

Give me light and I shall dominate.

Is it just me, or do you feel 1000 times better when the sun is out? I believe in the reality of seasonal depression, but I also believe that mental health is simply physical health. This means that sunlight, movement, and embracing our physical nature as humans are critical considerations when discussing 'mental' health. During winter—when it is cold, cloudy, and there is less sunlight—people are much more prone to feeling 'under the weather,' becoming unwell, sick, or depressed. I know from personal experience that I have so much more energy, positive thoughts, and excitement for life when the sun is out. On cloudy days, I can still maintain energy from the sunny days I've enjoyed previously. It's interesting because when I spend the maximum amount of time in the sun and the next day is cloudy, the energy seems stored in my body and carries over. **Perhaps humans are like batteries that need to be charged, with sunlight as our power source.**

Let us not forget that photography is merely painting with light, and sunlight allows us to create works of art. My thoughts about light and how it etches and gives shape and form to objects foster an infinite and abundant mindset, continuously driving my curiosity and inspiring me to produce more photographs. I know I can never take the same photograph twice; photography is a stream of becoming, and my next photograph will be my best. When you adopt this infinite, endless, and abundant approach to creating work, it will fuel your lust for life and enable you to dominate within the realm of photography. As long as I have light, I am happy!

Why is the sky blue?

When I consider light and the spectrum of colors emitted by the sun, I'm reminded of that question we asked as little kids: *Why is the sky blue?* The answer lies in the size of blue light waves; being shorter, they scatter across the sky and interact with various molecules, creating the blue hue we see. Light not only shapes and forms objects, people, places, and faces but also casts vivid colors that allow us to perceive and revel in its beauty.

Stripping away color from my photography, and returning to black-and-white, light and shadow, I simplify the way I create work. While I see the world in vivid color, I'm much more interested in the abstract nature of photography and its ability to transcend this reality. Perhaps I am looking to find a deeper way to explore life, and by embracing light and shadow, I hope the viewer of my photographs becomes engaged with the world in a more nuanced way.

I'm still surprised by how many rainbows I've photographed in my life so far. It seems that no matter where I go, I always find a rainbow. I remember the first time I photographed one with much intention—it was a rainy day in Baltimore, and I decided to head out with my umbrella and my camera in hopes of capturing a rainbow. When one appeared, I was astonished and quickly made an effort to photograph the scene. All the puzzle pieces aligned, and luck was in my favor. It felt as though it was a gift given to me. Throughout my journey, I've gotten lucky over and over again. Maybe the luck is something that's carried over with you through effort and hard work.

When I spent time in Jericho, which is a desert and very dry, I actually photographed a rainbow. What amazes me about the photograph I made in Jericho is the fact that it almost never rains there. It only rained for about 5 to 10 minutes, and during that time, I had to act extremely fast to photograph the tiny rainbow in the distance. A young boy, Ramsey, picked up a rock and began throwing it toward the abandoned buildings in the foreground and toward the rainbow in the background. When I look at this photograph, it may be one of my 'luckiest' shots ever made because of the conditions, the rare situation, and the moment that completely encapsulates the Palestinian conflict with the gesture of the young boy throwing the stone. This photograph reminds me of David and Goliath and might just be one of my best works ever made.

With a little bit of dedication, hard work, and belief in oneself, we can do anything.

Why I'm so prolific

I've never visited a location without coming home with something powerful or compelling from my photography. I've always had the ability to embrace chaos and impose order on it. I believe that I am a prolific photographer with a natural talent that I have been blessed with. Sure, I started off early in high school, learned the basics using film, and developed my technical skills, but since I hit the ground running, I've always created successful work. This isn't just an ego stroke—or maybe it is. **However, I know that my prolific nature as a photographer is due to my insatiable lust for life.**

You see, I believe that a photographer is merely responsible for being curious. We are responsible for going out into the world without preconceived notions, with an open mind and heart, and finding ourselves on the front lines of life. I am a very curious person, filled with courage, and this dedication to exploration has led me to great success over the years because of that. It has nothing to do with technical ability or how well you can put together a composition; photography is all about your curiosity, courage, and lust for life. I've become so prolific as a photographer through my dedication to embracing chaos and positioning myself on the front lines of life.

Learning is confidence

I'm confident because I know that I know nothing. While I am confident in my abilities as an artist and photographer, I still like to consider myself an amateur, a child, always eager, open, and prepared to learn. I believe with each new day, life, the world, the universe—whatever you see and perceive—has something to teach us. Perhaps through photography, we engage in a dialogue between you, your body, your brain, the connections between your mind and your eyes, and the things that you find beautiful along the way.

When I photograph, I allow my intuition to carry me onward. While I have technical skills, the ability to create compelling photographs, and a lot of experience, I don't ever want to feel like I've mastered photography. I believe that each day is a new way for you to learn, grow, and evolve. Perhaps as an artist, the wisest thing we can do is to never stay the same, and always embrace change.

