

We Are the Extraordinary

Why settle for good enough?

In this modern world, we have the option to settle, to conform, to be a good boy, to work hard, and to be kind. We're constantly being taught that equity of outcome is the solution to our problems. What if equality promoted mediocrity and was actually not a virtuous path after all? It seems that to be a pleaser, to fit in line, to abide by others, is the virtuous path. Let's strive for greatness, to become extraordinary, to go beyond the mediocrity that modernity preaches.

As photographers, we possess the ability to transcend the mundane and connect with the eternal now. We turn the ordinary into extraordinary with a click of a shutter.

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

Natural vs Artificial

Fake food, fake people?

The average person drinks at least one Coca-Cola per day. Most people eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. During lunch breaks, people smoke cigarettes, go to salad bars, and spend the maximum amount of time during the day indoors. Artificial food and artificial environments will inevitably create and breed a generation of artificial people. Think more critically about the things that we consume, the things that we do, and the places that we inhabit. To become extraordinary, we must avoid these unnatural, artificial spaces, foods, and people, like the plague.

Have you ever interacted with these people or overheard the conversations that occur after an office meeting? Every Friday, when I pass by a bar, I hear people moaning about their coworkers, gossiping, and complaining over a shared cup of poison, as they go into the weekend to finally feel freedom. We are modern slaves—slaves to our vices, slaves to our minds, slaves to other people, and slaves to our body’s desires and whims.

Silence is golden and pure bliss. When you tune out the noise and find yourself connected with nature by walking on an empty path, a dirt path, surrounded by trees and natural things, you finally have the ability to turn inward, to your soul, to yourself. When you strip away the noise of modern life, the distractions, and other people, you become in tune with your mind and your body, slowing down, and reconnecting with your true needs under the sunlight. There are infinite novel experiences to have in nature. By simply watching the birds in flight, leaves wiggle in the wind under a tapestry of trees, the way weeds grow, and flowers bloom, we become extraordinary, transcending the monotonous routine of modern life.

Every day, when I come home from the park and walk the streets with my camera, I see the same office worker smoking in the same spot every day during their break.

People who smoke cigarettes hate their lives.

I also see the same people, with their AirPods and sunglasses on, coming out of the same office every single day.

We city dwellers don’t even cook our own food anymore. They’re often accompanied by a salad bowl in the right hand, or with some perfectly prepackaged artificial meal with a soda ready to be consumed when they get home. I think the worst foods that we can possibly consume are sodas, artificial sweeteners, and any strange drinks. I think of soda as the “slow kill,” something that will eventually lead to your decline, like a dose of poison each day, slowly creeping you closer and closer to your inevitable death.

Why does everybody wear AirPods and look the same?

Perhaps modern trends, whether fashion or technological, promote mediocrity, antisocial behavior, and conformity among the masses. My thought is that these artificial environments that we dwell in throughout the day indoors contribute to a life of mediocrity and conformity. Modern lifestyle is slowly killing our soul, our vitality, and our vigor.

You are a Human Battery

Our body is a battery, and the sun is the charger. Our nervous system, heart, brain, and muscles are the circuits through which electricity flows, running and sustaining all our vital functions.

If you think this way about your body, wouldn't it make the most sense to treat it wisely, leading with vitality?

Modern life puts you in a box, both physically and metaphorically. These boxes are weakening our physical bodies. Humans are meant to be grazing in open spaces, like free-range chickens, not zoo animals locked inside a cage. Personally, anytime I'm spending on my butt, sitting down during the day, I can feel my battery slowly begin to drain. This is why I don't sit down when I read these days and walk around a nature path while reading out loud, or stand up surrounded by trees. It's astonishing how we've all agreed upon this lifestyle of being inside, sitting down for 90% of the day. This inevitably leads to decay, the decline of the physical body. The decline of the physical body inevitably leads to the decline of the spiritual, mental, and emotional needs that a human must be met with. If we lead with strength and resilience, even if the path may be difficult or more challenging, our lives become high-quality, or extraordinary.

