



PHOTO JOURNAL

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| This Personal Photography Journal belongs to | |
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| If lost, please return to | |
| | |
| My photographic journey | |
| Start Date | |
| Location | |

Dear friend,

I made this journal to invite you to reflect on your photography, motivations, and dreams. You already have all the tools and insights to become the best version of you. This journal will help you reflect on 'why' – why you take photos, why photography is meaningful to you, and why creativity is important to you.

Unlock your inner potential and take action in your photography. Personal photography is a tool to discover your inner photography purpose and better appreciate the beauty in the mundane. Personal photography can also help you to challenge existing rules and expectations in photography, and to explore your creative voice for yourself.

Keep shooting,

Eric
Saigon, 2018

MY MISSION STATEMENT

Why do I take photos?

What do I like to photograph?

What inspires my photography?

My photography goals:



PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHY REFLECTIONS

1. Why do I take photos?
2. Conquer my fears.
3. What role does social media play for me?
4. What do I not like to shoot?
5. Do I need to take photos every day?
6. Do I need to make my passion my career?
7. What do I love about my camera?
8. How can I cross-pollinate my interests?
9. What constitutes a 'good' photo?
10. Whose rules?
11. Is photography adding or removing stress from my life?
12. Am I being complacent?
13. What photo projects do I want to work on?
14. Discover my inner child.
15. I am not my photos.
16. Do I feel envy?
17. What do I want my legacy to be?

LEARN MORE

DAY 1: WHY DO I TAKE PHOTOS?

Photographers are often asked, "What camera do you shoot with? What do you take photos of? How do you make a living off photography?"

However, photographers are never asked, "Why do you take photos?"

"WHY?"

By figuring out *why* you make photos, you make all the other little questions redundant. By knowing *why* you make photos, you can better understand the underlying motivations, goals, and vision of your photography. Knowing *why* you take photos helps remind yourself and explain to others what role photography has in your life.

Do you make photos to bring yourself pleasure?

Or, do you make photos to bring others pleasure?

Do you make photos to fulfill your creative impulses? Or do you make photos to get more 'likes' on social media?

What is the passion that drives your photography?



Day 1

Date

Reflections

I take photos because:



DAY 2: CONQUER MY FEARS.

We are all slaves to fear. Fear holds us back. Fear prevents us from taking risks in pursuit of our dreams. Fear prevents us from clicking the shutter, reaching out to other photographers or curators, and achieving our personal maximum.

What if you lived a creative life with absolutely no fears? How much more could you accomplish with your photography? How much more free, alive, and excited would you feel?

Trust me, I am as much a slave to fear as anybody else. However, I train myself every day to lean into my fear. I try to channel my fears into doing what I am afraid of. In order to conquer my fears, I must first concretize them. What am I *actually* afraid of?

As an exercise, do something every day that you are afraid of. First, identify the specific source of your fear. Then, come up with small steps you can take to conquer your fear. Do what you are afraid of and you will grow.

What do you fear in your photography? Do you fear that people might judge your work negatively? Are you afraid that you cannot achieve your personal maximum? Are you afraid of unpredictable social interactions in the streets?

Day 2

Date

Assignment

1. Do something that you are afraid of.
2. Break a social norm.
3. Imagine the worst-case scenario.
4. Photograph a stranger every day for a week.
5. Shoot somewhere you are unfamiliar with.

FEARS

WAYS TO CONQUER

*Example:
I am afraid I will anger
someone when I take a
street photo of them.*

- *Practice asking for permission.*
- *Prepare a response to use if someone asks what you are doing.*

DAY 3: WHAT ROLE DOES SOCIAL MEDIA PLAY FOR ME?

Social media is overrated in a lot of ways. Many of us sign up for social media services because we are told by other photographers that it is good marketing, good publicity, and we need it to 'succeed.'

I do believe that social media has a lot of value for photographers. It has personally helped me meet other inspirational photographers, gain feedback and critique on my work, and expose my work to a larger audience.

There is also, however, a dark side to social media. Social media makes us worry too much about the opinion of others, rather than our own opinion of our photography.

What role does social media play for you? Do you use social media services to get your photography to a larger audience? Or, do you use social media to get feedback and critique? Do you use social media to connect with other photographers and make new friends? Or to get the superficial kick of getting a 'like'?



