

Photographic Vision, Rudy Brueggemann

I am a photographer, a visual storyteller. I do not claim the title of "artist." What's more, as a photographer, I have a greater interest in the world and people around me than in myself. In my mind, this great speck of dust we live on and the billions of people who call it home are vastly more interesting as subject material than my own comparatively minor story and human-sized desires.

I approach my interactions with my subjects according to rules that shape my photographic vision. For most of my people-centered work, I collaborate with the subjects I photograph. I also treat every single person the same – with the respect they are due. I don't treat this duty lightly, as the very act of photographing people is selfish and imbalanced because the photographer is taking something and giving nothing in return. So in most instances, I try to share my work with my subjects. That perhaps is the greatest satisfaction a photographer can have, seeing a smile on the face of a person he or she has photographed when they look at the final image of themselves.

I believe my final product – whether it's a portrait of a Seattle gardener, or a Kurdish businessman in eastern Turkey, or a farmer in the Philippines highlands – conveys the spirit of what I hope was a positive interaction. Hopefully the images will show my subjects being themselves. No more, no less. If I've done that, I've succeeded. What's more, this truth will be apparent the moment that I released the shutter. The rest is, well, technical trickery in the darkroom that anyone can master with enough time and resources.

In the end, what really counts is what you, the viewer, see in the work. If I've succeeded, you will be able to see a basic truth within the images. Thus, to paraphrase from the truly great American artist Duke Ellington, "If it looks good, it is good." I hope my body of work one day achieves this lofty height.