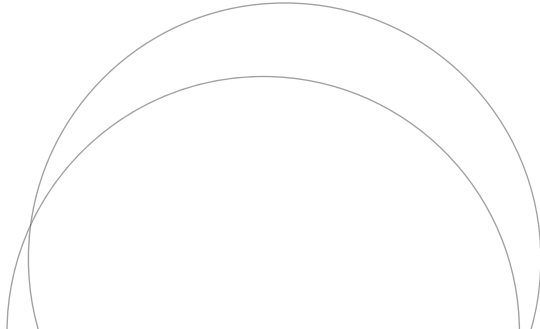


Afterword



At times, the education of a photographer can be a double-edged sword. Passion and determination often stand in contradiction to the endless courses and readings that are central to one's education. Yet it is naïve to think that emerging fully formed is possible. Photographers and artists must learn their tools in order to transcend and manipulate them. At the same time, the rules are made to be broken. The fact that photography has been thoroughly integrated into the academy further demands that its rules be broken again and again. Making it through art school takes both the courage to ignore one's teachers and the wisdom to heed their advice. Reaching that point can take time, but it is an essential lesson.

We all take pictures and assume we understand their complexity. However, the ease and accessibility of photography often belies the hard work and decisions that create great and meaningful work. While camera technology is virtually omnipresent in our lives, the scrutiny and insight of intelligent practice are often missing. For the serious practitioner, the opportunities, competition, and rewards are greater than ever before. At the same time, the global art market and the increasing popularization of photography have raised the stakes in potentially damaging ways for emerging photographers. The demands of the art market often run counter to methodical and serious practice. As photographers, we must take charge of our work, not only to create appropriate venues and forms, but also to challenge the changing nature of the medium and its potential.

Ultimately, we must foreground the creative impulse and remain grounded in the compulsion that drives us to pick up a camera. Whether seeking an audience, pursuing formal studies, or surviving financially, balancing our work with the demands of the art world or school or life remains a challenge. Given these difficulties, the rewards of an art education—acquiring the tools, community, and strength to follow creative obsession—can be great.

Despite the challenge of an arts education, my love for and dedication to the medium have been nurtured by outstanding teachers and a community of peers. While this book offers advice and a few signposts for the photographer who is beginning this journey, the real education of any photographer lies in taking the risks, pursuing one's passions, looking and, above all, making the work.

- Adam B. Bell