Chapter 11

iPhoneography in the Secondary Classroom: Using Social Media to Enhance Visual Communication

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter the author describes a qualitative study aimed to explore how secondary students used smartphone technology to capture and share images via social media. The findings of the study include: digital identity construction, image sharing and social media, the perception of public vs. private, image sharing as critique, and iPhoneography as visual communication. Pedagogical implications of incorporating iPhoneography into existing visual art curricula are explored, and include suggestions for utilizing iPhoneography to enhance skills in thematic development, as well as an effective tool for formative assessment. Finally, ways to challenge students creatively by using prompts inspired by contemporary photographers are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

Social media practices have become interwoven into our daily routines, offering a new and exciting perspective of the world (Castro, 2012). The ways we explore, learn, know, and create are all affected by the interconnected nature of social media. This chapter focuses on the use of smartphones as photographic devices, and refers specifically to iPhoneography and Instagram as tools for visual expression. It especially focuses on how teens use iPhoneography to document and share their daily lives (see Figure 1). Based on qualitative interview data, the following themes emerged: digital identity construction, image sharing and social media, the perception of public versus private. Student recommendations for classroom use were implemented into existing curriculum and utilized in hopes of strengthening visual communication skills in secondary students. The results from the implementation showed enthusiastic engagement with the themes and ideas presented, as well as sophisticated image creation. Possibilities for using Instagram as a formative assessment tool,
and suggestions for creating theme based visual inquiry rooted in contemporary photographic practices will be explored.

BACKGROUND

This chapter focuses on iPhoneography as the act of creating photographs using an Apple iPhone, it differs from other digital imaging options because the images are shot and processed all on the device. The iPhone is a multiuse device that allows people to access and process information quickly, creating a new media environment that has transformed the way we manipulate, store, and distribute information (Lee, 2010). This type of participatory culture has affected the way the world is perceived; our social culture is becoming reliant upon the viewing of the world through a camera lens or computer screen. With a handheld portable device, anyone can become a photographer and participate in a culture of sharing images through social media. This practice offers a myriad of possibilities for educating students about and through digital visual communication. The field of education may gain a new perspective of teen social behavior as it pertains to digital environments. Art educator Sarah Cress (2013) discusses student need for connection through friendship and companionship as exploration of a long-standing human need that can be traced back to the beginning of mankind. Cress (2013) continues, “the manner in which such connections come into being will evolve just as our commu-