

Light is Information

As photographers, light is our information, our source of power, our medium, that we use to draw upon our canvas, the world itself. When I consider light and the electromagnetic waves emitted from our sun, I think about how each wave visible to the human eye carries a different frequency, wavelength, and energy.

Perception

In Plato's allegory of the cave, slaves are chained to the walls inside a cave, only able to view the shadows on the wall of objects cast from the light outside of the cave. When one slave is freed and exits the cave, it takes them some time to adjust to the light, as they are now viewing the truth, the source, the light itself. The slave can now view the objects for what they truly are, in three dimensions.

You cannot step in the same river twice - Heraclitus

When I consider this famous quote by pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, I contemplate how light, and the way that it is always changing, provides a photographer with an abundance of ways to make photographs. I can walk the same mundane lane every single day, and position myself and my camera at the same vantage point, but always find myself making a new photograph.

You cannot make the same photograph twice.

This very simple idea is what fuels me with abundance. I enter this flow state, a stream of becoming, similar to water, ever-flowing, to the creation of new photographs.

What is the Goal of a Photographer?

The ultimate goal of a photographer is to make new pictures. The goal is to increase your curiosity by one percent every single day. We must let go of basic notions of what makes or breaks a good or bad photograph. Instead, find joy in the process, and embrace this very simple idea that will fuel you onwards -

Your next photograph is your best photograph.

Let go of perfectionism and embrace the imperfect nature of life. Also, embrace the impermanent nature of life, the fleeting moments all around you, whether you find a flower that is withering in decay, a bird in flight, the flow of a waterfall, or somebody hugging their friend goodbye. There is infinite potential in this world, and we can make photographs in a way that describes the human experience with all of its multifaceted complexities. Let's not limit ourselves to any dogma, tradition, or one way of doing things. Let us break free from the cave and go boundless through following the light.

How I Practice Photography

One thing I do every day is wake up before the sunrise and go for a walk along the river. When I make this same walk every day, I challenge myself through practicing with repetition. I photograph the same bridge, sculpture, building, river, flowers, and landscapes every day. I fuel myself with curiosity in the morning through playing in nature with my camera. I try new ways of photographing the same thing through tinkering with composition, both vertical and horizontal. I enjoy using macro mode. I photograph sculptures from low angles, giving life to the inanimate. I try to make pictures in new ways, from the top-down angle, honing in on textures, the peeling of bark on the trees. I play with my exposure compensation, making the pictures darker or brighter. There are so many different ways that you can make a photograph, even if you walk the same way. This walk reminds me of this infinite and abundant potential within photography. I highly suggest you hone in on this notion of practice, and take it to heart. Think of a basketball player, and the way that they hit the court each day, practicing their dribbling and their free-throw. Similar to that of a basketball player practicing their shot, we too should practice our shot in the realm of photography. I believe the philosophy of practice within

sports can certainly be applied to photography. My morning walk, my daily practice, keeps my eyes and body sharp. I've been walking every morning with a 40-pound plate carrier by Rogue, working on my fitness and my photography, killing two birds with one stone. Think of hypertrophy in the context of muscle growth and weightlifting. The more you use your muscles, the more you will increase their size and strength. Now, think of atrophy. The less you use them, the more likely your muscles will actually decrease in size. So, in the context of photography, we should strive for hypertrophy, not atrophy. The more we use our camera, the more we will increase our curiosity.

Show Life as It Is

The reason why I love street photography so much is that we show life as it is. We don't put any filters on life itself, similar to that of Snapchat or Instagram. We show the raw and spontaneous nature of everyday life. We embrace imperfection when we hit the streets, as life is not perfect. We show life as it is, raw, unfiltered, and candidly.

This is why I'm such a fan of the Ricoh GR and the high contrast black-and-white small JPEG file. There's really no funny business, stripping down to light and shadow, embracing all the grain and imperfection. While the high contrast black-and-white aesthetics can be seen as an abstraction of reality, I'm also simply depicting what I see, as what I get.

