

## Biophilia

I have an insatiable love for life. Whether it's the city, society, people, nature, or places, I feel that first and foremost I am fueled by my biophilia.

*The term "biophilia" is derived from the Greek words "bios," meaning "life," and "philia," meaning "love." Hence, biophilia translates to "love of life" or "love of living systems."*

I grew up exploring the Wissahickon Forest as a child and I've always loved nature. I remember swinging from vines, climbing trees, building forts and bridges with sticks and stones. I believe this childlike curiosity and inner adventurer is still within me and is what inspires me to practice street photography. My thought is that a photographer is merely curious about life, putting themselves out there onto the front lines of life, finding themselves closer and closer to the moment. I know I feel happiest when I am surrounded by other people and is why I prefer living in a city.

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## The color purple

Recently, I've been wearing the color purple. I like wearing the 5 inch purple license to train shorts by Lululemon and the drysense purple T-shirt. I like the matching outfit and find that the bright and vibrant colors are beautiful. Maybe I identify more with purple, in between red and blue. In a world that is so divided, between political parties, Democrats, Republicans, red, blue, black, or white, I identify with purple.

**Maybe it's best for all people to find a middle ground, and to realize that we are more similar than different.**

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## **Give more than you take**

My ultimate goal in life is to give more than I take. I would like to produce more than I consume, and leave behind an abundance of art, photographs, thoughts, and ideas. Think of Leonardo da Vinci, he spent his years drawing, thinking, and making innovations and inventions that were never complete. However, These ideas carried onward into the future, and were later utilized by modern society. We should detach ourselves from the outcome of our photography, art, and the things that we create.

**Don't worry about any external validation, admiration, and fame.** Vincent van Gogh made thousands of paintings before he died and never received the recognition he deserved. However, "A Starry Night" remains one of the most famous and pivotal pieces in art history.

## **The feeling of abundance**

I've been feeling very abundant these days. It's hard to describe with words, but I have an overwhelming sense of wonder, joy, and openness, that I am really trying to hone in on and share with the world. **I think that abundance is merely a mindset or a feeling that you get when you recognize the beauty in life, focus on the good, and uplift it, and the human spirit, to new heights.**

I find that by quite literally elevating myself to a great height, whether on top of the cliff behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, or by Penn's Landing and the Benjamin Franklin bridge, I have a view of the horizon, the river, trees, and nature, that fuels me with this feeling. I may not be able to describe exactly what abundance means to me with words, but I know how to achieve it, through positioning myself in an open space, and going beyond the horizon, with my eyes, and my mind.

## **You create paradise**

Where you are right now is paradise. We can create the paradise of our dreams, through our everyday choices. I prefer to start my day by walking around the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the dirt paths, and natural parks. I do this because it makes me realize how objectively beautiful my city is, and I find that the area

around the river trail is very reminiscent of ancient Greece or Rome. It feels like heaven to me, and it is my home. When you have this mindset, and think with this sense of pride within your own hometown, you're now living in heaven.

You can create hell for yourself earth by walking around the grid right away, going underground to the subway, and surrounding yourself with the chaos. **However, you create the paradise, you create it through your decisions, what you think about, and what you say.** Perhaps we should speak good things into the world, focus on the objectively beautiful things that around you, such as inspiring architecture, natural spaces, and beautiful places. I think that paradise is merely a mindset, it's a way of you, perceiving the world like a child again, and finding yourself amazed by the mundane.

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### **Time is luxury**

What is deemed as a waste of time is now our new luxury. Making art, thinking, walking, and most importantly, spending time with family, is luxury. I believe we should focus more on the things that bring you closer to what truly matters. Photography for me is the most life-affirming practice, and is so easy and accessible to get into. All I have to do is carry my camera in my pocket, go on with my day. It does not matter what I am doing with my time, I know that I have the opportunity to do the thing that empowers me at all times.

### **Wealth is family**

When I spent time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, Africa, I was amazed by how big the families were. Each family had around 10 people. There was an abundance of people in the rural villages, and the family to me is the truest sign of wealth. You see, when most people consider Africa and these rural villages, they may believe they are impoverished because you do not see them with modern technology and "luxury" material things like we have in the west. Ultimately, what I've realized is, that freedom and wealth is within the thatched roof, under one God, with family, and land to share.

## **Hierarchy**

One day I was walking through Rittenhouse Square Park here in Philadelphia, and I watched a Hawk swoop down and eat a baby bird alive. All that was left of the scene was a few feathers falling down to the ground. I looked around and asked others if they saw what I did, but alas, nobody noticed. This experience reminded me that nature is violent, and all is war.

In the village, there is a hierarchy between God, tried, and land. Everybody in the village has a role to play. Mothers come home with firewood on their heads and babies on their backs. The men are building homes and churches. The boys are building bricks with mud and sand. The girls are sweeping the floors, taking care of the house, and preparing food for the day. In a functioning society, everybody fits within different roles, and this creates cohesion amongst the tribe.

