

Yorkton Stories

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Kristopher Grunert: the magic of photography

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Dick DeRyk

Kristopher Grunert was born and raised on the family farm, a mile north of the correction line along Orkney Road, just northwest of Yorkton. The son of Gordon and Debbie Grunert and a younger brother of Michelle, the family lived on land first established as the Grunert homestead in 1888. His parents and several other Grunert families still farm in that area.

Farming, however, was not in Kris' future. As a teenager, he developed a keen interest in skateboarding, then a relatively new sport in Yorkton, which led him to Vancouver on a bit of a pretense. We'll let Kris tell that story. But that pretense did lead to a career and wide recognition in the field of photography that now spans 25 years, in which time, he has won numerous international photography awards.

His work has been included in exhibitions in Vancouver, Beijing, Osaka, Japan, Los Angeles, London, England, New York, Brussels and Berlin. In 2012, he also had a solo exhibition of his work in yes, Yorkton at the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery. His clients had included such familiar names as Adobe, Canadian Pacific Rail, General Electric, Tech Mining, Google, Gucci, Nike, and WestJet, to name only a few.

He has worked with top architectural firms, including the Pei Partnership Architects, owned by the son of renowned Chinese American architect, Yuming Pei, that's spelled P, E, I. And Kris's work has appeared in publications ranging from BC Business to the Wall Street Journal.

The Creative Director of DDB Canada, one of Canada's largest advertising agencies, and now part of Omnicom Advertising Group said this about Kris' work. Kristopher has the gift of being able to find beauty in things most of us take for granted. It's through his eyes you can find a deeper appreciation for the world around you.

The Director of Marketing and Communications for CP Rail said this. "CP first hired Kristopher Grunert for a one-time internal photo shoot through an agency in late 2012. Little did we know that he would go on to help us completely revitalize our corporate image with his unique perspective on railroading. High praise from high levels of the corporate world."

Kris is widely recognized as a photographer who uses his talents to create a bridge between humans and technology, in the process, creating mysticism around both mountains and machines. We talked at length about both his commercial and personal work, how that all came about, and how he sees himself as part of that process. You can view some of his work,

yorktonstories.ca where there are also links to websites showing much more of the work he has done around the world.

Until last winter, Kris worked out of Vancouver, but in December, he and his wife moved back to Saskatchewan to Regina, where they reconfigured and expanded their business. To many of us, a move from Vancouver back to Saskatchewan might seem counter-intuitive, but Kris had a good reason. We'll let him explain that as well.

So back to the beginning. You grew up in Yorkton. You were into skateboarding and you wanted to be a skateboarder, so you went to Vancouver soon after finishing school.

Kristopher Grunert

Yes.

Dick DeRyk

How does a farm kid from the Orkney district get interested in skateboarding? Because you were ahead of your time.

Kristopher Grunert

Yes, we were the first kind of generation of skateboarders here in the city. You know, I guess I would have to think satellite television that was in the 90s, like satellite TVs became a thing. I first stumbled upon a TV channel that was dedicated to surfing. Here I was, I guess, 14-15, and I found this channel on surfing, and I had never probably even seen that prior to that.

Dick DeRyk

There's not a whole lot of surfing on the prairies, is there?

Kristopher Grunert

No, and I was just like, wow, like these waves and these guys on the waves. And I was, you know, I just became quite amazed by it. And so, that was probably my first introduction to that idea of standing on a board, being so curious and intrigued by that. And then I might have kind of hit on snowboarding before skateboarding. It was, again, very, very new. And I think it again, it came through the TV, just sort of seeing a snowboarding competition on one of these sports channels and thinking, "Okay, well, I think maybe I could do that one", because I know that we have Mission Ridge and these other ski hills around, and I got my hands on probably one of the first snowboards ever. My dad would pull me behind the snowmobile, because that was kind of like the easiest thing to try it out and, and I don't know, I just love that idea of the feeling, I guess, just the feeling of going with the flow, which I think is what I saw on surfing, like, those guys, like, there's no specific line that they take, really, like, it's every individual choice that they make. So, yeah, it was snowboarding and then skateboarding.

