

ARE PHOTOGRAPHERS ARTISTS?

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In this essay, I will attempt to define art, and explain why I believe it to be essential in being human.

Art is the soul's power to change nature

I've been inspired by the philosopher Democritus, who explains art as:

The soul's power to change nature.

Therefore, art is our ability to change nature – to change external reality, and to feel more in control. To have more power in our lives.

Therefore, art is a tool of self empowerment, and the ability for us to take control of our lives.

Self sufficiency in art

Also, the great thing about art: it makes us more self sufficient. With art, we can create our own happiness.

As Nietzsche once said,

"Excuse me friends, as I venture to paint my own happiness on [my] own wall".

Therefore, I see art as the ability and the power for us to empower ourselves, to feel more control and autonomy in our lives, and the opportunity to share that power with others.

What do we have control over?

There are lots of things we don't have control over in our lives —we cannot control how rich we are, our health, or what fate sends our way.

But, we have 100% control over the art we can make.

Therefore, I think that true happiness has something to do with exerting control over our lives, by making art.

What is art?

Art is our ability to change nature —we can change pictorial planes by making photographs, or by putting paint on a canvas.

I think art is necessary for ourselves to thrive, and feel the greatest extent of joy in life.

Joy via progress

Furthermore, I think we can only feel true joy in art if we have a sense of PROGRESS.

And, we must judge our sense of progress within ourselves.

What does it mean

To feel progress in our art, it means:

1. To feel you are evolving
 2. To feel you are augmenting and increasing your visual acuity, and how you see the world.
 3. The sense of control – the sense that you are making art that is concurrent with what is in your mind. For example, as a photographer, you might pre visualize a scene and have an expectation of what the photo should look like. True joy in photography is when you make photos that are concurrent with what you expect the photos to look like. This is why I like shooting with an LCD screen: What I see is what I get. The worst is when you see a scene you want to photograph that you think will be a beautiful photo, you take the photo, then you review the LCD screen and feel disappointed because what you imagined isn't the same as what the photo became.
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Vertical integration as artists

We also need to be self-sufficient artists. As an artist, you must become “vertically integrated”:

1. Own the means to production (own your own artistic tools, camera, etc)
 2. Own your one publishing platform (own your own photography website or blog, or newsletter)
 3. Own the ability and means to process your own photos (if you shoot film, ability to process your own film). If you shoot digitally, the skill and ability for you to post process your own photos to look the way you want them to look.
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Art as increase of power

We must feel more power in our photography and art.

As a photographer, **I feel more powerful and self confident, when I hesitate less before making photos.**

To hesitate less in photography: don't censor yourself before shooting, and have no fear in street photography.

Therefore, to increase your power as a photographer is to feel a sense of control over your image-making process, without getting censored, and without doubting yourself.

Why photography is art

Photography is art, because:

1. Photography increases your self esteem, and sense of control in your life.
 2. Photography is able to transform what you visualize in your mind, and make it into a pictorial reality.
 3. Photography can be controlled 100% by you –from the image making process, to the processing, and to the publishing.
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Practical takeaways

1. Call yourself a visual artist, not just a photographer.
2. Make photos that please you.
3. Track your progress as a photographer, by judging your ability to transpose what is in your mind's eye —and putting that to paper (or screen).
4. To be a better artist, doubt yourself less.
5. Own your own photography website or blog to share and publish your works. If you're only on Facebook or Instagram, you are a slave. Don't be a digital share cropper, own your own platform, and your own means to production.

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