

Don't Fear the Unknown

Should I go left, or should I go right?

People often consider freedom as an option, free will, or choice itself. However, what if freedom was the elimination of choice, and there was only one option?

I choose to move onwards, into the unknown.

I Stand at the Intersection Between Order and Chaos

Each morning, I like to walk along a small curb at the intersection between two opposing roads. As the cars rush by me left and right, I feel free, standing at the intersection between order and chaos. This part of my walk reminds me of the scene in *Fight Club*, where Tyler Durden says to *just let go* when they're driving a car straight into traffic without holding onto the wheel.

"It's only after we've lost everything that we're free to do anything." - Tyler Durden

The predictable path, the safe route, is the road often traveled. However, I choose the unpredictable, the spontaneous, as a way to thrive as an artist. When I consider order, I think about the structure of the streets, laid out on a grid, the traffic signals that direct traffic, the crosswalks, the architecture, bridges, columns, and the perfectly symmetrical windows upon the façade of 30th St. station. There is comfort in a closed system, surrounded by air conditioning, TV channels with thousands of options, yummy foods, and an easy job that allows you to sit at a computer. This path will lead to mediocrity and is best avoided at all costs.

Let's get a dog, let's save up for retirement, let's go on a vacation to the Bahamas and drink margaritas, let's sacrifice all of our time, so when we get older, we can have the best nursing home take care of us.

I'd rather stand at the precipice than live a boring life.

Godlike Intuition

My intuition has carried me through chaos and strife, floating through life on a feather bed. I think we should trust our gut, our instincts, as that ultimately is our inner voice, our inner wisdom, or perhaps even God himself, navigating us through life's complexities. I'll never forget when my intuition told me to go back to Mass last year after a long hiatus. Something felt off in the city as I looked around and saw nothing but a luxurious prison, after spending the past few years in Covid limbo. At this time, I was working as a photographer for the city and found it extremely unfulfilling; the work you make is meaningless. At this time, I made the bold decision to quit my job as a photographer, as I realized that I'd rather photograph for myself and make zero dollars from it than waste my time making pictures for somebody else. My intuition brought me back to Rome, where I spent a lot of time practicing street photography, praying in churches, and exploring the eternal city. I feel like I have a deep connection to Italy; this is where my roots are from, and my second home, considering I am a dual citizen between both the United States of America and Italy. Needless to say, this experience in Rome was a profound experience in my life, a spiritual journey, if you will, an awakening of my soul. When I returned home to Philadelphia, I felt whole again, like I've entered myself anew, as a child returning to my true essence. I found my true vocation in life, which ultimately is art and photography, but now use horticulture as my source of work and income. It provides rich meaning in my life and gives me newfound purpose. I've always known that I was a bit different, that I cannot conform, to abide by societal norms, working in an office, or with the typical team in the city. I've always thrived in solitude, outside, in nature, and needed to design my life to be this way.

Life as It Is

The beauty of life is the imperfection of it all. Street photography allows the individual to accept reality in its raw form, life as it is. By embracing the spontaneous snapshot, I am creating a visual diary of my day, in a very raw and authentic way. I find this to be the most liberating way to make photographs, as I'm not altering life, or even traveling anywhere far away from home, but merely photographing what is most immediate and close to me in my everyday life.

Unpredictability

“If you really want to escape the things that harass you, what you're needing is not to be in a different place but to be a different person.” - Seneca

After traveling the world, experiencing different cultures, for an extended period of my time here on earth, I've been a wanderer, always moving from place to place. I've always thrived in the unknown, being uncomfortable, forcing myself to adapt to new environments, moving in and out of places from time to time whether in the Middle East or Africa. After all these experiences, what I find most profound is how great life is, right here, right now. While you can find novelty in the unknown of a different country, there's also the infinite possibility for you to dive within your mind and come out with something new each day that you will inevitably find. For our individual perspective about life, the world, and our current situation, city, etc., is ultimately what shapes our perception of reality. By embracing the present moment, or treating my hometown like paradise, I find bliss, peace, and order, among the chaos and complexities of urban life. By simply embracing life as it is, while simultaneously remaining open to the unknown and the possibility of changing my perspective, I find infinite novelty despite being in one place. I feel like I've reached this point where I could live the same day on loop eternally, as it is, and thrive in it.

I Am Built Different

The thing about me is that I can thrive in any situation you put in front of me. I'm simply built different, full of vitality, ready to go with whatever life throws at me. I'll never forget trudging through the darkness of a storm in the swamps of Zambia, with a bucket on my head, sandals on my feet, trying to use the dim headlamp to guide me to the dirt path. When I got home, I took my sandals off and was shocked by lightning as it struck the floor and traveled up my feet, my legs, and throughout my entire body. The next day, when I walked around the village, I saw many dilapidated homes. I got a phone call from home and found out that my grandmother was dying. I got on a plane, spent my last moments with a loved one, and then flew all the way back to Zambia again, only to find out that Covid hit the world and flew back to America once again in a very rushed and chaotic manner

just two weeks later. I feel like throughout my journey, there have been numerous times that I should've probably died, but somehow God has been by my side this whole time.

