

ASPECTS

// The Search for Truth & Beauty

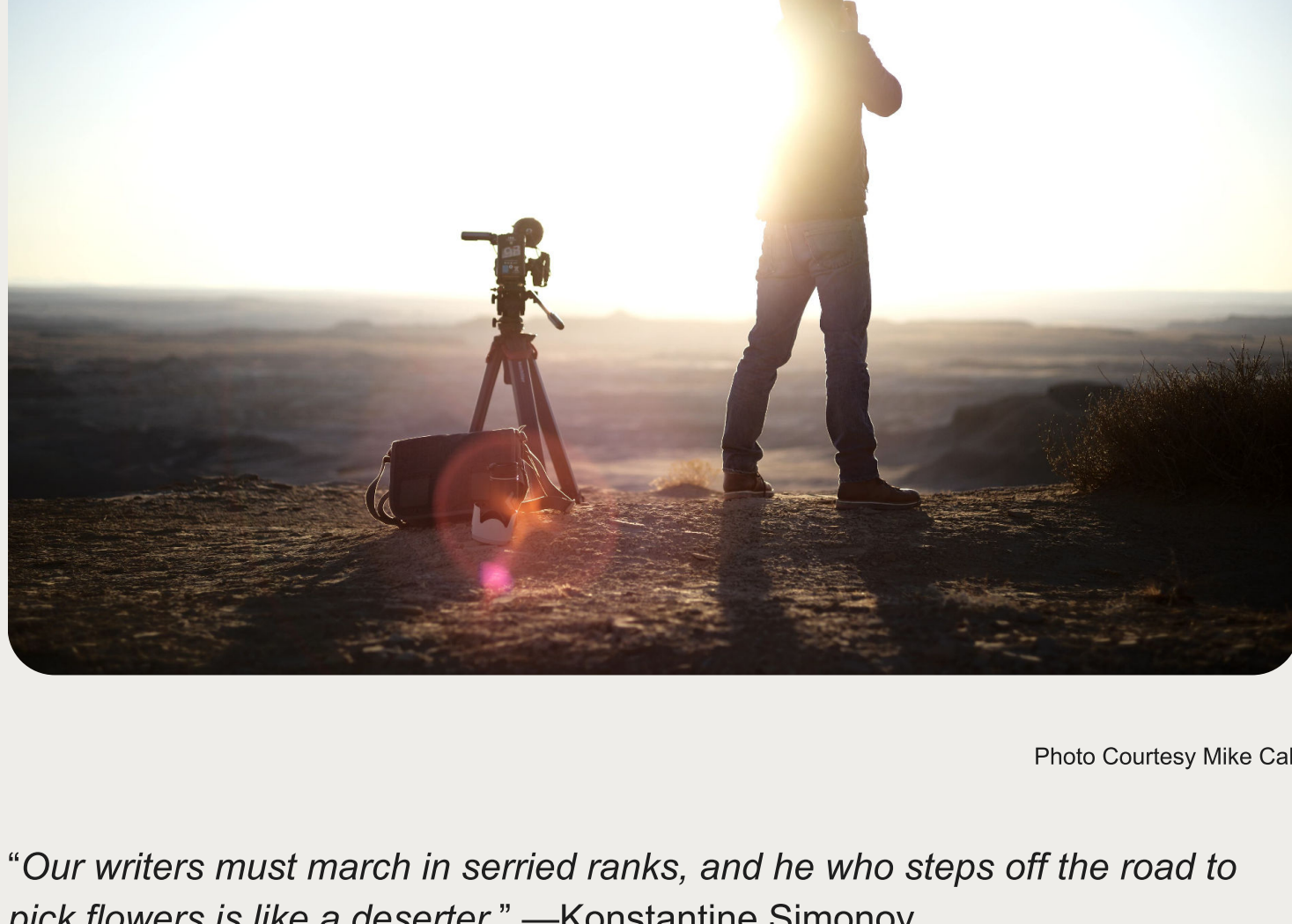


Photo Courtesy Mike Call

“Our writers must march in serried ranks, and he who steps off the road to pick flowers is like a deserter.” —Konstantine Simonov

Creative work, journalism, and documentary filmmaking share commonalities. They largely exist to uncover truths: some beautiful, others so inconvenient they feel like live vivisection. In times of political or cultural fervor,* though, the urge to seek truth remains, while the courage to speak truth is chilled.

We live in such times, but now, instead of the Stasi-like secret police and unsleeping bureaucrats of the dissident novelist Milan Kundera’s day, we have marshaled a censor class to mind us, trolling for wrongthink. Far left, far right, it doesn’t matter. Most people want to avoid confrontation, so most people shut up.

