

Snapshots

2020-2021
Issue 8
for meeting of
December 16
editor
Matthew
Robertson



The Angel Gabriel, by Cole Thompson

It has been a year like no other. Our print group has been reduced to looking at images on our screens. And yet I am grateful that we've been able to do at least that. It has kept us connected and looking at images, and it has afforded us an unusual opportunity. For the first time in many years, we will be hosting a guest speaker.

On Wednesday December 16th we will be very fortunate to be joined by Cole Thompson, an American, black and white, fine art photographer who will tell us of his life in photography.

Cole shoots exclusively in black and white and has been doing so since the late 60's. He has developed an aesthetic that is unmistakably his. While showing us some of his exquisite images, he will tell us about the twists and turns of his photographic journey and share with us the conclusions he has come to.

Upcoming Meetings

December 16
Special Meeting
with guest speaker
Cole Thompson

Winter Break
See you January 6!

At the Toronto Focal Forum we share a passion for the printed photograph: it's our chosen means of creative expression, so we strive for artistic and technical excellence. Our candid print reviews are times for diverse work and different ideas, creating an invigorating, ongoing conversation about our experiences in art and in life. These evenings are times of inspiration, honing our craft of clear vision and communication, enriching our photographic pursuits. This is the measure of our success.

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Jim Bridger Power Plant, by Cole Thompson

What is Vision (Excerpt)

by Cole Thompson

Years ago when I was challenged to find my own Vision, I immediately faced a dilemma: I really didn't know what Vision was. Sure, had a vague idea but I could not define, identify or even understand it.

I had this notion that it was some sort of creative ability that you were either born with or not. This caused me great apprehension as I set about to find it: I feared that I might be one of those unfortunate individuals who did not "have it." That scared me enough that I actually questioned if I wanted to go down this path: what if I discovered that I didn't have a Vision?

Well, I did go down the discovery path and I did find my Vision. With that discovery I learned something very important:

We all have a Vision, every one of us is born with one. Unfortunately for many of us, and this was my case, it can become buried when we conform, follow the rules and value other people's opinions more than our own. For some of us, me again, my Vision was so buried for so long that I came to believe that I didn't have one.

But I did and so do you.

Read the rest of this article on Cole Thompson's blog: [*What Is Vision*](#)

Vision is simply the sum of our life experiences, that allows us to see the world in a unique way.

– Cole Thompson

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Auschwitz #14 by Cole Thompson, as seen in “Why Photographs Work” by George Barr / Rocky Nook

Permission

by Cole Thompson

I've been doing a lot of Zoom presentations to Camera Clubs and recently I've been getting feedback that I've never heard before... and it really surprised me:

Thank you for giving me permission to create what I love

Thank you for giving me permission to ignore the rules

Thank you for giving me permission to listen to myself

My first reaction was horror! Who am I to give anyone permission? I worried that I had presumed too much and crossed a line in my presentation.

My second reaction was bewilderment. Why do people think they need permission to do what they want?

My third reaction was sadness. It seems that the message so many people come away with after taking a photo class or joining a camera clubs is: here are the rules that you must follow to create good images.

And then they hear my message:

Don't follow the rules

Create what you love

Don't listen to other's advice

And their reaction is often relief and excitement. Relief that they don't have to follow the rules and excitement that they can follow their own instincts and create for the pure joy of creating.

But of course following this path comes with a price: others may not like your work, they may even be critical of it and you probably will not please judges or reviewers who believe in following rules.

But what would you rather do? Follow their advice and create images that they love but you don't...or follow your own heart and create images that you love.

If it helps, you have my permission to ignore the rules, follow your Vision and create images that you love.

Article reprinted from Cole Thompson's newsletter. Get your own at: colethompsonphotography.com/newsletter

So much of what I've learned later in life about art, photography and especially about myself,
has come about as a result of unlearning something.

– Cole Thompson