Become the Media

One of the most fun things I've been doing these past two years has been documenting my life with a GoPro Mini. When you photograph life with a camera, it's best to do it spontaneously, in the context of street photography, right? You wanna make photos that are real and showcase real life. I believe similar to video production, the use of a GoPro, you quite literally put somebody in your shoes by using the SuperView and simply speaking your mind without any editing or jump cuts. I find that by recording my thoughts every day or whenever I feel like it, I can

get closer to how I view the world. Simply speaking out loud, my mind subconsciously blurts out whatever ideas I have. I can then use my iPhone to voice dictate these thoughts afterward and write an essay. I can become this multi-faceted media producer, making photos, videos, and writing now. It's a very fun and liberating approach to making media, and I highly suggest picking up a GoPro Mini. Even if you want to just film your POV of practicing street photography, or riding your bike, cooking, working out, and just living life, it's a really authentic way to share and relive your own memories. I'm really fond of the videos I've made through Rome, simply watching myself walk through some beautiful churches, even using my Insta360 X3 to showcase different perspectives throughout my travels.

Think of a first-person video game. I believe that real life can become as awesome as a video game! By using a GoPro, 360 cameras, etc., you can treat the world like it's a video game, and just film your way through it. It's a kind of liberating and fun approach that I'm super interested in right now. Also, maybe the ultimate goal of an artist is to simply share your perspective, or your POV.

Redesign the World

When I think of video games, such as Minecraft, you can terraform, create structures, and design your own world. What if we looked at life this way and designed our ultimate paradise in embodied reality?

Take no L's

When we make mistakes, it's very easy for us to feel down about it, like we failed or something. What if we just took these mistakes as the ultimate lessons, teaching us to change the way we do things? To me, when I mess up, when I do something wrong, when I feel pain, I learn from it. Every loss becomes a lesson. There's no such thing as taking an L with this mindset.

Don't Act in Fear

A lot of the time we act in fear. We fear humiliation, rejection, etc. We fear failure and potential negative outcomes. When we let go of fear itself, we become free. By removing any obstacles, distractions, and embracing our true and authentic self, we no longer have fear holding us back. With a fearless mindset, anything is possible.

I believe fear is what holds a lot of people back from achieving their goals. When I decided to join the Peace Corps, I had no fear. While I'd already had previous travel experience, I had no idea where they would send me. I simply went forward, into the unknown, without fear. When you set fear aside and let your body stride, you'll float through the chaos on a feather bed, untouched, and unscathed.

We Are All Born Artists and Free

When I was a little boy, I loved to explore in the forest, building tepees with sticks, bridges with stones, and embracing the spirit of play. As I grow older, taking my photography more seriously, I believe I bogged myself down with expectations of making something great. Once I let go of this and embraced this childlike mindset, being an amateur snapshot photographer, I feel the most free I've ever been in my life. I think I may have started to take photography too seriously at a point, and it started to kill the joy of it all. Now I let go of any expectations, I don't even care about the results, or the photos themselves. I'm simply enjoying the process of making things, embracing my creative spirit through play, like a child. We were all born free, with a creative mind, but society may structure us in a way to just conform, listen, and obey. I say, break all of the rules, and create anew.

Instagram is Digital Warfare

Instagram is for slaves.

“Check my Instagram comments to crowd source my self-esteem.” - Kanye West. Saint Pablo

When you're enslaved to Instagram, you're a slave to the advertisements, external validation, and comparison amongst other people. It's such a cesspool at this point, sort of like pornography, where people become shameless and sell their souls or their bodies. Numbers go up, numbers go down, dopamine here, dopamine there. People showcase their highlight reels, use fake filters, and project an image of themselves that isn't really true. The craziest part about using Instagram as a way to share your photographs is that you're completely locked into the platform, and anybody without an Instagram account can't even see the work. Just jump off the ship, make your own website, and tie yourself to the mast of your own raft.

We Are Bound to Gravity

I'm currently walking across the Benjamin Franklin Bridge as I write this. This structure reminds me of gravity and how we are bound to the ground by the force of physics. Humanity decided to build this bridge, working within the constraints of gravity, to go upwards and across this gigantic Delaware River. It's astonishing what man can accomplish through sheer physical force and labor. I'm currently looking across the way, at structures such as the Comcast Tower or the Liberty Tower. While we elevate our bodies inside these offices, condos, and even walk or drive across this bridge, perhaps it is wise for us to remind ourselves that we are earthly people, bound to this ground, this plane of existence. While great artwork strives upwards to transcend this world, maybe the best street photographs remind us of how low to the ground we truly are.

