

## **Welcome**

Hi, I'm Steve Simon, The Passionate Photographer, and welcome to my course on taking your photography to the next level. In the evolution of a photographer, to get to the next step, I say you should liberate yourself from photographic routine. This course is designed to help you on your photographic journey, help you to leave your comfort zone and lead you to new and exciting work. You know what you're currently doing and what's working. Now let's get beyond this. For work to move forward, look different, evolve and get better, you need to try new things, new ideas, new techniques, new subject matter.

Okay, let's get started.

## Getting Personal in Your Work

Photography is a creative pursuit. Every photographer has a unique vision of the world. And I want to encourage you to move away from the traditional imagery that you might be taking and get personal, be selfish, and photograph what you are most passionate about. Funny thing is, the more personal you make it, the more universal it becomes. The more personal you're willing to be, the more you separate yourself from the masses of other photographers that are out there. You know, when I was a young photographer, these two images had a big impact on my future work.

This first one was taken, I think I was 14 years old. It was at a local swimming pool in a suburban area of Montreal where I lived. And I didn't really understand about backlight or even exposure back in the day when I shot this with my Nikon FM and Tri-X film. But when I developed the film and saw the image, I realized that, wow, this looked way better than it did in reality. And I realized that photography although is very good at capturing what reality is, you can use it in a way to kind of say something that you feel about a particular place or subject, et cetera.

So that was really important to me. And this image also I remember because to take a picture like this on a bus, requires you leaving your comfort zone because people's expectations when they're riding a bus is not to have their picture taken. So as a photographer when you see, what I thought was a strong picture, to actually lift my camera to my eye and take this picture required me to get out of my comfort zone. And you know what, since that time, whenever I get out of my comfort zone, it's usually for a good cause and that is to try and get a four or five star picture.

So what are you trying to say with your photography? Do you want to show the beauty of the world as you see and experience it? Do you want to photograph the things that are most personal to you, like your own family? Do you want to capture the joy that you see every day in the world? Or do you want to focus on some issues that kind of make you angry? Well, you have the power to communicate these most personal feelings, you just have to find the outlet. If there's one concept that I want you to take away from this course is that the most rewarding part of the photographic process often comes when you find a project or a theme that you feel passionate about, that you can translate into your photography.

You'll find meaning and purpose in the picture taking process and you'll learn about yourself while elevating your personal photographic vision. All big ideas start with a small step. Securing your idea is what you need to do first, but keep in mind that you really won't know if your idea is going to work until you start shooting.

## Finding Your Inspiration

For me finding a personal project was a way to kind of break free of the shackles put on me by my newspaper photography job at the time. So, I was looking for a personal project. And I wanted it to be kind of general enough so that I could really get out there and experiment, do things very differently from what I was used to. And I read an article that talked about how my country Canada, where I was living at the time was becoming more like the United States. And it struck me that you know, if that's true, maybe we'll start to look more like the United States.

And I decided this would be my project. I would travel the states closest to Canada from Maine to Alaska, I'd do a road trip and see what the United States looked like closet to the border. And that's what I did. I traveled over a summer, and I brought with me different equipment than I normally use in my newspaper job. Just because I wanted to feel like I'm doing photography just for me. And it was just an extraordinary road trip. Now this was a general one, I was just shooting, shooting, shooting. And ultimately I would put these pictures together kind of like a puzzle, in a way that the sum would be greater than the parts.

But it just felt like I was getting back to the joy of photography doing this. Ya know I would go into a place, I would sort of what's happening there, and I would serendipitously ya know, find things that I was interested in. I would just respond to things that I saw. Ya know growing up in Canada, we used to go to the United States often ya know, on vacations. And I always felt it was this very different place from what I was used to. And that is what I was kind of responding to when I was going around shooting. Ya know it taught me a lot things.

Ya know it taught me how to get access to things. You know I heard there's was someone who was a Canadian on death row, his name was Ronald Smith, he's still on death row. And I wanted to see how to get into see him. I thought he would be good for my project. I learnt how to do this, and there's a momentum that starts where you feel that really it's worth a try to do anything. And I wanted to see some of the areas that were maybe a little more dangerous and because I didn't have a lot of time, I would approach the local police departments and to my surprise they would take me. So you know I also learnt that you know, just photograph everything including you know, signs sometimes could be used.

