

Mido
Photography

The Vision



Introduction

First it was “*Serenity*” a romantic book about the beauty of Lebanon that contained beautiful selected quotes and photographs that my friend Dina Hilal and I took and selected. After that it was the book “*Wou inta shou raryak*” a small Arabic booklet in black & White containing selected photos I took along with some short texts I wrote to highlight some of the problems of Lebanese society. Two years later a question kept haunting me: What is next?

This was a hard question to answer... I wanted to do something new, reflecting new thoughts and expressing myself in a new way. I decided to mix my experience and my academic knowledge of photography to publish some of the points that I focus on and highlight whenever I teach photography courses.

My first free e-book was born out of this idea, and is an invitation to travel with me on a magical voyage that is both surreal and real.... our destination... Photography!

“When a photograph captivates you and stirs your soul, you know it instinctively. You not only see the photo, you feel it...”

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Some Advice

Photography is now clearly a language...

You must have something to “say”...

Today, with everyone being able to easily take photographs with a cell phone, you need to be an “*author*”...

Study photography, see what people have achieved to learn from them, but don't try to copy anyone's photographic style...

Photography is a complex medium, an individual voice which requires time to develop, so be patient...

Lose the ego and let the photograph find you...

Try to translate personal experience into a collective one...

My Photographic Journey

For me, photography started as a hobby at the early age of ten with my first film camera “Minolta” and through it I started to “see” the world...

As soon as I reached university and while studying Architecture, I promised myself that no matter what I will enrich my hobby. This promise was kept and reinforced when I studied photography and completed this dream in 2003.

Day in... Day out... I found myself confronted with the hard task of manifesting my dreams into reality. I feel lucky that my journeys were marked by encounters with people who generously believed in my talents and encouraged me to improve and enhance them.

In 2004, I had the opportunity to begin teaching photography courses at university level, and over the years I found that teaching photography had turned out to be one of my greatest joys, especially when I find my students excelling in this field.

I don't see myself as a photojournalist... A photojournalist doesn't take sides, and I don't want to go through life like that. I decided out of strong belief that I would have a more powerful voice as a photographer if I expressed my point of view ... So here the voice calling for separating artistic photography from photojournalism took hold. .

The art of photography for me is a subtractive process, a distillation of reality into a personal vision. Thus, I often use the tools of modern photography – filters and digital enhancements – to try to capture in an image the emotions I felt at the moment I tripped the camera's shutter....

My Photographic Journey

I am very fond of a quote by Ansell Adams:
“A *photograph* is usually looked at - seldom looked into”...
I always try to let people look into my work not at it...

Thank YOU!

To My Wife and friend **Lynn** who stood by me in our ups & downs in life

To My Angels: **Yara & Hassan** who are my gift in life

To My Comrade **Afifeh Halabi** whose artistic design helped bring this e-book and all my previous books to life.

To the friend indeed **Lana Aoude** whose editing skills helped me put this e-book and all my previous books together.

To the friends **Gaby Arets** and **Denise Nassar** for their continuous support and for pushing me to do this e-book.

To My Facebook friends whose amazing support pushes me to give more and more

My family: **Hassan, Naila, Dany, Sara and Aya.**

Photography Defined?

When one asks what photography is, the classical answer comes: Drawing with light. If we search a dictionary we will find it defined as *'the art or practice of taking and processing photographs'*.

For me this is not enough...

Once in my adolescence, while holding my small "Minolta" and shooting in the streets of Paris and trying to enhance my photography, I asked myself what photography meant to me... I couldn't find an answer... But I felt deep down that Photography is a major part of my life, one of my major passions...

Photography has given me something to do and learn about for many years and has provided me with many thousands of hours of enjoyment...

Twenty nine years on and I'm still learning...

Photography gives me creative fulfillment. It helps me express myself artistically, and that's a wonderful thing. Creativity is a major part of my life.

Photography also gives me serenity and peace of mind in nature: *"in the real world"*.

It also gives me the motivation to travel and explore new places.

