

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. I'm Nicole Begley. And today we are speaking with the portrait photographer of the year for the pet photographers clubs, 2020 pet photographer of the year contest, Alicja Zmysłowska and like Haron's episode, just a few episodes ago. I did my best in my English language voice to say her name. If you'd like to hear how it's actually pronounced and have an incredible conversation on style, stay tuned.

Speaker 2 ([00:35](#)):

Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. If you're a pet photographer, ready to make more money and start living a life by your design, you've come to the right place. And now, your host, pet photographer, travel addicts, chocolate martini connoisseur, Nicole Begley.

Speaker 1 ([00:53](#)):

Before we get started on this incredible conversation that I've had with Alicja Zmysłowska about style and how to create your style. I just wanted to pop in here and ask you a couple questions. Have you ever said to yourself, I'm just not that creative or I don't have a unique vision or feeling the imposter syndrome or think that all the good ideas have already been done and there's nothing original left. Well, if you thought any of those things, this conversation is for you. And I also have an incredible free challenge week coming up. That is also just for you. It's called unleash your style and it is going to be coming to you in October, but it's not too early to sign up now, just go to www.hairofthedogacademy.com/unleash and sign up for our free challenge. It's going to be a five day challenge that is going to systematically take you through a way to start to look a little bit differently at your images and at your inspiration and how you can take your inspiration and your images, mix them together and start to create something that is unique and true to you and your voice.

Speaker 1 ([02:11](#)):

Not by copying those in the industry that are already doing it. But by instead creating something that is unique and original that you created solely on your own, we're going to take this big kind of esoteric style conversation and start to break it down with step-by-step things that you can do to start to move forward and start to figure out what it is you're attracted to and what it is that you want to create in your art. I can't wait to lead you on this journey. Don't forget to go save your spot. Now it's free for five days. It's going to be an October, but grab your seat now, hair.of.the.dog.academy.com/unleash. We'll see you there and now stay tuned for an incredible conversation with Alicia. Hey, everybody, Nicole here from hair of the dog. And today I have another very special guest from overseas that I'm going to completely butcher her last name. We have Alicja Zmysłowska, I would say in English. However, that's not how it is said in Polish. So Alicja, do you want to say hello and let us know how you pronounce your name?

Speaker 3 ([03:22](#)):

Okay. Hi, Nicole. Thank you so much for inviting me for the podcast. And yes, I can reveal now how you should say my name and in Poland, we would say [inaudible],

Speaker 1 ([03:36](#)):

That's a tongue twister for those of us that don't have those sounds.

Speaker 3 ([03:39](#)):

Yes, exactly. I wouldn't be surprised if you would just say this correctly.

Speaker 1 ([03:48](#)):

That's funny. Yeah, hereon the hair of the dog podcast guys, we get lessons in language and pronunciations and pet photography. So it's all very exciting.

Speaker 3 ([03:57](#)):

Actually. It's boring.

Speaker 1 ([04:00](#)):

Well, Alicia, I must say that I have been a fan of yours for a long time. I started photographing dogs in 2010, and I would say you're one of the first photographers that I found that had such an amazing unique style and had somebody that had curated your own body of work from the beginning. That was just, just unique and beautiful and incredible. So it's an honor to have you here. I'm very excited to have this conversation.

Speaker 3 ([04:29](#)):

Thank you so much. That's so lovely to hear really? Uh, yeah, that was long time ago, right?

Speaker 1 ([04:36](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. When did, when did you start photographing?

Speaker 3 ([04:39](#)):

Oh, I started photographing like 14 years ago and I go, yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([04:47](#)):

And you were, you were pretty young when you started, right?

Speaker 3 ([04:49](#)):

Uh, yes, I was, uh, 11 years old. Oh my goodness. That's amazing. Yeah, I was just okay though.

Speaker 1 ([04:56](#)):

Yeah, I love it. I love it. And then did you always photograph dogs or did you have other subjects when you first started getting into photography? Like what came first? The love of dogs or the love of photography?

Speaker 3 ([05:08](#)):

Oh, definitely love for dogs. I was just a big fan of dogs since I was born, basically. Like there was no reason for that. I was just like obsessed with all the dogs, but I ever had my own dog. Uh, and then I got Kira my dream puppy, my goal retreat. So that was a moment when I started photographing a lot, because I really wanted to capture the memoriz of my dream coming true living with me. And every while of it also before that I was photographing dogs, kind of like a hobby, like, you know, as a kid, uh, when I went to shelters to like walk the dogs and being volunteered there with my dad, I was attending

different kinds of, uh, dog events, like, um, dog shows or competitions or, uh, going to duck shelters as a volunteer. And I was photographing dogs with my dad as a hobby back then before I got Kara.

