

## Art is the Answer

### Art is the answer

*"At the end of the day, I find art is the ultimate answer to life itself."*

Life can sometimes feel meaningless, and because of this, I find that art gives a lot more meaning to life. Every morning, when I wake up, I open my eyes wide and set myself into motion. By moving my physical body, and observing the world around me, using the camera, I can uplift the world in a photograph.

The world becomes a canvas, and everything is photographable. A photograph is an instant sketch of life that allows you to create something from nothing.

---

### Artists Should Be Playful

I find that the use of light and shadow, high contrast, black-and-white, and a point-and-shoot camera to be a liberating tool. The snapshot approach—by not taking compositions too seriously and allowing the chips to fall as they may—is a good way to embrace the spirit of play.

I think that a lot of photographers wind up taking themselves too seriously, focusing on these heavy, or deep and meaningful documentary projects, or topics that they would like to cover. However, the goal is to be in a **state of production**. I find that many photographers have periods of time where they are not making work. I like to be in a state of **always making work**.

Because of this, I think that making art that is simple and easy to access, such as street photography, is extremely important in my life.

*"The street is accessible and open to all."*

Street photography requires no barrier to entry other than owning the camera and having two shoes to walk around. I think that when it comes to practicing street photography, specifically, people get caught up in notions of what makes or breaks a good photograph. I say, **forget everything you think you know** about photography, the history, what's been done before, and what makes or breaks a good photo. If you want to create photos, make photos for the sake of making photos.

---

### **The Autotelic Artist**

Embrace the **autotelic** mindset, and simply be in the state of play and production on the street. Remove any external validation in your life such as Instagram or social media and go off the grid. I suggest making a website blog because it helps with remaining grounded and true to your own process and thoughts. Without the influence of others, you can improve your photography incrementally without an audience. I find this to be interesting in terms of weightlifting as well.

*"If you have a home gym set up and work out at your own place without the pressure of others, how would you work out?"*

If you have to rush around a public gym and wait for machines to open or weights to be accessible, perhaps you will lift and train in the gym a lot differently. However, when you're training at home without any rush, you can take your time and do some lifts here and there, and not take it so seriously. For me, this is important for my health and fitness goals as I relate these to my goals with photography. Each day, I simply want to improve my strength by one percent, similarly with my photography.

---

### **Movement Is Improvement**

I would like to improve each day. Improvement happens over a long period of time and shouldn't be rushed. When it comes to photography, it requires a big passage of time to pass. This means, you could be photographing all year and only come home with one photograph after a year of shooting every single day. Maybe you have 12 pictures that you deem worthy at the end of the year or maybe only five. It really is up to you to decide what you deem to be a keeper or not, but from my personal experience, I find much more **failure** than success in photography.

*"This is why the autotelic approach to making photographs is critical. You shouldn't expect to go out there and make something successful every day."*

You should strive for greatness, but not expect it. Set your expectations high, but **expect nothing** to return.

---

## **The Joy of Photography Is the Gift of Photography**

In terms of practical tips when it comes to photographing on the streets, I actually say engage with your subjects.

This may seem to be a bit unconventional when it comes to street photography, however, I believe in this notion of **physical and emotional closeness** to your subject. Closeness doesn't just happen from getting up into somebody's face and snapping the shutter. I believe that closeness can happen when making a connection with the person that you photograph. You can still make pictures candidly without disturbing the scene or whatever was going on while interacting with people. I'm a big proponent of using an Instax camera and gifting prints to strangers.

*"More times than not, people will tell you 'yes.'"*

It's a beautiful thing that you can cherish a moment with strangers that typically don't have their portrait made. It's good to compliment others and to give them a print in person without having to send an email or text them later by using an Instax

camera. This Instax workflow has helped me throughout my travels when integrating myself in new communities and gaining trust and access to foreign places.

I'm only sharing this because I believe in it and it's something that has worked for me. Maybe it will work for you... and that would be a great thing.

*"Break all the rules. Create your own ethos, and your own way of doing things."*

Street photography is merely an ethos and can be done **anywhere at any time**. Just treat the street like a playground and be a big kid with a camera.

---

## **Artists Should Lift Weights**

I believe weightlifting and strength training are critical for the creation of art. In order to create better works, perhaps we should improve our **strength** first.

Waking up and doing a farmer's walk, push-ups, and pull-ups, I increase my strength and vigor to go out there, and to propel myself onward into the world. Believe me, weightlifting doesn't have to be so serious. I don't spend my whole day working out and merely do it for around **10 to 15 minutes**.

Afterwards, I set myself outside and thrive in the chaos of the streets. I also believe that **nature walks** are a really good way to start the day. I usually go for a long walk along the river trail, where I can think clearly and embrace nature. My creativity and thoughts usually come to me in **motion** when I'm walking, especially by water or surrounded by trees. I find that the signal between your mind and the world is much more clear and everything sort of clicks better in nature.

---

## Health Is Wealth

**Health is wealth** and for me it's been putting everything else in my life in place. In terms of making photographs on the street, your **intuition**, and your gut, is what determines when to press the shutter.

