



Stony Brook Camera Club

Finding Your Creative Direction

Jeff Curto



And I'm a
Photographer



A few of my photographs...



Our Time This Evening:

- *Some Tools & Concepts*

- *Generating Ideas*

- *Shaping Your Vision*

- *Practical Considerations*

- *Q&A*

Start A Story...

- *Once upon a time, I...*
- *I dreamt I travelled to...*
- *If my life were a book, I'd title it...*

Pick One...

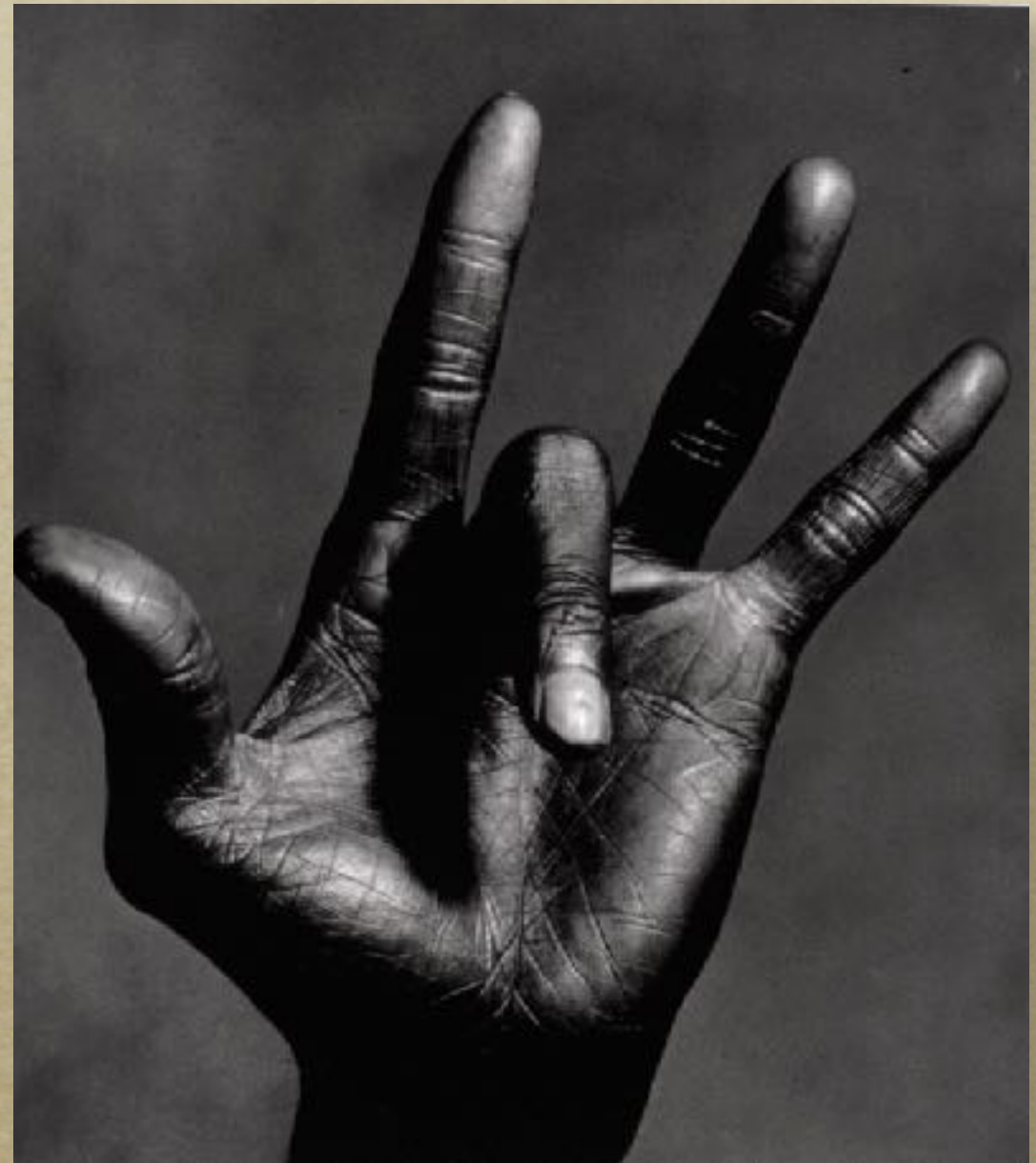
Some Tools & Concepts:

Some Tools & Concepts

What is Creativity?