Speaker 1 ([06:06](#)):

Nice. That's fantastic. And, um, yeah. And then were you mainly self-taught or did you go to school for photography or do you learn all your, all your special tricks?

Speaker 3 ([06:17](#)):

Yeah, so basically I'm, self-taught, like I said, um, I mentioned my dad and my brother, they were also like into photography, but just as a hobby. So they showed me something and then I was digging into internet, find some Nolan how to be better and, uh, or finding some groups, um, forums or websites where I can post my work and get some feedback. So I was basically self-taught and what I could find online and use it, then I was doing that. So no schools or

Speaker 1 ([06:51](#)):

That's awesome. That's fantastic. I feel like that's something that gets in the way for a lot of people that they have this belief that to be good at photography and to be an industry leader, they need to have gone to school for photography for some way. And that's, you know, just really not true at all that there's, you know, it's, it's one of the great things about this profession and this hobby is that you can learn so much without having to go get some fancy degree. And in fact, you were just awarded, um, portrait photographer, portraits portrait, photograph of the year from the pet photographers club, 2020 photographer of the year contest. And congratulations.

Speaker 3 ([07:30](#)):

Thank you. Yes, I'm really happy about this and about this specific image winning it. It has such a nice story behind it.

Speaker 1 ([07:38](#)):

Yeah. Don't tell us the story. It's so beautiful.

Speaker 3 ([07:40](#)):

Yeah. Okay. I can do that. Definitely. So it's a picture of my own documentary. She's my second dog. And we, they traveling by all the possible ways. I guess she was traveling with me by plane, by train, by buses, by cars. And that picture was taken during our train trips and it was completely continuous situation. So this picture was made by our together life, by our story, but by what we were doing together. So I was just going home. It was like early spring. So Brown's outside window that they really like, most of people don't like this part of the year.

Speaker 1 ([08:21](#)):

I actually love photographing in the winter too. Like the grays and the Browns actually make a really beautiful muted palette sometimes.

Speaker 3 ([08:27](#)):

Exactly. I really loved that. Uh, I would say that's kind of part of my style since years too. Yeah. So I wasn't really inspired by this landscape, um, by the light and by the train itself, it was surprisingly pretty.

Yeah. I had my camera with me, which is nice thing to do to just have the camera with you. And I had my dog and obviously her toys and her tricks. Uh, so I just started playing around with my camera, trying get this view behind the window, trying to get something interesting. Like just without any pressure, you know? Yeah. We were just spending time. Like we love and using the time I would just spend sitting in the train and then some women saw us doing this. Uh, and I fought, firstly, like, she's gonna tell us to stop or something. They're like, Oh no, she will tell like, what are they doing with the dog? Like, uh, but no, uh, that was a big, nice surprise. She gets really interested in what are we doing? And she started helping me, uh, to get the shot that I want, Oh, knife, like, Oh, watch just trying to do. And then I was trying to get Siri to look behind the window, not me because she's like, she's really focused on me. Like she loves her, you know, it's important coli thing.

Speaker 1 ([09:51](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. I discover some of the clients that have the most well-trained dogs are actually some of the hardest to work with because they have such spot on focus to their owner that like, no matter what noises I'm making, they're just like, well, no, my job is to look at my owner all the time. I'm like, Oh yeah,

Speaker 3 ([10:08](#)):

Exactly. That's tough. I noticed, you know, we can just do all the noises, use all the tricks and the dog is like, Oh, this is destruction training. I have to,

Speaker 1 ([10:20](#)):

I actually find it easier. Everyone's like, Oh man, is it hard to photograph a normal family dog of like, no, they're actually the easiest because they're interested in all the things that I have, whereas

Speaker 3 ([10:31](#)):

Really great obedience champions.

Speaker 1 ([10:33](#)):

Nope. This is my job. Gosh. Especially those working breeds. They're so, so focused on whatever they're supposed to be doing at the time. Um, yeah.

Speaker 3 ([10:43](#)):

Pretty challenging. Yes, exactly. But that's really funny. I have to say false about that. Like those most trained docs are not really the easiest thing. A you'd have to know exactly what you need from them so we can tell it to the owner. So you need to have the biggest idea from all these shootings. There is no spontaneous, uh, shooting at such session, you know? Right.

Speaker 1 ([11:11](#)):

Yup. Yup. A photographer's dogs are a close second because they've heard all of the noises too. And they're like, whatever.

Speaker 3 ([11:18](#)):

Yes, exactly. And also with Siri, all her comments are like spoiled because you know, she will do something different that I want, but they like it for my picture. So I'm high. She's like, okay. So I don't have to do your comment. I will just, you know, improvise CA yeah. And then I'm like, Oh, she's broken.

