

presents and suggests what to do, and how to do it. The slightest movement, the lift of a hand, the flicker of an eye, must not escape. The concentration required is comparable to that of a painter making a quick sketch, grasping essentials in a few spontaneous lines. The photographer, however, may have to effect a full integration within a few seconds. . . .

It must be stressed that man, himself, is the actual medium of expression, not the tool he elects to use. The hand directing brush, chisel, or camera, does not act without guidance. In the 15th century, Leonardo da Vinci protested when the "intelligentsia" defined painting as a mechanical art because it was done by hand! The human eye, too, is just as mechanical, quite as nonselective in its seeing as the camera lens: in back of the eye as well as the lens, there must be a directing intelligence, the creative force. . . .

An excellent conception can be quite obscured by faulty technical execution, or clarified by flawless technique. Look then, with a discriminating eye, at the photograph exposed to view on the museum wall. It should be sharply focused, clearly defined from edge to edge—from nearest object to most distant. It should have a smooth or gloss surface to better reveal the amazing textures and details to be found only in a photograph. Its values should be convincingly rendered; they should be clear-cut, subtle or brilliant—never veiled. These physical characteristics of an authentic photograph are repeated for final emphasis.

If the example viewed has all these qualities, and yet is not pleasing, the competent critic will not blame photography; he will attribute the failure to a photographer who could not affirm his intention, who could not correlate his technique and his idea—who was not an artist.

Edward Weston

Leaflet,

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AN EXCERPT

The invention of photography was the inevitable result of necessity: the need of a changing world for another technique, a means of expression through which, in certain essentials, a clearer communication, based on contemporary premises could be established. The new scientific approach to life demanded a method of recording which could meet the quickened tempo of the day; a means of unlimited print duplications (mass production); an art form which would be a synthesis of the apparently irreconcilable viewpoints of science and aesthetics. In fulfilling these requirements photography has extended horizons and created a new world-vision. . . .

David Octavius Hill, a Scotsman, made a series of photographs, mostly portraits, which even today are recognized as outstanding examples of fine photography. These portraits should have indicated the unique possibilities of the medium, thus serving as a guide to photographers of that day, and those to follow. Perhaps Hill's influence was negligible because his approach was instinctive rather than affirmatively intentional. One way or another his work was unheeded and forgotten, and for many years photographers, blind to the significance of their new adventure, indulged in abortive attempts to imitate the particular qualities belonging to painting and other arts, until photography, stigmatized by these travesties, lost all recognition as an original art form. . . .

Imitation must eventually die from its own false assumptions, but in an age of confused aims, misrepresentation, and indifference, it dies hard; so it seems necessary to note that exhibitions of pure photography are all too rare, that the medium still suffers from misguided workers, who in turn mislead the public, to the detriment of photography.

In viewing an exhibition of photographs one must seek those examples which justify their existence as fine photography by achieving a correlation between meaning and expression which is free from all irrelevant connotations, all suggestions of other forms of expression. They will not be difficult to recognize because photography is such a basically honest medium that even a tyro can detect falsifications. Look for the exquisite rendition of surface textures beyond the skill of human hand, beyond the seeing of human eye; or consider the uninterrupted sequence of subtle gradations from black to white. Realize that these qualities can be recorded in fractions of seconds at the very instant when they are most significantly revealed and felt; that this same split-second technique can be used to capture illumined expressions of the human face and fleeting gestures. In the application of camera principles, thought and action so nearly coincide that the conception of an idea and its execution can be almost simultaneous. The previsioned image, as seen through the camera, is perpetuated at the moment of clearest understanding, of most intense emotional response.

The chemico-mechanical nature of photography precludes all manual interference with its essential qualities, and indicates a fully integrated understanding of the aesthetic problem before exposure. The conception must be seen and felt on the camera ground glass complete in every detail: all values, textures, exact dimensions must be considered once and for all, for with the shutter's release the isolated image becomes unalterably fixed. Developing the negative and making the final print, completes the original conception. This is the procedure in straight, real photography. . . .

The mechanical camera and indiscriminate lens-eye, by restricting too personal interpretation, directs the worker's course toward an impersonal revelation of the objective world. "Self expression" is an objectification of one's deficiencies and inhibitions. In the discipline of camera technique, the artist can become identified with the whole of life and so realize a more complete expression. . . .

Far from being limited to unqualified realism, photography admits the possibility of considerable departure from factual recording. A lens may be selected to give perspective at great variance with the eye. The addition of an indicated color-filter will change or even eliminate certain values. The choice between films, plates, printing papers, and

chemicals, available in endless variety, affords full opportunity for emphasis or for divergence from nature. All these are relevant to straight photography, and justified if used with intention.

Faced with this choice of technical equipment, the artist selects those means best suited to his ends—and always with full understanding that his tools are no more than means. One may easily become lost in the fascinating technical intricacies and difficulties of photography and so make them the end. Due to these difficulties, as well as to widespread confusion of purpose amongst photographers, very few workers have stood out among the countless thousand of photographers as historically important. To be sure, a child can be taught to make creditable records within a few weeks; but to acquire a technique adequate to the consummation of intention may well be considered, as in any art, a lifework.

For all landscape, still life, in fact any stationary subject, I use an 8 x 10 camera on tripod. The camera is fitted with several lenses for various purposes, but the one I have used most often in recent years is a slow rectilinear lens costing \$5.00; I mention this cost because of a prevalent opinion that an expensive lens is prerequisite for fine work. Of course I have no objection to the finest apparatus procurable, and a fully corrected lens is sometimes a necessity. I use panchromatic films, pyro-soda developer, and print contact on glossy Chloro-bromide paper. For portraits, or any animated subject, I use a 4 x 5 Graflex fitted with a faster, fully corrected anastigmat lens; all other data being the same. . . .

The final examination of the projected image is all important in straight photography; at this moment one uses the experience of a lifetime; for—as has been noted already—the shutter's release determines all succeeding procedures. This way of working bars accidental successes, demands quick seeing and decisions. A photograph so conceived on the ground glass has a vitality and integrity not to be found in one depending upon subsequent changes, such as enlarging portions of the negative, alterations or corrections by retouching, or any phase of manual interference. One form of "improvement" to be decried is in the use of printing methods or papers which have in their own right exquisite textures thus tending to hide or even destroy the intrinsic beauty of the negative.

If the subject to be photographed is alive . . . I use a camera of the reflecting type, in which the image is seen on the ground glass up to the very second of shutter-release. Since I never "pose" a subject but rather wait for significant moments—and they happen continually—it becomes less possible to start with preconceived ideas. The moment