Day 3

Date

Assignment

To gain more insight, I recommend taking a break from social media for a day, a week, a month, or possibly a year. By *not* always uploading your work, you will figure out what photos are truly meaningful to you.

Reflections

I use social media because:

How do I reduce the negative effects of social media?

How can I use only use social media in a positive way?

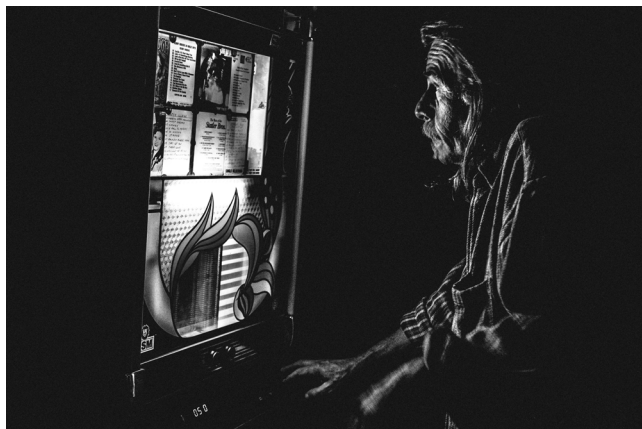
DAY 4: WHAT DO I NOT LIKE TO SHOOT?

One of the best ways to discover your personal style in photography is to figure out what kind of photos that you do *not* like to shoot.

Personally, I find it difficult to emotionally connect with landscape photography and studio photography. I am drawn to photography that is social and personal.

Therefore, I am passionate about street photography, portrait photography, and fashion photography. These types of photography force me to interact with my subjects, build courage, and practice tenacity.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' type of photography. There are only forms of photography that interest you or do not interest you.



Day 4

Date

Assignment

For a week, try a different type of photography each day.

Day 1: _____

Day 2: _____

Day 3: _____

Day 4: _____

Day 5: _____

Day 6: _____

Day 7: _____

Reflections

What type of photography bores me?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What type of photography excites me?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Why?

DAY 5: DO I NEED TO TAKE PHOTOS EVERY DAY?

On some days, we feel motivated to photograph. At other times, we feel external pressure from other photographers and social media to constantly produce.

Ultimately, it is about finding your personality in photography. Do you find more inspiration when you shoot every day or only when you feel motivated to take a photograph? Or, when you travel and want to make sense of something unfamiliar?



Day 5

Date

Reflections

Which do I prefer?

[] Shooting every day

- How can I build a routine in order to shoot every day?

[] Shooting only when I feel like it

- What inspires me to shoot (going to galleries, reading photo books, traveling)?

DAY 6: DO I NEED TO MAKE MY PASSION MY CAREER?

Sometimes we feel conflicted between our job and our passions. Does my work bring me joy or does it keep me from my passion of photography? Many aspire to become full-time photographers and make a living from doing what we love.

My dream was always to become a full-time photographer. Now that I have reached my dream, I honestly feel not much has changed in terms of my happiness. Often, happiness is more about perspective than external situations in life.

Having a day job has its own benefits. Some of the greatest artists and photographers had day jobs. Having a day job can provide financial security, which in turn gives you creative freedom for your photography.

If you do want to pursue photography full-time, I support your decision 100%. Just know, being a successful photographer is 90% business and marketing, and only 10% making photos. It also requires tons of hard work, persistence, and luck.



Day 6

Date

Reflections

BENEFITS OF A DAY JOB

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

BENEFITS OF BEING A FULL-TIME PHOTOGRAPHER

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

If I became a full-time photographer, how would my life change?

DAY 7: WHAT DO I LOVE ABOUT MY CAMERA?

Many photographers (myself included) are afflicted with G.A.S.(Gear Acquisition Syndrome). Whenever we feel uninspired or uncreative with our photography, we think that buying a new camera will bring us new insight, creativity, and unlock our potential.

In reality, it almost never happens. A new camera might inspire us for a week or so, but then we return to baseline.

The only true lasting way to be creative in your photography is to stick with the camera and lens you already have, and figure out how to make the best out of it. Remember, a camera is just a tool to do what you love.

