

## **The Eternal Now**

We have a past and a future, but the more we revel in these imaginary states of mind, the less we find ourselves in the moment, in the eternal now. As street photographers, we're on the hunt, looking, searching, for the next moment to photograph. But what if I were to tell you that this is a fool's game, that we should let go and simply let life flow towards us?

*Stop looking, and simply feel.*

## **Become a Different Person**

Evolution is the goal, and change is necessary for us to evolve. We change every single day, every single hour. Even the simplest elements in this world, such as light, provide us with new information and gradually change over time. With each new photograph I make, I learn something new, and I become a new person again and again in a stream of becoming. Through the practice of photography, I am eternally learning, growing, and changing by embracing each moment, finding meaning and novelty in the mundane. When I reflect on my photographs in the evening, it's like I have a window into the past, typically only the past 12 hours. Through observing the work and contemplating what I've learned, I recognize that I am now a different person, go to bed, and move on to the next day.

For around a decade, I traveled from place to place, searching for the next best photograph. I was a hunter, an adventurer, lost in the pursuit of greatness, a road that would lead to no end. I could continuously travel this world until I am 120 years old and still not see every square inch of this planet. The world is so large, and there's almost too much to explore. However, by recognizing the infinite possibilities within my hometown and changing my perspective on life itself, by becoming a different person, I see the world in a completely new way. I am no longer searching, hunting, and feeling the urge to travel from place to place. I can travel within myself, within my mind, and within my immediate surroundings in an infinite number of ways. Every single day, we should embrace change and explore the nuances and gradual differences that each day provides us. Our superpower is

that the world is our canvas, and there is always an opportunity to learn and grow each day. Remove any expectations you have, whether it's the possibility of you finding an interesting moment on the street, photographing for a particular theme or project, or even meeting a goal.

The goal is evolution, to continuously change, and to become a different person each day. Acknowledge your change each day.

*What did you learn today? What did you learn yesterday?* **Evolve.**

## **The Beauty of Mortality**

There's a quote from the movie *Troy* that reminds me of the beauty of our life and the nature of mortality, where Achilles is speaking with Briseis.

*"The gods envy us. They envy us because we're mortal, because any moment might be our last. Everything's more beautiful because we're doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again."* - Achilles

This reminds me to embrace each moment and to revel in life's beauty. What makes the human experience so special is our inevitable fate, which is death itself. With this lurking reminder in the back of our minds that we will and must die, we propel ourselves onward, despite this inevitable outcome. I'm reminded to champion each moment, to enjoy this moment, right here. I find that I disappear into the abyss, simply gazing out towards this tree, to find the intricate patterns and details to inspire me. The way the leaves rustle in the wind and the birds chirp always put a smile on my face. The ups, the downs, the feelings of anger, greed, lust, and even sadness are all parts of the human experience that make this life so beautiful. Remember that every moment is unique and will never occur again.

*Carpe Diem. Seize the day.*

So if this was truly our last day on Earth, let us remind ourselves to seize the day, not squander our time, and embrace the spirit of play. For if this is our last dance, let's make it great. Let's embrace our beautiful nature as mere mortals and create our own cosmic drama for the gods.

## **Becoming Eternal**

Let's shine bright in the darkness, like a lighthouse over a stormy sea.

We must see with clairvoyance on our walk alone. As street photographers, it is critical for us to become in tune with the patterns of both nature and human behavior. With heightened sense of awareness, perception, and intuition, we go forward into the unknown, with the ability to articulate it through our feelings, our gut reactions. Not merely seeing the world around us, but feeling it through all of our senses—visual, auditory, tactile, taste, and smell.

Let's develop a bulletproof mindset. Let's remain laser-focused. Let's cut through the noise. Embrace greatness through overcoming challenges, physical, mental, and spiritual. We all have different seasons in life, times when we're in the dark, times when we're in the light, but perhaps the goal will be to always shine bright. I'm currently in my grinding phase, like the early game in Minecraft, where I'm strip mining at y11, searching for diamonds. In Minecraft, when you dig below the surface, and simply break cobblestone over and over again in a straight line, there's a one percent chance that you will find diamonds every few hundred blocks or so. It's the most tedious part of the game, where you essentially keep clicking and keep mining while rarely seeing any results. It is a necessary step to advance in the game, and a challenge that must be overcome by the player. I find by remaining dedicated to practicing my street photography every single day without an excuse, I increase my chance of finding those diamonds in the rough through practicing with repetition and grinding, like I'm mining. I've given myself a two-year window, and coming up this November 2024, I will have been photographing every single day for two years straight with my newfound process of making black-and-white photographs. I'm almost ready to come out of the cave, to build my fortress, organize my chests filled with my items and diamonds, and position my lighthouse on the shoreline, to give me clear vision of any zombies or skeletons that are incoming.

