



THE VISION COLLECTIVE: WEEK TWENTY SIX.

Moving Forward

Of the 9000+ people that eventually enrolled in The Vision Collective, I have a feeling you're in the minority if you made it all this way. A course like this demands commitment, time, and energy, and not everyone has the same amount of those resources. That's also why so many flounder, looking for tips and tricks instead of the much harder path of craft. So where to now? I want to make a final plea for a couple areas of focus.

Be Intentional

Very little happens well when we just let it roll; we don't learn well when it's all ad hoc. In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice asks the Cheshire Cat which road she should take and the cat asks where she's going. Alice says, "I don't know," to which the Cat replies, "Then it doesn't matter which road you take." If you want to end up somewhere specific, you've got to make specific choices. You don't

have to plan out the next ten years, but give yourself some direction six to twelve months at a time. What do you want to learn next? What project do you want to be completing in a year? Go back to your vision, your desires, the things that are most important to you in this life, and make some decisions.

Diverge

We live in a time when it has never been easier to be just like everyone else. We live in a culture of homogeneity that encourages replication and painting by numbers. We love our rules. Spend 30 minutes on Instagram, and you'll see the same thing repeated by dozens of people over and over again. One person innovates, does something interesting, or even accidental, and soon thousands of people replicate. If that makes you happy, go for it, but I have a feeling it'll be a short-lived joy, and soon you'll be on to the next thing, getting further away from your individual vision and voice.

Go where others are not. Follow your own path. Say the things that others aren't saying, regardless of what you think the reception will be. Follow your vision, take risks, delight in the small failures that take you to the next lesson and the next season of growth. Be intentional about the visual media you consume. I have a feeling the photographers making the best—and most authentic—work are too busy creating to be spending all their time on social media giving likes.

Don't worry that it's all been photographed; it has. But letting that stop you is like a poet who refuses to write about life or love because others have already done so. What we photograph (subject matter) and how we photograph (what we say about that subject and how we say it) are two different things, and there is room aplenty for your unique voice. Make me sit up and take notice. Make me say, "Oh my God." Make me laugh. Make me cry. Make me long for something more. Forget the usual questions about whether your photograph is good, or sharp, or well-exposed. Ask instead if it is alive. If it is true. If it is honest. Ask if it is worthy of your vision. Ask if it connects. The world has enough photographs that are perfectly sharp, perfectly exposed, perfectly boring.

Photography is so much more than the camera. It's so much more than just making photographs. For me, it has been a means of intercourse with the world, a way to see it, experience it, and, I hope, to enrich it. Above all, remember this: you can't deeply photograph what you haven't deeply experienced. Go deep. Bring your camera. That's the Creative Exercise for this week and every week.

Be curious. Follow that curiosity. Make a lot of intentional photographs. Embrace the failures and the imperfections. And for the love of Ansel Adams, print your work.

Study The Masters

Study your own work as though it were that of any of the masters I've introduced you to over the last 25 weeks. Perhaps these questions will give you a good starting point and some future direction:

- What is the strongest work you have done? How can you do more of that?
- What is the weakest? Why do you continue to do that kind of work?
- Do you get a sense of what you're trying to say?
- Do you think it clearly suggests your vision?
- Is it authentic? Is it cohesive?
- When's the last time you celebrated how far you've come?
- When's the last time you intentionally planned the direction of your next work?

These are the questions to which we will always seek answers; some of those answers will be good, and others, not so much. It is the questions themselves that are important. Keep exploring. Keep expressing. Keep finding joy in this incredible craft.

For Further Study

Thank you for being part of The Vision Collective. If you want more, consider pre-ordering my new book, *The Soul of the Camera, The Photographer's Place in Picture-Making*. It should be shipping in mid-June and is available for pre-order now through Amazon and most major book retailers. I think it's my best book yet, and that it's an important book for photographers. It's beautiful; I'm so proud of the work my team did on it.

If you haven't already done so, **check out the resources at Craft & Vision**. We have eBooks, videos, Lightroom Presets, and more from some of the best teachers out there, all of them generous with their knowledge. **Use coupon code FINALVC30 to get 30% off any of the digital resources (until the end of May) as my thanks for being part of this course and sticking with it through**

to the end.

If you missed any of the lessons from The Vision Collective, **you can find them here in the archive.**

Lastly, **my blog has over 1400 free articles on the art and craft of photography,** and **my video podcast, Vision Is Better,** has over 50 free episodes.

If you have enjoyed this course, would you take a moment to **leave me some feedback here?**

Thanks again for your trust, and for allowing me to be a small part of your creative journey.

For the Love of the Photograph,

David duChemin