



Photograph Like a Thief: Using Imitation and Inspiration to Create Great Images

Glyn Dewis

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No photographer works in a vacuum. Photographers, like all artists, stand on the shoulders of those who came before them, and they are informed and influenced by those working around them contemporaneously. If you are striving to find your own style, one of the most powerful exercises you can practice is to find influence and inspiration in the work of those around you, and then emulate that work in an effort to define, shape, and grow your own photographic voice. By collecting, imitating, and eventually reshaping and combining the work of those around you, your unique voice can be found and the quality of your work can soar.

In *Photograph Like a Thief!*, photographer, author, and retoucher Glyn Dewis embraces the idea of “stealing” and recreating others’ work in order to improve as an artist. By “stepping inside” others’ images, you can learn to reverse engineer their creation, then build an image yourself that simultaneously pays homage to that work yet is also an original creation itself.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part 1, Glyn discusses his approach, covering the process of “stealing ideas” and finding inspiration. He also covers the gear he uses, as well as his retouching and post-processing workflow. In a very helpful chapter on “reverse engineering” a photograph, Glyn discusses how to “read” an image by the catchlights, shadow position, and the hardness/softness of the shadows. This is a crucial skill to acquire if you want to recreate another’s look.

In Part 2, Glyn works through a series of images, from initial concept and influence to lighting, shooting, and post-processing the image to get to the final result. For each image, he reverse engineers the shot to describe how it was created and discusses how the image influenced him, then works through the gear he used, the lighting for the image, and the post-processing of the image?from the RAW out-of-camera shot to the finished piece. While Glyn's work primarily focuses on portraiture, he finds inspiration and influence from a wide variety of work, from legendary photographers to animated films to book covers to movie posters.

By working alongside Glyn in *Photograph Like a Thief!* you too can learn to find inspiration all around you, discover how that work can influence you, improve your photographic and post-processing skill set, and begin your own journey to defining your unique style.

Who knows? Soon, others may be stealing from you.

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Melissa Ray:

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