Photography has helped see the beauty in the world, and it has also shown me some of the bad things namely people's suffering...

With all these stated I find *"drawing with light"* to be a dull answer...



"A Blast from the Past..."

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Learning to See

The first thing to keep in mind when practicing photography is to recognize that the skill you are growing is your ability to **“SEE”**.

For me, **“seeing”** is a complex combination of your physical **“eyesight”** and your mental **“vision”**...

A good way to enhance your ability to see, and thus your vision is the act of observing your surroundings... You can do it at any moment and all what it requires is a little extra **“attention”**.

Since I was a kid, I always imagine myself photographing with my eyes...

I always tell my students to imagine themselves as ghosts when practicing *“how to see”*, let themselves go and imagine they do not exist physically and search for details... Train your eyes as if were a spy.

You can also review your photos, not with the intention of criticizing, but with the intention of helping yourself improve to be the best photographer you can be.

This process of self-analysis will help you to see what you like about your own photographs. The things you like, you keep and improve. The things you don't, you discard and rework. Go and check the photos you took two years ago and you will see how your eye *“sees”* much better now; and not only this... Your *“vision”* is now more developed...



“Landing...”

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“STOP the Violence...”

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Violence against women is the last refuge of
disgusting immoral men.

Kristian Goldmund Aumann



“That Destructive Ego...”

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Ego is just like Dust in the Eyes... Without clearing the dust, We can't see anything Clearly... So clear the Ego and see the World!

Vision

“Be yourself, the world worships the original.” Jean Cocteau

Vision is the art of seeing the invisible. It is a subject that is rarely discussed in photography. Yet, it is a very important subject.

With vision your photographs become the conveyors of ideas.

As mentioned in *“Learning to see”* previously, vision is not just *“sight.”* Instead, vision is insight. It is the ability to see something in your mind’s eye, something that exists in your imagination, something that is within yourself.

A vision is an idea or a concept. It is inspiration made into reality.

For me, Vision is using photography to express something otherwise invisible. It is making poetry with photographs. It is reaching the artistic and self-expression level.

Finding and expressing your vision can be a challenging process. Because your vision is something that is invisible to others, it is a process that you have to go through essentially by yourself.

I believe that Vision is a message... It is creating a story through an image.

This message can be about sharing an emotion, a feeling, a belief or a particular way of looking at the world. It is not just about sharing an image with your audience. It is also about sharing the meaning of this image with your audience. This image means something to you. This image contains not just objects, people and features; it also contains ideas

Vision

that represent your vision. Without vision an image is just an image. With vision an image becomes the vehicle that carries your ideas to your audience.

So as photographers, we have to translate these visions to our audiences.

So you must have a vision or an idea. For some, this comes naturally. For others, it is something that requires work and, sometimes, soul-searching if you will.

A large part of the process of developing your vision takes place without a camera in hand. It doesn't even have to happen where you take your photographs. Sometimes it happens with me while driving or listening to music...

I don't photograph the world as it is. I photograph the world as I would like it to be.

A photographer's work is given shape and style by his personal vision.

In the process of developing your vision you must be yourself and demonstrate your personality.

You can only express your vision and demonstrate your personal style when you bring your personality into your work

In a way, and to continue the discussion started in Section 6, your audience seeks to admire and acquire objects that have a soul. Rationally speaking, objects, including works of art, do not have a soul. They are not alive; they do not breathe and are not made of living cells. They do not think, and thus, from a Cartesian perspective, they are not able to invent themselves. Irrationally speaking, however, works of art can be perceived as having a soul. This soul, if present, is imbued into the work of art by the transfer of the artists' personality and passion into his artwork. This soul is brought

Vision

about by the care and the craftsmanship used to create the work. This soul is present in the artwork because a part of the artist's soul was transferred into the work during its creation.

This soul is the personality of the artist. It is the demonstration of personal choices and the decision to implement a personal idea rather than other people's ideas. In a way, what surprises us and even shocks us when we encounter a work of art for the first time, is the implementation of the artist's vision through the demonstration of this artist's style, ideas and personality.

