INTERVIEW: REGAN NORTON
We spoke to professional photographer Regan Norton from Phoenix, Arizona.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUJ
We sat down with JUJ, a rising Pop artist from Philadelphia, creating music in L.A.

INTERVIEW: RORA BLUE
Rora Blue is a Northern California born and Texas raised artist.
WELCOME TO DEZINE
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Rylan Clark, Nilo Gardere, Effy Harvard, Mary Henschell, Izzy Hoffman,
Kekey Impicciiche, Alexis King, Ninya Nori, Bruno Nunes, Ashley Otregon,
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AN INTERVIEW WITH

REGAN NORTON

We spoke to 23-year-old creative and photographer Regan Norton, from Phoenix, Arizona.

Featured Models
Izzy Hoffman, Shea Baehr, Sami Vedula, Niya Novi, Nilo Gardezy, Rylan Clark, Jordie Reid, Morgan Roady
Tell us a little bit about yourself and why photography is important to you?

I am a 23 year old creative and photographer living in sunny Phoenix, Arizona! While working towards a career in portrait, fashion and lifestyle photography, I love being able to meet and connect with other people through my art. I express themes of colour, light, and memory into my photographs and enjoy styling, creating, and dreaming up concepts for my shoots.

Photography is important to me because it allows me to be creative, to meet other amazing people and to support myself doing what I love. I have a BFA in Photography from Arizona State University and I love to learn as much as I can. The art of photography is constantly fascinating me and I am always inspired by what I see around me.

Who or what are your main sources of inspiration?

Colour is probably my main source of inspiration! I often think of a colour scheme in my head that I want to base a shoot around, I see a coloured wall on the street that I want to use, or even a colourful skirt I spot in a store window. Without colour, I don’t think I would ever be a photographer! If I could capture the rainbow in every shot, I would.

There are so many other things I am constantly inspired by as well – clothing definitely plays a big part. I learned to love styling and putting together outfits for shoots or using unique props. Dancers inspire me as well, since I have a former dance background. I try to use movement in a lot of my shots and the shapes that dancers make with their bodies always gives me inspiration.

As far as photographers, a few that I love and look up to are Jimmy Marble, Michal Pudelka, Erika Astrid, and Diane Villadsen.

What do you look for in a model when you are planning a portrait session?

Natural beauty is the best kind of beauty! I love shooting with women primarily and always look for models who have unique features and a natural, simple kind of beauty. I also love to work with models who aren’t afraid to move around a lot and can create unique poses or facial expressions.
What is your “go to” piece of gear? Do you have a favourite camera or lens that you tend to gravitate towards?

I recently got a 35mm 1.4 lens and I have not taken it off my camera since! I do think having a good prime lens is key for any kind of portrait work and is a staple in any camera bag. Another lens that I’ve always loved is a 24-70mm 2.8. I think everyone should have this lens! It is so versatile and is great for so many different types of photography.

What has been your favourite photography project to work on so far?

One of my favourite photo projects I have done is a series of work titled “Space” that I completed during my senior year in college. For this project I worked with dancers and had them interact with forms of architecture. I really focused on the shapes they created, the meaning behind their movement and their interaction with the space around them. This was so fulfilling to me because I was able to combine both of my passions, dance and photography into one project. You can see this on my website at www.reganscamera.com/space

What would be the best piece of advice that you could give a new photographer?

Shoot as much as you can! Practice taking pictures of your family or friends, always look for new inspiration and keep finding new ways to be creative.

What’s next for you? Are you working on anything you can tell us about?

Right now I’m working on making photography my full time job. I’ll be doing a bit of travelling the next few months and I’m excited for what’s to come! Hopefully a few more personal projects will be in the works this upcoming year.
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We sat down with JUJ, a rising pop artist from Philadelphia creating music in Los Angeles. Making music for her restless generation, JUJ encourages them to fight for what is right in the world. She sings with the vocal passion of Lady Gaga, the drive of Demi Lovato and writes with the youthful perspective of Khalid. JUJ sings to kids from the projects to the burbs who feel trapped in their city and long to change to their world.

