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## Spotlight on Content Creators: Creative Photographer Shannon Fagan

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Shannon Fagan is in China, and he's standing at the edge of a diving board.

No, it's not for a shoot, although given the places his career as a leading stock photographer has taken him, it wouldn't be beyond the realm of possibility.

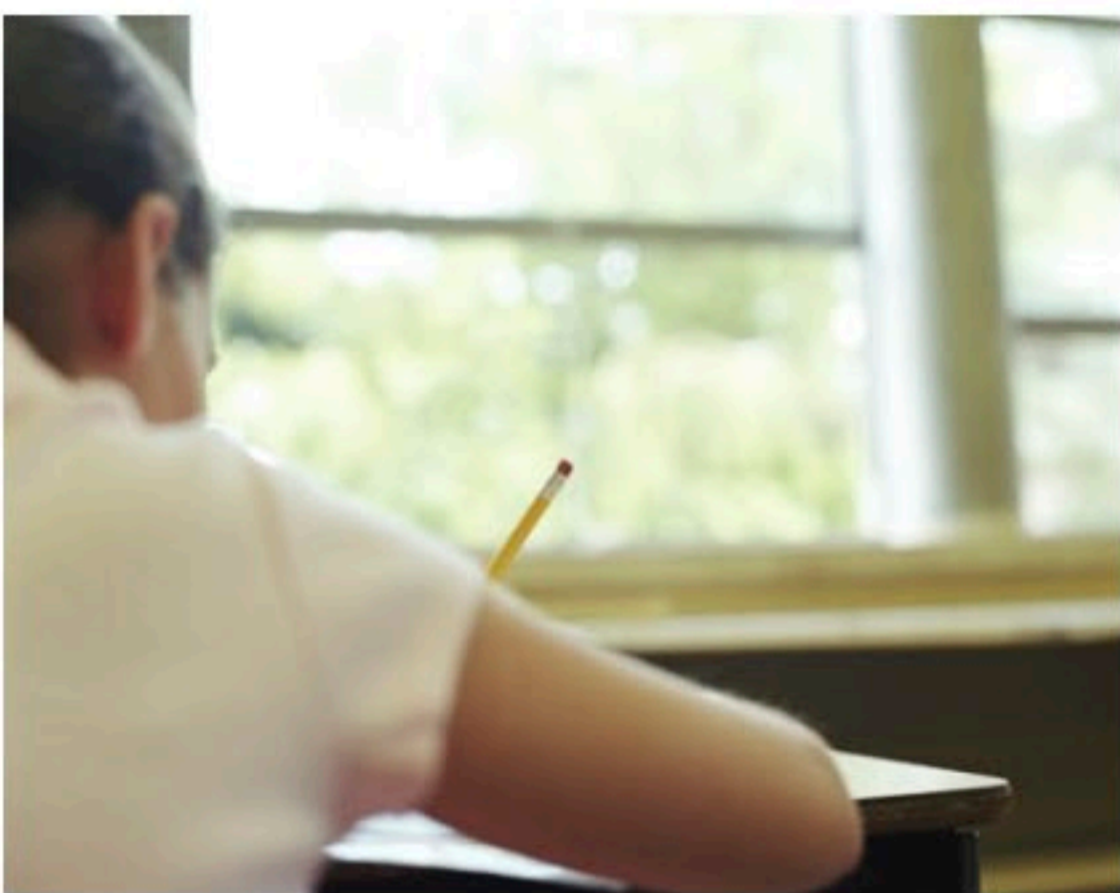
Rather, it's where Fagan is in life at the moment: on the cusp of many exciting things and in a place where he sees tremendous opportunity. And he's ready to jump in.



"I know I'm on a path," Fagan says. "This is going to be the biggest consumer camera market by 2015, if not sooner."

Right now, that path consists of a [workshop](#) (rolling out this summer) in which he will teach photography students the ins and outs of the stock industry – from shooting compelling imagery to the commercial mindset needed to thrive in this business.

