Context is Key

When reviewing or criticizing art, the most important thing is context.

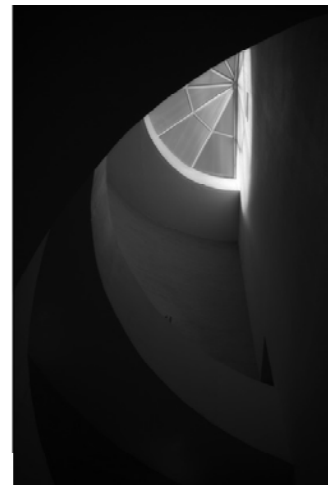
**Does the piece have any cultural cues, or *studium*, which are likely to be recognized by the general target audience?** If the artists' culture is different than the viewers', is there a recognizable universal component that might resonate, transcending the cultural boundaries? *If a studium exists, describe it. What is it about the piece that makes you immediately say "Oh, I see what they're referencing here!" Or if no such cues are in the piece, does the work confuse you with its lack of reference? Can you still get a "read"?*



99 cent, Andreas Gursky (1999), moma.org

**If the piece is being displayed as part of a series by the artist, is the series consistent?** Within the medium of photography there are many variables that the artist might use. Just a few include, but are not limited to:

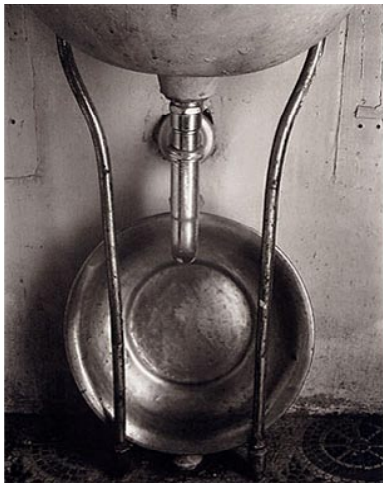
- I. Big Picture
  1. Concept
  2. Subject Matter
- II. Shooting Variables
  1. Film Choice
  2. Shutter Speed
  3. Aperture
  4. Perspective
    - a. Camera Angle
    - b. Focal Length
  5. Composition
  6. Color Palette
  7. Light Quality
  8. Light Direction
  9. Light Ratio
  10. Film Format/Size
  11. Subject Size
  12. Location/Backgrounds
- III. Printing Variables
  1. Contrast
  2. Density
  3. Tone/Color
  4. Paper Surface
  5. Print Size
  6. Borders



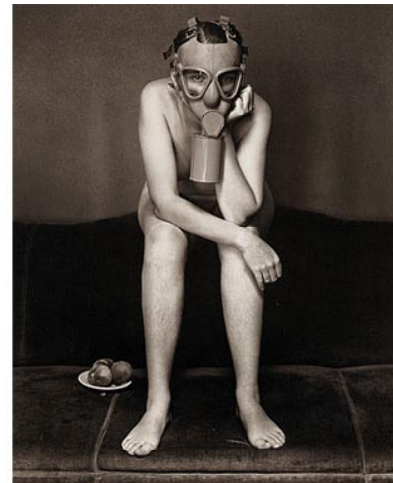
K's Ascent and Declivity, Chuck Ivy (2006), chuckivy.com

A successful photographer strives to be consistent in as many variables as possible for any given series, deviating where the opportunity for creative or emotional impact outweighs the need for consistency. Similar criteria may be applied to other mediums. *Is the artist consistent? Does the series feel cohesive? Or is it too scattered? By looking at the series, do you feel the artist has a distinctive voice that is successfully conveyed by the mastery of his craft? Or if the consistency is in concept and content rather than technique and process, is the artist's message recognizably similar?*

**How does the individual piece relate to the artists' entire body of work?** Beyond the context of the work shown, but in the larger sense of the artist's life's achievement. *Does it show progression? Regression? Is it part of a movement or period specific to that artist? Are you even familiar enough with the artist's history to make this judgement fairly?*



*Washbowl*, Edward Weston (1926),  
masters-of-fine-art-photography.com



*Civilian Defense II*, Edward Weston (1942),  
masters-of-fine-art-photography.com

**How does the piece, or the artists' entire body of work relate to the trends in the medium contemporary to the artist?** Are there trends at work in the art world, either in the context of the show, the local art scene or globally, that the piece plays against or within? *Where does the piece belong in the larger context of art as a whole?*



*Dali Atomicus*, Philippe Halsman (1948), vintageperiods.com