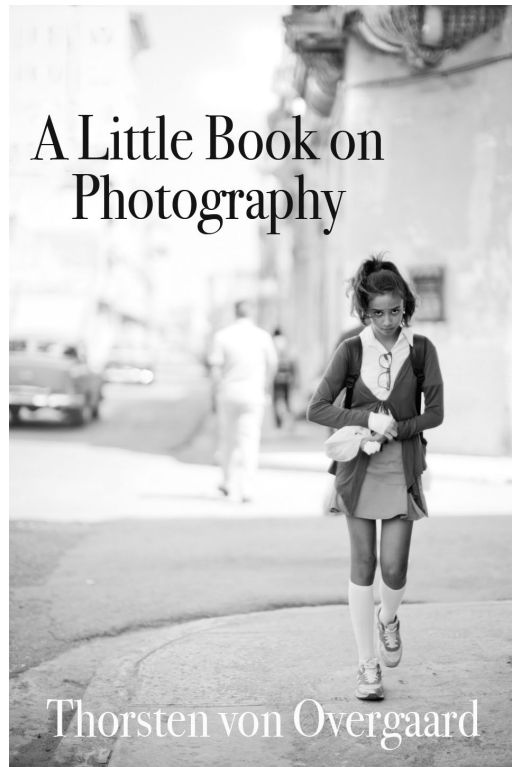


A Little Book on Photography



Thorsten von Overgaard

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Introduction

By Thorsten Overgaard

A Little Book on Photography is the closest I have ever come to writing a poetry book.

It started out as notes in a notebook, and then one day in Hong Kong, I sat down and put it into this book.

I continued the work in Hollywood, Havana and London, and this is what I put together.

Enjoy!

- *Thorsten von Overgaard*



My Career

By Thorsten Overgaard

I decided early on as a teenager not to pursue a career as a photographer. I was into it and wanted to do it well, but not as a profession.

At 14 I built my own 6x6 wooden camera from pieces of wood and metal I found in the basement. The lens I stole from my mother's camera she got as a teenager.

I used it a few times; it was mainly a way to understand the camera and the principles of photography.

I was very ambitious as a kid. I sold my first photograph to Ogilvy and Mather advertising agency for \$400 when I was fifteen.

I did some fashion photography too, with a girl that was a year older than me. The model agency she contacted with the photos was more interested in who the photographer was, than in her.

I wanted to become a great writer and wrote a lot in my teens for the newspaper and monthly magazines, as well as comics. Ambitious as I was, I had saved up

for the best typewriter early on. When I was sixteen my mother and I went up to the IBM headquarters in Denmark and I bought a brand-new IBM 196C red typewriter. In today's money that was a \$6,000 investment.

I started my first business, an advertising agency, when I was nineteen. In two years we had 36 staff, and in year three I went bankrupt and started over.

In 1995 I added the internet to what we did and sold it all in 2000. I got some cash up front and 20 million dollars in paper money.

Having accomplished that goal, I had no interest in big business anymore. I returned to photography – not as a photographer, but as a storyteller: I wanted to portray entrepreneurs with interviews, and I wanted to make photographs to go with them where you could examine their soul and character. I used Leica cameras for that.

I never pursued photography to make money. After the dot-com age I was at a point where I wanted *not* to make money. I wanted to tell stories with aesthetics, for the sake of that. I actively tried not to make money, maybe to re-experience the suspense from always navigating a fine line between going broke or accomplishing total success.



The Business Plan

By Thorsten Overgaard

As I took photographs to tell stories, I acquired fans of my photography, and some of them were editors who asked me if I could do this and that front-page photo or project.

I got into figuring out the business of photography. I started working with companies, with newspapers, with magazines, as a freelance with the world's leading picture agencies: Getty Images and Associated Press.

I found allies in editors who liked the types of stories I liked, and we made projects for me to do that nobody in the newspaper business did anymore: real stories from real life, about things that mattered. Most of these things happen in the streets outside your door.

For me, local children visiting a garden and finding fresh apples is more relevant than a story that two people died in Iraq. I always write and photograph what I want to see myself. "Play the music you would like to hear," as they say in music.

I stayed independent and true to my own goals and style.



Own Your Creations

By Thorsten Overgaard

I decided early on that I always wanted to own my own photographs, so I never gave away ownership to anyone.

I only sell the rights to the use of my photographs, never the photographs themselves.

I always follow my own goals. Now I photograph for myself and in my style. I sort of always did, but now I don't even try to hook up with the establishment.

I build an archive and I keep adding to that every week of the year. I travel to more than 25 countries a year and I always wear a camera.

I'm not going to live forever. The archive will be of use and value in the future.

If we look at the past and the future, one thing is true: valuable content is always valuable.

