Physicality

Maybe physicality is something that isn't talked about enough in the real of photography. I believe our movement is what ultimately determines our composition. Through our intuition, and physicality, where we position ourselves and our camera, determines the ultimate result of the photographs that we make.

When I move my physical body, I exist outside the passage of time. We have a past and a future, but when I photograph, I exist in the state of production, in the now, in a flow state, embracing the present moment. Perhaps novelty is something that we seek as individuals within the modern world. The problem with the ways in which we seek novelty are that they typically involve some sort of experience through a television screen, computer, or phone. The issue with media is that it becomes mind numbing and actually makes time go way faster. Just think, when you're sitting down, or standing still, doesn't it just feel like time flies by? My thought is that the more novel human and physical experiences that you seek, through movement, and physicality, you can achieve this blissful experience in your daily life.

Everyday life

How would you spend your everyday life if you had the most money in the world and all of the riches?

Would you spend your time on your butt, sitting in a luxurious car, or on a yacht? Or would you seek more physical challenges, increase your strength, and experiences that you have?

Personally, I find that the experiences we have are what shape reality as we know it. When I consider my time as a Peace Corps volunteer, working with aquaculture in remote villages in Zambia, Africa, I contemplate the mundane nature of village

life. You see, in a village, there is something about the novel experiences that occur on a day-to-day basis. It's not the fact that I was experiencing something exotic or different from modern life, but the sheer **physicality** of life itself.

Everybody has a role to play in the village, where mothers come home with babies on their back and firewood on their head. The men are building churches and homes. Girls are sweeping the floor, tending the home, and preparing the food for the day. The boys are building bricks with sand and mud. There is this hierarchy that exists within society that I believe is necessary for human thriving. There is God, tribe, and land. Or considering the United States of America we have, God, nation, and land.

In the village, the church is the center of the community. In my particular village there was a seventh day Adventist church. Every Saturday I would attend mass with my host family. In the church, there is an altar. The altar is the place for sacrifice, where the community comes together to break bread, and are reminded of the crucifixion of Jesus. When I consider Christianity, and all religion for that matter, I believe that it is generally a good thing. I believe that Christianity promotes families to come together and the production of more children. It seemed as though every family in the village had around 10 children per house. To me church and religion is the ultimate good, but we have abandoned this in the modern world. Maybe some people still go, but every time I've gone to church in Philly, it's certainly not as bustling as you'd imagine.

When I consider the roles that everybody plays within the village, they are all making their own individual sacrifice for the betterment of the collective. Whether people become mothers, teachers, preachers, farmers or fisherman, everyone sacrifices their individual time to keep the community alive.

Technology is good

My village had an interesting case of solar technology implemented where we had a solar power plant, and even a mill to grind the staple food, maize. I recognize how much better life is with electricity, especially in my particular village because this is allowed the community to quickly harvest, and produce their staple food with ease and efficiency. Technology can improve life, if used wisely. I think about the

boreholes and the different wells that provide water across the village. These sources of water are where all families come together. Without these wells or boreholes, there would be no community. The technology of a borehole makes it much easier for people to draw water and feed their families. Just think of how big these families are and how much water is needed per day to provide for the family. It becomes an a huge task that takes up the whole morning of gathering buckets and buckets of water to bring back home. Some families live far away from the boreholes and spend the entire day, hiking with a bucket on their head to go back to their home with water. Here in the United States, we simply go to sink, turn the tap on, and have clean water ready to drink. Now we even see these fancy alkaline waters and, perfect Ph water bottles and all sorts of luxury water that we consume.

Transportation is very important to keep a city alive. I think about the way in which we rely on trucks and drivers to deliver us food to the grocery stores. I remember when I was in college and I would drive to Whole Foods. This would take me a full hour in total of driving time. I remember that this became an annoyance to me, and I simply decided to order my food from Amazon prime. The food was delivered right to my door, what a luxury.

Recently when I visited Miami, I noticed these small robot cars that deliver food to apartments and condos automatically. Even inside the Giant grocery store, they use a tall, humanoid robot, with googly eyes, telling workers where to stock shelves or clean up the spills on the floor. The cybernetic and automatic use of technology and transportation is quite different from that of the village. While we did have trucks deliver rice to my particular village, young men, typically teenagers, or young boys, would take these huge packets of rice, tons and tons, and ride a boat that takes manual force, using a paddle, to deliver the food to neighboring villages.

