

EVERYTHING IS INTERESTING 2

EVERYTHING IS INTERESTING IN PHOTOGRAPHY!

Dear friend,

Remember -- the initial joy you had in photography, when everything was so interesting?

1. Beginner's mind in photography

This is what they call 'beginner's mind' -- when you start off as a beginner, or as a child, everything is interesting.

To me, being alive is the best possible blessing any human being could ask for.

And for me, photography is all about expressing gratitude for being alive. Our job as photographers is for us to transmit our enthusiasm and passion for life into our images.

2. Henri Cartier-Bresson's initial passion for photography

The problem that happens in our photography (and life) is once we obtain 'expert's mind' -- and things no longer become as interesting as they once were.

I came across this nice quote from Henri Cartier-Bresson, who talks about seeing everything as interesting:

"I think everything is interesting. If you're scratched but at the same time you can't just photograph everything you see. There are some places where the pulse beats more and others."

However, Henri Cartier-Bresson still admits, it is hard to find inspiration in your own country, when you're stuck in routine:

"The most difficult thing is on your own country. You know too much its a...when its on your own block, its such a routine, its quite difficult to get out. When I'm going to a butcher, well....places where I am all the time...I know too much and not enough and to be lucid about is the most difficult."

What is the solution? For us to have an open-awareness (a concept from Zen -- something Henri Cartier-Bresson also studied):

"Your mind must be open. Open, aware. Aware, like this, like having a radar, a searchlight or like this."

What is the most challenging thing in photography? For us to stay inspired -- to keep finding interest in the world.

Henri Cartier-Bresson admits that "...anybody has done 10 good photographs in his life." But consistency, is what is key, as he continues:

"What is interesting is consistency. To keep on, on, on, on. Its always re examining things, trying to be more lucid and free and to go more deeper and deeper."

What joy does Henri Cartier-Bresson get from photography? He says photography is a way of self-expression:

"[Photography is] a way of shouting the way you feel. I love life, I love human beings, I hate people also. You see the camera, it can be a machine gun. It can be a psychoanalytical couch. It can be a warm kiss. It can be a sketch book, the camera."

Furthermore, Henri Cartier-Bresson sees photography as a way to AFFIRM life, and to say 'yes' to life:

"Even for me, that's strictly my way of feeling, I enjoy shooting a picture, being present and it's a way of saying yes, yes, yes. It's like the last 3 words of Ulysses of Joyce, which is one of the tremendous works which has ever been written. Its yes, yes, yes. And photography is like that. Its yes, yes, yes. And there is no maybe. All the maybes should go to trash because it's very instant,

it's the presence, it's a moment, its there. And it's a respect of it and it's an enjoyment it's a tremendous enjoyment of saying yes! Even if it's something you hate...yes! It's an affirmation...Yes!"

3. Why did Henri Cartier-Bresson give up photography?

Now as an interlude, the interesting thing is that Henri Cartier-Bresson quit photography after a few decades, and retired to painting/drawing for the rest of his life. My theory is that he lost his child-like sense of enthusiasm for photography and the world. Also perhaps his hidden desire was to always be a painter (not a photographer), and therefore had some self-confidence issues.

Anyways, we should learn from Henri Cartier-Bresson by drawing from his initial enthusiasm in photography -- yet, going *further* than Henri Cartier-Bresson, by staying inspired in our photography for the rest of our lives.

4. It is human nature to "get used to" everything in life (no matter how good it is)

I know, I know -- it is hard to stay inspired in our photography and life. It is human nature for us to become accustomed or normalized to everyday life. Psychologists call this the 'hedonic adaptation' -- no matter how good we have it in life, we will always "get used to it."

For example,

- Even if you have the most beautiful partner in the world, you will probably tire having sex with them after a while.
- Even if you have the most beautiful home in the world, it will soon lose the "WOW" factor it once had.
- Even if you buy the nicest supercar in the world, you will soon become bored of it.

This applies to all material things we possess (our clothes, gadgets, cameras, tools), our lifestyle (the food we eat, the neighborhood we live in), and even our appreciation for our loved ones.

5. Distance makes the heart grow fonder

I know that when I am away from Cindy for extended periods of time, I appreciate her more, and I miss her more.

So perhaps -- we should detach ourselves from our things, home, and loved ones every once in a while, to better appreciate it.

For example, I regularly practice 'intermittent fasting' -- to better appreciate the taste of food.

Also, when I travel, I purposefully try to live a little more uncomfortable than I'm used to back home, in order to better appreciate 'comfort'.

And even once once once in a while, I will not drink coffee -- and of course, after overcoming a massive headache and depressive thoughts, I enjoy coffee so much more.

6. Fast from taking photos

So perhaps in photography, the secret is to regularly *not* take photos intentionally - -to fast from shooting photos, in order for us to better appreciate the joy of photography.

Maybe as an assignment:

Don't make photos for a whole month.

Rather than trying to force yourself to shoot everyday (against your own will), it might be better to force yourself *not* to shoot. This might be a better stimulus to appreciate the art of photo-making.

7. Before you hit the shutter, smile.

Ultimately, smile that you're alive. No matter how shitty your life is, being alive is the ultimate blessing.

You have something unique and special to share with the world, and remember-- photography is a tool for us to better appreciate the joy of the small, everyday things in life.

The final lesson:

Before you click the shutter, smile :)

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