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President's Message

Karen Nakamura, M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr.

ASP provides abundant opportunities to learn, teach, mentor, and share top quality photographic instruction. We have been able to brainstorm, give back to our communities, meet, network, and socialize with friends and support colleagues all over the nation. I am so proud of ASP's success over the past years, particularly in providing more opportunities for meaningful engagement of our members. I am amazed and eternally grateful for how many ASP members give to help out others.



enjoying their pairings. For our new members, this is one of the major benefits that ASP has to offer. I highly suggest that you take advantage of this wonderful program next year. I would like to thank our mentors for generously giving of their time and sharing their incredible talents with others.

I am so excited to announce that two extremely gifted photographers, Arthur Rainville and Toni Harryman, are teaming up to lead a workshop on "Emotionalizing and Crafting your Artistic Voice." The all-day Zoom program will be in September. Make sure you sign up on the ASP website! Your hearts and minds will be touched by these two brilliant artists. You will walk away inspired and energized after attending this unique workshop.

Just a reminder: the ASP Fellowship and Educational Associate degree application deadlines are coming up fast. I am excited to say that I have heard quite a few people are thinking of applying for these prestigious degrees. Good luck to everyone!

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank you, our members, for your continued participation in our professional community. We are also extremely grateful to our sponsors for their amazing support. A special thank you to our ASP Board and Executive Director for the endless amount of work that they do to make ASP a successful organization. Have a fantastic summer everyone!!!



Lisa Pertile and Karen McCall, our Mentor Program co-chairs, did an amazing job matching up our mentors and mentees. Thank you, ladies! I have heard everyone is

Inside This Issue

President's Message	3
AI-Generated Art	5
East Meets West: 2023 ASP Japan Adventure	10
An Open Letter to YOU: The Humanist	14
Heart & Soul: John Stork	18
Member Spotlight: Bill Vahrenkamp	19

On The Cover

Cover Image {Untitled}
by Keiichiro Matsuo
M.Photog.M.Wed.Photog.

This month's cover image was photographed by ASP member Keiichiro Matsuo, M.Photog.M.Wed.Photog., in March at Kitano Tenmangu Shrine in Kyoto during ASP's first-ever overseas excursion to Japan.

Keiichiro-san organized a unique photo shoot for our members, and they were given the rare privilege of photographing two Maikos, who are Geishas-in-training. The group was able to spend the day with them in various locations around town and incorporate the beautiful cherry blossom trees during this amazing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Thank you, Keiichiro-san, for making this a magical experience for those who traveled to the Land of the Rising Sun! 🌸

ASP wants to celebrate our members and their creativity! If you would like to have the ASP Magazine spotlight your work, please submit high resolution JPG images by going to our website at www.asofp.com/image-showcase where you can fill out the Image Submission Form. Please remember that only vertical images without competition borders can be considered for cover images.



Desert Moonlight

Laura Bennett, M.Photog.Cr., F-ASP
World Photographic Cup Gold Medal Winner
Nature/Landscape Category



Earning His Manhood

Sandra Pearce, M.Photog.MEI.Cr., Hon.EA-ASP
World Photographic Cup Finalist
Reportage Category



Liwa

Doug Bennett, M.Photog.Cr., F-ASP
Imaging Excellence Award



Son of the Serengeti

Lisa Pertile, M.Photog.M.Artist, CPP
IPC Grand Imaging Award Finalist
Landscape/Nature category

SAVE THE DATE FOR IMAGES OF DISTINCTION

Exciting news! ASP's image competition will be held on March 22 and the Judges' Commentary, where you will get feedback on all of your submitted images, is the next day, March 23, 2024.

Registration Opens: Jan. 1, 2024 -12:01 a.m. | **Early-Bird Submission:** Feb. 25 - 11:59 pm | **Final Submission:** Mar. 10 at 11:59 pm



CORRECTION:

Oops! We neglected to give credit to **Gabriel Alonso, M.Photog, Cr, CPP, F-ASP**, for creating our gorgeous ASP Board portrait which appeared in our last issue. Thank you, Gabriel, for being our portrait artist supreme the past two years at Imaging USA!

AI-GENERATED ART

By Danica Barreau, M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr., CPP

Was Artificial Intelligence (AI) part of your vocabulary prior to 2022? AI has been around for decades, and you have been using it every day. Have you used Google Maps or Waze to get to a destination recently? AI. Used your face to unlock your phone? AI. Asked Siri or Alexa a question? AI. Autocorrect, spellcheck, Google search, customer service chatbots, texts about weird charges on your credit card, photographing a check to deposit, Amazon and Netflix recommendations, auto-masking in Photoshop ... it is all powered by AI.

