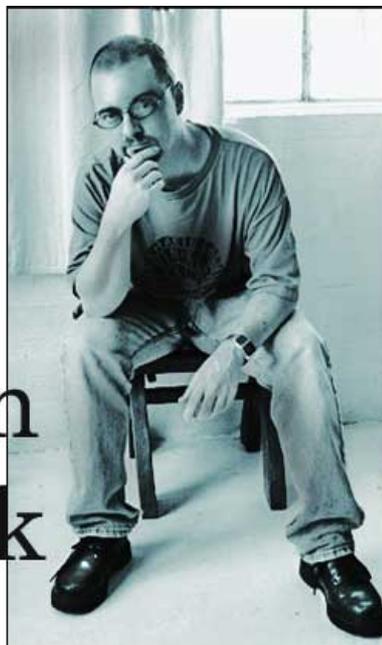


THE EXPERIENCE GALLERY

[home](#) | [archives](#) | [about us](#) | [blog](#) | [contact](#) | [back to Passion](#)

Passion

Kevin is a photographer based in Los Angeles. He currently is the official photographer for 1st street bridge. His work ranges from portraiture, fashion, and landscapes. He has an amazing studio with very high ceilings near downtown Los Angeles.



Kevin Break Photographer

More of his work can be found at www.kevinbreak.com.

What made you want to become a photographer?

In high school, I found out the cheerleaders would pay me to shoot their pictures. A pretty girl pays me to take their pictures made me think that I could get behind this. I like this... in college, I had to get a four year degree, which I actually didn't get and I had to decide what to do with my life. I thought that photography was really interesting. I thought I would run with that. I was working at Bank of America at the time and I saw the people working the 9-5 jobs and the only thing that would change everyday would be the color of their ties. They would sit at the same place everyday in the cafe eating the same soggy sandwich and I thought, I just can't deal with that. So it has its ups and downs but it has been a lot of fun.

Did you get into cameras when you were young? What kind of cameras did you have growing up?

I still have the first picture I ever took, when I was about eleven. A campground that we were at. When I was fifteen I got my first Canon camera and I had two dozen Canon cameras ever since. One every year or so. Nikon, Schminon, I'm Canon all the way. Once you spend money on lenses you really can't switch systems. I think Nikons have better ergonomics but canons have better image quality. It's just what you are used to. Some people drive Ford, some people drive Chevrolets. It's just what they are used to, as long as they get you there.



Kevin's Jesus Wall

What do you look for in a person you photograph?

How much money they have! I'm teasing. A sense of style, Do they have a coherent look? Do they have a mish mash, jumbled sense of different fashion symbols or are they one solid, cohesive, coherent, something that starts with a CO. Next question.

Your photos have a classic look, a timeless feel. What inspires you to bring that style in your work?

I think you are talking about the fashion pictures. I look for archetypes, I look for symbols. They are fashionable but not trendy. I avoid trendy unless they specifically want it. I like it that some of the pictures on the website you have no idea when they were taken. Some of them are ten years old.

Some are ten years old?

Yeah. I used a lot of grainy film before so I have no problem with noise in digital pictures. I think there is such a thing as too much information. I think you don't need all that information and just have what you need to tell a story. The pictures kind of have a truth to them. Since it is a photograph, they actually existed. It is not a drawing or painting out of imagination, I may have helped it a bit but I think our memories over time smooth out a lot of wrinkles and character defects anyways. We remember things more fondly. You don't remember that they smelled bad or dinged your car or stole some little thing from you.

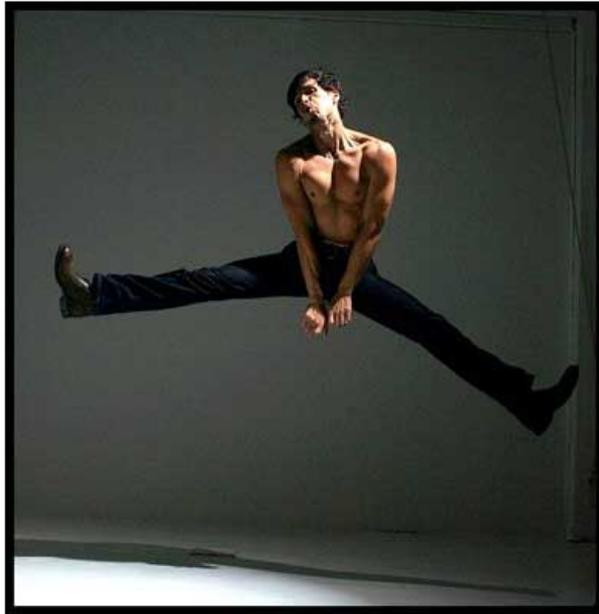
Is it hard to work where you live?

