Notes on Instagrammism and mechanisms of contemporary cultural identity (and also photography, design, Kinfolk, k-pop, hashtags, mise-en-scène, and *состояние*).

Lev Manovich

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This is the third part from my new book being published online (Lev Manovich**,** Instagram and Contemporary Image, 2016-). It continues the analysis of Instagram's "designed photos" from Part 2 of the book.

How do we characterize a *style* in general? And, in particular, the contemporary aesthetic that was born in early 2010s and can be seen today in numerous Instagram photos? And are there any differences today between *commercial* and *personal* photography even when they feature the same subjects and the same attitude? Can a style be defined through *a list of features*, or is it a larger *gestalt* that cannot be simply detected by finding images that have some of these features?

Look at the beautiful short films (2012-) from the "slow lifestyle" cult magazine *Kinfolk* (http://www.kinfolk.com/films/).

Figure 1. Frames from selected Kinfolk films. Source: http://www.kinfolk.com/films/.
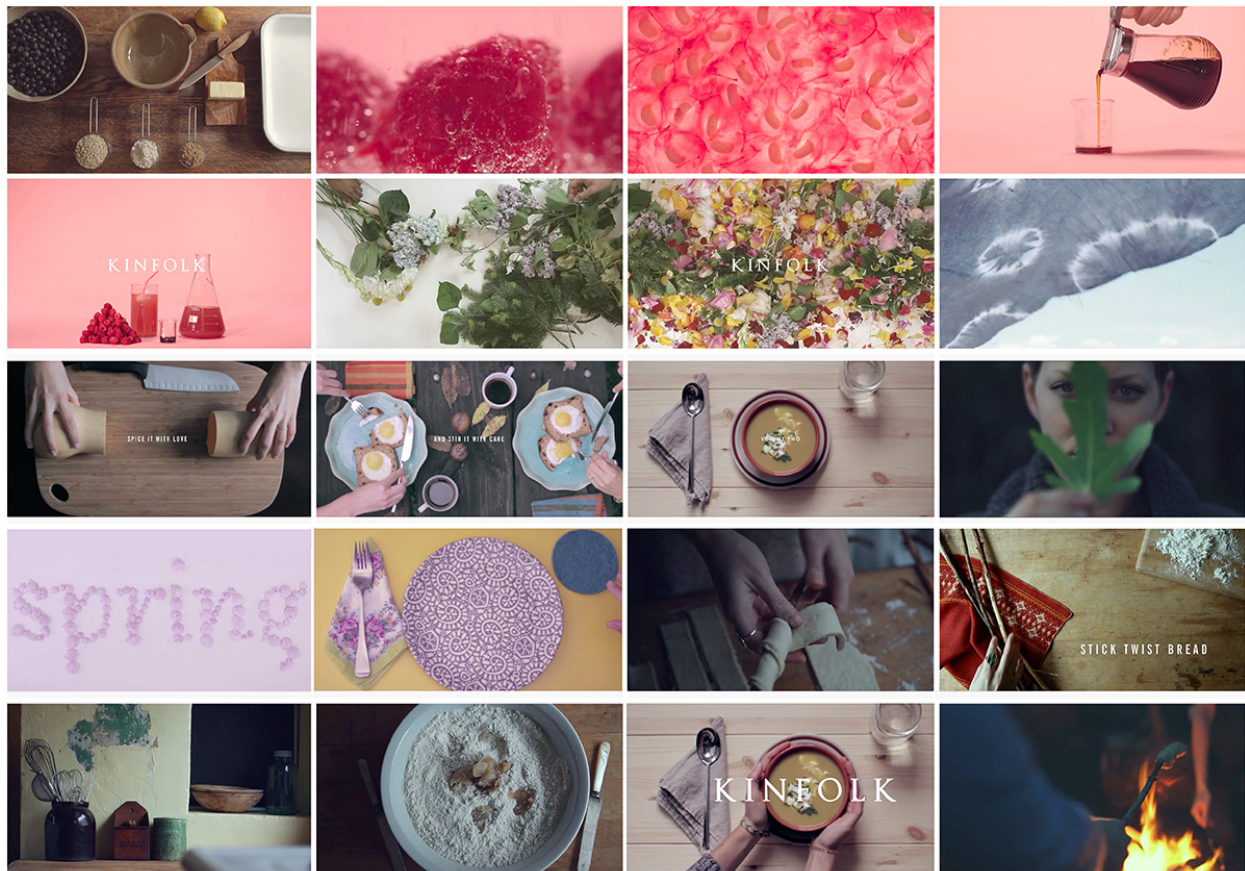
They perfectly exemplify a visual cultural form that can be also seen in numerous Instagram photos created by young visually sophisticated users around the world. It also appears in some - but far from all – contemporary lifestyle and fashion commercial photography and cinematography.

We can call this form *photography+design*.

Or, in the case of short films or video shots, *cinematography+design***.**

Or we can just make it a single (but pretty long and not really practical) term: *design + cinemato/photo/graphy.*

My use of "+" or "/" as opposed to "and" is deliberate. The aesthetics of modern 2D design and modern photography / cinematography are blended here so much that we cannot just talk about media meeting together. Instead, we have a blend.

What is more important in this style - design or the camera? Arranging the objects, the bodies, the spaces and orchestrating colors, textures, hand movements, etc.? Or choosing the right lens, the right point of view, and applying the right color filter to the image or the video? The flatness of surfaces (design) or three-dimensionality of spatial details (camera)? It is impossible to say. This is why I think we are dealing here with a distinct form. It was first developed in advertising photography in 1930s. It was adopted by professional graphic designers in 1990s, thanks to Photoshop. It was next extended to moving images, thanks to After Effects software. And after 2000, it was adopted by millions of your creative teenagers and young culture professionals, thanks to Instagram.

This form is a *gestalt* made up from two types of skills and media traditions, rather a mechanical joining of the elements. (In my book [*Software Takes Command*](), I offer detailed analysis of the earlier version of this form manifested in motion graphics in the 2000s. The term used in that book is "hybrid.").

There are many other instances of this form today, if we are only concerned with its formal dimensions – i.e., saturated or faded color, use of empty areas and textured areas, etc. In fact, lots of graphic designs and websites use the same aesthetics. But in the case of Kinfolk and many Instagram images (illustrated by a selection from 24 users from 8 countries in the montage above), we are dealing with something else. The media **form** that combines lens image capture and design techniques goes along with particular **content**. And together, these elements create particular "sensibility," "attitude," or "tonality." Perhaps the word which captures this best is Russian *состояние* - but unfortunately it does not have a precise English equivalent. (Another Russian word *образ* commonly used today to refer to the image with cultural or

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historical associations you create through fashion, hairstyle, makeup, and accessories is also useful.)

I am going to refer to this combination of a media form and particular content as *instagrammism*. Why? Instagram was started in 2010, and Kinfolk in 2011. Instagram was different from then existing photo-sharing services because it came with filters and other simple image editing tools available in its mobile app. And this democratized making good-looking images. Gradually, Instagram was also adopted by millions of young, sophisticated people around the world to display their photography, narrate their ideas and experiences, and connect to each other.

