

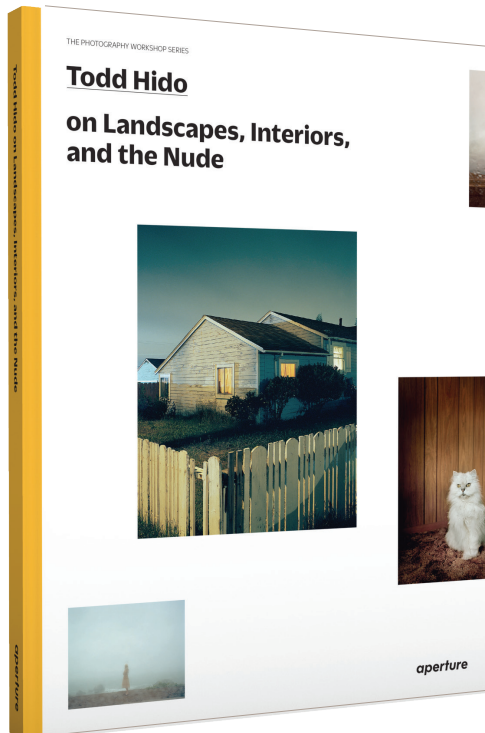
Learning Guide:

Todd Hido

on Landscapes, Interiors, and the Nude

This resource is intended to inform educators about Aperture's Photography Workshop Series book and aid them in leading meaningful discussions surrounding its content.

ALL AGES



***"We all have a story
to tell, and I believe
that we can't help but
tell it." —Todd Hido***

About Aperture's Workshop Series

The **Photography Workshop Series** is an accessible resource that can be used to begin class discussions on photography's history, the nature of photography, photographic techniques, the act of seeing, and the author of each book. The books are formatted in such a way that each chapter contains its own mini lesson or discussion, with bold headings or a bold quotation, and a brief elaboration or explanation below. The bolded headings can act as discussion topics, and can be easily rephrased as questions that you may pose to your class. The accompanying photographs can act as the slideshow for the lesson.

About This Learning Guide

Aperture education staff have organized this learning guide thematically, highlighting salient topics from Todd Hido's text. Within each theme, relevant chapters, passages, and vocabulary are noted, along with guiding questions to accompany specific images.

About Todd Hido

An avid photographer of the night, **Todd Hido** is well-known for his beautiful, and at times haunting, photographs of urban and suburban homes taken across the United States. Hido has perfected the art of capturing light and intimacy, both key elements in his work that elicit emotional memories for the viewer. Hido describes himself as a wandering photographer, traveling into the night with his camera; he states, "I arrive at most things in my work through a series of accidents and coincidences" (p. 14). His work centers around life seen from the outside, noting that subtle details—such as uncut grass or disheveled curtains—can tell an entire story.

His work has been featured in *Artforum*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Eyemazing*, *Wired*, *Elephant*, *Foam*, and *Vanity Fair*. His photographs are in the permanent collections of the Getty Center, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Los Angeles County Museum of Modern Art, as well as in many other public and private collections. He has over a dozen published books; his most recent monograph, *Intimate Distance: Twenty-Five Years of Photographs, A Chronological Album*, was released by Aperture in 2016. He is an adjunct professor at California College of the Arts.

Night Photography

Relevant Passages

"I see differently in the dark. Night is a quiet time without as much going on. The world moves slower. Lots of things disappear into the darkness." (p. 19)

"Ambiguity is one of the finest tools for making art. In my way of thinking, images should raise more questions than they answer." (p. 28)

Topics for Discussion

- What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - How do negative space and darkness affect this image?
 - Why do you think Hido chose to photograph at night? Would the image be different if it were taken during the day?
 - What story comes to mind when looking at this image?
 - How does the light from the window inform your story?
 - What are some unusual details in this image? What makes them unusual?
-

