

A photograph is a photograph is a photograph.



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One can observe how in recent years, a growing number of those who have used photographs in their work have started to shy away from describing themselves as photographers. They are now “artists”. As if photographers belonged to a different species than those of artists.

Well to a degree they do, by what one can glean from the market, it seems that if you consider yourself an artist, the same work can fetch considerably higher prices than if you are simply a photographer.

So I don't know if to congratulate such colleagues for their practical approach, or to question their opportunism for being willing to dance to the tune of what ever the taskmaster demands.



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But aside any issues that might come across as moralistic in nature. In this market oriented environment, there seems to be something most everyone is missing out on. Let us take a closer look.

Photography is not what it used to be. A lot of people have tried to invent new words for the work that has been coming out in this digital age, apparently we needed to coin new terms to describe the work because photography was no longer an appropriate term.

Not only has there been an exodus of photographers to the land of the “artists”, but on top of it, everyone is attempting to find new terms to describe the images produced in this age of computers.

There clearly is a profound dissatisfaction with what is, after all names just describe what is going on. It appears that any approval and major recognition is really bestowed on the artist and not the photographer, obviously economic pay follows. And if you can slap the label of NEW onto something, it will probably also create more interest, that is what the market tells us.

Maybe this can help us understand the increased distancing from the term photographer and photography, which apparently has become associated with old fashioned and outmoded ideas.

However, I find they got it all wrong and we should make every effort, especially at this point in the brief history of photography to seize the opportunity to actually expand the horizons of photography not abandon it, and not lose sight of where we can move forward to on our own terms.

Allow me to explain. I find that photography is at the threshold of its greatest creative moment and the best times are yet to come. However, the nature of what we understood as photography in the analog age has to be reconsidered. Yes, photography it is still all that it was, but then it's also a lot more as well.



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The word **photography**, as we all know, means “**writing with light**”. Well, never in my life time, have I ever had a more direct experience of actually writing with light, as I have in recent years, when taking a stylus pen, and actually being in a position to move around, at my will, all those pixels that were captured through my digital camera or scanned from film.

To sit there in front of my computer screen, and to manipulate those pixels, has been the most direct experience I have ever had with the notion of what photography was always intended to be, at least from the stand point of those who made up the word to describe the process called photography.

I can explore and submerge myself today to the very bottom of a sea of pixels, and touch each individual pixel through the pressure of my finger on a stylus, with no parallel to what could be done previously to the individual grains in a sea of **gelatin with silver halides**. This basic premise transforms all of photography forever.

With such a new set of rules, the limits of photography are basically our imagination. So the question comes down to the following: we can either expand our understanding of what photography is in order to broaden the field, thus making it a stronger and more influential player called PHOTOGRAPHY, or to let things stand as they are and to just watch as it all slowly erodes with everyone calling the photograph by another name, and no one really wanting to be identified with being a photographer any longer.

We either reinvent photography, by broadening what is understood as a photograph, or we will probably end up not having much of photography to defend, as it will be called something else by everyone.



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I for one, find that the more I alter my images, the more photographic they become, but then I am also thinking along the lines of looking at photography differently. I am also convinced that as soon as we view photography with a wider perspective, the “market” will understand that there aren’t so many dilemmas in this matter between being a photographer or an artist.

The strictest of documentary photographers, will probably discover to their great surprise, that there is as was before, room for a lot of such work under the term photography, much as the journalists has no problem using words to describe his or her ideas, we have poets using words as well. **Why should the “photograph” be considered any different than the “word”?** In either instance every one understands the context.

But having said that, we also call the poet a poet and not a journalist, and that is why probably the slow migration of photographers towards the self definition of artists helps us understand that such separations indeed define different working strategies that are distinctive and should not be confused and mixed up. But we should all still be able to call a photograph a photograph. After all, paraphrasing Gertrude Stein, “A photograph, is a photograph, is a photograph”.

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