**A Guide to Deconstructing a Visual Image**

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but whose words are they?

Just as an author carefully selects words and phrases to express ideas, a

photographer, advertising executive, or graphic designer composes a

photograph, ad, or layout to convey a specific emotion or message. As a

result, a visual is not simply a reflection of reality, but rather the expression

of a point of view. The following guide will help you deconstruct any image.

1. Content can be symbolic and the following elements may affect how

we interpret an image:

 who or what is emphasized

 facial expression

 body language

 the use of computer retouching

 the action featured

 objects

 setting

 colours

2. Composition refers to the arrangement of elements in the picture.

Consider:

use of blank space

 juxtaposition (putting seemingly unrelated items close together

or side by side

 details in the foreground and background

 what is excluded or cropped

3. Camera distance and angle may indicate a photographer’s attitude

toward the subject. Consider:

 high angles (looking down) suggesting vulnerability

 low angles (looking up) suggesting power

 close ups suggesting intimacy

 long shots suggesting distance

 eve-level shots suggesting equality

4. Lighting may contribute to mood and atmosphere. Consider:

 brightness/darkness

 top lighting

 side lighting

 bottom lighting

 back lighting

 artificial lighting

 natural lighting