Victory or Nothing

I came, I saw, I conquered. This is our new motto.

Veni, vidi, vici. - Julius Caesar

As photographers, when you're on the streets, you're not just photographing, you're conquering. Let's conquer a new realm, the realm of photography and art. I'm not here to be basic, and to make the same thing as everybody else. I'm here to conquer photography, to become the best that I can possibly be. If you're not striving to become the best or great, then why even try?

A street photographer must conquer their fears of confrontation and interaction within the public space. I believe street photography requires the most audacity and courage out of any medium of art. This is due to the physical nature of photographing other people on the front lines of life. If you're fearful when on the streets, overcome that fear through purposeful engagement with other people. Stop thinking, and just shoot. Maybe go up to that stranger and spark up a conversation. *What's the worst that could happen?*

Don't just be an observer, become a conqueror.

When I travel to a new location, especially when I go abroad, I seek to conquer those places, those streets, those alleys, and mountains. **It's victory or nothing. Take a risk.**

What Do You Value?

In modernity, I believe we've adopted a slave mentality. I recently finished reading *The Genealogy of Morals* by Friedrich Nietzsche, where he discusses the origins of this mentality, particularly through the concept of 'master-slave morality.' In the book, he argues that we've transitioned our values from strength and power to that of oppression and resentment. We prioritize obedience and self-denial over assertiveness and self-affirmation.

I'm reminded of my time working from home during the pandemic. You're threatened with disapproval by the boss if you don't "meet the quota" or "the deadline" or "hit those numbers!" I remember working overtime, beyond the typical hours, practically sacrificing the entire day, from around 8 AM to sometimes 9 or 10 PM. I think this is the biggest problem with most modern jobs and work in general, the fact that you sacrifice all of your time, denying yourself, as an obedient worker, a busy bee, a slave.

Also, how is it possible to lead with candor these days, in a life where kindness is our ultimate virtue? While I understand the importance of kindness, I think we should be speaking the truth more, despite how it will make other people feel. The problem is, the truth can hurt. If a loved one is eating themselves to death, are you permitted to tell them to stop, to tell them that they are a slave to these devices, that they are killing themselves? Can I be this blunt? Or should I lead with kindness, telling them that it's OK, that body positivity is the new norm, that you were just "born this way?" When it comes to life or death, maybe we shouldn't be kind; maybe we should become more like a tyrant, telling people how it is when it comes to those close to you in life. I'm starting to think otherwise. With strangers, maybe we should opt for silence and just let other people be degenerates?

Overcome Yourself

If you're bored, good. Revel in the boredom, and find new ways to embrace life's complexities. There are infinite ways that you can embrace boredom through creativity, or even intellectual pursuits, like reading. If you're bored, it's perfect for you to finally sit with yourself, to turn inward, to learn and to know thyself. Through boredom, and silence, you come to realize who you are, like you're reaching into the heavens, grabbing fire from the gods, seeking higher knowledge, bringing it down to earth, with the ability to destroy and to create anew.

Through boredom, I believe we can enhance our curiosity. I encourage you to hone in on curiosity, engaging with it, cultivating it, finding new ways to play the same game every single day. **The new goal, the new sign of success, is increasing your curiosity by one percent each day.**

Become Equanimous

Master yourself, both your mind and your body. Align with nature, and the highest version of yourself. One simple suggestion is to get a 40lb plate carrier from Rogue, and go for a walk every morning for one hour while wearing barefoot shoes. Think of it like putting on your armor in the morning, and going for a march. Through daily physical training, we become equanimous, calm, and undisturbed by the external world. By hardening your physical body, strengthening your posture, your feet, your legs, you also fortify your mind. There are no more frontiers for men to conquer, but perhaps we can conquer the streets, our bodies, and art.

Transcend the mundane routine, the monotony of modern life, and strive for excellence. Become the change you wish to see in the world. **Become extraordinary.**

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