



THE CONTENT  
PHOTOGRAPHER | 2019  
with Kyle Ford

Who the #1% is  
Kyle Ford?

- \* Creative Director of [Ford Media Lab](#)
- \* Self-taught professional photographer
- \* Spends about 2hrs a day on Instagram ([@kyle4d](#))
- \* Formerly worked in marketing and finance
- \* Award-winning mixologist
- \* Has two black belts
- \* Will shamelessly take shirt off for free beer



“ They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. ”

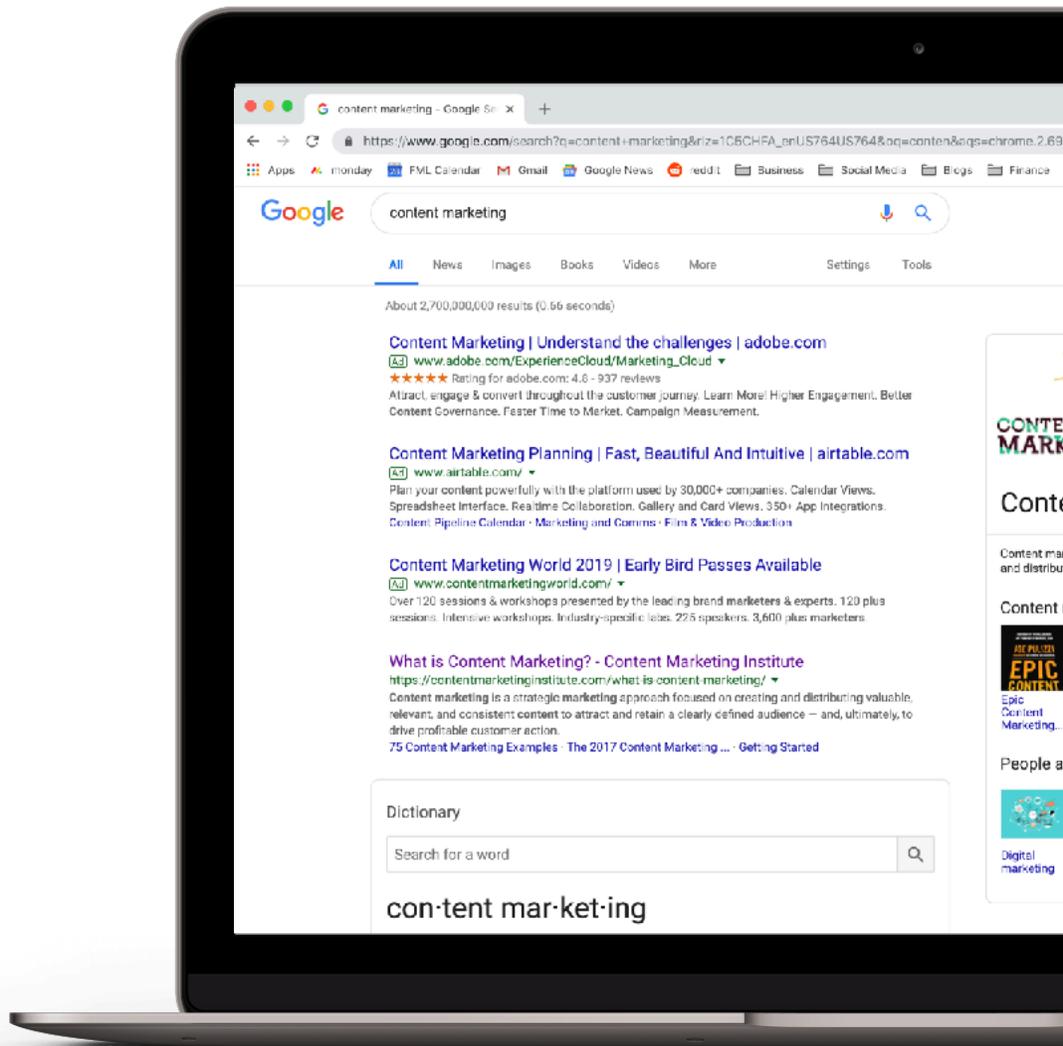
-Andy Warhol



# The Professional Photography Landscape Has Changed!

This is you getting the memo. “Yeah, okay, why should I listen to you?” Well, in less than 3 years I’ve become a top-rate photographer and built a successful content marketing agency with my wife, Rachel. I’m not here to brag, but to let you in on a potential photographic gold rush. Why? Because, high water raises all ships. As an industry, we need to adapt or we’ll get undercut. That said, let’s start with some boring...