Figure 2. Selection of Instagram photos shared by @tienphuc_ (Vietnam).
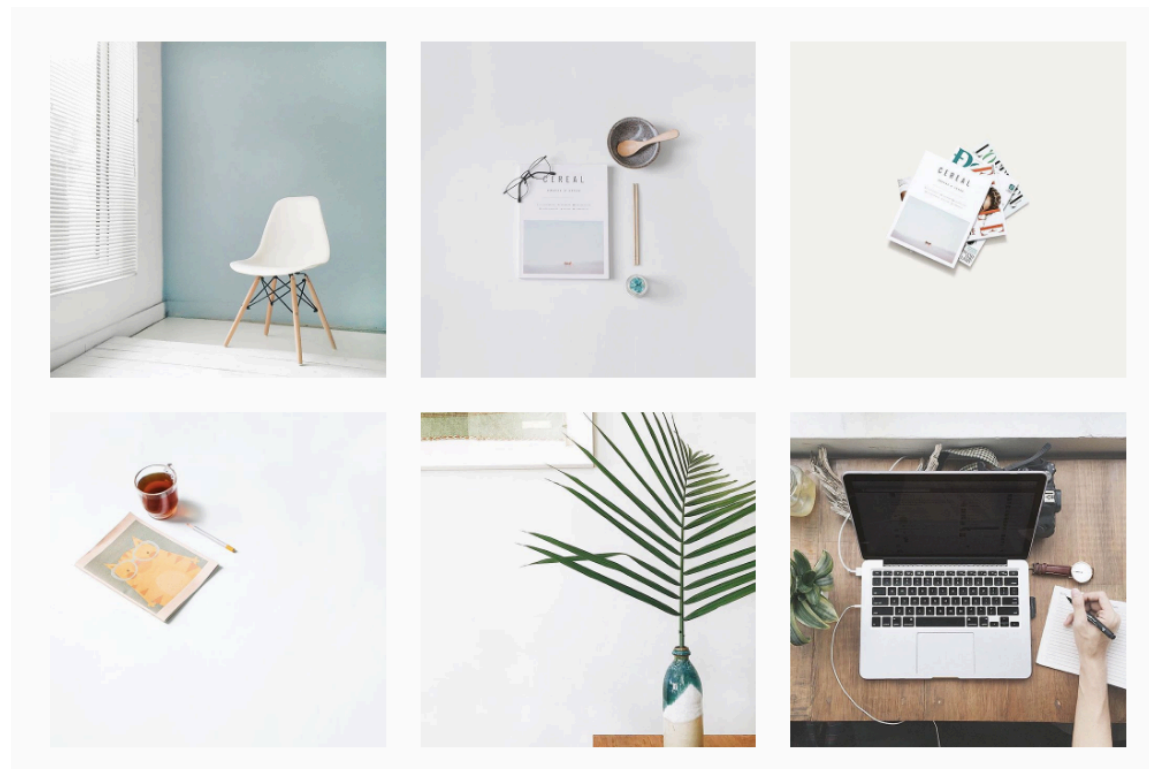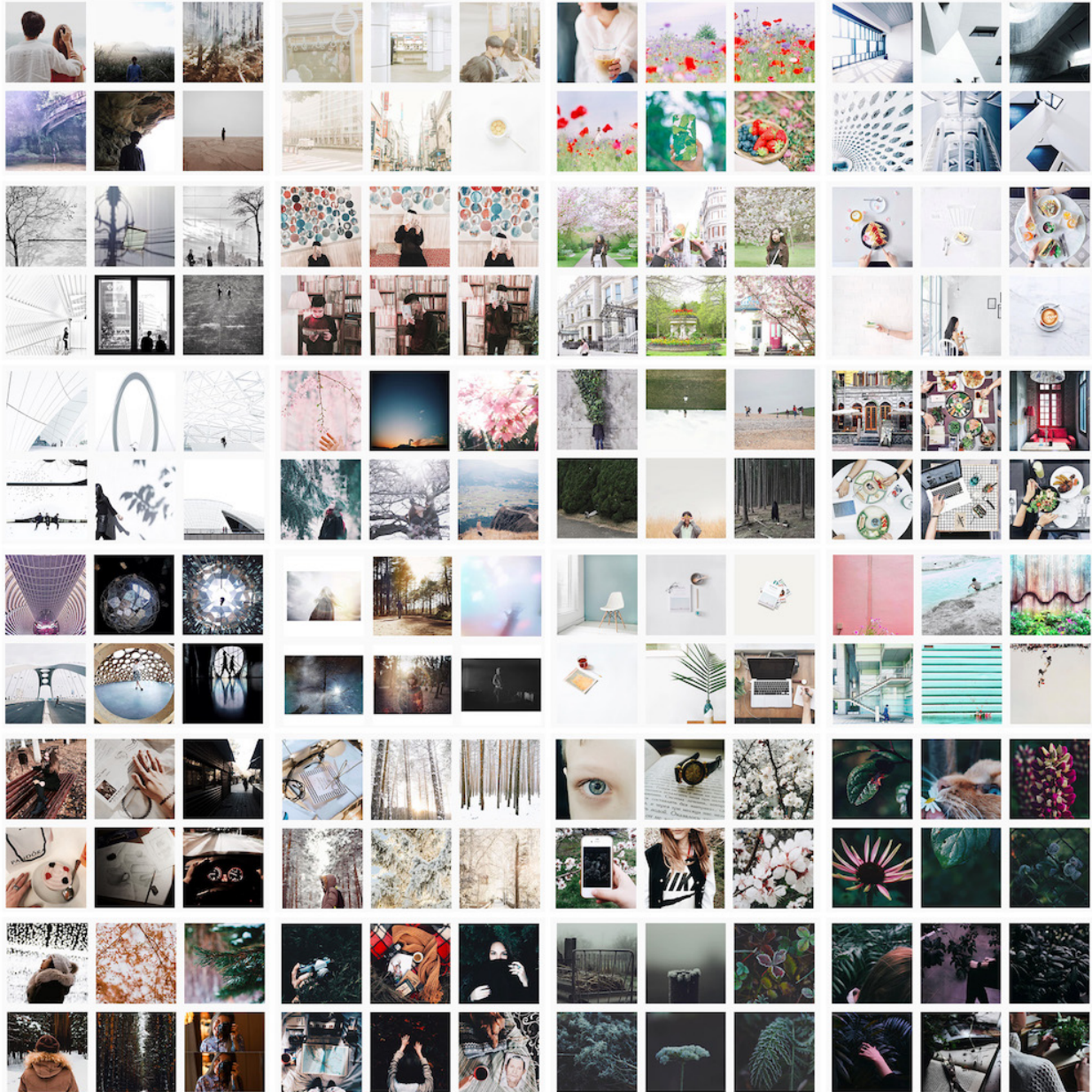
Figure 3. Sample images from 24 Instagram users from 8 countries: Vietnam, China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus. 6 images from each user is shown. Some of the images are shown at larger size throughout this text. Full size version of the whole montage is available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/culturevis/27064111290/sizes/l.

24 Instagram users, 6 images from each user arranged in 3 x 3 grid.
User name, country, city (if listed in user's profile):

10_ya / Japan / Tokyo	bnphm0609 / Vietnam	by_jinyoung / Korea	danieulloc / China / Shanghai
demo_yaru / Japan	duong_tan.loc / Vietnam	halleytran_ / Vietnam	hanhchipp / Vietnam / Hanoi
qcici / China / Shanghai	kohhhhoi / Japan / Fukuoka	koyoox / Japan	ninhtrungvu / Vietnam / Hanoi
k_a_r_e_n_g / Hong Kong	sora_ame / Japan	tienphuc_ / Vietnam	zahrada / Japan / Kamaruka
eleonora.art / Russia / Rostov-on-Don	katrinakonstrant / Russia / Yakutia	lavimeer / Ukraine / Kiev	lubamirgorodskaya / Belarus / Minsk
nekip.photo / Russia / Buryatia / Ulan Ude	recklesstonight / Ukraine / Kiev	victoria_photo_ / Russia / Ryazan	vita_century / Russia

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But how did young global Instagram users learn to use these tools (along with staging or choice of a scene, of course) to express particular attitudes? In 2010, *Wallpaper* magazine ("the world's most important design and lifestyle publication," according to a [Wikipedia article](#)) was already 14 years old, and the first [design hotel](#) by Philip Stark and Ian Schrager was 22. Both minimalist and mid-20th century modernist aesthetics were already widespread globally. However, Kinfolk developed and popularized a new aesthetics. It had a real effect on growing Instagram, and Instagram users popularized it further. This has been acknowledged by more than one commentator:

> "The Kinfolk look has become so influential that every over-styled, washed-out Instagram photo of a succulent or a cup of coffee is now deemed to be part of its visual bandwagon. (Dan Howarth, interview with Kinfolk co-founder Nathan Williams, http://www.dezeen.com/2016/03/02/kinfolk-magazine-interview-founder-editor-in-chief-nathan-williams-instagram/, March 2, 2016).