Speaker 1 ([11:39](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Oh man.

Speaker 3 ([11:42](#)):

Oh, that was funny.

Speaker 1 ([11:43](#)):

It's just a beautiful image. We'll definitely link that up into the show notes. If you guys want to go check out the winners of the pet photographers club, 2020 pet photographer of the year contest, you can see Alicia's image and actually lots of other beautiful images too, but you can definitely go there and check that out. Our show notes page is www.hairofthedogacademy.com/thirty. Just the number there's three and zero. So you can go there and check it out. Alright. So Alicia, let's talk a little bit about style. Is that something that is, Oh my gosh. So important. And I feel like the, well, a couple of things, the pet photography industries, such a unique young place in the photography industry in general, you know, 10 years ago, there were a handful of pet photographers. Gosh, 15 years ago when you started even less. But you know, now there's more and more.

Speaker 1 ([12:43](#)):

And some people were like, Oh my market's saturated, but it's really not. There's so many dogs and there's still going to be more pet photographers coming into the market. But I think that's actually good because it raises awareness for people, you know, out in the market that then realize, Oh my gosh, pet photography is a thing. And then one of the best ways we can stand out from all the other pet photographers is to really be true, to kind of figuring out what our style is and how we can develop our own personal, unique style and be true to our vision. Uh, so then it's not just, Oh, there's five pet photographers in my market and they all produce the same work and I'm just going to hire whoever's cheapest. So I think it's so important to have this, this evolution of our style, which we're always evolving our style, but I'm super excited to talk with you a little bit about it.

Speaker 1 ([13:28](#)):

And I actually have two types of style that I feel we all need to pay attention to. The first one is the style or really the curation of our portfolio. So when you look at your own body of work, is it cohesive? Does it look like it was photographed by one person? Or does it look like it's photographed by a whole class of people of all different things. And then number two, taking that body of work and not comparing, that's not the right word, but looking at that body of work, you know, against the photography industry as a whole that to make sure that it's not looking the same as everyone else's because as it grows, I've seen this in the family photography industry and also, you know, newborn industry in high school, seniors, all of these John, or as once they start getting bigger than the types of images that seem to be popular, someone's like, Oh, they're having success with this type of image.

Speaker 1 ([14:23](#)):

That must be what the market wants. Oh, well now it's doing this. We should do that. We should do this. And then everybody looks the same, which I think then makes us a commodity and going to people are

going to be comparing on price where the one true way to really, you know, have value in your work and demand really what, any, whatever price you want is to be true, to, to creating what you want to create. And then you're attracting people that are really drawn to you as an artist. So that's a long little soap box that I was on for a minute, but I would love to chat with you about, you know, your evolution of style. And I can share mine a little bit too, but yeah, I would just love to know kind of, was that something that you thought about or were you just, you know, what did that look like as you started, you picked up the camera and you started photographing dogs. How did that process happen for you?

Speaker 3 ([15:10](#)):

Well, I would say it's really, it was really natural because, um, yeah, as you said, they were not that many doc photographers out there when I was just starting, they were a few and they are still there and I still admire their work. Uh, and of course I was getting inspired by them. I was like, wow, they are doing such amazing job. But somehow since the beginning, I was like, yes, they are doing amazing Trump, but I don't want to be like them. I want to create something that is mine before photography. I was drawing a lot. I was into digital art. So I was creating things. I was always into creating things that are unique and expressing myself in this way. So from the drawing, I already got this feeling that I need to create something unique and not repeat us. So she's always, I was really into the thing that I have to create my work.

Speaker 3 ([16:07](#)):

It needs to be unique. It needs to be mine. So that was in my head since always, but, uh, the style itself, uh, in doc photography, for me, it wasn't like a conscious process that much. Um, and this process I think is never, never finished. So I still think I'm kind of progressing or changing in my style. So that's an important thing to mention, but my style in the beginning was created by the things that I had near my home. Um, because I couldn't really travel that much when I was so young when I started, when I was 11, 12. So right.

Speaker 1 ([16:45](#)):

Wherever your bicycle will take you. Exactly.

