



**TAKE
YOUR
PLACE**

Commercial storytelling with photography

with Cat Gundry-Beck

Cat Gundry-Beck is a commercial photographer living in Reykjavik, Iceland. She creates bright, minimal, dreamlike images, mostly outdoors in the wild Icelandic landscape. Cat uses narrative to create advertising photos that tell a story to help brands sell a product or service.

Objective

This workshop will look at how to create images that stand out and tell a story. Through examples of advertising images, we'll look at different aspects of photographs and apply them to your own work through a few fun tasks.

Workshop duration

This activity should take approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete. Please adapt to your circumstances.

YouTube workshop link

https://youtu.be/MQ_hNO2Mf2g

You will need

Essential materials:

- Camera phone
- A few objects to photograph (can be any products e.g. perfume bottle, soft drink can, bar of chocolate, etc.)
- Work surface e.g. table
- Background e.g. wall, roll of paper or bedsheet

Optional materials:

- Extra light source (can be a lamp or torch)
- Phone tripod for self-timer images



Task one: light and composition

- Set up your work station: a roll of paper, a bedsheet or a wall as a backdrop.
- Grab a product to 'advertise' - e.g. tea, soft drink, bag of sweets, a plant, perfume bottle, necklace.
- Curate (arrange) and photograph your product (either by itself, with a hand holding it or with a person) paying attention to light and composition.
- Think about where the light is coming from: a window? A lamp?
- Think about the rule of thirds - don't place your product in the centre of the image.

TOP TIP: Making the focal point of the image (the product or person) brighter than the rest of the image makes it stand out more.



Task two: leading lines and negative space

- Add in a second object that helps to direct the eye to the focal point (the first object).
- Create some leading lines (lines of the table, frame of the window in the background, a hand reaching for the product).
- Have some negative space in the photo: negative space is a part of image with little or no detail e.g. sky, a blank or coloured background, dark parts, out of focus parts.

TOP TIP: Creating negative space gives a balance to the image, leading the eye to the main focal point. It's also good for graphic designers for adding in a company's logo or some text on top of the image.



Task three: narrative and emotion

- Choose an emotion or story that you'd like to have in your image.
- Add something to the image to help tell the story.
- Some emotions/atmospheres you could choose are: happy, excited, fun, calm, tranquil, energetic, romantic, nostalgic, fancy, summery, and luxurious.

Examples:

- Bright colours to add a sense of excitement and fun.
- Use older objects to have a vintage/nostalgic feel.



TOP TIP:
Think about body language. For example if focusing on hands with a product, a soft open hand would give the feeling of elegance and openness whereas a clenched fist and tight grip would give a feeling of anger, power or urgency. If you have a model in your shot pay close attention to their facial expression and body language.



Next steps

Step back from your work and consider:

- What have I learned about different aspects of creating stronger photos?
- How could I use these techniques in other types of photography or image creation in the future?
- What are my passions? Could I create images for companies that work in that sector? E.g. sports brands, fashion, climate change initiatives, etc.
- How will this change the way I view advertising in photography?

Conclusion

This workshop gives technical tips and insights from Cat Gundry-Beck's approach to creating commercial photographs. What elements from this can you adopt into your work?

These techniques could be used as inspiration for ways of making and thinking that could be applied to Photography, Graphic Design, Illustration, Animation, Visual Effects, Games Art and Design, as well as Fine Art.



Find out more about Cat Gundry-Beck

 [@catgundrybeck](https://www.instagram.com/catgundrybeck)

 www.catgundrybeck.com

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 [@takeyourplace_he](https://www.instagram.com/takeyourplace_he)

Further resources

 www.the-aop.org

 www.discovercreative.careers

Useful links

 [@norwichuniarts](https://www.instagram.com/norwichuniarts)  [Creative Careers](http://www.creativecareers.com)

 www.takeyourplace.ac.uk  [NUA Website](http://www.nua.ac.uk)