> "*Kinfolk* also came into existence just as we started using platforms like Instagram aspirationally, translating the aesthetics of the glossy print page onto the even glossier screen and making them our own in the process." (Kyle Chaka, "The Last Lifestyle Magazine: How Kinfolk created the dominant aesthetics of the decade with perfect lattes and avocado toast," http://www.racked.com/2016/3/14/11173148/kinfolk-lifestyle-magazines, March 14, 2016).

Of course, many other magazines and web platforms now also use Kinfolk / Instagrammism aesthetics and "attitude." Searching Instagram, I found around a million photos tagged with various Kinfolk related tags: #kinfolk, #kinfolklife, #kinfolkmagazine, #kinfolkrussia, and so on. Among the cities worldwide (choosing only from the ones I visited since 2010), the ones which have this aesthetics the most in my view are Seoul, Riga, Tallinn, Berlin, and downtown Los Angeles – although practically every megapolis now has its "design / hip" places and districts. In choosing these particular cities, I am not simply thinking of the abundance of cafes and restaurants with interesting design, ambient bars in unusual locations, small design and lifestyle shops, and other places where we are expected not only to hang out and browse, but also to spend some money. More important are the atmosphere and the feeling (*состояние*) you have while walking around these cities – the result of their architecture, urban structure, rhythms, the numbers of young appropriately dressed and behaving young people around you, the looks on their faces, the ways their bodies move, and the way they occupy space. (That's why New York, Brooklyn, Paris, and London can never qualify to be top Instagrammism cities even though they have plenty of the right places – they are simply too crowded and too fast.) Because of these other factors, I don't think that we

can reduce Instagrammism to a simple list of dishes, drinks, products, filters, and effects such as "latte," "avocado toast," or "washed out" (which is what writers I quoted above seem to suggest.)

So let us now look more closely at Kinfolk films and Instagram photos expressing Instagrammism aesthetics and sensibility best. (They seem to come from Russia, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Japan). What is really going there?

The Instagram examples shown in Fig. 3 cover a wide range – from geometric and high-contrast spreads of objects and foods to blurry or low-contrast images of nature. The first kind is very close to Kinfolk photography. It is about *предмет (*Russian for "things"*).* The second is more about *состояние*. In the first, objects stand out from background which is often pure white. In the second, even if objects are present, they don't attract attention.

However, we have to remember that in an Instagram gallery interface, any image always appears next to others. Look at the selection of six images shared by user *@by_jinyong* (figure 4). It shows that the meaning of a particular photo in Instagram changes depending what photos are around it in the user's gallery. The user highlights the coffee cup (top left), mobile phone (bottom center), and a basket of fruit (bottom right) by blurring the background. So in another context these three photos would be about "things." But in this particular context, they became about the mood established by the other three photos of the flowers in the field.

Figure 4. Selection of photos shared by four Instagram users (also shown in figure 3).

Top to bottom:
@katrinaconstrant (Russia, Yakutia),
@vita_century (Russia),
@by_jinyong (Korea),
@sora_ame (Japan).
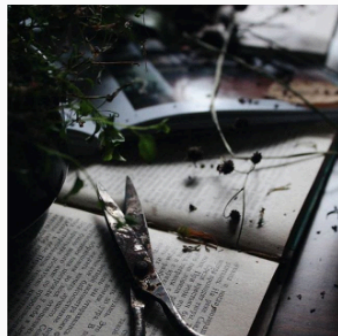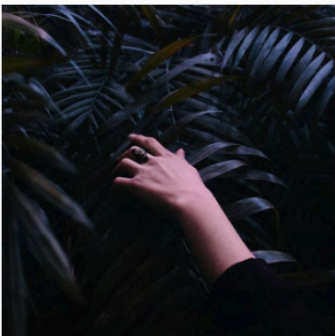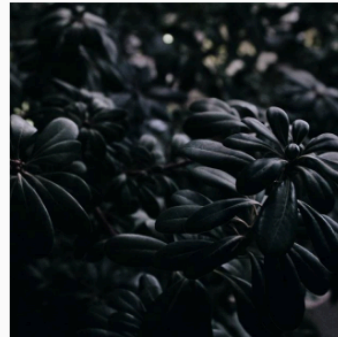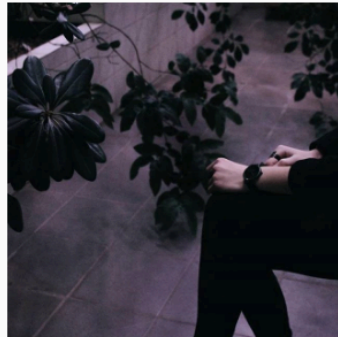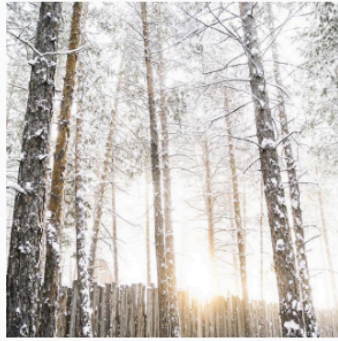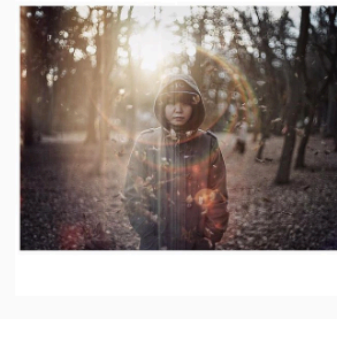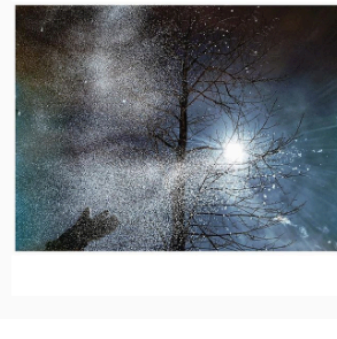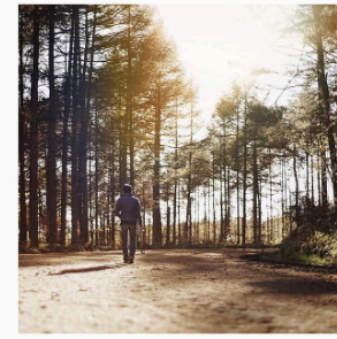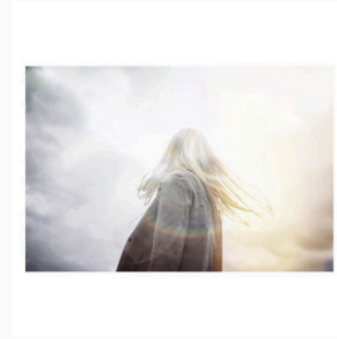
There are other differences between Kinfolk and Instagram aesthetics created by young sophisticated users from many countries - but I am more interested in their common features. Having defined *instagrammism* above as a "combination of a media form and particular content," let's now expand our analysis by bringing in other terms, such as "narrative."

