

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Out and About
Subject: Todd Hido
Discipline: Visual Art (Photography)

SECTION I - OVERVIEW	2
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT	3
SECTION III – RESOURCES	6
SECTION IV – VOCABULARY	8
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK	9



Photographer Todd Hido sets up an outdoor night shot. Still image from SPARK, March 2006.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE

Out and About

SUBJECT

Todd Hido

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts & Language Arts

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the photographic art of Todd Hido and to provide an historical and critical context for the artists' evocative images of Bay Area homes and posed female models

STORY SYNOPSIS

Internationally acclaimed photographer Todd Hido has made a name for himself capturing unsettling images of the suburban landscape. Hido looks for the anonymous, even mysterious aspects of American life, recording buildings and landscapes eerily absent of human presence. SPARK joins the artist at work as he cruises one of his favorite Bay Area neighborhoods in search of the perfect shot.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis
Teacher-guided instruction
Hands-on individual work
Hands-on group projects

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to contemporary photography and the work of Todd Hido
To provide context for the understanding of contemporary photography
To inspire students to explore photography as a means of creative expression
To inspire students to think about the development of photography as an artform in the last 100 years as well other mediums more recently transformed by artists into creative materials

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story about Todd Hido on VHS or DVD and related equipment
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer
Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects
Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically



See more information on
[Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at
www.kqed.org/spark/education.

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT PROFILE

Internationally acclaimed photographer Todd Hido has made a name for himself capturing unsettling images of the suburban landscape. Hido looks for the anonymous, even mysterious aspects of American life, recording buildings and landscapes eerily absent of human presence. SPARK joins the artist at work, as he cruises one of his favorite Bay Area neighborhoods in search of the perfect shot.

At the center of Hido's work is a certain degree of realism. He only uses available light and does not move objects when composing his images. Hido's signature residential landscapes are shot at night using long exposure times and employ the ambient atmosphere that surrounds his subjects. His minimalist, moody images suggest sinister narratives set in architecturally homogenous settings.

Hido's technique of using long exposures presents particular challenges. When photographing a house or landscape, any temporary change in light will affect the picture. The moving headlights of a car driving by may create the desirable effect of brightening the image, while the lights of a plane flying overhead will create an unwanted streak across the sky.

For his latest book, Hido is taking a different approach to pursuing the themes of isolation and loneliness evident in his earlier work. SPARK travels with the photographer to a hotel in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood where he is working with a model to create a series of portraits. For Hido, old hotels provide an exciting range of possibilities. Though he still uses only natural light, curtains can be used to alter or block out light, while details like old fixtures and furniture can be rife with suggested stories and associations when captured in the just the right way. Hido has lately been using a vintage 126 camera that his wife found in thrift shop. He began using the camera to help his models relax before shooting with his professional equipment but soon

began noticing that the camera's flash created an amateurish, snapshot look, an aesthetic that Hido found appealing and decided to use in his work.

For Hido, editing and sequencing his images for publication adds meaning to the images. The photographer considers his books to be like paper movies - arrangements of images that suggest loose narratives. Scenes may be tied together through formal means--the use of light, composition, or a particular tonal palette--but also suggest stories and characters that seem to inhabit the images themselves.

Todd Hido received his BFA from Tufts University in 1991 and his MFA in photography from the California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland in 1996. His work has been shown in galleries and museums across the United States and in the United Kingdom. Hido's photographs can be found in many prominent collections, including the Guggenheim Museum, New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. He has published four books, *Roaming* (2005), *House Hunting* (2001), *Outskirts* (2002), and *Taft Street* (2001). Hido is represented by the Stephen Wirtz Gallery in San Francisco.



Hido using the vintage 126 camera during one of his portrait photograph sessions. Still image from SPARK, March 2006.

THE BIG PICTURE/CONTEXT

Todd Hido's work draws on several traditions within the history of photography, most notably those of landscape and portraiture. Though the birth of photography is usually associated with the first perfected [Daguerreotype](#) images of 1839, it was not until the period of early American Modern art at the turn of the 20th century that photography began to be thought of as an art form alongside painting and sculpture.