I enjoy **fasting** because I have an empty stomach and a clear connection between my mind and body. In terms of food, I treat food as fuel. I choose a 100% **carnivore diet** of red meat only for over a year now, and have never felt this good in my entire life. Meat satiates your body and soul and gives you the proper nutrition to continue each day with full strength. I strive to eat around **3 to 5 pounds of meat per night**. I fast all day and only have one massive meal before sleep. This helps me crawl into bed extremely early and get good, deep sleep.

*"I like to go to bed early and wake up early."*

For me, **power** is created by eating good meat and getting good sleep. My simple and practical suggestion is to go to the Costco near you and pick up their lamb leg. It's five dollars per pound and one lamb leg is certainly more than enough to satiate your body for one meal per day. I use a slow cooker and simply throw it in with water and salts and call it a day. I let it sit for eight hours and when I come home, it's ready and juicy and tender and waiting for me.

*"Maybe as photographers, the food we choose to consume is more critical than what camera or lens to use."*

By remaining fasted with an empty belly, I feel more sharp and have a clear mind all day. I never feel hunger because eating meat actually satiates you unlike eating multiple meals of food throughout the day, such as salads, vegetables, fruits, etc.

*"Just let the cows eat the grass and the vegetables for us. Then we eat the cows and absorb all that good stuff!"*

---

## Morning Routine Is Critical

**Coffee is critical**, and I find that espresso is the best way to start the day.

When I wake up in the morning, I slam as many espressos as I feel like, drink a lot of water, hit the shower, gym, and go right outside for my nature walk.

I like to get the day started off on a good note, do some **calligraphy drawings** on my iPad, remix photos using Procreate and make collages, cull through photos from the previous day if needed, and just get myself outside as early as possible. The stimulus of the real world and being outside is something that you can't really get being under fluorescent lighting in front of a computer screen.

---

## Kendama Meditation

I also enjoy using **Kendama** in the morning as a meditative tool. The Kendama is essentially a wooden spike with a ball on a string. Kendama actually derives from the word **sword** and I see why, as it feels as though you're training with one in a unique way.

I believe that the use of the Kendama has been improving my street photography and camera operation as it really does improve your **hand-eye coordination**. It's a unique skill to train with a Kendama and I believe that every street photographer should just get one. It's a fun way to start the day in the morning and to sort of shut down and Zen focus as a warm-up for the gym. I appreciate using a wrist strap with my camera and find this mind-body connection to relate to both camera operation, and Kendama use.

*"Wield the camera as a sword, strike through the heart of chaos, reveal the soul of the street, and put visual order and harmony to the spontaneity of everyday life."*

---

## Become the Übermensch

It's good to have a balance between **weightlifting, thinking, writing, reading, and creating**. I've been reading a bit here and there every day for the past week while walking along the trail and reading out loud. I find that reading out loud to be a great way for me to improve my speech and reading. Reading is something very new to me and I'm happy to have started this past year. So far I've only read a few books, but I'm looking forward to reading more every day.

I've started with ancient **Stoic philosophers** like:

- Marcus Aurelius - *Meditations*
- Seneca - *Letters from a Stoic*
- Epictetus - *Discourses*

I found Seneca's works to be informative and sort of like self-help ancient Stoic philosophy books. Seneca reminds me of the **shortness of life** and grounds me in the now. I'm reminded how important the creation of new art is for me and something worth focusing my attention towards. Philosophy is interesting to me because it helps me think creatively about my artistic practice and way of life.

I'm now reading **Friedrich Nietzsche**. So far I've read:

- *The Birth of Tragedy*
- *The Antichrist*
- *The Gay Science*
- *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

I think it's effective to read all of the works from a particular author that you're interested in and then move on to the next one.

**Photo books** are good to collect as a way to learn about what you find enjoyable in a photograph. I've picked up a lot of books over the years and find that a few of them stick out to me the most:

- Joseph Koudelka - *Exiles*
- Larry Towell - *The Mennonites*

- Tod Papageorge - *Passing Through Eden*

*"Perhaps going forward, in order to create better art, we must also become better scholars, writers, readers, thinkers, poets, and photographers. Let's become the Übermensch, the next renaissance man!"*

---

## **Print Your Work**

I currently have been printing photos on my Canon Selphy CP1500 as a way to start culling through and sequencing my work over the past many years of travel. I've made a variety of prints and sizes so far.

It seems that making four photos on one 4 x 6 page and cutting them out and placing them on the wall to be a good size to sequence with. I also like putting eight photos on one 4 x 6 and cutting them out to put inside of sketchbooks, or cull and sequence on the table as tiny thumbnails. Most recently I've made full 4 x 6 prints of my hundred best photos to look through and see what I think about them.

I'm taking my time with editing and sequencing and playing with the prints on the wall, table, and sketchbooks, and all forms and sizes. This small printer has been extremely useful this past month, and I highly suggest picking one up as every photographer should see what the work looks like in their hands.