These transportation systems, whether the truck driver, or the men on the boats, sparked an economic hub and jobs for the people of my village. This was also the case with our solar mill, where men has jobs to operat the machines, and people would come and pay to utilize these machines from far and wide neighboring villages. Technology certainly improve our lives, but maybe we're using it a bit too much in modern society in the United States.

Media is bad

When I consider technology in the United States, I mostly relate the use of it to consuming media. Maybe the iPhone is the biggest distractor or problem here. It sits in your front right pocket and is so easy to use. I believe that the technology is taking over everyday life through consuming all of the nonsense that social media provides. Even the news, at home on a TV, is merely a distraction. The news basically promotes hate and fear, and creates mass hysteria amongst the masses.

Just think, when the news headlines come out, or even posts on social media come out, it can inspire people to move their physical bodies, take action, and have a negative reaction such as protesting, rioting or looting. We become less autonomous, and controlled by the technology itself. Even simple things like emails are controlling. You check your email, your calendar, you see that there's a meeting that you must attend, and you go to it without contemplating why this activity is important. You had no physical interaction with the person that told you to do something, especially when working from home. It is merely pixels on a screen, determining the physical things that you will do.

Of course, communication is a good thing, but I believe that communicating digitally can become a real problem. As much as it connects us and throws us into a place where social media becomes a global town square or something, the town square can also become toxic and hateful because of the anonymity and nature of using a username or avatar. My thought going forward is to just treat everybody that's in a comment section on a social media post as a bot. Just assume that they are artificial intelligence or something. I even consider the people that make YouTube videos with perfect lighting and are sitting in front of those LEDs, with jump cuts and editing at their desktop as bots. If we can completely create an avatar, that is exactly like a human, move their lips, and give them words to speak, how do we determine what is real and what is fake? This is an alarming thing, and I believe it's best to be skeptical. Perhaps this is where technology such as the blockchain becomes interesting and the future of authenticity will become more important than ever. I say that it's more interesting to share your thoughts candidly while outside and walking if you would like to produce your own media. Maybe this is something that is harder to reproduce with technology, but alas, it will probably also be something that's very easily replicated.

Gossip and society

Even when you consider photography, who cares what people think about your work? What does a like or comment really mean? I think that carrying a small sketchbook and sharing it with people in the physical flesh is much more interesting than random people that send you emojis and compliments. It's all just a distraction and doesn't really matter. Also, I feel as though these platforms just provide drama and gossip amongst people. I always hear conversations on the street, specifically by the River Trail, where many college students are, gossiping about their friends posts and what somebody said on Facebook or Instagram or whatever. I always hear "she said this and then she said that and then blah blah blah…" People love talking about other people and just gossiping generally. I don't know why people are so obsessed with drama, but the reality TV shows that people consume certainly promote this.

Maybe removing all media, and going off the grid is the only way forward. You don't have to move to a remote village in Africa or join an Amish community, but recognize that you can change your mindset and your approach to everyday life. I personally just keep my phone in airplane mode, don't watch any stupid YouTube videos and all this junk food on social media. I don't check the news, and I pretty much just stick with family or friends in the physical flesh.

Another strange thing I see are people that walk around with AirPods in their ears. Everybody's talking on the phone, and just going around mindlessly in the streets of Philly where it's very gritty and you must be alert. People become these lost sheep, just frolicking around like they're listening to a soundtrack of their own movie. These technologies are alarming because it promotes antisocial behavior, and I even notice that when I try to open the door for somebody or interact with somebody that a lot of the time they can't even make contact and are becoming more shy and bashful, maybe even just scared. Perhaps this is a product of the pandemic that occurred recently. I even still see people wearing masks.

I think that we all have the right to live the way that we would like, but I do see a decline in the culture generally. Even just yesterday when I was walking down Chestnut Street, outside of the very fancy Di Bruno Bros, there was a woman in her underwear, panties and bra, screaming and yelling at the security guard, raising a chair over her head, threatening to hit people that passed by. You see needles and

human feces on the ground everywhere, and drug use is at an all-time high because the local government hands the needles out for free. Sometimes you feel like you're just walking by dead bodies, zombies, down and out, I even saw one foaming from the mouth.