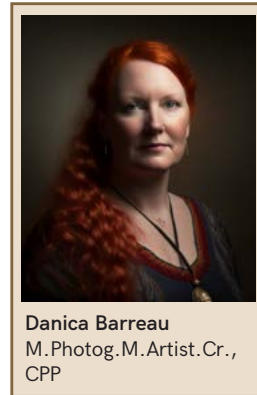
These applications of AI technology have not raised much concern or controversy, but professional photographers and artists worldwide are in an uproar and asking questions about an AI usage that applies to nearly everything we do: AI art.

Exactly what is AI art? Is it legal, copyrightable, ethical? Should you use it? Will AI art kill fields like professional photography, graphic design, and illustration? By exploring the history, mechanisms, and current legalities of AI art, perhaps we can reach some conclusions.

WHAT IS AI ART?

The definition of AI art is straightforward: artwork that was created with the help of artificial intelligence. AI artwork is not new, either. The first computer-assisted digital art was created in 1973 when a scientist and artist named Harold Cohen created the first ever AI painting using a program he named AARON.

The more current versions of computer-generated art rely less on a programmer directing tasks to create a piece of art, and more on machine deep learning technologies that allow the computer more autonomy in producing the images. In 2014, generative adversarial networks (GANs) were developed. GANs are the underpinning of generative AIs such as Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and DALL-E 2. These AIs create images from text descriptions or "prompts". Since they process the data in different manners, the overall style of the results differs between programs. While Midjourney can create striking



Danica Barreau
M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr.,
CPP

painterly environments and characters, Stable Diffusion generates beautiful landscapes that are, in some cases, indistinguishable from actual photography. Many of the programs can also take an existing image as input to produce a creative variation of it, like those AI-altered selfies that popped up on social media recently.

To create AI art, algorithms are not written to follow a set of rules, but rather to learn a specific visual aesthetic by analyzing existing images to create something new. The AI is trained on massive datasets of images tagged with descriptive words like "orange", "cinematic lighting", or "Rembrandt". The billion-dollar question is whether, when prompted to "paint an orange", the AI made the image from pieces of images from the original training data or did it really learn what "orange" means. After viewing 200 images of Rembrandt paintings, does it really understand the artist's favorite palette and tonal choices? To AI creators, the question seems ridiculous. The whole point of machine learning is to create

continued on page 6



AI-GENERATED ART (cont.)

continued from page 5

flexible neural networks that learn like humans. Calling them collage makers defeats the entire purpose of the technology. But that question is at the heart of the AI art theft and copyright debates.

IS AI ART THEFT?

To build LAION-5B, the training set used by several of the AI image generators, bots crawled billions of websites, including large repositories of artwork at Getty Images, Flickr, Pinterest, and more. This is the same sort of internet crawl used by Google daily to power its search engines. Those images were then tagged with descriptive text to create word associations. LAION collected a library of 5.85 billion images¹, including millions of copyrighted images gained without permission.

Several living photographers and artists have been dismayed to find out their names are being used to generate AI images. A website called [“Have I Been Trained”](#) was made in response. Users can search for keywords that might bring up their work or they can upload a photograph they have taken to see

if has been used. The group that created the website, Spawning, is also working on new tools for artist and photographer ownership of training data, allowing them to opt



out of the future datasets used for training of AI models (but not the current one). Artstation added a #noAI tag to their images meant to keep the data crawlers for AIs off their images.

While all of that brings up a whole host of ethical dilemmas, it is not illegal. There are several ways that people can use a copyrighted work without permission. The fair use doctrine promotes freedom of expression by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright-protected works in certain circumstances. Case law holds that this type of use – ingesting code or content without permission to create new tools – is acceptable. Such as, say, training an AI to make art.

A recent class-action lawsuit filed by Joseph Saveri Law Firm argues that AIs are creating nothing more than complex collages and compete in the marketplace with the original images. They specifically call out prompts that use “in the style of” to create artwork that looks remarkably like something the original artists could have created and are requesting compensation for the named artists. Is it infringement to copy an artist’s style? Probably not.

While fair use doctrine does consider economic impacts, it focuses on whether the infringing use denies the original creator the market for their specific works. It does not care if the new works diminish the overall market for all

continued on page 7



¹ Technically LAION collected the URLs for images, not the images themselves. An important distinction being used by LAION developers to cede any responsibility for copyright infringement to those using the data rather than themselves.

AI-GENERATED ART (cont.)

continued from page 6

artists. It also does not care if the new work creates unanticipated or previously unimagined value that is not shared with the original creators. So many of these activities will probably be interpreted to be completely legal and permissible under current laws and precedents – part of the trade-off of copyright and public exceptions to “promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts,” as described in Article I of the U.S. Constitution.

What is less clear is who, if anyone, will own the outputs of generative AI. This is an important question as, not to sound too dramatic, it could define the future of creativity.

