

BASHO'S NARROW PATH



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A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication



Basho didn't just write haiku; he showed us the way of being an artist in the world, of connecting with life, of being immersed in the moment. He stressed *amari-no-kokoro*, which he explains as "the heart/soul of the poem must reach far beyond the words themselves, leaving an indelible aftertaste."

As a photographer, I'm inspired by his directness, but the road is difficult. He had assets and tools — namely, his *wisdom* and *haiku*. All I have is me and a camera. I have so many questions I wish I could ask of him . . .

Master Basho, how do we begin the narrow path of the art life?

*The moon and sun are travelers through eternity. Even the years wander on. Whether drifting through life on a boat, or climbing toward old age leading a horse, each day is a journey, and the journey itself is home.**

Master Basho, you write in 17 syllables with eloquence; I have a hard time keeping it under 17 *paragraphs*. How do I know when it's right?

*In the end, without skill or talent, I've given myself over entirely to poetry. Po Chu-i labored at it until he nearly burst. Tu Fu starved rather than abandon it. Neither my intelligence nor my writing is comparable to such men. Nevertheless, in the end, we **all** live in phantom huts.*



* Text from his famous *Oku no Hosomichi* (Narrow Road to the Deep North), written in 1689.



But, life is so much more complicated now. How can we possibly measure up to those who have gone before us? How do we travel the narrow path?

No matter where your interest lies, you will not be able to accomplish anything unless you bring your deepest devotion to it.

How do I begin?

*Do not seek the men of old; **seek what they sought.***

Old pond

A frog jumps in . . .

Plop!

I'll try.





Brooks Jensen is a fine-art photographer, publisher, workshop teacher, and writer. In his personal work he specializes in small prints, hand-made artist's books, and digital media publications.

He and his wife (Maureen Gallagher) are the owners, co-founders, editors, and publishers of the award winning *LensWork*, one of today's most respected and important periodicals in fine art photography. With subscribers in 73 countries, Brooks' impact on fine art photography is truly world-wide. His long-running podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 900+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](#), the LensWork membership website. LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with *LensWork Extended* — a PDF based, media-rich expanded version of the magazine.

Brooks is the author of seven best-selling books about photography and creativity: *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Single Exposures* (4 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); and *Looking at Images* (2014); as well as a photography monograph, *Made of Steel* (2012). His next book will be *Those Who Inspire Me (And Why)*. A free monthly compilation of of this image journal, [Kokoro](#), is available for download.

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