And I also learned that even though I didn't have a lot of time, it didn't take a lot of time for me to go into a place, you know tell 'em what I was doing, and then I would fade away, and I'd be able to capture a real and authentic moment. And for me that was really important. So, the personal project really kind of brought me back to why I became a photographer in the first place. And it was just such a great experience, I want to encourage you to do the same. When you direct your photographic energy and passion towards a story or theme, it's something that I feel confident about that will lead you to a higher level in your work.

But you have to find that story or theme that inspires you because you'll commit to it, it'll drive you to work hard, it'll get you past certain frustrations, through obstacles. It'll push you forward

I believe, to a photographic place of competence and excitement that you can't even imagine before you start the project.

## The Brainstorming Session

You know, inspiration, for me, comes from my own life, and you know, the more interesting and varied my life is, the more often I'm inspired. But often, too, I'm uninspired. So, I'm looking to find a project, a subject, an assignment, an idea that I can really sink my photographic teeth into. And in order to find that project, I've come up with a few ideas that have helped me, that I think will help you, too. The first one is basic brainstorming, basically.

And it involves maybe looking at some of the work that you've been doing up until now, and looking for common threads that will yield a future assignment that might work well. You know, if you photograph a lot of reflections, for example, you're attracted to it. Maybe you're a people photographer, and you love people, or you want to photograph, do a portrait project, or a portrait series. There could be some ideas there. I'm a big fan of street photography. I'm often wandering the streets, and maybe there's a specific project that can be gleaned on a certain area or a certain corner, a certain street, or a certain city, that you can really get inspired to work on.

Animals, you love animals? Well, maybe there's an animal project in your future, that will really get you going. Or landscape, I know there's a lot of landscape interest out there. You know, how do you put together a set of landscape images to tell a bigger story in your work? Architectural details, I mean, if you're in a city like New York, there's incredible architecture. So it kind of makes sense. I think it's also good to make a list of some of your best photo experiences, because when you look back at some of the experiences, this picture was taken in Tokyo, I loved shooting in Tokyo, maybe there's a project that you can do, a new project that builds on what you've done in the past, that will get you excited and get you moving forward.

You know, some people say that access is everything, and to a certain extent, it is. You know, whether you're trying to capture an evocative portrait, having access to people. Do you have any kind of connection, any kind of special access from your own life? Do you have a relative who can get you into here? And maybe there's a project that can be done. I mean, it really is all about access and perseverance. If you really believe that you want to do something, you can convince people to let you in and tell their story, so it's something to kind of look for.

Are there places that you really enjoy spending time? Maybe it's a specific coffee shop. Why not do a little coffee shop thing? When you look at the places that you like to spend time, are there project ideas that will allow you to spend more time there, which you already enjoy? You know, go back and see what they look like at different times of day. You may think that the place that you always go during the day, changes at night, well, that intrigues you and there's a project idea or story there. I think it's always good to be inspired by other photographers, and I think you should make a list of photographers that you admire.

Look at the work that they do, and decide are there some projects or some ideas there that you can take from them, thank you, and then make them your own? You can do your own, sort of, take on that particular project, and you know, you like that work, and maybe you can make it

even stronger. Fun shoot ideas, you know, it's fun to sit down in a place you like to spend time, and mark down some ideas, give yourself the dream assignment, you know, and don't limit yourself, don't limit yourself to money or geographical place, just, you know, let things flow.

And from there, look at the list and see what may be realistic that you could actually start a project on, and see where it will go. Are there a group of people that you admire? You know, I think that anything's possible. And for me, this particular picture represents a project that's ongoing, on grandmothers in Africa, who I met, that were raising their own grandchildren and great-grandchildren, because their own children have died from the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and it's a powerful story.

These heroines were working with very little fanfare, very little money, and doing the best that they could, and it was amazing to see. So I wanted to, in my personal project, shine the light on them. You can have similar feelings about a group of people, or a person. And there may be a project around that. One person, day in the life. Start somewhere, just see, because you'll sink your teeth into it. On that front, are there issues that you really believe in, that you can use your camera to spread awareness, and you know, make an impact, and help? Because the power of photography, photography definitely has that power to do that.