Instagrammism does not care about "*telling a story*," and it does not feature proper "subjects" (in the sense of "subject of a photo"). Certainly, Kinfolk and Instagram video and photos show very concrete things: textured walls, human hands, flowers, bodies moving along designed trajectories, people looking into the landscape from a corner of a frame, etc. But at the same time they *blur*, so to speak, the semantic function of a representation. They are *not about showing, or signifying, or registering, or narrating, or convincing*. And they are *not about conveying a "feeling"* either, this would be too simplistic. Really, what is the "feeling" expressed by a close-up view of textured objects arranged on a table, or a hand holding a cappuccino cup in morning light? Can you name these "feelings"? And finally, they are *not even about "style."* Well-dressed people and design hotel rooms do have "styles." Not photographs or videos.

Having rejected all easy terms, what do we have left? I believe that the 20th century film theory and criticism were struggling with the same problem, and they did not solve it. After you take out narrative, editing, acting, and cinematography, how do you call the film "meat" that is left? (Of course only some directors had this "meat," most others were happy to use stereotypes). People writing about cinema sometimes used the term *mise-en-scène.* For me, this terms names a difficult intellectual problem rather than a solution. Here is [definition of mise-en-scène](#) from 1960 provided by one of the founders of *Cahiers du Cinéma*: "What matters in a film is the desire for order, composition, harmony, the placing of actors and objects, the movements within the frame, the capturing of a moment or look... *Mise en scene* is nothing other than the technique invented by each director to express the idea and establish the specific quality of his work." The start is exciting but then the writer gives up, reducing *mise-en-scène* to a tool used by a "director to express the idea." Really?

Although the term *mise-en-scène* does not provide us with a clear definition of Instagrammism, it does point us in the right direction – the 20th century cinema. Certainly, some of the 20th century film cinematographers, art directors, and directors pioneered Instagrammism in some of their films - to name only cinematographers, think of Sven Nykvist (cinematographer of Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*) and Georgy Rerberg (cinematographer of Tarkovsky's *Mirror*). (Instagrammism here refers not to any particular narrow aesthetics, but rather construction of scenes and images that are

atmospheric, visually perfect, emotional without being aggressive, and subtle as opposed to dramatic.)

(Note: In addition to particular cinematographers and photographers, we can also find great examples of Instagrammism sensibility in the history of painting: oil paintings by Balthus, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Utrillo, Robert Falk, and monochrome works on paper by artists from China, starting in the Song dynasty, and subsequently also in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.)

However, even the most atmospheric, visually perfect, and subtle feature films and 20th century commercial photographs with the same qualities were ultimately doing something else. Even the most artistic commercial photography had to help sell something. And even in the most poetic and individualistic art cinema, purely poetic non-narrative shots and sequences were embedded into larger "stories." These "stories" had people (i.e., actors) talking to each other, moving in vehicles, walking in and out of modern buildings, and performing other "actions." They had "establishing shots." They employed "costume designers," and "makeup artists," and used "scripts." All these horrible terms describe the forces that never allowed feature films to become %100 poetic.

I can think of only a few exceptions - the feature films that "got away," refusing to "tell stories." Or, at least, in these films the prose of the narrative did not take away poetry from the visual. Not surprisingly, most of these were made in the USSR, where in some cases some directors were able to use very professional state film system and big budgets to make very personal films. These are Sergei Parajanov (*Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, 1965; The Color of Pomegranates, 1969),* Marlen Khutsiev (*I am 20*, 1965; *July's Rain, 1967*), Mikhail Kalatozov (*I am Cuba*, 1964), and Elyor Ishmukhamedov (*Tenderness*, 1966; *Lovers*, 1969).

Figure 5. Top: stills from *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (Parajanov, 1965) *and The Color of Pomegranates* (Parajanov, 1969)*. Bottom:* stills from *Red Desert* (Antonioni, 1964).
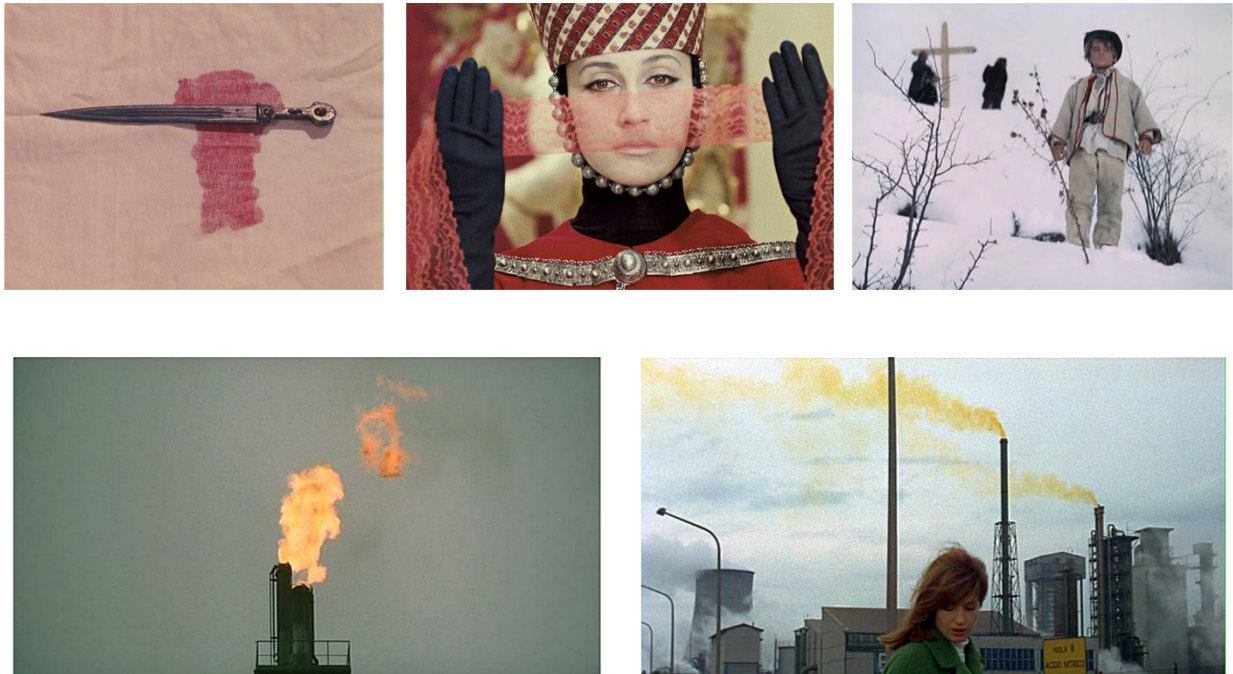
In contrast, their counterparts in Western countries had to rely on 8mm or 16mm format, and had no budget, studios or real actors - and as a result, Western experimental cinema was often abstract. Indeed, would you be scraping lines on film stock (Len Lye), filming rotating disks (Man Ray) or using other tricks of avant-garde cinema, if you had access to the same actors, cinematographers, and production crew as Tarkovsky?

In my personal view, the only Western feature films where visual poetry was as important as narrative were Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and *Last Year in Marienbad* (1960), Antonioni's *Red Desert* (1964), the first part of Bergman's *Persona (1966)* and Jacque Tati's *Playtime* (1967). I recently went again through the most well-known Godard's films of the 1960s, and they all now look surprisingly narrative-driven. And despite all their remarkable visual poetry, Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) and Agnès Varda's *Cléo from 5 to 7 (1961)* also are real narratives – or maybe they just did not pay the same attention to design of every frame as other directors mentioned above.