Speaker 3 ([16:48](#)):

I was just like using, you know, the big fields that are like near my home, like five minutes walking. So I was really exploring this one place. I had no option to go to the beautiful landscapes, uh, or anything like that. Uh, so I was just no finishing school, taking my camera, taking Cara with me and going shooting though. It was my way of spending time with her and enjoying it. So I had to look for really like small areas that they're pretty. Uh, so that kind of forced my style, like with blurred backgrounds, uh, because there was not so much to show to be shine. Uh, I had to make it interesting, uh, with, with my camera and I didn't have like big blur cameras back then. Right. It was a struggle, but then there was post processing that is also a big part of my style that I post process a lot. And that was also because of that. I didn't really have anything super beautiful around me. I had to add it in

Speaker 1 ([17:50](#)):

Post process and like learn how to do it. So that was a neat, that I kind of tried to refill with older tools than just camera and being somewhere. Yeah. I love that. I've had this conversation with Charlotte Reeves quite a bit of how much, where you live and where are you, you know, start shooting at influences your style. And, um, her and I have had the conversation, like if I lived in Brisbane where it's

sunny, like 330 days a year and you have brilliant, beautiful, glowing, natural light all the time, you know, would my style have evolved to be, you know, more sun filled where I lived for most of my life in Pittsburgh and where I was for the first seven years of eight years, eight years of my business and where I really learned to shoot and develop my style where we have maybe three days of sun a year.

Speaker 1 ([18:43](#)):

All right. That's, that's a little excessive, it's really sunny in the summer a little bit, but for like seven months throughout the winter, it is just gray and cloudy and monochromatic because yeah, everything's dead. But I found beauty in that and I have, my style is it's not backlit and warm and sun soaked. I mean, I have a couple images like that, but it's not, it's not the meat of my style where it's more like I was drawn to the architecture because Pittsburgh had amazing old buildings and cool doors and, you know, all these kinds of things like that. And like gritty textures where, you know, she has the beach and, and beautiful trees and things like that. So I don't know. I think it's definitely such a big influence on, on what type of artists we become, uh, based on what we have available to us to when we start.

Speaker 1 ([19:39](#)):

Yes, definitely. We'll do Saturdays real. And definitely shuttled has this style, um, connected to this sun spotlight and hot weather. And I was there and I sold that and I was like, yeah, I see, see why it looks like this when I was there. And she has those beautiful, I'm like pink and green or pink and purple skies. And when I lived in Florida, we would get skies like that. But I'm like, I don't think I've ever had a pink and purple sky in Pittsburgh ever really. I mean, maybe after a storm, but like, you know, I don't know, like the light as you go further South, like the light from Pittsburgh to Florida in the evening, Twilight time is vastly different in the light, Florida when it's more tropical, just has these colors, that Northern latitudes. I don't know. I usually just don't see.

Speaker 1 ([20:30](#)):

But, um, yeah, it's interesting, as you mentioned, you have the things and gray Chrome and I was like, Oh my God. Yes. That's what I love. I know, I know. I actually really sometimes enjoy shooting in the wintertime. I love shooting in the snow and I kind of miss that now that I live in North Carolina, we don't really get any snow. Um, but, uh, yeah. Yeah. So fun. So other question for you too, cause I think a lot of people, when they start saying, okay, I'm interested in pet photography, it's natural that they then look up pet photographers and they start looking at all this other pet photography. Oh, so-and-so does this? So-and-so does that. Oh, and this is pretty and that's pretty, Oh, and I like that. I should try that. And this and that. And they're looking at all this pet photography stuff, that's going to influence them in a way that I don't think serves them well for figuring out who they want to be as an artist.

Speaker 1 ([21:23](#)):

And I remember this, at least for me, you know, you know, your first year, you're just kind of taking things in and seeing what's possible and learning new techniques. And you don't know where to look for inspiration outside of pet photography because you think, Oh, well I want to do this. I should look around that market and see what people are doing. But there's so many places to get artistic inspiration outside of pet photography and even photography. I know for me within the photography world, like I love to look at wedding like good wedding photographers, Jerry for Berto, Venezuela, like, Oh my gosh, they create such beautiful images. And I feel like my style has been pulled slightly from their influence, but it's so very different because it's not the same subject. I'm not tuning in hotels. I wish I could take

dogs into all these hotels where they have like these amazing walls and, you know, things, but it's that, that texture and that architecture and, and things like that, that I've pulled into my work.

Speaker 1 ([22:25](#)):

And then looking at, you know, TV shows or movies, uh, movie posters, commercial photography, uh, you know, there's just so many different spots. For instance, when I was watching a house of cards a couple of years ago, I mean, there is one point the lighting they would use for some of the scenes. I would literally have to pause my TV show my husband, like what I'm like, I just need to look at this lighting for a minute. Cause it's so beautiful. So like you start to find things that you're drawn to in all these aspects of your life. Um, so yeah. So where, where have you found inspiration like that? Outside of pet photography?