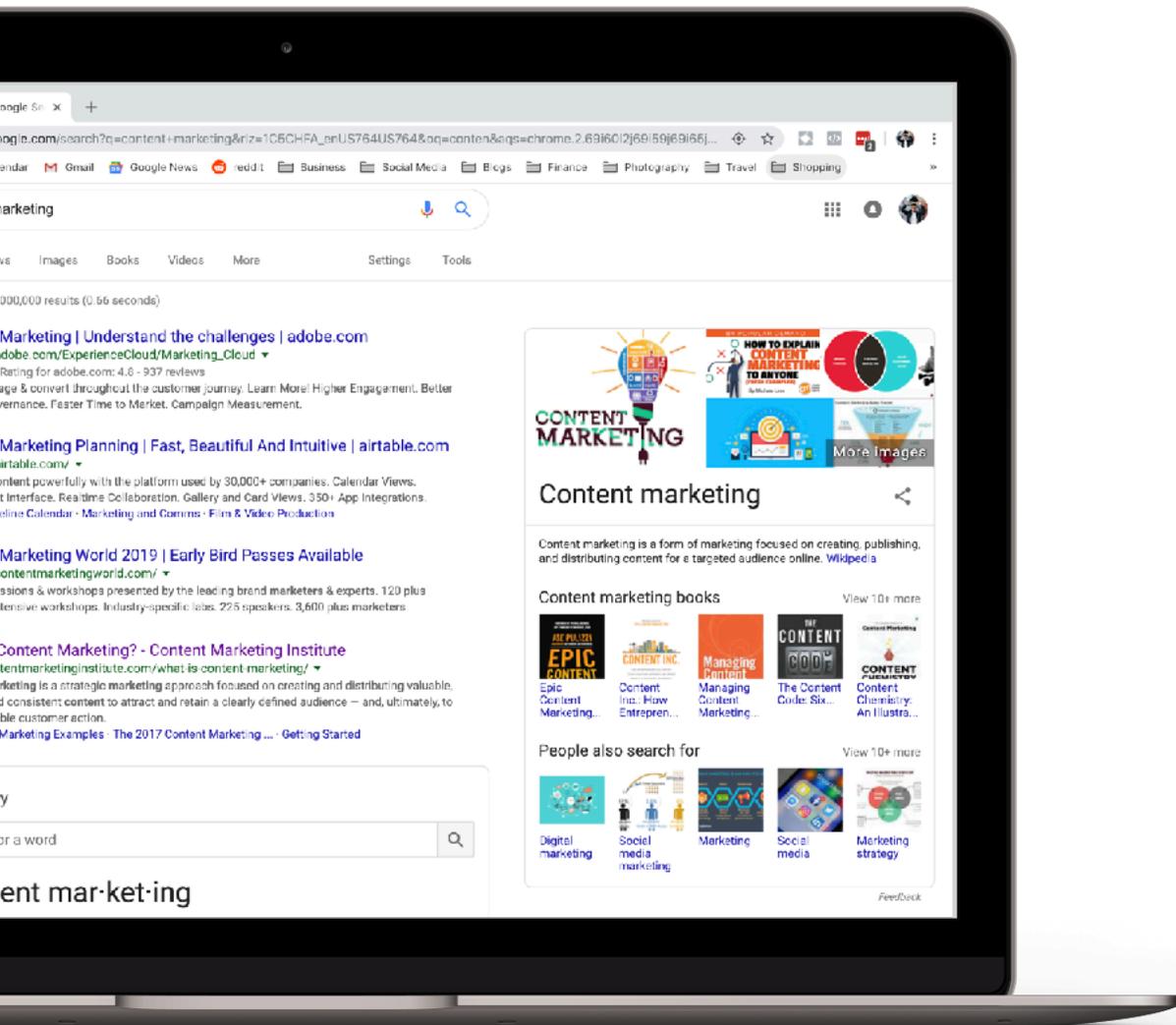




# Content Marketing... What is it?

The [Content Marketing Institute](#) defines it as follows:

“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”



That's nice, but...

“Why should I care about content marketing?”

Google it.  
There are 2,700,000,000 reasons.

Content marketing is replacing outmoded advertising.



