

Play the game your own way

In life, I believe it's critical to create your own game to play. You don't have to follow the rules of everyone else and try to fit in.

Glitch out of the map

Have you ever played the video game Skyrim? When I played this game, I always sped up the process of enhancing my character's abilities, and upgrading my armor early by cheating and exploiting certain things. In the game there is dragon armor that is sought after, and very rare. To acquire this armor, you must have lots of gold.

There was a glitch in the game where you could climb along the outskirts on the wall of the town, and "glitch out of the map."

You know how you can see that matrix pattern in video games that looks like a grid?

I would crawl under this and while shop owners were asleep, steal every item from their chests, and sell the items back to the owner the next day.

The point is, in life, photography, and any endeavor, there comes a point where the "grinding" is not fun anymore. In video games, you always have to "grind" for XP or gold, which becomes very boring and kills the gameplay. Maybe I'm not the most patient person, but I've always wanted the results immediately.

When it comes to street photography, grinding every single day to come home with basically nothing on your hard drive will kill your joy and curiosity. Sure, you can get used to the failure, and understand how "difficult" street photography is, and that it takes a lifetime to make anything worthwhile. I learned this fact after a decade of traveling all over the world and making pictures every single day.

Why settle for this lemming mindset

Create your own rules

You see, in street photography, I believe we can actually speed things up like cheating in a video game. Nowadays, I'm mostly interested in coming home with an aesthetically beautiful photograph that peaks my curiosity. By using high contrast black-and-white baked into a small JPEG file on my Ricoh GR camera, I'm honestly always happy with something that I've made every single day. This completely removes the concept of 99% failure and 1% success that street photography has deemed to be the truth for a century.

There truly is something about the aesthetic itself, sublime, otherworldly, and purely magic. By abstracting the mundane life around you and treating the world as a canvas, it no longer matters where you are in the world, you can always find something to uplift in a photograph.

Also, setting the camera to P mode, or simply putting it in automatic mode, and not having to worry about any camera settings whatsoever makes this even more liberating for anybody's level of photography. It does not matter if you are a complete beginner or a seasoned veteran, returning to the amateur snapshot is a fun and easy process that I believe speeds up the rate at which we make successful photos. See my camera cheat code [here](#).

Make the camera your slave and stop grinding with no results.

Painting with light

I remember when I was around 16 years old during a photography class in high school and teacher asked the class what they believe photography was. One student raised his hand and responded, **"painting with light."** This idea has stuck with me to this day. Perhaps it is true, photography is merely painting with light.

Your life is an RPG

Role-playing games were always fun for me as a child. I remember the first RPG I ever played was Kingdom Hearts on the PlayStation 2. In the beginning of the game, the main character, Sora, spawns in on Destiny Island. The objective is to seek the door that unlocks Kingdom Hearts, which represents all knowledge and power.

On the island he is with a group of friends. They often spend time looking out at the horizon, dreaming of leaving the island and what's out there in the open world. There is a special Paopu fruit on the island that Sora and his friend Kairi share. In the game, this fruit intertwines the destiny of those that share it together, forever.

It feels as though everything is going well until the enemy, the heartless, appear, and a portal takes Sora away and into the world of darkness.

Throughout the game, Sora wields a keyblade as his weapon. The keyblade represents light and is used to battle against darkness and the heartless. The heartless feed on the hearts of those that are strong in light. They consume those with will and power into darkness and turn them into "nobodies."

There is one particular scene that I remember most, when Sora is approached by his friend, Riku, that has become consumed by darkness and fights against him without a weapon. He taunts Sora because he has no weapon and appears to be powerless.

However, Sora responds, "I don't need a weapon, my friends are my power!"

This is a pivotal point in the game where we learn that true power lies within the heart, full of light, and through their connections to other people. At this point, the keyblade is summoned to Sora as his heart is pure.

What I learned from this game is that **upholding virtues, choices, and connections is the true source of power**. Themes of inner strength, friendship, and the power of the heart is key within the game Kingdom Hearts, and I believe applicable to real life.

Perhaps along our journey, we must be virtuous, and simply follow the light.

Mind body and spirit

I believe that when you put your mind, body, and spirit into any pursuit, we are bound for greatness. The connection between these three elements are critical to consider when it comes to life in general, but more specifically I related to my practice of street photography. In order to stay laser focus with a sharp mind on the streets, I prefer staying fasted as it increases the connection between my mind and my body, or my gut. Through walking and moving my body in the world, observing the patterns in both nature and human behavior, and treating the world as a canvas, my spirit is ever becoming. I believe that when you are creating anything and especially with street photography, we must return to the child like state, and be a bit naïve. **Perceive the world through a child's eyes, and embrace the spirit of play.**

My happy place

Perhaps it's wise to find your happy place wherever you may be. Personally, I love walking towards the river here in Philadelphia. My happy place is along the Schuylkill river where I enjoy going for a nature walk through the grass and dirt paths, finding myself at an elevated space overlooking the trees and the river itself. I prefer doing this, while barefoot, embracing nature and the uneven surfaces on an even deeper level. While I look out at the horizon and **see beyond**, I'm reminded of the open world that we live in. Like in an open world video game, in life, we should explore endlessly without any limits.

Imagination

Perhaps we've lost our sense of imagination in modern life. I find this to be true for most people. As you get older, your childlike sense of wonder about mundane things become replaced by television and social media. In cities, we lack a connection to the stars above because of the pollution and smog that covers the night sky. I believe humans were more adventurous in the past because we had this simple connection to the sky and the mystery above our heads.

Sora is a Japanese word that translates to “sky.” In the game Kingdom Hearts, Sora has an adventurer’s spirit and an open heart. **Going forward, we must remain curious and embrace our inner explorer every single day as artists and photographers.** Maybe one simple idea that we can adopt is to treat life like a video game. Video games are meant to be fun and for you to explore as an adventurer. Let’s use our imagination and treat life this way.

Think beyond the horizon

What’s out there? What’s beyond the horizon?

When you walk on the street, wherever you may be, recognize that this path is infinite. Sure, it cuts off at a certain point and maybe you reach a dead end. But there is always a way for you to continue walking, moving your body through the world and seeking more from life itself. Don’t get caught up on the grid in a city and stay confined to the same route each day. Walk along the outskirts more and find yourself on the quiet side of the street, observing the places that are less traveled.

Light chaser

Maybe I’m merely a light chaser. I am an explorer with a camera that I wield as a key, unlocking the many doors to life itself through each new experience I have. By painting with light, and simply following the sun itself, I am filled with physical power. And because of the light, I possess the ability to make beautiful works of art. Photography is a superpower and the sun above my head is the source. At the end of the day, just follow the light, and the world will deliver its beauty to you.