Return to beauty

I believe you must focus on the beauty in a culture that's on the decline. You could either create hell or paradise for yourself here on earth. The main reason why I enjoy walking along the River Trail and the various parks of Philadelphia is because they are objectively beautiful. I love being surrounded by beautiful things, beautiful architecture, beautiful water, trees, breeze, birds, plants, flowers, and all sorts of natural life. I find that this is an antidote to the chaos that exists in modern cities like Philadelphia. I simply drown out all the noise, focus on what's beautiful, and produce more photographs. Maybe the decline of the culture is a great place to be as an artist, as we thrive in chaos anyway. I still love walking in the chaotic streets of Philadelphia, and photographing the human condition. Maybe this is the goal of a street photographer, to photograph humanity. I believe that we can uplift the human spirit to new heights, through the photographs that we make. Perhaps whether or not we photograph the beautiful or the ugly, we can elevate the mundane things around us to a new idea or a new photograph, that transcends the world around us. The ugly and decay can become beautiful through the production of a photograph. There's something about the transient nature of life, the chaos, and uplifting that. I find that photography allows me to give life deeper meaning, and become endlessly curious of life itself. I find that when I wake up in the morning with my eyes wide open, I'm always eager to explore. I never want to miss another sunrise again, and just want to keep going out there onto the front lines of life and explore all of its complexities.

How to seek novelty

I believe that we can seek novelty through mundane and everyday experiences such as walking in nature, plucking flowers from the Earth, and throwing stones into the rivers. These physical actions become tangible, and real. *What is real anyway?*

Maybe intelligence is merely artificial, but the human is a biological and physical being. I enjoy wearing these barefoot shoes, and on the box of the shoes, when you order them, they have a quote, that says, **flesh is the technology.** Maybe at the end of the day, flesh is the real technology, and embracing flesh, embracing the physical nature of life, is what creates novelty. By walking and moving, standing upright, we embrace our true nature as human beings. I'm reminded of the times when we were hunters and gatherers, and would go for miles and miles on the hunt, without rest and maybe not even finding any food at the end of the day. Perhaps we didn't eat food for long periods of time, whether a full day or two of fasting, at one point in human history, and this is why we became so strong and formidable. When you consider the savage or the hunter, they are the ultimate and apex human being. Maybe to go forward like a lion, and to march with this strength, we can increase our will to power. I find that when I'm fasted, and I'm not eating food, I fuel my body with this sense of sharpness, where my mind is clear, and I have better connections to the world around me. I also feel that it reminds me to simply remain grounded and humble as a man in a modern and luxurious world of endless comfort. I think that struggle and suffering is necessary for human thriving.

Lust and Rage

Think of Greek heroes like Achilles, and the lust and rage that fueled him deep inside. The king took his war prize from him, and fueled Achilles with rage. Achilles possessed the lust for battle, and glory. This lust for honor, transformed into rage because of the kings actions. The king dishonored Achilles, and after hearing about the death of his best friend, Patroclus, he was filled with rage and returned to battle to kill Hector of Troy once and for all. He achieved vengeance, but this was his fatal flaw. Maybe the vengeful, and lustful nature of Achilles is worth studying, and even emulating to a certain degree. I believe that we all seek this sort of power, and all humans have this lust and rage within. When we can control these things and these

emotions that are so intense, we can strive upwards and onward to greater and better things through the suffering. Perhaps we must all go out alone, similar to the way that Jesus spent 40 days in the desert.

Maybe at this point of time in my life, I'm seeking bigger and physical challenges similar to Achilles. I have this lust for battle in me, and I'm seeking some sort of way to find glory. The big problem with modernity is that all of this technology and all of this luxury material things, simply leads to hedonism and over consumption. I believe hedonism is bad, and comfort just promotes degeneracy. It's easy to become complacent, sit down, shut up, do a little computer task, go home, watch TV, and go to sleep. Maybe this is the ultimate life of the majority of people within cities. They wake up, drive for 30 minutes, sit down on their butt for eight hours, drive again for 30 minutes, and then sit down on the butt again at a couch, and watch a television screen, and then go to sleep, and repeat. This is certainly not a life that I would like to live, and I am going to follow my intuition and curiosity, embracing physicality, as I move forward in life.

