Creative Freedom

Creative Freedom

Dear friend,

A very basic idea-- what we truly desire as artists is "creative freedom" -- to create what we desire without anyone else preventing us from doing it!

So this is the problem: many of us desire to achieve "fame", "influence", and get big contracts, deals, and perhaps getting "signed" to some sort of label.

But this is the problem:

Almost anything involving other people, money, and fame requires you to lose (some) of your creative freedom.

For example, if you got a $50,000 deal to work on some project (and someone else is paying for it), of course you're not going to have 100% creative freedom to create your project how you desire!

Similarly, a lot of us desire "fame" -- but the problem is this:

*Once you become famous, you end up having **less** creative freedom.*

Why? When you are "famous", your fans and followers expect a certain artistic output from you. Thus, you become enslaved to your audience-- you end up compromising your artistic vision, because you know what kind of pictures/artwork gets a lot of "likes". And you actually end up becoming more risk-averse; hesitant to experimenting and trying out new things.

As a simple thought, ask yourself:

Do I have the creative freedom to take whatever photos I want, process them however I want, and share them however I want?

If so, congratulations-- you have 100% creative freedom, which is probably the closest thing we can achieve for "happiness" as visual artists.

Things that comprise your artistic freedom:

1. **Uploading your photos to Facebook or Instagram**: You don't have 100% creative freedom on social media platforms. You cannot upload nudity, or things which might be "politically insensitive". For example, I got censored on Instagram in the past, when I uploaded an illustration of a KKK costume with a Nazi-Swatstika sign on his chest. I was ultimately trying to make a social critique on racism-- by making an illustration which showed that Nazi-ism, Racism, and KKK-white supremacy is all the same thing (evil). Yet, my picture got removed from Instagram because it didn't follow "community guidelines". This was one of the compelling forces which motivated me to delete my Instagram. Solution: Upload your photos to your own website/blog/platform (the best is to signup for some domain like 1and1.com or bluehost.com, and install the wordpress.org platform, and upload any kind of media on it you desire).
2. **Having people pay you money for something**: If someone is bank-rolling you with money for an artistic project, you will never have 100% creative freedom. Solution: Self-fund yourself. To compromise your artistic vision less, better to earn money as an Uber driver and produce your artistic project however you desire, rather than trying to make all the income directly through selling your art-product.
3. **Artistic collaborators**: It is good to have artistic collaborators, but recognize the truth -- whenever you collaborate with any other artist, you won't have 100% artistic and creative freedom. There will always be some sort of small and tiny artistic compromise somewhere.

Conclusion

So some basic takeaways:

1. As a photographer, revel in the fact that you can make photos however you desire! Film-makers and directors have it worse than us-- they are slaves to budgets, big movie production studios, and having to make a "commercially profitable" product.
2. You don't need to make money directly through your photography or artwork. Self-fund yourself in other practical ways.
3. Don't seek more "fame" as an artist, seek to retain 100% creative control of whatever you make.

Never trade your creative freedom for money, fame, status, power, or anything!

BE BRAZEN, ERIC