Only the business models change; the way we trade things.



Legacy

By Thorsten Overgaard

I think artists and photographers have to be entrepreneurs. You don't get hired with a fixed salary anymore, you get paid for what you do. So you might as well do something you feel is important and you really want to do.

In early 2016, I was in Florida to do two assignments. The waiter in the cafe was interested in what I did and asked how much I charge.

I realized I didn't know. One story was about people recovering from drug addiction, the other a portrait session with a famous actor. I hadn't talked money with anybody. I did it because I wanted to do it, and I knew I would get paid.

Following your own goals and ideas will make you able to do something that is valuable. It will allow you to make valuable content. You own it, you can sell it again and again.

The most valuable commodity you get out of what you do is that you are proud of it, you had fun, and you learned something doing it.



Born with Talent

By Thorsten Overgaard

There are abilities people have but which they may not recognize.

Einstein, Mozart, Isaac Hayes, Elliot Erwitt, Ansel Adams, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Stanley Kubrick, Bob Dylan – and the list goes on – all made some of their most significant work before age 30. Before they had been schooled and had a lot of experience.

Most great philosophers never finished university, were thrown out after a few weeks, or just never went there.

So statistically, adding time or education is not what creates genius work.

Experience, as in having tried many things and having tried some things many times, seems to give stability in that one will be able to predict a given standard of quality in one's work, as well as how to work the ropes.

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards,” as the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said.

When I look at the people I educate in photography, the hardest task I have is to convince them that what they see is unique.

The uniqueness of a person is so unique that even when I line up four photographers with the same camera and ask them to take the same photo; the result will be four different photographs.

So what would you train for – to learn to take the same photo as one of the four others?

Why?

When you can already take a unique photo all by yourself, without training?

I believe in study. I always was curious and studied a lot to understand.

How did he do that? Why is that so? as well as the history and origin of things.

And I get familiar with the tools and have a goal as to what I want to accomplish with them.



Work

By Thorsten Overgaard

I don't believe in networking. I believe in work.

Work on your stuff and projects without expecting any help or luck, just do it for the adventure and the good cause.

I don't depend on luck. It exists, but I don't wait for it. I don't wait for the right people or opportunities. It's in the process of doing work that I meet the people I need. It's also in the process of doing work that I learn to solve problems and become smarter about it.

As an artist, everything you do is a *process* (a series of actions taken in order to achieve a particular end).

When you come out the other side of creating something, you know more about it than before. It's tempting to look back and criticize your own work in that light, or look for what could be done better, but I choose to finish that thing and make it available for use, then look ahead and put my efforts in the future.

I also believe every creation is a product of where you are at now. I remember Bob Dylan was asked how he

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wrote the songs he did in 1963, fifty years ago. He said he didn't know how he did it. He only knew he couldn't do it now. Not the same Bob Dylan.

In photography many great masters made some of their most iconic work when young and inexperienced. They didn't know it would be iconic when they made it, it was just what they did that day.

When you create something, it might be important. Don't save it for later or wait until you understand how and why. Just do it, and some of it will be great.

Creating is a continuous flow of things. It's not a continuous flow of trying. It's a continuous flow of making something, finalizing it and putting it out there, then making the next thing.

I don't photograph much editorial. I mostly photograph for myself and I archive these. A good photograph for me is one that is timeless and has qualities so it will be valuable in 30 years too. When I photograph editorial I also get some of those, but most are for here and now and the story that the magazine or newspaper wants.

Working on assignments and editorial is a job. When I look back at my editorial archive, the photographs I did for myself while out somewhere doing editorial are the classics. Doing editorial work and assignments teaches you to work and get things done. You go in as a shark and look for the images that will do the job and get them, and then get on with the next thing. You

don't lounge around without any idea or purpose.

It's good training in getting things done, finalized and delivered.

Assignments and editorial work also gets you out and about. It gives access to places and scenes you wouldn't or couldn't go to if you weren't sent to do it.



Working for Others

By Thorsten Overgaard

Sometimes I can get into working for others where they decide what to photograph and perhaps even how to photograph it.

There is nothing wrong with that really, but when I do, I know that I am an instrument and I do their work. Even if it is only implied that someone wants me to come back with certain things, I am working from their viewpoint and may not feel the freedom to create my own things.

What I do is that I apply my own viewpoint and style to things. I do what I was asked, but I add my own viewpoint to it. Or I do what I was asked but I also make and present my entire own viewpoint as part of the set I deliver.

Likely the one who commissioned me will start liking my style of doing things and often my style will then influence others working on the same things so it becomes a new trend or a way of doing that.