What shocks us is that the choices made by a specific artist are radically different from the choices we saw other people make in regards to the same subject. What shocks us is the unabashed display of this artist's personality through his or her work. What shocks us is to see something depicted in a way that we have never seen before, a way that we know we will only see in this artist's work, unless of course someone copies it, but then it would be nothing more than a copy and not an original work of art.

The outcome of vision implemented in a work of art is a new and different way of looking at the world. It is the creation of a new reality, of a new world. It is in this world that the artist invites his audience. It is in the reality created by the artist that the audience is asked to step in. Once inside, the audience is shown the specifics of this world, the details if you will.

The experience, if successful, is complete and will leave the audience speechless and asking for more while seeking to retract in a more familiar environment only to find that, once there, something is lacking. Only to find that, once the door offered by the artist has been pushed wide open, one wants to experience more and more of the world

Vision

revealed behind this door. Only to find that this world, while not “*reality*,” is a world one wants to live in. If this indeed occurs, if this door is pushed then left open by the audience for future visits, then the artist has succeeded not only in creating a world, but also in creating a world that his audience is enthralled with. Passion has flowed from the artist towards his audience. Excitement has been shared, and now the desire to experience this world is shared by both the artist and his audience.

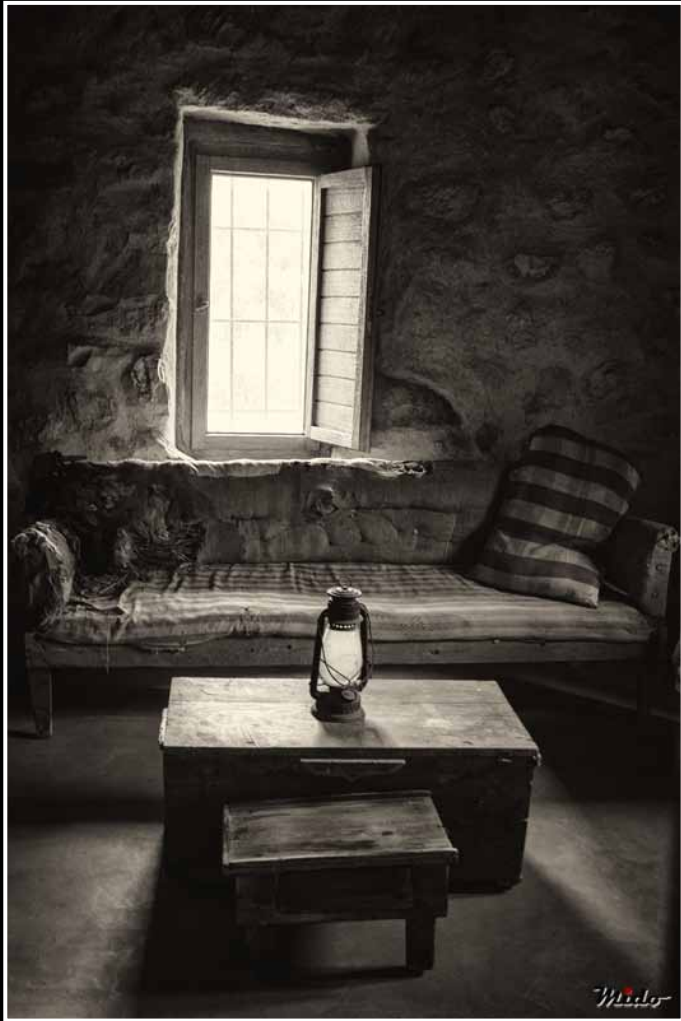
The conclusion is that you will not express the fullness of your vision working with a subject that you do not love or that you are not excited about. You must be photographing what you love and what you are passionate about for your vision to fully express itself and become a reality.

There is a difference between liking something and loving something.

I still remember when studying photography I was asked once to describe my vision in writing or in an audio recording.

Try it and keep in mind that no one else but you will see this writing or hear this recording. You do not have to share it with anyone unless you wish to. Write down as many ideas and as many things about your vision as they come to you.

