

DISCONNECT

In this modern world we are more connected than ever. I believe this puts us in a unique situation where everyone is both disconnected and connected simultaneously due to digital technology and media.

My goal as an artist is to remain in a state of pure curiosity without influence of external means of inspiration or validation. This is becoming more and more difficult as these things are so readily available to us through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook.

Become inspired by nature

The best place to come up with any creative ideas is in nature.

When in doubt, I just go for a walk away from the chaos of urban life. I prefer going for my nature walks in the early morning during sunrise or late evening during sunset. I find the natural beauty of trees and the calming movement of water gives me the inspiration I need for my photography and creative pursuits. There's something special about simply walking on a dirt path, disconnected from the city, and going off the grid for a stroll through nature.

Off the grid thinking

The concept of being off the grid is interesting to me lately.

Why stay in touch with the latest celebrity gossip?

Does the news of the world truly affect your everyday life in your hometown? What is the benefit of checking your email or staying on top of what other people are doing in life?

I say, just go off the grid. By removing more distractions from your life you can then refocus and recalibrate your mind and body to do things and think about things that truly affect you and that you actually care about.

Leave the phone at home

One thing that I have been making an effort to do sometimes is simply leaving my phone at home when I go out for my walks. By remaining alert without distractions of the world through a screen, I become more grounded and focused on reality.

Excessive phone use is such a basic concept that perhaps we don't realize is taking a toll on our lives as we know it. When I walk the streets without notifications on, checking emails, text messages, and phone calls, I grow to appreciate the small things in life such as the sounds of birds chirping or leaves rustling. I find that I become more social without a phone on me, always making an effort to chat with security guards and neighbors.

Maybe the problem with phones is the fact that it promotes anti-social behavior in the real world in replacement for the digital world. I find it's more difficult than ever to engage with people on the street these days because most people wear AirPods or are looking at their phones. The real problem with phones is that they take us out of the real world and produce an endless sea of distractions.

The antidote to consumerism

My antidote to the constant state of consumption we face on a day to day basis through TV, social media, advertisements, movies, news, media, YouTube videos, etc. is to remain in a state of production.

When I wake up in the morning I like to kickstart the day with some simple calligraphy drawing, Kendama mediation, procreate on my iPad, or go for a morning stroll, making some photographs, write, think, or make a video podcast.

By making my own artwork and media, I combat the urge to consume. I give myself the opportunity each day to make small progress towards my big goals that are never ending.

As an artist, I find it critical to steer clear of consuming and do as much as I can to always be producing. Of course, taking a break, relaxing, reading a book, or simply not producing anything can be beneficial. But my simple heuristic is to spend at least 75% of my time producing instead of consuming. **A big goal in my life is to produce more than I consume.**

Also, another fun goal and ambition to strive towards-

Can I become the most prolific photographer that ever lived?

What does success mean for you?

I believe we must redefine what success means in this modern world.

Hollywood and social media has people believe that we can all be movie stars or rockstars, but this is far from the reality. **Even if you accrue millions of views and followers on social media, is it really worth it in the end?**

The people who tend to make huge followings, especially photographers, are producing mediocre work to large audiences of people that will consume any old cookie cutter junk anyways. I think as artists, fame or recognition is the last thing of our concern.

Success as an artist is very simple- **to remain curious.**

Anti-mediocrity

With art, mediocrity spreads more rampant through the influence of others and especially social media. One funny thought I have is that going forward we should strive to make art that displeases the viewer or leaves them confused. Surely this

seems counterintuitive, however I find it much more liberating than pleasing others. The path to mediocrity is easy to walk as the audience of today is numb and oversaturated with lots of “good” work.

Destruction is creation

I find that I thrive along the path of destruction, creation, and rebuilding again. It’s easy to become stagnant and caught up in one mode of operating as an artist, especially when you’re consuming the flavor of the day all the time.

Treat everything you do as a work in progress. Nothing is perfect and nothing should be for that matter. I find that imperfection is more beautiful. Don’t take yourself or your work so seriously, and simply find joy in the creation of new work.

Where to seek feedback?

I believe feedback is critical when it comes to advancing in your craft and becoming a better artist. The issue is,

Where can we seek honest and useful feedback in today’s brave new digital world?

I say, make small work prints and bring them to a friend that isn’t even a photographer. Have them give you honest critique and feedback on your work from an outside perspective that isn’t actively engaged in photography. I think the issue with modern photography spaces is that they become sort of circle jerks or follow a particular philosophy or way of doing things that isn’t conducive to any productivity or useful feedback. When you put your prints in front of your mother, brother, cousin, or friend who has no clue what makes or breaks a good photograph, perhaps the feedback becomes more valuable.

Create your own media empire

Once you disconnect, what should you do next?

Make your own website and share your media, thoughts, videos, photos, etc. in your own space.

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

It's our duty as artists to share our work. We should strive to be in a flow state of both producing and presenting the work.

Become the producer and the consumer

I find this notion of creating the media that you wish to see manifest in the world to be a good one. What I find most amazing about making videos and photos is that I find joy both producing and consuming them. When I look back at the videos and photos I've made during my travels, or my mundane experiences, I find them to uplift my spirits!

Make a slideshow

One simple solution I find to presenting photographs is the slideshow. They are very easy to make and allow for many photos to be shared all at once. I enjoy streaming my photos on my big TV in the living room and reviewing the photos I make this way.

Buy an iPad Pro

I believe the iPad Pro is a must have for any creative person. For photography, I find the display to be the most satisfying and beautiful way to look at photographs. The [editing workflow](#) in the iPad photos app is a breeze and really intuitive to use. It's much faster than using Lightroom.

Remix your photos

One fun thing that I started doing with my photographs is remixing them using Procreate on my iPad. I found a simple solution to making collages of my street photography that give the work a whole new life. It's pure fun to tinker, break things, and just mess around with the new tech and ways of creating.

Go primal

If you want to truly go off the grid with your mode of living and enhance your flow state while practicing street photography, walk barefoot. Buy a pair of the [Vibram Five Finger EL-X shoes](#) and be like Mike.

Make your own contact sheets

Lastly, as a useful assignment, make your own contact sheets. Go through your catalog of photos and find a few frames that you deem to be successful. Make a PDF file with the contact sheets to share the behind the scenes of how you make pictures. By analyzing your contact sheets, you will find that it helps you better understand how you see the world.

Feel free to [download my contact sheets PDF](#) below to study or use as a reference to create your own!