

# DAVID JULIAN

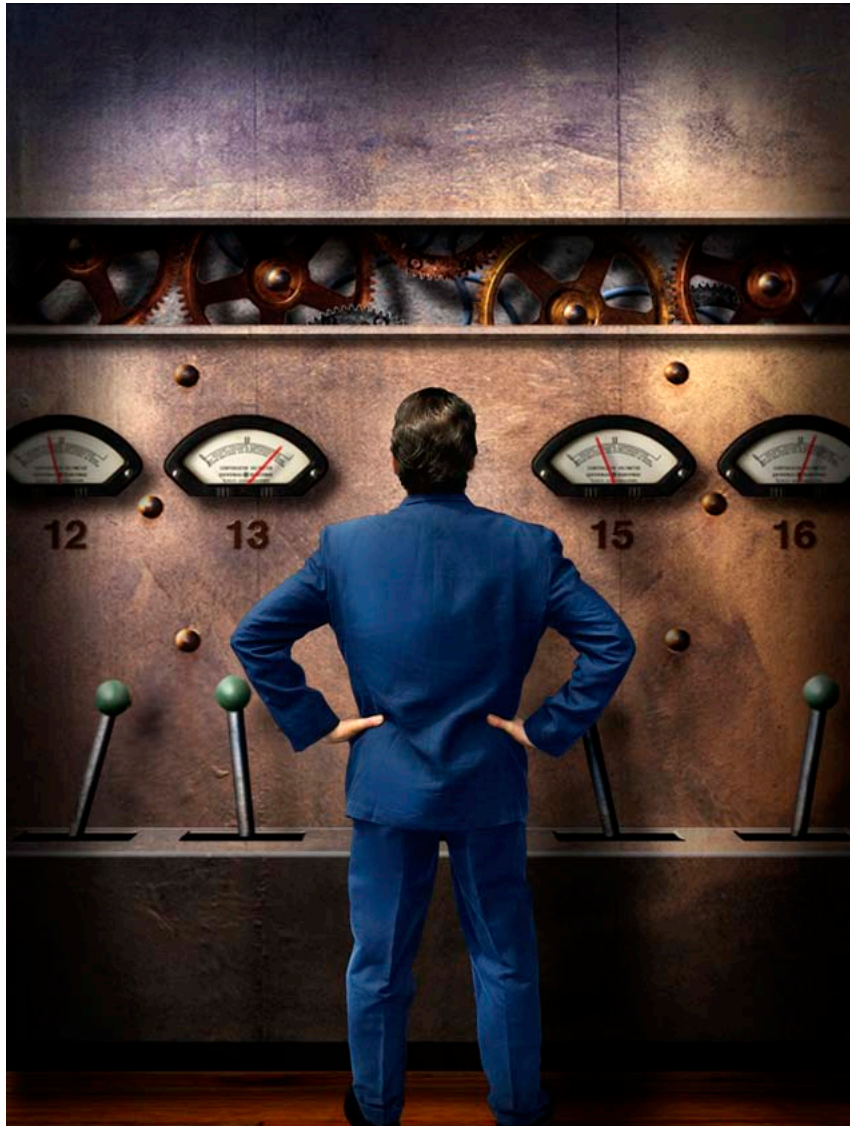


## The Conceptual Imagery Of David Julian

by Lynne Eodice

**D**avid Julian is a photographer, artist and teacher who works in several distinctive styles, ranging from straight, documentary photography to conceptual, layered artwork that is entirely a product of his imagination. His images and photomontages express his personal observances, as well as human psychology. He teaches photography and digital workshops focused on building skills and stimulating personal creativity.

When asked about his photographic specialties, David Julian describes one of them in terms of sensory awareness. "I try to capture the essence of how I felt at a given place," he relates. "I then work on the image in the digital darkroom to get back to the purity of that expression." Though he loves classic photography, he doesn't restrict himself to the limitations of a traditional approach. Julian performs minor adjustments on these images to recreate what he saw in



