



GREG WILLIAMS
PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS

WORKBOOK



1. THE ART

Learn to listen to your inner voice.

MODULE SUMMARY

There are three main aspects of photography; the technical, the business and the art. In this module Greg discusses the art of photography and the importance of discovering, listening to and harnessing your inner voice in order to take authentic, believable pictures.

The inner voice is key when it comes to asking yourself if you believe in the pitch, the job, the client and the picture you've taken, but also in knowing why your pictures were successful or unsuccessful. If you try and please everyone by having multiple styles (portraiture, landscape, reportage etc.) your pictures may be technically beautiful but your audience won't be able to connect with a singular vision. Greg's pictures are invariably most successful when they are a reflection of him in some way, and a manifestation of his unique perspective.

Collaborating with your subject can be one of the best tools you have as a photographer. Greg loves to feed off his subjects and their energy, and often prefers the spontaneity of walking into a shoot without a recce. Allowing two creative minds to come together as a 'third mind' brings a freedom and authenticity to the pictures that Greg has ultimately become synonymous with.

No matter how many people you're working with; creative directors, producers, clients etc. the success of the picture will always come down to the photographer. The buck will always stop with you. You can remain open-minded to creative or constructive input, but ultimately you have to be the captain of the ship, listen to your inner voice, and ensure that the pictures you take stay true to your vision.

ASSIGNMENT

- Choose half a dozen pictures from your archive which best illustrate your unique voice.
- Go out and take another picture that has the same voice.
- Choose three of your favourite photographers, and define what makes them unique.

NOTES

2. COMMERCE

Give them what they want, so that you can give them what you want.

MODULE SUMMARY

In this module Greg breaks down the key aspects of commerce, and how to strike the right balance between art and business. When Greg was starting out, commerce was by far the biggest black hole and it took him years to master how to be professional and not compromise the art too much in the process. His ethos is that in order to be a successful professional photographer you have to be 50% professional 50% photographer.

In order to be successful you have to have a distinct voice and it's this voice that will allow you to build your brand, sell yourself and gain a following. Greg follows the principle that if you put your life's effort into one thing, you are way more likely to be successful at it. Focus on that one thing, your distinct voice, and make sure that is imbued into absolutely everything you do. You will have to make mistakes and compromises along the way, but if you let that one thing guide you, the commercial side of the industry will become much easier to navigate.

When it comes to selling yourself, especially when you're first starting out, Greg believes you absolutely have to be your own agent and constantly be working. This means using social media to build yourself up as a brand, doing your research on clients and campaigns, being prepared to work at it every day and networking whenever possible. Greg has found social media incredibly empowering as it's allowed him to share pictures that represent his voice, and it can do the same for you. Be selective and strategic about what you're putting out there, think about hash-tags and algorithms, and use it to reach out to potential clients and subjects. In essence, you need to spend every day working on a different aspect, be that; the art, shooting pictures, technique, business development, social presence or establishing clients.

Commerce should work hand in hand with art. If you've stayed true to your unique view whilst keeping half your attention on the business, you can become a successful photographer. The key is to *'Only do what only you can do'*.

ASSIGNMENT

- Create a 40 hour (minimum) schedule for next week. 50% business. 50% photography.

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3. UNDERSTANDING YOUR WORTH

When someone asks ‘what’s your day rate?’ I ask, ‘what’s the job?’.

MODULE SUMMARY

It’s obviously very important to understand your worth when you’re negotiating with clients. In this module Greg explains how to establish your fee based on the client and the job they’re asking you to do. He wants you to understand your worth as both a professional and an artist, and will talk about copyright, usage & buyouts, travel & prep days and editorial commissions.

When it comes to establishing your rate, there are a number of factors that will help you calculate it. First and foremost is research. Greg researches his clients and his competition, whether or not the job is in line with his unique voice, usage and all of these things combined inform what his fee will be.

As a professional photographer it is essential to understand your rights as the image creator, and to fight to retain your copyright. A lot of photographers just starting out don’t realise they can continue to make money from their portfolio in the future, and having this control can be hugely empowering. Greg has fought to retain his copyright wherever possible throughout his career, only compromising where absolutely necessary, i.e.. he wanted the job so much he was prepared to lose it, or the fee was so good he accepted the trade off. You can still license your images and charge usage, but retaining your copyright is something Greg feels extremely strongly about.

Once you understand copyright, you can think about buyouts. When you shoot an image for a client, i.e. for an ad campaign, the initial usage may have been included in your fee. However, if you have retained your copyright, and the client wants to re-use the image year after year, you will be able to charge a buyout, which may also increase 10% year on year. If you had given away your copyright, you wouldn’t receive a penny.

Editorial commissions are a trade-off. You are unlikely to earn high fees but they are great for self-promotion and access to talent and teams. You will likely have to work for free or next to nothing (especially when starting out), but an editorial commission can be a great platform and opportunity to network.

Ultimately, in order to understand your worth as a photographer, you have to think about the commercial application of the work you’re doing. Where could you see that being used and how will it actually benefit someone’s business?

ASSIGNMENT

- List out five clients who could use your style of photography, and research them.
- Who are the right people to talk to on client and agency sides and how could you get your portfolio in front of them?

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4. CAMERA

So much of the creativity I bring to a picture comes from consistently returning to the fundamentals of photography.

MODULE SUMMARY

In order to fulfil your creative potential, it's so important to really master the fundamentals; light, exposure, depth of field, shutter speed and focal length. In this module, Greg discusses these in detail and explains why he still loves the 35mm format to this day.

Greg's background is in photojournalism, and he's never really strayed from shooting 35mm. He loves the speed he's able to work with them from beauty shoots to gigantic movie posters.

Exposure is a juggle of three compromises; ISO/ASA—the sensitivity of your film or the sensor, your F-stop—your depth of field and finally, your shutter speed.

Greg discusses how different focal lengths affect your subject's face. He demonstrates this practically in the module video.

Greg really believes that creativity comes from consistently returning to these fundamental elements of photography. He wants you to be thinking about these elements every single day.

ASSIGNMENT

- Take a photo in low light where you prioritise your ISO, another where you prioritise the F-stop, and another where you prioritise the shutter speed (perhaps your subject is moving).
- Shoot the same subject in the same place, with the same crop, using wide, standard and long lenses, and see how the different lenses affect your subject's face.

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5. LIGHTING

So much of the creativity I bring to a picture comes from consistently returning to the fundamentals of photography.

MODULE SUMMARY

In this module you'll learn about all the different types of lighting; backlight, ¾ front light, front light, side light. Greg will also talk about shooting motion and talk you through how to edit with your heart.

BACKLIGHT

Use backlight and reflection to create a soft or dramatic light and to sculpt your subject.

¾ FRONT LIGHT

The light that works every time. Widely used in portraits and one of Greg's go-to's.

FRONT LIGHT

Largely known as the 'beauty light'.

SIDE LIGHT

Use side light to create duality and intrigue.

MOVING PORTRAIT

Create a moving portrait using hot lights, haze and wind.

THE EDIT

Edit with your heart, and choose the pictures that make you feel something.

This is a practical module, so once you have watched all the videos please complete the assignment opposite.

ASSIGNMENT

- Recreate each of the different lighting scenarios with ambient light; backlight, ¾ front light, front light, sidelight
- Then recreate each of these using artificial light either at home or in a studio.
- Do a shoot where rather than using lights, you just use black (a photographer's flag, dustbin bag, or anything black). Use the negative to sculpt your subjects rather than using light.
- Try rolling film on one of your shots to create a moving photograph.
- Go back to one of your favourite shoots from your archive, and re-edit it listening to your inner voice.

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