Let's revisit that content marketing definition real quick:

“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach **focused on creating** and distributing **valuable, relevant, and consistent content** to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.” -Content Marketing Institute



That's great  
news for  
photographers!

The rise of content marketing has created a perpetual content need for every business out there, and it is estimated that one in three marketing dollars are spent on content creation and distribution.

That means there is major opportunity and \$\$\$ on the table for people who can create valuable, relevant, consistent content - a.k.a people adept with a camera.





Yo! Opportunity is ringing...

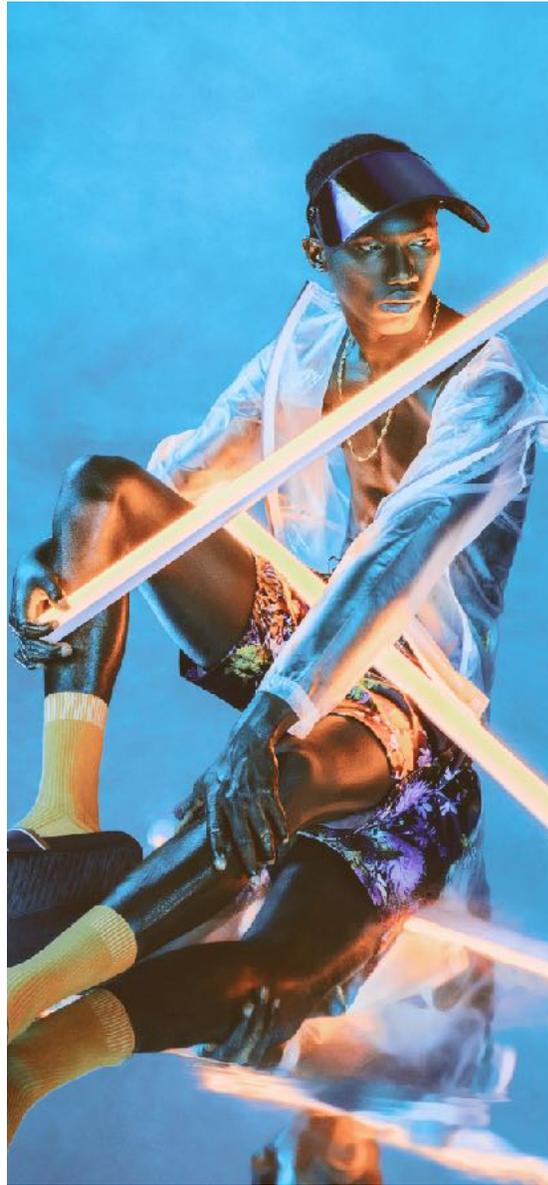
# “ Hello? Are you there? ”

It's time to be honest with yourself. What is your goal with your photography? Is it just a hobby, artistic expression, or professional ambition?

FML's goal has always been money-minded. By creating valuable and meaningful content for our clients, we can better equip ourselves for our personal creative pursuits. Freedom from financial burden can mean freedom in your art.

“ If you don't take money, they can't tell  
you what to do. ”

-Bill Cunningham



# Enter Content Photography.

*Content Photography is a strategic form of commercial and editorial photography focused on creating relevant and consistent visual content for brand storytelling.*

This is actually nothing new, but the rise of content marketing and social media necessitates that we give this niche a name. While seemingly redundant, as all photography could be considered content, content photography is created specifically to engage or inform a brand's audience. It's imperative that professionals enter this field, because someone has beat us to it: "influencers" armed with iPhones.



<p>Old Way / No. 1</p> <p>Project based.</p>	<p>New Way / No. 2</p> <p>No boundaries.</p>	<p>Old Way / No. 3</p> <p>Proactive.</p>	<p>New Way / No. 4</p> <p>24/7, 365.</p>	<p>Old Way / No. 5</p> <p>Polished.</p>
<p>New Way / No. 1</p> <p>Retainer based.</p>	<p>Old Way / No. 2</p> <p>Location specific.</p>	<p>New Way / No. 3</p> <p>Reactive.</p>	<p>Old Way / No. 4</p> <p>When it's done, it's done.</p>	<p>New Way / No. 5</p> <p>Organic.</p>

## The Content Photographer is different.

It's not a professional path for everyone, as it can be very demanding, but pursuing content photography can be a game changer for your business. Think retainer-based income vs. project-based. The barriers to entry are determined solely by your connections and topical expertise. The level of technical photography prowess required may actually be lower than traditional commercial and editorial photography. Given the use of your output, geography no longer holds you and travel may be encouraged. If this all sounds great, know what you may be getting into. The need to be reactive as a content photographer may mean no weekends, holidays or sick days.



