



essay

PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE

By Eric Vincent

Avid art photographers, both amateur and professional, will tend to evolve in their minds the notion that the world seems more attractive through duplication than it appears to the eye. This is to the point that the audience for a photograph may see something in a photograph of, say, a trio of bridges spanning a river, which they had never seen before, even though they are personally familiar with the actual area the photograph captured. This might come in the form of a person saying to the photographer something to the effect of, "I've walked past that spot a million times going to and from work, and never saw those bridges that way."

This touches on a unique power of photography. Someone once said to the famous and accomplished actor John Malkovich, "Cameras don't lie," to which Mr. Malkovich replied, "I thought that's what they were made for." (He was making the point that the stage, not the movie studio, is the natural home of the actor, because being in the presence of a live audience leaves no room for dishonesty.) Of course, a photograph can be honest and accurate. But if one is an art photographer, instead of a crime scene photographer or a photojournalist, more likely one is utilizing the camera and photography as highly flexible tools for exaggeration, editing, censorship, embellishment. The curving spans of those three bridges, and their reflection on the glassy surface of the river they cross, become something akin to a strange floral creation blooming in some alien ecology. The elements which made them bridges over a river to the daily pedestrian commuter have been edited out of the frame of the photograph, as the focal point of the frame exaggerates the negative space at the center of the juxtaposed objects, creating the illusion at immediate glance that *the negative space is an object, the object of the photograph, the object IN the photograph.*



*Photo by
Eric Vincent*

A cellphone camera cannot achieve this. But the truth is, a three thousand-dollar camera cannot either. Only a photographer can achieve this. This photographer's instrument of choice that day upon seeing the three bridges may very well have been his cellphone. But essentially an art photograph is a product of the photographer's imagination, just as an oil-on-canvas is a product of the painter's imagination.

What is the difference between the daily commuter who walks along the river and past the three bridges so often, and the photographer who took the picture there which captivated the commuter so? Simple. The photographer is a romantic. He searches out the beauty and romance hidden in the universe, by looking beyond the world, through the surface of it, finding portals in negative space, and discovering alternate universes. Once discovering these alternate universes, he captures them in photography, and shares them with his audience, the commuter. The commuter, upon seeing the photograph for the first time, has an ah-hah moment, and his world is changed. He never walks along that river and looks at those three bridges quite the same way again. He sees the negative space, which his artistic friend, the photographer, has revealed, and thus, revealed to the commuter a portal to an alternate universe. For all we know, the commuter will never look at any bridge over any river quite the same way again.

-Eric Vincent, Author of "The PYRAMIDER Spy-Fi Trilogy," <http://art-a.us/4eap6>