Sometimes, yes.

What makes it hard?

When there is someone in your house that you just can not stand and they are in your house and not in your office or place of work where you can leave and go home and divorce yourself from them. They are there fifteen feet from where you sleep. That sucks!

You wake up in the morning and look at the desk and have internet stuff to do and could be at work in about fifteen feet which means you sometimes end up not doing it. You are in the bed looking at the desk knowing that you should be working, but you want to stay in bed.



"New York has the fashion thing going on but I am afraid to go there because I don't think I would ever come back. I would do very well with the twenty four hour economy."

I do like having people come to me. I worked as a courier for Bank of America and drove for a living all day almost like a taxi driver and it got old. I decided when I got a place to have people come to me, so I try to make it worth their while. With all the pictures and things that you could look at and do.

It is convenient to live and work in the same place but sometimes you end up not getting enough done. How many offices you go to that have a bed in them or a couch to layout on? If I could do it all over again I would do it exactly the same.

What do you think about the development downtown?

I am glad the bubble popped and everyone kind of stopped moving in. I do like the fact that a Ralphs moved in in 9th and Hope.

Why did you choose this area?

The word Loft has gotten used up lately, but I wanted a large industrial space with large windows where I could work and make noise. It became really trendy, with hard lofts, soft lofts. What is a hard loft? What is a soft loft? I DON'T know.

It seems like you need all that space though.

Capacity always get used, there is no such thing as excess capacity. It will get used. You put in a ten lane super highway in the middle of nowhere, come back in five years it will be bumper to bumper traffic. I really enjoy the fifteen foot ceilings, I like it. I never could set up my big lights in my last place. I also like looking down in between the buildings and seeing what everyone is up to. I like to have a view. I shoot all the bridges in downtown, they even pay me to shoot the 1st street bridge, L.A. city does, and the last place we lived we could see all the bridges from the roof. Here we can't see anything, but there is a 7 eleven. That is such a huge difference. I remember when they put the 7 eleven in a few years ago and it changed the whole neighborhood.

For the better or worse?

Well, there's a lot more beer drinking going on! It is very convenient for a place like this.

Is the brewery a live work space?

I believe so, I think they originated it for that purpose. Around 1975 or 1978 the Pabst Brewery sold it. The place was 30 years old when they sold it. Carlson industries bought the whole place and tore down a lot of it and built additional living spaces.

Would you ever move out of Los Angeles, or do you like Los Angeles?

It doesn't really have a lot going in terms of fashion but it has the celebrity thing and it has the movie thing. And it has the weather thing. What is this wet stuff? Rain, that's what they call it...

I went to Europe and it's a great place to vacation but to live there you have to be very committed. I am used to being in America, I want my telephone set up in forty eight hours, I want my land line hooked up now and they will do it. When I was in Spain it was a two year wait. That's what it was like in Spain.



I like Chicago, but it has nasty weather. New York has the fashion thing going on but I am afraid to go there because I don't think I would ever come back. I would do very well with the twenty-four-hour economy. I would get my dry cleaning at four am.

I think (LA) is big enough and fast enough to be interesting but not too fast and kinetic where you burn out. As long as we don't have a big earthquake we're set.

What kind of music are you into?

I am going through a non-music phase. I used to have stacks of music going all the time but now I just want nothing at all. I have to remember to put on music when people come over.

Did the music help you work before?

I could always tell people who haven't really been on any real photo shoots because they want to play really loud music. It sounds very neat but you can't talk to each other. You can't hear each other, you can't communicate. If I am shooting pics and in the creative flow you could pay me a thousand dollars and I couldn't tell you what is on the radio. I am focused on shooting. It could be talk radio, opera, jazz, I wouldn't know. I am concentrating.

Is there a rhythm you work with?