Of course, if we also also consider the 20th and 21th century short films and documentaries, the list will be quite long. And if we start counting motion graphics and

music videos produced since the late 1990s, it will become enormous. For example, hundreds of k-pop music videos produced in the last few years have excellent visual design. And here are some recent (2014-2016) Russian and Ukrainian music videos with equally strong visual aesthetics and contemporary "cool" sensibility and attitude typical for the Instagram generation:

Quest Pistols Show - Санта Лючия:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6a_mLhifqc

Выходной by MONATIK:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wR-JxJ9II78

Тише by Анна Седокова и MONATIK:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dr_gCwjaoCI

Песня 404 by Время и Стекло:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeRCDH_zUnU

Имя 505 by Время и Стекло:
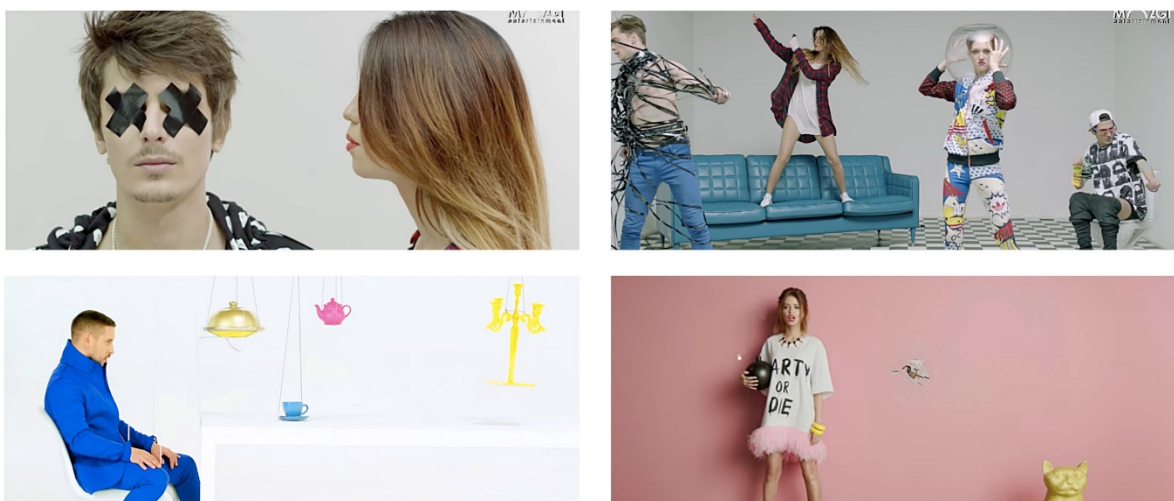https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Go8ub9a1k

Май by Клава Кока:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_7xH2D6Mxs

Stills from three of these videos are show in figure 6.

Fig. 6. Stills from four music videos.
First row: *Имя 505* (Время и Стекло), *Тише (*Анна Седокова and MONATIK).
Second row: *Тише (* Анна Седокова and MONATIK), *Имя 505* (Время и Стекло).

For yet another example of a "convergence" between pop music and design, consider the following. A number of K-pop albums received top awards from the most prestigious global design competitions (Red Dot Design and iF Design Awards) in design and packaging categories. The groups include Girls' Generation, Super Junior, SHINee, f(x), and EXO.

Figure 7 demonstrates design sophistication in recent K-pop videos. The view numbers refer to YouTube videos published at official YouTube accounts by the groups or their management companies:

Dumb Dumb (Red Velvet). Published on Sep 8, 2015. 38,699,981 views (as of May 31, 2016). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGdbaEDVWp0

The 7th Sense (NCT U).Published on on Apr 8, 2016. 11,437,989 views (as of May 31, 2016). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UGMDJ9kZCA

Gotta be You (2NE1, 2014). Published on May 20, 2014. 29,920,040 views (as of May 31, 2016). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdKTgwffmdo

Figure 7. Stills from three K-pop music videos. Top row: *Dumb Dumb* (Red Velvet, 2015). Bottom row: *The 7th Sense* (NCT U, 2016), *Gotta be You* (2NE1, 2014).
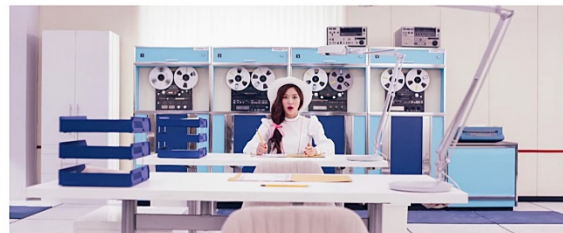
Having explored relevant examples from the 20th century cinema and contemporary music videos, let's come back to Instagram of today. Best images created by young Instagrammers practice something we can also call "poetic design" (referencing here "poetic realism" movement in cinema, minus the narratives). What are some of the countries that produce the best "poetic design"? It is hard to answer this without a large scale computational analysis of many millions of Instagram images, but here is one hint. Kinfolk has (or had) international editions in Russia, China, Korea, and Japan. Indeed, we keep finding great examples of Instagrammism aesthetics among users from these countries. Not surprisingly, some of their photos repeatedly feature Kinfolk magazine.

Figure 8. Examples of Instagram photos by individual users that feature Kinfolk magazine.
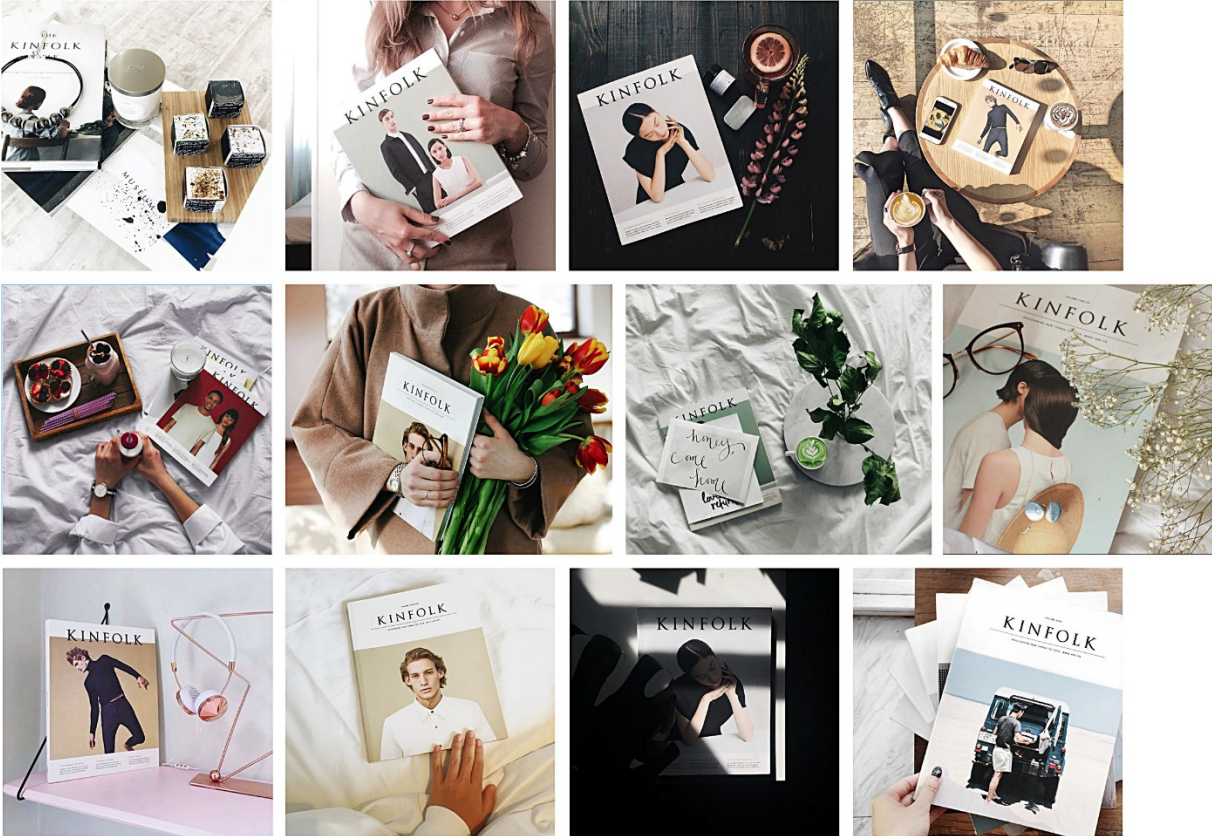

Let's look at the sample of photos from 24 Instagram users in fig. 3. Although some of these photos may look like commercial lifestyle or fashion photography, they don't focus on objects so directly. They don't "sell" them to us. They also don't feature perfect model bodies. The atmosphere and mood are more important, and the "props" (objects, bodies) are less important.