New cameras are announced every week, month, or year; do not be tempted. Reflect on the benefits of your camera and what you love about it. Remember how excited you were when bought your camera. Reread reviews of your camera and reignite your excitement for it. By focusing on the positives of your camera and lens, you will be able to fight the urges of G.A.S.



Day 7

Date

Reflections

My favorite things about my camera:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Photo projects I will make with this camera:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



DAY 8: HOW CAN I CROSS-POLLINATE MY INTERESTS?

You are an individual with many different passions, interests, and life experiences. How can you combine all these different sources of inspiration to make your photography unique?

Many experts who study creativity call this “cross-pollination.” Imagine you are a bee; as you collect pollen from different flowers, you combine them to form new ideas.

Mix it up. Remix what others have done in the past. Create your unique voice by integrating your varied interests in unusual ways. Through cross-pollination, we make new ideas and categories, instead of restricting ourselves to rigid boundaries.

Personally, I am greatly inspired by sociology, psychology, philosophy, hip-hop music, fashion, and education. Therefore, I try to integrate all of these interests in my work.

For example, I mixed sociology with photography and discovered my love for ‘street photography.’ I mix my passion for education with photography to teach photography workshops and make educational materials. I mix hip-hop music and fashion to inspire my ‘street portraits.’

Day 8

Date

Assignment

Aside from photography, what are your other interests? Write them down below, and figure out how you can combine them to form a new idea or concept.

MY INTERESTS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

CROSS-POLLINATE MY INTERESTS = IDEA?

_____ + _____
= _____

_____ + _____
= _____

DAY 9: WHAT CONSTITUTES A 'GOOD' PHOTO?

We all seek to make interesting photos, but what does that really mean? I believe an interesting photo is the intersection between **COMPOSITION** and **EMOTION**.

An interesting photo needs a strong **COMPOSITION**, with juxtapositions, contrast, leading lines, geometric shapes, and framing.

An interesting photo needs a strong **EMOTION**, with body language, eye contact, dramatic light, or anything else that evokes a feeling.

Ultimately, you want to make a photo that will interest you.

Examine your photo as if it was not yours. If you saw this photo in a book, would you stop to look at it?

Whenever I look at my photos on the same day I shot it, I am not certain how I feel about it. I need to let my photos 'marinate' for days, months, or sometimes even years before I can decide whether it is interesting.

The more time that elapses between when I shoot a photo and when I look at it, the less attached I am to the photo.

Finally, remember that the photo needs to be personally **MEANINGFUL** to you. Is the subject matter something that you are interested in? Did you personally enjoy the process of making the photo? Is there a message in the photo that you want to personally convey?

Day 9

Date

Assignment

For a month, do not upload any of your photos. At the end of the month, go through your photos and only upload the ones that truly speak to you. Limit yourself to uploading 3 photos. Remember, less is more.

Reflections

How did I determine my 3 best photos?



DAY 10: WHOSE RULES?

When we started photography, we had no self-imposed rules. We simply took photos because it was fun and exciting. It helped us be more creative and appreciate the world around us.

The more experienced we become in photography, the more 'rules' we inherit from others. We learn these 'rules' from our teachers, the internet, and books. For example, one 'rule' that others impose are strict definitions of street photography as only photos taken candidly of strangers on the streets. But this rule is restrictive and arbitrary. Whose rules do you want to play by in photography – rules imposed on you by others, or your own?

In games, there are rules to determine who wins and loses. In photography, however, there is no winning or losing, no right or wrong. I do believe that some self-discipline can help us be more creative. For example, I find that by sticking to one camera and lens, I am more creative and have a consistent aesthetic in my photos.

View all the 'rules' you have learned in photography as suggestions. You do not need to abide by them all the time.



Day 10

Date

Reflections

What are some 'rules' I want to unlearn in my photography? List them below:

RULES TO UNLEARN

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

RULES I SET FOR MYSELF

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

DAY 11: IS PHOTOGRAPHY ADDING OR REMOVING STRESS FROM MY LIFE?

Our lives are stressful; why add more stress to our lives with photography? Photography should empower us, and bring more joy and creativity to our lives.

Reflect honestly: does your photography make your life more stressful or less stressful?