As nobody can really copy your unique viewpoint, it will gradually become a personal style and will



distinguish your photographs and will eventually lead to you getting asked to work because of your style rather than as someone else's instrument.

That's when you are entirely yourself and you basically work for yourself, in your own way, creating what you want. That's the goal; to get paid for doing just that, which you like and which is easy for you, and nobody else can copy that.

It's much easier to be yourself than to try to be someone else.

The people who hire you are fans. They want you to photograph something because they love your style.

Essentially, that is the way you want to live and work, no matter if you are a musician, a chef, a painter, a management consultant ... Well I guess, no matter what you do for a living.

You should be doing what you like to do and how you want to do it, and get paid well for it.

Money for nothin' as Dire Straits sang in 1985. The song lyrics are written from the point of view of a working-class man watching music videos on MTV and commenting on what he sees.



Invalidation

By Thorsten Overgaard

The thing to watch out for in creating a career as a photographer, is to avoid people who invalidate.

Some will be so eager to use you as their instrument that they (knowingly or unknowingly) will prevent you from applying your own viewpoint.

They will invalidate it and insist you do it the way they want it.

You don't work for them. You stop working for them.

Another type is the ones who "don't have a budget" but "will credit you in the magazine". They will tell you to "be happy that we want to use your work" and that "others will see it and it will be good for you."

You don't work for them. You tell them the price and either they get in line and pay, or they don't use your photographs.

The effect is that you save time and energy not having to deal with blood-suckers. Or they call you back that they found the budget, and thus they become paying

clients and love working with someone who sets things straight.

They knew it was wrong to ask you to work for free to begin with, but it was their “solution” to get content and do their job. Asking to get paid, you have introduced them to the right way to get things done that has worked for thousands of years: you pay someone for their work with money or goods.

It even has a name. It’s called *economy*.

You can take a piece of paper and sketch out how it works:

You can work 100% of the time and get paid for 1/10th of your work and feel you “should be happy,” even though you are starving.

You can say no to free work and get paid for 1/10th of your work and have 90% of your time free to find other paying clients.

Saying no will filter away the people who don’t really believe in exchange, and you will eventually end up with 100% clients who pay for your work.

And you know what? Paying clients are happier with what they bought than people who didn’t pay for what they got for free.



Always Wear a Camera

By Thorsten Overgaard

If you can't really decide when you leave in the morning, if you're inspired or not, just take the camera anyway, because suddenly something happens that inspires you, and then you have to have the camera.

That's how pictures happen.



Get Out the Door

By Thorsten Overgaard

The basic axiom of photography is to wear a camera.

The next axiom would be to get out the door.

Just somewhere. It doesn't matter if it's Africa, Greenland, or down the street at the local library.

Just get out the door. That's the most effective way to get photographs.

I never walk to get photographs. I walk to get coffee, and I happen to have a camera with me.

(Axiom = A self-evident saying or rule)



Put Your Mind to Work

By Thorsten Overgaard

The mind works continuously day and night solving real and possible problems in the present and future, based on data, experience and imagination.

Always wear a camera and you will start composing photographs from what happens and what will happen in an instant down the street.

You also gain an ability to envision photographs made in places you will visit in the future.

You learn to see what a photograph is, and that makes you able to predict how to make them.



Make Something Every Day

By Thorsten Overgaard

I edit every day to produce something lasting. Editing is the process of going through all the photographs I took and selecting and marking the ones I want to make into final photographs that are ready for print.

I find that a good photograph is often worth making both a color and a black & white version of, and sometimes even different crops of the same photograph.

The point is to select which ones, and then bring them all the way to final photographs that are ready to be used.

The word “edit” comes from Latin and means to *make one or more, and to put out*.

When I edit the same day as I took the photographs, the creative drive is alive, and it is still fun working on the photographs.

When I notice something that didn’t work, I still remember what I did and I learn from it.



Some things work, some don't.

That's the essence of editing: you get some good ones and sometimes some really good ones – all from a series of photos you mostly didn't think was anything special. But going through them and editing, you find some good ones.

That's what gives you the enthusiasm to wear a camera the next day and use it.

You experience that when you take photographs, you make some good photographs.

It's as simple as that.



People and Light

By Thorsten Overgaard

It's always people and light that interests me. When I walk down the street, it's the light that I see. It's not some funny thing.

If there's a reflection or a sparkle – that's what I see and that's what I shoot.



Pictures Happen Everywhere

By Thorsten Overgaard

For example, when we walk around during my workshops, the only direction we have is to the next good coffee place. Then we just zig-zag there, and there's always stuff happening.

You don't have to look for action or go places where something is happening.

The less action, the more you are able to notice things and create your own photographs.

My experience is that you have to slow down to half or less of the speed you would walk to somewhere. That enables you to circle around and zig-zag in one place and it gives you time to notice and create compositions.

