

cole thompson photography newsletter

Issue 136 - October 31, 2025



Faroe Islands No. 217

My Friend!

I've recently had two thoughts about Vision. Actually, one was a "deep thought" that came from John Barclay (surprise!), and the other is an old thought that has recently been reinforced.

Read about them in the article "Vision is NOT About Photography" below.

Thanks to those who attended the Fort Collins Studio Tour and stopped by my home. It was nice to meet and talk with you! Some traveled a great distance, and I am appreciative of that, thank you.

And the Horizons Photography Conference was a treat to attend! I met several old friends and made many new friends there. It was really nice to participate in a conference that focused on the creative act.

Christmas is approaching, and this might be a good time to drop a hint to Santa that you'd love a Cole Thompson print under the tree!

Fortunately for you, I'm having a sale.

And lastly, happy birthday to me! Yes, I was a pre-ween baby!

Cole

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Quotes

“You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover it within himself”

Galileo Galilei

“How shall we measure success? It isn’t popularity, money, or critical esteem.

Success occurs in the privacy of the soul. It comes in the moment you decide to release the work, before exposure to a single opinion. When you’ve done all you can to bring out the work’s greatest potential. When you’re pleased and ready to let go.

Success has nothing to do with variables outside yourself.”

Rick Rubin, from The Creative Act

"If only every man would make proper use of his strength and do his utmost, he need never regret his limited ability."

Marcus T. Cicero, c. 106-43 BC

“Rules of composition are foolish, arbitrary, mindless things that raise you quickly to a level of acceptable mediocrity, and then prevent you from progressing further.”

Bruce Barnbaum

"Art today is institutionalized narcissism, a conspiracy between creators and curators to make poor people feel stupid."

Stephen Bayley

"Some people believe the purpose of art is to please an audience.

I believe the primary purpose of art is for the artist to express themselves, and then if they're lucky, they also please an audience.

But if the artist's first objective is to please the audience, then they risk pleasing no one, especially themselves."

Cole Thompson

"Photography is not made to impress others. Photography is made to discover yourself."

Selaru Ovidiu

"You must be prepared for your work to be misunderstood ..."

Sally Mann

"It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera...they are made with the eye, heart, and head."

Henri Cartier-Bresson

"Not one drop of my self-worth depends on your acceptance of me."