My grandparents that lived right next to us on the farm had this small concrete pad, which was like, you know, maybe 20 feet by 20 feet. And I would just roll around on there. And I do remember my grandma, like "Why?" My wheels were making marks on the concrete.

When I moved from Simpson School like grade six to grade seven, I was kind of mixed in with more of the city kids, and there were a couple of other guys that were into skateboarding. That's kind of

how I got into it and then I kind of went into that group. In the really, early days, there wasn't much of it around, but we'd get our hands on these tapes of these guys, I guess, down in California or wherever, and we just watched them endlessly. And I think it was just so far removed from what was around me on the farm that it kind of provided this thing that was different.

But, you know, growing up on a farm, it was me and my sister, and our closest neighbors were just like a mile away. They had boy that was my age, and a daughter that was my sister's age, so we had this social connection, which was nice.

I spent a lot of time on my own on the farm, watching the clouds and seeing the airplanes fly over, and having this curiosity of like, there's something further, you know. Also, my mom has family in BC, so almost every summer we would do a road trip to BC. So, I had this awareness of the west coast of Vancouver, of the mild climate.

When I was in high school, we would skateboard in the summer, and then you wouldn't skateboard for six months, so you'd kind of lose everything that you learned. It was kind of frustrating, because it's a really, difficult sport. I think that's also what drew me to it, that it was really challenging.

Anyway, this awareness of BC and the milder climate and so I was in high school, I remember going to the principal. I was like, "Okay, yeah, I would like to see how fast I could move through this high school so that I could get there", and he's like looking at my grades. I mean, they weren't bad, but they weren't like, exceptional. So, he's like, "Well, just be patient and you'll get there". I kind of knew that once I graduated, I was going to save up enough money to make that move, and so that's what I did.

So right after high school, I continued my job at Canadian Tire. I worked as a cashier or in the hardware department and saved up enough money for that move to do on my own. I moved with one other friend there, and it was clear once I got there that I'm probably not going to be a professional skateboarder as those guys are born with something that is kind of exceptional.

So, at Canadian Tire, you know, after working for six months, I gave my notice and one of the other managers was like, "Kris, I heard that you gave your notice and you're moving to Vancouver. What are you going to do there?"

I didn't want to say that I was going to go there to skateboard, because I honestly don't know why I said that. I said, "Oh, I'm going to go to Vancouver and study photography," and then I honestly didn't think about it.

I moved to Vancouver. I worked in retail and a few odd jobs. It was probably six months later, I was like I probably really needed to do something with my life, and I didn't know what. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I was completely open, so I went to the Vancouver Public Library. I found this book, which was The Encyclopedia of Occupations. It was thick and it went from A to Z, and I started in from the A's, and I just kept flipping pages. It probably took a couple hours. I'm sure I was sitting there, and I got to the P's, and then I saw photographer, and there were two pages about the photographer, all these different types of photographers.

That reminded me that I said that I was going to study photography, but I didn't even really know that that could be a job, honestly, until I saw it in the book and read all about it.

The next day, I literally drove to all the different colleges and universities around Vancouver. I remember going to Emily Carr and UBC and Capilano College and seeing what they have for photography programs. Then I came across Langara College, and the Director of the program just happened to be in her office that day. I introduced myself, and I told her that I'd like to join the program. And she's like, "Do you have a portfolio?" I didn't even know what a portfolio was really. I was like, "Well, no." She's like, "Do you have a camera?"

I didn't even have a camera at that point. I just knew that this was something that I wanted to do. She gave me that look, which I can still imagine, that sort of smile, and she could see I was keen and stuff. And she's like, "What I suggest is that you look at the night classes, you know, see if you like it, and build your portfolio. And then once you've done that, you can bring that back to me, and I'll tell you more about the program."

