

Photography Project Training, Session 2

How do you generate ideas for a photography project?

This is the creative bit where you brainstorm ideas for what you're going to photograph, and I'm going to talk through how you can create ideas for what you're going to do in your project.

And we're going to talk about some really interesting ways in terms of working out how you're going to take those photos to make your project look really interesting and be something that people are interested in looking at and take it a level above being a set of photos at one subject.

But why is this important?

Everyone has a great idea for a project in them, but what happens when you get this next bit right? When you come up with a really good idea, and when you work out a way shooting it in and really interesting, original and inspiring way you basically become a much better photographer because instead of wandering around the streets or taking photos without purpose you feel really, really focused.

And heading out every day or every week to take photos, you're going to visualise your photos more clearly and you start to know what you're looking for. You get a real direction and a drive behind what you do. You see the subject evolving in front of your camera. And then you also push yourself creatively because you start to see things in a different way. The little nuggets of ideas that you have, they grow and come to fruition. And you push yourself as far as you can go with a certain idea. And that's a really, really good way to be with photography. Instead of becoming a master of everything you work on specific projects and it really, really helps you develop your creative eye and develop your ability to see things and tell stories and express subjects and make people know what your vision is or what you've seen. And also in terms of the technique that you use you're going to push yourself in terms of creating photos in particular ways that tell the story in a more dynamic and a more visually appealing way that sits together. That's going to push you creatively and technically, so get out there and learn new skills. At the end of it you will have gone on long journey and you will really have a huge amount of satisfaction around that.

So what I wanted to talk about first is the idea of using a mind map, which we've all probably used in at work at some point. Check out the example included on a project regarding childhood. It doesn't have to be childhood, it could be architecture, London, birds, trouble, Vietnam, whatever it is you're thinking of. But, for any ideas of projects that you have, just put that idea down in the middle of a big blank piece of paper, and then just see where it takes you. So here's, you know, everybody knows what a mind map is, but let's see how we go with this mind map that we do.

How you express that idea with photography can then become a really interesting project. You're not just taking photographs, you're really taking the idea to the end of where it can be and really honing down on some really good ideas.

For every idea that you have for a potential subject, theme, idea or a feeling or whatever it is you're thinking of expressing with your photography, just write that you can do this multiple times on 10 different sheets of paper, just write that down in the middle of the paper and just write related words that come to your mind and then take different angles and avenues and explore those in your mind, or by talking to people or just writing it down and just seeing where the different avenues go and see where that takes you in terms of your ideas for your projects.

Using a mind map is super simple, but it's just a good way to dump some ideas on paper and to push ideas around. You take yourself from a nucleus of an idea into something that's got specific areas, which you feel that you can go into.

Take a look at <https://londonphotoshow.org/annika-bloch-exhibitor-oct-2020/> for a good example of this approach.

Once you've developed your idea for your subject the next step is to work out how you're going to photograph it.

There are always multiple ways to photograph a project. A good next step is to think about your viewpoint.

In the childhood example your view point could be an observer of childhood dreams, and convey that with photography.

Or, if you have it been traveling and you've got travel photos you could simply be displaying images that convey your view as a tourist, showing what you saw as an outside observer.

You could have much more intimate levels of access to a subject and you could use that and that gives a few different view, as someone very close to a subject.

You can also think of your view as a story teller or your view can be more abstract such as the view of a security camera, animal or someone's imagination. So there are loads of different ways that you can put your own view onto photos. I've seen landscape's originate from the inside of cars.

Think of how are you going to act as the viewer in your project? How is your view going to be expressed in your project. You can pretend to have a certain view, you can manipulate it or you have convey your simple and honest perspective. All of these will that change the way the project looks and really takes it on specific and interesting direction.

As well as your view, you need to consider the techniques you will use to take the photos.

For example, you could photograph buildings in quite a straight and truthful kind of way, or you can take views which are abstract and show different elements. You could use long exposures, or a drone to capture aerial views.

For portraits you could use a studio, location or other techniques to make the photos have a certain look.

Or you could use a fixed lens, film or many other techniques. But whichever you choose, make sure there is a reason for it and a consistency to it.