I know a lot of photographers who are constantly stressed by photography. They always feel inadequate with the photos they make, they feel their gear is inadequate, and they feel the feedback they receive on their photos is inadequate. They feel a constant sense of dissatisfaction and misery from their work.

On the other hand, many photographers do not take themselves too seriously. They treat photography as a chance for them to explore the world, chat with locals, enjoy a cup of coffee on the streets, and push their creative limits.

Photography should be an opportunity, not a burden.

Day 11

Date

Assignment

1. To reduce the pressure you feel from photography, drop all expectations. Never expect to make a good photo, never expect to get 100+ likes on a photo, and never expect to become famous.

- Ask yourself, "If no one saw my photos, would I still do it?"
- What expectations can you drop to reduce the stress of photography?

2. For one day, take photos without looking at them. You can take them on film or turn off photo review on your LCD. This exercise will help you focus on the process of photo taking without judgment. Enjoy the process, have fun, and let photography be an opportunity to find Zen in your life.

- Describe a moment when you were taking photos that brought you joy.

DAY 12: AM I BEING COMPLACENT?

Life is about growth. If we do not keep growing, we are dying.

The only way I have been able to stay inspired with my photography is to continually grow and change. Whenever I feel like I am repeating myself, I feel like I am dying. I feel complacent. I have no motivation to make photos.

Think to yourself, "Am I comfortable with my photography the way it is? Am I still growing, learning new things, and being curious? Or, am I just repeating myself and being complacent?"

If you want to avoid feeling stuck, bored, and stagnant in your photography, you must challenge yourself.

Here are some compositional assignments you can work on:

- Capture layers
- Capture triangles in your photos
- Use a flash
- Shoot only color or black and white
- Try to make the elegant minimalist images
- Capture multiple subjects in your frame (avoid overlapping figures).

Day 12

Date

Reflections

What bores me about my photography?

Whose photography inspires me? Why?

How might I add more challenges and complexity to my photography?



DAY 13: WHAT PHOTO PROJECTS DO I WANT TO WORK ON?

When I first started as a 'social media' photographer, I focused mostly on single images. Every day, I aimed to make one powerful image which I hoped would be memorable, and would get a lot of 'likes' on social media.

After a few years of shooting this way, it started to feel empty and pointless. I was no longer getting any pleasure or fulfillment from the external affirmation from others. I wanted something deeper and more personal.

I realized that my favorite photographers worked on personal long-term photography projects. They conveyed their concepts and ideas through multiple photos. Their photos wove together a story with a deeper meaning.

Depending on the person, photo projects can begin with an idea or can come together naturally based on their photographic interests. For example, three photo projects I am working on are "SUITS", "MY AMERICA", and "CINDY PROJECT." Each of these projects draws from my personal experiences and reflects my interest in social commentary and personal diary.

Photo projects can be complex or simple. Be flexible and open to changes with your project. They can spark creativity and direction within your photography.

Day 13

Date

Assignment

BRAINSTORM

Try to come up with personally meaningful photo projects using the following prompt:

Subject: _____

Message I want to convey: _____

Why is this meaningful to me? _____

MY PROJECT IDEAS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

DAY 14: DISCOVER MY INNER CHILD.

We are the most creative as children because we know no rules, boundaries, or limits.

However as we get older, we lose our childlike creativity and curiosity. Society tells us to shut up, sit down, and listen. Whenever we ask the question, "Why?" too many times, we are scolded.

One of the best ways to stay creative and inspired in your photography is to find your inner child. Dig deep and remember how you felt as a child. What artistic pursuits did you have? What was your dream?

Personally, I am able to find my inner child by not censoring myself. Whenever I feel the urge to photograph a scene, I just shoot it (and figure out what to do with it later).

We sometimes let our inner censor and critic prevent us from being creative. We get scared to make certain photos because we are afraid that others might judge us. We are afraid of sharing our photos because we fear criticism.

Children feel less fear. Children are bold, sometimes almost foolishly so, but that is what constantly keeps them full of energy and hungry to learn.

Day 14

Date

Reflections

What are some things I was curious about as a child?
What other forms of art interested me in the past?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What was my dream as child?