We can sometimes find lifestyle or fashion photography which is very, very close to poetic design on Instagram. The boundary is almost invisible, but I do believe that it exists. And *the subtlety of this boundary itself is an important sign of how culture works today*. "Independent" and "commercial" or "art" and "design" are not separated in clear ways like they were during the 20th century. But this does not mean that they have completely merged.

Figure 8 shows selections of Instagram-like images available for sale from stock imagery portion of popular 500px photo sharing site (https//marketplace.500px.com). I have spent some searching through the web site and browsing the results to specifically photos that are as close aesthetically to Instagrammism sensibilities. These particular photos certainly could have come from Instagram users who are not trying to monetize their accounts.

Fig. 9. Selection of more "Instagram-like" images from 500px.
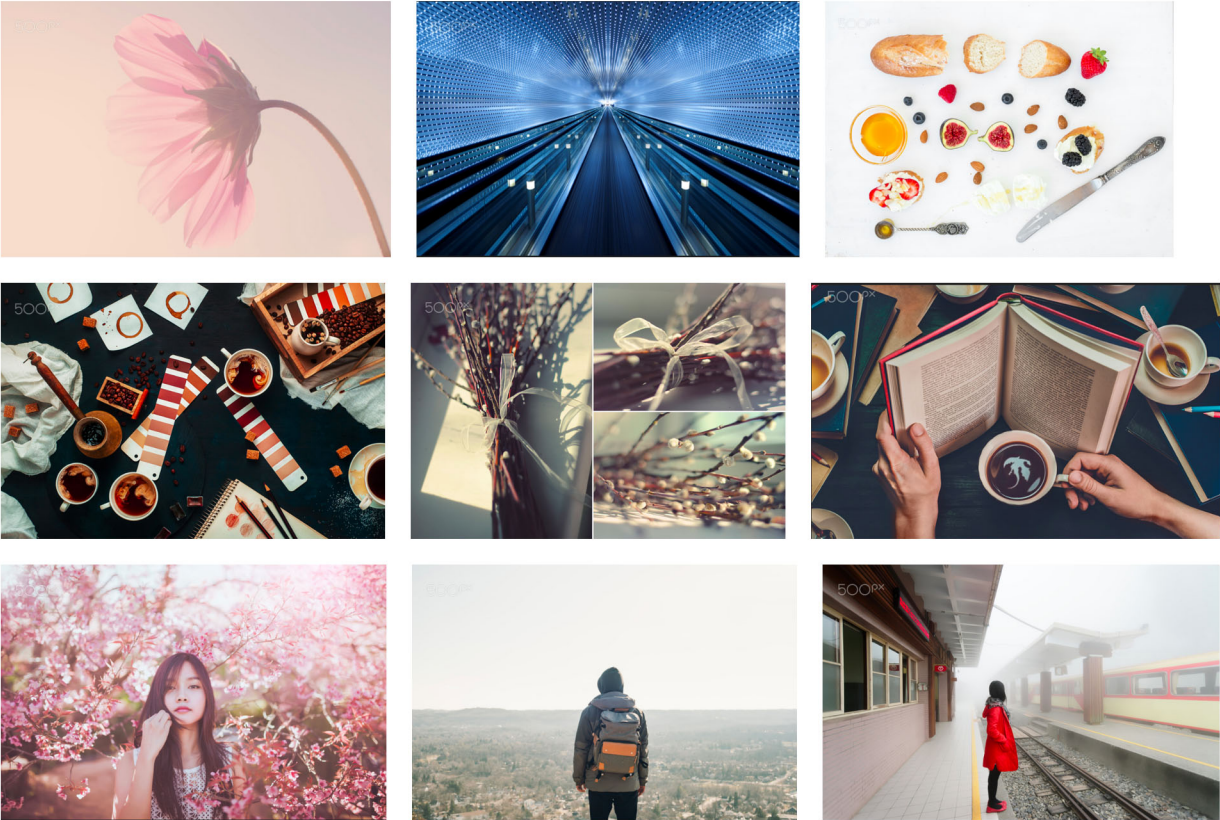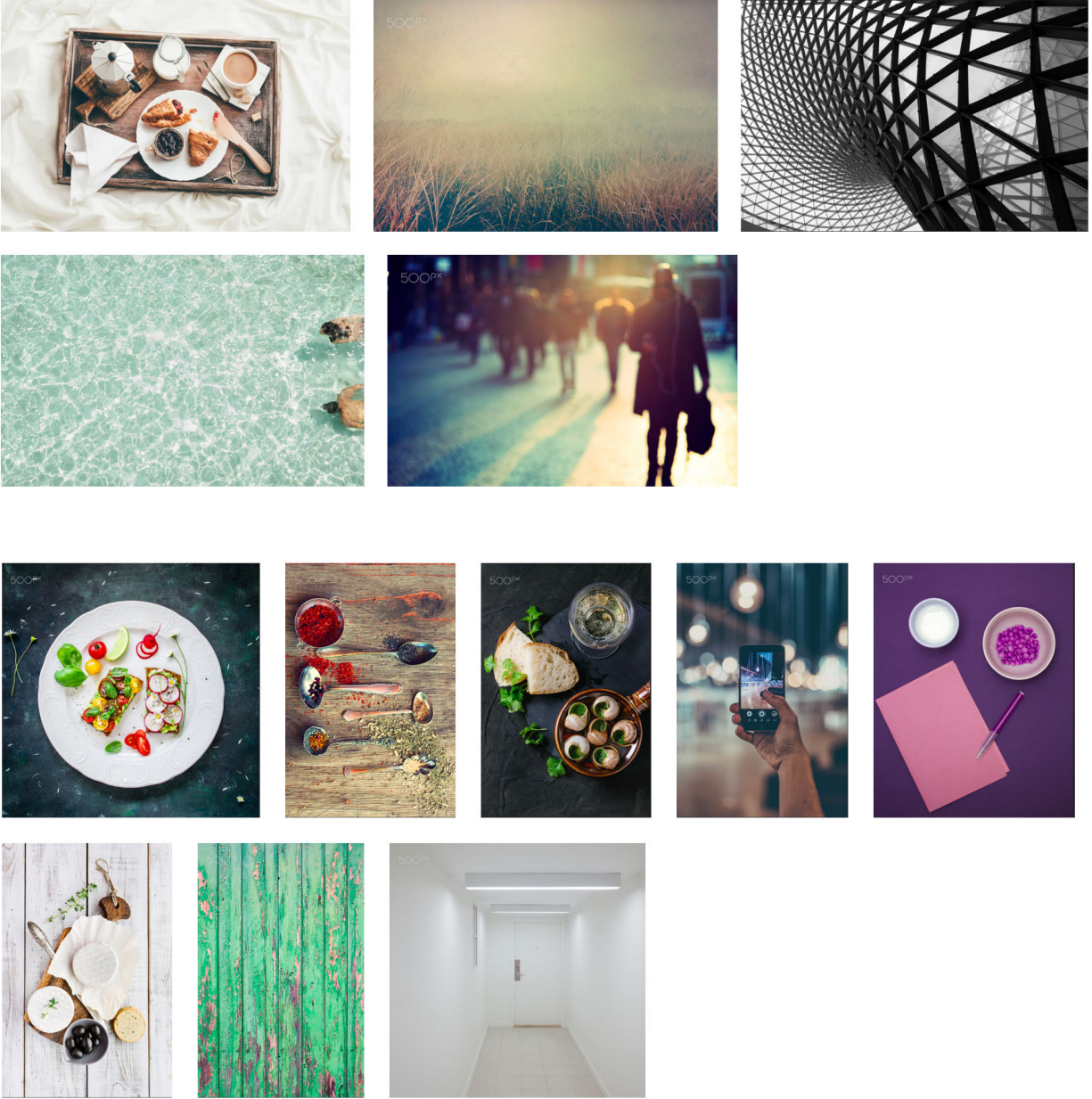
To give you a sense of more typical stock imagery from 500px, I have entered "Browse latest content" (with "no people" option selected) on marketplace.500px.com and saved the screenshot (figure 10).