So, I did all that and was accepted into the two-year photography program. It was technical, probably more technical than I've even been since then. I think my photography is a little bit less technical than some of my colleagues.

There was this last assignment of the first year and it was called industrial picture story, and that was like the first assignment where we were sort of given creative freedom to do whatever we wanted within the realms of it being an industrial kind of picture story. So, we were told to contact a company or some place and do like a photo essay. There was this oil refinery there that I drove past all the time at night. You know how those places just glow with all the lights, and even during the day, it just looks so interesting. It was kind of on my mind that it would be a place that I could contact. I did introduce myself and said I was a student and we had this assignment, and they're like, "Yeah, sure."

They were very welcoming. They welcomed me into the oil refinery for the day. They put me through the safety orientation and gave me coveralls and hard hat, and I really enjoyed that process of exploring and learning.

One of my friends brought a corporate annual report to class. It was a Finning Caterpillar Annual Report, and he brought it to class to show everyone like, "Oh, this is industrial photography. I found this on my dad's bookshelf. I guess this is industrial photography." It was beautifully designed and printed on incredible paper. It was all fine art quality black and white photographs of Caterpillar equipment in the Arctic and mines. I thought it was cool and this is what I want to explore. I knew at that time that this was something I would really like to continue so I did, and I just kind of kept going with it.

Dick DeRyk

What was your first big job? What was the one that in your mind got you started?

Kristopher Grunert

I mentioned that Finning Caterpillar Annual Report that my friend brought to class. That really stuck with me. It was probably three years later like I had finished college; I worked with a

photographer for a year as his full-time assistant. He was busy and I was really focused on supporting him. At some point, I realized I needed to go out on my own and take my own photographs. I still remembered that annual report. It was produced in Vancouver. I remember researching and finding out who did that original annual report. I think I called them up and made a meeting with them to show them my portfolio. I didn't really mention that annual report until I got there. They were like "Oh, we don't actually have that account anymore, but if you're curious about that, you should talk to this other company." So, I did.

I don't know if that was the very first assignment, but I went to that other company, I told them about this annual report that inspired me. They're like, "Oh yeah, we just finished that project, but we're working on this other one that maybe you're interested in. It's for a mining company called Placer Dome, and if you're interested in that, maybe we can work together."

So, I did my first mining assignment up in northern Ontario with my Hasselblad. It was like northern Ontario. Growing up in the prairies with cold temperatures was nothing new in the winter, but wow, Timmins, Ontario was -52 in the morning. This was the day that we were going to be taking photographs in this open pit mine. Luckily, I had the Hasselblad because that was completely manual. But even my light meter that I would use to judge the exposure, I'd have to keep it in my armpit to warm it up and then take the reading and then take the shot. So that was like my first big industrial assignment which involved traveling across the country, and it was so exciting to be in that cold weather. We did go underground, and that was my first time, also being in an underground mine, which was fascinating to me. And so, we got that one under the belt.

Then the next year, I got that Finning Caterpillar assignment, which was really a big milestone for me, because that was so cemented in my head since college. That one involved going to the UK, where they also had facilities and distribution centers, and then down to South America, to Chile, which Finney also operated in. So that was the first international assignment that I had. It was awesome, but it was also challenging. It was a bit of a wakeup call to me, because when we got to the UK, it was just raining nonstop, and it was dark and gray. Somehow, I had to do these photographs of this machinery and make them look awesome. Luckily, they stuck with the black and white theme of the photographs. In the end, it wasn't bad, but it was pretty stressful as a first international assignment. So, I just had to kind of push through and get through it.

Dick DeRyk

I asked Kris how his personal photography, where he can basically give free reign to his creative processes, meshes with his commercial work, which obviously has a very specific purpose, which has requirements and expectations set by the client he's working for.