# “Rad! I’m in. Let’s do this. Wait, where do I start?”

First thing’s first: take some time to **think big**. Here are some questions that helped me uncover potential paths forward:

- “Who do I know with a content need?”
- “What expertise do I have outside of photography?”
- “Where do the stories I love to tell or listen to live?”
- “Why am I interested in content photography?”

Answer these questions and you’ll know the “when” to get started and “how” best to develop your portfolio.

“ Innovation is taking two things that  
already exist and putting them  
together in a new way. ”

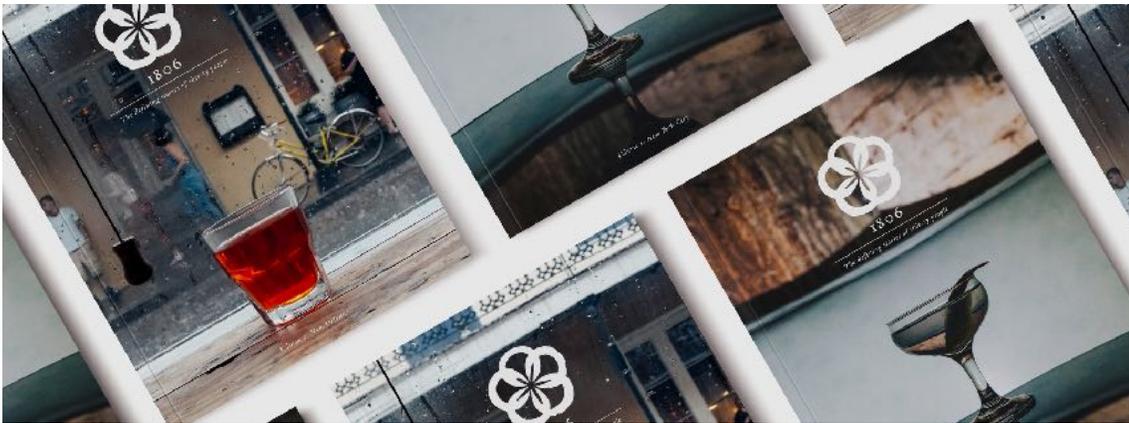
-Tom Freston



ABOUT US

# How Ford Media Lab got started.

Like a lot of great ideas, Ford Media Lab got started over a cocktail. My wife and I were working in liquor marketing and wanted to start our own business. We had a growing interest in photography and our respective brands' lack of content marketing strategy. We decided to merge the two and create a business that solved the content need present in our industry. Could you do the same in yours?



# “ Wait... what about social media? ”

You're right, the presentation description mentioned making social media work for you. However, you may have read that wrong. The current paradigm has everyone looking in one self-focused direction. Content photography isn't about you or your aspirations to be Instafamous. It's about leveraging an ever-growing content need. Most businesses utilize social media to engage with customers, but few have the consistent content to do so effectively. This is where you can make social media work for you. Its popularity has created a perpetual need for your photographic skills.



# “Cool, Dude. Now show me your photos.”

Fair enough. You want to see some of my work. I'm flattered. But first, some important things to consider:

- Curate your influences online and IRL
- Create an idea “swipe file” (This is why I'm on Instagram 2hrs a day).
- Build a team. You won't be able to keep up in this fast moving niche alone.

Now, as promised, here's a cross-section of my photographic adventures.



# Direct Flash ⚡

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Is it overplayed? Yes.  
Is it highly technical? No.  
Is it fun? Yes.  
Do I care what you think? No.  
Do people love it? Yes.



# Retro Futurism 🕶️

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Because it looks like I've been denied the future I was promised as a child of the 80s. Seriously, where is my hoverboard?! If that's not the future we are heading toward, I'll create it myself.



# Cocktails & Food 🍸

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This is my bread and butter. My foray into professional photography began in bars and restaurants.



# Cocktails & Food, 2 🥗

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Nom nom nom. The food and beverage space is prime for content photography. Why? People love it. It's a shared experience and can transcend its category and be shared in all kinds of places.