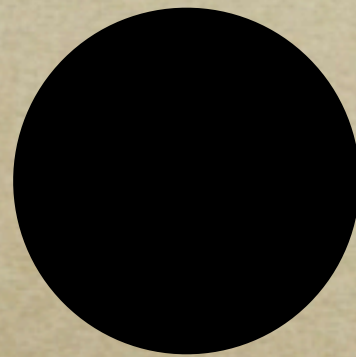
How Does it “Work?”

How Do We Nurture It?



Irving Penn
Miles Davis - 1950s

What Is This?



Educational Priorities



Math, Science, Language

Humanities

Drama
Music
Dance
Art



"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."
– *Pablo Picasso*



Jacques-Henri Lartigue
Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, Paris
1911

(Lartigue was a young teenager when he made this photograph)

Good News!

*“Creative minds always
have been known to
survive any kind of bad
training.”*

– Anna Freud



Jeff Curto
Barga, Tuscany, 2016

Some Myths about Creativity

- I'm Not That Sort of Person
 - *"I'm not creative"*
 - *"I'm not the creative type"*
- I'm Not Clever Enough
 - *"Creativity is difficult"*
 - *"You can't learn to be creative"*



Louis Pierson
Countess Castiglione, 1860s

Some **Excuses** about Creativity

- I'm Not That Sort of Person
 - "I'm not creative"*
 - "I'm not the creative type"*
- I'm Not Clever Enough
 - "Creativity is difficult"*
- You can't learn to be creative



Louis Pierson
Countess Castiglione, 1860s

Creativity “Defined”

The Ability to Create New & Original

- *Things*
- *Experiences*
- *Ideas*

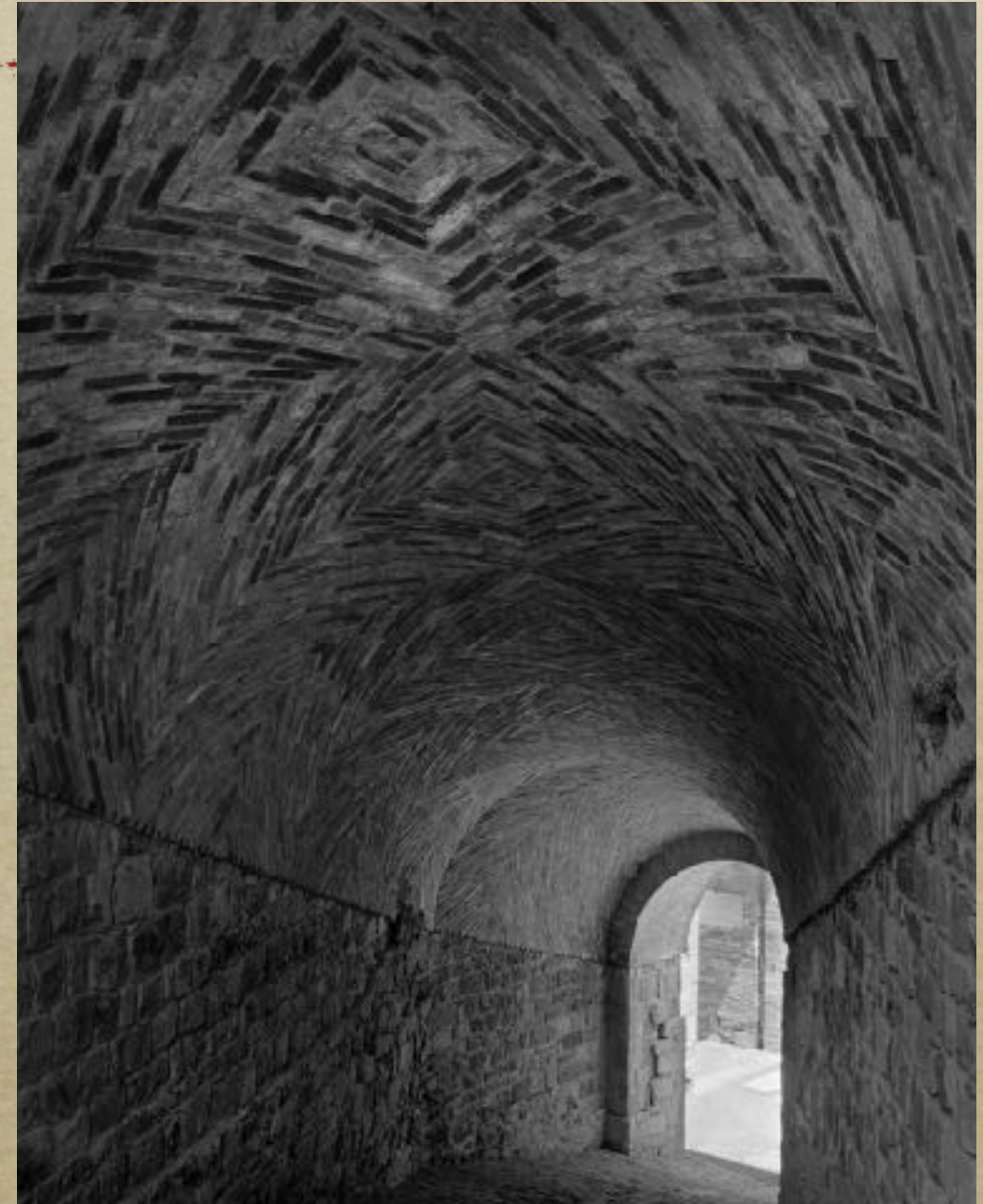
*By:
Grasping and Nurturing Inspiration*