Interviewer
Benjamin Wainman
“It’s crazy, before I could talk there are videos of me singing along and dancing to the moves of ‘Annie’. Little did I know how these artistic gifts would guide and define my future.”
Who is JUJ, what's your origin story and how did you get into music?
I've always had a strong love for singing and performing since a very young age; I've participated in school and local choir since first grade and have had a deep passion even before then. It's crazy, before I could talk there were videos of me singing along and dancing to the music of "Annie". Little did I know how these artistic gifts would guide and define my future. My love for music continued to grow throughout those formative years and I devoted everything into it. I started seeking out any and every chance to perform on stage. I'd sit in classes in middle school focusing more on finding auditions than my academic lessons. At 17, I graduated early and left home to further the next chapter in my life.

What's the biggest hurdle you've had to overcome so far in your career?
My biggest hurdle was leaving my family and friends to follow my passion. My family means the world to me and my friends are a significant part of who I am. Both have been incredibly supportive and have empowered me to work hard, remain strong and never be afraid of failing.

What's next for you after the record drops? How is the rest of 2019 looking for JUJ?
I'm already back in the studio writing my next record. Writing for me is a great artistic outlet and I am excited to turn all these ideas and stories into songs that people can relate too and love! Before this year ends, I'd love to collaborate with more artists and begin touring. Lady Gaga is one of my greatest artistic influencers, and would be my ultimate collaboration goal.

What advice would you have for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?
I will always encourage people to pursue the things in life they love, to find your passion and fight for it. I truly believe everyone is endowed with a special talent or skill that sets them apart from others.
That's the beauty of differences and people should embrace them. We can all learn from one another. Embrace the things that make you who you are. Never stop working hard as you can and always believe in yourself. Anything is possible!

What's your favourite track on the new record, and why?
My favorite track on the album is Hollywood. Most songs about Hollywood idealize it, but I like to think there are many people living in this amazing place who have faced bumps in the road and have gone through phases of becoming disillusioned. When I moved to California, I was making significant strides that made me feel as if I was proving myself to everyone who said I couldn't. Then two months in, when everything was falling into place, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease and became incredibly ill.
Being a minor, I was forced to return to the East Coast to receive treatment alongside my family. My dreams had shattered right in front of me. I had doubts, wondering if everyone was right and this was just a huge sign. In Hollywood, the first line of the chorus goes, "I thought that this would be my home" to "I knew that this would be my home". LA can chew you up and spit you out if you let it, and that's not what I was about to let happen. After finishing treatment, I returned to LA and persisted. I feel this song is extremely relateable to all of the aspiring young women and men living in such a cutthroat city and the trials and tribulations they may face.
AN INTERVIEW WITH

RORA BLUE

We sat down with Northern California born and Texas raised artist Rora Blue to talk about her projects “Handle With Care” and “Don’t”.

Featured Projects
“The Walk”, “Handle With Care” and “Don’t”
YOU'RE A WOMAN, YOU BELONG IN THE KITCHEN
Aren't you worried you won't be needed in life?
WHY ARE YOU UPSET?
IS IT THAT
TIME OF THE MONTH
AGAIN?

From: "Handle with Care"
By Rora Blue
Your projects “Handle with care” and “Don’t” explore what are essentially sexist comments from two sides of the gender spectrum, which project came first? And what made you want to tackle these particular subject matters?

Did one project inform the other?

Handle With Care explores sexist comments while (Don’t) explores comments that force gender roles on men. I created Handle With Care in 2016 and (Don’t) a year later in 2017. I felt inspired to first create Handle With Care because of a Women and Gender Studies class I was taking. Handle With Care definitely informed (Don’t). I experienced quite a bit of hate, which came mostly from men, in response to my Handle With Care series. I became very interested in what would happen if I embraced this population rather than let the hateful comments manifest within me. I decided to created a series that acknowledged the negative impact patriarchal systems have on men in hopes of bringing them into the conversation. (Don’t) was the product of this thought process.
It’s interesting that you decided to embrace the sources negativity from the response to “Handle With Care”, where many might have reacted quite differently. Was the response to “Don’t” similar to that of “Handle With Care” in any way?