WHAT ABOUT AI COPYRIGHT?

Photographers are especially sensitive to copyright issues as they must, on an almost daily basis, remind clients of what they may and may not do with their images. In February of 2023, the U.S. Copyright Office ruled for the first time against granting protection for artwork produced using an AI tool. The board found the AI-created image “lacks the human authorship necessary to support a copyright claim.” U.S. copyright law does not explicitly outline rules for non-humans, but case precedent has led courts to be consistent in the rulings that non-human creations (whether AI or monkeys) are ineligible for copyright protection.

Ahmed Elgammal, the founder of the Art and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, developed AICAN, an autonomous AI artist. He fed the algorithm over 80,000 images representing western art over 500 years, with no particular focus on style or genre. Then he requested

that AICAN create a piece of art, entirely on its own. The results were so good that AICAN pieces



are exhibited worldwide and sell for thousands at auction. People genuinely like the artwork, and most cannot distinguish it from human-generated pieces. Elgammal says that although he created the original

algorithm, he has no control over what AICAN creates so he gives credit to the art pieces entirely to AICAN. It has been noted, though, that at a recent exhibit of AICAN work, both Elgammal and AICAN were credited with the work – perhaps to provide a legal bulwark in case copyright law is challenged.

Harold Cohen, the creator of that first computer-assisted art in 1973, has had his work exhibited in major museums around the world, such as the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Tate Gallery. A piece entitled “Secret” was sold at Christie’s Auction House for \$11,382 in 2010 and, if you want to own a piece of history, there is a 22x30 drawing by Cohen’s AI for sale at Aleator Press today for \$8,500. All the artwork is clearly attributed to Harold Cohen because he was both the artist and programmer, providing his AI with detailed rules and forms (objects, plants, and people) that allowed the program to create art. Cohen, therefore, owns the copyright on all the work.

Consider this analogy. Imagine that you are an author and you are working with an illustrator to develop the cover artwork for your new novel. You provide descriptions and perhaps some sketches of the cover. You go through various iterations and finally decide on the final layout, after which you are provided with the finished artwork. You may have provided all the input, but it is the illustrator who holds the copyright on it since they generated it. It is the same thing with the AI generator – it may be your unique concept and vision, but since you did not generate it yourself, you cannot own the copyright. Since an AI is not legally a person, then AI-generated artwork is not copyrighted. Although you could personally transform the

continued on page 8

AI-GENERATED ART (cont.)

continued from page 7

artwork and then own the copyright under the Fair Act Index.

All AIs are not created equal. There is “weak” AI, where the algorithm is designed to perform a specific task and cannot make any autonomous decisions. And there is “strong” AI, where the programmer does not have direct control over the final output. Art created by a weak AI could conceivably be granted copyright because it was merely a tool and remained under the direct control of the human making the creative choices. Strong AI, on the other hand, where the programmer does not have direct control of the creative process, has less of a chance at copyright protection. The algorithm-generated images are purely arbitrary and mostly unpredictable.

In the process of prompting AIs for images, there is creative input from the human, refining the output and training the AI in the process to get to the desired result. A human has some control of the creative input and, although the results are not always predictable, they can be guided in a favorable direction. AI prompters can spend days developing the images to get to the point where they match what they saw in their mind’s eye, refining prompts and using previously-generated images as weighted bases, called “seeds”, for new ones. There are open job listings today for “prompt engineers” because there is a science and art to understanding how to properly craft a text prompt to generate a specific image. This lands these new generative AIs in a grey area

between “weak” and “strong” AIs. This is important in terms of copyright.

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the world currently has two legal options:



The first, as demonstrated by the U.S. Copyright Office’s decisions, is to deny copyright to all non-human-generated content. Apart from the U.S., authorities in Australia and the European Union have settled similar cases by rejecting copyright applications on the grounds of works not being entirely made by human hands.

The second is to credit the creator for any work generated by any AI programs. This option is evident in the United Kingdom, as stated in Section 9(3) of the Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988,

which not only gives credit to the human creator but also grants the work copyright protection. Other countries that have taken this approach include India, Ireland, and New Zealand. It will be interesting to watch these countries to see what sort of impact these decisions have on artist communities and their economic markets.

IS AI ART REALLY ART?

Ahmed Elgammal, AICAN’s creator, said: “I often compare AI art to photography. When photography was first invented in the early 19th century, it wasn’t considered art – after all, a machine was doing much of the work. The tastemakers resisted, but eventually relented: A century later, photography became an established fine art genre. Today, photographs are exhibited in museums and auctioned off at astronomical prices. I have no doubt that art produced by artificial intelligence will go down the same path.”

