



From a Simple
Rule

Photography is about the art of observing your surroundings and growing in your ability to capture those sights to match your vision of it. Creativity is also a major part of the art form and isn't dependent on your gear to exist but your ability to use your tools at hand to achieve the vision in your head. The time we give to both the act of going out to photograph the world around us or to work up new ideas and concepts to explore internally is never a waste of time. In many ways the theories and assumptions in my head need that real world test to move on or explore it further; while, reality and the pursuit of photography often clue me into something I may have never consider. I see photography as a hobby I am actively pursuing to simply enjoy it and fill in some of my time more productively.

The link between putting theory into practice and just simply practicing photography isn't new to me but recently I started the daily photo challenge on July 25, 2022 so given it is now December 11, 2022 and essentially four months of taking photos at an intensity level I haven't before what have I learned. Frequency of photo sessions does have an effect, self imposed limits alters a routine, accumulation of images eventually has to lead to somewhere are some of the observations I will be expanding on here.

Frequency of sessions

Be it daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly when we do get out to practice photography it is the unknowns and perhaps some better educated guesses of what we will encounter we deal with. What is the purpose of going out to practice in the first place? I believe I have improved when I switched from my mostly planned weekend session to the daily I'm trying to stick for now. Life gives you a break here or there but isn't as cooperative when you are trying to do photography daily, I have learned to use my spare time to take that photograph. Time of day and location is far more random and out of my control so I must adapt and change how I plan. Planning is still involved but somehow seems just as random because it is that brief glimpse of a target or photograph as I drive by waiting to be explored or captured I use the most. I have seen more of Odessa, TX in this time than I likely ever had before since I live here and it is what I have to photograph so frequently.

That photograph taken has value only based on what I assign it, so one aspect of taking so many now is how to value them when I use to take less. It isn't quantity over quality because of the volume increase either as I still have a choice to curate what I post or even post process. I simply have more time to experiment when I have three or four images at a time maximum, this is the other side of taking photographs and valuable practice. While I would ideally like to do the nature photography I prefer a camera captures the prevalent light conditions and the pattern of elements in the scene. The pattern isn't as critical when practicing because if one is able to pull out that pattern of lines, shapes, and texture, shadows, highlights, colors, luminosity, etc when it matters

less to you then imagine when that rare moment that does happen. The practice put in may make the difference at that moment.

Self imposed limits

I would equate limits to the rules we put in our way on purpose instead of staying within our comfort zones and preferences but then again rules are self imposed on us all the time by default. Consider any sub genre of photography having criteria to properly fit in, those constraints and common standards are rules. Those same rules can be broken but are accepted without thinking about it. I'm sure other examples could be used but no more really come to mind but it could be said that "no rules" is actually a rule set by default.

The choice to introduce a new rule will have a reason behind it personal to each photographer but starts with one intent and leads to places so unexpected. Creativity can be enhanced by using the "change" to just play and see a place differently, for example, using a lower point of view or focusing on a subject often ignored. If you are over burdened with gear then maybe make yourself use every lens and or camera for a set number of photos until you learn more about each one. Maybe to get out of your comfort zone the "change" can force you try something new. The transition for me from nature photography to urban photography, accepting of it at least, was underway already but the "change" I picked did accelerate it. Perhaps I'm simply an opportunist now. Whatever the goal of the "change" and what you needed to accomplish, it maybe something unexpected, keep trying new things.

My rules are to take a photograph every day and post at least one of those photographs every day, after this much time it is starting to feel like normal routine now. I aim to take more than one photo when I head out to have more to pick from but an aspect of the pace and constraint of posting an image is what am I posting. By what am I posting I mean is it a practice photo or a portfolio selection having a different presentation at least. I see my posting as something akin to making a sketch book available online but that does bring up the possible bad image I can't salvage at all. Do I post it if it is my only option or break part of my rules and skip that day, I would likely post it anyway and explain what went wrong. We learn from failure and explaining what went wrong and how I could have maybe fixed what I did wrong would a valuable lesson to other photographers. The good, bad, or ugly are all possible outcomes and teach me something new either in the taking of the photograph or post processing there of.

Accumulation of images

I started out with the goal of posting a daily photograph but my routine is already set so I explore an area often taking more than one photo, this isn't a problem until somewhere

along the way I have to evaluate why I have taken so many photographs. This collection exist but needed a purpose and it became another feature on the website called “A photographer's view of Odessa, TX” as the more rare non-local sessions already had a home on the website. Barely curated and more a stream of consciousness as it combines some insight on a place long ignored and how I approach photography overall it adds to the level of work required but is worth it. It seems to be a pattern for me, mindlessly collect then decide what to do with the volume of images.

In conclusion

In reality I like the idea of going out to photograph the world as it already exist but the directive to take a daily photo is much more open than that. I could just as easily create a scene indoors and let my imagination create the photo taken since that would be just as valid. That created scene and its post processing might push my skill set in a new way so having value in a way that the challenge has always implied, to accumulate not just photographs but experience and new skill sets as well. New types of photographs may lead to a new website feature but when sharing your work is a key part of your motivation it is simply a focal point to put that energy. I choose to use a website to achieve that goal even if there is some added work involved because it is visible to anyone visiting it.

Having created the projects related to my initial simple rules I'm amazed where it has lead me so far but also wonder where it may take me as I continue with it as a guide. What if I had started out on that July 25th with an end goal this ambitious and knew how many images and level of detail I would require. I somehow think I wouldn't be writing this now or have had explored my hometown like I have due to many factors, so starting small is an unlikely huge step to something unimagined.

Seeing as you the reader of this will have your own unique take on the world and photography my story and end goals are not likely yours but when making your own “changes” you never know what might happen so just be open to trying something new.