One thing that I learned many years ago is that it is not possible to make good art if your heart is not in it. Even if you try to do so your audience eventually will see that you are not totally involved and people will eventually distance themselves from your work as a result.



*"Light & Darkness: a combination to form
life - one cannot exist without the other..."*

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"Too many people go through life waiting for things to happen instead of making them happen!"

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Great Thoughts from Great Artists

Photography is not a form of documentary; it is rather intuition and a poetic experience. It's drowning yourself, dissolving yourself, and then sniff, sniff, sniff – being sensitive to coincidence. You can't go looking for it; you can't want it, or you won't get it. First you must lose yourself. Then it happens. - **Henri Cartier-Bresson**

Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision. - **Salvador Dali**

In order to be a successful Photographer, you must possess both Vision and Focus neither of which have anything to do with your eyes. - **Kevin Russo**

You don't make a photograph just with a camera. You bring to the act of photography all the pictures you have seen, the books you have read, the music you have heard, the people you have loved. - **Ansel Adams**

The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera. - **Dorothea Lange**

Black and white are the colors of photography. To me they symbolize the alternatives of hope and despair to which mankind is forever subjected. - **Robert Frank**

Photography is a small voice, at best, but sometimes one photograph, or a group of them, can lure our sense of awareness. - **W. Eugene Smith**

Of course, I won't be abandoning photography, because it is my life. - **Sebastiao Salgado**



*"Dare to imagine. Dare to be.
Books are the seeds. Dreams are the soil.
The fruit of the harvest, a world reborn."
Richelle E. Goodrich (Dandelions).*

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Conceptual Photography

Conceptual photography as a part of conceptual art is a photography genre in which the artist makes a photograph of a concept or idea. It is a mystifying field of photography for many and a taboo for photojournalists and documentary photographers.

Usually the conception of the idea precedes the realization of the photography. This kind of photography often, but not necessarily, involves use of computer editing to achieve the desired effect.

My purpose here is to try to clarify and define conceptual photography as I see that this genre of photography is vague for many.

A conceptual photographer is trying to bring some message to the viewer and the photo is a general expression of the idea...

Conceptual photography does not always attempt to be beautiful or even pleasing to the eyes. Shocked? Well yes, this is the truth!

From Conceptual Photography derive two other genres: Minimalism and Surrealism; conceptual photography is the entry level to those genres.



“Throw Away Your Television...”

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Brainwashed People - Time to Wake Up!
Brainwashed to Keep Watching a Particular TV Program
Brainwashed to Believe the News
Brainwashed to Believe You Must Have a Particular Product
Brainwashed to Believe that You Need a Particular Medication

Creativity

Photography has changed more rapidly in the past 10 years than it did in the 50 years prior.

Most of the new photography books focus now very heavily on image processing while if you look back at a book written 20 years ago, you will see that most of the emphasis is on capturing the image.

For me, understanding the camera, and photography theories are all fundamental to being a great photographer even today. It is needed to make a balance between the importance of image capture and what you can do on the computer afterwards to turn a great photograph into a stunning one.

In over ten years of teaching photography and creativity, I came into contact with mostly adults, people seeking to find a way of expression... Most of the students were older than college age and were prepared to work passionately toward realizing their creative aspirations. Moreover, it is truly surprising to me that some young artists believe that they already, and seemingly by instinct, fully understand the process of creativity. It is not viewed as a question or an inquiry; rather, it is seen as something that they feel capable of accomplishing through their ordinary mind alone, without the enlarging dimension of the deeper parts of their nature...

In fact, the creative process, as with all natural processes of growth and evolution, proceeds along a long line of development but does not always follow a linear progression.



"A negative thinker makes everything worse, heavier, and harder..."

A positive thinker makes everything better, lighter, and easier..."

(Self Portrait)

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A Meditation

What I will try to explain now is what has lately been called Contemplative photography...

Some people think that the purpose of meditation is to stop the mind to relax. I define it as: Calming the mind.

In other words, photography is concerned with producing images of reality; meditation is about seeing reality as it is.

