

# A LESSON LEARNED, AGAIN



*Brooks Jensen*

*A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication*

**There is no doubt** that we live in an age of ever more sophisticated technology that aids — and sometime *rules* — our lives. Like so many, I'm fascinated by all the magic the new devices can perform; I embrace them, enjoy them, are entertained by them, and will even admit to a small degree of lust for the newest gadgets.

And then I'll wander into a place like Smiley's and am overwhelmed by a sense of nostalgia for what we are at risk to leave behind.

I needed some repairs done to the trailer hitch on my car. I was advised that Smiley's was the place, so off I went. Luckily, I had the camera in the car. I asked and was given permission to photograph from the fellow working on the repairs. I eagerly and naively started working.

















A short 20 minutes later, I was approached by the owner. I introduced myself and assumed a little small talk was in order. “Why are you photographing?” he asked. I fumbled an answer which clearly didn’t satisfy him. He kindly, but firmly, asked me to stop.

Hoping it would smooth things over, I explained that I had asked permission from his employee. “Well,” he replied curtly, “you should have asked *me*.” And, of course, he was right. I knew better, but in my eagerness I had neglected to seek out the *the owner* before I started photographing — a foolish and embarrassing mistake.



During the next few moments as I tried to talk my way into an understanding, I could feel the tension building. Not wanting things to escalate, I changed course, apologized and complied. Tail between my legs, I spent the next hour in the waiting room, watching the clock tick. Ten photographs made, and countless ones lost because of my inept lack of courtesy. I couldn't blame him. I can just imagine how I'd feel if someone came into my business and started poking around without first asking for my permission. I'd be suspicious, perhaps angry, too.

Art may be some higher calling, but it doesn't trump common courtesy and human relations. This was the second time in my photographic life I'd been kicked out from somewhere I regretted being denied — and as the *second* time, I must have needed to relearn the lesson. This time, the lesson has been stamped as if in steel. Thanks, Smiley — I owe you one.





**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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