Vocabulary

ambiguity
minimalist
light

exposure
aesthetic
negative space



Key Image: #2133

Relevant Sections

"Seeing in the Dark" (pp. 14–19)

"The Drama in Details" (pp. 24–25)

"The Pleasures of Not Knowing" (pp. 26–29)

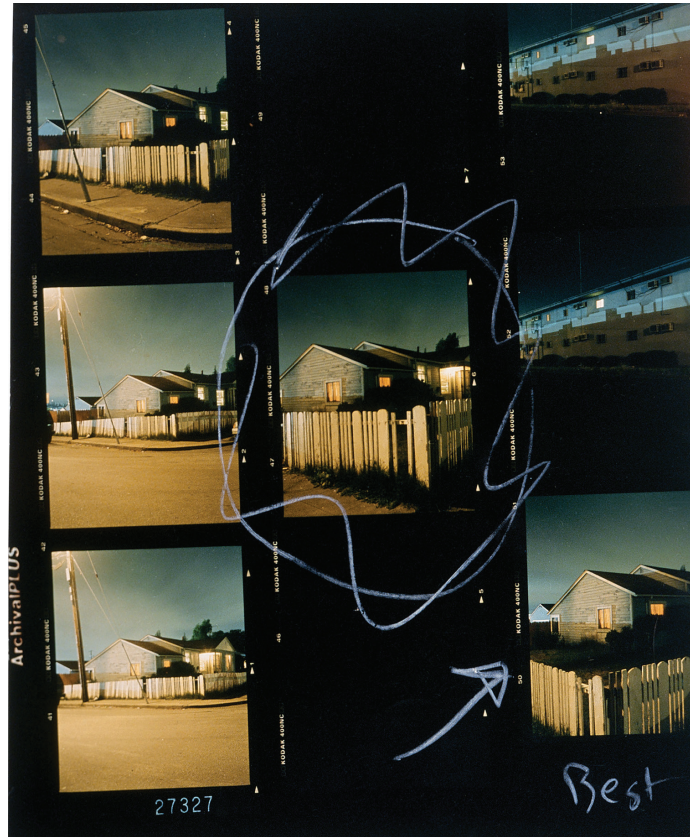
Perspective and Distance

Relevant Passage

"When photographing space, it is useful to use perspective to draw the viewer into the frame. The diagonal line creates depth, and depth often works well in describing an environment. The diagonal lines extend your photograph into infinity somehow." (p. 20)

Topics for Discussion

- How does Hido's perspective and vantage point change from image to image on the contact sheet?
- How does Hido's distance from the house affect the photograph? Would the image be different if he stood closer to the house? If so, why?
- Why is the fence an important part of the photograph? What story does it create?
- How many diagonal lines are in this image? How do they contribute to the success of this photograph?



Key Image: Contact sheet of #2690

Relevant Section

"Where Do You Stand?" (pp. 20–23)

Vocabulary

distance
vanishing point
composition
depth

perspective
frame
diagonal

Repetition and Trust

Relevant Passages

“There are a million ways to talk yourself out of making your work, and saying to yourself that it’s already been done, is a big one. Not everything has been done before. Go and do your work.” (p. 30)

“Repetition is your friend and also your enemy. While you want your work to be consistent, to have a style, you’ve got to strike the right balance between consistency and monotony once you’ve been working on a project for a while.” (p. 34)



Key Images: Todd Hido, #2479-a;

Robert Adams, *Berthoud, Colorado*, 1976 © 2009 Robert Adams



Topics for Discussion

- Both Robert Adams and Todd Hido photographed houses at night. What are the similarities between the two photographs? What are the differences?
- “It’s okay to stay in the same place for a while and to trust the desire to do so” (p. 33). Why is trust important when making photographs of a particular place?
- Discuss places in your life where you feel a sense of trust. Why do you trust them?
- How can repetition strengthen a series of photographs?
- How can repetition be limiting when making photographs?

