PHOTOGRAPHER AS A VESSEL

THE PHOTOGRAPHER AS A VESSEL

Dear friend,

Some more fun photography philosophy to wax poetic about -- this time, let's consider the photographer as a vessel.

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1. All reality is subjective

Let's consider the following facts:

First of all, 'reality' as we know it -- is just interpreted through our sensory-perception. There are a trillion shades of color, yet the human eye cannot perceive all of it. There are billions of smells, yet the human nose can only perceive a bit of it. There are radio signals, wifi signals, and other waves floating around in the air, yet the human senses cannot perceive any of that.

The dragonfly sees the world differently from a human. The dog and cat also perceives the world differently from a human.

Therefore, let us accept that the human being can only capture or perceive a tiny, minute portion of reality.

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2. Capture decisive moments which are meaningful to YOU

Now, the real world (visually) is quite phenomenal. There are millions of shapes, forms, patterns, gestures, faces, and scenes we cannot begin to even comprehend.

There are millions and billions of 'decisive moments' happening every second, on every street corner in the world.

Yet, you are just one human being. There is no way you can capture *all* of the decisive moments happening right now.

Your duty as a photographer is to capture personally-meaningful decisive moments for yourself-- and share that joy with others.

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3. The photographer as a filter/vessel

First of all, you are a filter. You can only filter (some) of visual reality -- and you capture that reality with your lens.

Also, the photographer is a vessel -- an empty vessel, and it is your job to store images, and share those images with others. If we take a zen-taoist philosophical approach, we as humans aren't so important. Rather, we are an empty vessel to carry ideas, and share those ideas/information with others.

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4. Your pictures are more important than you

The reason I like the idea of a photographer being a vessel is that it helps me kill my ego.

I think having an ego as a photographer-artist is important, for you to share your own perception of the world with others. **Your perspective as a photographer-artist-individual is important, and deserves to be shared.**

However, the downside with an ego: we get personally offended or we get sad when others don't like/appreciate our photos/work.

Therefore, if you consider yourself as a vessel -- an empty carrier, waiting to be filled up with images, **you disconnect your ego from your photographs.**

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5. Inspire 1 viewer

The benefit of disconnecting your ego from your photographs is that your duty is to make beautiful images/pictures. However, it isn't your duty to force everyone to like your photos.

My philosophy:

> *If you can make 1 photograph that inspires, uplifts, and elevates the mood and joy of life to 1 viewer someone on planet earth, you are on the right path.*

For example, let's say you make a photograph and share it online. Let's say 100 people see it, and 99 of those 100 hate it. But for 1 person, it totally changes how they see life (in a positive way). According to my moral calculus, your duty as a photographer is fulfilled -- if your image was able to deeply touch that 1 person.

I guess in other words,

> *Don't seek to please the masses. Seek to please 1 individual (1 viewer), deeply, and profoundly.*

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6. If all fails; shoot just for yourself.

Now, let's say you share the photo with 100 people, and all 100 people hate it (unlikely, but possible).

> ***If you like the photo, that is enough.***

If you make photos that bring you joy, that gives you more hope, that makes you a more pleasant person, and makes you more optimistic, and you end up sharing that optimism/joy with others-- then, **making photos is good not only for you, but for all of society -- society as being understood as your friends, family, and close community**.

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7. Your photos don't belong to you

Josef Koudelka once said, once he makes the photos -- he realizes, **the photos don't belong to him.**

I see myself the same way. Of course all the photos I shoot are filtered through my own subjective reality. Yet, once I create the photos and release them into the world-- the photos/pictures no longer belong to me. This is why I believe in open-source; the advancement of the human race is far more important than myself as an individual.

I am only a vessel.

Conclusion: Practical takeaways

So -- this is what ERIC KIM thinks; what should I think?

1. Call them 'the' pictures; not 'my' pictures

First of all, don't call them "*my*" pictures, call them "*the*" pictures. This means, someone can hate your photos, but still like you as a human being.

2. Don't take your photography too seriously

Secondly, your duty is to make beautiful pictures which uplift, inspire, and motivate others. Therefore, don't worry about yourself too much -- just focus on the picture-making.

3. Inspire just 1 individual

Thirdly, it is impossible to please 100% of the people who see your pictures. In your mind, just seek to inspire that 1 viewer-- that one person, who will find extreme joy in your work. According to the MODERN PHOTOGRAPHER principle; it is better to alienate or have extreme followers; people who EXTREMELY HATE your work, or EXTREMELY love your work. Avoid people in the luke-warm in-between.

JUST SHOOT IT.

Lastly, don't over-think it. When you see something that makes you smile or excites you, **just shoot it.**

Photograph like a child. Shoot your food, photograph nice colors, photograph nice textures. Don't seek to make 'serious' photos; seek to make fun photos. Have fun, share your enthusiasm for living, and don't take yourself too seriously.

SMILE, ERIC

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