What I love about repetition is that it keeps me moving onward. The more that I keep pushing myself every single day, the more likely I am to increase my chances of finding something. By pressing forward, by quite literally moving my physical

body throughout the entire day, I'm existing outside the passage of time. For this moment, through grinding, through repetition, through moving, I merely exist in the eternal now. Every click of the shutter gets me closer to my goal, to evolve.

## **Self-Sufficiency and Inner Strength**

Empty your body, empty your mind.

I already have everything I need. There is nothing left in this world that I truly desire. Everything can be found in nature, and perhaps it is wise to let go of our desires?

When you become self-sufficient, needing little, and embrace simplicity, it truly sets things into perspective. We often seek the next thing, whether it's a material goal of acquiring a thing itself or even an expectation of our dreams and goals coming into fruition. When you detach, when you empty your mind of these illusory thoughts and ideas, you become stronger and more self-sufficient. For everything you need is both within your soul, your body, your mind, as much as it is found within nature itself. We have the sun, this big ball of fire; without it, we would have no life. We have clean water that comes straight from the tap. We can order from Amazon and have it delivered to our door. We are living in this age of abundance, and it is so easy to be swayed and led astray through advertisements and media that tell us what we need. Let go of these external expectations, let go of social norms, and simply follow your nature. Follow your inner soul; your strength from within will be the ultimate determining factor for how you will live. Can you walk alone? Can you go the empty, lonely road? Can you find yourself quiet, without these distractions leading you astray?

Think of the Spartans and their goal of freedom from tyranny. They were simply military warriors; physical strength is what guided them in life. They had nothing else in their mind but war and freedom. For every day is war, every day is a battle for your mind. So you must find yourself strong from within, bulletproof, with your armor on, that of a Spartan, fighting for freedom.

Free your mind, free your body.

## **Life and Death**

I live in a building with 99% elderly people. I heard one of them state:

*"You enter through the front and leave through the loading dock."*

When I heard this, it was actually really amusing, and we all cracked up in laughter because of the truth of this statement. Every few months, ambulances arrive at the back of my building, taking dead bodies or sick people away. I see people going from standing upright to a few months later being put into wheelchairs. This sets a clear vision of life and death for me.

## **Embracing Playfulness and Courage**

Children voluntarily play. When I was a kid, I remember playing this game called manhunt, where one person went out and searched for the other players who were hiding in the forest. Some players would climb trees, others would build forts, some would hide in the bushes, and the goal was very simple: to have fun! This is where we should be with our creative practice and everyday life, through embracing the spirit of play, like that of a child, voluntarily playing and actually having fun. In this modern world, we involuntarily wind up playing the game, we involuntarily go through the motions without thinking about it too much, going from point A to point B, going into the office and leaving, going home, repeating the same monotonous routine. But what if we make this moment, this day, the most joyous it can possibly be? If we embrace the simplicity of play, like that child, perhaps we may be a little bit more curious, a little bit more playful, a little bit more interesting. It is very easy to harden by world, societal norms, expectations, etc. Let go of these things, sing, dance, and embrace your inner child.

*Become a gay monster.*

My favorite Pokémon was Cyndaquil. He was very cute, but if you bother him, he becomes engulfed in flames and will not put up an easy fight. Let's be more like Cyndaquil, playful, cute, seemingly unharmed, but not afraid to bite back when

necessary. I think of Jesus, who constantly preached kindness and peace but eventually found himself at the steps of the temple, where the money lenders were, cleansing it with his whip. Be playful, but be courageous.

