

## Finding a Theme – A Summertime Challenge

Subject: Visual Arts

Grade Level: Grades 6-12

**Guided Instruction** (To be self-directed, or with teacher, parent, caregiver, older sibling, etc.)

Many artists develop *themes* over the course of their career – specific ideas, symbols, or scenes that they return to over-and-over. This is true about artists working in all types of media, from sculpture to video.

Take time to view some images from Durham based photographer Bill Bamberger. A selection of photographs are printed on page two, or you can view more of his images by visiting here:

<https://nasher.duke.edu/exhibitions/courtside-photographs-bill-bamberger/>.

Bill Bamberger began photographing basketball hoops sometime in 2004 and continued seeking them out and making photographs of them over the next 13 years. In all, he made thousands of photographs of basketball hoops in 38 states across the United States and nine countries worldwide.

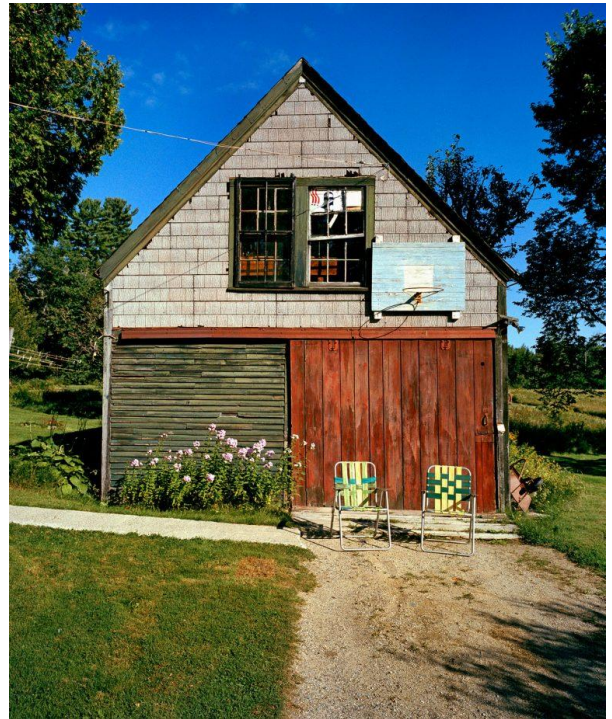
### Discuss:

- How does a recurring theme connect these images?
- Outside of the basketball hoops, are there other parts of the images that relate to one another?
- What does this series of images suggest about the world?

### Practice

As we move into long summer days, away from Zoom classrooms and math worksheets, it's a great time to start observing themes in your travels – whether that is a walk in the neighborhood or an afternoon road trip.

1. If you have access to a camera, even one on your phone, spend a few days or a week taking pictures of anything that interests you. Try to take at least 10 pictures a day.
2. At the end of this time, look back through your photos and see if there is any sort of *theme* you see repeating – this could be as broad as “portraits” or something specific like flowers in unexpected places, blue cars, or discarded gloves.
3. After you identify a theme in your images, spend some time every week looking for and photographing more examples of this theme. You may find, that over the course of the summer your theme changes – that is okay!
4. After a set period of time – the month of June, for example – look back through your images and start to organize them. You might start by simply “liking” some images or adding them to a “favorites” folder.
5. At the end of the period, choose your favorite 10-20 images that share your theme. If you made 10 photographs a day, that is 300 images from which to choose!
6. Share your final series of photographs with friends, family, classmates, or on social media.



(top left) Bill Bamberger, *Abandoned Barn, Mebane, North Carolina, 2006* (printed 2018). Archival pigment print, 45 ¾ x 35 ½ inches (116.2 x 90.2 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA. Gift of Bill Bamberger. 2018.10.3 © Bill Bamberger

(top right) Bill Bamberger, *Public school playground, Sedona, Arizona (detail), 2009*. Inkjet print on archival paper. Courtesy of Bill Bamberger. © Bill Bamberger.

(bottom left) Bill Bamberger, *Neighborhood above steel mill, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 2006*. Inkjet print on archival paper. Courtesy of Bill Bamberger. © Bill Bamberger.

(bottom right) Bill Bamberger, *Retired couple's garage, Franklin, Maine, 2006*. Inkjet print on archival paper. Courtesy of Bill Bamberger. © Bill Bamberger.