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Photographic Intelligence?

by Pedro Meyer

Making a case for "photographic intelligence" is the purpose of this editorial. One of the clear changes in the digital era, is how intelligent photography has become.

Imagine, today our pictures are pregnant with every conceivable piece of information as to how, where and what the image was made with. What lens and what f stop was used, what camera, what exposure speed, if one used flash or not, or better yet, if the flash went off at the time of shooting, let alone that you had a flash connected. The latitude and longitude of the place the image was taken, the hour of day or night it was taken. The serial number of the camera you used and a myriad of other pertinent information.

And now the images are being cataloged according to the smiles, the faces within the image. In other words, all the pictures of each one of my sons, for instance, gets separated and placed into their corresponding folder with their name on it. And all of this, automatically of course.

You can go into Google and search for a specific image, let us think of a sunset for example. And then lo and behold, you can make further selections according by color. The browser will respond offering you a wide assortment of pink sunsets, if that is what you were looking for. You want to compare it to green images? then a click away and you have such an alternative being displayed on your monitor.

One can of course add to the images, not only key words to make the picture easily retrievable at a later date, but you can also add sounds. You can add a verbal message to your image, or a sound track which might be relevant. You can add to the image a URL address on the internet, to

connect the image to further information to that what is strictly contained within the picture taken.

If you compare all this wealth of data contained within the digital file of a photograph, to just the plain negative or slide of the past, one can start to visualize that a new form of photography has clearly emerged. And we have not even touched upon the intelligence of the cameras themselves and how they have been changing photography, that will be for another editorial.

Photographers have yet to understand what the implications are of all this abundance of information. Of course it does not make a single image any better due to such an array of data. But that would be like dismissing a library with all of it's volumes because it does not make you wiser by walking past the book shelves. I think you get the point, you also have to read the books, and not only that but make sense of the content as well.

We need to begin and make sense of the potential that lies dormant in the information that our digital photographic archives contain. As I go through my digital archive, and look at all the feedback coming from those images, and then compare it to my autistic negatives, I find that we have a lot of exciting times ahead.

Please let us hear what you have done with your intelligent photographs, and what you believe will be taking place in the future with all this potential.

*Pedro Meyer
Mexico City, Coyoacán
July 2009.*