My goal with all of my art is to make people feel something. Though it was hard, I tried to look at the situation objectively. Technically I was achieving my goal by getting a lot of hate on the series, hatred and anger are very strong emotions. People were looking at my art long enough to be angered by it and write a emotion fuelled comment. I think Handle With Care made quite a few people think and may have even exposed some to a new perspective.

I wasn’t sure what the response to (Don’t) would be. Initially I wondered if I would receive hate from women and support from men. To my surprise, it was exactly the opposite! The majority of hate on the series came from men and was mostly supported by women. This lead me to think that the societal pressures of masculinity have been deeply internalized by a lot of men.
WANT
HELD

From: “Don’t”
By Rora Blue
Coupon code: 435
1) Bring receipt to a Qdoba to redeem.
One per order, valid 7 days from receipt.

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Here Total: $33.45

PAY
LET
BOYS
D
DON'T
GIRLS

FROM: "DON'T"
BY RORA BLUE
WHO DID YOU GET ALL DRESSED UP FOR?

From: “Handle with Care”
by Rora Blue
With that in mind, what was your biggest takeaway from both projects? And do you plan to explore these themes again in future work?

My takeaway was that we need to keep having conversations and those conversations need to include everybody. The response to both series also affirmed the importance of art to me. I think art is unique in its ability to start important conversations between people.

I explored a similar theme in my 2018 series titled The Walk. The Walk is an interactive and submission-based series that pairs text with visuals. The series explores the objects women carry for protection while walking alone. Pink sticky notes were submitted from women all over the world and detail the objects that they carry. Selected sticky note submissions were paired with a photograph that is created as a visual representation of the submission. Pink is used almost exclusively throughout the series in an attempt to reclaim a colour that is traditionally associated with women.

I love looking at these three series chronologically. The thought process and subject matter seem very linear to me. I don't have new work that reflects on similar themes planned immediately, but I certainly won't rule it out for the future.
I live on a college campus. They sell pepper spray in the bookstore. They said to carry some. Most girls here do. With all the stories of campus rape I'm scared to walk alone at night. I hold my pepper spray ready to go after my night class.
What themes do you intend to explore with your new work, and is there a particular project our readers should look out for?
Right now I am focusing on developing my two larger ongoing projects, the Unsmt Project and After the Beep. The Unsmt Project alone now has over 40,000 submissions so it’s quite a handful. In regards to other series, I will absolutely have a few other pieces come out this year. I am currently interested in identity and am turning a bit more inward. Stay tuned!

You can keep up with Rora's work on her website at rorablue.com which includes a shop, exhibition dates and project updates. You can find her on Instagram and Twitter at @rorablue.
WHY DID YOU CUT YOUR HAIR? BOYS LIKE IT BETTER LONG

From: "Handle With Care"
By Rora Blue
As soon as I step out the door, my keys are between my knuckles as if my life depended on it... Because it might.
SLEEP APPARATUS FOR THE DEDICATED

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AN INTERVIEW WITH

JON CRUZ

We spoke with Jon Cruz, a visual interactive designer and portrait photographer based in San Francisco. Jon tells us about his inspirations and charts his journey from hobbyist to fully-fledged photographer.

Featured Models
Alexis King, Brooke Buchanan, Genevieve Abell, Arielle Panta, Effy Harvard, Elizabeth Wood

Featured Talent
Tawni Nicole Tran (Stylist), Jaycee Mniraj (Hair stylist), Alaina Davenport (MUA), Debbie Church (MUA), Shaina Feldman (Stylist), Hall Mc Gowan (MUA), Chelsey Brentner (Hair stylist)
Tell us a little bit about yourself and why photography is important to you?

My name is Jon Cruz, I’m based in San Francisco and I’m a full-time interactive designer for a web company. On my days off, I like taking portraits. It’s very important to me because it’s how I can express myself creatively and at the same time, make a connection with someone in front of the camera. And more recently, I’ve been taking charge of team shoots (consisting of a wardrobe specialist, hairstylist, and makeup artist) to produce really great work.

What was it that first got you interested in photography?

Graphic arts was something I wanted to pursue as a career and I’ve been a graphic designer for double-digit years now. Imagery and photography were always in the background of my work and my source of inspiration for projects, but I never bothered to learn how to take a great photo only because DSLR’s were expensive and just wasn’t practical for me at the time.
About 4 years ago, I wanted to take up a new hobby and I just gravitated towards photography. After saving up for my first DSLR and lenses, I did a lot of reading, watched countless hours of YouTube, and constantly asked for artistic and technical advice from my peers. All of those experiences and innumerable hours in Photoshop and Lightroom has made me the photographer I am today.