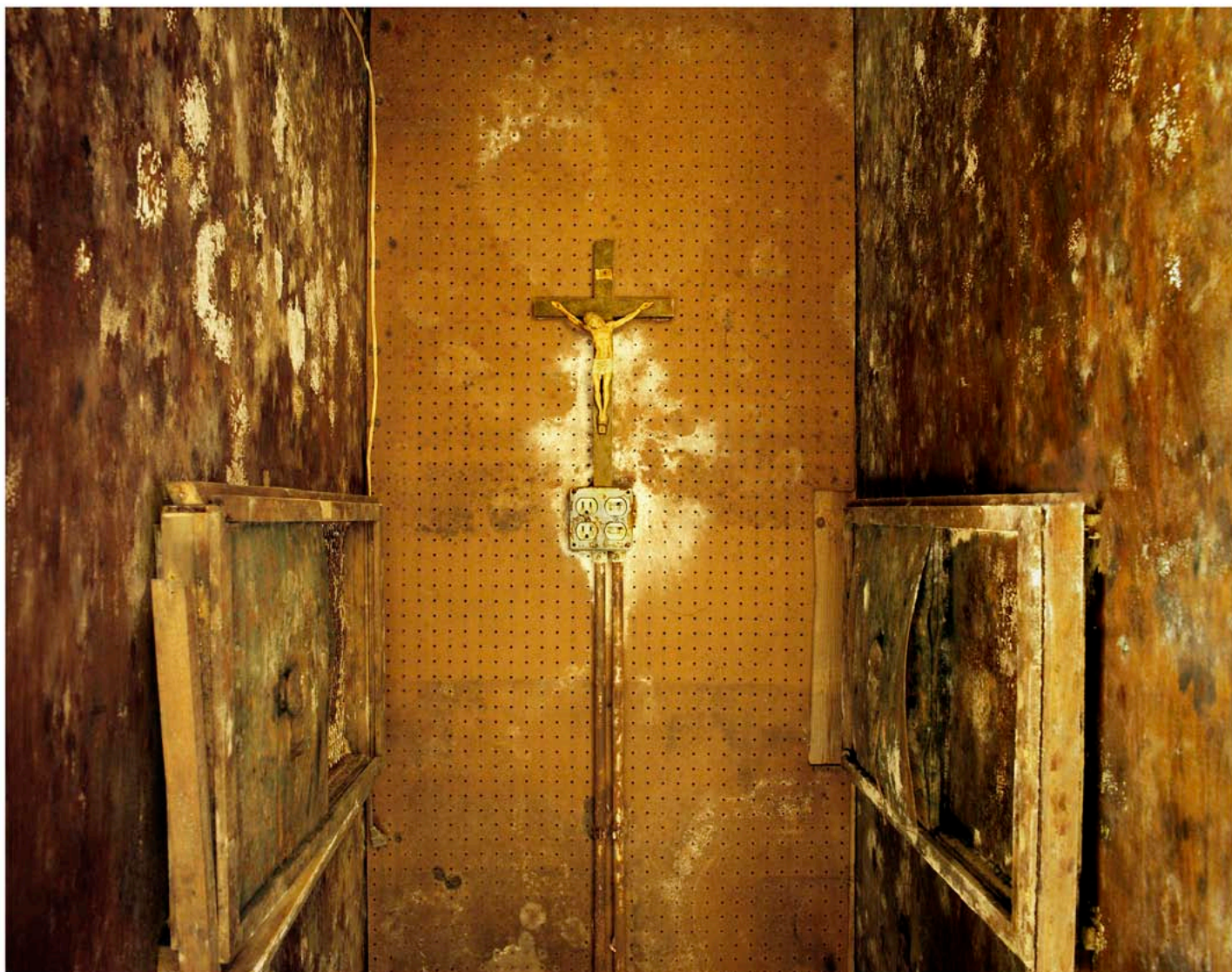
his mind's eye at the time he photographed it—"I enjoy the presence of capturing a feeling, and then creating a visual to express it my way." As a departure from this, Julian also works in a straight documentary style in which he doesn't make any alterations at all. "I record these subjects as honestly as possible, allowing the interpretation to come from my viewpoint and technique," he explains.

His third style—and what Julian is best known for—is his layered, conceptual imagery. Most of these images begin with a simple sketch on paper. "And then I create, or pair existing images together in layers to tell a story. I like working this way because it's spontaneous and the best use of my imagination." He says that this type of photo illustration begins in a place of contemplation, or a dream state. He is an avid collector of certain objects and photographs that he finds in various places, and often these objects show up in images that he creates later on. These images embed detail and mystery to fully involve the imagination of the viewer.

## A Community Of Artists

Julian meets with a group of people on a purely creative level. "What's been incredibly stimulating to me has been feedback on assignments from a small group of photographers that I meet with regularly," he says. They discuss the excitement of ongoing work, and as they normally work alone, they also provide one another with a community of artists. He calls this group "Cranial Crowbar," a name that he describes as "a symbol of prying ideas out of our minds." The group tackles an assignment each meeting, which has resulted in many incredible visual art journeys for all involved. Julian started this group around the year 2001, and says that participants have come and gone, but there is a core of people who have remained steadfast throughout the years. "One of the things I love about it is the social aspect of being with other artists, and being in the presence of other people who have so much creative energy."