Vocabulary

objective
trust
repetition

consistency
monotony
variation

Relevant Sections

“Adding to the Conversation” (pp. 30–31)
“Repetition as Progress” (pp. 32–35)

Memory, Color, and Senses

Relevant Passages

"Shooting through the windshield intensifies the pictures; it heightens the sense of memory and also grounds the picture squarely in the physical world. It's one thing to make a picture of a snowy landscape. It's another level of difficulty to take that picture in a way that actually conveys the feeling of cold and damp." (p. 46)

"Another primary thing that conveys feeling in photographs is color. Blue will almost always read as cold to us, especially in a landscape. Green represents growth or sickness, depending on the hue. Colors bring their own meanings and moods to a picture." (p. 48)

Topics for Discussion

- What are the contrasting elements in this image?
- Can a landscape photograph be intimate? What makes you say that?
- What are some ways you can create intimacy when taking a photograph?
- What are some techniques that can be used to create a photograph that employs your senses (ex. cold, damp, warm)?
- Hido chooses to photograph through car windows in order to evoke memories. What personal memories do you have when viewing this image? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How do the colors in this image contribute to the feelings and memories discussed in the previous question?



Key Image: #6237

Relevant Sections

"In and Out of Focus" (pp. 42–45)
"An Intimate Distance" (pp. 46–47)
"The Color of Emotion" (pp. 48–53)

Vocabulary

focus
intimacy
memory

Concept

Relevant Passages

"There are no rules. But sometimes you need parameters. They could be conceptual. . . . The concept can change and evolve. You can always modify it at any point." (p. 59)

"The act of photographing can bring inner things to the surface. I'll look at my pictures when they're finished and realize they are really touching on something deeper. One of the great pleasures of making photographs is being surprised by the results." (p. 74)

Topics for Discussion

- What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What are some concepts found in Hido's photographs? What are some concepts found in your own photographs?
- What emotions do the colors evoke?
- What are some interesting details in this photograph? How do they contribute to the overall feeling of this image?
- What are the differences and similarities between Hido's outdoor photographs and his indoor photographs?

Vocabulary

concept
analyze



Key Image: #1601

Relevant Sections

"Concepts and Contradictions" (pp. 58–61)
"Surface Memories" (pp. 66–73)
"What I See and What It Means" (pp. 74–77)

Gesture

Relevant Passage

"Any time you're working with a person as a subject, be it a portrait or a nude, very simple gestures become fascinating. You don't need to go for grand poses; subtle hand gestures and expressions of the eyes and mouth say it all." (p. 80)

Topics for Discussion

- How do simple gestures, such as a facial expression, add to the meaning of a photograph?
 - What are some simple gestures in this photograph? How do those gestures contribute to the story?
 - What do you think is happening outside the frame? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - Is this a candid or formal portrait? Why?
 - Is a formal portrait a truthful photograph? What makes you say that?
 - What are the similarities between Hido's landscape work and his portrait work?
-

Vocabulary

gesture
portrait
candid
formal



Key Image: #10967-2498

Relevant Sections

"Complicating the Story" (pp. 78–83)

"Nudes and Narrative" (pp. 84–89)

Location

Relevant Passages

“Whether the photograph is true or not doesn’t matter. What matters is what you want to say as an artist to the world, even if the meaning eludes you too.” (p. 93)

“You can have an amazing story to tell, but you have to get the setting right. Location is everything. The place is part of the story, and the details are crucial. If the place isn’t right, it doesn’t matter what’s going on in the picture.” (p. 97)

Topics for Discussion

- Why is having the right location important when making a photograph?
- What story is created in this location?
- What does the location tell you about the model?
- Locate some key details in the photograph that help depict the story.
- Do you think this image is candid or staged?