Who or what are your main sources of inspiration? My main source of inspiration comes from everything really; movies and how they are framed and color graded. When I’m at the mall, seeing posters and signage. Online, I tend to look on Pinterest for new and old photographs. A videographer friend of mine has shared some of his hardbound books from his favorite photographers, so we’ve been looking at those a lot. Inspiration is everywhere and sometimes it’s a bit overwhelming.

What do you look for in a model when you are planning a portrait session? First and foremost, I make sure she’s fun to work with. I do some research into her social media just to get an idea of her personality, then I look at her portfolio, see what work she’s already done and what my team and I can bring to the table. With the talent I’m working with and the agencies I contact, it’s best to be able to provide images that they need or are lacking (e.g., a model with a lot of fashion photos might be in need of some swimsuit looks so I’ll pitch a swim shoot).

What has been your favorite photography project to work on so far? My most recent shoot was a great combination of talent, setting and great natural light. Our images were so great in camera that my team and I decided then and there to submit our photos for publication. It got accepted quickly and I can’t wait to show what we came up with once it’s printed.

What would be the best piece of advice that you could give a new photographer? The best piece of advice I can give to photographers is to shoot what you love. Because of social media and the pressures it provides, it can be stressful at times. I think it’s best to stay true and take photos that you can be proud of, without an audience around. Make yourself happy first or you will quickly get tired of your own work.

What’s next for you? Are you working on anything you can tell us about? I currently live in San Francisco, but do the majority of my shoots are done in Los Angeles, so the major thing I’m working on right now is moving there this summer. Once I’m settled, I definitely have plans to do more team shoots, make contact with more agencies and take my photography to a higher level every time I use my camera.
PHOTOSERIES: FARM BOY

“The shoot was based on an idea of a soft boy who lives in the countryside, working on his family’s farm. We decided to show how his break would look like, after working for hours under the sun.”

Featured Model: Bruno Nunes

Carol Montemor
Photographer
PHOTOJOURNAL:
SILHOUETTES IN KERALA, INDIA

——

Geraint Rowland
Photographer
I have recently finished a six month voyage through India. It is a great country for photography offering a variety of landscapes, amazing architecture and a variety of interesting cultures to capture. Wherever you go in India there is always something to document photographically. Whilst I was in the South of India in the state of Kerala, I spent a few days in Fort Kochi. This small coastal city is a great place for both street and architectural photography with a huge mix of different influences from throughout the ages. The area is famous for its Portuguese, Dutch and British architecture, as well as the elaborate Chinese fishing nets which were introduced by Chinese explorers in the 14th century.

I’m sure that in the right conditions the Chinese fishing nets can be photographed beautifully, but during my time there the sky was dull and the vibrant sunsets lacking! Instead I decided to experiment with some silhouette style images along the coastline. I enjoy taking silhouette photographs, I feel that their simplicity adds to their overall beauty and the addition of people can add a lot of emotion.

When taking silhouetted images, as with much of photography, the most important element is light. The subject that you want to be silhouetted should be directly in front of the light source. In addition, the background needs to be lighter than the foreground to create the silhouette. In these images the late afternoon sun was directly behind the people making it perfect for the high contrast silhouetted results. Choose subjects that are easily recognisable as your silhouettes and keep it simple. Try to avoid distracting elements within the frame and make use of the surrounding negative space. The subjects I took here were on a coastal walkway and I was slightly lower down on the beach shooting up. This angled technique ensured I had no distracting noise in the background of the frame. These images were taken using a Canon 5D4 and a Sigma 135mm 1.8 art lens. The extra range on the lens allowed me to stand a little further back and photograph away comfortably. However, any type of lens can be used successfully for silhouettes, practice until you create the perfect shot and have fun doing so.