## **The Warrior's Mentality**

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

If you feel voiceless, shy, bashful, or insecure, recognize the power of photography. Our cameras are swords, and photography is a universal language that will give the individual a voice. As much as our cameras or photographs can be seen as weapons, empowering us, perhaps our actual voice, through utilizing our vocal cords and speaking up, literally, becomes the ultimate weapon. Never censor yourself, never feel afraid to speak your mind. Let's become hard in a soft world, not afraid to ruffle a few feathers. Your voice is the most powerful thing in this world. Use it through both photography and speaking.

## **Emotions and Mindset**

When I was a young lad, my favorite champion to play in League of Legends was Blitzcrank. I would maximize his defense, increase his shield, as he was a super tanky character, an indestructible robot, taking all of the hits from the turret and the minions, taking all of the shots, allowing my teammates to push forward onto the battlefield and kill the other champions.

Perhaps we should become a tank in real life, not just physically, but mentally. We should control our emotional state of being and suppress it immediately. If you feel anger, curb it. Sadness? Let go. We must recognize how fleeting this feeling will be, and how quickly we can make a turn of events. Let's become more than just a human who reacts to his emotional whims. Let's be like the robot, the tank, Blitzcrank, take all of the shots, and reflect them right back to the enemy.

## **Authenticity and Leadership**

In this modern world, we consume a lot of artificial food. Perhaps the more artificial food we consume, the more artificial people become?

*There are leaders, and there are followers, but I'd rather be a dick than a swallower. - Kanye West*

Let's say you're invited to a bar to join a group for some drinks. Just because everyone else is drinking, you do realize you have the choice not to, right? Just choose a sparkling water instead! It's very easy to follow the crowd and do things just because other people are doing them. Don't be suckered by groupthink or group behavior patterns. It's better to be a leader by simply doing the thing that feels right and best to you than following the crowd. However, being a leader does not necessarily mean being a tyrant; we simply do our own thing, setting an example by becoming the greatest version of ourselves, becoming a blueprint for others that would like to follow. Just let other people be degenerates. Most people eat junk and garbage food. Think of a Chipotle or a salad bar. These places smell like dirty locker rooms, or somebody cycles from the rice to the beans to the lettuce to the blah blah blah, flopping the goop into a plate. 99% of people do this every single day, but we don't. We're the new 1%. I'd rather be a dick than a swallower.

## **Living on the Edge**

I stand on the precipice each morning.

As I go for my hike in nature to the cliffside behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and stand at the edge, a gust of wind could come behind me, a bird could swoop down and peck me, a spider could bite me, or a bee could sting me, and I would go toppling down to my death. Through embracing danger and risk, we find freedom. By removing the fear of death from our lives, we find ultimate freedom and peace of mind. Think about freedom more, and what that means to you. Are you a slave to time, to the alarm clock, to the email, the text messages, etc.? This is modern-day slavery, recognize that, and how you can free yourself from that as quickly as possible if you seek modern freedom. It is possible, but you must be more critical

about how you spend your time, what you are giving your attention to, and what you are a slave to. Perhaps we are all slaves in this modern world, but let us remember that freedom is the goal.

*For men in a state of freedom had thatch for their shelter, while slavery dwells  
beneath marble and gold. – Seneca*

I feel most free in nature. I feel most alive when I'm underneath a tree. I feel best when I'm connected to the world, the ground, the movement, and being outside. How can we achieve this in modern life? How can we seek this ultimate sense of freedom in a world where we become caged inside like animals in a zoo? The most alive and free I've ever felt was under a thatched roof in Zambia, underneath the stars, off the grid. While I don't believe that this way of life is necessary for freedom, we don't have to remove ourselves from society and actually live off the grid. We can go off the grid with our thoughts, our minds, and find new ways to play this game in this modern city of Philadelphia.

During the Covid lockdown, I played a video game, *Cyberpunk*. If life was like a cyberpunk video game in real life, how would you choose to play? Would you be a nomad, a street kid, or a corpo? When I played, I only played as the nomad, and I increased my stealth skills to the maximum. I was extremely agile, and my favorite weapon was the katana. I would often climb around the rooftops and jump down to kill the enemies, getting close in my combat. A nomad is free, agile, stealthy, and strong. Let's focus on these attributes, and treat life this way, like we're living in a cyberpunk dystopia.

Freedom is the goal. Don't be a Corpo slave.

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