Edward Weston, [Pepper](#), 1930. Black and white photograph
http://www.crockerartmuseum.org/exhibitions/images/exhibition/WESTON_Pepper.jpg

Three practitioners closely associated with the use of photography as an art form are Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston. Each of these photographers experimented with the medium as a window onto the world *and* as a formal art technique itself. Works such as Weston's [Pepper](#) of 1930 best represent the latter exploration of the camera to create images in which the artistic qualities of the image (such as play of light and shadow on the form) overshadows the actual subject of the image. By contrast, Stieglitz's [The Hand of Man](#) (1902) is both a documentary image (window to the world) that also suggests a social commentary about industrialization given its subject and the formal arrangement of the image.



Alfred Stieglitz, [The Hand of Man](#), 1902. Black and white photograph
http://www.robertmann.com/artists/stieglitz/full_01.html

Of these three photographers, however, the work of Paul Strand provides the most useful comparison to that of Todd Hido. Inspired by the earlier works of Stieglitz and others, Strand undertook photography

seriously around 1910 and by the late teens and early 20s was producing images that set the standard for modern urban photography – images that played with the forms in the landscape. His images revealed patterns and the beauty of shapes and light as they highlighted the often ironic relationship between humans and the built environment.



Paul Strand, [The Court](#), New York, 1924. Black and white photograph.

Strand quickly began working in motion pictures as well as still photography and completed a series of leftist political documentary projects in the 1930s and 40s, eventually deemed subversive at the beginning of the Cold War. No longer able to finance his filmmaking, Strand turned more seriously to book-publishing as a means to integrate image with text in a manner that prefigures Hido's use of the photographic book as a "paper movie."

Hido's barren landscapes also look back to earlier photographers. While Ansel Adams' majestic images of the West remain iconic of a certain romantic tradition within photography, Hido's images of residential neighborhoods are markers of the post-war American landscape of suburban sprawl and share something in common with other practitioners who have taken on this subject. Dan Graham's photo-essay [Homes for America](#), first published in 1967, features images of the ex-urban landscape similarly eerily absent of human presence.



Dan Graham, [Homes for America](#), 1966-67. Color photograph
<http://www.walkerart.org/archive/6/AA7319C633A116C56170.htm>

Hido's portraits also share some important qualities with works of other artists from recent decades. Like the work of Diane Arbus or Cindy Sherman, Hido's portraits offer condensed, complicated narratives in single images. Arbus' portraits, which were all of individuals that existed on the fringes of American society, suggest entire subcultures complete with their own particular codes and modes of behavior. Their particularities are perfectly and wholly communicated through the "objective" lens of the camera in pose, clothes, look, gesture and the countless other details that collectively tell the story. Where Arbus shot candidly, capturing her subjects spontaneously, Hido composes his images, carefully considering location, light, appearance, clothing, etc.

Cindy Sherman's Untitled Film Stills of the late 1970s and early 1980s are a series of self-portraits of the artist in different guises typical of stock cinematic tropes of femininity that equally suggest narratives that extend far beyond the photograph's mere instant. Aptly titled, each of the works in this series seem to belong to a movie scene wherein some elusive but undeniable drama has or is about to unfold, as in Untitled Film Still #14.



Cindy Sherman,
Untitled Film Still #14,
1978. Black and white
photograph.
[http://www.masters-of-
photography.com/S/she
rman/sherman_14_full](http://www.masters-of-photography.com/S/sherman/sherman_14_full)

Like Hido's hotel room portraits, Sherman's environments are both specific and generic at the same time – specific enough to convincingly evoke our memory and yet left generic enough so as just to be on the edge of recall. We know them, yet they never existed. For Hido, the hotel rooms function similarly like a tableau in which he has constructed an image, adding subject and then just the right moments of color, light, composition, form, texture, etc. so as to be evocative of that "you have been there" feeling" and yet completely new and anonymous.

SECTION III – RESOURCES

TEXTS & PERIODICALS

Hido, Todd. House Hunting, Nazraeli Press, 2001

Hido, Todd. Roaming, Nazraeli Press, 2005

Newhall, Beaumont. A History of Photography: From 1939 to the Present, Bulfinch Press, 1982.