Vocabulary

location
background
staged
projection



Key Image: #5845-a

Relevant Sections

“What Is True” (pp. 90–93)

“Setting the Stage” (pp. 96–99)

Authenticity

Relevant Passages

"Models often have these ideas about the way a photography shoot should work: they're supposed to pose, and it goes fast, and blah, blah, blah. You have to get around this perception when you're working with models in order to shoot something more authentic." (p. 101)

"Where I stand emphasizes emotional distance even though there's physical proximity. In many ways the photographs are the opposite of my landscapes, which feel intimate though they cover far more distance." (p. 102)

Topics for Discussion

- Why is it important to slow down and take your time when making a photograph of a person?
 - Why is trust important between the photographer and the subject?
 - Does this woman look like she's posing for the camera?
 - Hido calls the close distance between a photographer and a model "emotional distance." How would you define emotional distance in your own terms?
 - Is this photograph intimate? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What story is Hido trying to tell in this photograph?
-

Vocabulary

authentic
space
perspective



Key Image: #1657

Relevant Sections

"The Authentic Moment" (pp. 100–101)

"A Distant Intimacy" (pp. 102–103)

Sequence

Relevant Passages

"One of the most magical things about photography happens when you place one picture next to another picture to create new meanings." (p. 105)

"When you're putting together photographs for a book, it's helpful to think of music. . . . You can create a rhythm by being consistent from image to image and by paying attention to how the images hang together." (p. 114)

Topics for Discussion

- How do the two photographs influence each other when placed next to one another? Do you think these two images work well together? Explain.
- Look at each image individually, then look at them together; does the meaning change for each image when they are viewed together? What makes you say that?
- What story do these two images create when they are together?
- What do these two images have in common, both visually and conceptually?
- "I find it really helpful to work with pictures on paper. . . . I've never found a fabulous pairing or a great sequence on a computer screen" (p. 114). What are the benefits of sequencing pictures that are printed?
- Why is it important to create a rhythm in your sequence?



Key Images: #2871-a; #3726

Relevant Sections

"Building the Story" (pp. 104–113)

"Paper Movies" (pp. 114–117)

"Turning Pages" (pp. 118–119)

Vocabulary

sequence
object
medium
rhythm

Key Vocabulary

Aesthetic: a set of principles underlying and guiding the work of a particular artist or artistic movement (pp. 19, 36)

Ambiguity: the quality of being open to more than one interpretation; inexactness (p. 28)

Analyze: discover or reveal (something) through detailed examination (p. 74)

Authentic: genuine (p. 101)

Background: the part of a picture or design that serves as a setting to the main figures or objects (p. 97)

Candid: (of a photograph of a person) taken informally, especially without the subject's knowledge (p. 87)

Composition: the artistic arrangement of the parts of a picture (p. 20)

Concept: an abstract idea (pp. 40, 59)

Consistency: conformity in the application of something (pp. 33, 34)

Depth: a dimension taken through an object or body of material; the quality of being deep (p. 20)

Diagonal: (of a line) straight and at an angle; slanting (p. 20)

Distance: an amount of space between two things or people (pp. 20, 23, 40, 46, 102)

Exposure: the quantity of light or other radiation reaching a photographic film, as determined by shutter speed and lens aperture (pp. 28, 65, 72)

Focus: the point at which an object must be situated with respect to a lens or mirror for an image of it to be well defined (pp. 42, 45)

Formal: done in accordance with rules of convention or etiquette; a carefully arranged pose under effective lighting conditions; not candid (pp. 72, 84)

Frame: the presentation of visual elements within the boundary of the photograph (pp. 19, 20, 42, 66, 84, 93, 106)

Gesture: a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning (p. 80)

Intimacy: close familiarity or friendship; closeness (p. 102)

Light: a source of illumination; the amount of quality of light in a place (pp. 14, 19, 25, 28, 45, 72)

Location: a particular place or position (p. 97)

Medium: the material or form used by an artist, composer, or writer (pp. 93, 110, 114)

Memory: something remembered from the past; a recollection (pp. 45, 66, 83)