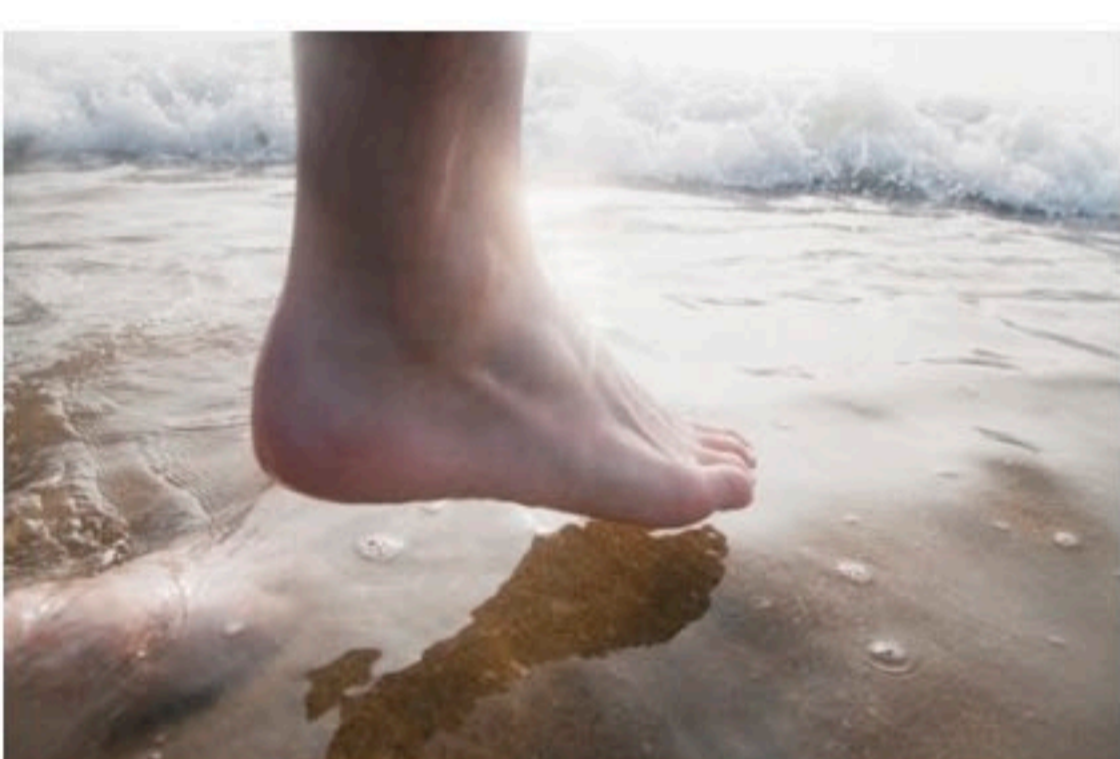
"I'd like to train photo students here who can't find a job," he said. "This is a widely underserved marketplace, but also a very different one. The stock photography business landscape here is only 5 to 10 years old... It's a really hard market for people to get into. And there's a huge learning gap."



As he talks about this latest opportunity and his move in December from New York to China, Fagan's passion punctuates each sentence. It's the culmination of months of research and team building, and a huge risk, he admits.

But while the landscape might be new, Fagan is no stranger to making these kinds of leaps. In fact, being unafraid to seek out new opportunities is one of many guiding principles which have shaped his [career](#) over the past decade, taking him from assisting on fashion catalogue shoots to becoming a highly sought stock photographer and contributor advocate.

It is also one of many principles that have helped him navigate the variety of changes this industry has undergone, from the rise of digital to the emergence of Royalty Free and Microstock licensing.