The confusion over who made the artwork, the machine or its user, complicates everything and fuels arguments against recognizing AI-generated artwork as a marketable artistic product. While the industry bickers about the definition of art, AI users are happily creating works and selling them, sometimes for sums they would never get with traditional artwork. Because no matter how it is created, it does not diminish the aesthetic merit of the AI-generated piece.

If a human is directing the results and shaping them to fit their vision and

continued on page 9

AI-GENERATED ART (cont.)

continued from page 8

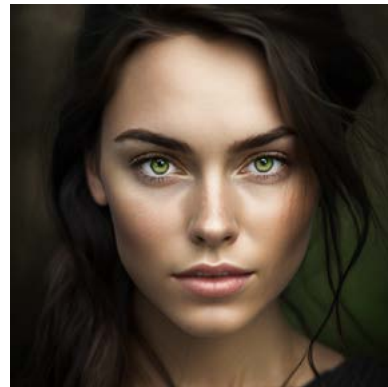
to create an emotional response of their choosing, I believe it is art. Now, take the human out of the equation and leave the art generation purely up to the machine, as with AICAN, and you will have a harder time convincing me. While the AI can provide imagery that inspires, horrifies, or intrigues, it is not creating art out of its own complex subconsciousness. It resonates because it is expressing something it copied from its data set of human-created images, but it is not actually creating anything out of its own collection of emotions or experiences.

WHAT ABOUT AI PHOTOGRAPHY?

There is no such thing as AI Photography. The definition of photography is: "... the art, application, and practice of creating durable images by recording light, either electronically by means of an image sensor, or chemically by means of a light-sensitive material such as photographic film." By its very definition, an AI version cannot exist.

A painting or illustration does not need to pretend to be a photograph to have value. If you must produce an AI illustration to depict something you were not able to photograph, then you create art. But you don't pass it off as photography. There is something viscerally disturbing about representing a moment, person, or place in time with a computer-generated image and calling it photography. A photograph has the trust of the viewer. It captured

a moment exactly as it was and while you can enhance it with dodging and burning, split toning, and masking, that original capture, film or RAW, still exists. There is a "proof of life".



Photography is never going to be replaced by GAN-generated imagery because, at its heart, it captures something that actually exists. There is a tangible human-based connection that is missing when created by AI.

Most of the users creating AI photography are not actually photographers. At the time of the writing of this article, there were close to 115,000 posts on Instagram tagged with #aiphotography, ranging the gamut from nostalgia to future fashion concepts to images of real people in situations that never existed. That last category is going to be a problem for many. While generators of AI photography say they are not infringing on any copyrights when they create people who don't actually exist and don't

use the style of specific individuals or movies, the ones altering real people may find themselves in an unenviable legal position.

Portrait photography centers around the entire experience of a session and an end-to-end solution, not just the final image. While there may be some who will use AI to create self-portraits, these are the same people who will pay a photographer \$25 for 100 digital files. AI "photography" will probably decimate the market for low-end clients.

While product photography seems endangered, the photographers I have questioned say that the stringent demands most of their clients have in terms of size and angle and lighting of their products make any true threat to their livelihood a distant concern.

Photojournalism will need to guard itself against false images – that is a serious risk and could affect world politics and national security. The potential for high-quality disinformation campaigns with falsified actors was already high – generative AI makes it a certainty. The identification of AI-generated images should be a high priority to any forward-thinking person.

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY AI ART?

When AI-generated images started gaining mainstream popularity in 2022, they were fairly easy to

continued on page 12



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Meets West

ASP JAPAN ADVENTURE | MAY 2023



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continued from page 9

identify. The algorithms were still being updated/learning and giraffes would have six legs, eyes would have pupils looking in opposite directions, and, the bane of artists everywhere, hands, seemed to stump the AI as well. There was a certain “look” to AI generated images that made them identifiable. But there is so much training data being provided to the GANs from millions of users playing around in programs such as MidJourney and Dall-E 2 that the AIs are learning, and fast. The improvement in renderings in just a few months is absolutely astounding.

Photographer Jos Avery found fame recently with striking black and white portraits posted on his Instagram account. It turns out they were created in MidJourney and “cleaned up” in Photoshop even though he originally claimed he shot them with his Nikon.