This is happening. In the world of novels, there is a genre now known as “discourse literature.” It’s loosely defined as writing that instead of employing original thought and characters and plot lines to brush the dirt from some fossil of insight, instead relies on tropes and stereotypes pulled from social media to reinforce the views of a highly segmented audience of fellow believers. Discourse literature is storytelling not in the pursuit of beauty or truth, but to get believers marching.

Go to a film festival of any genre today, and you will see the same split between the creatives and the propagandists. There are the films that seek beauty and truth through narrative and originality. Films like that often organically further worthy causes like gender and racial diversity because the identities of the characters are subservient to who they are as people representative of beauty or truth.

And then there are the films that only echo, fainter each time, some doctrine. Click the like button. Stand and clap so your neighbors see you. But know you are applauding dogmata, not film craft. The same type of bias is on display in today’s partisan journalism. What was once a working-class job for truth seekers is now too often, like social media, an advocacy tool.

The work of truth or beauty leaves you sated. The feature-length hot takes from the Ministry of Public Enlightenment run through you like light beer.

Still, contrarians will rise. Social media as Big Brother will fall. Creative works that remind us that the truth is nebulous but worth pursuing anyway will return to prominence. And then, just as likely, the chill will set in again and only the brave will tell stories while everyone else yells into the canyon for the echoes.

* For more thinking on these subjects, scroll down to “What We’re Reading Now.”

// No Shame in Self-Promotion



A HEADSHOT AND YOUR WORK HISTORY ARE NO LONGER ENOUGH. IT’S TIME TO MARKET WHAT YOU DO. HERE’S HOW.

“Woe to the media professional who doesn’t at least have a passing understanding of marketing—not of products or companies, but of themselves as independent contractors. In 2024, tech-savvy self-promotion is as central to success as having a decent headshot and short bio on file was 20 years ago.” Read more of Dan Oko’s look at self marketing [here](#).

// Meet a Creative

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Meet the music supervisor [Bodie Johnson](#) who has worked on films for The North Face, Outdoor Research, 5Point Film Festival, Teton Gravity Research, Red Bull, Yeti, Anthill Productions, and Sweetgrass Productions.