You Can Do Anything

This world is open and endless. There are so many different experiences we can have in this lifetime, and I say we should not squander our time while we are alive. Life is too short to take the easy route, be comfortable, and be complacent. I seek to go beyond the horizon and explore endlessly. You could live to 120 years old and

still not see and do everything that this world has to offer. Champion that. Uplift that. And allow this feeling of abundance to flow through you when you contemplate the infinite potential of your life. Maybe it's best and most wise to treat each day like a mini lifetime. For any day can be your last.

Memento Mori.

"You are not special. You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake. You are the same decaying organic matter as everyone else, and we are all part of the same compost pile." - Tyler Durden

While I enjoy this quote from Fight Club, I believe that you are special. Your DNA is unique to only you. You are dying and organic matter. But this entire compost pile is connected, and every individual part holds it together.

Music and Mood

We should become more mindful of the music we consume. Music has the ability to transform your emotions and your mood in an instantaneous moment. Most modern music these days is quite degenerate if I'm being honest, with violent and sexual lyrics that affect your soul at a low level. Let's seek to listen to music only at times where we want to and need to. I personally stick to the Wanamaker Organ at 5:30 PM each day in Philadelphia. The music fills me with vitality, as it is the world's largest playing pipe organ, and uplifts my spirit. I believe that the music we consume can have a negative impact on our emotional state, and it's something that we should be more mindful of. By eliminating music throughout the day, I remain focused and undisturbed. I choose to listen to music towards the end of the day, before I go to eat and go to sleep. It's a very meditative and practical way that I've found to enjoy music. Find ways to listen to music that you enjoy, and just be mindful of the music you consume in general. Or just start listening to the best music, such as the songs from birds in nature.

Become In Tune With Nature

Every single morning, I go for a walk in nature. This is non-negotiable for me, as I find this is the best place to catch the sounds of the birds before the sun rises. As much as I love living in a city, if I am to go walk around the sidewalk right away, I will feel as though I am confined to a maze. The tall buildings block the sunlight, and I need an open space to start my day. By walking along the Schuylkill River Trail, and specifically standing at the top of the cliff behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, I have a clear view of the horizon, the river, and the tree canopy. It's a very beautiful place to start the day, as I become in tune with my circadian rhythm, my natural biological clock. By embracing nature, through walking, and absorbing more sunlight, my body becomes connected to nature itself, increasing my power, and helping me get deep and good sleep.

Armor Is Most Important

When I consider the story of David versus Goliath, and the way in which he armored himself with God, it has me thinking about armor itself. Perhaps armor is most critical, and the weapon we choose to use is not as important. For even a small slingshot was able to do the trick and have David win the battle.

I wield my camera as a sword, striking through the heart of chaos, revealing the soul of the street, creating visual order and harmony through the spontaneity of everyday life.

When you go forward with courage, or heart, you armor yourself with a protective force. Armor yourself with courage, and everything else will follow.

Fortune favors the bold. - Publius Syrus

When I think back on my best photographs of all time, they were the shots that required the most courage. The more courageous you become, the more bold and brazen you are, the more success you will find. It is true, fortune favors the bold.

I'm Built Different

I'm built different because I need chaos to thrive as an artist. There's something peaceful about looking out towards the Delaware River, but the chaos and noise of the cars crossing the Benjamin Franklin Bridge fuels me. I love the chaos of the streets, the movement of the water, the unpredictable weather patterns, the spontaneous moments on a street corner, and the inevitable fate of my life, which is death itself. I don't fear death. I just fear the pain associated with it, specifically if I were to drown right now. That would kind of suck. But, march onwards. I don't sit still. I'm always moving. I'm always doing. I can't stop. Don't worry, I will carry the boats!

NPC vs. Player Character

I remember the good old days of playing Xbox 360, specifically Skyrim. I have very fond memories of Whiterun, interacting with the same NPC over and over again, purchasing goods, and selling daggers to them. They provided me with a lot of gold, and I was able to acquire my Daedric armor after lots of grinding. The NPC was always there, the non-playable character, somehow always accepting my daggers. They always had the same thing to say, with a smile on their face: "Hi, are you looking for any weapons, armor, potions?"