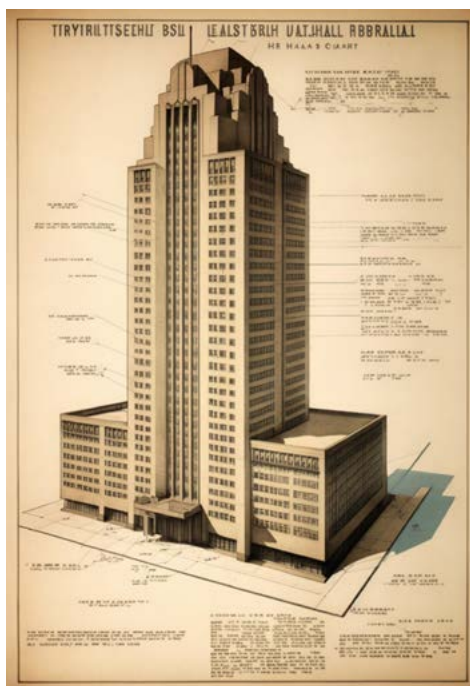
In a twist, digital Illustrator Ben Moran found himself banned from Reddit and his artwork removed because it was deemed to be AI-generated. When he offered to share the layered PSD file showing his work, he was told by one user to “find a different style” because it looked too much like AI.

Tidio ran an experiment to see if over 20,000 Internet users could recognize photos, artwork, music, and texts created by AI. In some survey groups, as many as 87% of respondents mistook an AI-generated image for a real photograph of a person. They did note that younger users and users familiar with neural networks tended to do better.

French photography magazine *Réponses Photo* recently published an issue with an AI photograph on the cover. The article inside was about the difficulty in identifying AI-

generated images and how easy it is for people to be fooled. We urgently need a way to tell the difference.

Several companies are creating “GAN detectors” to try to identify GAN-



generated images. Unfortunately, most are not particularly accurate. Microsoft recently released deep-fake detecting software called “Microsoft Video Authenticator” but only released it to news and political organizations. Microsoft has proposed a system where content creators can tag videos with a unique “signature” and if there are any edits to the video, it will generate a

different signature, thus identifying a deep fake. That is great for videos but what about photography?

To be cheeky, I posed the question to ChatGPT, a text-based AI:

WHAT WOULD BE A GOOD WAY TO IDENTIFY GAN-GENERATED IMAGES?

... here are some methods that can be used to identify GAN-generated images:

1. Expert analysis: Experts with domain knowledge or visual expertise can often identify GAN-generated images by examining the image’s content, color, texture, and other factors.
2. Metadata analysis: GAN-generated images may have different metadata than real images, such as inconsistent or missing timestamps, camera models, or location data.
3. Statistical analysis: GAN-generated images may have different statistical properties than real images, such as differences in pixel distribution or correlations between pixel values.
4. Deep learning: Deep learning models can be trained to identify GAN-generated images by learning the statistical differences between real and generated images. For example, a classifier can be trained on a dataset of real images and then tested on a dataset of mixed real and GAN-generated images. If the classifier can accurately distinguish between the two types of images, then it is likely that the image is GAN-generated.

continued on page 13

continued from page 12

- Reverse image search: Reverse image search engines can sometimes identify GAN-generated images by comparing them to other images on the Internet. If the search engine cannot find any matches, it is possible that the image is GAN-generated.

The answer seems to be “good luck”. For things such as image competitions, a combination of expert and metadata analysis may be the solution. Perhaps uploading a RAW file of the original shot that includes metadata. But for the moment, we are going to have to rely on our own critical eye and keep abreast of new developments in GAN technology. And while there are currently some generalizations that can be used to identify AI-generated portraits, give it a few years and those will no longer apply.

IN CONCLUSION

At this point, there is no going back. The time to act was a decade ago, before the developers of generative AI systems started crawling the Internet to train the algorithms.

The idea that there was a theft committed and that artists must have compensation does not work when you think it through. Individual artworks don’t have any value once they are broken down into an algorithm. At best, a collective value could be assigned and, once divided between the 5.85 billion works integrated into LAION, would be miniscule. And that is only if copyright law is shown to be violated in the first place.

AI generated artwork should not be copyrightable. It does not mean that the work is not valuable or could not be sold. But it does mean that everything AI makes would immediately be public domain and be available to all the other makers



to use as part of their own creative process. If it sounds unfair, remember that it is exactly what the AI creators did when they scraped the Internet to train their algorithms.

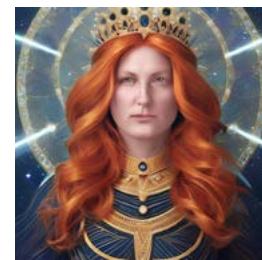
Another argument to not allow copyright protection is the need to prevent the suffocation of innovation. Every new computer copyright would immediately be followed by automated lawsuits to defend them. Would there be any room left for creation, progress, or cultural development? AIs might offer important opportunities in terms of art, but making them a legal monopoly is not the answer.

AI technology is evolving at fantastic rates, and the creative industries will need to evolve with it. The copyright issue for new works must be addressed, and the identification of AI-generated artwork should be everyone’s top priority, especially photographers. It is important for the creators of AI-generated art to be transparent about the process they used to create the artwork

and to credit any sources that were used in the creation of the finished product. And it is incumbent on us, as photographers, to stay abreast of the technology so that we can identify false images and help find solutions.

