

## *A Piece of my Peace*

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Each photo in this series is of a particular person, place, or action which makes me enjoy being alive.

I understand that what we do is all that determines who we are. So, the things I do resemble the things I wish to be; strong, challenged, grateful and peaceful. I don't "do photography"; I live my life and I take my camera along with me. I try to meditate often, to clear my mind and set meaningful intentions. When meditating, you clear your mind by acknowledging thoughts, not dismissing them, but rather accepting them fully, to allow your mind to move forward. I can relate this feeling to the reason I enjoy photography so much. By taking a photo of a moment, you are fully accepting its existence, not dismissing it in any way, but you can materialize its existence in order to move forward to the next moment. I am aware of the fact that you can't meditate on an empty stomach, with the "empty stomach" being a metaphor for an unfulfilled life, and an uneasy mind. The way that I metaphorically "fill my stomach" is by doing precisely what fulfills me every day, and nothing less. These things are often difficult and uncomfortable. I feel like I have to go to war with myself in order to find peace. Over the course of this year I've been working out daily, going for freezing cold winter swims at the beach, running marathons, camping with friends, and hiking in the hills. I often do these activities with other people, because I see life's enjoyment reflected in them. If I never looked at my own reflection, I'd have no idea what I look like, and if I'd never seen enjoyment in the people around me, I'd never know how to find it myself. Everything seems to be twice as fulfilling if someone is there doing it with you. My meditative use of photography is what often guides me through these difficult things. The photos selected for this body of work are the ones which I felt best represented who I wish to be, and the ones which captured moments that propelled me forward. This year has been the best year of my life so far, and it makes sense to me that these are some of the best photos I have ever taken too.

As described above, my main goal with photography is to capture the moment in a way which makes the most sense and conveys the most meaning. In terms of the medium itself, I have always loved the technical parts of photography the most. I love the efficiency about it all, and I find the simplicity of pressing the shutter button is what allows me to focus on the artistic elements so heavily.

Almost all the photos in the series were taken with my Canon EOS R camera body, and my 70-200mm telephoto lens. The full frame, 30mp sensor of my camera body is what allows me to get the sharpness I love, and even the ability to maintain such sharpness when cropping. The one thing that every one of these photos has in common is the fact that they all have one subject in focus. Most of my work is done at the lowest possible aperture, which for this lens is F2.8. I like working with the fast shutter speed, and I shoot in RAW file format, meaning I can easily underexpose photos then increase exposure in post processing. The huge benefit of this 70-200mm focal length is the narrow depth of field given by the low apertures. This is what isolates my subjects so effectively. A byproduct of this isolation, is the creation of bokeh in the foreground and background.

My main focus for many of these photos was as follows:

1. Make the subject the focal point.
2. Make the background and foreground as interesting as possible, in ways which don't detract from the subject.
3. Edit to amplify these features, (vignette, contrast, exposure/masking).

For many of these photos, I tried to lower my camera, almost completely to the ground to have an interesting foreground, and a simplistic background. This can be seen in the photos of my brother at the beach, inspired by some of Max Dupain's works, such as *Bondi*, in 1939, and *The Boy Fishing at Tathra*, from the 1940's. I found that it was often a lack of any complex background which would make the subject stand out the most, and that a simple foreground would give an extra layer, framing and hence emphasizing the subject quite nicely. This sort of "focal-length sandwich" is the reason this lens is so popular amongst sports and portrait photographers. Another way that I made the subjects stand out, was by shooting in portrait. This better fits the shape of a human body, and allows me to reach further behind the subject, instead of off to the side.

One principle I focused on throughout this series was balance, or more accurately, a lack of balance in contrast and focus, in a way which made the subject stand out, but fit in at the same time. For example, the three bench portraits in the forest: I matched the darkness and low saturation of the foggy forest with the darkness of my clothing. However, I was able to separate the subject from the rest of the photo in a structural sense, by the distance and contrasted focus emphasized by my lens. I didn't use contrasting colour or textures, but I instead used emphasis in a more structural way. My use of low saturation, and layers which guide the viewer down toward the back of the photo, are inspired by the work of Frederick McCubbin. Additionally, I mimicked the use of a triptych in McCubbin's *The Pioneer*, in 1904, to simultaneously tell a story and symbolize the significance of a certain composition. My use of rough textures like rocks, waves, or leaves, to juxtapose, and hence emphasize the smoothness of a subject is inspired by Antonio Mora's work, as he blends his portraits with contrasting objects or landscapes.