Kristopher Grunert

It was always like a challenge to me, because I always had this more personal work, and then more commercial work. The personal work was where I would just go out and explore the city.

At this point after college, I did like tree planting one summer to save enough money to buy a Hasselblad. And so, then I had a Hasselblad, and that was like my baby. And then I would just go out and explore the city with my camera, often at night, creating all this personal work. And then I would get these, like commercial assignments.

And to me, it was always a challenge, because I had this body of work, which was very personal, and then this other stuff which was kind of commercial. Everyone that I talked to, like these sorts of consultants and people that help photographers build their career, they were like, you know, show your personal work. That's how you'll get the commercial stuff.

I've always enjoyed the commercial work, like it's more fulfilled, that sort of need to just explore and but honestly, when I think about it, now that you ask me, I did this exhibit here, at the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery, curated by Don. He was the first one to really see my commercial work, like this industrial stuff, and wanted to put it into the gallery as art pieces. And to me, that was a real milestone.

Dick DeRyk

The commercial and the personal?

Kristopher Grunert

To me, it always was the same. It was the same process of just going out and exploring, but there were two very different results that people just categorized. For me, when I did that exhibit, which we titled "As Above So Below," it allowed me to finally blur those lines between the two in my own head, at least. So, you know that kind of bridged the two things in my own head and I guess for others who saw the work as well.

Photography has always been more about the process of taking the photograph than the photograph itself. Even though that commercial work that you see for these large industrial companies was very personal; to me, I approached it the same way in most cases. The spiritual stuff would have come about like during Covid, when all that commercial work just disappeared overnight, essentially, whatever projects I had just got put on hold. Like a lot of other people. I had time to reflect on myself and my own practice.

I've always had this sort of spiritual side, like growing up in the family that I had, there was always this awareness of religion and spirituality, and I somehow got interested in meditation, because I guess I had time to do it, and I started to do that on a daily basis.

It wasn't really like meditation. It was a breathing practice that I started during Covid. Wim Hof Breathing, which is this method of essentially taking 30 big breaths and then holding your breath, and it's supposed to be very healthy.

After doing that for probably a few months or something regularly, at some point, it just kind of hit me like this whole concept of meditation, like everything I was reading about meditation and this awareness and mindfulness, is really kind of what I've been doing with photography, like just being in the moment, being out in the world, being in the actual present moment. Because when you're taking that photograph, you're looking through the viewfinder, you're capturing the present moment. So, there was this awareness.

Dick DeRyk

Freezing time.

Kristopher Grunert

Yeah, freezing time. And so, I kind of just, at some point it just hit me, like, Oh, wow. Like this, this whole meditation thing, I think I've been basically meditating or being in the present moment when I've been out on assignment, or when I'm just out exploring the world. Like that is meditation in the sense of being aware of the surroundings and being in the present moment. And so that got interesting to me, and I started to really look at my own self and then figure out, like, what is it that I do? Like, what is this process that I do when I go out and take photographs? And I just kind of deciphered that for myself. I would look at photographs that I was most proud of or had most connection to, and I was thinking about those times when I was creating them, and it was like, okay, well, what was I doing? I was letting go of expectations. So, I would just go out and explore. I didn't really have this specific image in mind that I wanted to create. I would just let go of expectations, engage in that curiosity, which I knew I always had, ask myself questions about the things that I would see, whether it's like me exploring on my own, or for an assignment, an industrial assignment. I was always curious, asking questions like, what is this? What does this do? And I think that even just by asking questions, it kind of puts our brain in a different mode, right? We're now in inquisitive mode, which is different. It's a different state of mind.

Again, looking at these photographs that I created, and I remember like how it felt, like I'd remember that if it was super cold, or if it was warm and. I could remember some smells that were associated with it. You know, sometimes with industrial processes, there's strong smell, sometimes they're good, sometimes they're bad. And sounds, right? There's like, you know, in these industrial places, there's a lot of sound. I was really engaging in all my five senses, even though I was like, taking these pictures, you could not be aware of the sounds or the smells. And then I realized, well, that's also a key component, because our senses connect us to the world around us, so when you kind of become aware of them, it just strengthens that connection.