Much of the backlash from traditional artists comes from seeing results generated in minutes that would have taken them years of learning and hours of labor to achieve. Not only is their livelihood threatened, but it was their work or those of their teachers and predecessors that was mined to achieve these images, and they have not been compensated. And while I can well understand their anger and frustration, it

is just not possible to put the genie back into the bottle. We will all have to learn to adapt and find ways to make the technology work for us. That is not to say we should not question or voice concerns – that is the only way we are going to find solutions to these new AI issues.

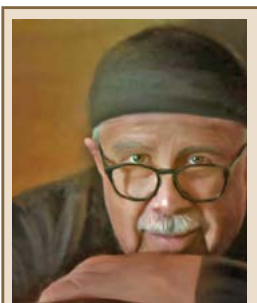


While I don’t foresee the extinction of photography, those in a race to the bottom will not be able to compete with AI. Photographers will need to continue to focus on creating a unique experience for their clients and explaining the value of their art. We need to figure out how to protect and preserve human art in a way that acknowledges it as a public good. Otherwise, art will have to compete economically with tireless machines capable of endlessly churning out soulless imitations. 🌀

AN OPEN LETTER TO YOU ... THE HUMANIST

By Arthur Levi Rainville, M.Photog.Cr., API, Emotive Visualist

In this fast paced, technology driven, stressful world, you can, you know, get back to your "much". Quite simply, muchness is your magic; your personal connection to those folks you were put on this planet to cross paths with – maybe make a portrait of or enrich a spirit. It's your Humanism, and it's waiting there to serve you in crafting your art, growing your business, living your life large. How does humanism pertain to photography and art? Well, British philosopher A.C. Grayling aptly put it this way: "Humanism is the philosophy that you should be a good guest at the dinner table of life." Cheers! I'll



Arthur Levi Rainville
M.Photog.Cr., API

toast to that! There are lots of words connected with humanism, like compassion, empathy, and altruism, but quite simply the only word we need is love; the "love one another as you would love thyself" thought.

The bottom line is, love is the most salient form of connection on a path to the still point. What is the "still point", you ask? It's something T.S. Eliot, Nobel Prize winner, penned in 1936 in a poem where

he referred to being at the still point of the turning world.

"Except for the point, the still point, there would be no dance, and there is only the dance."

The beauty of your dance, your magic, often gets shoved aside when you get on the overload road, bogged down by the day-to-day to do's. Sidetracked yet again ... and now you're overwhelmed. There's something called the Pareto principle, or the 80/20 Rule, which suggests that in business as in life, the goal is to identify inputs that are

"You're not the same as you were before," he said. You were much more ... muchier ... you've lost muchness."

– Lewis Carroll,
"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

continued on page 15



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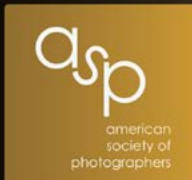
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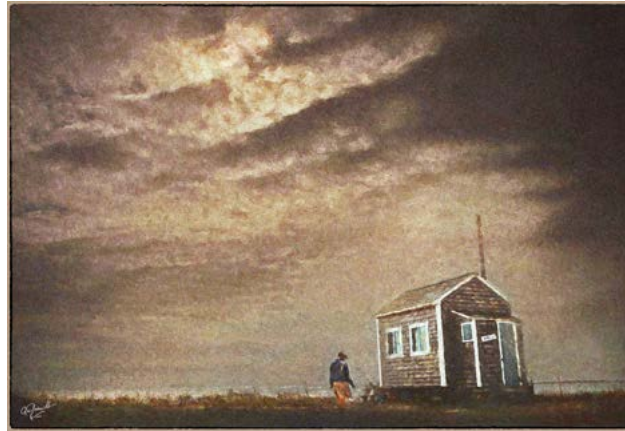
continued from page 14

potentially the most important and make them the priority. I suggest getting back to your much is prime directive #1.

The muchness is what matters. The magic. The dance. Your humanism skills. All of that, however, cannot be gleaned at a convention, in a chatroom, or on YouTube. Let me digress...

AI, Artificial Intelligence, will own our world ... period. Yes, a dire prediction, but history has a way of challenging us. In this day, AI promises to be our pal, make our workflow more efficient, speedier. And it begs with an alarming rate to 'help' us make artificial magic – razzle dazzle of a digital age ... who wouldn't want all that? But I, along

with many a prodigious sage, predict a tipping point when AI will win, or at least seem like it has won. It will have grown the capabilities to 'create' on its own. Make its own marketable magic that many of today's savvy clients will relish.



So, what's left? What doesn't that superhuman AI Tin Man possess?

