

photo
project:
look with
NEW EYES

Photograph a Door a Day

(or a tile or a doorknob)

WITH A THEMED PHOTO PROJECT YOU LOOK AT THE
WORLD IN A NEW AND DIFFERENT WAY. CAROLINE BUIJS
DISCOVERED THIS WHILE LAUNCHING HER OWN.



It all started more or less by accident, while I was on vacation in Portugal about nine years ago. I began taking photographs of just one subject: I photographed every painted tile I saw—and in Portugal there are quite a few. I had been looking for a fun project on my vacation, and this had a nice side benefit too: My traveling companions all started pointing out tiles to me if I missed one. It gave every walk through a city or village a nice feeling of companionship, as if we were all united on this quest. It also felt very calming, because there are so many beautiful things to see on a trip, how can you possibly capture everything?

By picking one detail to focus on, I felt more centered. Now all of my photographs of these tiles are lined up and framed on my bedroom wall, and I can still remember the exact time and place that I took some of them.

A BEAUTIFUL DOORKNOB

In 2013 I started using Instagram, and it turned out to be a perfect medium for posting series of photos. The Flow Mindfulness calendar from that year gave me just the nudge I needed. Each month, the calendar suggested a new idea for a project, and if you put the same hashtag under each photo, you could not only watch >



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your own photo series grow, but also the series other people were creating. It looks like a patchwork blanket made of different people's photographs, but with one unifying theme. That's how I discovered that taking themed photographs was also fun to do when you're not on vacation. The project-of-the-month 'Photograph a detail of your house every day' (to be found on Instagram under #flow31details) not only enabled me to see my own home in a new light ('Oh, that doorknob is actually quite beautiful, I never noticed it before'), but also provided a peek into other people's houses—secretly a favorite pastime for many.

Another project was to take pictures of front doors for a month. This time I got a whole new view of my city. Normally when I'm heading home from work I can be pretty wrapped up in various worries, but by concentrating on finding pretty doors I never had a chance to focus on anything unpleasant. And, one more advantage: It was impossible to go anywhere in a hurry anymore; I had to keep stopping to get a photograph of some beautiful front door I was passing, and that could only be done when I took my time.

PROJECT DISNEYLAND

But I think the most fun series of all was one summer ago. While on vacation in Japan, I had promised my children a day at Tokyo Disneyland. I did not consider it my ideal outing, until I started noticing that a lot of friends and couples we saw there were dressed in identical sets of clothing. Not only children, also twenty-somethings and older. Slightly apologetically I approached one of these 'Tokyo Twins' (as we had started to call them) and asked if I could

'Thanks to the 'Tokyo Twins', a day in a busy amusement park became a mindful day'



take a photograph of them. They said yes, and then, just like in Portugal before, my traveling companions helped me scout out more material, "Over here mom, these are fun!" And so, even a day in a busy amusement park was able to become a mindful day for me in a way—something I never would have dreamed was possible.
@carolinebuijs

TREASURE HUNT

Julia Gorodecky has been using Instagram for about three years now and posts a photograph almost every day on a specific theme, which changes every month. One day she noticed that traffic signs in her neighborhood were being ‘hacked’ in a comic way. For example, a sticker of scissors was put on a No Entry sign (the round red sign with a white horizontal strip), to make it look like the scissors were cutting through the white strip. These turned out to be the work of French artist Clet Abraham. Julia took to searching out as many of these hacked signs as she could find, and posting pictures of them on Instagram to show her friends abroad. It felt kind of like a treasure hunt.

