

Keep it Simple

Simple Living

I'm always looking to simplify. Whether it's within my photography practice or daily routine, I prefer keeping things streamlined and simple.

Zen Lifestyle

My thought is that the life of Zen requires zero distractions. Whether that is phone calls, text messaging, "group chats," emails, or media consumption, this modern world provides lots of distractions. It is wise to remove as many of these distractions as possible.

Firstly, just go through your phone and **delete all media apps**. Delete YouTube, YouTube Studio, Instagram, Facebook, etc., and only really use the phone for ChatGPT, FaceTime, and Safari for blogging. I've recently started using Safari as my main blogging tool instead of the WordPress applications, as it is much more minimalist and less distracting. I just log into my site through the browser and can publish to YouTube browser as well.

While digital detox is a good first step, I believe that **embracing the moment** and following your intuition is the most critical. With these distractions removed from your life, there will be less need for you to check the phone or do other distracting things such as consume media.

Instead of consuming media, just **make your own**. Get a GoPro, mini, film using super view, export to 720p, and upload your own thoughts, experiences, and POV to YouTube and your own blog using Videopress.

In terms of writing, I've been using the iA Writer application on my phone, iPad, or Mac. I find that it's best to start a document using my phone and walk around outdoors, speaking to the phone using the voice dictation built into the device. I just click the microphone at the bottom right of the keyboard and speak directly to the mic built into the phone.

I find filming using a GoPro is almost like a way to flush out your thoughts and treat it like **stream of consciousness writing**. What I've been doing is going for long walks, speaking candidly about whatever is on my mind, coming home later that night, and then going into a document and writing about what was on my mind. This seems to be the most effective way to do any writing these days as it does not require you to sit down, hunched over at a keyboard, typing away at a computer.

Why I Love Philly

I was born and raised in Philadelphia, and I'm very passionate about my hometown. I find that this city is the **most walkable place** in the United States. I never need to use a train, bus, and I can simply walk with my two feet everywhere. This provides maximum enjoyment for my everyday life, as there is no need for a car, being stuck in traffic like most people undergo when living in the suburbs.

I think that the **suburbs were a good place** for me to grow up, having the forest in my backyard, neighbors to play with, and a safe community to live in, but as an adult, the city is my playground.

I thrive around other people, the bustling streets, and enjoy the chaos of urban life as an artist. It makes sense that I love Philadelphia as a photographer, because it is extremely **underrated, and not well documented**. It gives me a purpose and more meaning to my work as I head out there with my camera each day, knowing that I am doing something that matters. I want to uplift the human experience in Philadelphia to new heights.

City life is supreme, especially Philadelphia, given we have so many parks, green spaces, trails, and places to roam around. We have beautiful architecture, historic sites, museums, and infinite things to do and places to explore. All you really have to do is walk outside your door. There is always something going on, something to photograph, somewhere to be, and something to see.

Happiness is Physical

What I've realized is, **happiness is a physical thing**. You hear notions such as "mental health," but I believe that physical health is what ultimately determines your mental state. I found that it is quite impossible to become depressed if walking all day long, in the direct sun, and especially while wearing short sleeves, short shorts, or even just walking topless. Maybe the sun is the source of all power, our bodies are like batteries, and absorbing as much UV radiation as possible throughout the day is how you keep your body charged with full power.

Maybe modern man spends way too much time inside, in the dark, and not getting enough natural sunlight. Most jobs these days keep people inside, locked away. This is not good and goes against our natural biology and what promotes healthy physiology.

I've learned to **love the heat** throughout all of my travels, whether in the desert of Jericho or in the villages of Zambia. During the winter months here in Philadelphia, the best thing that you can do is simply get one of those Canada Goose jackets and just call it a day. I got mine as a gift, and it was probably the greatest gift that I've ever received in my life.

I actually think that the **clothing that you choose to wear** is more critical than superfluous things like cars and watches. Ultimately, it's worth investing in the good stuff, like Lululemon license to train shorts, shirts, and the Vibram FiveFingers ELX shoes. I find that the minimal barefoot shoes help me connect with the earth, enhance my daily commutes, slow me down, and allow me to appreciate each step.

In terms of the shorts, **zipper pockets are critical** for camera batteries, camera equipment, and my GoPro. I also like the 5-inch version because it's shorter and exposes more of the legs, getting even more sunlight. I've been wearing Lululemon clothing for about a decade now and honestly, some of the shirts that I've purchased years and years ago, I've gone through all of my travels and they still hold up.

Food is Energy

So, as I said earlier, the **sun gives me and my body power**. Combined with the power of the sun with some weightlifting, and you're bound to increase your strength. However, food is critical to consider.

What Food Should We Eat?

My thought is that **food is energy**. The way that the vitamins, minerals, and cholesterol synthesize within your cells enhances your strength and builds your muscles. Foods that seem most effective at increasing strength and building muscle are all found within animal-based products such as **grass-fed red meat, beef liver, ribeye, beef loin, Wagyu ground beef, beef eye of round, lamb leg, and pasture-raised eggs**.