More of my travel photos can be found on my website at: www.geraintrowland.co.uk and my Instagram at: www.instagram.com/geraint_rowland_photography.
Casten Clemens prepping for a take inside an historic observatory
FEATURED PROJECT

SPIN STATE

Back in October 2017 I started shooting my first feature film, Spin State. It’s a project I’d spent a couple of years writing and had moved to London in May of the same year to start production. What followed was a fevered whirlwind of a shoot with my new family, a fantastically talented group of actors and filmmakers forging out of chaos a story that had until then existed only on paper.

Writer
Ross A. Wilson

Photography
Greg Bartley & Donna Enticknap Wilson

www.spinstatefilm.com
"But for me locations have to mean something too, they can’t be just a pretty backdrop or an atmospheric setting, there has to be purpose."

After suffering from amnesia, his only clues a series of blackouts that see him waking up in strange places with no idea how he got there. Lead actor Jamie Robson plays the troubled PI Kline. Dyon with costar Seyan Servan playing mathematician Dana Weitnar, a young women whose destiny crosses with Kline’s. The story takes place across a multitude of locations that act as a psychogeographic landscape externalising the characters’ inner states.

We spent a lot of the budget on locations. Whilst I was writing the project, and even before then when it was forming in my mind, I’d always find myself drawn to industrial areas and anything that was built with a particular design aesthetic or functionality in mind. But for me locations have to mean something too, they can’t be just a pretty backdrop or an atmospheric setting, there has to be purpose. That’s the writer side of me responding to the photographer side of me that
loves these places just because they look awesome. I think part of that enamour comes from the sense of what could happen or has happened in these places, but there's definitely also an appreciation of pure form. I've been interested in architecture and architectural photography for a while, and even my photographic style is somewhat geometric when it comes to people. So it was a dream to be shooting in such locations from a photographer's standpoint, but of course also from a director's point of view, and again to see the story come to life as a writer. One day we'd be shooting under London railway arches, the next in a disused power station, then the next beneath a radio telescope. For a few days we were in an architect's house that he'd built specifically as backdrop for shootouts.

The whole experience was surreal. But, as a director, you don't get much time to enjoy the view during production because you're too busy exploiting it, setting up your shots and movements, blocking the actors and directing the takes.

Another important part of the world-building was getting the costumes right. A lot of the locations were built in the '60s and '70s and while the story is present-day, I didn't want to completely abandon that aesthetic — I wanted the characters to belong in the world and for it to have a slightly out of present-day feel without being specific. An idea that, without saying too much, fits with the other ideas behind the story. Costume designer Adam Dee did such a great job in building the look for the characters. He did a lot of research and cultivated a lot of options for each specific role, then the actors could come in and along with our input and guidance choose what they felt reflected their interpretation of the characters. I like to involve the actors in as many decisions as possible that are relevant to their character. Sometimes it's like a dance.
Sometimes it’s like, as Jamie (Robson, Kline) put it, like coaching a boxer before they go out for the next round. Before Spin State I’d written and directed a number of shorts that I also acted as director of photography on. Going into my first feature I knew that in order to give the actors the attention they deserved I’d have to hand that baton off to someone else, which to those who knew me was a surprise. Fortunately I’d cultivated a great relationship with our director of photography-to-be James Chisholm, James worked as camera operator, gaffer and 1st A.C. on a couple of my shorts so he knew what I was like, he knew I’d be a control freak about where the camera went and how it moved and what lens was used. A good DoP helps a director achieve his vision even if that means shifting the traditional boundaries of the job. What it did mean for James however was that he’d be able to concentrate solely on lighting and exposure. In many ways I didn’t miss that side of things, and turning around and seeing what James had achieved with the limited gear the production could afford was not only impressive, but felt like a luxury.

For this project, I was also acting as a producer alongside my wife Donna. Even though we had a fantastic 1st Assistant Director Phil Romanos, and 2nd AD Natalia Davidowicz, lots of the knowledge of the schedule was with myself and I was holding the purse strings too so there were always practical questions to be fielded on set. You have to go into these situations knowing what you want, there’s just not enough time or money to dither or worry or you end up risking not getting enough coverage to tell the story properly or even at all. In a lot of ways it’s like photography in that there’s always this apprehension about sitting down and seeing what you’ve got at the end of a shoot. No matter how carefully you plan there’s always a little room in your mind for doubt. Ultimately, I think the same fear drives you to get what you need in the moment no matter the cost. Once you’re satisfied it’s all there, that’s when you get the first glimpse of how these images work together in real life and not just in your head. I like to leave room for happy accidents and that’s when they reveal themselves to you as if they’d always been a part of the plan. That’s one of the true joys of creativity, working with the universe so to speak.

