

Create Your Own Light

So it's winter here in Philadelphia, and I'm currently riding the SEPTA bus to work. It's often very dark at this time of day, but I love watching the sun peer about the horizon as I cross the bridge to Fairmount Park, dazing out towards the skyline. Has me thinking, if it's dark outside, why not just create your own light?

Painting with Light

When I look at the world around me, I view it as a canvas, and light as my medium, to draw upon the world. Through light, we possess the ability to create a new world. This, to me, is the ultimate superpower of photography: the ability to create something from nothing, or rather, seemingly nothing, as light is what ultimately gives us this ability.

I think all these years of photographing, after a decade, my true passion, my true interest with photography, lies with light itself. I'm fascinated by the sunrise, waking up early at dawn just so that I can watch the hues and colors change across open horizons. I'm always intrigued by the result of the photographs I make, and the way a lot of the times it's out of our control. For instance, if I'm photographing a scene, I can't necessarily predict the end result of the photograph before I make the picture. I have a general idea of what I can make compositionally, timing the moment, etc. However, light is always changing, in flux, and out of my control.

"This to me is the ultimate game of making photos: putting order to the chaos, the unpredictability, and the spontaneous nature of life itself."

There are certain photos that I've made over the years where I have a general sense that I could make a photograph somewhere. I'll stick around for a bit, working the scene, finding beauty in the light—maybe it's golden hour, maybe the shadows cast on the wall. However, I can't necessarily control the light; I can only respond to what I see in front of me in a fraction of a second. A young boy playing on an empty frame can turn his face in a particular direction, and the light can illuminate his gaze. Maybe a shadow casts across his face, and all I can see are his

eyes looking back. Spontaneous moments, through the change and flux of light, have always amazed me. It's almost like a miracle when I look back at the photo and wonder, **"How the hell did I even make that?"** Honestly, I couldn't tell you—a lot of the time, it's just a happy accident.

Mind, Body, and Spirit

I find that practicing street photography daily activates the mind, body, and spirit unlike any other artistic practice that I've been able to find in my lifetime. Firstly, photography requires the artist to experience life in open spaces, in the real world, on the frontlines of life. Not only are you there physically, but you become emotionally close to the subject that you're working with—the things that you're photographing, the places that you experience.

"This connection, both physical and mental, transcends the simple act of making a photograph into a spiritual experience."

How? I believe that the photographs I make are merely a reflection of my spirit, my lust for life, my soul. When I make a photograph of something, I was there. I was present when I pressed the shutter—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Just Let Life Flow

When I'm on the street, I like to walk at a very slow pace and just let life flow towards me. The only thing that I'm responsible for is being present and responding to my intuition. Everything else? It's pretty much out of my control. I can't control the streets, the light, or the moments that are fleeting. Recognizing what's in our control is so important.

For instance, are we in control of our thoughts? I think a lot of thoughts just come to us randomly, spontaneously, and the only thing we're responsible for is how we deal with our thoughts—how we respond to them. You can apply this to pretty much everything in life, as most of it is out of our control. We're merely responsible for how we respond to it all.

What Is Your Rhythm in Life?

I think that I'm very chaotic. I'm very spontaneous. I don't like to make plans or set any destinations. I kind of just follow my whims most of the time, if I'm being honest. I have control, but I can't help myself but to embrace chaos openly. I don't think that this is necessarily a good thing all the time, but it's definitely put me into a lot of interesting situations.

"I like to just laugh in the face of chaos."

What Are Your Guiding Principles?

I know that deep down I'm trying to strive for excellence, to become the best version of myself that I can possibly be—the best artist, photographer that I could ever be. I've always wanted to be the best, but I recognize this as a fatal flaw. It's quite impossible, really.

"By striving for excellence, but recognizing that I'm merely a student and amateur forever, that's how I like to go forward."

Basically, I'm striving upwards, but I recognize that I'm bound by gravity.

What Happens When Man No Longer Needs Society?

Clearly, I love society, humanity, and city life, generally. I absolutely love being around other people and think that it's important to have society and community in order to thrive as a human. However, I do recognize that it's possible to live on your own, sort of like a wild, untamed beast. You don't really "need" society in order to survive, but maybe you need it to thrive?

How Far Can You Walk in a Day?

Movement is godlike. Through the act of making a photograph, you transcend time. Walking and photography go hand in hand. Adventure is in my blood. If you're ever wondering where I am, I'm always moving, walking, photographing, and never sitting still. The only time I stop moving my body is when I go to sleep and eat.

What Is Your Duty?

I can only really speak as a man because obviously, I am one, and that is that it is my duty to be strong. I think the role of a man is to simply be a rock, undisturbed, unburdened by external circumstances.

"I actually think that all evil stems from weakness, specifically weak men."

I think weak men—men with very low testosterone, men that are weak of the body and mind—are probably the biggest threats to humanity.

Curiosity, Courage, and Power

Without curiosity, would you ever want to get out of bed, go outside, and see the world? Without courage, how would you face strangers, interact with society, or try something new? In order to cultivate curiosity and courage, I believe it derives through power, energy, and force. It's actually quite simple—you just gotta move.

"A lot of people are looking for inspiration or motivation to get going, to start something, when it all simply derives from your two legs: standing upright and moving your physical body."

Who Cares What Others Think?

It's my belief that a lot of people are in fear of the judgment of others. This holds a lot of people back, myself included at one point. I was always afraid to just speak my mind or be myself, especially online and in YouTube videos. I would always just

share my POV practicing street photography because people could judge me based on the merits of my work, and not who I am authentically.

Now, I am the niche. Whatever I'm interested in, I'll create around those interests. Everything I do, I do without the need for external validation at this point. I don't need your money, your views, your appreciation, etc. I just need curiosity and the will to create.

Personally, I've come to the conclusion that all of these online communities are just fake. By disabling likes and comments, and just sharing my perspective, my thoughts, my life, what I'm doing, I've been liberated and allowed to become my authentic self through the act of creation and not filtering anything.

"I highly encourage those that feel shy or timid, but want to create to just put yourself out there, disable the likes, the comments, and just create things because you enjoy it."

I feel extremely liberated knowing that whatever I create, say, or do is coming from a place of authenticity without the fear of judgment. At this point, I don't give a fuck what anybody thinks about me.