And your personal project, if you find it, it's going to be strong, and it's going to have an impact. It's fun to, kind of, imagine a dream job. I don't know what your job is. Maybe your dream job is a photographer. I feel I'm living my dream job. But maybe it's chocolate taster, or maybe it's talk show host, or whatever it might be, make a list and then see, okay well, is there a project idea? Is there an actual chocolate taster job? That would be an interesting story to try and document. So that might yield some possibly good results, when it comes to finding a project.

As far as keeping a file of things that inspire you, of course, there's the old school printed newspaper/magazine thing, but then of course, you can bookmark different stories that you encounter, so that you might be able to take a story that was happening in another part of the world, and localize it. Because you know, chances are, we're all human, we all have the same story, and that's the universal language of photography. The power to tell these stories. The deeper you go, because you will go deep in a personal project, and it's going to be good.

So basically, you know, photograph what you must photograph. I mean, what is the one thing that you can't not photograph? Think about that and think if there are any story ideas there. I can't officially give you homework with this course, but I do suggest that you research to find at least ten completed photo projects that inspire you. Because from my experience, there's much to be learned from the creation of a set of pictures versus a single image. When you take on a project, you strive to make each individual image as strong as it can be.

The challenge of creating a set of pictures is to make each piece strong on its own, yet when you put them all together in a very deliberate way, the message communicated is much stronger, more complex, and ultimately, more powerful. The sum is greater than the parts. My encouragement for you is to pursue a set that comes from your own experience. The more

comprehensive coverage that you're able to do, it will yield stronger and deeper and more interesting work.

I guarantee, it will improve your skills, and make you a better photographer, and give you just amazing life experiences.

## Books as a Source of Inspiration

Story ideas can come from anywhere, but when I'm looking for inspiration, I often don't have to go very far because I have, on my bookshelves, kind of an extensive collection of photographic books that I've been collecting over the years, and when you look at a photographic book, generally, you're looking at the work of a photographer. Kind of the best work of a photographer. Sometimes it's retrospective. It's the best from that photographer's entire shooting life, or sometimes it's a specific project where looking at a book gives you kind of rare entree into the psyche of that photographer.

You get to see which images he or she chose. The order and sequencing. Which pictures were big. There's a lot to be gleaned and inspired. A lot of inspiration to be gleaned by looking at photo books. That's one of the things that I do, and I recommend to you too. There are big book stores. Here's a picture of a bookstore that I've been to in Japan. Maybe one of the best places to seek out inspiration and come up with projects 'cause it's a photo book store, and in it, you can have a coffee and just browse through this extensive library and look for things that you connect with.

There are bookstores in museum shops, often, that have a big art book collection, and spend the afternoon there. I think that, for me, anyway, I'm often sparking and igniting project ideas that come from books. A couple of books that I wanted to share with you. This is one book that really kind of inspired me, and I was in a little book shop in Fredericton, Canada, Fredericton, New Brunswick, and I happened upon the day-to-day life of Albert Hastings, and when I opened it up, I saw this quiet and beautiful coverage of this gentleman named Albert Hastings, who the photographer KayLynn Deveney, who is an American photographer living in Wales at the time met this gentleman, he was 85 at the time.

He's since passed away at 91, but she thought she would want to do a story on him and his life. She got out of her comfort zone and approached him and explained to him what she was hoping she could do with him, and that is to spend time and document, and it really became a collaboration where the photographer and the subject, she would take these images, and he would, in his own writing, caption them, and for me, it was a bit of a revelation because, you know, you think about these photo projects.

Often, you think about these far off and exotic big projects, this was one that was very quiet, but for me, very powerful, and it's true, there are a million stories in the naked city, and it made me realize that sometimes the challenge of documenting a quiet story is one that's definitely worth taking. When I talked with KayLynn, she mentioned that sometimes it's difficult because it's just her and him in a relatively small place, but you just have to sort of go through that and keep shooting.