You sort of have to be willing to waste your time in order to create time.



Photographs Just Happen

By Thorsten Overgaard

When I look at the winning photographs in competitions that I judge, they're always photographs that just happened. It's never somebody who planned something and set it up.

It's somebody who just had a camera with them, and something happened, and they just caught that moment.



Changing People's Viewpoint

By Thorsten Overgaard

That's one of the great things about being a photographer; you can change people's viewpoints.

You turn on the television and they tell you what to think or how things look.

But here, you can express something.

You can create something.

I think if a lot of people turned off the television and just took out the camera instead, they would start making the world a more beautiful place, a more interesting place.



Right and Beautiful

By Thorsten Overgaard

I want to make people look beautiful in the photographs.

I would never take a photo of somebody to show how ugly or stupid they are, or how wrong they are.

I want to make them right and beautiful.



A Good Photograph

By Thorsten Overgaard

When I have something that is timeless, and it could be 1950, it could be 1930 or 2014, and nobody can really tell, and it doesn't really matter, that's a good photograph.



Why Keep Doing it?

By Thorsten Overgaard

My purpose (in life) is to help people improve themselves.

I like to preserve knowledge so it can be used and shared.

I have always had a big love affair with aesthetics: furniture, architecture, music, painting, fashion.

Aesthetics is creation at its finest.

Preserving and sharing aesthetics is a way to build a better future.

It's hope.



Workshops

By Thorsten Overgaard

I had some people who asked me if I would teach them how to use their camera or which camera to buy.

I said yes, but on the condition that they did two evenings of seminar to really understand photography.

That's how I composed my first workshops and it was mainly theory and no actual photography. But it was all there, all you need to know about photography.

I later added that we would go outside and actually use the cameras, and later I added portrait photography to the palette.

Realizing a photograph is not a photograph until it is finished, I added time to review and edit photographs as well.

Later, others in New York and Los Angeles asked if I could do it there, and that's how the Overgaard Workshops became international.

I do 25-30 workshops a year, all over the world.

I don't invalidate or criticize. People can get enough of that later.

I teach and inspire.



I Just Taught You Everything

By Thorsten Overgaard

When I started doing workshops, I wanted to tell people all the basics that they had to know about photography so that they could do it by themselves.

But then often when we were done with the workshop they said, “That was great! Let’s do it next year!” And I was like, “Do it next year? Why do you want to do it next year? I just taught you everything.”

So it took me a while to realize that it’s not so much teaching technical stuff, but it’s inspiration.

Seeing how I do things and hearing what I have to say about it, that inspires people.



Being a Teacher

By Thorsten Overgaard

It took me some years to realize I have a talent for teaching. I was teaching the member of a royal family a couple of years ago who said to me, “I could have any famous photographer come work with me, but none of them can teach me like *you* can.”

That made me think.

I take that seriously now, being a teacher. I used to hate teachers and going to school. Most of it felt like a test, and teaching is really about helping people to find themselves and be really good at something.

Now I am the teacher, and I teach and educate. That was an unexpected turn of events!



The Leica

By Thorsten Overgaard

Most of the people I work with in my teaching use the Leica camera system, but I intend to inspire and help anybody who wants to photograph. It's the *person* and not the camera that makes the photograph.

The people I meet are serious about their photography. I don't get dilettantes, because those types don't want to spend three days photographing.

So many people are interested in photography these days, all ages, backgrounds and cultures.

It's the preservation of beauty and being able to share that beauty with others that seems to be the most common goal.



A Camera

By Thorsten Overgaard

Photography is very simple.

A camera sees the world as middle-grey. When it is darker or brighter, you have to take control.

I cannot think of much middle-grey I want to photograph.

It's not what the camera can do, it's what you can do with the camera.

A camera has to be so simple that you can take control of it easily and be in charge of the exposure.

That's basically all there is to a camera, technically speaking: control of light. Any other functions added to a camera really don't belong there.



Unique

By Thorsten Overgaard

You have a unique viewpoint. Most people think someone else is better. But you are unique.

What you see and make, others can't. That's how unique you are!

That is the single most difficult thing to teach people and make them understand: that you do not have to wait for approval or permission. You *are* ready.

When you have kids, they think you are the coolest person in the world. If you could see yourself through their eyes, you would understand they are probably right.

Always wear a camera. Look and take pictures.



Decide to Take a Picture

By Thorsten Overgaard

Pictures are not about pixels or sharpness. What hits you first when you see a photograph is the *emotional impact*.

When you stopped in the street because you saw a picture, you saw something you felt you should preserve and share. You saw an *emotion*.

Don't try to reason or argue with yourself. Just take that photo.