*"I find that it doesn't have to be such a serious print, but a small thumbnail really does make a difference."*

Looking at them from a bird's-eye view and seeing all of the work next to each other opens up more possibilities of how you can sequence and think about the work itself.

---



## Artists Should Make a Blog

Ultimately, the goal to create art is what will give our lives a deeper meaning and purpose. I find that in the age of **consumption**, where we have unlimited yummy food options, TV shows, social media, entertainment, etc., the antidote to all of this is to **create** your own media and your own art.

I like using the GoPro mini as a way for me to create my own video/audio, podcast that I upload to both YouTube, Spotify, and of course, my WordPress website using Videopress. I think that **creating a blog** has been the greatest thing that I've done in the past year.

1. Create your domain (First name)(Last name).com using Bluehost
2. Go to [WordPress.org](https://WordPress.org) and get started
3. Install the Astra theme
4. If you want to host your own videos, install the Jetpack plugin and purchase Videopress
5. Upload your photos and videos to the media library and start publishing!

*"Treat everything as a work in progress and don't take yourself so seriously."*

Get your thoughts out there, get the photos out there, and do something with them later if you see fit.

---

## Archive Thoughts

I like using Google Photos as a way to back things up to the cloud right away and keep everything tidy and in order.

In terms of culling through the work, I appreciate using an **iPad Pro** and the Photos app that's built into the device. I look at the work from a 3 x 3 small thumbnail view and just point, tap, and favorite as I go. I appreciate coming home each day and going through the work that I made the same day, making initial selections and favorites, backing them up, and publishing them.

*"I think it's a good idea to stay on top of your archive."*

Throughout the years of practice, having a big backlog or archive to go through hundreds of thousands of pictures can become a real headache down the line. This is why I'm such a fan of the Ricoh and a small JPEG file with a black-and-white simulation baked into the camera. There's no processing needed—I simply go out, shoot, import, and publish.

---

### **Just Disable Stats and Analytics**

The blog has become a place that I find to be the most liberating platform to share my art on as there's no pressure of an audience or feedback from others.

If you're going to publish on YouTube, I highly suggest **removing likes and comments** and simply publish things that you deem interesting. When I think of YouTube, it's merely a search engine tool owned by Google. If you title something a certain way, you can always go back and search the topic you covered in the video with your first and last name and find it somewhere on Google or YouTube. This to me is the benefit of using YouTube—it's simply a search engine tool.

*"Perhaps at the end of the day, the goal of an artist is to share our perspective."*

Our individual POV and experience are interesting, unique, and worth sharing. Maybe this is where the GoPro is a good idea to simply share what you're up to from the first person. Using the superview allows you to put people in your shoes and see what's on your mind or what you're doing.

---

### **Create with No Limits**

What are some of the things that limit us as artists?

Perhaps physiological health and wellness deter us from creating more work. Oftentimes artists are **emo**, and not healthy. Perhaps you imagine a cigarette in their mouth, a beer in their hand, or a glass of wine, and in a frenzy.

*"My belief is, we should be sober, at our peak physique, health, and strength, and then go out there and make art."*

For me, focusing on health and wellness, I've never been happier and more joyful, ready to tackle each day. Of course, happiness isn't the goal of life, but it's not a bad place to start, and to have as your baseline for creating art.

I think that a lot of artists become overly emotional, and I believe that we should strive to be the **antithesis** to this.

*"Create art from a state of strength, joy, and abundance."*

---

## Photography Is Life

I find that **art is the answer** that affirms life itself. When I think of the question "why," I ultimately come up with the answer—**art**. This seems to be the answer to life itself and helps me move onward into this strange, brave new world.

There's no other way I would like to spend the day but outside, passing time with an open mind, no preconceived notions of what I will find, responding to life with the camera.

- Can you walk the same mundane lane every single day and still find something to uplift with a photograph?
- You must have **lust for life** to practice photography every single day with repetition. Perhaps this is what is on display when viewing your photographs ultimately—how much do you love life? Did you propel yourself onto the frontlines of life itself?

Photography has nothing to do with photography, but has everything to do with other factors, such as **courage, intuition, and curiosity**.

Treat the next photos you create as your next best shot. Don't dwell on past work, and simply remain in the state of production and play.

*"There's no such thing as good or bad photos, but only new photos."*

Photography is both a **physical pleasure and visual game**. Think of the compositions you create like visual, problem-solving, or putting together puzzle pieces. If you're looking forward to making layered compositions with a foreground, middle ground, and background, consider where you must position yourself and your camera in order to achieve **order amongst chaos**.

Find street corners with good light, and study the street, and become in tune with the **beat of the street**. Watch people's feet and the way they dance upon the sidewalk. Always be two steps ahead of the crowd and look down the block and anticipate what's around the corner.

---

### **Affirm Life Through Art**

The goal of an artist is to **articulate the unknown**. We thrive in chaos and put order to it. The creation of new art is what affirms life for me, and helps me find more meaning in the mundane. This is the power of street photography.

*"At the end of the day, before you head out with your camera, ask yourself, this one simple question... What will reality manifest to be in a photograph?"*