Be unrealistic

In life it's often seen as crazy to be unrealistic. You are told that you should be humble and that you are out of your mind if you ever have a goal that is higher than yourself for something that seems intangible or unachievable.

Why as a society have we have become so basic?

Much of our art has become sterile and boring because we conform to being "normal," and embrace "moderation."

For instance, am I permitted to declare that I would like to become the most prolific photographer of all time? I think most people would deem this goal to be crazy or *unrealistic*, but I'm not like other people.

Have you ever played the video game Tony Hawk's Pro Skater?

You see, in the game you achieve more depending on what stats you apply to your character. You can choose to increase your grinding, manual, ollie, etc. Most people that play the game will decide to apply their stats equally amongst the different skill sets that your character can unlock. This would create a base level character that can do just about everything, moderately.

Whenever I played Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, I maxed out my speed and my air right away. I did this because I knew that these were the most critical attributes that a character in the game needed to unlock new abilities, levels, secrets, etc.

I feel like I applied the maximum points to only one attribute in my real life character as early in life as possible. I went all in on photography skills in sacrifice for everything else. I believe this is how you truly advance to the next level. **I was always the crazy player in any video game, or creative pursuit that wants to be the best.**

You see, I relate this to my photography because of my approach over the years. I made the necessary steps to improve at a rapid pace early on as I had to play on the hardest level in Baltimore.

I had to learn to adapt to photographing in my own way, by engaging with a community on a deeper level than simply walking around and taking candid snapshots. I became an adaptable photographer that can photograph in difficult situations and allowed this to carry throughout all of my journey.

Shortly after, I found myself photographing on the frontlines of conflict between Israel and Palestine. I slept on the floors of mosques, and embedded myself in my work further after many months of traveling throughout all of the West Bank.

I lived with a Zambian family, learned a new language, attended funerals, baptisms, and spent time in a village working as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

After Covid passed, I continued to travel to various locations to practice my street photography, where I explored the slums of Mumbai, ancient fishing villages, and documented Holi celebration. I then climbed to the top of the mountains in Mexico City. Lastly, I meditated along the lakes of Hanoi, Vietnam where I spent my time contemplating my approach to photography.

This is where I decided to return to my hometown Philadelphia, and reinvent myself as an artist, resetting my skills back to base level, zero, and rebuilding again.

Do you remember the iPod touch?

They were released around the time I was in middle school. I used to tinker with the software and jailbreak my iPod so that I could change the features on my device to my liking. I could install applications that were not available on the App Store, play games on my iPod from my PlayStation such as Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, and customize the device as uniquely as I wished to enhance the user experience.

When I was in 8th grade, I would jailbreak everybody's iPod touch in school. At the end of the day after class and the bell rung to go to the bus, people would pay me $5 and I would jailbreak everybody's iPods and give them back to the entire class

the next day.

Around this same time, I would modify my Nerf Guns and make it so they could shoot much faster and stronger. I'd take out the screws, open the plastic, remove the air restrictors, shave off plastic parts that reduced the amount of air the bladders could fill, and put it all back together again. I became a hacker, a tinkerer, and an innovator when I was very young.

Flik and the anthill.

The first movie, I remember, watching, and one of the earliest video games I played on the PlayStation was "A Bug's Life." The story of A Bug's Life revolves around the main character, Flik. Flik is different from the rest of the anthill, and always tried to innovate and create new ways of doing things.

The plot goes like this: the ants harvest the food, and the grasshoppers control the ants as they are dependent on them to eat. The grasshoppers had the power and would sort of just kickback and relax and use their dominating force to control the population in the anthill to get what they want.

Flik would create inventions that helped him harvest at a faster rate, but the rest of the colony found it to be destructive and didn't want him getting in their way. He decided to send himself off to explore and went on an adventure as one of the first ants to ever leave the colony. He traveled to different cities and collected a group of warrior bugs that he then brought back to fight against the grasshoppers, and reclaim their authority over their own colony.

I feel like Flik, innovating within a niche space of photography and art that is becoming mediocre at best. I known that I will be misunderstood going into the future, but I'm looking to gather as many warrior bugs as possible to create an army of 300 Spartan Street Photographers.

Create your own rules

In street photography, there are no rules, guidelines, or ethics that you must abide by. You create your own game to play when practicing street photography. This is why it's such a unique art form and allows for innovation and creativity.

My personal game that I've set out to play is by making the biggest limitation and solution possible to making a photograph. I'm shooting in a way that what you see, is what you get, without any going back. **No more training wheels.**

Currently speaking, I'm shooting with the small JPEG file on my Ricoh GRIII with the high contrast settings, cranked to the max like I'm Tony Hawk. This is essentially the simplest and fastest solution possible to make a photograph. This is the easiest way that you can go about making a picture that looks aesthetically beautiful, straight out of camera. I import the photos with lightning speeds to my iPad and get a result that surprises me every single time. I don't need to tinker or edit anything in post processing and I can simply continuously shoot with speed and longevity as my main goal.