Being good at photography is being able to experience the emotion of the picture as a viewer, the moment you get the idea.

Then decide to do it and do it, making the process from seeing to recording the final picture simple.

With pictures you can express what words can't. That's why you don't have to be able to explain a photograph – not to others, and not to yourself.

Just make them and realize they don't have to be explained or translated.



You Have the Viewpoint

By Thorsten Overgaard

Maybe the most important thing that I try to teach people and inspire them to believe is that they have a unique viewpoint.

Most people have this idea that somebody else can do this better or they're pursuing to find out something that they don't know. But basically you know because you have the viewpoint, and if you have a camera, you can record that viewpoint. And then people criticize themselves and they delete pictures and they think they're really bad at focusing or something like that.

But what they fail to notice is that nobody else can do the same as you can do. Even if somebody else tries to do the same, it's just going to be a copy. It's never going to be the same original viewpoint as you had.

And I think as that confidence builds up and you see, "Wow I can actually do something that some people like," then you also get the certainty that you don't have to try that hard. You can just walk around with a camera and take a photo here and there.

That's basically the simplicity of it.



The Breakthrough

By Thorsten Overgaard

The breakthrough I look for in any photographer is that they start believing and stop doubting.

Believe that when you “see a picture” or “get an idea” that it’s valid and real.

Decide to take the photograph, and take it.

That is the main breakthrough, and the rest of the career is to make the process from seeing it, to getting it, simple.

It sounds nice and easy, and it sort of is. But most people want to complicate things with more gear, more software, more knowledge and all.

Making an idea communicate requires that you remove things. Not that you add.



Light

By Thorsten Overgaard

When I see a sparkle, I stop. Some stop when they see a funny thing, an interesting gesture or a nice background. For me it's the light.

You can change the light by moving your viewpoint around. That goes for people, cars, buildings, landscapes, flowers and so forth.

If you just take a photo, that's a snapshot.

When you start moving around to get the light right to tell the story and get aesthetics, that's photography.

Photography is writing with light, but it's not the light source itself we photograph. All you see with your eyes, the textures, the beauty, the colors and the shapes – and the order you notice them in – is guided by reflections of light from a main light source.

It's the reflections of light that shape things and define them. It's also the quality of light that determines if a photograph is perceived as crisp and sharp or not.



Concept of Photography

By Thorsten Overgaard

The art of photography is to see with your eyes first, then capture the things the camera can actually capture. Some things are better seen with a camera than the eyes, and vice versa.

I think it's an important point to learn to see first.

Well, it's not actually learning, its more taking the time to just observe things.

Some of my finest moments in life are to sit in a café with a coffee and just look out in the air. Somehow it's very close to my native being.

That's where I get the best ideas, and it's also where my eye gets caught by something that inspires.

It's fair to say that 1/3 of photography is before you ever use the camera. The act of observing. The act of being, and starting something new.

Another 1/3 is using the camera. The last 1/3 is to decide which of the photos goes somewhere, and then make them go there. Edit (select) and distribute.



The first 1/3 and the last 1/3 are what cause the most difficulties. The first 1/3 is what is the most important and difficult because it's the part nobody thought they had to do. To be there and observe. Most people think the camera does that.

No, it's *you*!

As you go through the cycle of observing, photographing and editing/distributing, you get better and better at seeing that some things that don't look great to the eye, would in fact work well in a photograph.



A Life with Leica

By Thorsten Overgaard

It's really important to know that the camera is just a tool for your viewpoint.

For me, that's why I don't even look at all the cameras, because there are very few cameras that just have the basic controls of light that you need in a camera. Leica is the only one that has managed to keep it simple.



I Sold my Television

By Thorsten Overgaard

I haven't owned a television in the last 15 years. I remember a time when I felt lonely if I didn't see the usual faces on the news every night.

I guess I changed, but also television changed. One day I had had enough of it and decided to sell both of my television sets. I kept them off for a while, and when I realized I could actually live without them, I got rid of them.

What I dislike about television is that it's bad quality imaging and storytelling. Most of it is lacking so much data you cannot draw any conclusion or learn anything from it. Actually, it has so little correct information you can't even trust what you see. People making television are not doing storytelling.

Most television is made to fill the gaps between the commercials. The only art applied in today's television is to keep you glued to the screen so they have ratings to show to their advertisers.

But most importantly, the image quality of television is really poor and spoils your aesthetic sense.



The Role of the Artist

By Thorsten Overgaard

Artists create the future. That's your job and that's the special skill that distinguishes an artist from the non-artist. The dreamer and creator.

Watching stream of television, being in a constant bombardment of "news" and living a life where you are working for the next meal does not create a state of mind where you are free to dream and create a desirable future.