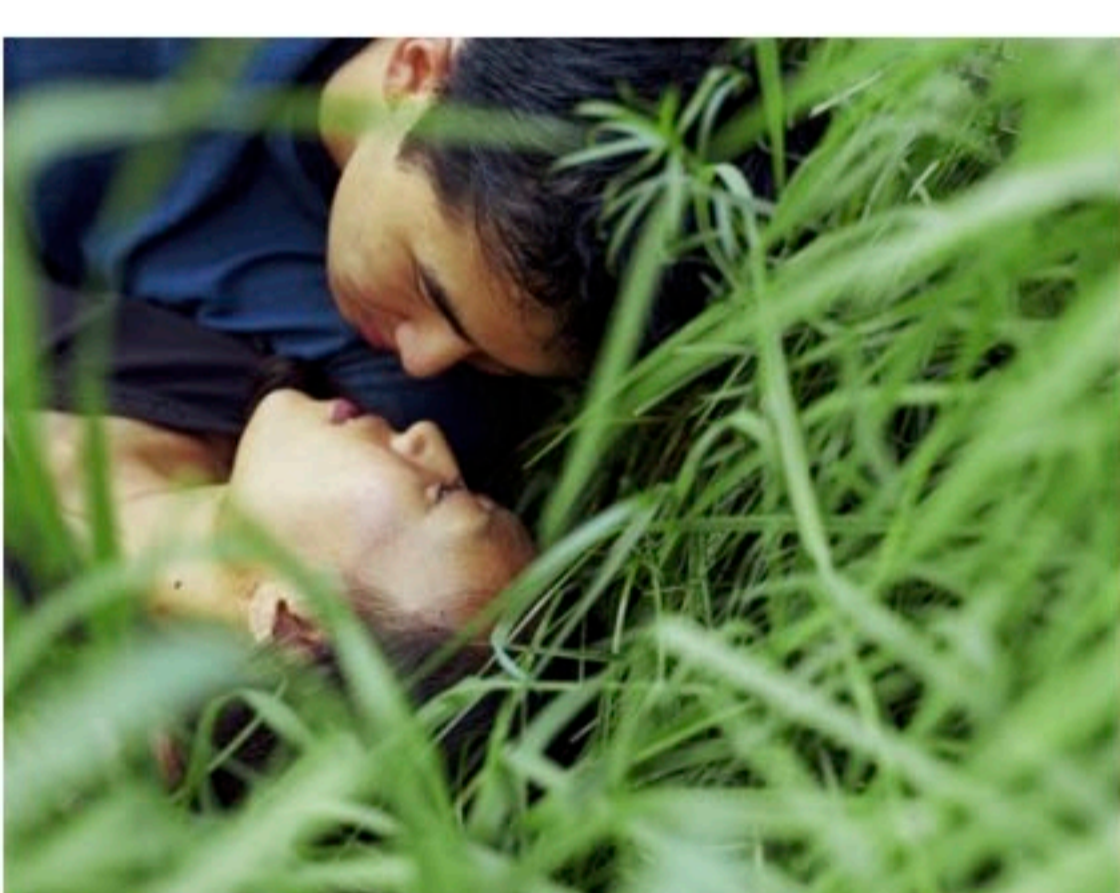
"Doors open, others close," Fagan says. "Your job is to see that door opening and go through it."

After studying photography at the University of Memphis in the late 1990s, and completing a handful of successful summer internships in New York City, Fagan began to see what a career in stock photography would look like – an alternative to the award-winning reportage work he had been creating.

"All of that gave me a rounded perspective of what it would be like to be a commercial stock photographer," Fagan said, "which is not what I thought I'd be doing."

But around 2001, when he began his stock photography career, some early successes – and mentorship – inspired him. For example, Fagan recalls the time he brought in some photos he shot at Central Park to his editor at Getty Images, who, to Fagan's surprise, was unimpressed.

"It just didn't click," Fagan says. "And my editor said, 'Shannon, what happened? We should talk about this.' He was smart. Not only did he constructively criticize my work, but I went back and redid it. And I got better... and one of those photos actually sold really well."