Both photography and meditation require an ability to focus steadily on what is happening in order to see more clearly.

In Photography as in meditation, a river of feelings and thoughts is flowing, but I am not drowning in it. I feel free.

"To take photographs," wrote Henri Cartier-Bresson *"is to hold one's breath when all faculties converge in the face of fleeing reality. ... It is putting one's head, one's eyes and one's heart on the same axis. ... It is a way of shouting, of freeing oneself, not of proving or asserting one's originality. It is a way of life."* These words of the renowned French photographer define photography as an ongoing meditative relationship to the world. For Cartier-Bresson, photography is not merely a profession but a liberating engagement with life itself, the camera not just a machine for recording images but *"an instrument of intuition and spontaneity."*

Contemplative photography calls us to see our world in a new and fresh way.

Being involved in the conceptual, I can say that I am still trying to get involved and dive in this genre that I find very simple, but it is not always easy... It requires stillness of mind,

A Meditation

patience, and the desire to really see what is there, so that we can understand how to express what we are seeing with our camera simply and precisely and that is the main difference with the conceptual genre. You train yourself to see with a GOOD eye but in conceptual photography we reveal the bad sometimes.

Here, the world is always fresh, because everything we see is as for the first time. There is no memory, no association, only the world manifesting to us, as it is, out of nowhere.

To be honest, I feel I am not ready yet to be able to produce this genre, maybe I have to admit that I belong to the conceptual camp.



“Reality Is a State of Illusion...”

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Photography in 2014

I hear a lot especially from old school photographers that photography is finished because of technology and the spread of cameras in phones.

I can say that the traditional approach to photography is over and thank God for that...

Photography has undergone drastic and dramatic changes, while many photographers refused those changes and fought them...

Digital cameras are cheap and image-processing software (whether on-camera firmware or applications like Photoshop, Lightroom and Instagram) has made it extraordinarily easy to produce an image-quality that was previously only possible with years of specialized training in equipment, shooting technique, and printing methods.

I can summarize the problem in the following: The traditional understanding of "photography" is ill-suited to make sense of the 21st Century's photography.

Lately, we saw photography through social media to have played a key mobilizing role in riots and revolutions therefore I would focus on the way technology changes the way people think about photography and this is a good point to stop and think of it.

"Both those taking snaps and documentary photographers, however, have not understood 'information.' What they produce are camera memories, not information, and the better they do it, the more they prove the victory of the camera over the human being." - Vilém Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography.

Photography in 2014

Let us be realistic, today, we're taking and uploading more than 200 million images per day via Facebook alone. Our phones have become our recording devices. Or as I like to see it: My camera can also make calls.

Smartphones have democratized photography, and Instagram, in particular, has given us an unprecedented platform for our snapshots. But instead of marveling at all the choices, there's some grumbling. Some professionals feel threatened as they see the playing field leveling; they interpret it as the end of skill and craft in photography. They should have no fear of such a thing.

I can simply say what's happening today is similar to the original proliferation of Kodak's camera starting in 1900. An inexpensive and easy-to-use camera in every hand didn't usher in the end of photography...

Photo apps won't magically give the smartphone photographer a better sense of composition, or lighting, or framing. The apps and filters only change a photo's look and aesthetic feel.

That doesn't make it a better photo. If you put lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig!

I see Instagram as a tool to practice photography and composition: this is good and enhances creativity... We have a sea of images now. On the horizon, I see the forming of a new photographic language. Let's embrace photography, as it exists now. And let's continue to find our individual voice, perspectives, stories and style, regardless of the medium.



"Light Attack"

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"Dubai 360"

© Mido Photography | www.mido-photo.com

Selfie

Selfie was the word of the year, but is it a new trend or fashion? Surely not.

Lately, the American Psychiatric Association makes it official: “*Selfie*” is a mental disorder...

Did you know that Van Gogh took Selfies?

People through history have been painting, sculpting, and photographing themselves long before the smartphone turned us all into amateur self-portraitists. No one says Raphael or Van Gogh were narcissistic even though they spent years painting their own faces.