As soon as you put your head a little ahead of the storm, there is nothing but open space ahead of you. Everybody else is so busy creating the now and considering the past that all the future space is one open, yet unoccupied land.

Out there in the future you can create anything you want because nobody else has considered it yet. It's quite quiet and undisturbed; it's the new territory.

Most people suffer under the pervasive fear of the future. The only known way of a secure future is to own something that will stay there in the future. "No worsening of things" is the general standard for what



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most can hope for from the future. That's why Mercedes and BMW are the Gods of the Western World. They're each a material sign of accomplishment that keeps its value.

As an artist, you present an idea or a dream, and it makes people unsecure of the future, because they don't see what you see. They want something real, they want you to have something they can see, and which value they can establish and compare.

That's why most people will ask how much you sell your art for, how many you sell, if you fly first class or what education you have. They want to categorize it to understand it.

In an age where many people hope to be in a position where they can send their kids to schools and universities for many years to learn to be successful in life, it might be hard to agree with me that the easier it is to do a thing, the better. The mind and spirit are far superior to any technology invented, so the more we rely on our self rather than a hard-learned skill, the more brilliant the result can be.

Give the mind some simple tools to work with.

Wise men like Einstein, Stephen Hawking and Steve Jobs had their breakthroughs when they were young and filled with ideas and asked questions like "Why not?"



It is interesting that with a strong intention and little education you can accomplish anything, but with a lot of education and no intention, not much really happens.

As an artist your job is not limited to painting, music or any of the known art forms. Your job is *unlimited* to creation of future.

If you can create future, you are directing life and society. It's implied in "create future" that the more hope and life you create in what you do, the more future there is.

If you can dream a new future, you're an artist.



How Did You Meet?

By Thorsten Overgaard

I met Joy Villa when I was photographing a gala in Hollywood. She looked very exotic and aesthetic with a flower in her big afro.

She was a sunshine in the center of the room and I thought she looked like a princess.

A year later we met in New York and I photographed her in a vintage wedding dress running between the taxis on Fifth Avenue.

She said a voice in her head said, "That's him."

And then I kidnapped her.

We have been touring the world together ever since.



What I Teach

By Thorsten Overgaard

People who have done my workshop photograph a lot more after they do the workshop.

Many of them start sharing their photographs. They publish books, have exhibitions, make prints, share on social media and forums.

Almost all get active somehow or another.

For a long time, I was devastated whenever someone didn't use all the technical things that I had taught them. White balance, for example.

When I realized they all became more self-confident, produced more and shared more, I relaxed.

And when they then came back to do another workshop I realized it wasn't to pick up technical details they hadn't gotten but to get more inspiration to pursue their own path.

Make photographs and share them. Don't be an unpublished writer.



From Denmark

By Thorsten Overgaard

I am from Denmark. We are not an enthusiastic people, and we don't talk a lot.

I am surprised how much I can talk about photography and still love it even though I have said the same things hundreds of times.

It's often said that Danes are the happiest people in the world. We're not, we're just narrow-minded and have enough in our selves. When Danes travel, they do so with the viewpoint of seeing how un-Danish everything and everybody else is.

We could learn so much from others, but that idea never occurred to us. In our viewpoint, if everybody was like us, it would be a better world.

Being Danish is a state of perfection. When Danes meet foreigners in Denmark and realize they are not born in Denmark, they tilt their head and say, "Oh, you are not Danish?"



Asia

By Thorsten Overgaard

From a Danish and Western viewpoint, Asia is far away if you haven't been there.

Many Western people often discriminate against Asian people.

When a rich Asian friend visited New York with his wife and three kids, they had to go through hours of interrogation in the airport. That's not unusual and of course stems from a lack of knowledge (which is always the fundament for discrimination).

What few Europeans realize is that Asia is so much ahead of the Western world in philosophy, history, current technology and economy that it's unreal.

If you were sitting on another planet and watching Earth, Asia would stand out as a proud culture with a thousand-year history that is known, a spiritual awareness and a bright future. The Western world with our worship of Mercedes and BMW is a joke compared to Asia.



If you look ahead into the future, Africa will be the next culture to rise to unseen levels.

Travel is interesting because you see how people are very much the same, but if you cannot see through the discrimination, you cannot learn from richer cultures.

Consider that Spain was the richest and most powerful nation in the world just 550 years ago. They sent Columbus, and that's how America came about.

Things change, and they will continue to change.



Loving the Camera

By Thorsten Overgaard

I like the brass on the Leica because it shows loyalty and hard work.

When you have accomplished something together, there is some sort of relationship with your tool.

If the camera and I have made some great things together, I don't sell it. I keep it, I adopt it as a loyal part of my heritage: look at all the work we have done together.



