

EDITORS' NOTE

In “Make It Beautiful,” Taylor Kilbride guides us through her interviewing experience where she learns to appreciate her sister, Weston, in a new light. How does she mesh new information about her sister with what she already knows about her? How do her realizations about her sister’s art help to guide the reader through the essay? Would the profile differ if she interviewed an artist that was not her sister? Many profiles focus on natural artistic talent, but Kilbride instead explains her sister’s artistic process. Weston is really intent on the object’s potential: “I’m making something unexpected beautiful.” Do you think this process is what makes Weston’s photography remarkable, or is she capturing beauty that is already there?

WRITER'S NOTE

Since I am a biology major, creative writing is not something I get to do very often, but nevertheless has always been a passion of mine. Sequence II was by far my favorite to write, especially since I was able to write about someone I love dearly. The goal was to capture my younger sister, Weston, in a way that allowed my audience to see her as I do: an amazing person and talented, up-and-coming artist.

Make It Beautiful

Taylor Kilbride

She is beautiful. Her thick brown hair reaches down to the lower arch of her spine and falls around her back and arms like a veil just tossed over the head of a bride. A few wispy fly-aways around her face and a sparking diamond stud on her nose gently accent her petite facial features. As we settle into a back corner table of Linnea’s Café, I get a sense of quiet mystery and at the same time a concurrent forceful presence that is unprecedented in anyone else I’ve ever met. This girl, Weston Kilbride, who happens to be my younger sister, is an incredible up-and-coming photographer. Growing up in the same household as her has allowed me to see a side of her photos that not many get to experience. I see the mental processes that go into her photography: the thought process prior to a shoot, the visual brain that sees life in photographs, and the effect that photography has on her, not only as an artist, but as a person.

Weston is one of the most free-spirited, carefree people I have ever met. In her seventeen years of life I have never once seen her stressed, worried about what others think of her, or concerned with anyone else’s opinion. Her goal in life is to be content. It’s that simple. For this reason, when I asked if she ever considered the audience when setting up a shoot or heading out for the day to take pictures, she responded with a quick and stressed “No!” I was not surprised. She then stated, “I like the universal nature of photographs. Don’t get me wrong, I do like showing people my pictures. The pictures are personal though—what I think deserves to be photographed.” She doesn’t take pictures to show off or to even make a statement. She does it because it makes her happy, and that is her sole motivation.

With this outlook on photography it is possible to assume Weston is not passionate, but this is surely not the case. The majority of the times I am with her, her camera is around her neck just in case inspiration decides to jump out at her. The Nikon D700 DSLR means more to

her than most other material possessions—and with a talent like hers I am positive my camera would mean the world to me also. All of her work is simple yet beautiful and captures scenes that you normally wouldn't think of as intriguing. She has a pretty modern and contemporary style but takes pictures of everything from people to plants, animals to cities, and even clothes to other random inanimate objects. Her last few photo shoots involved light manipulated black and white close ups of animals at the zoo, and seashells against varying textured backgrounds. Weston just has that artistic eye that can find beauty in almost any everyday scene, and with a love and talent like that it's almost impossible to not be passionate.

Even though the audience is not a factor in her pictures, like it is for many other artists, a lot of thought is put into each shot. Recently, I spent a day with Weston in San Luis Obispo taking pictures. As we were walking around downtown she said, "I photograph best when I'm alone and can think and really capture what I want to. Each shot must be perfect or I'll retake the picture hundreds of times." I followed her and watched her work. Even after living with her for so many years I never saw her in her element, and it really was an eye opening experience. I have never witnessed her so focused or intent. She was all over the place—on her stomach on the ground, sitting in awkward angles, leaning against trees or against buildings. All I could hear was the clicking of the lens and see her scattered motions jumping around from place to place. I asked repeatedly what she was talking pictures of and the only thing she could reply with was "I'm making something unexpected beautiful." I was completely taken aback by hearing something so simple but yet so profound come out of my younger sister's mouth but in retrospect those five words captured what she was doing perfectly.

She notices lighting, angles, shadows, shapes, colors, outlines . . . nothing is out of the question or impossible with her camera. After a few intense hours, Weston stands up, all that previous concentrated focus gone, and walks back into Linnea's café for some lunch. As we sit at the table we go through her pictures and I am in complete and utter awe. Every single picture. Breathtaking. There is no distinction between the lens of her camera and her eyes or brain. This girl literally sees in pictures. As I think back through the years I've spent with her, I can remember times on family road trips where she forced us to pull the car over in random locations so she could get out and take one quick picture. My parents always humored her but I remember feeling annoyed and frustrated, because I didn't understand. But now, I see her and her photography in a new light. I had never in all our years felt such a strong connection to her, and being able to see her act out her passion was unbelievably rewarding and gave me a new respect for her skill.

As we chatted and ate, I brought up one of her favorite pictures "Hope." The photograph is of a grungy wash in Downtown Los Angeles. No people are present, no major building for the eye to focus on, nothing I would have seen as photo worthy. Just a gloomy bridge, a few scattered cars, some electrical wires, various dilapidated warehouses, and a lone body of water in a part of the city overrun by industry. Uniquely, LA is Weston's chosen place to spend the day taking pictures. According to her "It is the epitomic place to make a grungy city look so perfect. In 'Hope' the water is brown and the city rundown but nevertheless the scene is still amazing." Her passion, goal of happiness, mind that captures all of day to day life in photographs, and pre-picture taking thought process, all result in something unexpected and beautiful—her goal exactly.

The unique aspect of Weston's photography is that without her even trying or realizing it, her photographs have extremely large audiences, and in fact, do not exclude a single person. Rather, they are some of those most inclusive pieces I've ever seen. Since she literally sees in photographs, almost every human can identify with feelings captured in her pictures; happi-

ness, loneliness, failure, ecstasy, love. Her collections are argumentative and persuasive, deep and compelling, rhetorical and straightforward. By making the ugly beautiful, they effortlessly provide counter arguments to basic and frequent negative expressions of human nature and in return are warm, honest, true, and as stated by the title of a particular favorite, hopeful.

As my time with my sister drew to a close, we shifted our conversation more toward the effects photography have on her as a person and as an artist. Earlier in the day Weston said, “I capture moments. I don’t set them up.” This simple yet profound statement gave me insight into how she thinks about photography and what it does for her. Even though everyone that knows her thinks she could, and should, be a photographer for a living, she is still undecided. She is not sure that she wants the muck and chaos of business to get in the way of her passion. If she keeps it as a side hobby she will never have to worry about the cutthroat and competitive aspect of trying to make a living as an artist, which appeals to her. Having her “own blog or website, selling at street fairs or coffee shops, printing on t-shirts, anything casual is fine with me. I’m not into the big industry stuff.” For Weston photography isn’t art, it isn’t a statement, it isn’t a show, it isn’t to turn a profit. It is a release of energy, and a display of her own feelings created from day to day life. What she doesn’t realize is that this release of emotion is exactly what most people consider art to be—feelings visually represented for others to take notice of. But that’s what is it, and what she is. An artist.

Weston Kilbride. Young girl, big dreams of success, talent and love for photography. The mysterious quirky girl with a boiling inner passion that is a compelling and powerful way of expression. Her art effortlessly reaches all audiences without her even aiming to do so. She sees, thinks, eats, sleeps, breaths, in photographs that captivate any who take the time to look. The epitome of beauty herself, Weston strives to bring a different type of beauty to hidden aspects of daily life where you would not expect to see it. Her positive outlook and refreshing self-interest make her stand out, and can be seen in all of her pictures. Whether she believes it or not, she is, in every sense of the word, a true artist.

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