When asked how his work has evolved, Julian replies, "It's changed as I've evolved personally. I believe that as I get older, I care about different things at different levels, and those themes often appear in my work." He says he feels much better connected on an emotional level nowadays. "Doing non-profit work is one of the things that's opened me up to a different connection," he points out. At one time, he did a lot of commercial assignments and solved other people's problems, but this didn't often allow him to artistically express what he cared about—"Which is why I got into art to begin with." He adds that by doing some non-profit work, like a photography project he did for tropical forest conservation and a project about personal items lost in Hurricane Katrina, he experienced a whole new level of deep internal connection.

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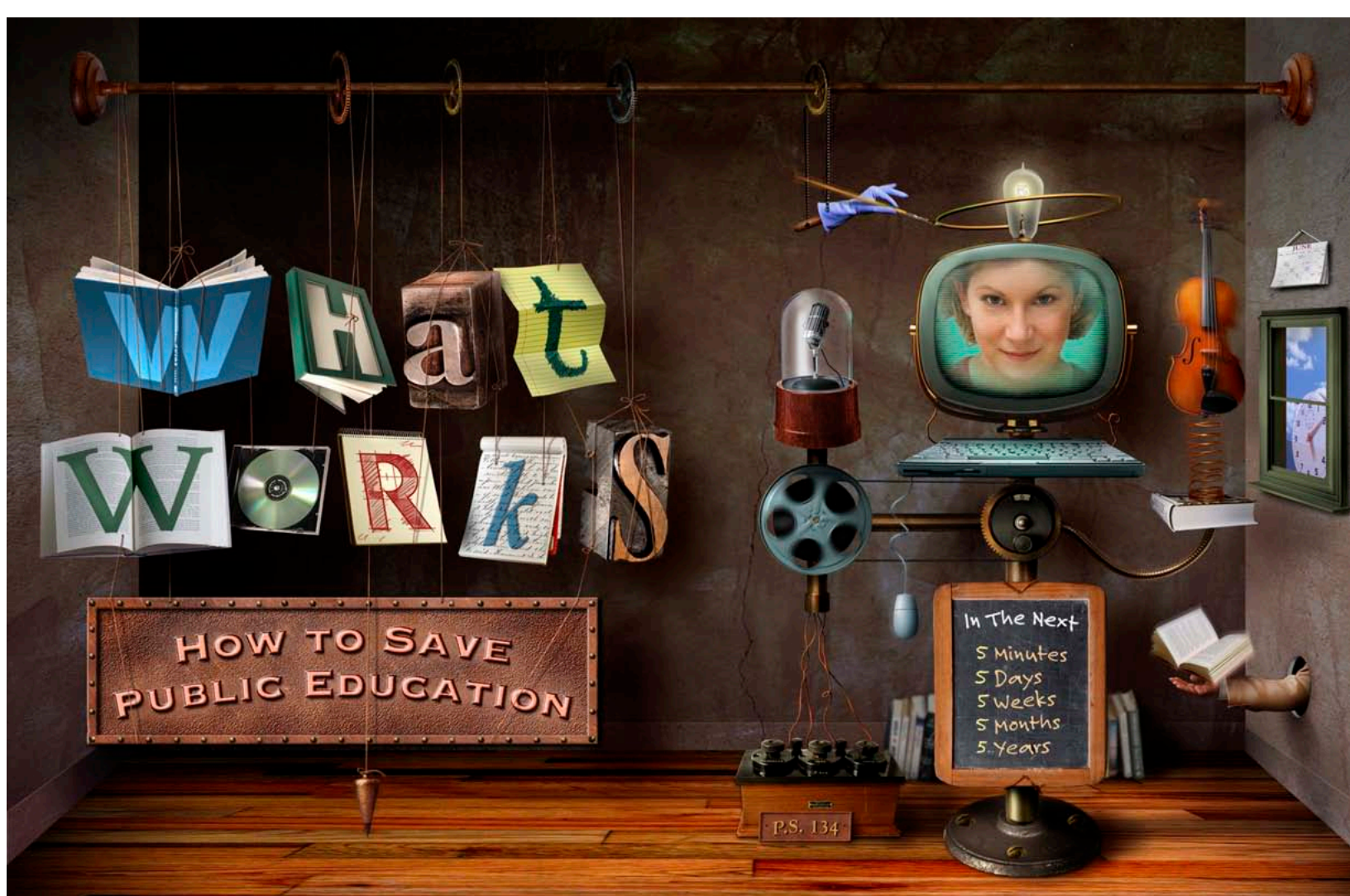


