

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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Dear friend,

I'm very afraid for the future of photography and humanity.

I'm also very hopeful.

Okay first of all, some trends I'm seeing:

Less creative freedom

So, there are really any more independent photography bloggers. Rather, we are all on Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, or some social media platform.

The problem: we have less creative freedom.

For example, on Instagram you cannot change the order of your images. New photos will always show up on top. You cannot add hyperlinks in your posts.

On Facebook: when people see your photos in their stream, they will also see advertisements. You cannot block advertisements on your Facebook photos.

I think photography blogs are the answer. Register on 1and1.com and install Wordpress.org. The benefit of using a wordpress photography blogging platform: you own your content. And you can control whether you put on advertisements or not. You can easily mass import and export content.

You can mix visuals with text, or audio or video.

Not only that, but realize-- Instagram is owned by Facebook, and Facebook/Instagram are advertising platforms. Facebook and Instagram, Snapchat and all these other "free" companies are companies. Their purpose is to make money. And how do they make money? By delivering you content-tailored advertisements, based on your personal browsing behavior, what you "like", what you comment on, etc.

So on one hand I love social media-- it connects us. People who are poor and cannot afford to pay for their own website is empowered.

Yet, we are also trapped. To be honest, you are kind of at a slight disadvantage if you're not on Facebook or Instagram.

Even scarier: the only real photo sharing networks in existence now is Facebook and Instagram (same company). Which means, there is a monopoly of images on just one platform. Which means, Facebook can eventually manipulate the images we are being delivered through their "News feed algorithm". For further reading, read the book "The filter bubble"-- the basic concept that we are becoming tunnel-visioned in terms of what is being fed us in our news feeds. So liberals will only see pro-liberal news, and conservatives will only see pro-conservative news. It is a lot of navel-gazing, which prevents us from seeing a diversity of opinions, ideas, and thoughts.

SOMA

In Aldous Huxley's book "Brave New World"-- he envisioned a world where everyone was "happy", because everyone took "Soma"-- imagine a mix between ecstasy and weed, with no downsides. People wouldn't care that the world was going to shit, because everyone "felt good".

Today's world, our photography soma is the likes we get on Facebook, Instagram, and the "snaps" we get on Snapchat, and messages on What's app, Facebook Messenger, or anything else in our social media streams.

Above all, our soma is advertising. The only reason the capitalistic engine keeps running: we keep having desires to fulfill. We keep working at our shitty jobs, just so we can buy that new Range Rover, that new Hermes bag, or that new Giuseppe shoe.

As photographers, many of us have good jobs. Yet, we are stuck in golden cubicle prisons. We think if we just bought that new Leica or digital camera, we would have more freedom, to travel, wander, be a nomad, and make photos.

Sad reality: ain't no camera gonna buy your freedom.

Hedonic Treadmill

Hedonism: feeling good. Treadmill: something that keeps on going faster.

We buy a new Leica, and it is exciting for a week. Then the effect wears off. We buy a Hasselblad, and it is exciting for a week. Then the effect wears off. We buy a Phase One, and the same happens.

It happens with everything-- new phones, tablets, laptops, desktops, cars, pornography, movies, tv shows, YouTube shows, video games, etc.

Social media too: you can never have “enough” followers. Once you have a thousand followers, you want ten thousand, then a hundred thousand, then a million.

Same with money: \$40,000 a year, the. \$80,000 a year, \$100,000 a year, \$200,000 a year, \$500,000 a year, a million a year, ten million, a hundred million, a billion, ten billion, a hundred billion, a trillion, etc.

Trust me, when I say this, I'm not immune. I was spoon fed the virtues of American capitalism ever since I was a kid, watching Hot Rod commercials on tv, eating Hot Pockets from Costco, eating \$1 McChicken burgers from McDonald's, and more recently-- by buying expensive Apple products, expensive NIKE shoes, Leica cameras, etc.

Good news.

Good news: free unlimited photography storage from Google Photos.

Good news: you can buy a good iPhone for \$400, and make good photos.

Good news: free photography editing apps like VSCO and Snapseed.

Bad news.

Bad news: if one day Google becomes evil and refuses to give you your photos, you're fucked.

Bad news: one day Facebook or Instagram prevents you from sharing photos that it deems “inappropriate”. For example, I had a photograph/illustration I shared of a KKK (ku klux klan) which I photoshopped with a Nazi Swastika (as racial/political commentary/activism) removed from my Instagram, because it didn't follow “community guidelines.” In other words, the image of a KKK member might offend potential advertisers or people on Instagram, so it was removed.

How to fight back.

Okay, there is no real enemy. The only enemy is ourselves.

I cannot speak for yourself, but I can speak for myself.