Early photographers used mirrors, timers or remote-controlled shutter releases to take pictures of themselves.

Selfie may be the word of the year, but let us admit it: The concept behind it is eternal!



"Mafia Era..."
(Self Portrait)

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The Theory & Psychology of Framing

Horizontal or Vertical?

Our natural vision often suggests a horizontal view (because of the way we naturally observe with our eyes) which may be the most influential reason why photographs are often composed horizontally rather than vertically. Another, less fundamental, reason is the ease of hand holding a camera in a horizontal manner due to build and design.

When a subject is vertically elongated, it makes more sense and is more naturally perceived by human vision when framed vertically. If our scene or subject expands horizontally (or equally in both directions), it is more naturally perceived by human vision framed horizontally.

A square frame could, however, sometimes offer an interesting or even refreshing change from the more familiar vertically or horizontally elongated frame shapes. It can even be a more convenient format for symmetrical subjects.

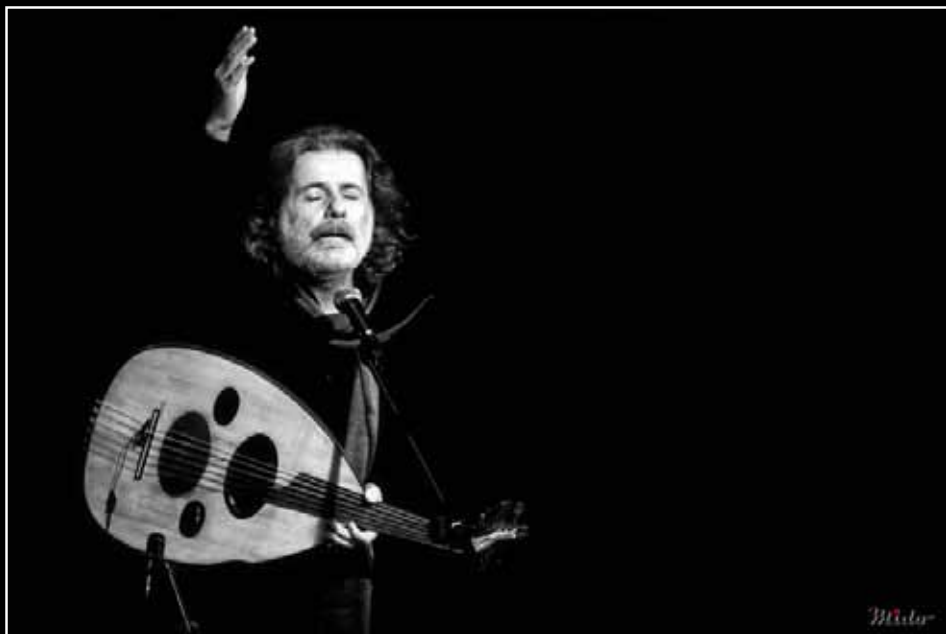
When there's just a single subject to be framed, it might seem logical to place it dead center – with equal empty space around it in all directions. Sometimes this actually works, but the problem with this kind of framing is predictability. It's always worth looking away from this option, and experimenting with positioning the subject at different sides of the composition to see which works best.

This becomes more important if the subject is relatively small in size compared to the full surrounding space. When the subject is off-center, it creates tension within your

The Theory & Psychology of Framing

image. This tension can be described as a physiological force, which in photography gives an extra edge to your photos, conveying excitement and creating drama.

What a photographer can do to help viewers understand the sense of art in their work, is to give them a little incentive or push in the right direction by observing and understanding the visual weights of different elements. Using these carefully can help a photo tell a story, engage an emotion, or draw all of the viewer's attention to one particular point.



