

Creating and Manifesting Art Through One's Persona



Pierre Poulain



When one looks at a picture, the mind recognises the objects and people in it. But the true meaning of a picture is beyond the reality of what one sees. The true meaning of a photograph is the sentiment behind it.

Many photographers support their images with lengthy captions in a bid to describe this invisible sentiment. Yet, a photograph can never be about its description because the truth goes beyond it.

A good artist is one that uses his work to make the invisible visible. So can you achieve one photograph where you don't have to explain, where it is so simple

Today, I think that most people involved in the practice of any art, including photography, consider art to be a personal production—an expression of the self. But art should not just be that. It should not come from the artist's personality but from the artist himself. The essential question to ask at this point is, what is personality? How is it different from the 'self'?

In simple words, personality can be explained as the characteristics of an individual that influence his or her thinking and behaviour. In practicality, it is this which eventually leads to the creation of the art. The word personality is derived from the Latin word *persona* which means mask. And a mask, in theatrical terms, can do two things. One, it can hide the actor. Second, the mask can be used as a tool to reveal oneself to the world. So then, is the mask really the 'self'? Or is the self using the mask as a useful tool? Thus, who am I exactly? Am I the actor behind the mask? Or am I the mask itself?

In the famous French novel, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a pilot is stranded in the desert who meets a young prince fallen to Earth from a tiny asteroid. The central theme of this story is quite philosophical in nature. However, the entire essence of this story comes through a sentence said by a fox (a character within the story) to the little prince—“One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye.”

and you do not need the mercy of words to tell your story? If not, then your photograph is not simple enough. A thought is beautiful when it is expressed in a simple manner, and when it is perceived and understood.

In this process of making a photograph, the artist must stay faithful to the goal. Art should bring harmony and unity. It cannot be momentary. It has to be universal. It therefore, cannot lack depth. This can be said for any medium, be it painting, photography, dance, music, theatre and other forms of self expression.

Academics can help one learn to control technique. Yet, this alone is not enough. One cannot create simplicity, beauty and unity if it is not in them. Too many people are concerned with the idea of just knowing. That is not the same as experiencing something. One must live what they learn, and consecutively, if you are not living it, you cannot produce it. Thus, one must 'become' to create. Often, this is difficult not only for beginners, but also for advanced exponents.

An artist cannot always produce work that is a hundred percent his or her expression of self. For that matter, it is also impossible to create something that is perfectly universal. There will always be some imbalance in trying to be perfect. And as this struggle continues within the artist, the art and the manifestation of it, through the mask as a channel, will reach closer and closer to the invisible truth. ■

For Pierre Poulain, photography is more of a philosophical and spiritual journey. Based in Israel, Pierre's passion for street photography is supported by his strong views in the various philosophies of life. In 1986 he founded New Acropolis School of Philosophy in Israel and later on in many other countries.