

The Photographer Unknown Revealed

By Peter Angelo Simon

People who have taken my photography workshops vary greatly in occupation and experience but they all share one thing: a sense that within themselves lurks a more accomplished photographer wanting to emerge - the Photographer Unknown. There have been scientists, students, bureaucrats, retired businesspeople, artists, teachers, photographers, a plumber and just plain folks. Some come advanced in their craft, others as complete novices; most somewhere in between.

Without exception they harbor a gnawing hunger to express themselves visually in a more satisfying way and a desire to show their observations of the world to others and, perhaps unknowingly, to themselves.

The basis of the workshop is shooting and looking at the pictures; it is the very best way to learn. Black & white, color, film, digital, what kind of camera you use - these are not important. Seeing, shooting, looking at what you're doing as we go along, editing and critiquing the work: these are the essentials. And learning to click the shutter when you are truly excited by what you see, ideally something never before seen.

Two years ago I gave up my studio in SoHo and consolidated my photographic life in the Fort Greene brownstone where I have lived for 26 years. This is where the photography workshops are held.

The young woman's email said "I'm a complete novice, definitely a beginner, I don't even have a camera yet but am really interested in taking your Photography Workshop. I'd like to know how advanced it is."

When I suggested she stop by and bring a few photograph she said "I don't have any photographs".

-Nothing?

-Well a few I've taken on my iphone.

-Bring your iphone, I told her.

There were more than a hundred pictures on her iphone and they showed me that she had a good eye, a personal way of looking at the world and a passion for taking pictures.

I explained that I don't distinguish between beginners and advanced photographers. A natural mix of personalities and visual interests enriches the experience for everyone. The workshops are a safe haven where strangers quickly come together and respond to each other's challenges and strengths.

Participants learn to see, shoot better, lay claim to their vision, become more committed to the quality of their images and prints, and to take themselves and their photographic interests more seriously. Members have found projects to explore, clarified their artistic and business intentions, learned the demanding and essential discipline of editing their work.

In my own work I strive to create conditions which will encourage the emergence of my own Photographer Unknown: that most valuable and mysterious character who dwells within in me. It is a matter of listening to the feathery voices on the edge of consciousness that try to get my attention and of remaining, in the broad sense of the word, available.

In the end what we do – our goal – is to indulge the deep pleasure of seeing and sharing our visual experience of the world.

Peter Angelo Simon's photographic interests range from classic documentary to the creation of cutting edge photography-based artworks. His intimate photographs of Muhammad Ali in training have been widely published. His series *Beyond Gravity* explores the relationship between photography and painting in vivid images of circus performers in motion. His next photography workshop begins September 13th.

[www. PeterAngeloSimon.com](http://www.PeterAngeloSimon.com) / psimon1234@earthlink.net