It's an attention to detail thing. There's all kinds of new things that come up. You find that you've gotten enough pictures of one thing and it's time to maybe focus in on another. For me, at the end of the day, it made me think of a gentleman like Albert Hastings who I knew in my

own life, and that's really powerful praise for a project that gets you to feel something and think about something. It was a real eye-opener for me. The idea is everything a lot of the time.

John Glassie's a writer and photographer who was kind of obsessed with bicycles in New York City, and he did this project called *Bicycles Locked to Poles*, and when you look at the book, low and behold, what you find are bicycles locked to poles, but with this kind of unique idea, and with his kind of quirky sense of humor, he created this project that there's a momentum that happens when you see these images and their growing on each other, and you're seeing the various states of the bicycles locked to poles in New York City, and by the end of the book, you have to either smile or whatever, but it's powerful, and the sum is greater than the parts.

No one image is necessarily going to win an award, but together, the project becomes very powerful. Don't discount any idea. The more personal you make it, the stronger it becomes, and this was personal to him. Here's another project that I wanted to share with you, and it's by a Canadian photographer. It was done years ago. Andrew Danson. Done well before the selfie had become popular, and his idea was, he would photograph Canadian Politicians with a twist.

He would go into their environment. He would set up the lights, but then he would give them the cable release and he would leave the room, and you'll notice that the cable release is often in the picture, and what resulted was this really, I think, quirky and interesting set of pictures that could only have been taken by the person themselves and what's interesting is how the camera really reveals, you know, part of who that person is. You can't fake it.

You can see the politicians that had a sense of humor. I think that the personality is revealed. If you yourself have ever tried to do a self-portrait, not so much a selfie with a phone, but a serious self-portrait, you know that the exercise is not always an easy thing to do, but it can be very revealing and not easy. You can't fake it. You can puff yourself up, but when you take that picture, the camera reveals, and for me, this was a powerful reminder, and I think that we've all seen these kind of photo booth projects that have happened.

You see them at weddings sometimes, and those are some of the most wonderful images that you get, but this one, I think, was very, very revealing to me, and it was just a great idea. Again, the sum is greater than the parts, and you can take this idea. You can steal this idea. I'm sure Mr. Danson wasn't the first one to do this kind of self-portrait thing, but you can take it to a specific set of people and see what you get, and update it, and make it your own. Some projects, I think, are about challenging yourself.

There are many photo-a-day blogs out there, and I think for good reason because, you know, Instagram has become a great place to show them off and gain a following, but maybe more importantly, you commit to shooting at least a photo a day, and that means you're shooting, and from my experience, the more you shoot, the luckier you get, and the quality of your work improves. Shooting is the key. You got to get there, and obviously, when you find that passion project, that will get you out there to shoot. The more specifically focused you are on a project, ultimately, the stronger the work will be.



## Documenting a Cause

Some projects are born from a passion you might have for a cause and for me, one of those projects was inspired by a visit, an assignment that I had. My first trip to Africa, I went to Zambia for a nonprofit organization to deal with and photograph a story on the HIV/AIDS situation there. And you know, it had kind of a profound impact on me. I think that photography is still a very powerful way to get a message across to people because you know, people are busy in their lives but everyone has time to look at a still photo and a strong still photo has the power to get your attention and you know make you sort of look a little deeper into something that you find compelling.

So, I actually went Because I had done some coverage in Africa on this cause, I went back and I continued to work and as a result my book *Heroines & Heroes* was born. You know, when you take on a project like this, because you end up spending so much time, you certainly dig a lot deeper than what you first thought you knew when you came there. You know, I hadn't been to Africa before that first trip and you know, all my conception of what I would find were kind of shattered. Many of the places, and it's hard to generalize about a Continent with such diversity, but I saw the beautiful places.

And I even saw snow in Lesotho where I spent a lot of time. As I continued to work on the project, because it was HIV, I kept meeting these people who were leaders in terms of helping. And as it happened, most often they were women. Thus, you know, I named the project *Heroines & Heroes*. You know, women like Mamello who are looking after, you know, 100 orphans. People that have dedicated their lives to kind of help people and make people better. I was inspired by going to and photographing aerobics classes because you know, the people that were lucky enough to be getting the drugs knew that they had to stay in shape in order to maximize the effect and keep themselves healthy.