It feels like I found a cheat code or a hack to photography and I just want to share the good news that you too, can play the game this way.

You can learn more about my workflow here: https://dantesisofo.com/the-best-street-photography-workflow/

Anti-mediocrity

Have you noticed the ugly architecture that is being built in modern cities these days? Just take a look around you at these ugly condos, apartment complexes, office buildings, and spaces that look so sterile and boring. We're not building anything with beauty in mind anymore. I can't help but adore the old architecture of City Hall or Old City in my hometown, Philadelphia.

It feels as though we strove towards building great things at a point in time with beauty at the forefront, and a belief in something greater than ourselves than mere individual consumers, or ants in an anthill.

The buildings we construct now are filled with dull lighting, ugly aesthetics, and promote poor hygiene, where we put ourselves in boxes to acquire piece of cheese like rats, to then go home and watch TV. Modern society is starting to deny the human body in replacement for more advancements in technology.

Artificial intelligence

People are very misunderstanding of what artificial intelligence entails for our future. Consider ChatGPT like augmented, thinking or just a simple way to learn and research at a faster rate than browsing Google or the Internet. The problem with these platforms is that they bombard you with marketing and boring advertising that just gets in the way. But ChatGPT allows you to stay laser focused and think with an augmented technology that can increase the bandwidth of you learning things.

It's better to believe in something rather than nothing

Now that God is dead and we are replacing God with artificial intelligence, what is there to believe in anymore?

What should we believe in?

I find that it's better to believe in something rather than nothing... Whether it's an intangible goal like becoming the most prolific photographer that ever lived, colonizing Mars, building cars that can fly, making the next iPhone, or simply becoming the strongest version of yourself.

We can set goals and believe in things that are higher than ourselves, have dreams, and aspire towards the impossible. I think this is where innovation, creativity, and human thriving is built upon.

Perhaps it's better to think more unrealistically, transcend, and go beyond basic notions of what success means. Believe that we create our own values and set them to the highest standards ever possible and hold yourself accountable to striving onwards to that crazy belief that you hold dearly to your heart.

An eclipse is coming soon

> *What are the chances that the sun and the moon can cover each other when they are so far apart?*

I remember my time spent in Zambia, where I would gaze out at the stars and the galaxies up above my head in the night sky. I would sit back and chat with my host father, as we were pointing towards shooting stars, constellations, and even watching satellites as they moved around. I've never gazed up at the heavens like this before, as our city in Philadelphia is covered with smog and pollution. Perhaps this is where our lack of imagination stems from. We can no longer look up at the sky and just simply gaze and wonder ***"why"*** to this big cosmic mess that we live in to this day

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You don't need "motivation"

You don't need motivation to practice street photography. If you feel like you need something to inspire you, recognize that the motivation is in your legs.

> *The movement of your body, the open world, the endless terrain to explore, should be enough to get you out the door.*

You don't need to go out there with the hope of making a successful picture. Just simply carry the camera with you and respond to life as it flows towards you. **Embrace the autotelic approach to everything in life.**

Go slow and enter zen zone of recognizing the patterns in both nature and human behavior. Make order from the chaos that's in front of you. Don't make pictures because you feel like you have to, but **do it because you want to.** Continuously propel yourself onward into the unknown and articulate it through the medium of photography. The world is our canvas.

Your motivation should never get in your way of creating things. Don't force anything and only do things because you want to do things. **It's quite simple, really, carry the camera with you, and if you see something, make a picture.**

Optimism for the sake of what?

Optimism is the antidote to pessimism.

In a world where we deny the body and make ourselves slaves to consumer culture, take medications, steroids and supplements to enhance our health, plastic surgery to alter our bodies, it can be hard to find that there's any natural beauty left in this world. *A lot of society is trending towards the ugly, but what are we to do about this?*

Perhaps it's most wise to approach everything with a sense of naïveté and optimism. When making artwork, embrace your childlike curiosity, and create from an abundant state of gratitude, pure joy, and love. Allow these feelings to take over your body and soul, and create in this abundant state with optimism at the forefront.

Look onward into the future with high hopes that we can achieve anything that we desire and put our will to power.

Identity crisis

Have you ever been asked the question, "what do you do?"

This question always reminds me of the movie "300" when the Spartans were approached by the Arcadian soldiers. King Leonidas of Sparta asked the soldiers what their professions were. One responded and said they were a potter, another a sculptor, and another, a blacksmith. King Leonidas looks back towards his army of 300 Spartans and ask them with great power, "What is your profession?" The men simply responded with a fierce war cry, "A-HOO, A-HOO, A-HOO!"