I will occasionally eat kimchi as a side. I pretty much never eat sides with my meal, but have perfect gut health, digestion, and feel great. My thought is that the **starches in vegetables**, broccoli, potatoes, and even the sugary fruits, don't do much for our bodies. I will occasionally have a piece of fruit here and there if I'm with family, but for the most part, it's never a part of my diet.

What I've been doing for over a year now is simply **visiting the Costco** in Cherry Hill, New Jersey once per month, and filling my freezer so that I don't need to do any grocery shopping for an entire month. I believe it's best to simply eat one meal a day on a **strict carnivore diet** because it is so insanely satiating that you will find yourself full throughout the entire day without the need for any meals. I basically just fast until the end of the day, eat 3 to 5 pounds of beef, and go to sleep.

Sleep is a Steroid

Sleep is the ultimate steroid, combined with nice grass-fed beef. After I eat my massive meal at night, I get such good and deep sleep. I'm typically in bed around 7:30-8:30 PM after the sun sets. By going to bed with the setting of the sun, I find that I rise early before sunrise around 4:30 to 5:30 AM.

When I eat, I just eat until I am full and satiated. I find it similar to the way I go to bed, I simply wait for my body to start to get tired after a full day of walking, creating, and then finally eating. Once I have the food in my belly, I feel my body's ready to go to sleep, take a hot bath, read a book, and stay away from any screens and just keep all the lights off in the house. I also like to sleep with my windows slightly cracked to let the air into my bedroom. I think we need to start training our bodies to become used to **sunlight, and stop being a slave to time**, clocks, watches, and alarms.

Art is the Answer

So once we have removed all distractions from our life, and become locked in with good sleep, meat, and weightlifting, what can we then do with our time on this earth?

My thought is that **art is the answer**. Perhaps art is the greatest gift that humans can create. When I consider photography, it is supreme because it deals with reality, people, and the outdoors. Photography is a **physical medium** as much as a visual one. It requires the artist to explore, and see the world from their own perspective. It really is a liberating medium because of this fact, accessibility, and the ease of use when it comes to camera technology.

We should remain in a state of production as photographers, like a **stream of becoming**. Water, ever flowing and changing, an artist should learn to embrace the change as well. When I see the world, I see it anew each and every day like a child. I recognize that I can make a photograph of the same thing each and every day, but you can never make the same photograph twice. This is the power of photography. It is merely painting with light. The way that light captures shape and forms subjects, objects, places, people, it allows the photographer to create something new, something from nothing, each and every day.

Could you make a photo essay every day? Just treat photography like a personal diary. Photograph everything. Photograph yourself, take selfies, photograph your hands, photograph out the window of the car during your commute, photograph riding your bike, photograph buildings, people, details, textures, and don't limit yourself to photographing one way.

*I believe that if you are looking to thrive as a photographer and become your most creative self, you should consider photographing using a compact digital camera like the **Ricoh GR III**. I believe this camera is supreme because of its accessibility, ease of use, and size. It fits in your pocket and can always be carried with you. I like using the small JPEG files with the high contrast black-and-white settings, cranked to the max, to return to the basics of the medium of photography, using **light and shadow**. Perhaps using this approach, we can become closer to the roots of the medium and create our own world, abstracting what we see.*

Making art is the ultimate way to **affirm life**. Treat the world as a canvas, and find beauty in the mundane. Become your own journalist in your hometown, and just go out there with curiosity, wondering what is out there, and documenting your daily routine. Don't go out there with any expectations, detach yourself from the outcome, and really learn to **love the process and the journey** itself.

Thrive in Chaos

As street photographers, we must learn to **love chaos**. What does the street photographer thrive on but on the front lines of life? Our ultimate goal as street photographers is to get closer and closer to life itself. When you see life in front of you, you're not looking at pictures—you're looking at chaos. Throw yourself out there into the abyss, articulate the unknown, the unexpected, embracing **serendipity**, trusting your intuition, and making your compositions this way.

*Having **courage** is most critical when it comes to practicing street photography. You must remain strong, in order to make strong photographs. Don't allow yourself to get lost on the sidelines, distracted with AirPods, wearing sunglasses, and being merely a bystander during this life that we live. Become engaged, not only a bystander but an **active participant** within the drama that unfolds on a street corner. Don't be afraid of interaction, chatting with people, and engaging all of your senses, whether visual, auditory, or sensual.*

You should **smell the street**, you should **feel the street**, in order to conquer the street.

What is There Left for Man to Conquer?

When I start my morning off, I like to go for a walk along the Schuylkill River Trail, and find myself at an elevated view behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, looking out towards architecture, woodlands, and the river. I find that this starts my day off on a good note, **filling myself with power**, and it feels like I can just conquer this entire city.

But what is there left for man to conquer? All of the streets are filled with traffic signals, paved roads, highways, organized offices, condos, malls, factories, Amazon delivery, computers, cars, etc. Maybe there are no more **physical spaces** in this world for man to conquer, but perhaps we can use photography and the **digital space** as our domain to dominate.