And they really worked hard. You learn too about some of the problems and one of the biggest problems was, you know the misconceptions about how you get HIV/AIDS and some of the, you know, mythical ideas as how to get rid of it. And then education and all that stuff. So because I went back, I had the opportunity to do a book. I went back on my own. I was inspired. And I also knew that, you know, the more it got out there the better it was and your project will give you courage I think, and will allow you to do things you might not normally do.

So when I heard that one of the guys I really admire, Bono from U2 was going to be in the suite too, I kind of went there to see if he would consider writing the forward to my book because he also was working on a lot of issues that are related. Didn't happen but you know, I just felt that with the project idea behind me and some of the work, I had no fear. And when you do that, you too will realize that this project will take you places that you can't predict. So, in working on the project, I wanted to show kind of the everyday life, the fact that life goes on.

I wanted to touch, I had a bit of a chart as to kind of, some of the areas like education that I wanted to deal with. I wanted to show the reality of life there. But I also wanted to show the

fact that the scourge of AIDS was having a huge and horrifying impact on the population that was going on there. So I mean, I realize that the stronger the images that I would make, the more potential impact this story would have. And when you take on a project that you're passionate about the cause, it inspires you to take whatever talent you have and make it as good as you can.

Because it's not just about you anymore. It's about the subject. And you know, photography can be a very me thing. These are my pictures, this is my vision, and so on and so forth. But when you take on a project with a cause, it becomes more about the people that you're documenting. You will benefit from it, believe me. But you also want to see your reason for doing it, the cause to have an impact, a positive impact. And you never know exactly how it is. But you'll want to get those images out there. So, I think that taking on a project is a wonderful thing.

You can have more than one project going at a time. But thinking about, you know, a cause that maybe you can think about documenting and you could lend your voice to an issue that you feel important about, that you feel is important will have, possibly, a nice positive impact on that cause. And also, will have a powerful impact on you personally. And you will elevate your photography because of it.

## Photo Essay Blueprint

Looking back in photographic history, there's arguably no one more passionate about his work than the stories that W. Eugene Smith created. Look up some of his classic essays for Life Magazine. *Country Doctor, Nurse Midwife, Spanish Village*, you'll know what I mean. As creative and amazing much of the work is, Life Magazine had kind of a blueprint, a formula that was often encouraged to ensure the photographers would come back with a variety of imagery that they needed to tell the whole story.

Now this can be useful because applying this simple framework can help you create a stronger set of images. Especially if you're new to the genre. And I'll just go over some of the things that they talk about. So the signature image, obviously the signature image is really important. It's often the strongest image. It's often the most story telling image. It is the storefront that will attract the viewer to more of your story. So you want it to be attention getting, you want it to have impact, you want it to have relevance to the story.

Now the signature image can come from some of the other formulaic labels that Life had. They wanted to also have kind of a wide view. You know, a wide-angle lens tells more of the story, gives you a little bit more information than some of the close-up images. So that was always important to have kind of a wide view and then work your way in as you start to tell kind of a deeper story. Then there's the detail. The detail image although often not given the attention that it should be given, is really important.

Because again you're telling a story in more than one picture. So, you now have the ability to focus in on a detail, but that detail should also be very strong. As a matter of fact, every image has to live up to a certain standard before you can include it in the story. And the detail is no different. Sometimes the detail ends up being the signature image, you don't know. But the care and attention that you give to what you consider might be the signature image, that same care and attention and passion is required when you're coming up with a strong detail image as well.

Of course, you know, the portrait is something that is really important often in the story, just because a lot of projects involve telling the story of a place or whatever. And you know, the people are essential to that. So, having strong portrait work is also very important. And the portrait could be a candid one, it can be one that the subject is posing for. But again, the subject matter, the image, you shoot a lot to get that really strong picture.

Ultimately if you're really lucky, and it's rarely that it happens that way, every image could be the signature image. If you have an essay of images that can all be signature images you know you've got a strong body of work there. So, the portrait is another one to include when you're sort of carving out your story. And then of course there's action. You know you want to be able to capture the action. And again, some stories are just portrait stories and that's fine. You'll take one signature portrait, the best of the bunch as your window to the rest of your story.

