

How to Evoke the Sublime in a Photograph

Listen to the beautiful birds. So beautiful.

What's poppin, people? It's Dante.

Currently walking around alongside these cliffs in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Today I'm thinking about something deeper: *how to make a sublime photograph.*

What Is the Sublime in Photography?

You know, what does it even mean to make a *sublime* photograph? Why sublime?

When I'm looking at the world around me, a lot of times, the most mundane things evoke emotional responses. I'll look at dew drops on a leaf or the grandeur of nature, and something inside me says *yes*. I put four corners around it and create an image. But that *visualization* and *creation* of something sublime? That's not easy.

"To evoke the sublime, one must go beyond beauty and elevate the mundane to an extraordinary height."

It's not just about seeing. It's about *feeling*. It comes through a mental and emotional state of being — a response to the life right in front of you.

Practical Ways to Evoke the Sublime

There are some very simple, practical ways to begin:

- **Use light and shadow** intentionally.
- **Find emotional resonance** with what's in front of you.
- **Shoot with childlike wonder.**

Like this moment — I'm standing on the edge of a cliff, and this kid just runs right into my frame. Dramatic sky, light piercing through storm clouds, children playing underneath all of it. *Spontaneous. Unscripted. Sublime.*

"Despite returning to the same location daily, I feel something — every single time."

Nature's Grandeur and the Photographer's Task

From this cliff, I see the Schuylkill River, the boathouses, Greek-inspired structures, trees, wind brushing my skin. I'm reminded:

"The goal of the photographer is to extract from the ordinary and uplift it to a transcendental height."

Even if I've stood here a thousand times, I'm still struck by it. The water flows, the clouds shift, and I'm reminded of the vastness of life — and my tiny part in it. *It humbles you.*

The Interconnectedness of It All

To truly make a sublime image:

1. **Stand on the edge of danger.** Let it remind you you're alive.
2. **Look out towards the horizon.** Let awe enter your bones.
3. **Recognize the connection** between everything — children running, stars above,

cells within your body.

"There's something powerful in realizing everything is connected – and flowing."

Watching water rush reminds me that I too am always changing, always evolving. It's not just visual – it's spiritual.

Technical Aesthetic for the Sublime

We can uplift that feeling *aesthetically*, too. Through:

- **High contrast black and white**
- **Crushed shadows**
- **Exposing for highlights**
- **Playing on that edge between order and chaos**

By making *those* decisions with intention, the mundane becomes something far more. Something sacred.

"Through the use of a camera, we can visualize the sublime – an image that goes beyond beauty."

Final Reflection

So yeah... how do you evoke the sublime?

You feel.

You appreciate.

You become *aware*.

Even the simplest things — birds chirping, gnats buzzing, kids laughing, light through clouds — *everything* can be lifted to a higher place through the act of noticing. And *that's* what the photograph captures.

That's the sublime.

—