

WHAT'S YOUR FINAL AIM IN PHOTOGRAPHY

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Dear friend,

What is your final aim in photography -- for what, for whom, and for why do you make pictures?

I. "Please like my work and follow me!"

For me, my final aim in photography (used) to be to gain 'fame', 'fortune', and to have my ego supported by others. Essentially, I wanted everyone to know my name, and applaud 'ERIC KIM' from the rooftops.

But -- why? Why should I care what others think of me and my pictures?

What do I do once every human being knows who I am? What do I do once I have every single camera that exists? What do I do once I have traveled to every corner of the globe-- and experience every single type of foreign culture. What is my ultimate aim as a photographer?

II. Why ERIC KIM makes pictures

To think about it -- the reason *why* I make pictures is two-fold:

1. First, I make pictures to evoke emotions within myself. I make photos because it encourages me to live more bravely, for me to explore more of the world, and to create art which gives me a reason to live, and to keep learning, and keep extending my capabilities.
2. Secondly, I make pictures to influence, affect, and evoke feelings in my viewer. If I were in outer-space and the last human alive, I would still probably make art just to relieve my own boredom -- but without fellow human beings to share my art with, I would have FAR LESS motivation to make art.

III. Why make pictures?

So I think as photographers, our two-pronged approach is important:

1. Make pictures that please ourselves
2. Make pictures that affect others

I don't think that we have to make pictures that 'please' our viewer. Rather, our pictures should EVOKE some sort of emotion, or feeling in the viewer. **Our pictures should CHANGE our viewer in one way or another.**

For example, our pictures should perhaps change the perspective of our viewer -- how they see the world. **As an artist, we are trying to influence the viewer to see the world as we do.**

IV. Be ego-centric as a photographer/artist

An artist must be ego-centric. And yes, as a photographer you are an artist.

A photographer or artist without an ego will compromise. A compromised artist is not a real artist. A compromised artist is a people-pleaser. **A 'true' artist is a people-influencer.**

V. You don't need to 'please' your audience

You can influence or affect your viewers with your pictures in different ways.

For example, your pictures don't need to make your viewer 'feel good' -- you can make pictures that make your viewer feel uncomfortable. Often, good art doesn't please the audience-- but rather, disgusts them, makes them feel afraid, scared, or repulsed.

You know when art is bad when it gives a Luke-warm, or 'tepid' response to the viewer. When the viewer looks at your pictures, shrugs their shoulders, and goes 'meh' -- that is a bad picture.

VI. How do your pictures change YOU?

But going back to the prior point-- **you gotta make pictures that CHANGE YOU.**

For example, I've been shooting a lot of high-contrast, high-saturation color pictures-- which change how I see the world. I see the world as a more interesting place. I see the world as having more life, more sex, more danger, more thrill. For me, my pictures are encouraging me to LOVE LIFE MORE, and to feel MORE EXCITED TO LIVE!

Photography and art should help STIMULATE our life -- and be a stimulus to life. Art, your pictures, should be like taking a triple-shot of espresso -- you see the world more clearly, more vividly, in multiple dimensions, and you just feel pumped up and excited to seize the day (carpe diem), and to live life to the fullest.

VII. NEVER DOUBT YOURSELF!

The most important thing to squash in ourselves is self-doubt. As an artist, you need to have this indomitable, uncompromising artistic vision -- so self-centered that others will think you're insane, an asshole, or crazy.

As an artist, you gotta know what your own taste is. You gotta know whether you like your own work or not.

An uncertain artist is still with his/her training wheels. A certain artist is a mature artist-- who doesn't need the nod of another to 'validate' his/her work. A really bad artist evaluates their artwork based on how many 'likes' they get on social media.

VIII. How do you develop your own taste?

I think food is a good analogy for art.

Ask yourself:

What kind of food do I like to eat? What flavors, spices, and textures do I like?

Also, **know how to cook your own food**. When you learn how to spice, flavor, and cook your own food (to your own liking) -- you learn about your own preferences, and your own taste.

Artwork is the same -- use your taste-buds. Does your artwork excite your palette? Does your artwork add spice to your life? Or is your artwork bland, and in desperate need of salt or yuzu-koshu sauce to invigorate you? Even worse-- does your artwork need a ton of MSG -- for you to taste anything at all?

IX. Become your own taste-maker

Don't let anyone else dictate what is 'good' taste or 'bad' taste. Be your own taste-maker.

An assignment: **don't upload any pictures for a month. Uninstall all social media apps from your phone. Then for a month, only make pictures which you like -- and at the end of the month, evaluate your pictures and ask yourself, 'Which of my pictures do I like-- and why?'**

X. Present your vision of the world through your artwork

In becoming an artist, it learning who you are. Like the oracle of Delphi: "Know yourself" is the distillation of all the Ancient Greek wisdom and philosophy.

In photography:

Shoot yourself.

Or

Make yourself.

You gotta make pictures which are a representation of *you*. You MUST be more individualistic as an artist, more single-minded, and straighter. Imagine your artistic vision like the bronze tip of an arrow. You must fly straight, and you must stay sharp. And like a good archer knows, you must not hesitate, and you must not self-doubt yourself before releasing the arrow-- or else the arrow will not fly straight, and hit your target.

XI. Practical steps to becoming a self-faithful artist

My simple suggestion:

1. First make art that pleases you.
2. Share and publish your work.
3. Keep publishing and sharing your own work (according to your own uncompromising vision) until you find an audience for your work.

To be frank, you might never find an audience. You might become a beautiful tragedy like Van Gogh -- he innovated so much with his painting, but died in rags and in poverty. Yet, he is praised by millions many years *after* his death.

And to be honest, in today's world -- if you are not good at publishing, marketing, or 'branding' your own work -- you will not find an audience for your art. Simply to be a good photographer isn't enough-- as we learned from Vivian Maier (she was a genius photographer, yet never effectively 'marketed herself' during her lifetime, and therefore never built an audience or following. Thank God for John Maloof for bringing her work to the masses).

XII. Inspire 1 future artistic genius.

And ultimately, don't make art to please the masses. Seek to make art to please yourself, maybe a few of your close friends, and those who you really care about.

If you can make art that inspires one future artistic genius-- you have done your work as an artist.

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BE STRONG, ERIC