

Photographing Without People: The Street Photographer as Flâneur

What's poppin' people? It's Dante.

Getting my morning started on a nice walk through *Fairmount Park, Philadelphia*. Got the **Ricoh GR IIIx** in the pocket—always got it strapped.

Today, I'm thinking about **street photography without people**. What that means. What that looks like. Let's dive in.

Inspiration from Atget

For the past two and a half years, I've drawn inspiration from a single source:

"The World of Atget."

Eugène Atget, the godfather of street photography, photographed everything:

- Rag pickers
- Street performers
- Streets
- Stairwells
- Doorways
- Railings
- Signposts
- Lamps
- Parks
- Trees
- Foliage

Urban life in its totality. That's what he archived in Paris. And this approach? It's *liberating*.

Photograph Everything

"Find potential in everything."

That's the practice. By treating everything as photographable, you enter an **abundant flow state**. You increase your chances of producing something impactful. That's the goal: **press the shutter often**.

Not every shot needs a human. In fact, the absence of people can reveal new perspectives.

Macro Mode is Clutch

The **macro feature** on the Ricoh? Game changer.

- I have it mapped to the up button on the D-pad.
- Drop low. Get close. Capture bark, leaves, textures.

"Photographing things without people unlocks a new flow state."

Street Photography and Skateboarding

Here's a metaphor: **street skateboarding**.

When I was a kid, we turned everyday objects into opportunities:

- Ollie over a brick
- Manual across sidewalk cracks
- Grind curbs and ledges

That same spirit applies to photography:

"Use the mundane as your obstacle—or your subject."

You start to see *everything* as potential for creative expression.

Become the Flâneur

"I think of myself as the ultimate flâneur in Philadelphia."

Not just a photographer. A *wanderer*. A *watcher*. A slow-moving explorer.

Slow down.

Most street photographers move too fast. And in that speed, they miss:

- Patterns
- Details
- Light

Walk with **intention and intensity**, not urgency.

"Be present. Let life come to you."

From Tripod to Pocket

Atget carried a heavy wooden camera on a tripod. He had no choice but to move slow.

But now?

- Ricoh GR III / GR IIIx
- In your pocket
- One-handed
- Snapshots

No excuses.

Program mode. Point and shoot. Be the digital flâneur.

Light is the Subject

Here's my philosophy:

"Treat light as the subject, and the world opens up."

Stop looking for moments. Stop hunting gestures. Instead:

- Observe how light hits surfaces
- Study the way it *etches* detail
- Frame it

That's it.

Be the Archivist

Think of yourself as **an archivist of your hometown**.

Just like Atget documented Paris, document:

- Your city
- Your surroundings
- The everyday

"Photograph with purpose. Archive where you are now."

This gives meaning. A reason to shoot.

Simple Techniques

Try these out:

- Use **macro mode**
 - Study **Atget's photos**
 - Photograph **architecture, parks, sculptures, windows, doors, door knockers**
 - Focus on **flowers, horticulture, signs, textures, pipes, walls, infrastructure**
 - **Observe light**: how it reflects and shapes
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Ricoh Workflow

- **High contrast black & white**
- **Small JPEG** files
- Underexpose to **crush shadows**
- Use **highlight-weighted metering**

"Crush the shadows, expose for the highlights, simplify the composition."

Want the full setup?

Check out my Ricoh workflow guide:

👉 <https://dantesisafo.com>

Go Out and See

Photograph:

- Patterns in nature
- Patterns in the street
- The in-between moments

"Street photography is more than a genre. It's a philosophy."

It's how you see. How you experience. How you **engage** with life.

Final Words

"So much beauty in the mundane."

Look at Atget's photos. Use them as your blueprint. Let them resonate.

Start photographing everything.

No hesitation. No limitations. Just presence, curiosity, and light.

Peace.