However, sometimes individuals must be removed from the tribe for their nefarious actions, and is typically done with force. One young man got into an argument with an old lady who was already sick and unwell. He tripped the lady and pushed her to the ground, and ultimately killed her. The tribe then took notice of this man's actions and took matters into their own hands. They beat and battered this young man to a bloody pulp, and was run out of the village. He had to go on his own now, removed from the tribe, and became a lone wolf or, a lost puppy.

## **How to thrive**

My idea of human thriving is very physical. This means, maximum amount of time spent outdoors, walking, lifting weights, and focusing on your human biology. I feel best when I'm walking, standing, and moving. I do not like being indoors, under fluorescent lights, or sitting down. Because of this, I make sure to be outside and to experience the world and its physical nature. I'm not a fan of the digital world that we create, such as the news, social media, and television. I prefer the real thing, the real world, the open world.

## Open world

In RPG video games, you often are exploring open worlds. There are infinite possibilities within these games, and is what makes them so novel and interesting. Maybe we should seek novelty through our everyday experiences in the open world. I enjoy chatting with new people, going to new places, and making photographs as a way for me to learn about and experience the world. I like thinking of each day like a new quest, mission, or piece of my story. Just treat life this way, like a game, where you really can do anything. We can conquer the world through photography and approach the streets like a warrior from video games like Skyrim or Assassin's Creed. Defeat the dungeons, increase your experience, and reap the rewards of making beautiful art.

## Be a noob

Let's be noobs forever like we just started playing the game for the first time. I don't want to ever feel like I've mastered anything in life. I want to be in a constant state of improvement, learning, and growing with each day. By adopting this mindset with photography, and whatever you are interested in, it becomes endless and infinite. **There are no walls boxing you in, but only a glass ceiling that you need to smash through.** By going beyond your capabilities, pushing your limits, and treating each day like it is day one, maybe this is where the magic happens.

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## School is prison

I attended Catholic school from grade pre-K to eight. I actually really enjoyed this experience as we had lots of field trips, time outside during recess, and close friendships made over many years spent together. Once I got to high school, I attended a public school, Central. This is supposed to be one of the greatest high schools in Philadelphia, and apparently one of the first photographs of the United States was made of this school. My issue with high school was that it felt like a prison. When I entered for the first time transitioning from Catholic school to public

school, I was greeted by a metal detector and security guards. You could not go outside during lunch, and always felt watched by the security lurking around in the halls. In high school, you're told to sit down, shut up, listen, regurgitate, memorize, rinse, and repeat. I understand discipline, and learned this as a young boy from grades pre-k to eight. Maybe the Amish were right, you just stop after grade 8. However, because of the nature of school, I found it very forceful, and not productive whatsoever. Because of this, I would often skip class, sneak out the doors, and find myself exploring in the lawn, and neighborhood nearby. I couldn't believe that you had no time outside during school, and had to sit there for eight hours all day long in a confined box, like a prisoner.

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### **Don't box yourself in**

As artists, we should not box ourselves in. We should embrace all mediums, whether physical or digital. I'm a fan of using the iPad Pro as a way for me to import my photographs, review them, and even remix them. I have adopted a new practice of making collages, calligraphy drawing, and enjoy trying new things with my digital devices. Maybe as artists, we get pigeonholed into doing one thing, and become one trick ponies. We should try to expand our horizons, do new things, and don't box ourselves in. In terms of street photography, photograph everything. Street photography is merely an ethos, there are no rules, and does not have to be done one way. You can do whatever you would like. Just go out there and treat the camera like riding a bike, photograph with repetition, and you will inevitably improve with time.

### **Visual problem solving**

When I consider photography, it is like visual problem-solving. This means, you're responsible for where you position yourself, the camera, and when you press the shutter. You become observant of the visual patterns that exist in nature and within human behavior. **When you're on the street, you're anticipating things, with clairvoyance, and sharp visual acuity.** As much as photography requires your eyes, I believe that it is a physical pleasure and needs to be talked about more. It is

your body, and movement, which ultimately determines the result of your photograph, not your eyes. Composition is merely intuition, by following your gut, and moving your body, repositioning where you are in the world. When you photograph a scene, move your body more, don't just stand still, and start snapshotting your way through the scene.

### **Don't look at pictures**

I think one of the worst things that you can do for your creative thriving is study photography. I really believe that you should go out there and make your own work without the influence of others. Sure, collect a few photo books that you deem to be interesting, look at them now, and then, but other than that, just disconnect. Make your own work, study your own archive, and go out there and make more. The more you consume, the more you become influenced. **The less you are influenced, the more interesting work you will make.** Forget the past, history, and the masters. Make pictures in a stream of becoming, following your pure curiosity, without the need of looking at any other pictures for inspiration.

Instead, let us find inspiration in nature, architecture, sculptures, and things that are outside in the open world.

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