And then it comes back to the light. That has always been the true fascination for me is just seeing the light. And that's really what I learned in college. And then even after college, working as an assistant for a photographer, he was primarily a natural light photographer, an architectural photographer, but used all-natural light. So, he was really dialed into that, aware of the light. And so, photography, for me, like when I'm creating that picture, I was always really focused, focusing on the light and the quality of it. You know, light is this thing which is everywhere. It reveals our entire existence.

And you know photography, when you, when you really boil it down, that's what it is. It's drawing with light, right? That's the definition I think, of photography is drawing with light, the original definition and so just this awareness of light, and I find that when you really focus in on that, and you've done these other things, like got yourself in that inquisitive mode and consciously became aware of what you're smelling and hearing, and then you focus in on the light, the world then kind of disappears around you, and it's just you and your camera or you and your subject. Time is somehow dissolved. You're capturing time, but you're not aware of it, because you're focused on these other things.

Once I started realizing these things and learning more about meditation and what people are kind of looking for or feeling or trying to achieve or these concepts, I was like photography has taught me a lot in a very different way. It's hard to not have gratitude at the end of all of that, because you've learned about it, you have this appreciation for the process or the person that you're

photographing. So that feeling of gratitude, which is also built into just the process of taking photographs or doing the assignments. For me, to kind of decipher all of that and realize that it was pretty, special, and then being able to share that with people and all those things. Hopefully, some of those things come through the photographs and people feel that that connection or that curiosity or the awareness,

Dick DeRyk

Do you use any light other than natural light?

Kristopher Grunert

I certainly have for certain assignments and things that I've been asked to do. Sometimes, but it's pretty rare. There's something about using what's existing. I think it does feel authentic. The idea of being in a studio is different. I have colleagues that do that, and it's, they just love it. They're really focused on the light. They obsess about that, so they do these incredible product photographs or portraits, and they're about creating the light, you know, to create these perfect, beautiful photographs. And I have huge appreciation for that. It's very much more technical, I don't know. I've just always gravitated more towards accessing my intuition, I guess, and just trying to place people in the right place at the right time and just using what's around us. There's no right or wrong. I'm definitely more drawn to the locations or the outer world.

Dick DeRyk

We talked about a trip he made to Dumont Dunes in the south end of Death Valley in California. It is an inhospitable place, as the name might imply, that captured Kris's imagination, which he then captured with his cameras.

Kristopher Grunert

2017 I had the opportunity to house sit a friend's house down in Los Angeles, and I had the time to do it for the month. And I thought, okay I'll take a week ahead of time, and I'll drive down there and take my time. And I kind of pre scouted all these, you know, interesting things to see, along the way from Vancouver to Los Angeles.

There was this one place that I wanted to go to, the Eureka Sand Dunes, which is on the northern part of Death Valley, and it's apparently the largest sand dune in North America. This massive sand dune has an interesting quality. Apparently, you know, we've heard of the singing sands. It's something that happens in this particular place. I mean, I guess other deserts as well, but apparently, it's like just the humidity and everything. And if you stand on top of this dune and you kind of create a bit of a landslide, or you push the sand down, the sand as it's rolling over itself, creates this sound. That's what I read about on the internet. And I was like; I've got to go there. And that was kind of my, like, destination. And, you know, I kind of worked my way there.

I was in a little town closest to it, and I was at the local kind of restaurant, and people were very friendly. They just asked, "Oh, what are you doing in town?" I'm like, "Oh, I'm going to go to Eureka Sand Dune tomorrow." And they're like, "It's just you." And I'm like, "Yeah, yeah."