Arno Raphael Minkkinen
1990s

Creative People Tend to Be:

- *Mentally Flexible*
- *Critical – Both Positive and Negative*
- *Persistent in Striving Towards Goals*
- *Brave – Willing to Stick out their Neck “just because”*



Jeff Curto
Castello di Radicofani, Tuscany, 2010

Two Brains: No Waiting

<i>Left Brain</i>	<i>Right Brain</i>
Logical	Random
Sequential	Intuitive
Rational	Holistic
Analyzes	Synthesizes
Objective	Subjective
Parts	Wholes

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Goal of
Creative
Thinking

“Sideways Thinking”

*“Anyone can look for history in a museum.
The creative explorer
looks for history in a
hardware store.”*

– Robert Wieder



Ralph Steiner - 1921

Mistakes are OK



- *If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original.*
- *Creativity is “applied imagination” - putting your imagination to work*
- *Creativity is a process, not an event.*

Generating Ideas

Generating Ideas

Where To Begin?



W. Eugene Smith - 1946

Who Are You?

- *What are you curious about?*
- *What is your story?*
- *Why do you think the way you do?*
- *Why do you behave the way you do?*
- *Go back to the beginning*
 - *It may not be about you*

Passion & Mission - An Exercise

Exercise

Passion & Mission *for* Jeff Curto's Photography Workshops

What do you care about? How can your photographs express that interest?

A basic concept that writers learn is "write what you know." The objective of this exercise is to help you start to connect the things that you find important to the way you approach photography. It's that connection that will help you make the strongest and most personal images you can make and to have those images carry greater substance than simply being a set of loosely related images.

An initial step towards this to find out what you are passionate about. To get started on thinking about this, I'd like you to make a list of the things that are most important to you in your life. Pretty much anything can be on the list... people, places, things, types of things, foods... but it's it's critical that the things you choose are things that are genuinely important to you.

You should write this list down... you won't have to "turn it in" so it can be scribbled anywhere: here if you'd like:

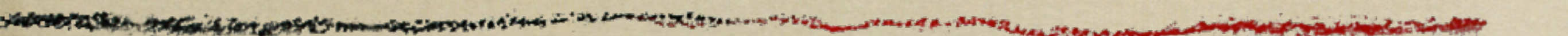
What's Important:

Once you've completed your list of What's Important, find at least **one** list item that really pulls you in and offers up possibilities for photographs. It does not matter what it is. It could be a word, an idea, a place, a person or an event. The key thing is that you have a strong connection to it and that it is one of the most important things on your list.

Once you have that in your head, think about how that passion can be translated into a set of photographs. In other words, *how can you tell the story of that passion in pictures?*

To begin to answer that question, first answer these:

- What are you interested in talking about?
- What does the body of work look like? (in your imagination)
- What is the tone (positive, negative, romantic, ambiguous, etc) you want the statement to take?



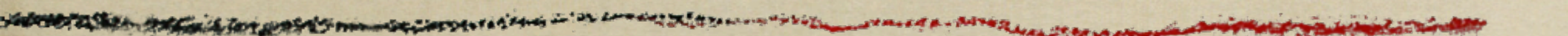
Idea
vs.
Subject



Idea

vs.

Subject



Make work *about*
something, rather
than *of* something.

Shaping Your Vision

“OK, I’ve Got an Idea.
Now What?”

Shaping Your Vision

Dig Deeper

*To Find
Greater
Substance
&
Meaning*



Shaping Your Vision - Research



Shaping Your Vision - Audience



Galleries/Publications

Competitions

Photo Peers

Friends

Family

Shaping Your Vision - Presentation



Digital Publication



Online Storytelling Platform



Curated Website



Self-Published Book



Image/Sound/Motion/Story



Exhibition/Folio/Art Object



Practical Considerations

I mean...

I've got a *life*, man...