Always changing

No day is the same. It does not matter if you walk the same mundane lane every single day; there is always something different and a new way for you to say something. **You see, photography gives you a voice. It gives you an opportunity to change your opinion, to change the way you see things, to change what you would like to photograph, and to change the world through articulating it.**

Perhaps, as artists, we must embrace change, never remain stagnant, and embrace the spontaneity of the streets, life, and the chaotic nature of the universe. While there is order to this place that we live in and call home, maybe there is still so much that's out there and unknown.

Just think of Elon Musk and his aspirations to make life multiplanetary. Perhaps we've conquered all of this earth, and there's a need for us to explore and to go beyond the horizon. When I consider his work in advancing technology, science, and space exploration, it inspires me as an artist to remain curious, embrace the future with an optimistic spirit, and change with each new day.

Why I'm so grateful

I am grateful for simple things. Water is our life force, and we should protect it, honor it, and cherish it. Maybe you can fast for a very long time without food, but your body needs water. Water is the first thing that I am grateful for today. I'm grateful that I can drink water from my tap, filling my belly, providing me with energy in this life and vitality to conquer today. I'm grateful for the sun, and the power that it provides me with. I'm grateful for the breeze, and the sensation that it gives me upon my skin. I'm thankful for the sounds of birds, chirping, and society, and the people that I can surround myself with. I'm surrounded by beautiful people, nature, and architecture that uplift and inspire me, allowing me to remain grateful for the small things. I'm grateful for the time I spend with my mother, family, and loved ones. I'm grateful for my lifelong childhood friends, and the people that I am closest to. I'm grateful for grass-fed beef, which satiates me and keeps me going every day. Honestly, I'm filled with nothing but gratitude and abundance, and going forward, I just want to share this joy with others.

The meek shall inherit the earth

Jesus says that the meek shall inherit the Earth. When I initially consider this thought, it makes me feel weak, to be humble, and to not be too proud or domineering. It feels like something that goes against the natural human will to power. And while I have my critiques on this sentiment, I do believe that it is a nice message, positive, and uplifting at its core. It does not matter if you are lame, sick, weak, or poor, all people can find hope and reap the rewards and fruits that life offers. Maybe we need more optimistic messages in our lives like the sermons Jesus gave throughout his life.

Decisions are discipline

I believe that we can all thrive together and seek power through simple physical pleasures. The decisions that we make ultimately determine our outcome in life. With a little bit of discipline, and consideration of the things that you do and don't do, consume and don't consume, you can make significant changes in your life.

The problem with modern cities is that there are too many options. There's too much tempting food, endless TV and entertainment, things to do, and places to be. This can become overwhelming for a city dweller, and cause one to embrace degeneracy, hedonistic pleasures, material things, and ultimately get lost in the sea of options. I'm reminded of my time spent during the pandemic when I lacked discipline and embraced hedonism through escapism in video games, junk food, and degeneracy. I would go to the market just next to my house, buy sandwiches filled with processed meats, bagged chips, sugary drinks, beer, and other junk that you can find in any of these stores. Why is it that all these stores just sell junk? It really does seem like nothing in a grocery store these days is worth consuming. Everything has some strange chemicals in them, excess sugar, and things don't seem to be 'real food' anymore. During this time I was still lifting, working out every day, but never really saw any results. My antidote to this was by adopting a 100% carnivore diet of red meat, beef, and lamb.

As a thought experiment, just think, which person will be healthier and stronger?

Person A. Eats 2000 calories of Oreos Person B. Eats 2000 calories of meat

Obviously, nobody's only eating Oreos, but I simply find it an amusing reference to the standard American diet.

Since going carnivore, I've cut out all sugar, carbs, junk, beer, and anything degenerate from my life, including video games. Just think of the grinding required in video games where you need gold, you need XP, in order to advance your character. Replacing the grinding and addictive nature of video games with weightlifting makes a lot of sense to me. By remaining disciplined and making the right decisions, I am blessed with beautiful results. I can't stress enough how much this has changed my life and hope to shed light as an example and proof that it really does work. With a bit of discipline through the decisions that you make, you can create a whole new person within yourself.

One practical suggestion I have is to do simple, calisthenic exercises, such as pull-ups, push-ups, pistol squats, dips, L-sits, and using dumbbells for a farmers walk. The great thing about farmers walks is that you can even just pick up two heavy bags filled with books or anything really. I believe having a home gym is the best solution and doing things that are easy and accessible for you each and every day require you to drive or walk to a public gym.

Be fearless

When I was a kid, my friends and I would often climb trees. We would climb so high in the trees that it felt like you could touch the sky. I am amazed by the courage that exists within a naïve child. I remember my brother and I would often seek danger. We got into skateboarding very early on, around four or five years old, and would throw ourselves down the ramps and launch our bodies into bushes, onto concrete, scrape our knees, and get back up. Maybe skateboarding is a really great sport for kids because of the courage required and its inherent creative nature. It reminds me of street photography, and the curiosity and courage an artist must possess to

throw themselves out into the chaos. **Going forward, we should become more like children, curious but dangerous, and courageous.** I believe it is at the intersection between curiosity and courage where we can all thrive together.

Just give me light, and I shall dominate.

DANTE