Minimalist: a person who advocates or practices minimalism in art or music; the use of simple forms (p. 19)

Monotony: lack of variety; repetition (p. 34)

Negative Space: an area of a painting, sculpture, etc., containing no contrasting shapes, figures, or colors itself, but framed by solid or positive forms, especially one that constitutes a particularly powerful or significant part of the whole composition (p. 19)

Key Vocabulary

Object: a material thing that can be seen and touched (pp. 114, 119)

Objective: (of a person or their judgment) not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts (pp. 30, 40)

Perspective: a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something (pp. 20, 65, 72, 102)

Portrait: a painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders (pp. 78, 87, 96, 105)

Projection: the presentation or promotion of someone or something in a particular way (p. 90)

Repetition: a thing repeated; the action of repeating something (pp. 33, 34)

Rhythm: a harmonious sequence or correlation of colors or elements (p. 114)

Sequence: a particular order in which related things follow each other (pp. 104, 106, 114)

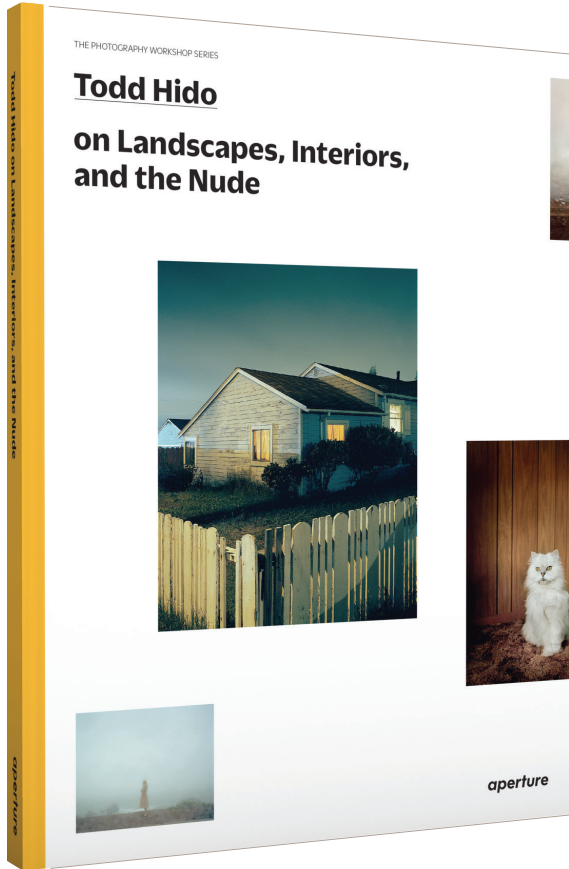
Space: a continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied (pp. 20, 25, 65, 72, 77, 97, 102)

Staged: planned, organized, or arranged in advance (pp. 88, 97, 99)

Trust: firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something (pp. 33, 39, 90)

Vanishing Point: the point at which something that has been growing smaller or increasingly faint disappears altogether (p. 20)

Variation: a different or distinct form or version of something (pp. 33, 34)



Todd Hido on Landscapes, Interiors, and the Nude

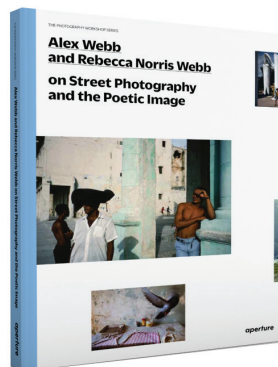
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Introduction by Gregory Halpern

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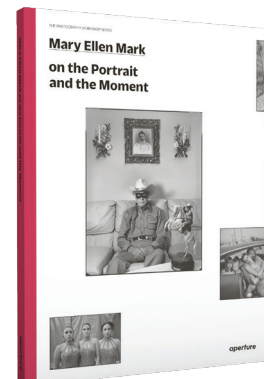
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