



Commercial Photography - Unit 2 - Food/Product Photography

Unit Focus

In this unit, students transition from casual photographers to commercial creators by exploring the art and science behind professional food and drink advertising. This hands-on experience covers the entire industry workflow—from the initial mood board concept to the final polished advertisement. Students will master high-end equipment including strobe lighting and different camera lenses to capture the perfect “hero shot” of different food items. Students will learn different tricks of the trade when stylizing food. Students will use tools such as Adobe to practice advanced retouching, color grading, and the integration of typography and other graphic design elements to create professional ad layouts. By the end of the term, students will have developed a commercial campaign demonstrating the technical precision and creative strategy required in the modern marketing world. Throughout the trimester, success will be measured not only by final images but by growth in the Profile of a Graduate (POG) capacities. Specifically, students will engage in Design through strategic planning by developing concepts via mood boards and analyzing the physics of lighting and posing before the shutter is released. Furthermore, students will cultivate Self-Awareness by mastering the Creative Cycle, utilizing peer feedback and technical reflection to refine work from a rough capture into a professional-grade final image. Students will also continue to explore how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are influencing the field of photography from concept development to post-production, while learning to navigate these tools in an ethical and responsible manner.

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

Standard(s)		Transfer	
Connecticut Goals and Standards Technology Education (CTE) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluate a shooting location in terms of lighting, sound, production equipment needs, and electrical essentials. (TE.DV.C.13)Describe, plan the use of, and apply 3- point lighting, source light, white balance, scrims, and reflectors using the appropriate techniques. (TE.DV.D.14)Create graphics and titles appropriate to the project. (TE.DV.F.22)Describe and apply import, file, and asset management. (TE.DV.F.24)		<i>Students will be able to independently use their learning to...</i> T1 Critically analyze how visual media influences consumer behavior and "sells" a lifestyle or sensation. T2 Apply professional studio lighting and styling techniques to transform ordinary objects into commercial-grade subjects. T3 Navigate a multi-stage creative process—from conceptualization and critique to technical refinement—to meet a professional brief.	
National Core Arts Standards Visual Arts: HS Proficient <ul style="list-style-type: none">Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas. (VA:Cn10.1.HSI.a)Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress. (VA:Cr3.1.HSI.a)Analyze, select, and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation. (VA:Pr.4.1.HSI.a)Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works. (VA:Re9.1.HSI.a) MPS AI Literacy Framework		Meaning	
		Understanding(s)	Essential Question(s)
		<i>Students will understand that...</i> U1 Commercial photography is not about documenting reality, but about constructing an idealized version of it to trigger specific sensory responses (thirst, hunger, indulgence). U2 Lighting is the primary tool for creating form, texture, and visual interest in inanimate objects like glass and liquid. U3 High-quality commercial work is rarely achieved in the first shot; it requires a cycle of shooting, critiquing, and targeted reshooting.	<i>Students will keep considering...</i> Q1 How do photographers make a viewer feel a sensation (like coldness or thirst) in a 2-dimensional image? Q2 How does a change in light placement alter the story or vibe of a product? Q3 Why is professional-grade work dependent on the ability to accept and apply constructive criticism?

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

AI Literacy

- The capability of generative AI, particularly large language models (LLMs), to generate humanlike content can make it difficult to distinguish fact from fabrication, increasing the potential to generate misinformation, deepfakes, or manipulative materials. (K4.3)

Madison Public Schools Profile of a Graduate

- Design: Engaging in a process to refine a product for an intended audience and purpose. (POG.2.2)
- Self-Awareness: Examining current performance critically to identify steps/strategies to persist. (POG.4.1)

U4 Strategic use of negative space and the Rule of Thirds are essential for integrating typography and branding later in the design process.

Q4 Where is the line between photography as art and photography as a commercial tool?

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skill

Knowledge

Students will know...

K1 Technical Terms: Strobe, continuous light, softbox, ring light, tripod, and seamless backdrops.

K2 Styling by using glycerin, water sprays, and fake props (ice, ice-cream (mashed potatoes), milk (Elmer's Glue) etc.) to maintain a fresh look under hot studio lights

K3 Camera Angles: The specific purposes of the Overhead (90°), Hero (45°), and Eye Level (0°) shots.

K4 Design Fundamentals: How negative space, color grading (warm vs. cool tones), and typography are used to influence how a viewer feels and where their eyes move when viewing a food photograph

Skill(s)

Students will be skilled at...

S1 Identifying light sources and styling techniques in professional advertisements

S2 Setting up and operating studio lighting equipment (strobes/softboxes) safely and effectively.

S3 Applying physical textures (condensation, fizz, garnishes) to a product to enhance its visual appeal.

S4 Editing images using professional software for color correction and masking.

S5 Articulating their artistic intent and providing specific, actionable feedback to peers.