Newhall, Nancy, ed. The Daybooks of Edward Weston, Aperture, 1991.

Sherman, Cindy and Peter Galassi. The Complete Untitled Film Stills, Museum of Modern Art, 2003.

Stieglitz, Alfred. Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings, Bullfinch, 1999.

Tomkins, Calvin and Paul Strand. Paul Strand: 60 Years of Photographs, Aperture, 1999.

WEB SITES

Masters of Photography
<http://masters-of-photography.com/>

American Masters on photographer Alfred Steiglitz
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/stieglitz_a.html

A tribute to artist/photographer Cindy Sherman
<http://cindysherman.com/>

Photographer Edward Weston
<http://www.edward-weston.com/>

<http://www.toddhido.com/todd.html>
Todd Hido's website

All inclusive Web site with resources for amateur and professional photographers
<http://www.photo.net/>

Web site with images and biographical information on photographer Paul Strand
<http://www.temple.edu/photo/photographers/strand/strandindex.html>

Stephen Wirtz Gallery – Todd Hido's gallery
<http://www.wirtzgalleries.com>

VIDEO RESOURCES

SPARK – video streams of other artists using photography and photographic process:

Sixth Street Photography Workshop -
<http://www.kqed.org/arts/spark/episode.jsp?id=5035>

Photographer Olivier Laude
<http://www.kqed.org/arts/people/profile.jsp?id=4722>

Man Ray: Prophet of the Avant Garde (1997) 60 minutes, black and white, narrated by Stockard Channing. Mel Stuart, producer & director, written by Neil Baldwin.

Alfred Steiglitz – An American Masters film on photographer including a Web site and images
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/stieglitz_a.html

Portrait of an Artist at Work: Cindy Sherman (1988) Color, 43 minutes, Directed by Michel Auder.

Peppers and Nudes - The Photographer Edward Weston (2004) Color, 27 minutes, produced by Joachim Haupt and Sabine Pollmeier.

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

[San Francisco Camerawork](http://www.sfcamerawork.org)
657 Mission Street, San Francisco
415.863.1001
Monday-Saturday 10AM-6PM
<http://www.sfcamerawork.org>

Rayko Photo Center
Exhibits, workshops, darkroom rental
Tuesday–Thursday: 12–10 pm
Friday–Sunday: 12–8 pm
Closed Mondays
428 Third Street, San Francisco
415.495.3773
<http://www.raykophoto.com>

San Francisco Photography Center
Harvey Milk Recreational Arts Building
50 Scott Street, San Francisco
Call for schedules and fees:
415.554.9522
** Offers classes and darkroom rental*

[PhotoAlliance](#)
**Offers workshops, lecture series, and exhibitions held at venues around San Francisco*
Call or email for events and schedules:
415.781.8111
shows and lectures at various locations around San Francisco
photo@photoalliance.org
<http://www.photoalliance.org>

[Center for Photographic Art](#)
P.O. Box 1100
Carmel, CA 93921
(408) 625-5181
** Non-Profit Organization*

[FiftyCrows](#) (non profit org.)
49 Geary Street
Suite 225
San Francisco, CA 94108

[Fraenkel Gallery](#)
49 Geary Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

[J.J. Brookings](#)
330 Commercial Street
San Jose, CA 95112
Mixed media gallery

[Levin Gallery](#)
408 Calle Principal
Monterey, CA 93940

[Photography West Gallery](#)
P.O. Box 5306
Carmel, CA 93921

[Robert Koch Gallery](#)
49 Geary Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

[Saret Gallery](#)
111 East Napa Street
Sonoma, CA 95476

[Scott Nichols Gallery](#)
49 Geary Street, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94108

[Spectrum Photography Gallery](#)
1306 North Wishon Avenue
Fresno, CA 93728

[Stephen Wirtz Gallery](#)
49 Geary Street
San Francisco, CA 94108
Mixed media gallery

[Studio 391 - Fine Photography](#)
39150 S Highway One
Gualala, CA 95445

[Viewpont Gallery](#)
Sacramento Valley Photographic Art Center
551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd
Sacramento, CA 95814