Now I’m in post production I’m really excited to be edging closer to a final cut. Seeing these locations on screen and rewatching the performances the actors have given is a real joy. Aurora Fearnley, Carsten Clemens, Will Harrison-Wallace, Katarina Andrejewa, along with Jamie and Seyan, have really done an amazing job. I know for actors good locations and shooting in the real world as opposed to on set can really aid their process. Given that these weren’t your average apartments or offices and how strange the story could be, it became even more important for the actors to take cues from their environment. Seyan became particularly attached to what was her character’s house, wandering around and making it her own, giving everything a backstory, absorbing the alluring and oddly clinical atmosphere.
She’s such a talent and has such an intellect it’s almost like watching sparks fly as she thinks and Lens the moment take her. Jamie was the only cast member to see every location. He had quite a journey creating spaces in his psyche for these strange locations and he did just that, he got it every time and just gave himself over to it all. He really threw himself on the fire and as a result you could literally watch him do nothing but stare at something and still be captivated; that’s testimony to his commitment, talent and what he puts on the line. Supporting roles obviously never give an actor quite as much to chew on as leads, which is why it was it was so impressive to see how deep the rest of the cast took their roles. Carsten could often be found in character letting the atmosphere soak in and take him away, always ready to go for a take, leaving no psychological stone unturned, just losing himself to these mysterious landscapes. Aurora would seldom leave her character’s state, even when interacting with the crew. Every time she walked into what was one of the other characters’ spaces it’d create this tension, she seemed to belong everywhere. Will would come in with all this energy and it never went, he’d play to the atmosphere. But then in one particular location our fantastic set designer Gaia Predasi had set-dressed quite extensively, it became like a stage and it felt like he’d owned it for years. I can’t say anything about Katarina’s role at this time for reasons that will become evident for anyone who watches the film. I’m so proud of them all, and although my primary job is to make myself happy with the final cut and make sure it matches my vision, I’m really driven by wanting to do these performances justice. For almost everyone else involved, the film is over. We finished shooting over a year ago, but for
me it never stopped. Post production is where the film is made for the third time, the previous times being when it’s written and when it’s shot. This is just as an exciting and important part of the process and creatively that world and those characters are emerging as they were envisioned, as are some of the deeper meanings baked into the story. It really is like having a child and seeing them grow up, they’re going to be who they are by this point and all you can do is support them so they can become the best person they can be. There’s a way to go yet but I’m hoping for a 2019 cast and crew premier before taking it on the festival circuit shortly afterwards. I don’t think it’s going to be until then that I can really put this project down. I’m not sure how long it’ll be before I get perspective on something this big but even so, I’m already excited to do it all over again and the next project is already in the pipeline. One day, I’ll be able to look at Spin State as if standing at the stern of a ship and looking back at an island I once lived on but can never return to. There will just be the final images like postcards and the things people say about it – I think it’s only then that I’ll truly understand what was created, what it means to me and who I am. And in a way I think that’s why we create, it’s an expression of ourselves whose purpose isn’t complete until its creator looks back on it and sees something of themselves, and hopefully, if you’ve done your job well, others find themselves in it too.
“You might enjoy these images of the construction of a Haddock Davidson Motor Fish and Test Run off the Gower coast, South Wales, it's near where I live. I have a bit of a passion for motorcycles. All the images I use in my work are taken by myself and manipulated in Photoshop, I've been using Photoshop more or less from its birth, I just love it.”

Mark Mumford FRPS
Photographer
AN INTERVIEW WITH

JASON SHI

Erikson Erise interviews Jason Shi, a hobbyist photographer currently based in Los Angeles, California.

Interviewer
Erikson Erise

Featured Models
Jaenna Wessling, Kelsey Impicciache, Emilia Ares, Alexandra Shydlovskia, Ashley Obregon, Mary Henschell
What does photography mean to you?

