

## Embrace the Unknown

The unknown is where I thrive. I'm always looking to challenge myself, embrace change, and walk my own path. By embracing the unknown, I allow serendipity and my intuition to guide me. In this space, I find myself at my most creative and productive.

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## What Do You Value?

What I value most in life is **time spent exploring and creating**. I feel like I was born for adventure since I was a child, spending time biking in the forest, building forts with sticks, bridges with stones, climbing trees, and blazing my own paths.

When I explore, I value going out into the world **without preconceived notions**. I never do any research about a place, plan for any events, or worry about the weather. I simply go with the flow. This is how I've always been. There's no rhyme or reason why I've explored the places I've been to other than my gut telling me to.

Perhaps this **child-like curiosity** is what brought me to the streets of Baltimore, a kibbutz in Israel, the mosques of Palestine, funerals and baptisms in Zambia, the slums of Mumbai, the sea in Napoli, the streets of Rome, the mountains in Mexico City, and the bustling markets of Hanoi, Vietnam. I've always known there's something more to life than just my hometown and that I need to explore this world. My imagination is something that has always kept me wondering why and what is out there. I hold certain virtues such as **courage, curiosity, and honesty** closely. I believe that, in order to explore and create anything, these virtues have helped guide me.

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## The Frontlines of Life

When I review my photographs, I believe that determining what is “good” and “bad” is a lemming mindset. Instead of these basic notions of what determines a successful photograph, such as lighting, composition, and moment, I find it much more interesting to ask myself these questions:

- How much **courage** did it take me to make the picture?
- How **curious** was I?
- Did I throw myself onto the **frontlines of life**?

My thought about photographs is that they showcase your **lust for life**. What you see in the photograph is merely a reflection of how much you love life itself. When I wake up in the morning, with my eyes wide open, I hit the streets like it’s my first day with a camera. This helps fuel my insatiable lust for life, always prepared to take in all of the beauty. Every single day I hope to become closer to life itself, fueling my curiosity through the medium of photography.

When it’s all said and done, I want my photographs to display that I have thrown myself onto the frontlines of life, **embracing the unknown**, lusting for life with all my mind, body, and soul.

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## Cave Dwellers vs. Sun Warriors

I have this funny theory about **cave dwellers vs. sun warriors**. The idea is that in this modern world, we are becoming much more comfortable spending time indoors rather than under the sun. Whether it’s working in an office, spending time at the computer at your desk, sitting at home and watching TV, or going to a movie theater, sitting in darkness while watching a flickering light cast images upon the display. We’ve even become accustomed to wearing sunglasses and sunscreen, blocking our connection to sunlight. I find this all concerning because it goes against our natural biology and affects our health in a negative way.

When I was in high school, I would often skip class, and sneak out of the back door of the school. From there, I would just explore. I enjoyed walking around the lawn, by the trees, and in the neighborhood. School felt like an assembly line, preparing me to be the perfect factory worker. Wait for the bell to ring, sit down, listen, do your task, rinse, and repeat. I always found it much more engaging to be in the **real world**, outside.

Last year, around this time before Easter Sunday, I woke up in the morning and looked out of my window. When I saw the city in front of me, I thought about it very differently. To me, it looked like a **big prison**, and I was living within a perfect prison cell in my nice home with amenities, technology, and luxury. This realization particularly hit me because I spent so much time indoors during the pandemic. I then went into the hallway, looked at the vents, and saw how dusty they were. Something didn't feel right, and I realized that I should not be breathing this air all day.

From that day onward, I made an effort to spend the maximum time possible **under the sun** in the great outdoors. I'm becoming a **warrior of the sun**, harnessing its raw power, and channeling it into the creation of my new photographs. I no longer see the world as a prison, but feel like I'm just a big kid in a big playground, painting with light. The sunlight helped me return to this childlike, naive, and optimistic spirit that I've always had deep down inside. Perhaps your **perception of reality** is what holds you back from pure bliss, change, and the unknown.