YOU. A box of nuts 'n bolts will never take your place, be the empath that only you can be. Bring your humanity to your work, translate that magic to your clients. Sit in the still in front of them, connect and make a heartfelt portrait. The right ones will get it, want it, and want you.

Your muchness hides within you in your innocence from a simpler time, before you were colored by life. To harness the power of You, you must dig deep and fall back to your Book of WHY. WHY did you choose this path in the first place? What glad tidings stirred within your heart from sharing your artistic gifts, creating the work of your life? What matters most to you?

continued on page 16





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AN OPEN LETTER TO YOU ... THE HUMANIST (cont.)

continued from page 15

My WHY has always revolved around making meaningful portraits. Feelings are what ground me, remind me to bring my humanism to the dance. "The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance," dear old Aristotle wrote more than 2,000 years ago. I didn't understand the quote until it eventually hit me over the head. I've learned to be cognizant of pivotal moments, those never-see-it-coming experiences that, if you're wise enough to catch them, you know they were sent to change you.

I have been blessed to have made my living as a professional photographer for more than half a century now. I created my first client portrait in

1962, and gave my first talk about Art and Heart to other photographers 57 years ago. Over the years, I've crafted what I call a host of pretty



pretty, subject-satisfying, maps of faces. But in one pivotal moment my world became so much more. It changed in an OMG heartbeat the day – we'll call her Amalie – walked into my studio. "I was told you could make a picture of how I feel," she uttered. I remember that moment like it was yesterday. Shocked with the frankness, I accepted the

challenge: to photograph how she felt, not looked, and in the process, I took on a new mantle: a Portraitist. Since then I've often been asked the difference between a photographer and a portraitist. I simply reply, "A photographer records. A portraitist reveals." In that moment, I understood that Amalie's story was all that mattered to her, and now to me.

We sat and she talked. We sat some more and both of us talked. The script of her self-perceived image revealed itself through her emotions: turning away forever, penetrating aloneness, determination for self-life anew.

And we went to the sea. And I let

continued on page 17



New Member
SPOTLIGHT

Keiichiro Matsuo

What excites you most about ASP?
The international exchanges and friendships.

Favorite accolades:
*Doran Wilson - Degree guidance
ASP Superstar pin recipient
Grand Imaging Award Finalist*

What is your greatest inspiration?
*My concept is 'Image with LOVE'.
I work with the feeling that I am
creating a work with my client
rather than creating it myself.*

Studio name:
Keiichiro Matsuo Photography

How many years have you worked as a professional photographer?
16 years

What type of photography do you specialize in?
Wedding and Portrait



IG: @keiichiromatsuophotography

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AN OPEN LETTER TO YOU ... THE HUMANIST (cont.)

continued from page 16

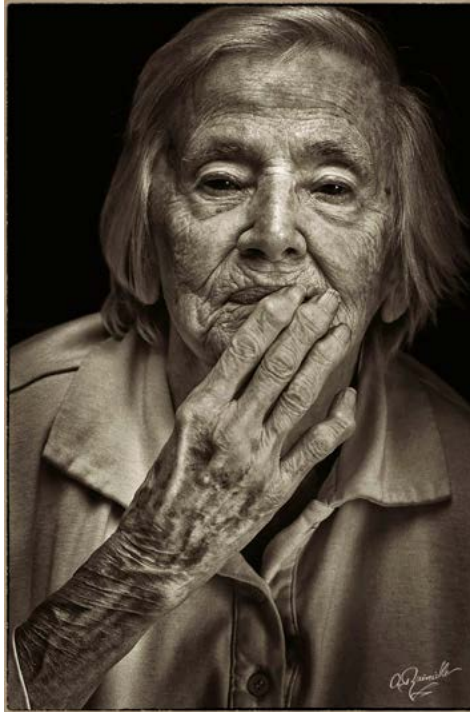
her be. And we made one virtuous portrait of her countenance.

Amen

Truly feeling one with the family of man has grounded me in my work over the years. One of my favorite Humanist moments came as I walked the beach by my home near Cape Cod. It was late, well past the setting sun, as I rounded the bend by a favorite oceanside outcropping. I had to stop, give a last gasp, inhale the sea air, and feel the pulse of life with the ebb and flow of each rolling wave. I almost missed the stranger, grounded to his discrete hiding place, far away from worldly distractions. It seemed like we both were playing the part of the weary traveler, seeking our own individual expressions of peace and harmony. I gingerly approached and sat on the rock next to him. We sat in silence for a couple of minutes before he acknowledged me. The two of us connected in the stillness of the waning light. I asked, "Are you ok?" He responded, "Are any of us really?" I nodded, patted him on his shoulder, and sat in silence again. In a moment of sublime calm, we breathed a collective sigh. Two strangers; yet not estranged. We shared a bond of just being. I returned to my journey up the beach, looking back over my shoulder, thinking about how our paths crossed. Surely this meeting was connected to our collective humanity.