"You know, it's called Death Valley, right?" Like, it's really a dangerous place. And they just found that family that was, you know, I don't know they found a family that was maybe lost for like, 20 years. They just found, like, the car and whatever."

I was like, "Oh, I'll be fine, you know, I'll be fine. I've got water and everything, and I've got a sort of 4x4." And they're like, "Okay, well, you know, be careful."

And so I go, you know, I start my journey. It was a few hours' drive from where I was, the closest community. It was still, like three or four hours. Halfway there, you do lose your cell phone connection. I still had satellite connection so I could still see myself on the map. I ended up going off the road down the trail, kept going, kept going.

There was kind of a storm a few weeks ago that, you know, it rained really hard, and there were a couple of washouts. And I went through one of them. I had a 4x4, and it wasn't too bad. I think I went through a second one, and I got to this third one, and I knew on the map, like I was, I couldn't see the dunes, but it was like, through this valley, like through this corridor around the corner, it was not far away. It was just over there, but there's this wash out. And I was just like, oh man, like, I know I could get across this, but I probably should dig out some of them, you know, make it an easier pass. And I was just standing there, and I could see there's like, a storm kind of brewing over to the right. And I'm like, whoa, those clouds are pretty dark. I'm like, gosh, I don't know if I should. I had to decide, because it was probably another five minutes around the corner. I was just looking up, and I swear to God, a single snowflake...this was in April, and a single snowflake came down in front of me. It was coming down so slowly. I put up my hand, and it just landed right on my finger, and I was like, okay, I guess I better turn around, because if I were to keep going and this storm is like, it's not going to be fun, and, you know what, if I can't get out. So anyways, I turned around defeated. You know, I really wanted to go, but it was clear that it was not the right time.

So, then the next day, I go back on the internet, and I kind of look for other dunes, and then I found this other place called Dumont Dunes, and it's on the southern tip of the Death Valley. And I was like, okay, well, maybe I'll go there. It was amazing. There was a black top highway that just went right there. And it was like this Regional Park that you put like \$5 in a mailbox kind of thing, and you could camp for seven days. And they just had, you know, outhouse facilities, which is all they had. But it was like this beautiful desert with these, like large sand dunes as well. And I just spent three days there. I had food and water and just me and my camera and just watching the light and the sand shifting. And there were very few people there, and that was to me, like the most incredible experience. I was very fortunate that I had the time to do that, to just connect with the environment. It was just me and the sand dunes, and the light was constantly changing, and the wind was you could just see it shaping these dunes. And honestly, that was probably my favorite little personal assignment. "The Ascension of Dumont", is the photograph that came out of that.

I've done all these nighttime photographs and used sort of long exposures to kind of create, like painting with light, and I've always been quite fascinated with that. And I did have this general idea of using my flash at night and flashing my flash and creating this sort of line or a journey, kind of capturing footsteps. I kind of had that idea, like I wanted to go up this dune and capture the journey along the way. And just spent three days there, got familiar with the place. I finally decided where I wanted to do this, and on the third night, I set up my tripod. I programmed it so it continuously took 32nd exposures on the tripod, and then I went to the bottom of the sand dune, and then then walked up, up the side of it. And basically, every three steps, I just flashed my flash, and it was completely dark. What could go wrong? Really? The temperature was perfect. It was like 21 degrees at 10pm and it was just so perfect. Every three steps I flashed the flash, got to the

top, and then came back. That's the photograph that you see there. A journey from point A to point B is also, I think, always been something that I've been aware of in my life, even those road trips as a kid, right? Like starting here and going there, and that awareness of that and so that's what this photograph is really trying to capture, is that, that journey and that, gosh, well, that it's really all about the journey. You know, in life, it's not about where you get to or even where you start. It's like that, that journey is everything.

Dick DeRyk

You've pretty much been all over the world since. What areas have you missed? Because, I mean, I see pictures from China, Macau rainforest, and desert, like most of us have kind of an idea of, you know, yeah, I'd like to go there. Is there a place that you haven't been to that you still need to go?