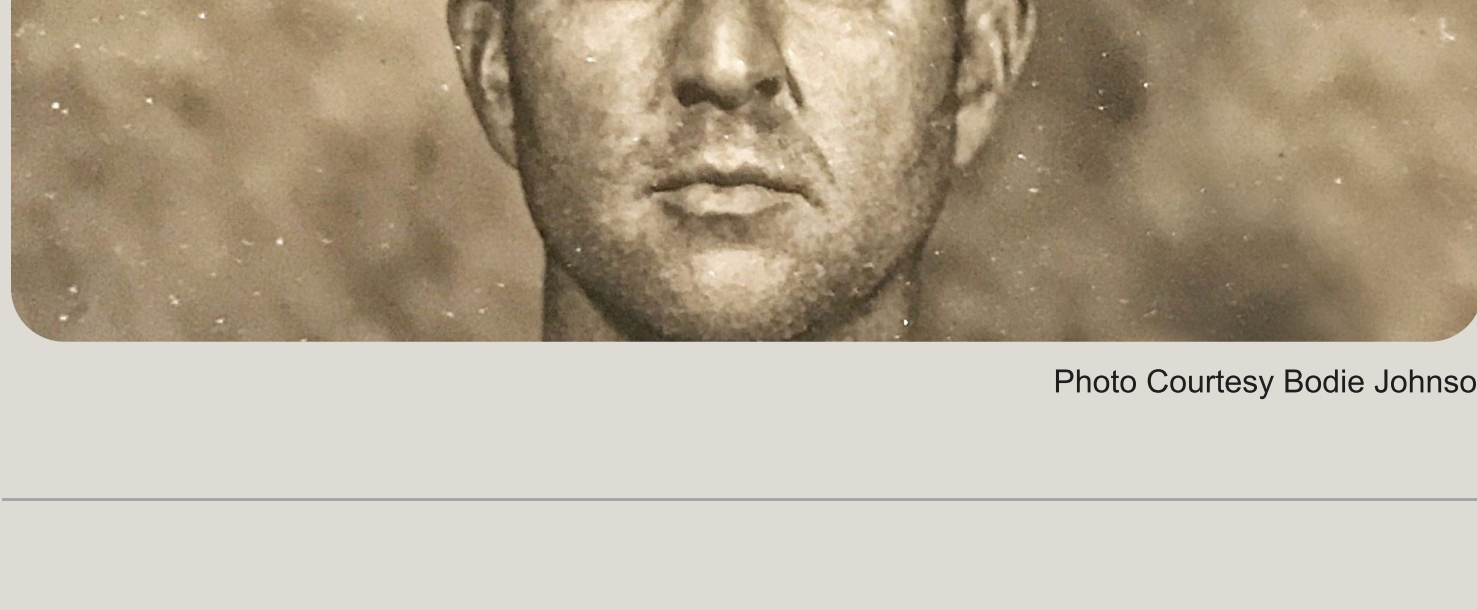


Photo Courtesy Bodie Johnson

// Meet a Creative

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“I love even the toughest shoots,” says the climbing and culture photographer [Tara Kerzhner](#). “I’m always grateful to be on set. I work my ass off because I learned how to hustle from a very young age.”



Photo Courtesy Tara Kerzhner

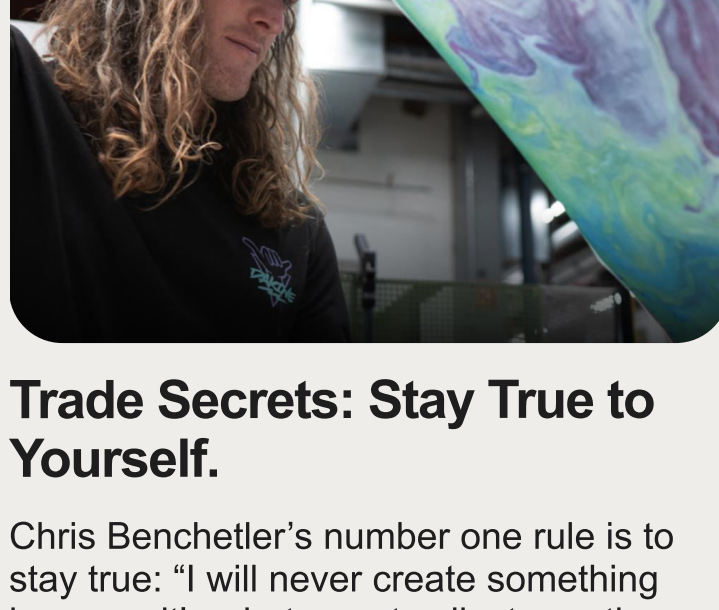
// New in Hence Journal

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Trade Secrets: Learn From Your Past Work.

“I find myself asking how I did something in the past,” says the filmmaker Jordan Manley. “I’d like to think these techniques are ingrained in me, but sometimes I need to relearn them. Looking back can give you reminders of what worked well or what you could have done better.” [Read more](#).



Trade Secrets: Stay True to Yourself.

Chris Benchetler’s number one rule is to stay true: “I will never create something because it’s what an art collector or the industry wants,” says the athlete, artist, and filmmaker. “It’s more important to stay authentic and create art or films that come through me.” he says. [Read more](#).

MORE FROM THE BROADER CREATIVE WORLD

What We’re Reading Now

- 1. When Creatives Allow the Internet to Set Limits on Thought.** Henry Oliver of *The Common Reader*: “... discourse fiction replicates the acceptable ideas of intellectual bubbles or online echo chambers. The modern fashionable novel is not about the fashion of class, clothes, or cutlery, but of the limits of what you can and cannot say.” ([The Common Reader](#))
- 2. It’s OK To Talk About Movies. Even Controversial Ones.** Ted Hope of Hope For Film is a little riled up because good old word-of-mouth advertising, friends telling friends about great films to catch, might be another victim of the chilling of speech. “People are hesitant to open their mouth because they suspect others will jump down their throat the instant they do.” ([Hope For Film](#))
- 3. Creatives Don’t Fare Well In Mass Movements.** This one will require that you read a book. It’s *The True Believer* by Eric Hoffer, and in addition to making sense of how fanaticism happens, Hoffer writes at length about creatives in mass movements. “The blindness of the fanatic ... is the cause of intellectual sterility.” (Thanks to Rob Henderson and [The Free Press](#))
- 4. AI Michaels?** We’re guessing it involved money, but someone at NBC convinced AI Michaels, the sports commentator with the best voice after Bob Costas, to let AI regenerate his voice and vocal mannerisms for some low-quality recap soundbites for the upcoming Olympic Games. Standing by for the gaff reel. ([Vanity Fair](#))
- 5. And Some Good News—Maybe.** Looks like Amazon and Netflix are again commissioning television shows. Is storytelling back? ([Hollywood Reporter](#))