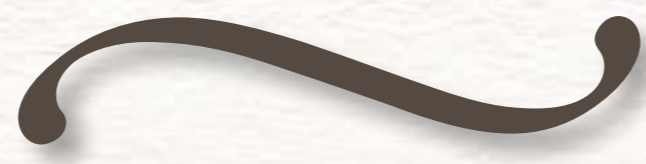


# MEMENTO MORI



*Brooks Jensen*

*A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication*



**The Latin** maxim *memento mori* (“Remember that you will die,” or more succinctly “Remember death”) has a long association with art. It’s a call to urgency, humility, and a reverence for living *fully* while we are yet alive. Mortality is our gruesome, yet common lot — but it’s so easy to pretend otherwise.

On Hainan, the island prefecture of southern China, I found *memento mori* in the remote village of Bing Lang Gu, revered by the native Li and Miao peoples. Throughout the village, reminders of mortality were everywhere in the form of painted cow skulls. How does one not think of Georgia O’Keeffe’s paintings, Edward Weston’s still life photographs, and all the other examples in art that point us in the direction of *memento mori*? Perhaps artists are keenly aware that their work will end, yet simultaneously remain.

Perhaps *all* of us are aware of our mortality, at least for a moment here, a moment there, in the midst of daily life. And then our routine resumes and the rhythm of days ticks on. But for those moments when *memento mori* is with us, uncomfortable as it is, do we not feel just a bit more connected to a larger truth?



























**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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