It used to be a creative outlet for a conflicted pragmatic individual (me). Now, it's much more than that.

From a young age, I was fascinated by visual art and loved drawing, but never took formal training. My parents, being Chinese, told me there was no money in art and all great artists died before their work became famous (HA). There however IS money in law, medicine, engineering, and business.

I chose finance as my career but felt more and more unfulfilled over the years, like something was missing. That's when I found photography, which has more than helped fill this creative void. Through photography, I've met many creatives around the world — some of whom are my closest friends to this day.

One of my favourite things to hear is when friends say, "I usually hate photos of myself, but these are wonderful!" It's truly a fulfilling feeling to help people realize just how beautiful they are.

What's your thought process from when you conceptualize an idea and execute the project?

I'd break it out into roughly 4 steps for portrait photography, which is what I shoot mostly:

1. Look for inspiration — this could be from movies, books, magazines, anything really!
2. Communicating with model — it's important to speak with your model about how your concept aligns and fits with what they're looking for (whether it be for a portfolio or website). I also like getting to know them over a cup of coffee first as well.
3. Styling — some photographers collaborate with makeup artists (can work that into #2). I personally have the model do makeup themselves.
4. Decide on logistics (location and timing of day) — does it fit with the concept? Do you need a permit?

"It's truly a fulfilling feeling to help people realize just how beautiful they are."
What role do you think social media plays in the world of photography and being a creative?
I’ll keep my comments here brief as I do think social media is wonderful and helps us connect with friends and people we would have never spoken to.

However, I do think Instagram has one glaring problem for photo enthusiasts in that the ecosystem is now centred around the concept of a personal celebrity rather than community. “Community” in the Instagram age is a fight upstream through trends to make your way to the top – fine for fun but feels poisonous to photographers. A set of hashtags isn’t really a conversation, right?

What are the biggest lessons you’ve learned that you wish you knew before you got into photography?

Probably these four:
1. There's no such thing as perfection. Simple as that.
2. Shoot RAW. RAW is lossless and gives you much more power in post-processing because of all that information contained in the file. Given storage advancements, there's no reason to shoot JPEG anymore.
3. Buy the 50mm f1.8 lens for $100. Larger aperture for nice bokeh and helps shoot in low light situations. Sure, it’s prime so you don’t have the benefit of zoom but will help you work harder to get the composition you want – it’s a huge benefit as you develop your skills.
4. It’s not the gear. I’ve seen some terrible pics taken with top of the line full-frame DSLRs. On the other hand, I’ve also seen truly breathtaking photos that were taken with smartphones. What matters is how you pull every oz of performance with the gear you have on you.

Where do you draw inspiration from? Who are other creatives that inspire you?

I get a lot of my inspiration from films. I recently watched Requiem for a Dream for the first time and that movie is FILLED with gorgeously framed shots. I’m also a huge fan of Wes Anderson – he’s obviously obsessed with composition. You can pause at any moment in his films and it’ll look like a piece of art.

Some of my favourite photographers include Terry Richardson, Marta Bevacqua, Alessio Albi, Marat Safin, and Zach Allia.

I do think Instagram has one glaring problem for photo enthusiasts in that the ecosystem is now centred around the concept of a personal celebrity rather than community.
If you can give one piece of advice for someone interested in photography, what would you tell them?

Whether you’re interested in photography as a hobby or a profession, it’s important to remember that it is a journey. It’s not something you can “learn” overnight.

A few tips for this journey:
1. **Learn to experiment.** Collaborate with other creatives to try something you’ve always wanted to do! HDR, black and white, multiple people — whatever it is, try it!
2. **Look for feedback.** Seek constructive criticism from other photographers as well as non-photographer friends. Helps you see your work from others’ eyes and widen your “aperture”.

3. **Do it.** It takes practice. **The more you shoot, the better you’ll get.** At first, you can try to imitate other photographers’ styles but overtime you should be able to develop your own.

**What are some future projects in store that you’re excited to work on and share with the world?**

HA: As a hobbyist, I’d love to travel more and shoot with more people around the world. I’m planning to go to Seattle in May and possibly Germany in the fall, so stay tuned for some travel journey-style stuff.

I’d love to work on editorial material at some point!
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