Speaker 3 ([23:04](#)):

Yeah, that that's exactly inspiration. Um, what do you explain? And this is what I would advise to everybody to get inspired in that way. Like you said, from other types of photography, like wedding for you, for me, it was like children photography a lot, a lot of times really inspired me. And again, like I said, it wasn't the same because I was using docs. There is like no way dog is like a child, uh, in any aspect. So, uh, I was inspired by like children photography or later in my later projects with landscape by of course landscape photography, but also by the movies by movies, like Lord of the rings, that was all time. Favorite movie since I was a little kid. Uh, so all those landscapes and the mood of the movie or something that I love. And then I wanted to create something like this, but with docs. Um, so yes, I love that.

Speaker 1 ([23:58](#)):

I love that. Uh, yeah, movies have, um, they have entire creative teams and lighting directors and art directors, you know, to bring to life just in a little bit of a different medium, you know, on video versus photography, but it's still light and it's still similar and they still might use some like color grading, you know, where they have the mood of, you know, it's dark and cool and, um, more mysterious versus like warm and, you know, just all these different things that we can pull into our own artwork, depending on what story we want to tell. Yeah. So homework for all of you guys is to get out and look for some inspiration. It does not have a dog in it if you're flooded graphing horses, no animals.

Speaker 3 ([24:42](#)):

Yeah, exactly. No the same thing, but I think the most important thing is to look yet outside of photography. We mentioned the TV show movies, but for me also I'm big, big, big part. Maybe even the biggest I would say was music now. Yeah. Yeah. Like music and the lyrics of the musicians. I love, I have so many, uh, captions of my photographs, like inspired from lyrics of the songs that I was listening to in that time. Um, I even created pictures, uh, like a series of small series inspired by a song. Um, it was my serious, uh, crystalline, uh, it's part of craving miracle, serious of dogs in breathtaking landscapes. And the song was from Bjork. The song title was crystalline and she's singing about crystals growing under our feet. So I had this dream to take a dog to a black beach in Iceland with, um, you know, ice, like part of glacier on the beach, uh, ice cubes, ice. Yeah,

Speaker 1 ([25:48](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Um, glacier. Yeah,

Speaker 3 ([25:51](#)):

Exactly. Like it's likely thought. So I have a dream to take a picture like where the dog is among those crystals under the feet. And yeah, I did it. I did it then. And it was like, okay, that's a serious really inspired by, by song, by one song. That's fantastic.

Speaker 1 ([26:07](#)):

Yeah. The inspiration is absolutely just everywhere. I actually have had a couple, um, inspirations from dream time too. And I, man, I think so much crazy stuff happens when you're sleeping and your, you know, your unconscious brain is connected to so much more than ourselves that, uh, yeah. You know, if you guys are looking for inspiration too seriously, this is going to sound crazy and you're going to be like, Oh, Nicole, woo got off the deep end before you go to bed, just be like, ah, help me find some different inspiration or where do I want to take my vision? What do I want to create? And then tell yourself to remember your dreams and pay attention. And it might not happen that night, but I guarantee you you'll start to notice different things, whether you're asleep or awake, but you need to be open to seeking that information. Oh really? But from dreams, but like,

Speaker 3 ([27:00](#)):

Say more about that because that's the first time I hear about kids.

Speaker 1 ([27:04](#)):

I actually have it's on my list to do, it's actually sketched out right next to me. It's for print competition image. And cause I've wanted to get more into compositing and that's been like really pulling me, um, my interest. And so I'm a big believer as a full, if you have an interest in something there's, there's something there, go explore it. And I think it might be from all the COVID coronavirus crazy, but I just had this idea that it's literally a dream. I woke up and I reached over, I keep the pen and paper next to my bed and I like sketched it out and it's um, you know, like, uh, me, all the shoveled and like my house was like picture on the side and my cat climbing the curtain and my dog like chewing on a toy on the couch and like a kid kicking a ball off the wall, which is basically what I feel like my life has been since March. Um, so a bit of a self portrait.

Speaker 3 ([27:53](#)):

Amazing. That's yeah. That's the inspiration from your life and from your dream, but can't wait to see this picture.

Speaker 1 ([28:01](#)):

I just need to like make the time to make it happen. Um, also book, have you read the book big magic? Oh,

Speaker 3 ([28:08](#)):

I don't think so.

Speaker 1 ([28:10](#)):

It's amazing big magic by Elizabeth Gilbert in that book, she talks about how these creative ideas, um, basically have a life of their own so that they, you know, they come to you, they come to us, our subconscious and it's up to us if we want to do anything with it or not. But if we like, we get it and we're

like, Oh one day, one day, maybe, maybe, and we don't act on it. Like eventually it might jump to somebody else. Cause that that idea, this creative thing has this energy of its own that wants to be made. It's just, it's fascinating. It's such an interesting book. And it talks about, I don't know if you've had these experiences to where, you know, you're just doing something, usually it's in the shower or, you know, somewhere where it's just like all of a sudden you get this like download of information. That's like, you've been thinking about something. How can I do this? How can I do that? And all of a sudden it's like here, this is how, and you're like, Oh my God. Oh my God. I gotta go.

