

The Art of Staying an Amateur

What's popping, people? It's Dante. Currently walking through the tunnels of City Hall. My man is standing tall, playing his flute all year long. I think for two years now, he's been honing his craft, playing his flute, and working on some paintings and drawings too.

It's always nice to hear an amateur musician doing their thing—just going through life, *one whistle at a time*.

The Joy of Being an Amateur

It's much more fun to be an amateur. There's something fascinating about the stage of *becoming*—the period where you're learning and growing. This phase was the most fruitful in my photographic journey.

I'll never forget when I first started with the Ricoh GR II. I barely understood how to use the camera. I'd just throw it in P mode and run around, capturing crazy photos. To this day, some of my strongest work comes from that time—when I was still learning.

"To be an amateur forever seems to be a wise way forward."

By using tools like the Ricoh GR III or GR IIIx, I can remain an amateur forever. These cameras, without viewfinders, push me to rely more on intuition. There's no obsessing over composition or fancy techniques. It's raw, instinctive shooting, and that's where interesting work is made.

Why the Camera Matters (Even When It Doesn't)

While people say the camera doesn't matter, I think it does—because it influences how you behave on the streets. For instance, using a Fujifilm camera with a viewfinder makes me slow down, overthink, and strive for perfection. But I'm not interested in perfect pictures.

"I'm trying to make pictures that are more spontaneous, more raw, with a feeling of serendipity."

When you remove the viewfinder, you open yourself up to play. You create images that reflect your soul—how you feel about life and how you position yourself on the front lines of life.

Stripping Down to Essentials

I've found that high-contrast black-and-white photography reveals the magic. By stripping away color and focusing on the highest contrast possible, the images become more intriguing.

- **Less information in the frame:** A darker photo obscures details, drawing the viewer in.
- **Avoiding obviousness:** Perfect exposure and composition make photos too clear, too literal. By underexposing or focusing only on highlights, the shadow areas tell their own story.

"Think of a photo like an instant sketch of life, less as a documentary record and more as a form of self-expression."

Photography as a Form of Expression

Ultimately, art is about sharing your perspective. It's about expressing yourself. Treat your photos as visual sketches—quick, intuitive captures that show your unique view of the world.

I'd encourage you to embrace the snapshot. **Let go of perfection** and allow yourself to play.

Life as a Video Game

Imagine life as a video game. How would you play it? Personally, I choose the fun mode. Life's too short to take everything seriously. Whether it's shooting photos or navigating the streets, approach it with a light heart and playful spirit.

"Not taking life too seriously is the best way to experience it fully."

So, stay an amateur. Stay playful. And keep capturing the world as it unfolds in front of you.