I do have a lead in, a happy yo yo, you are shooting and.... The hardest part of a shoot is knowing when to stop. Should you try shooting some more or were you done half an hour ago and you don't know it. I think for a painter it would be "Is the painting finished?" Don't ever ask a painter if the painter is finished. They hate that!

You always wonder if you are going to get a better picture if you tried a little longer? You know that you got something good but is it as good as it could be or should be? I just wait and see if they are happy. With digital they can immediately see the results. It is also a hell of a lot cheaper than film.

Do you have something in mind before a shoot or is it all natural?

Sometimes, I try not to be specific. I am a water sign myself and a lot of times it seems to be if you are specific you are going to bang your head trying to get the one specific thing to come out. Whereas if you say you want to take a good picture with this person and they ask what you are going to do, you say you have no idea. A lot of times I don't know what they are going to wear. A lot of times I don't know what I am going to do until I pick up a camera and start doing it. A lot of times I introduce chaos into the shoot. For example, "every picture you will be in motion, jumping, leaping, falling, reaching." Something arbitrary, "like wear something red no matter what" You just pick a thing and run with it. Just pick any arbitrary thing and run with it.

I really like Brian Eno's deck of cards, Brian Eno is the musician. They were a stack of cards, like Tarot Cards and they would say things like "undo the last action that you did." "Figure out the most important thing in the object and throw it out." Brian Eno is a genius, he is like Mozart.

Is there a critic in your head that you silence or do you listen to it?

Inner critic... Um... I make a point in not giving him much credence. I do let it speak so that it keeps me more honest. It always says it's not good enough, it isn't fill in the blank enough. I ask myself if I made an honest effort, if I did then I tell it to shut up. The inner critic makes an ideal and an ideal by definition cannot be attained. You cannot get perfection but you can get excellence all the time. You can be excellent without being perfect. If you want perfect you are going to be a very frustrated person because it doesn't exist. If you find something you think is perfect it is probably really static and unmoving, dead. Everybody has a mole or wrinkle or hair stuck out of place, we call that character. Where would Marilyn Monroe be without her mole?

I know the inner critic's there and everyone has one, I just try not to make it very important. If the person is having a good time they will see it in the pictures. Anybody making anything very important or an emergency out of it, it will turn out bad.

What art influences you?

What is art? I don't like to say that word. I just do what pleases me.



Did you go to photography school?

I took a few classes at UCLA, I don't think I got out of it what they intended to teach but I got something out of it. Every week we had an assignment to do a picture and after the fourth week I knew exactly what to do. All you had to do was to follow exactly what the rules were, the constraints of the assignment, and make sure I did something else no one else would do. And after the third night class like that I stopped going because I knew I could always do that forever.

Has your point of view has changed over the years?

I don't try as hard. If they have beauty or stylistic sense. I don't have to bust a nut to get there, they just have to show it. Some people do require a lot of work because they are trying to be something they are not or not yet. Maybe they will grow into it and I can help them. Most of the time a working model or an actor have a thing going on and all you have to do is to reveal it. A lot of times shoots just seem ridiculously easy. Maybe because I have done so many of them? I just pick up the camera and start shooting. Sometimes it is ridiculously easy... not always.

What do you think about the accessibility of cameras and what makes a good photographer and an amateur one?

Everyone can make their own music or own albums. It does dilute the working photographers' cache to some degree. But are they still shooting pictures six months from now? What do they do when the client doesn't like the pictures and there is nothing wrong with them? What do they do when they get ripped off? Your client writes a bad check? Are they in business? Anybody can pick up a digital camera and shoot a neat picture, and they do, but can they do it again? Can they do it on a day when they don't feel like it? I like that there are so many people trying to do photography because it keeps the price of equipment down. I believe and hope to see cameras getting dusty in shelves. I think everyone can go play with a camera and they should, its a tool, its a toy. If it amuses you it has done its job.

Do you think being persistent is important?

Yes, know that you are going to be a photographer and you are being a photographer. End of story. you will be around next year, five years from now, ten years from now. Take pictures that please you and then take pictures that please the client so that you get paid and go back to do the thing that you love. Three years ago I started shooting the bridges. I really loved going out at night to shoot them in the dark. I go out by moonlight to the spiral staircase where the 110 freeway meets 5 freeway, and check it out and take pictures. Now Los Angeles city pays me to shoot the bridges, and now I get paid to do something I like to do.