Speaker 3 ([29:06](#)):

Exactly. Everything has to sense. Everything makes sense. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([29:13](#)):

So, um, so this book talks about that too. So it's really, it's really pretty fascinating. So yeah. So I better, I better get to work on my disheveled self portrait before, before that idea jumps to somebody else

Speaker 3 ([29:28](#)):

[inaudible]

Speaker 1 ([29:29](#)):

And the whole podcast. So now I better get it done before this airs in mid September.

Speaker 3 ([29:33](#)):

Yeah. Looks like, wait,

Speaker 1 ([29:37](#)):

I'm on a timeline. Um, but yeah, no, and I totally get how my selfie dog series, like that kind of created the same way where I had, I got my dog, my Zoe dog about four years ago. And uh, you know, she's trying to give pause, she's trying to do all sorts of crazy silly little things. Cause she's a terrier and she wants to, wants to please and kill small things, but please me. But anyway, I was like, Oh man, wouldn't it be awesome to have like this picture of a dog taking a selfie? And I'm like, Oh, I could totally train my dog to do Paul and hold the POL and move it to here. And then she's really good at it. But then I did it with her and I'm like, I wonder if I can do it with other dogs. So I started, you know, doing this with some other dogs and it was just, Oh, you know, it's so fun. And it it's so much more rewarding when you're able to come up with something and you know, you know that it came from your soul, you know, that it came from your, you know, your creative mind and Oh, it's just, it's so rewarding.

Speaker 3 ([30:39](#)):

It brings so much satisfaction because you are expressing yourself. And as you said, you can just start from a really small thing. Like, Oh, you said picture with your dog, with a PA. And then now maybe I can do this with more dogs or places. And it's just, it just starts with something small, like some parts of them, I think to say it out loud. It's not like a big project in your head. Maybe something like this, but it can just start with something little that you need to explore and deep inside yourself to create something bigger and bigger and just let it grow.

Speaker 1 ([31:15](#)):

Yes. You hit the nail on the head because I think a lot of people expect that what this would look like for them is, Oh, I don't have this big grand vision, but it usually doesn't come as a big grand vision. It usually comes as a Oh, that's interesting. And you know, the same thing with somebody that says, alright, I am going to redo my website. You're not going to sit down and one day and redo your whole website. That's something where you're like, I have 500 steps and I just need to know steps one through five right now. So like, as you start on this, you know, the style exploration or this exploration of finding your project, whatever, you know, and you can have more than one project, but finding something that's unique and that you want to create starts with just, huh, that's interesting.

Speaker 1 ([32:01](#)):

Oh, I like to paddleboard dogs and water. What can I do for that? Maybe let me see if there's any models and you know, find a dog and just go out and play no expectations, not client work. Just get out there and start to explore. And then it starts to take a life of your own of its own. And then you start to get some more ideas and the path becomes clear or sometimes you start and you're like, no, this one isn't working so much. Maybe let's try this way over here. So you will never, the point of that long rambling story is you will never have this whole thing thought out that you just sit down and execute. It's a process that, you know, start small and then you just keep exploring and building it and trying new things and practicing and not, and not being afraid to create stuff that stinks. Because during that process, you're going to create stuff. That's like, Oh, that didn't turn out. As I thought, you know? So it's just having that freedom to explore and giving yourself that freedom to, to fail on what you want to create, because then you learn, well, that's going to work and you have opportunities to try other ways.

Speaker 3 ([33:06](#)):

I agree what is said and what I would love to add to what you said is that it's difficult and people need to know, yes, it is difficult because, uh, I often hear about, but it's so difficult to find a new idea, to find a new post processing. Everything was done already or something like, no, because you are who you are. And if you explore it, you can find something new because there is no such person as you, there is no second year, you know? Yes. And it is difficult. And I like repeated it. I don't know, five times or 10 times, but maybe then it's going to be remembered. Right? It's going to be remembered to do that. To be unique, to have a, you know, a unique style. It's not easy, but it's the right path to go through. And it's most rewarding. I think I already know two choices evolve or repeat. And because repeating is so easy, there's nothing easier. If you have the right, the same gear and you see the idea and you see the dog and you see the place, then you can just go and do it. There is no fun about it. There is no volume about it. I need this the easy way.

