

BTS PHOTOGRAPHIE

ANGLAIS – U. 2

SESSION 2007

Durée : 2 heures
Coefficient : 2

Matériel autorisé :

- l'usage d'un dictionnaire bilingue est autorisé.

L'usage de la calculatrice est interdit.

Dès que le sujet vous est remis, assurez-vous qu'il est complet.
Le sujet comporte 4 pages, numérotées de 1/4 à 4/4.

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QUESTIONS

Document A : « In praise of captions », Mike Johnston.
(*Black & White Photography*, May 2006.)
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Answer the following questions, **in your own words**. (12 points)

1. What does Johnston prove with the examples of Martin Parr, Alex Soth and Hiroshi Sujimoto ? (3 points)
2. Find out at least two reasons why, according to Johnston, the amateur photographer should caption his or her photographs. (4 points)
3. “Captions are how photographers become more than camera operators.” (line 91)
Explain this assertion in your own words. Do you agree ? (5 points)

Document B : « Studio hire ».
(*Professional photographer*, juin 2002.)
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Translate the classified ad « Hampshire Street Studio » from « Situated » to the end.
(10 points)



MIKE JOHNSTON

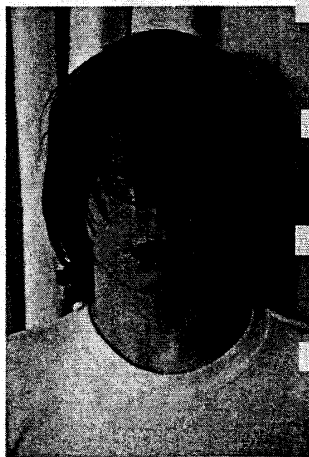
In praise of captions

Putting words to your pictures entertains, informs and makes you think about your photography, says **Mike Johnston** – and he'll whack you with a rolled-up B&W if you disagree...

1 'A great photograph should stand alone.'

Really? Who says so? I'm pretty sure I

BELOW Zander Johnston, aged 13 in March 2006



5 know: photographers who take pictures of rocks and trees (not that there's anything wrong with that). When you take pictures of trees, you've pretty much got a stockpile of titles three deep: *Tree, Another Tree and Yet Another Tree*. After that, you're

10 done – out of choices. After all, unless you're a botanist and are interested in the facts of the tree, trees are trees. Like my illustration here. It's a tree picture, right? A certain kind of tree, no doubt, but just

15 a tree. A tree is a tree is a tree.

Well, sure enough, some pictures don't need captions. And I'm sure a case could be made that some pictures are actually weakened by captions or explanations. But

20 for the most part, I prefer pictures that have captions. I find I almost always want to know the who-what-when-how-why.

I might even venture to point this up as a distinguishing difference between

25 photo-sophisticates and photo-neophytes. Certainly, news photographers are used to dealing with captions, but curators and editors and critics also like to know the context and significance of a photograph.

30 Some amateurs, on the other hand, often seem to be engaged in a dogged pursuit of the generic and the pictorial.

Don't think that uncaptioned art photographs are actually uncaptioned,

35 either. In Martin Parr's book *The Last Resort: Photographs of New Brighton* or Alex Soth's book *Niagara*, each picture might not get its own caption, or only a cursory one, but the context is more than

40 amply provided by the book's written introduction and the photographer's commentary on the project as a whole.

I would venture to say that for someone as besotted with photography as myself, sometimes much of the running commentary is within the viewer's head! Only the photographer can really explain the picture's true signifiers, however.

Photographs are documentary much more

50 than pictorial and they are specific, not generic. Are you familiar with Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Seascapes*, for example? They're all minimalist pictures exactly bisected by the horizon line, sea below, sky above, often as simple as a rectangle

55 of white above a rectangle of black. What makes them interesting – valid, one might even say – are the titles telling which of the world's oceans is pictured and from where.

I want to whack some photographers over the head with a rolled-up B&W when I'm shown some fascinating landscape or city scene and the title is

60 merely *Fiery Sky* or *Early Morn*. Don't other people want to know where and when the landscape was taken, or in what city and at what time of year the city shot was made? I do. I want to add the photograph to the sum of my

70 knowledge about the world.

At the very least, I always encourage photographers to take a moment and jot a few identifiers on the back of their prints. You may see no need to label

75

a picture of your very own mother, but then you are not going to be upon this coil indefinitely, and a hastily scrawled

80 *Mother, age 52 in 2006, by George*

George may be invaluable to your grandchild half a century from now, because she wouldn't otherwise recognise her forebear. (And don't laugh at the name: I actually had a relative called

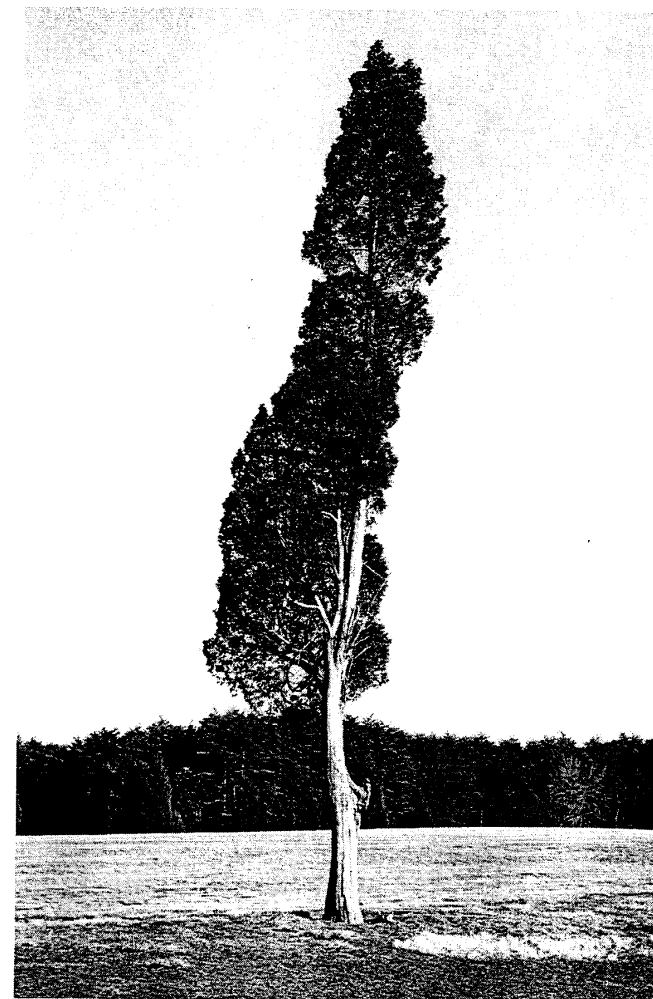
85 George George. His nickname, naturally, was 'Double'.)

In her wonderful and sadly long-out-of-print book *Photography and Society*, Giselle Freund points out how easily the

90 meanings of pictures can be changed by simply changing the captions. Captions are how photographers become more than camera operators, how we are honest or deceptive, how we become thoughtful. If

you've not been in the habit of captioning your pictures (or giving them descriptive titles), take a few minutes sometime and jot down the 'stories' behind a handful of your own pictures. It might be an

100 instructive exercise.



■ Mike Johnston's daily fix for photo junkies, *The Online Photographer*, is at <http://theonlinephotographer.blogspot.com>