Figure 10. Screenshot of images displayed by marketplace.500px.com after selecting "Browse latest content" (with "no people" option selected) at 11:25pm, May 31, 2016.

As we can see, the distinctions between "Independent" and "commercial" still exist – although a significant proportion of photos can function equally well in either category. And this is no longer the question of "commodification." The "independent" and "commercial" continuously influence each other and borrow from each other.

This discussion and examples suggest the following. If want to understand the specificity of the contemporary cultures, we cannot use the 19th and 20th century concepts such as as mainstream and experimental, late capitalism, fetishism, narcissism, commodity, appropriation, etc. They are too broad to capture *the small differences between different cultural situations and sensibilities* that matter today. To put this differently: when cultural trends emerge and become popularized faster than before, people's answer is to develop small *variations*, rather than trying to make something really very different (modernist "make it new.")

Cultural identity today is established via small variations and differences – and also hybridization among already established positions. (For example, if the first part of the 20th century was about radically conflicting "isms" – cubism, suprematism,

surrealism, etc. – then the 21st century so far is about variations on single larger trends such as minimalism in design.)

Note, however, that there are limits to how many distinct cultural identities are possible. If you describe yourself as "traveler, blogger, photographer" (as many Instagrammers do), you immediately position yourself within a really big "Instagram class." Instagram contains over 100 million photos with tag #travel, 27 million photos tagged #photographer, and 18 million photos tagged #blogger (numbers as of May 31, 2016). You can, of course get, more specific, but again numbers are massive. Here are examples of such tags from photos of a few users I showed in figure 3.

#geometry - **2,061,435** posts
#minimalmood - **1,022,493** posts
#flatlay - **991,444** posts
#shadowhunters - **972,219** posts

Wikipedia article List_of_subcultures lists 126 different subcultures (many of these are specific to Japan). Among those listed, we find *bōsōzoku*, "a Japanese youth subculture associated with customized motorcycles"); *demoscene*, "a computer art subculture that specializes in producing demos"; and *furry fandom*, "a subculture interested in fictional anthropomorphic animal characters with human personalities and characteristics." This sounds like a lot of choices, but it is not enough to create a unique cultural identity. If a young person identifies with any subculture, this excludes her/him from the "mainstream" (if it exists in given place) or a few common identities. But at the same time, the person now belongs to another group, i.e. the chosen subculture. So instead of creating a unique identity, the person gets locked in a group identity.

Does music offer more opportunities for self-definition? A well-known project Every Noise maps music genres "based on data tracked and analyzed for 1460 genres by Spotify. They range from broad genres such as "electronica" and "hip hop" to national variations such as *Slovak pop* and *Australian hip hop*. This suggests that music does offer more categories. It is important to also note that creation of new genres by combining already existing one is a key mechanism of modern music evolution, and such mechanism keeps generating new varieties.

However, in my view, photography today – and Instagram platform in particular – gives young people at least as much power in crafting unique identities as music. And in comparison to writing music, Instagram is much easier to use. To establish a visual style, chose particular subjects and compositions for your photos and use Instagram or

VSCO app to apply the consistent edits, filters, and presets to all of them. Between different subjects, compositions, color palettes, contrast levels, and other adjustments and filters, the number of distinct styles that can be created is very large – as demonstrated by selections of users' photos shown in figure 3. (Of course, creating really unique and really amazing photos still takes lots of time and practice. VSCO possibilities in creating different looks are demonstrated in the post 50 VSCO Cam Filter Settings for Better Instagram Photos and on many Pinterest boards such as VSCO Cam Filters.)

Given this analysis, I want to make my earlier statement "Cultural identity today is established via small variations and subtle differences" more precise. "Subcultures," food preferences, and fashion styles give people basic tools to establish and perform their cultural identities. However, digital cameras and editing and publishing tools as exemplified by Instagram provide **the crucial mechanism to further refine and "individualize" these basic identities**.

How individual can they get? In a network culture of Instagram where people can see each other images and use the same editing tools it may be very to achieve complete uniqueness – but at least you can develop a visual presence which is "sufficiently unique" – something which does not fit into common types and can't be captured by a single or a few hashtags. In fact, many of the users I selected for figure 3 don't use any tags for their photos, because they probably do not want to be "labeled" and compared to others.

