

Behind the Scenes: Breaking Down 5 Street Photographs

What's poppin', people?

It's Dante.

Today I'm breaking down five of my street photography shots, explaining the behind-the-scenes of how each photograph was made.

1. *Basketball in Baltimore*

This first shot was taken in Baltimore—some young men playing basketball.

I was pulled into the scene by this **beautiful pool of golden hour light**, casting long, looming shadows and creating a dramatic effect. The mural in the background caught my eye, and I wanted to **relate the players to that backdrop** to create a strong frame.

"The photographer is simply responsible for where they position their physical body in relationship to the moment, the content, and the background."

It's all about synthesizing **content with form**—the **moment** with the **composition**.

- The mural became my stage.
- I used light and shadow to separate the subjects.
- I kept the frame clean, simplified the chaos.

I was in **Program mode**, shutter speed around **1/4000s**, which helped me freeze this split-second gesture—**arms outstretched, faces half-lit, basketball midair**.

You'll see in the background:

- One man shielding his eyes from the sun.
- Another observing the scene from the sidelines.
- A shadow play that mirrors the mural—serendipity at work.

What brought this all together?

I walked past a school. I saw light. I saw kids playing.

I approached. I asked. I moved.

I worked the scene.

2. **Grandmom on the Rooftop – Philadelphia**

This one's personal:

My **grandmother sunbathing on a rooftop**.

"You can make street photographs of anyone and everyone."

Photographing family gets you **closer**, emotionally and physically. There's intimacy.

In this shot:

- Her **gesture**, the **lipstick**, and the **nails** drew me in.
- The red color popped.
- I dropped to a **low angle** to isolate her from the background and simplify the frame.

One fourth of the frame is taken up by her form.

That alone gives weight, grounding the viewer.

- The city skyscrapers are separated in the back.
- A cloud drifts by.
- Her yellow shirt pops against the setting.

Simple composition, deep connection.

3. *Tattered Mask at the Border – Jericho*

Here at the **front lines of conflict between Israel and Palestine**, I photographed a **masked man** near the border of Jericho.

This came through **returning to the same location**, being patient, and building relationships.

"I had the ability to get as close as possible because I mustered up the courage."

The border was blocked. The police were out. I couldn't walk in—so I jumped into a **Palestinian taxi**, got as close as I could, and **ran through the desert** to reach the front lines.

The composition is simple:

- Rule of thirds.
- Main subject fills **half of the frame**.
- Physically close. Emotionally closer.

"By positioning your body as close as possible to a subject... the rest of the frame kind of just naturally falls into place."

4. *Watermelon by the Sea – Napoli*

Two hours at this **seaside scene in Napoli**, just chatting, soaking in life. Eventually, the moment arrived: a group of men opening up a watermelon they had just cooled in the sea.

I positioned myself in relationship to one thing:
The swimmer in the background.

That swimmer became my **anchor point**.

- Foreground: Man on the right (1/3 of frame).
- Midground: Man on the left (another 1/3).
- Center: Juicy **visual feast** of watermelon and gestures.

"Without that swimmer, the frame would fall flat."

Because I was patient, because I spent time at the scene, the composition came alive:

- Spiraling gesture.
 - Popping color.
 - Storytelling in one shot.
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5. Funeral Mourning – Zambia

This scene is from a **funeral in Zambia** where I was serving as a **Peace Corps volunteer**.

I was permitted to photograph because I had become part of the community.

As the **grave was being dug**, I noticed a man mourning in the foreground.

So I dropped low.

Just like in Baltimore, I made a **gesture-focused frame**.

Outstretched arms, emotional weight, and relationships between:

- Foreground grief.
- Middle-ground gestures.
- Background crowd.

"Photography is a physical game. You're not just looking... you're responding."

I noticed little things:

- A stick on the left.
- A pole on the right.
- They formed a visual rhythm.

All of it came from **intuition** and **being present**.

6. Bird in Flight – Mumbai, India

Finally, in Mumbai at **Bandra Fort**, I was once again **setting my stage**.

"Just like in Baltimore, I looked for a beautiful background."

This time I focused on the **choke point**—a **window frame** where I knew something interesting might happen.

I noticed birds were flying across the scene at regular intervals.

So I waited.

Tourists walked by in the foreground.

I observed **patterns in nature** and in **people**.

And then... *click*—a **bird in flight** through the frame.

It may seem lucky. But really:

- It was *observation*.
- It was *patience*.
- It was *positioning*.

 **Final Thoughts**

So hopefully this gave you:

- A few **simple ideas** about how I work the scene.
- A better understanding of **how I make photographs**.
- A glimpse into **how I see the world**.

"To make impactful street photos, be physically close, emotionally present, and patient enough to let life unfold."

Thanks for watching today's **rapid-fire breakdown** across five photographs from around the world.

If you learned something—or were just entertained—I appreciate you.

See you in the next video. Peace.