Practical Considerations

Integrate creative process into your life

Being Creative:

*Is not about dropping everything
to do your creative work.*

*Is about living a life that is
driven by curiosity.*

Practical Considerations:



*Budget Time
&
Resources for
Creative Activity*

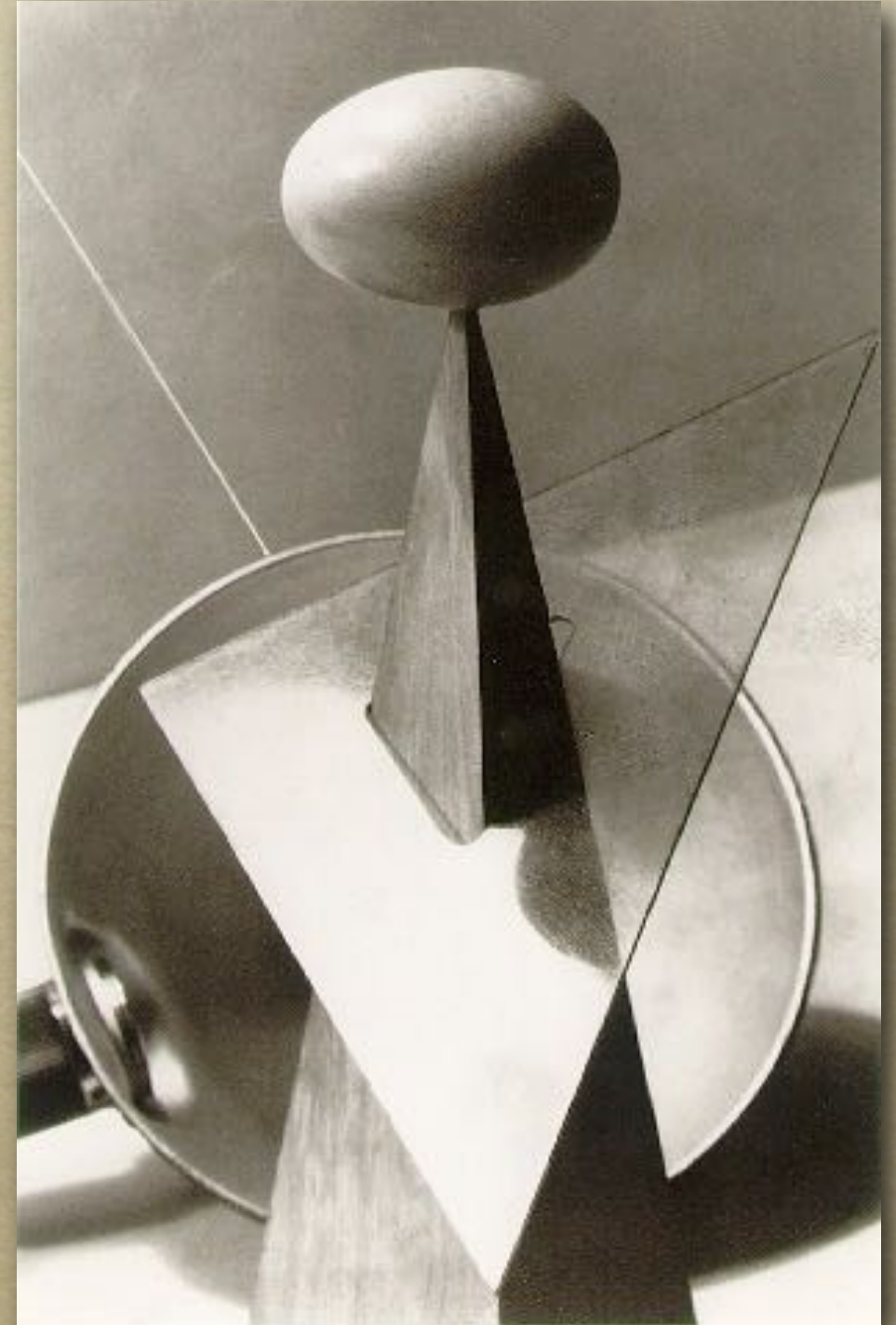


Practical Considerations:

Nurture Creativity

- *Try new foods*
- *Listen to music*
- *Read voraciously*
- *Visit museums (and hardware stores!)*
- *Go to the theater*
- *Change your sleep habits*
- *Take a different way home from work*
- *Talk to some strangers*

Paul Outerbridge
Triumph of the Egg, 1932



Thank You!



www.jeffcurto.com

Creative Photography Podcasts

www.cameraposition.com

Italy Photo Workshops

www.photographitaly.com

Photo History Podcast

photohistory.jeffcurto.com