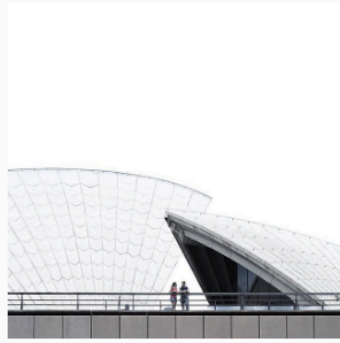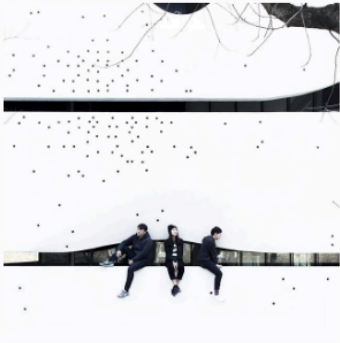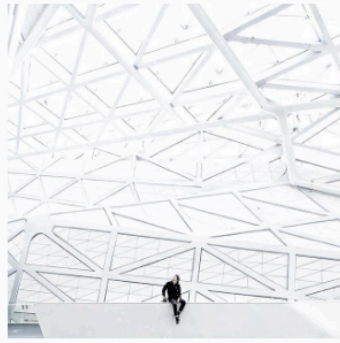**Figure 11.** Selection of photos from five Instagram users (also shown in fig. 3).
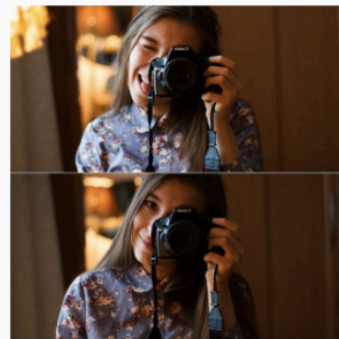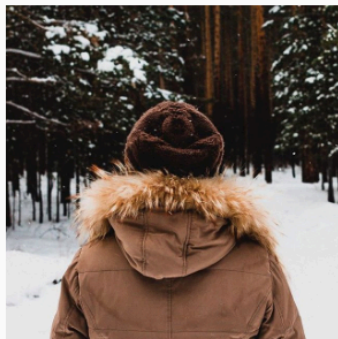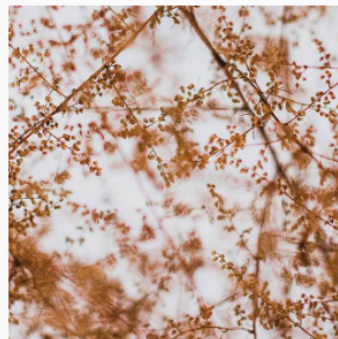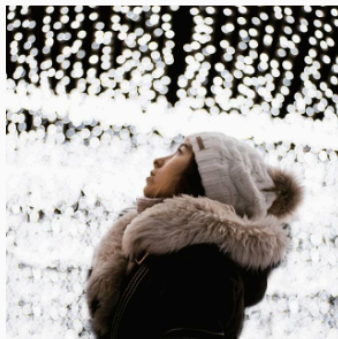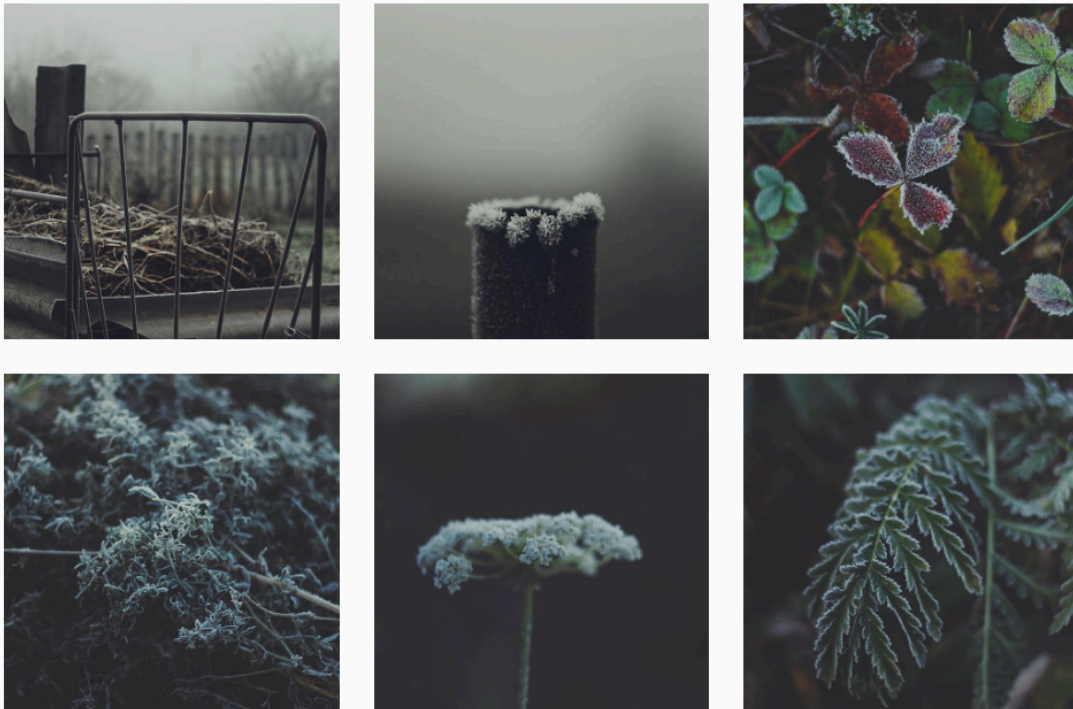Top to bottom:
@k_a_r_e_n_g (Hong Kong),
@koyoox (Japan),
@bnphm0609 (Vietnam),
@nekip.photo (Russia, Buryatia, Ulan Ude),
@viktoria_photo_ (Russia, Ryazan).
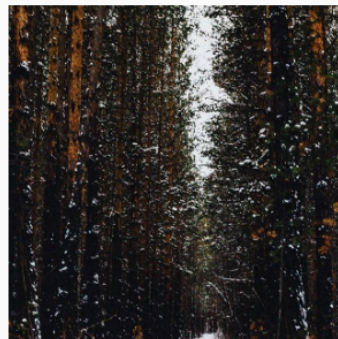
To continue with our investigation of Instagrammism, let's look at the self-description of Kinfolk magazine to see if it can help us to better understand the aesthetics of their films, as well as seemingly similar aesthetics on Instagram:

> "*Kinfolk* is a slow lifestyle magazine published by Ouur that explores ways for readers to simplify their lives, cultivate community and spend more time with their friends and family. Founded in 2011, *Kinfolk* is now the leading independent lifestyle magazine for young creative professionals and also produces international editions in Japan, China, Korea and Russia. Published quarterly, *Kinfolk* maintains a vibrant contributor base from Copenhagen to Cape Town. Ouur is a lifestyle publisher and agency creating print and digital media for a young creative audience." (http://www.kinfolk.com/about-us/, accessed May 27, 2016.)

Very interesting! But why does simplifying one's life and spending more time with friends and family end up looking so intensely beautiful in Kinfolk films? Why the result is something which blends aesthetics of minimalism from Asian pen and ink paintings, Scandinavian aesthetics of clarity, simplicity but also rich natural textures, and colors produced by VSCO filters? The possible answer suggested by Kinfolk self-description is that its films and photography are doing two things simultaneously: creating the idealistic, almost utopian picture of perfect "slow lifestyle" while at the same time feeding

the need of their readers – "young creative professionals" – to be visually stimulated and inspired by "good design." So when you are looking at Kinfolk, you are benefiting both personally and professionally.

But what about all the Instagrammers globally who seem to favor very similar aesthetics, even if they are not young creative professionals and don't care about "slow lifestyle"? (Some of the best "poetic design" Instagram accounts I found in Russia are from teenagers.) Maybe things are not as logical and straight-forward as Kinfolk self-description suggests?

Lifestyle is not about always *doing things*. (Never mind that American commercials for lifestyle products and services associate lifestyle with actions: you driving your European sports car, you having romantic dinner with your beautiful wife, you being served by hotel staff in a luxury hotel in an exotic location, etc.) To use the term from narratology, lifestyle is often about about "description" than "narration" (although "description" also does not quite capture what I am trying to say.) It is about sitting in a café and looking down at the table which has your coffee cup and a notebook. It is about gazing into the landscape from the corner of a photo frame. It is about "contemplation," "meditation," "being lazy," and so on - the luxury of doing absolutely nothing while being in a perfect place, perfectly dressed, with a perfect drink – solo or with a perfect friend. It is the unique feeling you get when you put on a special piece of clothing or when you look at a very particular landscape or cityscape.

Both Kinfolk and Instagrammers represent a lifestyle - but only if we understand it in this non-commercial, *not product- or action-oriented* way. Kinfolk's original motivation behind subjects and aesthetics of its photography and films was the cultivation of gatherings with friends and family, while young Instagrammers adopted and extended this style to capture all kinds of situations – but in both cases, it is about experience. Therefore, their films and photos do not focus on products or actions. For example, we don't see people talking on their mobile phones, or taking photos with mobiles or cameras. Instead, we may see these objects lying on a coffee table or a bed. *Being* rather than *doing* – if there is any message in poetic design, this is it.

"Washed out" filters often used for these photos and films are not about photo history nostalgia. They are about *reducing greyscale and color contrasts – which are metaphors for emotional contrast and cognitive dissonance*. (Thus, the most un-Kinfolk location in the world that I have experienced is Midtown Manhattan.)

The neologism "Instagram" suggests speed, quick decision, and fast action. If this was the platform's original intension, then the visually sophisticated global youth and many

members of global creative class use it today in a completely opposite way. Instagrammism needs slowness, craftsmanship, and attention to tiniest details. (One of the young Russian Instagrammers I follow at some point started experimenting with adding one pixel wide white border to her Instagram photos). These qualities are also required to create great design, regardless of whether you are working with physical materials, a space, a printed page, or an app.

And this is why today ***Instagrammism is the style of global design class*** (although it is also used by millions of young people who are not professional photographers, designers, editors, etc.). This global class is defined not by the economic relations to the "means of production" or income but by Adobe Creative Suite software it uses. It is also defined by its *visual voice* - which is about subtle differences, the power of empty space, visual intelligence, and visual pleasure. Everything you find in the very best Instagram, web and print images, space design, food, and street style fashion today.