I feel as though modern society is undergoing an identity crisis, where we attach any value and meaning to our lives based upon our race, gender, job, work, and toil.

Whether you are a photographer, chef, doctor, lawyer, construction worker, teacher, etc. you are not "what you do." You are not your job and you are not what society tells you what you ought to be. I say it's better to not be attached to any of these basic identities that we are currently putting at the forefront of our lives.

Become a warrior

Instead of identifying as an artist or photographer, let's become warriors together. When you put your health first and foremost, everything else truly does fall into place. A simple solution is to do some pull-ups, push-ups, and a farmer's walk each morning. This is the routine that I do every single day for only around 10-15 minutes followed by some simple yoga poses.

After a year of lifting, 24 hour daily fasting, one meal a day, and 100% carnivore diet, I have achieved an insanely strong body and physique like a warrior or spartan.

There's no such thing as good or bad photos

When you consider photography, don't think about good or bad photos. I think it's more wise to consider whether or not it is strong or weak. It's my theory that a strong photographer will make strong photographs. Put your effort towards increasing your strength, and I believe that your photography will become stronger. Photography is not just a visual game, but it is a physical please. **I say, your best photo is the next photo you make.**

Walking and reading

Every morning I like to start the day off with a nature walk along the river. I find that I have much more creative thoughts and start the day off with a good note by staying away from the hustle and bustle of Philadelphia. There's something special about being surrounded by trees and nature. I love walking to the back of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where I have an elevated view, overlooking the green spaces, river, and beautiful architecture along the outskirts of the city. I highly suggest you find a place in your town where you can start the day of with a nature walk and an elevated view.

When you look out at the horizon into the far distance, it really does set your day up for a positive existence.

I also appreciate reading along the river while walking and speaking out loud. I enjoy reading this way because sitting down feels very unnatural to me. It enhances the experience of reading when you are in the elements, walking, in nature, and reading out loud. If you are looking to find any book that you desire to read, I suggest checking out this website where you can download anything for free via PDF files. I just started downloading books to my iPad.

- https://gutenberg.org

I am currently reading The Genealogy of Morals by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Writing with voice dictation

I'm currently walking around with my iPhone, speaking with the voice dictation enabled using iA Writer to make this blog post. I'm not slaving away at a keyboard, typing with my fingers giving myself carpal tunnel, but I'm merely making this post by speaking out loud to my phone.

I highly suggest using voice dictation in replacement to writing. Simply click the bottom right of your keyboard on either iPhone or iPad where you see the microphone icon. It's a much more efficient workflow.

Perhaps this is how we will determine what is written by humans and what is made from artificial intelligence going forward into the future. It's very obvious when something is written by AI, but when you use voice dictation, the grammatical errors and nuances really do make a difference. It becomes your voice, quite literally.

Just go pro it

Lastly, I suggest purchasing a GoPro. I personally enjoy the GoPro Mini as there are no screens or distractions. It's a simple black box that I throw into super view, use a chest mount, head mount, or simply handhold it when I walk around the streets.

I appreciate using the GoPro as it is not distracting whatsoever, with no need to focus or create any camera settings. I simply press the record button and share what's on my mind. You can also use it to share your fitness routines, cooking, behind the scenes of street photography, or any activity you are up to.

Another fun thought is that it's even faster than writing using voice dictation. You can create your own podcast by simply speaking out loud to the tiny black box. When you hold it up to your face it has a really good microphone. I personally believe it's a much more authentic experience to share your thoughts via video than writing.

Perhaps the ultimate goal of an artist is ultimately to share your perspective, or your POV. This is where the GoPro is interesting and allows you to share your raw, unique, human experience.

Let's thrive together as artists, photographers, innovators, or whatever you want to call yourself. I say we are the new warriors, the Spartan Street photographers. Let's go onward with strength, courage, and curiosity. Never forget our ultimate goal… to simply remain curious.

Wield the camera as a sword. Strike through the heart of chaos. Reveal the soul of the street. Create visual order and harmony from the spontaneity of everyday life.

Dante Sisofo

If you would like to see more from me, check out these resources linked below via my website blog. dantesisofo.com

Download my contact sheets: https://dantesisofo.com/contact-sheets/

1. https://dantesisofo.com/the-best-street-photography-workflow/
2. https://dantesisofo.com/how-to-make-a-photography-sketchbook/
3. https://dantesisofo.com/10-things-i-learned-from-practicing-street-photography-for-10-years/
4. https://dantesisofo.com/how-the-kendama-improved-my-street-photography/
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ESCAPE THE DIGITAL GHETTO

1. Delete your Instagram
2. Create your domain using bluehost.com
3. Start building on WordPress.org
4. Install Astra theme