

What Does It Mean to "Get Close" in Street Photography?

Beyond Physical Proximity

When we think about getting close in street photography, iconic names like Bruce Gilden and William Klein come to mind. Their work exemplifies the raw, in-your-face style often associated with physical proximity to subjects. But getting close is about more than just how near your lens is to someone's face.

"There's more to the idea of getting close than proximity. It's about breaking barriers—physical, emotional, and cultural."

Emotional Closeness Through Connection

True closeness involves creating a connection with your subjects. When traveling to a new place, **immerse yourself in the local culture**. Whether it's through learning a few words of the language, adopting customs, or simply being present, these actions help bridge the gap between you and your subjects.

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

For instance, during a feast day celebration, I found myself dancing with a local man. This playful interaction allowed me to spend time with his family, capturing intimate moments of joy and connection. The photos weren't just snapshots; they were reflections of shared experiences.

Honesty and Openness

Getting close also means being transparent with your intentions. **Don't hide your camera**. Approach people openly and engage with them genuinely.

"Being playful, honest, and open helps break the barrier and fosters emotional closeness with your subject."

The result? Photographs that resonate on a deeper level, capturing not just faces but the essence of the people and their environment.

Time and Intimacy

Spending time in a place or with a group of people naturally leads to more intimate photographs. When I lived in a village in Zambia, I stayed with a host family. Over time, our bond grew so strong that leaving was emotional for all of us. This closeness translated into my photography—each image carried the weight of shared experiences and genuine connection.

"The time spent in a place transforms your photographs, making them more intimate and meaningful."

Interaction and Engagement

Think about William Klein's work. His photos radiate energy, not just because of their proximity but because of his interaction with people. He didn't just observe from a distance; he engaged.

"Getting closer is about engaging with people on the street, not just hiding behind your camera."

This interaction fosters authenticity, making your subjects feel seen and valued rather than objectified.

Conclusion: The True Meaning of Getting Close

Getting close in street photography isn't solely about physical distance. It's about building trust, fostering emotional connections, and immersing yourself in the environment. By engaging openly, spending time, and embracing the humanity of your subjects, your photos gain a depth that mere proximity can't achieve.

"It's not just about putting the camera closer—it's about getting closer emotionally, culturally, and personally."