Kristopher Grunert

Probably many places. But, you know, I remember being in grade one, and just like being so curious about the whole like, Egyptian pyramids and, you know, that whole world, and I'm still curious and interested in that part of the world. I've never been to the Middle East at all. I would love to go. I don't know which country there, but I'm very fascinated by the history of it. It's just such an old civilization and some of the oldest architecture, but then also some of the newest architecture, they were just pushing the limits.

Dick DeRyk

Dubai?

Kristopher Grunert

And Saudi Arabia. I mean, these towers that they build are just, they're really, really pushing the possibilities of what we can build, which is fascinating to me, you know, I'm always interested in, you know, what we build and design and create, and love to see those buildings, tallest buildings, or the biggest. I would love to go to the Middle East at some point.

Dick DeRyk

Kris and his wife Mar are now back in Saskatchewan. Well, Chris is back, but for Mar, who comes from much warmer climates, it is her first venture here, and it started in the cold of December of 2024.

Kristopher Grunert

I didn't expect to be back in Saskatchewan at this time, but, but I'm really happy that I am now. But, yeah, I have my son, Luke, with my ex-wife, Chelsea. Chelseas' new husband is an RCMP officer, and he was transferred to Saskatchewan, so for me to be a part of my son's life, it involved moving here, which was a pretty hard thing to accept at first. Now that we're here, Luke is really thriving, and I'm realizing that the community that I had growing up, just the kids and the community, is awesome, and he's really thriving. So, I'm happy to be back in Saskatchewan.

My wife, it's more challenging for her because she's from Southeast Asia, and she has never experienced the Canadian winter before. She spent most of her life down in the US, in warmer climates, and so it's been really hard on her. We got through the winter. We arrived on December 1st, which was a really hard time to be introduced to the province. We got through the winter, and

we've even actually created this company together Creative Project Partners, and she's been such a help creating this company, because it's really something that I've always wanted to do. You know, I've always had my company, which is Grunert Imaging, and it was always just me, me and my camera, and it was like Kris's portfolio, and here's who we're hiring.

I'm really excited about Creative Project Partners and just kind of taking myself out of the equation a little bit and servicing clients in a bigger way than what I was able to do just by myself, because I've noticed companies have a bigger need for photography than ever. With that comes a lot of responsibility for them, like creating a library of images that are cohesive and that get used effectively and just managed in general. So Creative Project Partners is this bigger thing that allows us to service clients, not just me, but also bring in so many other people that I've met along these 20 years, different designers, writers and other photographers, videographers, drone pilots, basically whatever's needed. I've developed these relationships over the last 20 years to help service clients. And I'm also really excited about the digital asset management part of it, which is way more technical, but just helping clients manage their photographs, because even some quite large companies have a hard time doing that. Things get lost, and they don't realize what they even have. We're using some cutting-edge software to help manage that for companies. So now that we're here in Regina, it's, I'm really excited to work with more Saskatchewan based companies. I think for a long time, you know, I was, like, always kind of had this thing of, like, yeah, wanting to work with, you know, companies in other places. I don't know what it is, if it's just like the collective consciousness, or just me getting older, but it's, I don't know. I'm just not really interested in that as much anymore. I am really interested in working with companies that are just around us and here on the prairies, and realizing that, wow, like there's a lot of really, incredible things that are happening here in the industrial sector and in science and agriculture and technology that's interesting. So, I'm just starting now to start, you know, marketing to these companies, and started to get my first, our first contract, so it's exciting.

For me, it's so obvious that people that are here or grow up here, there is this general appreciation or connection to society or the people around them. In bigger cities, it's hard to find that connection. There's a comfort that's not there, that makes it hard, you know, to meet somebody new or to develop a new friendship in a bigger city. Vancouver in particular, is challenging, and maybe more challenging than Toronto, for some reason. But here, people are just really nice, and they have this sort of awareness and understanding of things that's really hard to articulate, but make life easier and more joyful, really.