My problems:

- I was always dissatisfied with myself and photography, because my camera wasn't “good enough” in my eyes. I fell victim to “Gear acquisition syndrome), aka GAS.
- I wanted more social media fame. No likes or followers were ever enough.
- I was desperate to become famous, and sold my freedom to camera companies, just to get more “branding” and free products.
- I focused so much on making better photos, rather than asking myself “*why*” I

made photos.

I'm also afraid that the future of photography is gonna be made disgusting with advertisements. You can even see this on Instagram today, so many more advertisements creeping everywhere-- in your feed (once a sacred space), or now even in your "stories".

Advertising isn't necessarily a bad thing. But for me, I just hate advertisements. Yet, we are all advertising ourselves. Like I'm the most shameless self-marketer, advertiser, and promoter of ERIC KIM and HAPTIC products, and my books and workshops.

So you gotta be wary of everything you read online, because everyone has a secret agenda, even including ERIC KIM. Like even in writing this article, I'm secretly hoping that you will like me, end attending one of my workshops one day, buying HAPTIC products, or joining STREET CLUB. So friend, even take everything I write on this blog with a (huge) grain of salt.

To be honest, I don't trust anything on the internet anymore, that is supported by advertising. The only thing I trust include books from dead philosophers, like Seneca, Montaigne, Epictetus, Nietzsche, and more contemporary philosophers like Nassim Taleb, or other rich independent opinion-makers and risk-takers like Ray Dalio.

Be skeptical.

Always be skeptical of ERIC KIM and other photography bloggers.

All photography bloggers with affiliate links to cameras receive a small percentage profit, including Eric Kim. Ask yourself:

If you wrote a camera review for a \$1,500 USD camera, and made \$30 off every camera you sold through your link-- is it really in your best interest to say something really bad about the camera?

Another idea:

If I am sponsored by camera company X, and I review their camera, am I going to be 100% truthful about what I think about it-- especially if I'm getting free cameras, free travel, and other goodies?

Be skeptical of everyone, including Eric Kim.

Solution: test out your own cameras and equipment, and see whether *you* like it.

Social media suggestions

I started to hate my addiction to social media, and how many likes I got on my photos, comments, followers, etc. So I deleted my Instagram with 60,000 followers.

I now feel free.

I feel clean. I make photos that please myself. Now, I honestly don't care what others think of my photos.

Now, I just ask myself:

Do I like my own photos?

My ideal camera

With cameras, I don't care about brands or labels anymore.

My only requirements now:

1. Is the camera light, compact, and can I carry it with me on a daily basis?
2. Are the ergonomics and feeling of the camera in my hand comfortable?
3. Are the menus simple and easy to use?

As of now, only cameras which fit that requirement for me:

- Digital RICOH GR
- Film Leica

Shoot in airplane mode

I'm a huge fan of phone photography. But I prefer not shooting only on a phone. Why? I'm addicted enough to technology, I want to spend *less* time being chained to a 5-inch black mirror. I want to rest my eyeballs, to let it wander like when I was 5 years old.

Simple suggestion for phone photographers: shoot your photos in airplane mode.

The photography trifecta

To me, photography isn't about making pretty photos. Rather, it is about finding meaning, purpose, and appreciation in life.

I endeavor to make beautiful photos of Cindy, strangers I meet, and myself-- to help me appreciate life more. I want less stress and anxiety in my life, and more words of thanksgiving and gratitude.

So for me, I currently practice the photography trifecta:

1. Street Photography
2. Personal Photography
3. Entrepreneurial Photography

Street photography makes me more confident and brave.

Personal photography makes me more appreciative of my loved ones.

Entrepreneurial photography makes me money, and helps me take more risks in life, and to build things that empower others.

Photography solutions for myself.

I don't got any answers for you. I'm sorry. But I figured out (some) answers for myself. Some lessons for myself:

1. Always optimize for the smallest, lightest camera.
2. Own your own photography blog (Wordpress.org) for maximum creative freedom.
3. Make your own photography products to feel cool (HAPTIC)
4. Share what you learn via teaching, workshops, books, blog posts, video, articles, letters, etc.
5. Only share photos that I like.
6. Photography is a good tool for self-empowerment, an excuse to walk more, and photography is studying philosophy in a practical sense.
7. I'm a sociologist-philosopher-photographer, not a photographer.

Make photos to uplift your soul.

I often feel a bit like a black sheep in this sea of white. But that's okay, I like to share my ideas, and hope it will help a few others.

If you want to find more meaning in your photography and life, buy PHOTO JOURNAL.

To conquer your fears in street photography, attend an ERIC KIM WORKSHOP, or buy STREET NOTES.

Buy lots of HAPTIC products, to make Cindy happy when she checks her email, which makes me happy, and a more productive blogger.

Lastly, make photos for yourself. Nobody else.

Have more creative freedom. You are already a photographer and artist. Don't doubt yourself. Make photos, don't take photos. And above all, shoot everyday like it were your last.

Photographic Memento Mori.

BE STRONG, ERIC