Speaker 1 ([34:14](#)):

Yes. And a hundred percent. Like if you're, you know, you can't, you can't lead from doing the same thing that's already been done. Um, you know, it's just, it's just not how it works. You know, you're always playing catch up and if you're copying it, a gazillion, other people are copying it and there's no longer anything unique in that. I did want to touch briefly on the process of learning because there is a time and a place for copying something. But here's the caveat. You copy something to learn the technique. It's not something you share. It's not something you claim as your own. It's something that may be, you're like, Oh man, I would love to learn how that person did that. Let me try to recreate it. I recreate it for the lesson. I don't recreate it to create, create that image. And then you can take that lesson and mix that lesson up with other lessons that you've learned.

Speaker 1 ([35:06](#)):

And then all of a sudden you do have something unique. You do have something that you created on your own. So, you know, I just want to make that distinction because this, this, this learning this copy to learn, I don't think is a bad thing. I think that's okay. But it's when you take that copied piece and you say, Oh, look what I did. I created this. No, no. The copied piece is just for you to learn a technique that you then take that technique and apply it to other ways, apply it to other images, other dogs, other locations, other, other techniques mixed in with that technique to again, make something that's new and unique.

Speaker 3 ([35:42](#)):

Yes. I agree. Like 100%, this is what needs to be, you know, said and repeated that this is what needs to be repeated, what you just said. Yeah. Like you just can't take somebody's idea and shot and just posted as your own. If you post a credit and ask the outer, if that's okay as like a tribute to someone, then it's amazing. But like you don't just repaint because art and claim, this is yours, right? Like, no.

Speaker 1 ([36:12](#)):

Right. Okay. Maybe I want to learn impressionist art. So I try something, but you're not going to send it off to a gallery and be like, look what I made.

Speaker 3 ([36:20](#)):

Well, I asked her that somewhere, all that looks familiar, but yeah, it just wouldn't work in like arts. It wouldn't work in music. It wouldn't work in books. Yeah. No it's obvious and straight away like, Oh, that's, you know, a copy. That's not yours. Yes.

Speaker 1 ([36:38](#)):

Yeah. A hundred percent. And I am also a big believer in karma. And the energy that we put out in the world is what's going to come back to us. And if you, you know, knowingly go out and feel like, well, this person's far away, whatever. They'll never know. Number one, the industry is much smaller than you think you're number two. Like it's just, it's just not good practice. It's not good karma that, you know, you can't expect to put something out that was created in an energy of really scarcity and lack because you're copying thinking that that's the only way forward that, well, this must be how I need to do this. If I don't do this, no, one's going to be interested in me. Like, I think it's fear based. It's like scarcity based, but it's actually completely false because if you took the time to start to create something, that's uniquely yours.

Speaker 1 ([37:31](#)):

And again, this takes time. You guys don't get down on yourself. If you're like, man, I've been at this for a week and I can't get it. Like it takes time. I think it took me probably six or seven years before. I really felt like I had an evolved style where I could look at my work and it looked different than other people's. And, but like cohesive that, I kind of knew what, what fit into my, my style world. So it takes time. But I firmly believe that if it is just, you are thinking that copying someone successful is a quick ticket to success and it just doesn't work that way because the energy behind it is not congruent with attracting, um, attracting what you're hoping.

Speaker 3 ([38:11](#)):

Yeah. It's just not ethical. You know, like I think it's not about a law that should be more strict, I think for photography and like pleasure, pleasure reason. But yeah, about moral side and ethics, like, yeah. It's so

easy. Oh, somebody took those sexist we'll picture. So I will repeat them and I will get clients. I will get fame. Like, no, that's just not ethical. That's just not right. Um, yeah. I just think, you know, there are so many choices. I'm like overwhelmed at my every shooting or even before I'm so overwhelmed, but so many like possibilities and choices of place of a model, um, of time of a day, like light. I mean, there is so much to pick from. Right, right. Yeah. I don't have the time to make them all to, you know, create all the beautiful pictures to go to all the beautiful places and to photograph all the beautiful, like it was so many beautiful breeds and so many beautiful mixed docs. And, you know, like there is so much to be covered by all the photographers. And I would love to see all those different things like shown by others because I didn't have the time to show them all right.

Speaker 1 ([39:27](#)):

Yeah. There's so many things that are beautiful. Like for instance, I love a beautiful black and white image. For whatever reason I can not create a beautiful black and white image that I like to save my life. But you know, there's just, there's beauty in these other pieces that like, that's not going to be part of my style. It's not something I want to recreate, but you can appreciate the beauty and all these different styles. And if we all dig in to finding our unique vision, imagine how much more beauty we're going to bring to the industry and, um, and the world, which is always a great thing and definitely in need of more beauty in the world at this particular moment in time. Um, but yeah, to put a big, a big red bow on this episode that I think has been so good, I would love to just touch on one more thing. And that is to give people advice on how just to, to wrap up, we've kind of talked about it, but I want to wrap up with what steps people should take going forward to how they can start to determine their style and start to create things that are uniquely yours or theirs. So what advice do you have for people that are, you know, ready to dive into this endeavor and want to start figuring out what their voices

