

**IF I WAS STARTING OUT TODAY  
HERE'S WHAT I WOULD DO...**



[ CARLA · *coulson* ]

Dear Friend,

Oh how life has changed in such a short number of years. When I started out in photography I was still shooting film and sending 'trannies' to magazines on the other side of the world.

Everything, and I mean everything has changed!

I was asked the question the other day if I was starting out today what would I do differently? Sheesh, that got me thinking and asking questions and looking closely at the way I did things and I do things now.

The start is so wonderful, it is like the first flush of love when you would do anything for that love. Your energy and enthusiasm is ready to smash all glass ceilings and if you can harness and direct that power in the right direction you could set cities alight!

So if you are starting out, instead of poking around in the dark here's what I would do today.

### **LOOK AT DIFFERENT 'MODELS' OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

I would look at the different ways one can become a photographer whilst studying your craft. There are so many marvellous 'models' and the internet has changed and opened everything in 10 years. There are wonderful success stories like Alex Stoddard (fine art), Lara Jade (fashion) , Katie Quinn Davies (food +styling), This Wild Idea (Instagram) who have taken the new route and created a career of the modern age through social media backed up by marvellous, creative, true to their style photography. They created amazing work and put it out there and let the world get excited and that created a buzz around it.

**Why?** Before you jump into anything, the smart thing would be to inform yourself about it. I didn't, I just dived off a high cliff and almost hit the rocks below. This wasn't a fun experience and then I had to paddle up a river that felt like going up Niagara falls the wrong way. I learnt everything by trial and error and on the other side of the world (Italy) and wasted money and years. Somewhere in the middle I lost sight of what I wanted



to do because I was working it all out as I went along. If you can track yourself down a real live working photographer who is doing what you would like to do and ask them the reality of it.

## **GIVE MY CREATIVITY SPACE**

Give myself more time to be creative before putting pressure on myself to start making money from photography! Yes folks you may consider me one of the lucky ones who got published straight out of photography school with 13 pages in Marie Claire. I was in a desperate hurry to make some money and photography seemed to be the only outlet available to me in Italy where I didn't have a permit to work. If I was starting out now and I could make money doing something else, I would allow my relationship with photography to develop with time, love and experience.

**Why?** I remember the sickening feeling of having my first job, of the sleepless nights and the investment of film to 'overshoot' to make sure I had what the client needed. Even though we can all pick up a camera today and you don't have to know all the technicalities that you needed to know then, I think many people like me tend to jump in at the deep end (for whatever reasons) when they are still 'half baked'. Yes, the creative and technical pudding is still soft in the centre and photography like all crafts takes time to develop your aesthetic, your techniques, your voice, your language, your sensitivity to colour and your inner belief in what you are doing.

When we ask for money for our photography when are still developing our aesthetic we are too eager to please the person paying the bills and straight out of the blocks we start to compromise our artistic vision before we have let that little baby flower. You haven't even had the luxury to understand what your photography purpose is in life and BOOM you start losing it straight away.

Therefore, I would suggest take your time, discover, be curious, be like a beautiful dog and go sniff out some bushes and see what comes of it. Shoot the breeze with your photography, have a love affair, look whimsically into each others eyes before you move in together and start washing each others undies!!! I

## **INSTAGRAM + SOCIAL MEDIA**



When I started in photography social media meant going to have a chat with one of your friends who knew someone or had heard about a job that you might be interested in. It also meant picking up the phone to your favourite magazine or client and asking if you could come over and show them your pics. It meant going to the parties where all the 'right' people were going if you were in the fashion industry. It meant shaking your booty so god damn hard that you actually started to meet the world. If I was starting out today I would go build the biggest most beautiful INSTAGRAM account with every relevant hashtag whilst studying my craft, waiting tables, transitioning from a job or hanging out with my boyfriend Mr. Photography. Long before I was actually ready to start.

**Why?** Because the whole world is looking and connecting with each other on social media platforms such as Instagram whilst I was in Sydney a friend who works in magazines said that they no longer do Picture Editors enter a keyword into Google when they need an image they put it straight into Instagram! There is a double whammy effect of having a wonderful social media profile, you may just be discovered and even if you don't know where it is going to take you at the beginning it gives your work visibility, you choice and an eventual much needed audience no matter what kind of photographer you are. The first question you will be asked when you front up to a publisher is how many people do you have on social media? A photographer I know who had photographed oodles of books for International chefs decided to pitch a book of his own, first question, how many people do you have on social media? Do you have a blog? When the answer came back as 'No', the publisher didn't offer him a book deal.

Another photographer I know created an amazing blog with her work, created an International buzz which in turn created a large social network on the net and a publisher found her work on Google and offered her a book deal.

## **PORTFOLIO**



Sheesh, the portfolio is right down at number four. That isn't because it is the least important it is because it is the most important! Yes folks developing your craft, putting love, thought and experience into your portfolio will take you somewhere far quicker than starting out too early with a 'half-baked' portfolio.

Why? Someone who has built up an Instagram account or vibing social media and then creates a 'rock-star' portfolio and launches it to his/her community will have the beginnings of an instant made business, just add Vodka and shake!

If you do it the other way around, you have an incredible portfolio or body of work you can go see clients in the traditional way, get in touch with websites etc or launch it to 'deaf ears' on your non-existent social media network. Yes, your beautiful work will be seen by no-one till you start playing catch-ups.

## **PRACTICE**

I would have practiced more before handing over my precious craft for money (sheesh did I say that).

Why? Photography is like mastering a violin, riding a perfect wave or writing a beautiful book. Whatever you want to master in life you need to put the hours in. Malcolm Gladwell in Outliers says "to truly master something you need to put in 10,000 hours" and I am telling you from experience and someone that has put in 10,000 hours confidence, experience and depth comes in the doing. You mightn't need to do your 10,000 hours before starting but make sure you have done way more than 100 hours or it will show.

## **WEBSITE**

When I was ready to start I would go build me one of these beautiful shiny new websites (well kind of like what I have) but it doesn't need to be that tricky. It should be easy to navigate, show off your beautiful portfolio, tell us who you are and what inspires you and what you are selling!! Yes, don't put up a bunch of gorgeous pictures without telling us if you are a fine artist and where you are showing, if you are doing children's photography or wanting to do travel, tell us please what you are selling.

Yes, dear photographer if you want to eat and work as a photographer



it means you are selling something and hopefully that something is your work. Please make it clear and simple.

The people starting out today have so many wonderful resources at their disposal, we are heading into the 'Age of Aquarius' and in all things spiritual and creative so hats off to the lucky souls who are flexing their Aquarian creativity, vision and energy.

I hope this little insight helps you on your path.

*"There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting." Buddha*

Carla

PS: I would love you to share to help anyone new starting out

Thanks so much for signing up to receive this free PDF. I have loved sharing my experiences as a photographer throughout the years and you will find more resources on my blog at [www.carlacoulson.com](http://www.carlacoulson.com)

I also offer workshops and mentoring sessions that you can read more about here

I'd love to stay in touch and you can follow me on social media here. Please feel free to pass this PDF onto your friends.

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