# Street Photos

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Street photography serves as a great creative exercise in finding something interesting in the every-day. Apparently I like capturing human isolation in urban settings.



# Street Photos, 2 🚧

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If you live in an interesting place and don't regularly take time to go out and capture a slice of the madness, what are you even doing? In my experience, the concrete jungle can change your perspective.



# Editorial Portraits

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Portraiture can be powerful tool in visual story-telling. As people, we are generally social by nature. If you can create a visual emotional connection with your audience, your content has already won.



# Creative Portraits

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Sometimes I like to tell visual stories just for fun. Even if it's just for your own portfolio, taking photos of people in different environments can be a great way to challenge yourself as a photographer.



# Travel ✈️

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You know what makes great content photography? Travel photos. Go see the world. There is some crazy awesome things out there. What you find may take your photography in a new direction.



# Urbex 🦴

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So, let's just say that I let myself into an abandoned amusement park. I was almost arrested, but it was worth it. Talk about an adrenaline rush and exploring a new form of photography.



# Fireworks

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Ooo! They are so pretty. Why watch the show when you can capture images like this? Although, you can really only do this in the first couple of minutes, anyway.



# Dinosaurs 🦖

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RaWr!!! Okay the Dimetrodon isn't a dinosaur. It's a Synapsid, but who cares? Creating a macro world for toys can be quite fun.



# Use Your Phone

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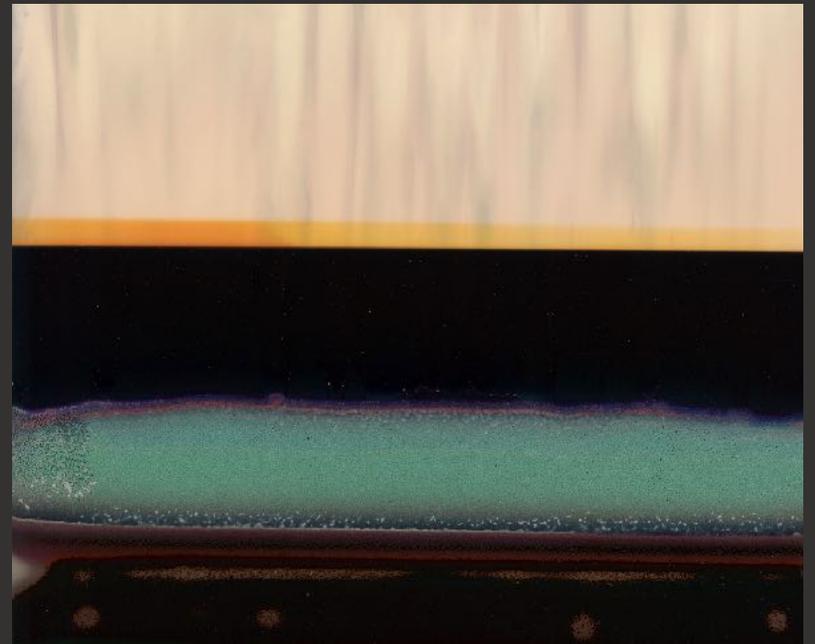
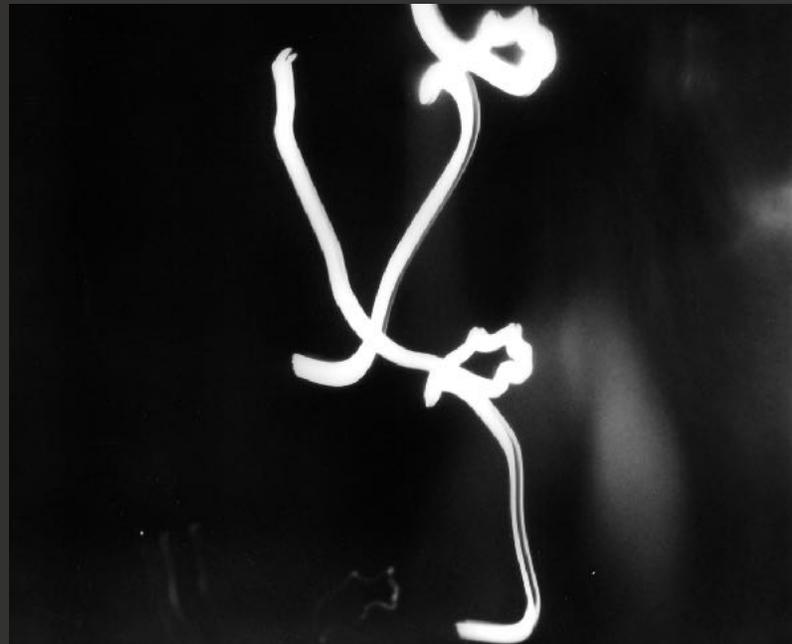
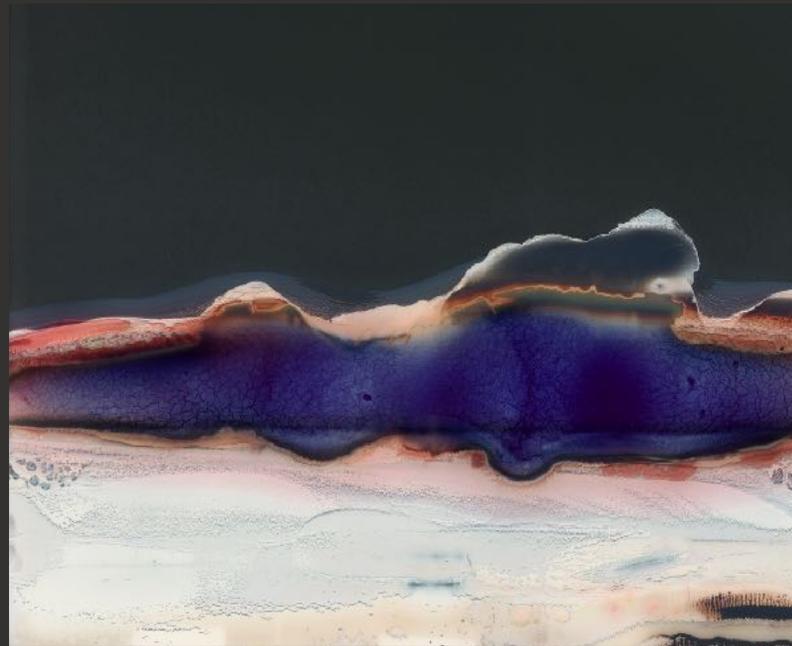
A true photographer is always scanning their circumstances for photographic potential. However, there may be moments that you don't have your camera. Or do you, in your pocket?