Henry David Thoreau, the American naturalist, poet, and philosopher, once quipped; "The question is not what you look at but what you see." For me, it's not what I see but what I feel. The more I can relate to another person or the environment around me, the more I can translate feelings stirred. "To photograph is to confer importance" proclaimed

Susan Sontag, an insightful writer and political activist. I get it, Susan ... but how? Clairsentience: the intuitive act – or ability – of sensing, feeling emotions, sensations, and energy of those around you. That vibration in the air is essential for a portraitist.



I fondly remember Thelma, who, when I met her, handed me a crumpled piece of paper with just her name on it. I, of course, already knew it, because I had done my research on her before we met. Thelma was now deaf and blind. But her 98 years had not robbed her of spirit. She could still feel deeply from the inside out. Thelma had been an Army Nurse in World War II. When she enlisted, the 18-year-old told the recruiters she was 21. Like many of her time, Thelma saw some really bad stuff, but she believed her greatest service was offering comfort just by holding a trembling hand. Now, many years later, I sat across from this brave woman, camera over my shoulder, remote in my pocket. We simply sat in the same air. We sat, and we sat, and we just sat together. Searching

for a harmonic resonance, I reached out, took her hand, and rubbed her frailty. I got on her breathing cycle and held on for dear life. I not only saw her, I felt her. And then she offered the smallest of smiles. Click. And then she reached up and shared her melancholy. Click. And then I kissed her hand. Her captured likeness became another cherished memory. Another chapter in my private book of Why.

Amen

In every eye that produces a tear – because of a picture you have created – someone is silently saying thank you for your finger on the shutter button of my life. This is Why you and I were put on the face of this sweet earth, to have and to hold dear those chosen few who cross paths with the lens of our cameras. This is our purpose, our genuine muchness.

So, yes, I am proudly a Humanist. It's not complex gobbledygook at all. We – photographers and artists – simply, genuinely care, our empathy on display in our imagery. It's simple: love and the rest of the answers you seek will find you. I always share the story of a reporter who asked Mother Theresa, as they were surrounded by hundreds of sick and starving people, this question: "Mother, there are so many. How can you possibly think you will be successful?" Her muchness reply was: "I am not here to be successful, I am here to be faithful."

When all is said and done, it's quite transparent really: make the picture you were born to create. The picture you were put on this planet to produce for the person who waited patiently for you to arrive. Your muchness dance, in the still point of your life. ☺

Affectionately,
Arthur

HEART & SOUL

JOHN STORK, M.PHOTOGR., CPP



HEART & SOUL PROJECT



John Stork
M.Photog.Cr., CPP

We know John Stork as a professional photographer and retouch artist based in Cleveland, Ohio. His photographic interests are in portraiture, documentary, landscape, travel, medical, and scientific subjects. But John is also a physician who has practiced medicine since 1978. He works as a Pediatric Anesthesiologist at UH Rainbow Babies and Children's

Hospital in Cleveland, and is part of a team that travels around the world to operate on children whose families cannot afford medical care. John does volunteer work in Guatemala, Egypt, Kenya, Haiti, and St. Lucia, and he continues to donate his time to the World Pediatric Project, even at the age of 73. He has also served the Rotary Club and Healing the Children of Ohio and Michigan. 🌿



If you'd like to nominate an ASP member for a Heart & Soul spotlight, please contact Kristy Steeves at kristysteevesphoto@me.com

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

BILL VAHRENKAMP, CR.PHOTOG., CPP

Member Spotlight

Did you attend the ASP Gala and Late Night Lounge during Imaging USA 2023? Then you most likely enjoyed the photo booth and all the fun photos you are enjoying from those amazing events!

The photo booth for both evenings was provided by and staffed by Bill Vahrenkamp, and we want to share a little bit about Bill and the on-site side of his photography business.

Bill has been photographing weddings since 1982, when he was a senior in high school. In addition to portraits and weddings, Bill is printing photos on-site including photobooths, festivals, and events such as celebrity meet and greets, Santa photos, and the ASP awards banquet.



Bill Vahrenkamp
Cr. Photog, CPP

You have seen Bill printing the photos at the ASP Gala for nine years, and he added a photo booth two years ago. He earned his PPA Photographic Craftsman degree teaching photographers how to photograph events and print on-site, so doing it for his fellow photographers, he says, has been an honor.

Bill is an expert on chroma key background replacement, he sells the printers and software, and he teaches people how to process on-site photography successfully, whether in-studio or at events.

When not working as a photographer, Bill is cooking ... usually something with steaks or Texas BBQ! 🍴



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