

12 Days of P52: Day Eight

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Don



What Is Your Style?

We all hear so much about photographer's styles, and how important it is to develop one. And it really is important.

However, I don't think we 'develop' a style going forward, we find our style looking back.

Let me explain.

Trying to 'develop' a style usually goes something like this: I want my photos to look like "Other Photographer" so I need to do what they do so I can achieve my style.... which is actually THEIR style.

Look – there is absolutely nothing wrong in finding out how someone else shoots or processes or presents and trying it out. We call that learning.

But to build your 'style' on what someone else has done is only to be a bad clone of that person. They are authentic, you are a knock off.

Instead, we try many things when shooting. We experiment with someone else's style, then we add a bit of our own to it. We mix the style of one photographer with another to see what happens. And if something happens and we truly LOVE it, we will shoot more of that type of image. And by doing that we begin to lay the foundation for our style.

"Imitate. Assimilate. Innovate" — *Clark Terry, Jazz Trumpet Legend*

[\(Article on Lighting Essentials\)](#)

Imitation means learning the style of someone. **Assimilate** is pure technique so you can pull that style up without even thinking.

Most people stop there. But we can't.

We have to **Innovate**. Taking what we have learned and adding our own layer to it. Eventually what was “copying” became intuitive and then transitioned into influence. To be influenced by someone is not to copy them, but to pay homage to their work and style and bring something of your own to the mix to make it yours.

We generally find our style by looking back at the work we have created, and finding those images that resonate. We can certainly guide the process initially, but it is the experimentation, personal choices, and ultimately our vision that will work its way to the fore.

Caveat: your style cannot be simply a post-processing technique. That is *part* of your style, but not the totality of it. If that is all it is, anyone with that pre-set or action can do “you”... and that is no way to build a powerful vision.

If you have a style now, great. Keep it flowing and use it in the assignments we are going to be doing together. Bringing your style to all you do is an important way to establish your voice and let potential clients understand what you do. So you get hire to do you. Nothing sweeter than that.

Having a style, a vision... a body of work that is cohesive and recognizable as yours is a very important part of building a photography career that is more focused on the work than the whims and fads that take us down rabbit hole after rabbit hole.

Do you have a vision?

Is there a particular way you like to shoot stuff?

Don't worry if you do not have a style yet, or are still seeking one. There will be ample time in this class for you to make some great discoveries as to where and how your style is evolving.

Additional Articles worth your time.

[A Few Thoughts on Photographic Style](#)

[DEVELOPING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC STYLE: EXCERPT FROM A CHAT WITH ZACK ARIAS](#)

[4 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DISCOVER YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC STYLE](#)

[Defining style, and finding your own](#)