How can I channel my inner child into my photography?



DAY 15: I AM NOT MY PHOTOS.

Many people take their photography too seriously and too personally. I know that I do. There is a bias called the 'Ikea effect' – whenever we build something ourselves, we over-value it (just because we made it).

One of the biggest lessons that I learned from the photographer Josef Koudelka is that we should separate ourselves from our photos. In other words, **WE ARE NOT OUR PHOTOS**. Sure, we happen to take the photos, but the photos do not define everything about us.

If someone criticizes our photo, they are not criticizing us. They are simply giving their own opinion of our work.

When you detach your ego from your photos, you will truly become liberated. You will be able to see your photos from an outsider's perspective, which always helps you judge your photos more objectively.



Day 15

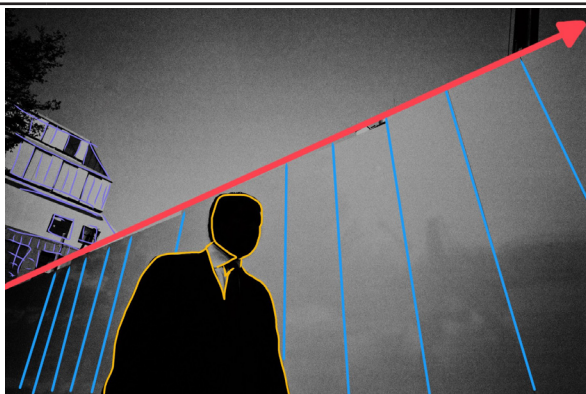
Date

Assignment

Step 1: Analyze your photos objectively, as if they are not yours. Look for composition, emotion, and message in each photo.

Step 2: Curate a set of 10-15 photos. Use the following questions to help you decide.

- If I saw this photo online, and if it were shot by someone else, would I like it?
- If I saw this photo in my social media stream, would I share this photo with others?
- Will this photograph be relevant 10, 25, 50, or 200 years from now?
- Would I be willing to spend \$500 to print this photo and frame it in a gallery?
- Is the memory of shooting this photo skewing my perception of the actual photo?
- Is the backstory of this photo more compelling than the photo itself?



DAY 16: DO I FEEL ENVY?

Like every other human being, I am prone to envy. Whenever I see that my peers have more followers than I do, get more likes than me, publish books, have exhibitions, or get awards, I feel a tinge of envy. I wish I was in their shoes. I feel inadequate. I question what I am doing and the quality of my work.

Envy is one of the things we need to cut from our creative lives. Envy is a useless emotion that does not spark us to create. Envy is like venom – it slowly kills us. To be envious is like drinking poison and hoping it will harm someone else.

Whenever I feel pangs of envy, I try to transform that feeling into motivation. I know that when someone else accomplishes something great, I will be motivated to (also) do something great. I will let the work of my peers encourage me to take my work to the next level.



Day 16

Date

Assignments

Whenever you feel envious of another photographer, consider these questions to reduce that envy and transform it into a positive emotion.

- Are there other photographers who might be envious of me? Why?
- Although another photographer has more followers and likes than me, what other photographers have fewer likes and followers than I do?
- Am I willing to make the sacrifices that the other photographer made to earn the success that they have?
- Do I feel envy because I do not think the other person deserves it? Or because I feel inadequate about my own work?
- Rather than comparing myself to others, compare myself to myself from a year ago. How have I progressed? Have I made progress I am proud of?

DAY 17: WHAT DO I WANT MY LEGACY TO BE?

As human beings, we have a natural need and want to create a legacy of our life's work.

To figure out what kind of photographic legacy you wish to leave behind, think backwards. Imagine yourself on your death bed. What kind of regrets would you have in your photography? What would you wish you had photographed *more of*, and what do you wish you photographed *less*?

For me, the personal photos I shot such as my portraits of Cindy are the most meaningful to me. I imbue my images with love for her and hope to communicate that same love and intimacy to others.

Furthermore, I want my legacy to be less of a photographer and more of an educator. I know my greatest strength is in teaching, sharing information, and empowering other photographers. My life's goal is not to become the world's best photographer.

We all have different aspirations for our photography. Some of us want to have a legacy of having made beautiful images, some of us want to leave behind powerful photography books, and some of us want to be remembered as being kind and generous to the community.

