

Joslin: Photography is a business, a difficult one

Being a photographer has always been a hard gig.

During the film era, it was downright expensive to do, even if you knew your way around the darkroom. During the digital era, the market has become flooded with every Jim, Bob and Shirley who bought a Canon Rebel off Amazon and decided to try his/her hand at portraiture.

Whenever I scroll through Facebook, I physically cringe at senior portraits with heavy vignettes, overly softened skin and an Instagram-esque filter on them. Each time, the same thought crosses my mind: "Someone paid for that?"

Occasionally a post will cross my feed that reads something along the lines of, "Now booking for senior portraits, \$30 for 3 hours, all images on a disk," and it's paired with an album of all those photos that make me cringe.

Almost always, there are several comments about inquiries. Those kinds of posts make me shake my head in disbelief and almost laugh at how ridiculous they are.

Aside from overly processed photos with barrel-scraping low prices, there are a few things that are sure to irritate a photographer. They usually sound something like these:

"That's a great photo; you must have a really expensive camera!" I wouldn't go up to a chef and tell him or her that I liked his or her meal and that it was probably because of the expensive pot and pan set.

A good photo is about more than "capturing an image"—it's about making one. While, yes, having the right equipment does help, the camera does not make an image.

Having the knowledge of how to utilize what equipment I have, how to create a composition, and then executing it is what makes a good image.

“Can you bring your camera?” While we do like to take photos, believe it or not, most photographers like to attend social gatherings as a guest. They like to see these events as separate from work.

There’s this thing called a personal life that we generally like to keep separate from our professional lives. Sometimes I like to bring my camera to events to take photos, just for fun, but that’s for my personal enjoyment.

If you invite me to an event expecting me to bring my camera, get out your wallet.

“I can’t pay you, but my photos would be great exposure for you.” Thank goodness my landlord started accepting exposure for my monthly rent payment... Oh wait, he didn’t.

Turns out, it doesn’t pay for groceries either. I’m sure the hundreds of *potential* Instagram likes I could get from your photos would be great for my self-esteem, but the sad truth is that likes aren’t a form of currency, and photography is still a business. Try walking into your local grocery store and telling the clerk that you’ll be paying for your Nutella with *exposure*.

“Anyone can be a photographer; all you do is press a button.” To think I’ve been working on practicing and learning the art of photography when all I should do is press a button... Silly me.

“Just pressing a button” assumes that I shoot on auto, which would mean all the precious *candid* photos that I get constantly asked to take would probably be blurry from movement. So, you better hope I don’t shoot on auto.

“Can I have all your RAW photos?” As much as I’m sure you’re right when you say that your cousin’s wife’s brother is great at Photoshop, a photographer with any shred of credibility will never hand you their RAW images.

The images that you will get, however, are the best and are edited to that photographer’s style. The images that you won’t get weren’t up to standards.

Some might have been blurry, out of focus, underexposed, overexposed or just plain bad. You might have blinked or were making a weird face. Maybe there was a tree sticking out of your head in the background.

Photography is an art, and it’s a business. So, next time you talk to a photographer, it would help to keep these ideas in mind.

Savannah Joslin is a fourth-year communication student with a focus on public relations and the IC’s Director of Photography.