Celebrity

By Thorsten Overgaard

I read one day on the internet someone saying I was secretly gay.

That's when I realized I had reached celebrity status.

First you take it personally, what people say, but then you realize you are not a person to them. You are a subject.

I get recognized a couple of times a week when I'm out and about in the streets around the world. That's enough to boost my self-confidence, and appropriate to live a private life.



Glass

By Thorsten Overgaard

I like old lenses that perform some things really well.

There's no art in finding a new modern lens that is perfect.

But finding an old lens that performs miracles, that's like finding a life-long companion.



The Noctilux

By Thorsten Overgaard

Noctilux means “King of the Night”, but for me it’s not so much a lens for the night and low light.

It’s the way it handles light, even sunshine.

It’s magical and very poetic. The Noctilux lens is the closest I get to creating fantasy that I can share.

I don’t want to preserve and show reality as it is, I want to create fantasy. That’s what the Noctilux can do.

It creates the type of image where enough is left unaccounted for, so you as a viewer can contribute your own fantasy in completing the vision.

Next page: Leica 50mm Noctilux-M ASPH f/0.95 lens on the Leica M10 camera.



Critics

By Thorsten Overgaard

If people criticize your photography, you feel like stopping. If people criticize the way you drive, you don't care.

One should be aware that criticism is meant to make you less. Those who criticize don't want you to improve. They want others to be lower and less than themselves. It's an antisocial "help" used by some people who can't raise their own conditions; so they choose to reduce others.

Sometimes when someone makes really crazy criticism, I look them up. That's when you realize they don't have anything to show. They're helpless and don't have any skills. They are desperate.

They speak as if their voice is the opinion of thousands. You look them up on Twitter and they have 3 followers and did 29,000 tweets. True story.



Gypsy Life

By Thorsten Overgaard

It's fun and easy to travel all the time, or it's not fun and easy. Depends how you do it.

I think the secret to a happy life, no matter if you are living in a small city somewhere, or you are a jetsetter traveling all the time, is that you create your own dreams and follow your own goals.

In marriage the success is often that you keep creating the dreams and the future, and that you are together in doing that.

I started traveling a lot because I wanted to travel and see the world. I didn't have any ties or anybody who said I couldn't. So, I just went to the airport and never came back.

You want to travel? Buy a plane ticket. It's as simple as that.

I was fortunate to meet my spouse while I was doing what I wanted to do, who wanted to travel with me and do art that was different from mine, but also in many ways was the same activity.



We share the same likes and dislikes, we spend a lot of time together and we talk a lot. We are considerate and we're honest.

So that in short solves the problem some have that they travel a lot, but they are not home with their family. Our home is the road.

But I had my youngest daughter, Robin Isabella who was with her mother in Denmark half the time, and with me the other half of the time. So for a while I had to spend half the time in my house in Denmark.

A few years ago I decided she would learn a lot about life by simply traveling with us, and it also solved the problem that I didn't have to return to Denmark and stay there so often.

After a year of having her with us on some of the travel, I was working on solving that she needed to learn to read and write. The school wasn't doing it. First I hired private teachers specializing in that for some weeks to do intensive schooling, and then when we stumbled into Terry, who didn't mind traveling and didn't have any ties, we decided to have our own tutor traveling with us.

I wasn't aware it was possible to do. Well, of course I was aware they existed, but I only thought superstars could do it.



I learned that we just rented apartments with 2-3 bedrooms when traveling, and then the expenses were just a matter of a monthly salary and the flights. Not a big difference, actually. And I saved expenses from private school tuition.

Well, I talk about it in very Danish way: We always justify our expenses to let others know we don't make any more money than others. Essentially, my business is my life. It's not just a traveling household, it's a traveling household and a traveling business.

The truth of the matter was that I didn't care what the expense was precisely. The major thing was the idea that it could be possible, and then finding out the mechanics and realizing it was actually an easier way



of life taking over the school than trying to fit my daughter and my life to the school.

Nothing is more important than ensuring your children's future. Learning to read and write is the most important thing for any person, because when you master that, you can study and learn anything you want to.

The added bonus is that my daughter learns about life and the world by observing it. I don't think she will ever know how life would be without the knowledge she gains from first-hand experience. But I know it will make her a very tolerant and open person because her world is big and it's filled with friendly people of all races and nationalities. She can manage anything, anywhere.





Being Me

By Thorsten Overgaard

Sometimes people are trying to copy what I do and how I do it.

It's tiring to answer questions where the aim is to copy. But I love to help people become more themselves and be successful in marriage, photography, money and all.

The key in what I do is that I am myself and I do exactly what I want.

I have freedom, but if you copy what I do, you don't have freedom.