“After I ran out of new traffic sign art, I started missing it,” Julia says. “I missed the treasure hunt, and missed sharing my pictures. That’s when I came across several funny objects that just happened to be blue, and so I decided to photograph a blue object every day for a month. After that I kept choosing a new theme every month, to keep things fresh—for myself more than anything really.” One of the fun things about the project is thinking of a title for each, incorporating the name of the month when she can. Like ‘September through the looking glass’. “Since I started using Instagram this way, I feel like my eyes have been opened to a new world,” says Julia. “I notice far more things while I’m walking,

cycling or even driving around. I’m always looking for things that can spark off a theme, and that makes even a walk to the supermarket interesting. My love for photography has grown, too. I used to be a bit jealous of my husband and daughter because they take great photos. Now it’s nice to notice my photographs are getting better, too. For my birthday, my husband gave me a new camera because he saw how much I’m enjoying it.”

@juliagorodecky, @cletabraham >



‘This way I notice far more things while
I’m walking, cycling or even driving around’

A DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING

Traveling through Tanzania, the idea for a photo series came to **Laura Vink** quite suddenly: laundry hanging out to dry on a clothesline. “It must have been the combination of colors, location and the huge contrast between the clotheslines and the way I dry my clothes at home—in the dryer—that gave me the idea for a series,” Laura says. “Moreover, a photograph of clothes hanging out to dry speaks volumes about the people who live there and how they live.” From Tanzania onward, the series grew, as Laura photographed clotheslines in other countries, too. She’s noticed it has changed the way she looks around her, even when she doesn’t have her camera. “I notice clotheslines wherever I am,” she says. “Although I don’t photograph them as often any more, I can’t resist a good clothesline. Once I startled my boyfriend by yelling ‘Stop!’ when we were on the road in Austria: I had seen a beautiful clothesline and just wanted to take a picture.”

Another well-known theme on Instagram is ‘From where I stand’: a picture of your feet, taken from above (#fromwhereistand). Laura, too, uses this theme for an ongoing series. “Because I have lots of pairs of All Stars in different colors, the pictures come out in a nice range of colors and also gives me a good excuse to buy a new pair in another color,” she says. “Taking themed photographs is a fun challenge: When you are taking lots of pictures on one theme the trick is to get each picture to be just that little bit different.” @lauravink >



TIPS FROM LAURA

- * It's fun to do a photo project together with a friend. It's not about being the best, but about seeing how you two might approach the same project in different ways. It's also fun to do if you are each in a different place.
- * If you are making a series of photographs with an analog camera, then you can choose how many pictures the series will be in advance—one roll of film, for example (24 or 36 pictures).
- * There are different ways to take series of photographs: It can be a 365-day or a 30-day project, or 10, 50 or 100—whatever you decide. There are no rules.



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DETAILS AND MARVELS

Femke Hesselink has been active on Instagram since 2012. “My photographs actually always have a certain theme but I don’t always use specific hashtags,” Femke says. “Except for #moestuinaandag (Monday kitchen garden) and #charliekitty. Generally the themes that I use in my photographs run for a long time, or keep recurring. For example, when I am on vacation I take a lot of pictures of doors and windows, so I am extra focused on these when I walk around a city.”

What Femke likes about working with themes is that it brings about a natural selection of the subjects you photograph; many things are automatically eliminated because they don’t fit the theme. “I love details,” she says. “When you compare my pictures to my boyfriend’s, you’ll see all these overview pictures by him, for example of the harbor of some Italian town, and in my picture you’ll see only a bright yellow buoy floating in the clear blue water. I like to marvel



at all that I see around me, and don’t take anything for granted. Those two things—details and marveling—are, I think, what make my pictures distinctive.” Femke now makes cards out of photographs that turned out to work well as a series: Nature photographs with a blue glow, made with a special type of film. @femke_hesselink ●



FUN INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS

#flow3ldetails
#flow30doors
#flow30flowers
#flow3lpatterns
#100daysoftea
#fromwhereistand
#frontdoors
#greendoors
#windows_aroundtheworld
#oldtiles
#whatieattoday
#whatiread
#30daysofnature

TEXT CAROLINE BUIJS PHOTOGRAPHY CAROLINE BUIJS,
JULIA GORODECKY, FEMKE HESSELINK, LAURA VINK