



THE VISION COLLECTIVE WEEK TWO

Making Deeper Images

Right from the start I want you to begin asking yourself this one over-arching question: "What do I want from my photographs?"

There will probably be several different answers. But most of them will come down to two things: how others experience them, and how you experience them, and how those experiences can be stronger, deeper, more interesting, more human.

I doubt very much that your hope for these weekly emails from me is that I help you make *more* photographs, but that you make stronger, deeper, photographs. What would *deeper* mean to you?

I want to suggest three ways you can make your images deeper. But first I want you to consider making fewer final photographs. I want you to consider demanding more from each final frame and being choosier about what you show to the world. I think that's one reason some of the photographers we admire seem to have such strong work; we see less of their sketch images. They probably make many, many more images as they sketch their way through the creative process. But they show many fewer of them. That alone will improve your photography. It will help you focus, and it will help you practice the discipline of looking for only the best frames. It will free you to stop polishing your turds in Lightroom or Photoshop in hopes that you can rescue the image you know falls short. It will free you from the manic need to post, post, post something—**ANYTHING**—to social media. Slow down. Post less. Be pickier.

Ok, three ways to make deeper images.

Care More. This was, in part, the subject of last week's email, and it's going to keep coming back. Life is too short for you to spend time making photographs of things you don't care about, things that don't excite you or pique your curiosity. And my own life is way too short to spend it looking at the uninspiring work of uninspired photographers. If you don't want to laugh about it or cry about it, find something you care more deeply about. That alone will change your photography. It'll also help you slow down and focus.

Look Deeper. Most of us skim the surface of things. We look, we shoot. We move on. When I teach my Mentor Series Workshops in places like Italy or India I tell my students to stop moving around so much, to park themselves in one place and really look. And they nod their heads the first time and think I mean sticking it out a moment or two longer. A couple more minutes, maybe. It takes them a while to get it, to see that I mean thirty minutes or an hour, and to come back time and time again. Being patient and receptive is not the work of a moment. The best photographers are present and they look much deeper. That takes time. And it's not the work of the eyes only but of the mind. What are you really seeing? What's going on in the scene? Where is the light playing? Where are the lines leading? And how many sketches can you make from this one opportunity? Most of us give up too quickly.

Go Universal. If you want people to care about your images, make your images about things people care about. The deeper, more human and universal, the better. This applies to every area of creative photography I can think of. Are you a sports photographer? Great. Stop making images that are *only* about the local football team. Make them about that, for sure. But also make them about the companionship of a shared defeat or victory. Make them about the conflict between two opposing sides. Show me raw emotion and great strength. I don't give a shit about football. When you make the image of a moment in a football game that makes me take notice and feel something, *that's* the deeper image. I'll discuss this next week when I look more closely at the idea of Of vs. About. For

now, just ask yourself the questions: what moment do I need to find that will make someone who doesn't know the bride and groom care, or feel something? What kind of photograph do you need to make of your cat, your brother, or the backyard to which I've never been that will make me interested, make me laugh, make me care? The best photographers have been doing this since they started making iconic images.

Change Your Perspective. If you want to change my perspective as a viewer, you need to change your own. That means helping me see things differently. Give me new information. Tell me a story from a side I never anticipated. You can also make deeper images spatially. So many of us started using longer lenses the moment we could. They're a lot easier to use but they flatten things, and that's not the way we experience the world. We see the world with incredibly peripheral vision; we live in three dimensions and the photograph robs us of that unless we put it back in. That's where a wide-angle lens comes in. A wide-angle lens exaggerates the lines in a scene (if we let it—the closer you get to those lines the more energy you'll give them.) But it does another thing; it forces you to get close if you want the elements in the scene to be larger than an ant. You get closer and you become more involved in the scene itself. The scene begins to enfold you, and foreground elements get larger relative to background elements and the images take on that illusion of depth. There's nothing wrong with longer lens images, but they tend to be a little more graphic. They isolate (and that's a powerful tool), but for re-introducing the idea of depth and illusion of three-dimensionality, nothing does it like getting in close with a wide-angle lens.



Made in Old Havana several years ago, this image is a great example of using a wide-angle lens up close to exaggerate the lines and effects of perspective. No other lens will give you this same feeling, but you have to get in close.

Creative Exercise

Become familiar with the tools useful in creating visual depth in images. This is about the feeling, or experience of depth. Go out with the camera, or look at some of your own images made with a wider lens (16-24mm) and play with the following questions, knowing that your answers will be different than others:

- How does a tighter or shallow depth of field change your own experience of depth in an image?
- How does a strong foreground element add a greater sense of depth?
- What about leading lines that take your eye to a vanishing point?

Use all your lenses. Which ones are better at creating depth than others? Now combine some of those visual tools with a subject you care deeply about, and spend more time immersed in that scene making images that are about something more than what you see on the surface. You could spend a year focusing on just this one exercise.



Study the Masters

Sebastião Salgado is one of my favourite photographers and a good one to introduce to you in connection with this week's subject. Salgado cares deeply about the work he does and the subjects he tackles. His use of wide-angle lenses, close POV (point of view or camera position), and choice of emotionally poignant moments makes his photographs an excellent study. Choose 12 of [Sebastião's images from the Workers series](#) and ask yourself how he approaches depth in a visual sense. How close was he? How wide (angle) do you think his lens was? How did he use lines and composition to increase the spatial depth of the image and make you feel more included in the scene? Do you identify with his characters? Do you empathize and therefore feel a deeper emotional response?

Further Study

- If this topic interests you, consider reading my eBook, *A Deeper Frame, Creating Deeper Photographs and More Engaging Experiences*.

- Read this article, [Creating Depth in Art and Photography](#).
- This article, [11 Ways to Add Depth to A Design](#), might be a little more than you're looking for, but it's got some excellent ideas about the cues we use to understand and experience visual depth.
- Here's a great [print interview](#) with Sebastiao Salgado, from POV Magazine.
- Lastly, if you want more Salgado, I have these two books on my shelf and they're among my favourite possessions: [Genesis](#) and [Workers](#).

Final Comments

I hope the time you're spending on this is challenging you. Some of it, especially the first several emails, will be more theoretical, and some of it more technical. But it all ties together in the pursuit of more intentionally made, compelling photographs. Ultimately, the best thing you can do is go make photographs and figure this stuff out with a camera in your hands. I hope you'll put in the work to do that. See you next week.

If you're looking for me, you can find me on [my blog](#), on [Facebook](#), and on [Instagram](#).

For the love of the photograph,
David duChemin