Marcel Khalife

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The 7 Legal Commandments of Photography

I teach these in my workshops and classes and I insist that photographers MUST know these seven points:

- I. Anyone in a public place can take pictures of anything they want.
- II. If you are on public property, you can take pictures of private property. If a building, for example, is visible from the sidewalk.
- III. If you are on private property and are asked not to take pictures, you are obligated to honor that request.
- IV. Sensitive government buildings can prohibit photography if it is deemed a threat to national security.
- V. People can be photographed if they are in public (without their consent) unless they have secluded themselves and can expect a reasonable degree of privacy. Kids swimming in a fountain? Okay. Somebody entering their PIN at the ATM? Not okay.
- VI. If you are challenged, you do not have to explain why you are taking pictures, nor do you have to disclose your identity (except in some cases when questioned by a law enforcement officer)
- VII. If someone tries to confiscate your camera, you don't have to give it to them. If they take it by force or threaten you, they can be liable for things like theft and coercion. Even law enforcement officers need a court order.



“Quantum Leap...”

(Shot not edited)

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“My Way...”

© Mido Photography | www.mido-photo.com



I've loved, I've laughed and cried
I've had my fill, my share of losing
And now, as tears subside, I find it all so amusing
To think I did all that
And may I say, not in a shy way,
“Oh, no, oh, no, not me, I did it my way” Frank Sinatra



“On the Day the World Ends...”

© Mido Photography | www.mido-photo.com



Women walk through fields without their umbrellas
Men walk through fields heads bent down
The voice of a violin lasts in the air
Those who expected lightning and thunder are disappointed.
Silence in the air
On the day the world ends...

Mistake vs Failure

A failure is a project that doesn't work, an initiative that teaches you something at the same time when the outcome doesn't move you directly closer to your goal.

A mistake is either a failure repeated, doing something for the second time when you should have known better, or a misguided attempt (because of carelessness, selfishness or hubris) that hindsight reminds you is worth avoiding.

Following the RULES of composition and lighting and posing and exposure will NOT make you successful and will only serve to make your work average. You will spend more time remembering rules to determine the quality of your image than you will spend being creative and motivating your subject to deliver a captivating expression.

If you are a photographer who feels that Photoshop should not be a part of the creative process or a photographer who feels the need to use plug-in's to "*flavor*" all of your images you will NOT move your work anywhere beyond average. You will simply produce lazy images.

SO PLEASE REMEMBER...

It is ok to fail. If you fail... it means you were trying. The Wright Brothers failed. Steve Jobs failed. We could write an encyclopedia of failures that lead to success.

You can listen to what people say...

But it is better to listen to what people do...



“Burj Khalifa”

© Mido Photography | www.mido-photo.com

Lessons from Burj Khalifa

It was a challenge...

Never been done before, not guaranteed to get built or to work...

It was criticized by hundreds of experts...

It's designed to be an icon, it's not an accident...

People flock to it because it's famous...



"Only a Memory..."

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"In Byblos with the sun going down, the amphitheater is a beautiful structure..."

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"Memories..."

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“Do You See Any Future?!...”

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"Oriental Dream"

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"Beauty..."

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"The Thinker"

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"I Am the QUEEN of the World..."

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Make Your Choices for a Reason

When you take a photo and choose where something goes in the frame, know why you're doing it...

If you're just trying to take a pleasing photo, the rules are your friend. On the other hand, if you're trying to convey something with the photograph, figure out how you want to convey it and compose your image accordingly. This may or may not involve breaking the rules, but you increase your chances of ending up with a compelling photo if you choose a specific composition for a specific reason.



"360 Degrees of Raoucheh"

© Mido Photography | www.mido-photo.com



"Lebanese National Museum"

The place that does not concern many
Lebanese.
(Unfortunately)

© Mido Photography | www.mido-photo.com



*"You can pray anywhere... and no matter
what religion or sect you belong to..."*

The reason and goodness are ONE."

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And Now How to Develop Your Own Style?!?!

Pay attention...

Development of a style is different from imitation!

First thing to do is to educate yourself to understand the difference between style, subject and genre.

STYLE: It is what makes the work unique

SUBJECT: Selecting what to photograph

GENRE: Capturing the photograph using the viewpoint of the art movement being followed.

BE PATIENT... It does not happen overnight.

Mido Photography Contacts