### Creative Inspiration

He lights up when asked about who has influenced him artistically. “In the beginning,” he says, “I really liked the Hudson River Painting School. The vast landscapes and dramatic light inspired me.” And not surprisingly, the classic surrealist artists have been influential, such as Dali, Magritte, and Joseph Cornell. He describes M.C. Escher as “a huge influence in conceptual invention.” Pete Turner was inspiration in terms of the color and composition, as is Alex Webb, who photographs world cultures with a beautiful sense of balanced observation.” Julian also names Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel, whose works “were often very dark, and a delightful marriage of madness and beauty.” Another early influence is a lesser-known artist named Jiri Kolar, who tore apart photographs and then collaged or created patterns with them, which he shellacked onto furniture, converting utilitarian furniture into layered artistic creations.

Photographer Jerry Uelsmann was a strong influence for Julian when he was a student in Brooklyn during the '70s. “He was the first person who taught me that you could dream into your photographs and create images that were interpretive of your thoughts.” Julian describes Uelsmann’s images as generally pleasant and placid, while his own creations were much darker. And unlike Uelsmann, he didn’t have the patience to craft composites in the darkroom. Julian’s unique photo illustrations came about through his experiments with Adobe Photoshop, even in early versions before they gave it layers.



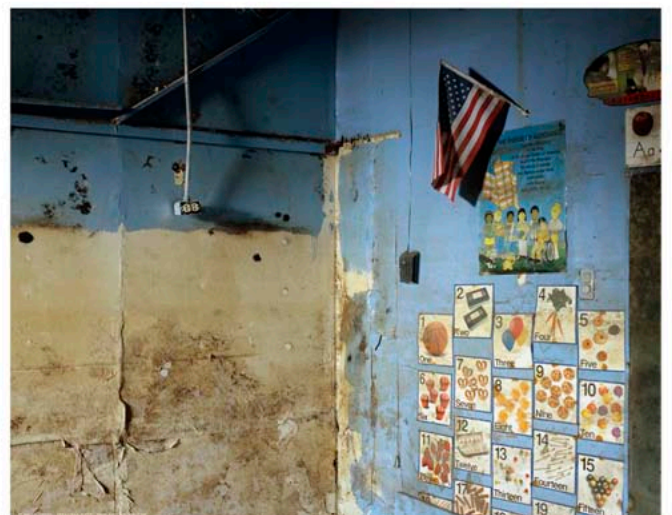
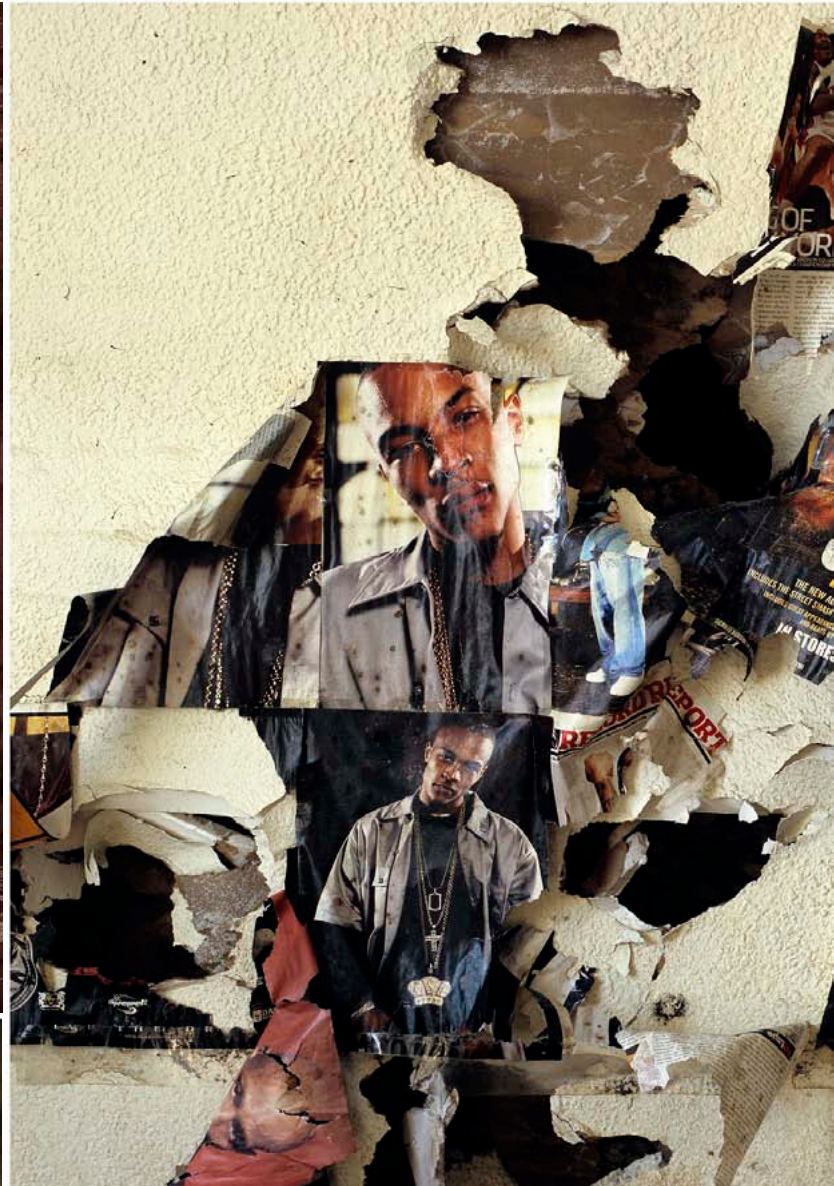