That success, combined with an attitude that allows Fagan to find something he likes in every situation (even his worst moments) led to others, and by 2006, Fagan decided to jump full time into shooting stock.

He already sensed some changes in the industry with Royalty Free "winding itself out," he says, but he decided to double down anyway. More shifts came. In 2008 and 2009, Fagan noticed an upswing in online licensing as well as the emergence of Microstock. He was busy traveling six months out of the year for his work, spending time shooting in Vancouver and doing very well – but he wondered what impact these changes might have on his livelihood.

"I was thinking about jumping into microstock," Fagan says, "but contractually at that time, I couldn't. I was going to have to create a different system."

While Fagan entrenched himself in researching the keywording and back-end management he previously had been outsourcing, he also was presented with a major opportunity: to head the Stock Artists Alliance.



As president, Fagan saw the SAA through its merger with the Alliance of Visual Artists, but he also gained access to conferences and seminars – which really helped open his eyes, he says.

"To be successful, you need to be in a constant state of learning," he says. "Stock is a self-motivating game. It takes a constant business mindset and a constant creative mindset – and a constant training among the right groups of people if you want to do it."



Which brings us to China.

While on a monthlong lifestyle shoot in Shanghai in 2009, Fagan saw another door opening.

"I knew that something was clicking for me," he says, "and that's when I fell in love with China."

Again, Fagan threw himself into research – learning all he could about the place he would ultimately call home. By December 2010, he leaped again, this time across an ocean – and now he's standing on that diving board.

But does he ever worry that when he jumps, the water will be too rough?

With life, as in his business, Fagan is confident his drive – and the lessons he has learned – will see him through whatever lies ahead.

"Throughout my career, I saw an industry changing rapidly," he says, "and I decided to shift with it."

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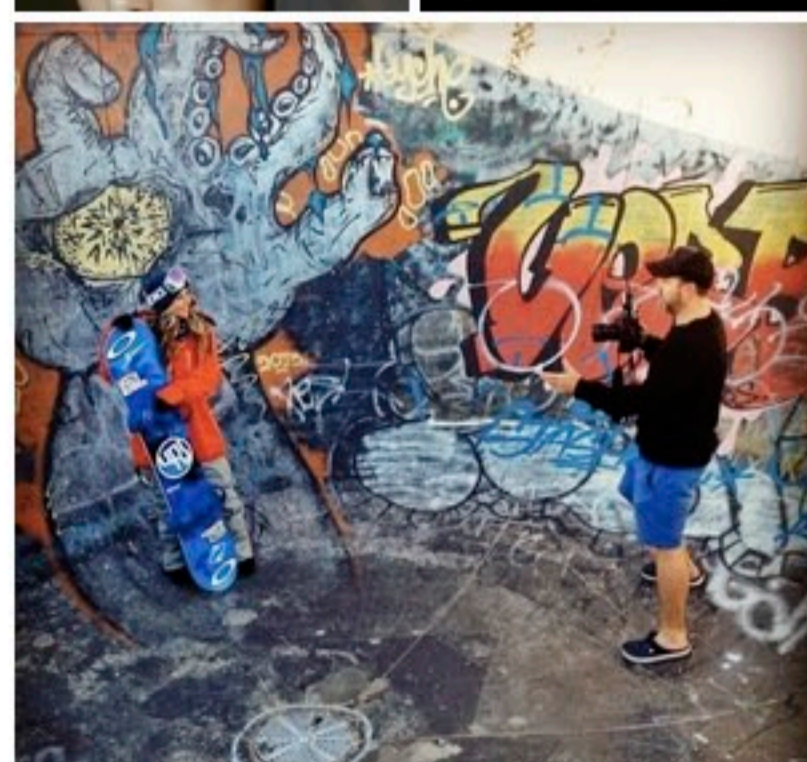
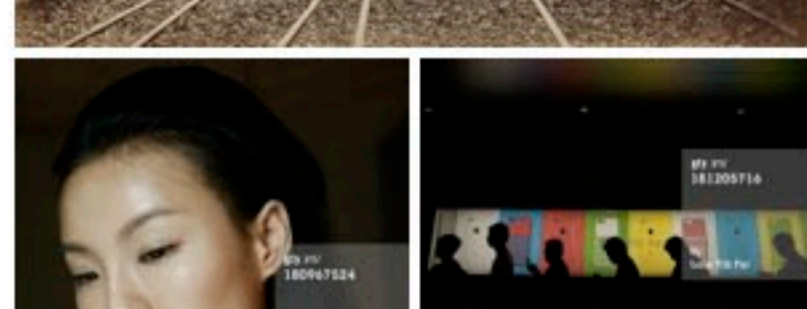


