UNEXAMINED PHOTOS AREN'T WORTH SHOOTING

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This is a spin-off of the wise saying from Socrates: "The unexamined life isn't worth living."

Gratitude in photography

I've been reviewing my old pictures and been having a lot of fun.

For me, it's appreciation of how far I've come, and how I'm changing and evolving as a photographer.

How have I evolved as a photographer?

For example in the beginning of my photographic pursuits, I was all about "the decisive moment"—shooting in the spirit of Henri Cartier-Bresson, then shooting with a flash like Bruce Golden, and now, I see myself shooting more childlike abstract photos, in the spirit of Matisse or Rene Magritte.

I feel the problem in modern life is that we have too much action, no reflection.

What is happiness?

For example, I think happiness in life is:

1. Achievement
2. Appreciation

To achieve is to satisfy some inner desire. Then appreciation is feeling gratitude and a sense of progress.

So looking at my old photos, I feel immense gratitude for the past teachers I've had, and the past experiences I've had. But also, it is a reminder to make NEW photos, and to gain NEW experiences —for me to keep evolving, experimentation, and learning.

Feel gratitude for the past

I think in life, we often spend too much time living in the past, with nostalgia, and sadness or regret.

My suggestion:

Smile at the past, and be grateful — both for the good and the bad.

The good: we must remember the good times in the past, and feel gratitude.

The bad: also be grateful for the pain in the past, because that is where the biggest growth opportunities come from.

Even for myself —my failures, regrets, scars, and pains has helped me become me.

How to learn from your failures in photography

So friend, look back at your old pictures, and feel gratitude.

Also, examine your old photos —and ask yourself,

What can I learn from my past pictures, for myself to improve in my photos?

For example, I think we learn more from our failures as photographers than successes.

When I look at my photos that I feel disappointment in —I learn:

1. What can I do differently next time? Should I adjust my focus differently — focusing on the background instead or foreground? Should I hesitate less next time when shooting? Should I "work the scene" more and shoot more photos of the same scene, to squeeze more juice from the lemon?
2. Were my exposure or technical settings off? Should I use a flash next time, or lower my exposure compensation?
3. Why are my pictures boring to me? Should I have been more patient, and waited for a more interesting decisive moment to occur?

Never stop learning, be bold, and remember — enjoy the process in photography.

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