

Battaglia

Ever since we were little kids, we were programmed to sit down, shut up, and take orders. I remember when I got to high school, and I dreaded class. The most jarring aspect of my public school experience was the fact that you could not enter the school without going through security, metal detectors, and x-rays to scan your backpack. There were security guards all over the halls, most doors were locked, and you could not go outside during lunch. It felt like school was a prison.

Maybe our newfound prison is of the mind, and it is our duty to free ourselves of this mental jail. We become influenced by others, societal standards, dogma, religions, politics, and philosophical ideas. Perhaps in order to go beyond the mental prison requires a return to childlike curiosity, and the spirit of play. Where the prison becomes a playground and the freedom is of your mind.

Freedom

I participated in a Passover dinner celebration this past weekend. I was reminded of the stories of the Israelites fleeing Egypt from slavery and the journey of Moses through the desert. The Egyptians were plagued 10 times, one of them being the swarming of flies.

Last night, I was awakened by a nightmare. It was a really crazy dream where I was sleeping in a tent or some sort of home and flies swarmed the house. I got up to close the door, but they kept pulling through. In the dream, I was trying to go back to sleep, but as I set my head down on the bed, I was consumed by flies, entering my mouth, and my nose, preventing me to breathe. This was a vivid dream that woke me up immediately.

Maybe our subconscious controls the dreams that we perceive and draw images upon the things that we previously experienced or thought about.

Reflect the world

This morning, I am walking along the River Trail, as usual, looking out towards the river. I find peace along the river and enjoy watching the ebbs and flows of ripples in the waves.

While walking under the bridge, I observe the shape of it and the way that it is reflected upon the water. Maybe like the reflections cast in the water, photographers also reflect the world. We reflect reality through what we see and photograph. The artwork and photographs that we create are not only a reflection of reality, but become an abstraction of it, and a reflection of our soul. As much as the photographs we create are a reflection of the world, they are a reflection of ourselves, and how we perceive things.

Under the bridge, and looking out towards the river, it almost looks as though you are being consumed by a snake in the mouth of it where the arches on the left and the right look like two giant eyes. Lots of street art, images of demons, and various scratchings of words and other things left behind are drawn under the bridge along the wall. Perhaps street art is a reflection of our current culture and society. Consider street art as the new hieroglyphic.

When I consider the first hieroglyphics, and those of cattle or oxen, I feel as though people viewed them as most high. Oxen is a source of power, food, meat, and were viewed as something worth depicting in images upon the walls of caves. The significance of oxen hold a special role within ancient civilizations. Consider ancient Greece or Rome and the way they would sacrifice hundreds of cattle in hecatombs to Zeus. I'm also reminded of the story of Moses rising to Mount Sinai and the Israelites, filled with anxiety and worry that he may not return, crafted a golden calf, and began worshiping this idol.

When I consider modern street art in urban cities, they often depict demons, discuss morose or deathly things, and generally very emo. Just observing the scratchings on the walls whether outside or upon bathroom stalls, you will recognize that the human spirit is weak and suffering.

Suffering is necessary

Maybe at the end of the day, a world without suffering is not worth living in. Think of the story of Jesus and the suffering that he endured throughout his life. While seeking to make peace, and heal the hearts of others with hope, he was then put to death. These heroes such as Jesus or ancient myths of legends like Achilles, are worth emulating in modern times.

Think of Achilles and the Iliad where he disputed with King Agamemnon when he took his war prize, Briseis. He just wanted to chill with his woman, and did not want to fight any longer. This caused Achilles to withdraw from war as he felt disrespected. Achilles suffers the death of his close companion, Patroclus. In Florence, I observed the beautiful sculpture depicting this suffering of *The Pasquino Group* (also known as *Menelaus Carrying the Body of Patroclus*). The death of Achilles' friend caused grief and rage within him. He transformed his suffering into action, and returned to the battlefield to kill Hector of Troy who killed Patroclus. The suffering led Achilles to become one of the most fearsome warriors in Ancient Greek mythology.

Going forward let's draw inspiration from ancient myths and use them in order to ascend to greater heights of excellence.

Equality is mediocre

When I consider equality, it sounds good on paper. However, **equality promotes mediocrity among the masses**. Just think, if everyone is equal, everyone will be the same, boring, and not excellent. The great notion of capitalism is the ability for the individual to rise to great heights and become greater than others. There is a natural imbalance within a capitalist society and I believe that is a good thing. It allows for people to reach new heights, and seek more excellence. Excellence was something that the ancient Greeks held highly considering the birth of the Olympic Games and the drive they had to reach new heights within human potential.

Power

Ultimately my goal is to **seek more physical power**. The more physical power that I hold, the better my art becomes. I feel like within the realm of photography, the physicality of the medium is oftentimes overlooked. You must be able to walk long distances, stand upright, and move your body with agility. I believe that **movement makes for improvement**, and gradual increase of strength over time will also sharpen your mind. The better and stronger you become, the better your visual acuity will be. The more you walk, the more you will see, and ultimately, the more that you will create.

One practical suggestion I have is while walking, strengthen your core by flexing the muscles in your abs. While walking with your abs contracted, and your back upright, you will increase your posture and strengthen your spine. I believe that physical strength is easy to increase and does not require a gym membership. There are various techniques that you can use by simply engaging your physical body weight. Consider pull-ups and push-ups and squats, and the various ways that you can create strength without fancy equipment.

Language and story

When I think of Western civilization being formed essentially from Christianity, I can't help but consider the Bible and the stories within it. Perhaps the stories and language used within these texts are what shape our reality as we know it. For without the text within the Bible, no other texts would be formed from there. The Bible, and all ancient myths become archetypes and stories that we can draw from to this day. I believe that there is an inherent truth within these texts that we should seek to learn more about.

Also, consider photography as a universal visual language. When I consider the way that it transcends language barriers, cultural differences, through visuals, it becomes extremely powerful.

I'm a fan of this notion of following what is beautiful, and photographing that. Perhaps the accessibility of the medium of photography, where everybody has access to a camera, is a great thing, because now everybody has the ability to share what they deem to be beautiful.

Last week I was asking various people on the street, what they consider to be more beautiful: the Comcast tower or City Hall. I personally believe City Hall to be the most beautiful building in the city of Philadelphia, as there is a story told through the architecture, the sculptures, and the detail. It is the largest municipal building in the country after all. However, the majority of people deemed the Comcast tower to be more beautiful, and it's perhaps because of its grand height, touching the sky as a large skyscraper.

At the end of the day, maybe beauty is subjective. Where I find beauty in the decay, and the moments that are oftentimes overlooked. But through the power of photography, I can create something that is otherwise ugly, and make it beautiful. Perhaps through photography, we can seek the objective truth by following the light, but evoke our subjective taste of beauty through what we put within the four corners of a frame.

The greatest thought I have about photography is that **the world is our canvas, and it is endless**. You could not live until you are 120 years old, and experience everything, go everywhere, and see everything on this earth and what it has to offer. This abundant feeling, is what keeps me curious and engaged with everyday, mundane life. Where I go through life, with all its strife, and still manage to find something to uplift through the medium. Where my physical body is moving through the world, and I am not confined indoors, to the four corners of a canvas to draw upon like a traditional painter.

I wield the power and source of truth, the sun, and **paint with light. Follow the light, but crush the shadows.**