Quincy Jones

New Images



Harbinger No. 66



Light Poles No. 13



Three Muses



Faroe Islands No. 205



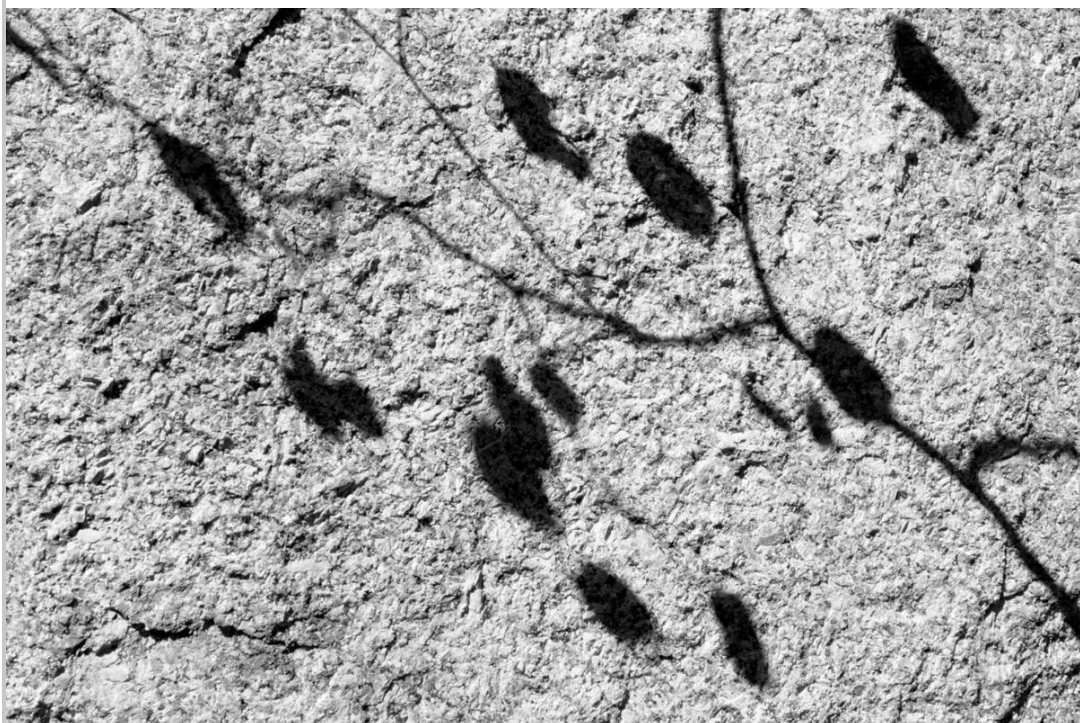
Faroe Islands No. 215



Beauty in Death No. 20



Ancient Stones No. 106





Diagonal Log



Beauty in Death No. 21

Print Sale



The Angel Gabriel

All prints on my website are on sale through Christmas. Here are the details:

- Any image on my website (not just those in this newsletter)
- 10X15 image size (10X10 for square images)
- Print only (no matting)
- Printed on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308
- \$125, which includes shipping
- Shipped in a tube
- Extra for shipping outside of the US

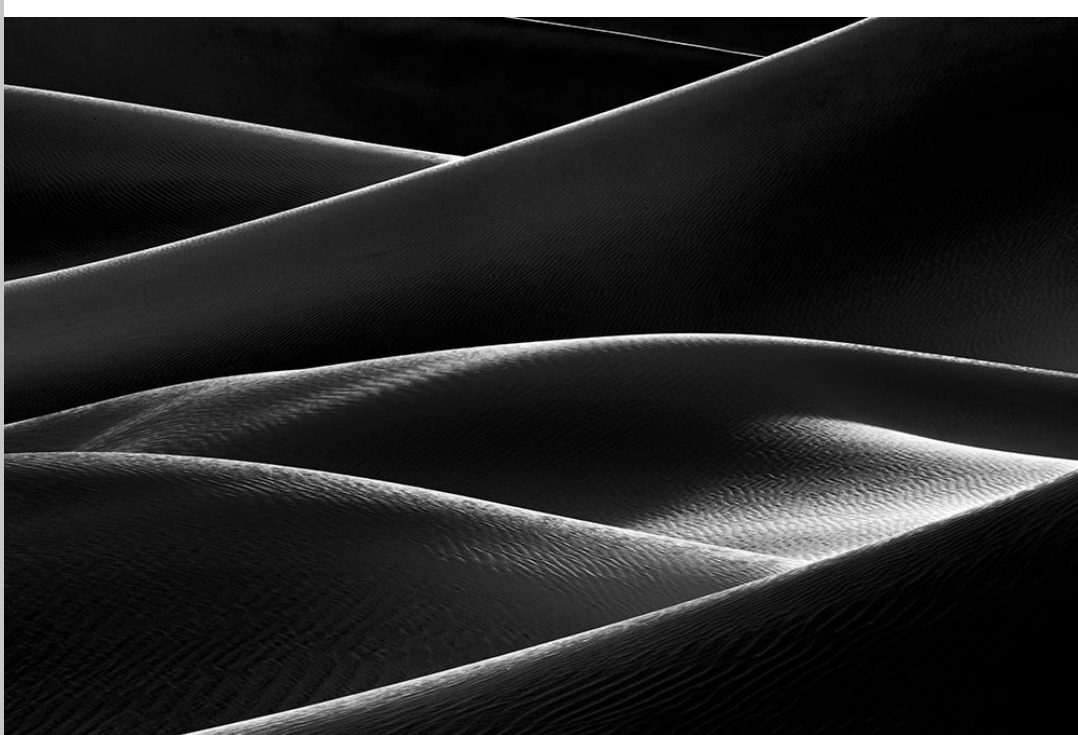


There are a lot of images to choose from, perhaps too many? You may want to start by looking here:

<https://colethompsonphotography.com/portfolios/favorites/>

When you've found something you love, email me and I'll take care of the rest.