I remember glitching out of the map, going under the matrix, and stealing from the chest of these NPCs overnight. Maybe in real life, we should glitch out of the matrix, don't follow the script, and just become the player character. As bad as it sounds, just treat everyone else like an NPC...

I Exist Outside the Passage of Time

When you slow your body down on the streets, and just watch people pass you by, it feels like everyone's rushing. However, as I go slow, and let life flow towards me, I exist outside the passage of time. I'm not rushing anywhere! I'm simply a flâneur,

enjoying the day, not a slave to time. I have nowhere to be, no email or text message to check, I'm just enjoying the moments as they are fleeting around me. Stop checking your clock, stop being a slave of time, take off the watch, and just leave the phone behind. Enjoy these moments, right here, right now.

Food Is Making People Sick

When I consider the word "restaurant," and its etymology, meaning to restore, I feel like most restaurants don't restore people. Most restaurants sell you slop, think of a salad bar, or a Chipotle, or any of those food courts, where they sell those prepackaged meals or have an assembly line to put together a meal for you. All this stuff is junk, slop, and not good for our souls. I think food is making us sick, and this is a problem. However, I believe that there are healing qualities to certain foods, such as beef. Maybe it's most wise to just stop eating out altogether. Only cook meals at your own house, and put your hands on your own food. Don't let anyone else cook for you.

Grateful to Be Alive

I'm so grateful to have a sun above my head, providing me with the energy I need to get through every day. I have meat in my fridge, and a meal that I will eat tonight. I have clean water that runs from a tap, and all I have to do is turn the sink on! I have two legs and can move my body through the world. I have a camera, an iPad, and the ability to create art. I have weightlifting equipment that increases my strength and keeps me moving forward with power. I have a roof over my head, a comfortable bed to sleep in. What else do I *really* need?

What Are You Spending Your Time Doing?

Become more mindful of what you're spending your time doing. For myself, I need to spend the maximum amount of time working on my passions, such as photography. I can't be distracted because that usually drains my battery or my energy. I find myself producing more than I consume these days. I can't sit there and watch any TV show, movie, or social media, and find joy in it. I find joy in creation and exploration. I think a simple heuristic is to just create more than you consume. Maybe going forward, just become more mindful about what you are doing right here right now. Only focus on the things that you truly deem to be worthy of your time and that you care about.

The Meaning of Life

Maybe the meaning of life is just to live a life of meaning? What does that mean to you? What are the things that you would be doing to give your life meaning?

This answer for me is very simple: **to create**.

The Best Ideas Are Worth Stealing

Ideas and information are free. Let's remember that. Why would you pay for a book when you can just find it online for free in a PDF file? Or, just go to the library. If you find good ideas, and you believe them to be the best, why not just steal them?

Go Primal

There's a scene from Fight Club where Tyler Durden gets the fight club members to tediously tend a garden. There's something about this return to the primal way of life that intrigues me. You could say I'm in my garden phase, embracing my primal ways, and finding meaning in it. The rejection of the modern world, depicted in Fight Club, and embracing the primal way of life, is something I truly resonate with, and find that it gives my life way more meaning. I'm glad I started practicing horticulture, because it is way more fulfilling than sitting in an office. We all have different preferences, but I certainly know mine. I've practiced horticulture in Israeli kibbutzim, and enjoyed working in aquaculture, and in various farms and outdoors while a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia.

How to Achieve Chaotic Frenzy

Just slam four shots of espresso, do some pull-ups and push-ups, some squats, slap on a weighted vest, and go for a walk. Oh, and just start rambling to a GoPro. You're bound to come up with some weird ideas.

Babies Are Born Without Shoes

Babies come into this world without shoes; maybe we should leave without them too? Or, just buy a pair of Vibram FiveFingers EL-X shoes!

Also, children have no preconceived notions. Let's embrace the spirit of play, like a child, and just play more. Fun is the goal!

How to Be Happy?

It doesn't cost anything to smile. I think the simplest trick to increasing your happiness is to smile more. Even if you don't feel like smiling, just start smiling, and feel the physiological effect of it. It's inevitable that you will start to feel better, and fill your day with laughter. I believe that the more you laugh, the happier you become. Laughter is bliss. Healthy people laugh and smile more.

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