Harness the Power of Light

Every morning when I walk to the cliff behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, it is basically pitch black, dark outside, despite the moonlight, and a few very faint stars that I see in the night sky. When I stand upon the cliff, I feel like I'm putting my beacon down, as a lighthouse, shining my inner light for the whole river to see. I feel as though every human has an inner darkness, just as much as they have light. I suggest we turn into our greatest version of ourselves and simply shine that light from within.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." - Mahatma Gandhi

We may not be able to directly change other people, but we can simply change ourselves, becoming the best version of ourselves, serving as a blueprint, or a leader, for other free spirits to follow. Even if your words, thoughts, arts, or actions impact the life of one other person, no matter how small it may seem, this is what true success means.

Go Beyond the Ordinary

With everything I do, I strive to go beyond the ordinary, to become extraordinary. I reject mediocrity, seek, or to simply go by the status quo. If I'm told to do a task, I'm going to do it with vigor and vitality at the forefront, completing it to the best of my ability. As a photographer, this means I will be waking up immediately, reaching for my camera, hitting the streets, and photographing before anyone is even awake. Maybe equality promotes mediocrity after all. I do not seek to be your equal; I seek to go beyond.

Don't Be an Actor with a Mask

The problem with most social media users is that they simply put on a mask, performing like an actor. Honestly, just consider the Instagram filters or Snapchat filters that allow individual users to cover up their blemishes or imperfections. To me, this is fake and not real whatsoever. As a street photographer, I embrace imperfection and authenticity openly. Because of this, I do not seek to participate as an actor within your matrix world, your façade, your illusion of what you believe life is. I find authenticity to be way more important than seeking fame or praise. Maybe the most authentic ones will inevitably ruffle a few feathers and upset other people, similar to the famous saying that “the truth hurts.”

Remove Fear, Guilt, and Shame

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, perhaps this is what first introduced feelings of shame. While they were naked in the garden, bearing the knowledge of good and evil, it made them feel insecure about their naked bodies. They started to make clothes, covering their genitals and private parts with small cloths that they formed from leaves. When you remove fear from your life, whether it's fear of rejection, detaching from the outcome, or removing all guilt from past behaviors, you can move forward into the unknown freely. Maybe fear is what holds us back the most in life, and by removing fear, especially the fear of death itself, it is the only thing that will ever set you free.

Set Yourself Free

Freedom is the feeling of a bird in flight, like an eagle, who flies alone. The eagle flies alone because it is most dominant in the sky and does not need a pack or an army to support it in its hunt. When an eagle sees prey, let's say a sheep that lurks along the cliffside, it strategically swoops down, pushing the sheep off the cliff, waiting for the prey to hit the ground. The eagle then swoops back down, finishing off the kill, and feasts on the flesh of the sheep. Don't be the sheep; be the eagle.

To Change Is Happiness

It's easy to be complacent or to follow the same process or practice continuously throughout your life. When you find something that works, why switch it up or change?

What I've realized is that by killing my past self and creating anew, I've found ultimate joy in life. By embracing transformation, I have found true happiness.

Since changing my process from photographing in color to black-and-white, I've been thriving and evolving more than ever in my life. What I've realized is that to change is happiness. By changing each day, increasing my curiosity by one percent, and remaining open to the unknown itself, I am growing, evolving, transforming, and feeling the sensation of bliss.

Evolution is the Goal

Perhaps this is where the will to power becomes interesting. As I increase my physical strength through weightlifting, I feel physical change within my body. This physical change, or increased vitality, is the greatest feeling in life itself. Think of it this way:

Person A: Has the ability to walk 30,000 steps per day, outside, standing upright on his two feet for the entirety of the day, never sitting down or taking a break.

Person B: Is forced to sit down for eight hours per day, inside, and only has time to walk 2,000 steps per day, and even if they tried, could never walk 30,000 steps, stand, and walk all day.

Which person will be happier?

I think it's obvious. Person A is filled with vitality and power. This power, this physical ability to be moving, exerting force, and power in the world, is ultimately what brings you happiness. A person confined to gravity, forcing the body down to

sit throughout the day, will lead to the decline of the physical body. The decline of the physical body will lead to the decline of the emotional state of this person, succumbing to weakness.

The feeling of weakness, of the physical inability to move, is the ultimate tragedy in this modern world. The feeling of strength, of the physical ability to move the world, is the ultimate feeling of happiness.

Through physical evolution, we embrace continual self-improvement, striving for a higher state of being. This ultimate striving for a higher version of oneself is what provides ultimate meaning in life.

You Are the Universe

Zoom into the smallest atom in your body out of the seven octillion atoms that make you, you. Then zoom out to the hundreds of trillions of galaxies in the universe.

Become in Tune with the Rhythm and the Beat of the Street

When I'm on the street, I enjoy engaging with the world dynamically. The street is like a stage, and all of the people are merely actors. As the street photographer, I become the conductor of the orchestra, of the cosmic drama that unfolds on a street corner.

Wield the camera as a sword, strike through the heart of chaos, reveal the soul of the street, and create visual order and harmony from the spontaneity of everyday life.

Just watch the feet and the way that people move upon the street. Become in tune with the rhythm and the beat of each step, of each sound, of each movement. Life is like a dance, and perhaps we should treat each day like it's our last.

You can create a new world in a fraction of a second.

I'm not just a bystander; I'm an active participant in the street. I am order. I am chaos. I am the unknown.