But having an action image can also be very sort of important to the story in terms of telling it. Maybe the action one will end up being your signature image. So, if you were to consider doing some of these labeled images that I just described, when you go in there looking for those things, whether it's the portrait, maybe one day you're going to do the portrait one day you're going to to the wide view, the vista. You're going to up in the mountain and you're going to photograph the whole place before you go into the area that you're going to concentrate on.

When you stick to that, you may find that you're going to have a stronger body of work because of it. You're not going to be missing things that you'll go oh too bad, I didn't have that. So that helps in your pursuit, when you latch on to that personal passion project.

## Exploring the Work of Barb Davidson

You know your projects don't have to be long term ones. Shorter projects become a powerful starting point for more comprehensive work, allowing you to delve deeper, showing new and different sides to an issue or a theme. The more you shoot, the better you will get, but if you're not inspired you probably just won't shoot all that much. You need to find the inspiration, then let your passion for the project motivate you to work and improve. If you're having trouble deciding on a personal project, think about taking on a smaller one to start.

A short-term photo essay can be a visual profile of an idea, a person, event, a business, it can be kind of a day in the life of an artisan, a musician, community leader, it could even morph into a portrait series of a certain group of people. It can be still lifes, landscapes, or other groups of images with a common thread that ties them together. Keep it simple, less is more, it can be presented chronologically, or thematically, but the images all really have to work together, that's the key.

So, in talking about a little bit of a smaller project, I wanted to show you the work of a friend of mine, and her name is Barb Davidson, Barbara Davidson, and she's a Pulitzer Prize winning photographer, very passionate and talented one. And Barbara was on her way, she was invited to speak at a photography conference in India, and she took advantage of the opportunity to find a story that she can focus on while she was there. And she decided the amazing culture of kushti wrestling would be one that she would pursue.

So over two days, and in that two days, she told me there was a lot of downtime. She spent time with these guys, and she was very patient and she put in the time, the actual shooting was probably less time than the waiting around, but patience pays off, and in that short two day period, she was able to come up with this beautiful set of images that are very intimate and make you kind of feel what it's like to be there and in that community.

And I guess the underlying point here is that even a small amount of time, considering two days, devoted to a project where you're passionate about and you have to be willing to put in the time, will yield some beautiful results, and ultimately the project can take you to places and could bring you into a deeper examination of this particular culture in different areas, etc. It's definitely worthwhile to put in the time because when you put in the time, you get new and amazing images.

So while you're there, even though you're there for a short time, you really just take the time and you spend the time as much as you can, you're only devoted to this, you're waiting, waiting, but you're ready, and you're shooting, and obviously with more experience, you'll fast track to the stronger images, but the bottom line is taking time for these shorter projects I think is a good idea. The other thing I wanted to mention after showing Barbara's work is you don't have to travel to faraway places to do a great project.

You're actually better off finding one closer to home, because it means that you can work on it anytime, when you have the time, so if you're not a full time photographer and you live in a place and you work for your living, when you have the downtime, if you have a project that you have access to, you'll be able to just make it stronger and stronger by continuing to work on it because if you shot 10 days on your project you'd have a certain amount of images, if you shot a hundred days on that project, guaranteed that project will be ready for prime time and will be a lot stronger.

So one of the projects that I like to give my students is the idea of where you live, something close to home. Now you can show me where you live, it could be literal, it could be spiritual, really it's up to you to interpret, but think about what might best represent you and where you live. Maybe it's your house, your apartment, your neighborhood, your coffee shop, maybe it's the camera store, computer screen, or an image that describes where you live ideologically, metaphysically, or in some other dimension.

Because the bottom line is, if you're going to be finger quotes "stuck in a place," doesn't have to be New York City it could be a small town where you can do an equally powerful set of pictures showing me where you live and showing the world basically what's important to you and what you find personally very compelling in the place that you live. And again, the bottom line is, the more you shoot on that project, the stronger it gets. And if you're talking about a big city like New York and creating a set of pictures, ultimately within that set you'll find subprojects, maybe it's one corner that you want to spend a lot of time, because, again, the idea that an inch wide, a mile deep, the more you can concentrate on a place, the more you get to know that place, the more insight you have into the place, the more access you have in that place, and the stronger the work gets.