### David Julian's Camera Gear & Software

- Canon EOS 5D Mark II D-SLR
- Lumix LX3 compact camera
- Medium-format Pentax 67
- Several vintage folding cameras that accommodate medium-format film
- Adobe Photoshop CS4
- Wacom Intuos 4 Tablet
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe Lightroom, for light image control and organizing.
- Photoshop plug-ins that include Focal Point by OnOne software and Exposure by Alien Skin, mostly for assignment work.

Julian started out studying drawing and natural science. His first job was working at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, where he also attended extension classes to develop budding interests in observation and ecology. He briefly attended the Massachusetts College of Art to investigate sculpture and illustration, and then transferred to Pratt Institute in New York to study illustration and communications design. "I discovered the medium of photography accidentally," he says. "It was really through my father's use of the camera in documenting

our family." He says he fell in love with the recorded image, but didn't study photography formally. After graduating from Pratt, he worked in advertising and corporate design. "I was an art director for years," he says. "I was able to hire photographers, illustrators and typographers and put together their talents using the ideas I came up with. And all the time I was doing that, I was practicing my own art form on the side." Julian eventually decided he wanted to go deeper into expression as an artist himself.



Julian teaches a number of workshops privately, and at venues in Seattle, Washington. He teaches annually at the Maine Media Workshops, at the Santa Fe Workshops, and in California, Hawaii, British Columbia, and elsewhere. He particularly loves to teach “Creativity and Invention,” a workshop that can be applied to either the camera or to Photoshop. He says that students want to learn how to express their own personal vision through Photoshop, not only the technical aspects.



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repeatedly come up in my life," he says. This project was also inspired by Hurricane Katrina—the valuable treasures that people lost, as well as the belongings that people chose to take with them. "For some people, it's a hand-me-down, or a fragment of significance—and part of their personal history. They attach meaning to the object, and I want to document such stories by creating a body of work." Julian says it will take focused effort and funds to complete this global project, and ultimately plans to exhibit this work in print and video form, as well as publishing a book and a website. Galleries and organizations are already interested in the preliminary work.

"There's a very organic dialogue between my feelings and imagination, which is a concert played by the heart and brain," says Julian. "My ongoing process is an expression of both."



See more of David Julian's work at [www.davidjulian.com](http://www.davidjulian.com)

## Moving Forward

He's currently working on two personal projects. One of them is called "Strange Beauty," a long-term mixed-media project that portrays unique found objects as precious gems. "I take objects from the mechanical or natural world, like bits of shells or a piece of a butterfly wing," he explains. "And I re-contextualize them to appear like precious objects in a museum, where they're presented on rich fabrics framed in wood boxes or within other objects. I'm creating groups of these images for a formal print exhibit and physical installation."

In describing the second project (which has a working title of "Meaningful Things"), Julian is examining people's personal relationships with their most meaningful objects by shooting portraits of these people and interviewing them. "I did it to specifically challenge myself to photograph people, and to tell a story that's