[The Weston Gallery](#)
P.O. Box 655
Carmel, CA 93921

[Zeum](#)
Digital Quilt project
221 Fourth Street
(@ Howard Street)
San Francisco, CA 94103
415.820.3320
info@zeum.org
<http://www.zeum.org/education/digitalQuilt.html>

SECTION IV – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY & CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

126 camera

Instamatic cameras produced in the 1960s for easy use and low cost, typically considered to have relatively poor image quality with some exception

Aperture

An opening, such as a hole, gap, or slit, such as in an optical appliance such as a camera or telescope, that limits the amount of light passing through a lens; the diameter of the aperture in photography is expressed as an f-number, such as f15, f45, etc.

Askew

To one side, not centered

Ambient

Surrounding, to be all-around

Contact sheet

A sheet of images made from a roll of film, used by photographers to preview the images and make selections of what images to print

Edward Hopper (1882-1967)

American artist active primarily in New York, known for his rich landscapes and building portraits

Emanate

To send forth; to give off

Exposure

The act of exposing sensitized photographic film or plate; a photographic plate or film that has been exposed to light

Mock-up

A model of something, or a smaller piece made in advance of a larger work to check on quality, scale, etc.

Mundane

Ordinary or unremarkable

Natural light

Light emanating from a natural source such as the sun or moon

Negative space

The space in an image which is around the subject(s) or object(s), such as the spaces between blades of a fan, or the profile of a building or house

Pensive

An emotional state that is suggestive or expressive of melancholic thoughtfulness

Realism

A type of art that aims to reproduce subjects and objects in manners resembling the original

Shutter speed

The speed at which the shutter of a camera opens and closes, allowing light into the camera to expose the film

Signature

A distinctive mark, style or characteristic indicative of a particular person or identity

Tenacity

The state of quality of being tenacious; persistent determination

Tripod

An adjustable 3-legged stand used to support a camera

Vigilant

To be on the alert or watchful

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Reading & Talking About Photographs

Compile a group of photographs using resources in the Resource or a library collection. Include documentary, celebrity, landscape, adventure, historical, snapshot images, etc. Help students develop a vocabulary to “read” and discuss photographs using the terms on the vocabulary list.

Challenge students to compare two different types of photographs, one from the early 20th century (1900-1930) and one from Todd Hido (see the SPARK, Todd Hido, or Steven Wirtz Web sites (see **Resources**)). Ask students to describe each image, identifying the subject, elements of style, and point of view of the photographer.

Ask students to write short essays about what is happening in the photograph, including who the people are, what has happened in the place, how objects got to where they are, etc. Make sure students tie the specific details of the stories to specific support in the photographs. If the image is an historic one, invite students to do research to discover just what the objects or places are, including year of manufacture, type, tradition of use, cost, etc., and to weave these facts into the story.

If appropriate, invite students to restage the scene in the image and to recreate the photograph it using contemporary elements and a camera.

Once they have seen the elements of the image in “real” life, invite them to discuss the difference between the “real” scene and the image in the photograph? How does the medium of photography impacts on the image?

RELATED STANDARDS - VISUAL ARTS

Kindergarten

Connections, Relations & Applications

Career & Career-Related Skills

5.4 Discuss the various works of art (e.g., ceramics, paintings, sculpture) that artists create and the media used.

Grade 1

Connections, Relations & Applications

Career & Career-Related Skills

5.4 Describe objects designed by artists (e.g., furniture, appliances, cars) that are used at home and at school.

Grade 4

1.0 Artistic Perception

Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design

1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (color, shape/form, line, texture, space and value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

Grade 7

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.1 Describe the environment and selected works of art, using the elements of art and the principles of design.

Grades 9-12 Proficient

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.4 Analyze and describe how the composition of a work of art is affected by the use of a particular principle of design.

1.5 Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.

RELATED STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 8

Writing

2.1 Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives:

a. Relate a clear, coherent incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.

Photography & Truth

Address the issue of photography and truth by finding a number of images about the same subject or event, specifically one in which you can locate both single images **and** images published in a larger context, such as those with headlines, situated within articles or with captions. Showing only the single image(s) first, ask students to express the information conveyed the image and to identify how that information was conveyed.