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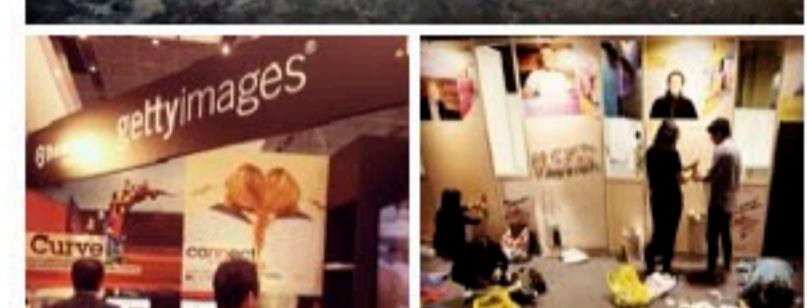
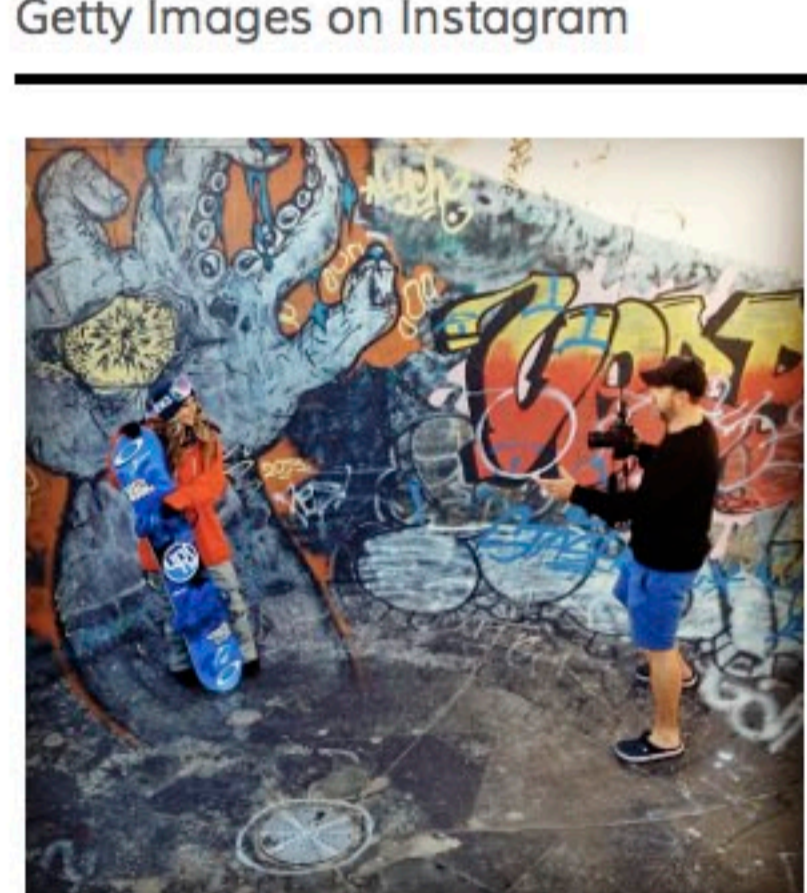


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