Vision is NOT About Photography



When I was challenged to find my Vision over 20 years ago, I thought Vision was about photography. But as I found and followed my Vision, other changes came about in my life. I was not just discovering how I saw, but I was changing as a person. I was questioning more, I was examining my beliefs, I was becoming much more independent in my thinking.

At some point, I realized that Vision was not really about photography; it was about life! It was not just seeing for myself, but thinking for myself.

I threw off the shackles of groupthink, of following the crowd, of thinking the way I had been taught, and started questioning everything. I stopped following blindly, examined the rules and norms, and stopped trying to fit in. I defined success for myself. I reexamined everything I thought I knew and believed to be true.

The result: finding my Vision changed not just my photography, but also my life.

And then, when John Barclay and I held our first two Vision Retreats, someone at each event commented that Vision was not just about photography but about how to live your life. Those comments have again brought this idea to the forefront of my thinking.

And here's another thought about Vision that surfaced a couple of days ago: John said something to me as we were recording our YouTube show. We were talking about my definition of "honest work," which is:

- It was my idea (not borrowed or stolen)
- It was created for myself, with no thought of how others would receive it
- It was created from my Vision
- It is work that I love, regardless of what others think of it

John said that, if a person were to create honest work following these four points, it would go a long way toward finding their Vision.

That was a good thought, and he's right.

Vision is not about photography; it's about how to live your life.

The Story Behind the Image

(and the rest of the story)



I was in Ukraine, visiting my son who was serving in the Peace Corps. I purposely went there with my eyes closed, so to speak, because I never prepare, research, or study when I travel to a new location. I choose to go with a blank slate and with no preconceived idea of what I might find. I want to discover something that inspires me.

That was the plan anyway, but as with all plans, things often don't go as you hope.

I had been there for three days and hadn't found anything that caught my eye or inspired me. And now I found myself worrying about the days slipping away and the possibility that I might come home empty-handed.



I found the people to be interesting, but whenever I visit a foreign land and try to photograph them, all I got was a big smile, or a "mask" as I call it.

Even if I had the time to get to know the person so I could break down those barriers, I don't speak Russian or Ukrainian.



As I waited at a bus stop, pondering this problem, I saw a man leaning against the wall. Suddenly, I had this crazy idea for removing the mask, and I approached the man.

I tapped my chest and said, "American," and the man nodded.

I held up my camera and said, "Photographer," and he nodded again.

I then signed, "Can I take your picture?" and he nodded again.

I took his picture.

Then, using sign language, I said "Stop! And close your eyes."

The look on his face said, "What???" and I signed it again: "Close your eyes."

And then I took his photograph a second time, but now with his eyes shut. I loved what the closing of the eyes accomplished; it got rid of the "mask" and revealed the real person beneath the smile.



And for the rest of my trip, I walked the streets of Ukraine, and using sign language, asked if I could photograph strangers with their eyes shut.

That's the story behind the image, and now, here's the rest of the story:



Natasha

We made friends with several Ukrainians and have kept in touch with them during the war. Some are safe, some are not.

This is Natasha. She lives in Beryslav along the banks of the Dnieper River, on the front lines of the Ukrainian war. For two years Natasha has endured bombings and a loss of water, power, and heat.

How could things get any worse?



Three weeks ago, Natasha came home to find her house had been hit by two Russian drones and was burned to the ground, along with her beloved dog and two cats.

Now Natasha has nothing...absolutely nothing.

And that's the rest of the story.

Print Drawing



For this month's print drawing I'll be giving away a print of "Windsurfing."

To enter: send an email to Cole@ColeThompsonPhotography.com and put "Windsurfing" in the subject line.

Thanks for entering!

[Email Cole and Enter the Drawing!](mailto:Cole@ColeThompsonPhotography.com)

The winner of my last print drawing is Sidney Stone, who will be receiving a print of her choice. Browse my website and pick an image that you love!

Congratulations, Sidney! Please email me and arrange for your print to be delivered.

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