- What is portrayed in the image?
- How is the object or person portrayed?
- What is the point of view of the photographer?

Then show students the image in its broader context. Ask students what is different about the image when it is in context?

- What does the context have to do with the image?
- How does text change the meaning of an image?
- What are the similarities and differences between how the photo appeared before and after?

Once completed, ask students to choose a photograph and to present it in two different ways. Invite them to write a 500-800 word essay for and against a topic and then to situate the images inside the essay, using the image to support different arguments or viewpoints on the same issue. Share the results with the class and talk as a group about how successful the presentations are and using the image and text as a persuasive tool.

Single Subject

Assemble a grouping of images of the same subject, such as trees, flowers, houses, cats, etc. that convey different moods or perspectives. Using the exercise above, talk with students about how different perspectives are expressed. Then challenge students to all take 1-2 photographs of the same object, such as a parking meter, swing set, fire hydrant, flag, sewer cover, fence, banister, etc. Assemble the images in one place and ask each student to talk about his or her image and how they made it and what kind of mood or perspective they were after. Afterwards, invite the other students to respond, assessing how well the image expresses the student's intention. Avoid terms such as "good" and "bad," supporting students to ground their observations to specific elements in the image, such

as "the image successfully communicates sadness because....." and then identifying those elements in the image that communicate sadness.

Portrait Project

Watch the SPARK story, focusing on the portrait project on which Todd Hido is presenting working. Challenge students to develop a similar portrait project, using a specific place and a person or group of people, such as a classmate, another class at the school, a retirement center, a residential treatment facility, a hospital, a hospice, etc. Ask students to develop their approach to making the portrait in order to put the subjects at ease.

If appropriate, consider using the portrait project as a starting point for an interview or project with the students, using the photography as a way into the subject. For instance, students take portraits of residents in a retirement community or other housing facility in the neighborhood. They could conduct an interview that is prepared and exhibited next to the image.

Create a Paper Movie

Challenge students to collect a series of images from home, Internet, magazines, etc. and to create a paper movie in the manner of Todd Hido. Discuss the concept of a paper movie, exploring the idea of telling a story (beginning/middle/end) and visual flow (images that are related to one another through color, light, composition, subject, texture, etc.

SPARKLERS – TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND EXPLORATION

- * Using a Polaroid, 126, 35mm, or digital camera, ask students to take one image somewhere in the classroom or on school grounds. Once developed, invite students to write a short poem or piece of free verse about the image, using the visual elements of the image to inspired choice of words, format, length, etc.
- * Compare a National Geographic article with images to a history book account of the same place, preferably one of which the students are

unaware. What are the most important characteristics of the place? What images are included in the National Geographic? What are they of? What can you tell about the place just looking at the photographs? How do the photographs relate to the text? How do the National Geographic and the textbook compare?

- * Consider the role of photography as a document of truth. Research the traditional use of photography as a method of documentation for insurance purposes (as with objects and possession) as well as for people when they have passed away. Compare these uses with the more familiar uses of photography today, such as snapshots, vacation photos, etc. How have our ideas about and uses of photography changed?
- * Talk about the idea of an embedded photographer – someone from a community – taking pictures of that community. Then compare it to a journalistic photographer who comes in just to take photographs. What are the differences? Look at works of the same place, people, or objects taken by different types of photographers. What are the similarities and differences? Does one appear more “truthful” than the other? How is that expressed? What the points of view of the various photographers? How is that expressed?

- * Discuss as a group the relationship of photography with truth. Because photography has an analogical relationship with objects and people in the world, it was long held as being a thoroughly truthful document, not manipulated to anyone’s particular aims. Choose a number of photos that represent misrepresentations or falsehoods, such as Hippolyte Bayard’s self-portrait called Drowned Man (below) from 1840, designed to play with the prevailing belief in photography as a document of truth at the end of the 19th century. Talk about the notion of truth and photography, showing contemporary examples of manipulated photographs. What techniques are used today to achieve similar effects?
- * Explore the Digital Quilt project at Zeum, the youth technology museum in San Francisco, by making an in-person visit or visiting their Web site. Invite students to create a digital quilt.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/standards/vpa>.