

Raw

Guide to Unique Photography #44

Let's cut this to the quick. Only in a world fully saturated in half-truthed fabrications, glossy ideals and romanticized or villainized unknowns could we be drawn so hypnotically into the appeal of 'the raw'. Maybe we've spent so much time in this postmodern house of mirrors that we got fooled by how realistic the reflection looks, and got all turned around. We started confusing the reflection with reality, and now, anytime we get outside to have a look at the world in broad daylight ... we just say with awe how movie-like it is.

What is an uncut view into reality these days? Is it an unapologetic look at the ugly side of life? Is it unflinching violence, unmerciful sexualisation? Is it a confrontation of humanity's scars? A reveal of its fragility? Can it be gentle or does it need grit? Is it hardened by experience, or can it be naïve? Can an artist be a practiced expert at achieving rawness, or does that confound its nature as something unrefined, imperfect?

Maybe the one thing we can agree upon is that the more you talk about it, the more you try to deconstruct and explain it, the more the whole thing falls apart. The nature of raw is unmediated, unspoken. And yet, it's also one of those words that we all thought we could agree on until, at some point, we realized we were talking about different things. Like beauty. Like honesty. Like love.

As more and more photo projects are crowned 'raw' – seemingly one of the highest compliments of today – we decided to open our own investigation into the murky depths of art that aims to express a raw reality while trying to hack off the cuffs that hold it confined to that contaminated word 'art'. After all, artifice contradicts rawness ... or does it?

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