# Ejection Dejection



Going analog can be fun, but it doesn't always workout. I love shooting Polaroids while I'm on set, but some of my favorite results tell a "story not captured" by my SX-70.





# Go Find Your Context!



While I just showed you these photos for fun and visual delight, it was also to prove a point. Each and everyone of them could serve as content photography, given the proper context. In fact, they just did just that, as they were used to engage and educate you on a personal passion point: photography. That's a win for me, B&H, and you. Get it? Great. Now go find your context and create what inspires you!

\*We aren't sponsored by anyone. These are just the resources, gear, and inspiration we utilize ourselves.

feed me more!

- \* [Kyle Ford: @kyle4d](#)
- \* [Rachel Ford: @rachel4d](#)
- \* [FML: @fordmedialab](#)
- \* [Ford Media Lab](#)
- \* [B&H Photo and Video](#)
- \* [Content Marketing Institute](#)
- \* [RGG EDU](#)
- \* [Flixel](#)
- \* [Animoto](#)

- \* [Sony A7R III](#)
- \* [Sony RX100 VI](#)
- \* [Profoto B10 Duo Kit](#)
- \* [Sekonic LiteMaster Pro L-478D-U](#)
- \* [X-Rite Colorchecker Passport](#)
- \* [Epic Content Marketing by Joe Pulizzi](#)
- \* [Ignore Everybody by Hugh MacLeod](#)
- \* [Steal Like an Artist by Austin Kleon](#)



“ For me context is key - from that comes the understanding of everything. ”

-Kenneth Noland



**Ford Media Lab** is a boutique content marketing and social media agency for brands with a story to tell.

We specialize in content creation and community management for liquor brands. We are experts in the industry, because we were born from the industry. FML is led by two award-winning former mixologists, turned acclaimed brand ambassadors and marketing professionals, turned lifestyle influencers and content creators. With this unique experience and unparalleled expertise, we create opportunities for brands to connect with consumers in a way that few have mastered.

We approach social media marketing from a human perspective; if your brand were a person, what would be their unique voice? Let us help you answer that question, stir up your content, and change the way others see your brand.