Sublime Photography

Looking at some my photos here in HADONG South Korea, sublime.

What is sublime photography?

The first question at hand is what is sublime photography, what makes it sublime etc.? First and foremost, I think a sublime photo is effortlessly beautiful, has a lot of curves and squiggly lines in it, arabesque composition etc.
Also, to me a sublime photo is black and white monochrome. Grain, contrast. The best way to do this is use a digital camera which has a built-in JPEG setting that allows you to add maximum grain and contrast. For example I really actually like the grain simulation in my Panasonic Lumix G9 camera, maybe even the green effect is even more beautiful than the Ricoh GR 3 and GR 3X.

Wabi sabi aesthetics

Why grain? I believe that grain makes a photo beautiful because in terms of aesthetics, images which are too clean and perfect and sanitized lack dynamism. For example, just shooting a typical iPhone photo with HDR enabled in color mode, default mode, with all of the highlights and shadows true to life, typically speaking the photos are not that interesting. Why? **We disdain the normal and every day and the real**. Instead I think what we like is the *hyperreal* the *surreal* etc.

For example, the reason why I find Kyoto Japan to be one of the most beautiful places on planet earth is because of the wabi sabi aesthetics; the beautiful wear and tear and patina. Also what makes Japanese aesthetics so unique and interesting is that because they are an island and were sequestered from the rest of the world for so long, they were actually able to build their own unique system of

aesthetics. For example even though I really love Korea, I think the downside of Korea and Korean aesthetics is that they did not have enough time to develop it; too much time being invaded by Japan, China, and now America etc.

How do we make sublime photos?

First and foremost, I think you must develop your taste and aesthetic preferences for your photos. The difficulty that a lot of photographers have, especially young photographers (it doesn't matter your age, just assuming that you're starting off) is that they don't really know what they like.

Also the difficulty is that in terms of aesthetic taste, so much of aesthetics is tyranny; those in power and those on top try to superimpose their aesthetic taste and preferences to you in a tyrannatical matter.

For example, it seems that the current art world in photography had this preference for what I call "emo" medium format or large format film photography. Essentially photos with high definition and resolution in medium format or large format film photos, and whatever you photograph needs to be boring, plain, and emo.

There also seems to be a trend towards both the photographer and the subject of being disinterested, "objective", and unattached.

I personally find this approach to not only be boring, but also weak and anemic. It's like eating nothing but kale and lentils for the rest of your life, not even salt or garlic or pepper allowed.

More robust, stronger and more powerful approaches

I also have a personal theory that the physiology of the photographer also affects and influences the photos that they make.

For example, if you are sad, depressed, weak, pale and anemic, lacking exposure to natural light, certainly the photos you produce will also be the same.

Let us just take a good hard look at the modern day photographer. Who are they and what do they look like? First and foremost they don't seem to exercise, hit the gym, and also they do not eat enough red meat. Their aesthetic preferences generally tends towards the past; they prefer vinyl records, flannel, the old and musty. The hilarious irony is that they believe film photography to be supreme, yet they always seem to have the newest iPhone Pro and spend waaay too much time on Instagram and social media. The simple heuristic:

Trust no photographer on Instagram.

The path

First, ascertain your aesthetic preferences, and pursue your own aesthetic ideals of beauty.

Second, do it digitally. Why? Fewer obstacles, and things to get in your way. I still have around 50 rules of Kodak portra 400 undeveloped and 20 rolls of Kodak Triax 400 I have yet developed, I doubt that I'll actually ever have time to develop it.

It isn't necessarily "excuses" which get in our way; simply, **most of us lack time**. Even me, as a full-time self-employed individual, even I barely have enough time to keep up with my photography in terms of reviewing my photos uploading them selecting them etc.

Actually one entrepreneurial idea I got is creating some sort of app or program which can look through your whole photo library, and automatically select your best ones. This would be such a great idea because once again, if you have a backlog of 5000 photos, how will you ever have the chance an opportunity to review it all?

Studying the masters then killing them

My personal aesthetic is a combination of Henri Cartier Bresson, Richard Avedon, Joseph Koudelka, and Daido Moriyama.

I love black and white, high grain high contrast etc.

The reason why I love the static is that it is hard, strong, enforced. Also a pragmatic thing as well is that it simplifies scenes and things and people, makes them more dark and mysterious etc. In fact like a good movie, there must always be some sort of element of uncertainty and mystery.

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