I believe that we must be resilient during these times of comfort and luxury, especially when there is so much of it. It's actually such a burden to sit down to consume in my opinion. I hate watching movies, eating food for no reason, and feel like I just need to get out and go. Every single day I have this warrior inside me that's trying to escape, but the modern world just keeps me tame. Maybe this is what drove me to the front lines of conflict in Israel and Palestine, living amongst the various remote villages. and tribes of Zambia, hiking to the top of the mountains in Mexico City, the slums of Mumbai, and the bustling markets of Hanoi.

Nationalism

I grew up going to a Catholic school from grades pre-k to 8. Every morning we would pray and say the pledge of allegiance as a class. I remember this being a great way to start the day, but maybe people critique that you are mindlessly being indoctrinated into a religion or country. I believe that this isn't such a bad thing after all. I believe that this causes you to become more prideful for your nation and your community as a whole.

I remember last year, during the Fourth of July, I went to Independence Hall in Philadelphia to see what celebrations were going on for the day, honoring our nation's independence. What I viewed was insanity, as these protesters tore down the American flag and burnt it to the ground. They all felt so proud of their actions, waving a communist manifesto in their hands, exclaiming that our nation has oppressed native people of the past. The native people believe that the the land belonged to God, and that nobody owns it.

William Penn, the founder of the Pennsylvania colony, is renowned for his dealings with Native American tribes, which were notably fair and peaceful for that era. His most famous agreement is known as the "Great Treaty," which took place under an elm tree at Shackamaxon, near what is now Philadelphia, in 1682 or 1683.

Penn's Quaker beliefs, which emphasized equality and non-violence, shaped his approach. The details of the treaty itself are not precisely documented, but it is celebrated for its spirit of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. This treaty reportedly ensured peace between the settlers and the local tribes (such as the Lenape) and involved agreements on land use and trade.

Unlike many other treaties of the time, Penn's agreements were marked by efforts to deal fairly by the natives, avoiding deceit and coercion. The success of these early relationships helped Penn establish Philadelphia as a prosperous city. This legacy of fairness helped establish a relatively stable and peaceful relationship between European settlers and Native Americans in Pennsylvania for several decades.

All over the city, I saw spray paint upon the statues, exclaiming "land back." There seems to be some really angry people within modern cities that just want to tear the whole thing down. I think that a lot of what George Orwell warned us about is starting to become true. It seems that we're asking for totalitarian control from the inside, and desires everybody to be on a base level of poverty. There will always be this political tension and division amongst the masses, but I believe that it is because of the hateful information that we consume is what sparks these people to embrace doom and gloom.

Capitalism provides everybody the opportunity to seek their own individual wealth and prosperity, and most especially, freedom. I've been seeing a lot of people from Africa here in Philadelphia, working multiple jobs, delivering food, and parking cars for garages. I started to speak with some of them the other day, and got to know a few of them. You even see many people from Mexico, doing the same thing. People are coming to America for freedom, and opportunity. I think that this is generally a good thing. I'm reminded of my family and the immigrants that arrived at Ellis Island in New York City from Italy. The Italians lived in poverty for quite some time, but through the collective effort of the community, or the tribe, they lifted themselves up and found their place here in the United States. Maybe this is what makes America so great, the simple fact that you can go from nothing to something.

The frontlines of life

Going forward, I believe we should consider the physicality of life and what is real more. I believe that we must make physical sacrifices for the betterment of the collective, and find our individual role to play within society. What I have learned over my many years of travel is that we are more similar than different. I volunteered on both a Kibbutz in Israel, and also volunteered in Palestine. I am probably one of the only humans who has ever had these very diverse experiences and believe gives me a nuanced perspective on the human condition. I see goodness in all people, and recognize how similar we are as humans.

I think that we should simply embrace the love for all people, similar to the teachings of Jesus. The big problem with religion, media, and politics, is that it might be dividing us more than ever before. Maybe it's best to just pick up your cross, and shoulder the burden alone. But does anybody truly have the hutzpah or the balls to do it? Probably not. Think of the greek myth of Sisyphus pushing his rock uphill for the rest of his life, only to have it roll downhill when he reaches the summit over and over again. This task becomes meaningless and almost absurd. However, the significance of the cross, and carrying it, gives life a deeper meaning, through accepting the sacrifice you make for the betterment of the collective.

As photographers and artists, we can give our life deeper meaning through the production of new work and seeking the truth in the light, by painting with it, no matter how meaningless or absurd it may seem. By embracing the complexities of the world, and uplifting the human spirit, we can create a deeper meaning through our physical connection to the frontlines of life.