Dick DeRyk

I suppose you have the advantages that you have already developed your business, right? Maybe it doesn't really matter where you are.

Kristopher Grunert

It doesn't really.

Dick DeRyk

When you bring your portfolios and your client list with you, they don't really care where you are. Like you said, you can, you can fly anywhere, and you only have to get to Regina airport an hour before.

Kristopher Grunert

Yeah, I love that. It only takes me five or 10 minutes to get to the airport. And yeah, I only need to get there an hour ahead and then I'm wherever.

Dick DeRyk

When you're talking to a photographer, there's obviously one other question that has to be asked. Everybody's now a photographer, because. Everybody has a cell phone, right? Yeah, you mentioned Hasselblad. My phone has a Hasselblad camera.

Kristopher Grunert

Oh, yeah, awesome.

Dick DeRyk

But not all cell phone users are photographers. What do you say when somebody says, how do I take a good photograph on my phone? Is there any advice from your experience?

Kristopher Grunert

It's amazing, right because I've been doing this for 25 years now, or actually more, counting those college years. So, I have seen the evolution of photography this whole time. I guess it was social media and obviously phone technology. The amount of images created now in any one day is just like it's an incomprehensible number that's equivalent to probably a century or whatever from, you know, in one day. I mean, I like to be optimistic. I think that it is amazing that people do have the tool, like the camera with them. I do feel like it is an opportunity to connect with the world around you and the people around you. It's a really fine line I think because we built this, it's almost like a visual language, I guess is what we've developed. You know, with photography, like we're using it as a way to communicate, just like, in a similar way, as words have evolved.

Yeah, everybody's a photographer now. I guess my advice would be, though, like to just slow, slow down, and before you take that photograph, look at the scene, maybe try to access other of those senses, you know, even if, like, if it's your smell or your hearing, because that will create. Developing that connection between you and the subject, whatever it is, will make a better photograph, as opposed to just pulling it out of your pocket and taking a picture really quickly, or, you know, being at a concert and viewing the concert through the phone or whatever. It can be this tool to create really a disconnection between you and the subject, and then also you and the world, or it could be used as a tool for connection. That that would be my advice is for people to really just slow down and take a moment before taking the picture, and just if it's a person, a loved one, a family member, a group shot, like, just take, like, two seconds and just look at them and just, you know, appreciate them for that little moment before you take the photograph. I feel like that will make the photograph better somehow. Technically, will it change it? Probably not. But I think there's some sort of magic there.

You know, that was a nice thing about being able to start in those early days with film, and I would go out and explore these places, and I wouldn't get to see the photographs right away. It would take at least 24 hours to see the photographs, if not maybe three days. That totally changes the whole process. That would be an interesting exercise for people to do as well. Try to get into the habit of not reviewing your photographs right away. Just focus on taking the picture and, you know, maybe review them later that night or the next day or something. It's hard to do when it

pops up in front of you, but there is a bit of a resurgence in this way of thinking of, you know, film photography. I think there's an app I heard about recently. I don't even know the name of it, but where, that's what it'll do, you'll take pictures, and it will essentially, kind of lock them up for you for like a day before you can see them. I think that's great, because in that time, your mind has the time to, I don't know, process the experience or the moment, and when you come back to it, more of a connection and appreciation, so having that time in between taking the picture and the final picture, and sometimes, honestly, like sometimes 24 hours isn't enough like this. This sounds like an exaggeration, but it's not like it's not. I've gone back to photos like some of these, like more personal type photographs, these landscapes that I've done in the desert and stuff, I've gone back to them, like, three or four months later and found aspects of it that I didn't see then and then, it completely changed the outcome in the end. 24 hours is great. You know, sometimes going back to pictures much later is even better.

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