## The Order and Disorder of Cities in Photos

I'm of two minds when it comes to artist statements. You know, there's a reason why people say a picture's worth a thousand words, it's because the good ones are. Strong images communicate so much in an instant. If photographers were better able to communicate with words, I'm sure many of us would be writers instead. But articulating a project in an organized and coherent way can be important. It can help clarify and focus your vision for a consistent point of view, as well as help form a framework for future shooting on that project.

A written project description is also a prerequisite to apply for grants, enter some contests, and look for support for your project. The images will speak the loudest, but knowing how to describe your project will also help you when editing. Nailing down a specific paragraph or headline can help you keep a tight thread through the story or theme, making sure that all photos reflect that headline, helping you stay on-point. Then there's the mission or artist statement.

Having one can help you keep your point of view consistent, something that's well worth striving for. So, I think that Mr. Lewis Hine sort of said kind of what I was saying, only a lot better, when he says, "If I could tell the story in words, "I wouldn't need to lug around a camera." And you know, that's the bottom line, but words can be important. My friend and former student Hakim Boulouiz is fascinated by the order and disorder of cities, and that's his subject matter.

He looks to tell stories in his street photography around poetry, complexity, mystery, and emotion. Most of his work is based on ordinary situations and daily events. He's a great photographer, but also a great articulator of his process and philosophy when it comes to his work. So I'm just going to read you how he describes it. "I believe that the street is the sum of small movements "rather than one general frame. "However, every ordinary moment can be transformed "into an extraordinary one through the lens.

"The banal can become most significant "if there is observation, patience, "perseverance, composition, and creativity. "Each portrait of a city fragment "has its own ephemeral language. "That's the reason urban spaces are magical, "and why the image remains so essential. "Street photography is a form of visual recycling, "like a sculpture manufacturing "several forms from scrap metal, "or a designer working to give waste new life and new use.

"Beauty is everywhere, and the artist has to see, "to learn how to see, to take his time "and believe in his art. "One of my favorite strategies is simply the desire "to get close, to immerse myself into the scene "by using a fixed wide-angle lens. "My best pictures are what I call my urban happiness. "I didn't need to hunt and seek the extraordinary, "everything happens right in front of me, "I just pay attention to detail. "I just remain attentive as a feline. "I try to feel the energy of the street, "and get close to the subject.

"I proclaim my body as guest of the day of that place, "and I practice extreme recognition, "and gratitude to the streets where I am. "And all the streets around are small planets." Well, I think that is very articulate in terms of describing the work. And when you hear Hakim's artist statement or his description, I think it ultimately helps to kind of magnify and add new understanding to the work that we're looking at. And ultimately, in our projects when we do include words, that's exactly what we want.

We want those words to magnify the image, by providing some insight that visually is not there. So I think the idea of a written artist statement is one that you should consider when you're doing a personal project.

## Next Steps

Hey, just a note about the technical side of photography. Everything I've talked about here presupposes that you have a strong grasp on the technical side. You know, the technical side of things, the technical weaknesses you might have, that's the easiest thing to fix. There are a thousand things more important than sort of creating the strong images that you want. But, there's no shortcut in terms of getting around the technical side. So, if you're having any kind of technical issues, fix them. The photography library here is a great resource to help fix those technical issues.

I've even done some technical courses on some Nikon cameras. So again, you've got to make sure that your bar is set high from a technical standpoint. I have no doubt that when you start to pursue your project, if there are issues on the technical side, you'll be able to fix them. I know that when you find your personal project, it's going to take you on this great photographic ride, taking you to the next level in your photography. Like most creative pursuits, the more time you invest, the better the result.

Good pictures that you get will be replaced with better pictures, and you're going to find yourself getting outside your comfort zone more often, and that's going to lead to stronger images as well. Like peeling an onion, you'll go deeper and deeper. And because you're passionate about the work, you're going to invest more time and that passion will be communicated to all the people that get to see your work. So, set your personal project bar high and keep working until you get there. You will.