

// Thinking Bigger



Photo Mike Call

"Now he worships at an altar of a stagnant pool, and when he sees his reflection he's fulfilled." —Bob Dylan

Career comfort, even with the requisite ego-stroking in place, isn't a great catalyzer. We stall when our work is convenient. To advance, we need to place ourselves in uncomfortable situations where rejection happens. But it's our nature to avoid pain.

When I talk to up-and-coming filmmakers, their end goal with a project is often an "official selection" nod by a film festival, and not much else: not winning the laurels outright; not maximizing audience size through smarter distribution; not earning a sustainable living as opposed to simply recovering costs. When we give voice to small goals, we are shielding ourselves from the possibility of rejection. I know this because I've done it.

To avoid the sting we (myself included) [hide behind labels](#). My default is the narrow "magazine-article writer." If you call yourself a camera operator, then you will never have to deal with a network telling you "no" for the series you should have pitched as a producer. If you only identify as a writer, then someone else will take your story and make a film out of it—without crediting you. If you self label as a photographer, then how will companies know that you could also build their brand's look and feel?

A friend and colleague of mine is a seasoned Head of Sales type in the outdoor space on the media side. He's really good at what he does. Because of that, filmmakers reach out to him to help sell in sponsors. He gets frustrated when the ask is less than maximizing distribution and dollars based on the merit of the film. Recouping costs and paying yourself starving-artist wages is not a business model. But more to the point, it's hard to get potential partners excited about a project when you are too risk averse to mention the potential. "Creatives need to think bigger," my friend in sales says.

This is not a knock. Historically, there was nothing wrong with staying in your lane if you found that fulfilling. But today the creative industry is chaotic. Meaningful work doesn't just fall in our laps as readily. We need to pursue such projects and convince partners that they're vital. And in doing that we must be ready to face rejection.

If someone tells you they like getting slapped like that, they are lying. It's brutal. But as the ancient Chinese said, "with danger comes opportunity." And besides, there are ways to limit the pain: When we collaborate on bigger projects instead of working in silos, we embolden ourselves through our duty to our colleagues and a collective will to see the project forward.

Ultimately, that's what Hence is being built to deliver. An ecosystem-wide approach to securing and producing more impactful work. We are stirring the stagnant pool. —Marc Peruzzi

// Behind the Velvet Curtain



WE GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE “NEXUS” DIRECTOR SHANNON CORSI.

From the story: "The chase for official partners, though, is harder. They pitch close to 100 brands. Thirteen eventually sign on, including Arc'Teryx and Red Bull. The naysayer responses include comments like: "Do you think people would actually be interested in watching this?" To: "No offense, but we have standards." Read more about how the "Nexus" AK shoot came together [here](#).

// Meet an Athlete

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Meet [Casey Brown](#), the freeride mountain biker who spearheaded the movement to include women in the Red Bull Rampage—and won. "It's been a long journey, and I'm stoked for every woman rider," she says.



Photo Syo Van Vilet Courtesy Casey Brown

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This past winter, [Ingrid Backstrom](#) and Anne Cleary wrapped up filming their third edition of "The Approach" film series, to premiere this fall. "The response to the first two films was eye-opening," says Ingrid.



Photo TNF Courtesy Ingrid Backstrom

// New in Hence Journal

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Trade Secrets: Get Feedback Early & Often.

As he's grown from an operator to a storyteller, Alex Mager forces himself to get feedback earlier in the process. "It's one of the hardest parts of filmmaking," he says, "but I've had to learn to take my five minutes to feel sour about it, and then make a better product." [Read more.](#)



Trade Secrets: How to Avoid Burnout.

"When I became a photographer, I really thought I wanted to work for big companies," says Boone Speed. "But what I learned is that the money and the fame are fleeting. Don't get me wrong, I like those things. But doing it just for those reasons robbed me of the joy." [Read more.](#)

MORE FROM THE BROADER CREATIVE WORLD

What We're Reading Now

- 1. More Evidence That Rejection Sucks—But We Gotta Deal.** Cole Haddon of *5AM StoryTalk* interviewed 20 filmmakers and writers about rejection. If your misery needs company, you'll find it [here](#)—also the will to keep fighting after comments like this: "This is one of the worst scripts I've ever read. It's not only a terrible story, it's an offensive one. I know this seems harsh, but please believe me, I'm doing you a favor. You have no talent. You'll never make a living in this business. Go back to Nashville." (*5AM StoryTalk*)
- 2. Actually Spotify, Music Does Have Economic Value.** From Ted Gioia: "In my economics, a song can possess great value. We have evidence to support this. The biggest trend in our culture right now is people tapping into the transformative power of song in live performance (not streaming, thank you very much Mr. Spotify CEO)." (*The Honest Broker*)
- 3. Don't Give Up The Dream.** David Brooks describes how Cézanne's paintings were rejected for 18 years running while the artist worked as a clerk. Cézanne: "On this matter I must tell you that dreading criticism that is only too justified, I have resolved to work in silence, until the day when I should feel capable of defending my endeavors." (*The Atlantic*)
- 4. Sundance is Window Shopping.** "Six cities have made it to the final round to be selected as the home of the Sundance Film Festival—and there's a chance the event will stay in Utah." (*The Salt Lake Tribune*)
- 5. The Metaphysics of Copyright Law.** Case law could be in the artists' favor with lawsuits from the major labels directed at AI companies Suno and Udio. Here's a primer from Robert Levine. (*Billboard*)