Instead, be yourself and do exactly what you want to do, the way you want to do it.

That's what I preach. Don't look to be like others, look to be your true self. Then expand that to something even greater. Make your life an art.

I am more than happy to provide any experiences and know-how on how to do *that*.



Making a Photograph

By Thorsten Overgaard

Sometimes when you give a child a camera, they shoot everything. It's hard to control. With a film camera it's really painful seeing them waste a roll of film in two minutes, taking pictures of a television screen.

With the digital camera or a smartphone, it's just a lot of noise and files that you have to clean up.

Not a very encouraging experience when you wanted to help them become a great photographer!

What is missing is the ability to look at things.

First you have to look to see something. Then you must figure out a way to preserve it so you can express it in a way that others also see it.

One way of doing it is to look at things without a camera. Sometimes even have a frame to look through so you can see how it could look in the limited, cropped expression that a photograph is.

Then take a camera you can actually control and use



it to preserve it that way. That's how to do it.

We all easily get taken by technology and the tools.

It's not only children who fall into that trap: they are just so straight-forward, that it's more obvious.

Photography forces you to look at things in present time, notice things other than yourself and outside yourself that are unique, and find ways to communicate them to others.

It brings you into communication with the environment, the present, yourself and eventually other people too.

Photography is therapeutic.

Where is the Picture?

By Thorsten Overgaard

I took my daughter Robin out one day in Los Angeles and gave her a paper frame.

I told her, she should find the pictures with the frame, then I would make them with the camera. I wanted her to just observe and see pictures.

Ten minutes out on our walk, she holds up the frame and I ask her, what's in the frame. Where is the picture?

She points to the other side of the street, "There!"

That's perhaps the most essential thing in photography: The picture is not over there. It's in the frame you hold in front of you; and later when you get the concept, you don't need the frame. You see the world with a frame around it.



The Walking Painter

By Thorsten Overgaard

The photographer walks every day with his camera.

When he sees a possible photo, he moves quickly with his feet while his hands prepare the camera.

He takes the photo and he's gone in an instant as if it never happened. That's how you get that frozen moment of life where people look like they were living life and as if the photographer was never there.

Only the photograph exists to document it actually did happen.

The Axioms of Photography



The Axioms of Photography

By Thorsten Overgaard

A few years back I was asked to write the axioms of photography by a gentleman from Texas. What he wanted was the short and sweet truth about all there is to know.

That's what "Axiom" means, the *self-evident truth*.

It's not easy, but I've given it a try. I've been making notes from time to time, and I don't feel I have nailed it yet. But here's what I've come up with so far, which is in fact the first time I have ever shared my axioms of photography.



1.

Always wear a camera.



2.

Photography is about light.
The word photography means
“writing with light.”



WORLD PREMIERE
ROCK & ROLL MOVIE STAR

WORLD PREMIERE
ROCK & ROLL MOVIE STAR



California
CADDY 51

3.

A camera is a tool to capture
and record light.



4.

A lens is used to replicate light (the basic colors: red, green and blue) to match these so they display details as if you were there, and could touch and feel the textures.



5.

Sometimes a lens can add aesthetics
and signature to an image.



6.

People sense also the things they
cannot see or describe.

Truth is the exact duplication of
colors, textures, lines and shapes,
down to each microscopic detail,
that make up the whole.



7.

Bad quality in lens,
camera operation, finalizing of the
image, or materials used for
reproduction, reduces the truth of
the photograph.



8.

Truth is universal and is recognized
when people see it. It makes us
agree, understand and like.



9.

A photograph is a conscious
presentation of something to
forward an idea.



10.

A snapshot is recoding without
thought or intention, a reactive urge
to not lose a memory.



11.

Aesthetics is the thing that glues
the viewer to the photograph and
makes them want more.



12.

Aesthetics is composition, light,
rhythm and perceived message.

Aesthetics is beauty.

Aesthetics is far above “pretty.”



13.

Composition is to
put things together.

In photography it's storytelling
without the need of words and often
surpasses what could be said with
words.

It includes what has to be in the
frame and what to exclude.



14.

In photography, the first
and most fundamental part of
composition is light.



15.

Photography enables space between the image on paper or a screen, and the person looking at it. Unlike images you remember and look at in your mind.



16.

Photography is communication. It could be just for yourself, but essentially it's to show others what you made something you saw into.



17.

A photograph is an instant recording of a moment, sometimes expressing a concept like and emotion, an event, a thought or idea.



18.

Photography preserves emotions
of a moment.



19.

Sometimes one instant is used in articles, exhibitions, slideshows or with other content, with one or many images to tell a story.

When that is done, each element may gain strength from the other elements.



20.

Photography is simple.