Speaker 3 ([40:35](#)):

[inaudible] start looking around. You like open your eyes, open your mind for everything you have around stop blocking yourself and stop excuses. Like I often hear, Oh, but I don't travel to beautiful landscape countries. So I live in a country with not all beautiful places as kind of excuse not to create something. I know, you know, I think that the step one is yeah. But open your mind for what you have open your mind for that don't block yourself with what, what you don't have. Think about what you have. Just look on the bright side, like the simple thing that you say, but it's just so true and

Speaker 1 ([41:17](#)):

Yeah. And there's truly a beauty anywhere. I mean, no matter where you're living, even if you were, you know, in a, you know, God forbid like war torn country, like there still could be beauty in creation there there's, you know, there's, there's beauty everywhere. Um, so that whole excuse. I mean, certainly yes, I would love to, you know, go photograph on these beautiful vistas or, you know, here or there and a beautiful, I would love to photograph on Charlotte's beautiful beach all the time, but guess what? I don't live in Brisbane, so it's not going to happen.

Speaker 3 ([41:53](#)):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([41:53](#)):

Well I better enjoy my shores of Lake Norman, but, um, yeah. You know, there's, there's so much beauty around us and yeah.

Speaker 3 ([42:00](#)):

And you don't want stories to be told, like, you know, it doesn't always have to be only about the pretty side of photography can be also a story to be told. Every city has every person, every dog. Yeah. And relationships. Yes. And most places stocks, I mean, yeah. I'm just like, Oh my God, there's so many things to do, you know?

Speaker 1 ([42:26](#)):

Yup. Yeah. So yeah. Open your eyes so that I think the second step is just to get out there and practice and give yourself that permission to create stuff that you don't like, the create stuff that maybe might not turn out, take the risk and try. Cause you'll never know if you don't try and on those tries is when you start to uncover, you know, Oh, this works, Oh, what if I tweaked that? That's where you start to uncover the magic. So dust off that camera get out there and um, grab a dog, grab a stuffed animal. It doesn't matter. Just go out and start photographing, you know, without a plan in mind without a, Oh, let me try to recreate this. Just go out and try to create something.

Speaker 3 ([43:05](#)):

Yeah. Give yourself freedom to do that. And freedom to make mistakes and freedom to make bad pictures, but just do it and try to enjoy it. Because if you are stuck on some image that you have in your mind and you want to do something similar, you will just get lost in your mind and you will lose energy. Something is beautiful. Appreciate it. And then just go and do your thing like that. That's the way. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([43:29](#)):

Yes. I love it. Alicia, this has been such a good conversation. Thank you so much for making the time. And this is going to be one. I think that might live on in infamy. It's so good. Everyone required listening for everyone in the industry. Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([43:47](#)):

Yeah. Thank you so much for inviting me again. And I loved that we could cover this topic and I couldn't have this conversation with you and Kendall to be, can wait for it to be online and to hear people like opinions about it.

Speaker 1 ([44:03](#)):

Yes. Awesome. Yeah. And then go ahead and let everybody know where they can find you online, but guys, just remember what we've talked about here. Whenever we're sharing these conversations with all these amazing photographers here on the podcast. Um, yes. Remember this conversation, but yeah. Let us know where we can see some of your beautiful imagery.

Speaker 3 ([44:23](#)):

Yeah. So, uh, I have a fan page on Facebook. Uh, [inaudible] photography, and I think Nicole will give you a lead because we'll put a link in the show notes thing. You can really write it down from Weiss. From my page on Facebook, there is my website. [inaudible] we also need to have written down. You can find me on Instagram. Um, yes. And I think that's all my socialist Instagram speech.

Speaker 1 ([44:55](#)):

Perfect. Perfect. And yet, if this resonated with you guys, please feel free to reach out with, to us. Let Alicia know that you appreciate her conversation. Yeah, this was, this was great. And definitely should be required listening for, for all in a creative field. So thank you again for joining us. Thanks again for listening everybody. Remember you can always get our show notes@hairofthedogacademy.com slash the episode number for this particular episode. It is three zero. Hey, pet photographers. Are you struggling to bring your vision to life? Do you long for creating a style that is true to you? Are you ready to leave the fads and trends behind and learn how to create a style that is uniquely yours so that your work can stand apart here at hair of the dog, we are hosting a free five day unleash your style challenge to help you do just that registration is open now. So go to www.hairofthedogacademy.com forward slash unleash to save your seat. We can't wait to see what you create.