I think that photography is **endless**, and that there's still so much to do and innovate within this medium. One practical suggestion I have for any photographers out there, is to simply **stop shooting film**. If you want to innovate and move forward with the medium, out with the old, in with the new. I believe this is necessary in order to thrive creatively and become the most prolific photographer that you possibly can be.

Maybe people romanticize the process, nostalgia, and find themselves more interested in cameras, gear, photo books, and history—wanting to be like the legends: **Bresson, Gilden, or Winogrand**.

Sure, have a general understanding of what's been done before, but once you know, you know. There's no more need to be in a constant state of studying. Recognize that the **more you know, the worse you are**. Just be foolish and childlike with your approach and **forget everything you think you know**.

*Maybe we should start thinking 30 years into the future and 3,000 years into the past. Draw your inspiration through ancient Greek philosophy, Greek epic poems like the **Iliad** and the **Odyssey**, books by **Nietzsche**, and the strength and courage of the **Spartans**. Download some audiobooks, and go for a walk or ride your bike and listen to the *Iliad*.*

We should strive to become the next **Renaissance men**, not just photographers, but **innovators, philosophers, writers, and poets**, using all tools that are at our disposal, such as compact digital cameras, iPads, ChatGPT, and modern technology.

It seems that most photographers still have these romantic ideas of the gallery and photo books. I say, these are **basic ideas** and not interesting anymore. Every artist should make their own **website and blog**. The best solution is using **wordpress.org** and **bluehost.com** to host your first name and last name as the domain. I then installed the **Jetpack** plug-in and **VideoPress** to host my own video media. I also use the **Astra theme** as it is simple and popular. Whatever's most popular in terms of themes and things that have to do with website building is often best because they are reputable and just work. Just **don't use Squarespace**. I've never felt so free and liberated as a creative since launching my website over a year ago. It's probably the single best decision I've ever made in my life.

I must say, treating **YouTube** as a way to archive your life, stream your everyday routine, share your POV, thoughts, and techniques in terms of photography, is a great place. However, I highly suggest **removing all likes and comments**, and simply keeping the metrics turned off. At this point, we should just assume that anybody commenting on social media is merely a bot account. It is quite impossible to distinguish between things that are written by artificial intelligence and by humans, so as a consequence, let us **disengage** and simply create for ourselves and **one other person** that is interested. Just imagine 30 years from now, looking back at everything that you've said, recorded, photographed, written, and having everything in one space such as a website.

The problem with platforms like Instagram is the fact that you must have an account to view the media that is produced there. Everything becomes tied down to this single platform and is not open and accessible to the worldwide web.

Another thing that I've made the effort to do is simply **speak my mind more**. This means no more pretending, acting, and trying to be somebody that you're not. I say, don't trust anybody that is making videos and speaking in front of a camera while sitting down inside their home with those fancy lights, jump cuts, and HD camera. **If AI can do it, you shouldn't do it**. When you make media, make it as **human as**

possible, raw, uncut, and imperfect. I find that the more you just simply press record, speak your mind, the more that you **become**. It not only helps with thinking, but you start to become your true and authentic self by just letting go.

What Next?

One assignment that I have for you is to create your own **contact sheets**. This means, go through your archive, find a few photographs that you deem successful, and screenshot the behind-the-scenes of this particular image. Make a spread in Lightroom and create your own digital PDF like mine. I believe this is a great way to study from your own work and better understand how you view the world.

If you're looking to improve your street photography game, there's only one place on the Internet that provides the opportunity for you to grow, and that is the Flickr group, **Street Fight!** I personally do not participate any longer, but I know for sure that it will benefit you if you're just getting started with street photography or are a seasoned veteran looking to participate in some sort of community. Essentially, they match two photographs up against each other each week under the discussions tab, and the group votes on which photograph will enter the pool by including a description in the comment for why they voted for one photo over the other. It's essentially like a little photo contest each week, alongside some of today's best contemporary street photographers. I believe you can learn through simply reading through the discussions tabs, looking at the photos that win and enter the pools, and judge for yourself as a bystander, without even having to participate.

Buy a pair of gymnastic rings from Amazon. When I was in Zambia, Africa, as a Peace Corps volunteer, I used rings as a way to work on my fitness off the grid. I simply threw them up in a tree, did pull-ups, dips, muscle-ups, and other calisthenics movements. I actually think that this is the best first place to start when it comes to strength training.

How much ground beef can you eat? Fast all day, spend the entire day outside, walking in direct sunlight, and when it comes to the end of the day, see how much ground beef that you can eat in one sitting. Just eat until you are full, and see what your limit is.

Ultimately, our goal is to **increase our physical power**. There's no amount of money and fame in this world that will provide you with as much power as **good sleep, grass-fed meat, and weightlifting**. Let us sculpt our bodies into **Greek demigods** and become the strongest versions of ourselves. The more powerful you become, the more photographs you will go out there and make. We can thrive together!

*Remember, good artists copy, but great artists steal like a **thief at Target** during the pandemic.*

Let us conquer the world through photography and dominate our new domain.