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## **The Reflection in the Water**

When did a human being first look at their **reflection in the water**?

I thought of this recently, during a walk in nature along the Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia. I looked into the reflection, wondering if an ancestor of mine thousands of years ago similarly looked at themselves and questioned what they saw. Perhaps going forward, we should **embrace our reflection in the water** and be proud of who we are.

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## How to Change the World

To **change the world**, I believe we must **change ourselves** first and foremost. I believe we could all benefit from becoming more selfish and spending more time alone. I think there is a difference between solitude and loneliness. **Being lonely** is unintentional and typically makes one feel depressed and disconnected. **Solitude** is a choice that helps you find peace, clarity, authenticity, and deeper meaning in life. I believe embracing solitude for at least a period of time is the only way you can truly find yourself and why you are here in the first place.

Upon much reflection, I have become **abundant**. Now whenever I'm in the world and around other people, I can't help but smile and spread small acts of kindness with other people. These small acts of kindness, such as complimenting strangers, holding the door open, and listening to others, can make a **big difference** in the world.

I think deep down everybody wants to make an **impact on the world** at large. Perhaps after we all find our true vocations, we can then positively impact other people. My goal is to use my camera to seek the truth and share my perspective with others. Even if my photographs, videos, or words can impact just one other person, I'd say that I have successfully changed the world.

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## You Give Life Its Meaning

I believe that it is up to the individual to **give life meaning**. For me, the creation of new photographs and videos is what brings me meaning in life. I have found something that I truly care about with all my soul.

I find that **art affirms life**. Without creativity, I feel like I simply float through life without orienting myself towards a tangible goal. I desire to create, destroy, and rebuild again and again. I need the stimuli of exploration, and thrive when I am in a

state of production.

The power of photography is the fact that I can **give meaning to anything I see**, as the world is my canvas. When I view a rock on the ground, I can give it meaning and purpose in my life. I can photograph it, throw it into the water, or even kick it around and make up my own game. However, it's up to the individual to view the rock this way. The rock can either be boring and useless, or the source of all of your joy, and something that you can use for a new creation. I believe it's important to remember that **we give life meaning**, and that nobody else is going to do it for you.

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## Heaven and Hell

**Philadelphia is my paradise**, or heaven on earth. I have two beautiful rivers and trails to explore in the forest. There are bustling streets filled with people, parks, beautiful architecture, rich history, and great museums.

It's up to you to create your own paradise while you are here during this short journey of life. It seems that it is much easier for people to complain about all of the negative aspects of their city, but why do this? This becomes similar to **creating your own hell on earth**.

However, I can walk the same mundane lane every single day, and still find it to be the most interesting, beautiful, and blissful experience that I've ever encountered in my life. This is the power of **affirming life through art**. Heaven on earth.

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## Break the Rules

To thrive as artists, we should **break the rules** and create our own. I am currently at a turning point within my photography practice. I have already made a body of work that I am proud of, crafted compositions that are strong, captured moments that are impactful, and explored different places in this world that I could only dream of.

However, going forward, I find that I must **break the rules and limits** that I have set for myself in the past. I've always made an effort to make the best pictures possible and really strived for greatness within each frame I made. It was a game that kept me going back out there, and I would only ever look for one thing—a better picture. You see, the hunt for the next best shot actually isn't worth it in the end.

***My new rule is that the next photograph I make is my best photo.***

I don't even look through the viewfinder or LCD screen half of the time. I'm photographing in a **liberating way**, stripping down to simple light and shadow, and embracing the snapshot as my technique and approach.

I'm more curious about longevity and remaining in the state of production without any limitations whatsoever. Perhaps going forward, it's best to remember where we've come from as creatives—just children, playing in the woods, tinkering, exploring, and innovating. I want to forever be an **amateur**, a child, in a stream of becoming, always learning and never stop exploring.

Move forward with **authenticity**, seek **truth**, and **embrace the unknown**.