

## "Monica Framed" by Nora Liu

As you all know, I am interested in photography. It is a long-standing interest. I started in my thirties – that is when I bought my first camera. However, recently this interest flared up with such surprising intensity that I had to ask myself – why am I doing it, what is the intent, what is the purpose.

It led me to reading about the philosophy of photography, interviewing people, getting answers, finding answers – there are many reasons, some selfish, some not so. However, you can approach the problem from the other direction - looking at a photograph and ask, now what is this good for, is it worth anything.

Recently, looking at my files in my computer, I found a picture that I fell in love with. Here it is, taken about 12 years ago, of my granddaughter Monica. I remember her being dressed up for some occasion, I remember giving her the hyacinth to hold.



The picture is not of high quality technically. It is a low resolution scan of 4x6 snapshot (albeit taken with a good camera and lens) but I find the picture pretty magical. Let's see, what is so good about it?

The composition is nice. The little fingers are adorable and the flower is well defined. Her face is not the brightest spot, as it should be, but the hands and the flower draw your eyes to it. It is the picture of a dressed up little girl, in a well-ordered and safe world with rules. However, look at the face – is it solemn, sanctimonious and obedient? No!!! Her expression says something different. And, as with all portraits, this makes all the

difference. She has a little impish, smirky, rebellious, almost sarcastic smile. One little out-of-place tuft of hair supports this expression. What does this mean? What is she trying to say? I think she says that OK, I am patient, for the time being I am putting up with all your finery, order, rules and predictable life, but not for always – I am not going to build a life patiently one brick at the time, I will not be bounded by your rules, but look for all my possibilities. And why should not we all?

In Rilke's poem -Archaic Torso of Apollo, " all the pores in the marble are looking at you – saying – you must change your life". This admonishing is one of the noble goals of art.

This little picture is not as drastic or presumptuous – all it says – if you want to change your life it is OK to try and do so.

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