Day 17

Date

Reflections

What kind of legacy do I want to leave in my photography?

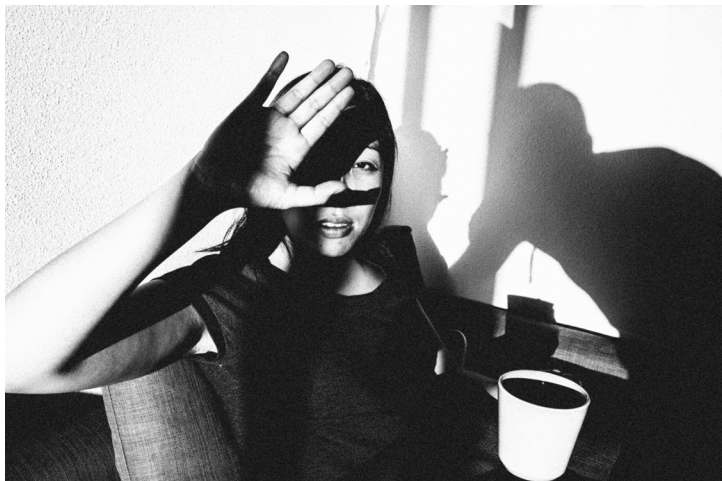
What can I do now to work towards creating that legacy?



PHOTOS FROM CINDY PROJECT







Dear friend,

I wanted this personal photo journal to help spark your own creative ideas, and empower you to reflect and appreciate.

‘Personal photography’ is to truly make photos for ourselves – not just to please an audience. Personal photography reminds us to reflect on our personal motivations, dreams, and the legacy we want to convey with our photography.

Remember, photography is not a competition with others. Photography is about self-expression, self-empowerment, and self-meditation.

Today, take one step closer to achieve your dreams. Think of the smallest possible action you can make. The solution is not always a new camera or to travel somewhere else. Make the best photos possible given your life circumstance.

Does that mean taking just one photo today? Does it mean publishing just one photo to social media? Does it mean starting a draft of your photography project? Does it mean signing up for a photography class? Does it mean asking a close friend to give you critique on your work?

Whenever you feel dissatisfied with your photography, look inwards. Measure your own progress against your former self, rather than compare yourself to others and social media.

Practice gratitude for the people, tools, and opportunities that you have found through photography. Most importantly, be like a child and just have fun. To put simply, photography is just a tool to help you appreciate the world around you and the simple joys of everyday life.

Eric
Saigon, 2018



Personal Photography Ideas

1. Document your morning routine for a week.
2. Photograph only the hands of your loved ones for a week.
3. Do a self-portrait photo project of yourself.
4. Photograph only from a 1-block radius from your home for a month.
5. Make a portrait of all of your coworkers or colleagues.
6. Only shoot with your smartphone for a month.
7. Delete all of the photos from your social media account, and restart from scratch.
8. Ask all of the loved ones in your life to make a portrait of you.
9. Print out a photobook of your 20 favorite personal photos, and give away a copy to all of your loved ones.
10. Tell a story using only 10 photos. Tell another story using both photos and text.

My Personal Photography Ideas

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

LEARN MORE

Staying inspired in photography is one of the most difficult challenges we face. My suggestion: always treat yourself like a beginner, and retain your innocent 'child's mind.'

Also keep in touch, and we can both stay inspired in photography together, with these resources:

- [Newsletter](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [Forum](#)

ERIC KIM Blog

- [Learn from the Masters](#)
- [Street Photography Composition](#)
- [Personal Photography 101](#)

HAPTIC Books & Tools

- [CREATIVE EVERY DAY](#)
- [ZEN OF ERICs](#)
- [HOW TO SEE](#)
- [MASTERS](#)
- [Free Street Photography Visualizations](#)
- [HAPTIC products on Amazon](#)

Video Courses

- [The Philosophy of Photography Course](#)
- [Ultimate Beginner's Guide to Mastering Photography by Eric Kim Online Course](#)
- [Ultimate Beginner's Guide to Photography Entrepreneurship by Eric Kim Online Course](#)

HAPTIC

Mobile Edition, 2018

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