

Street Photography Without People

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

Today we're diving deep into a topic that's often overlooked: *street photography without people*.

Return to the Source

I want to go back to the source. I want to take you on a journey through the photographs of **Eugène Atget**, the godfather of street photography. He worked in Paris in the late 19th century, documenting a wide array of subjects.

"The ultimate flaneur in Paris, documenting his town."

The book *The World of Atget*, edited by Bernice Abbot, breaks his work down into categories:

Parks, painting, people, prints, rag pickers, reflections, roads, ruins, sculptures, signs, steps, stores, street scenes, toys, trees, urns.

This multifaceted approach to urban life is, to me, the ethos of street photography.

It's Not Just About People

We often focus on people in street photography, but Atget reminds us that *the environment itself* tells a story.

"God is in the details."

I slow down. I look around. I use my **Ricoh GR** with high-contrast black and white JPEGs cranked to the max.

I photograph:

- Door knockers
- Empty streets
- Signs
- Mannequins
- Storefronts
- Interiors
- Sculptures
- Railings
- Roads

All the elements that *make up city life*.

Light is My Subject

I'm not out there hunting moments. I'm watching the light.

"Treat light as the ultimate subject, and the street opens up without needing people."

Light on surfaces, light etching detail. That's what I follow. And when you follow light, everything becomes photographable.

Macro Mode Magic

The **macro mode** on the Ricoh? Phenomenal.

- Trash becomes sculpture.
- Details become divine.
- The mundane becomes art.

"Make something ordinary, extraordinary."

What I Photograph

Inspired by Atget's categories, here's what I shoot:

Parks

Nature in Philly. Trees. Green spaces. Serenity in the chaos.

Paintings & Prints

Graffiti, chalk drawings, old posters. Walls speak.

Trash

Masks, cups, fire hydrants. The Mummers Parade aftermath.

Reflections

Puddles. Rivers. Portals into new worlds.

Roads

Open roads. Snow-covered streets. Skid marks that tell a story.

Ruins

Decay. Erosion. Even the wear and tear of home.

Sculptures

From Florence to Kelly Drive. Statues speak of history.

Signs

Discarded, stacked, weathered. *"Photo enforced."*

Steps

Union League staircases, Macy's interior, Schuylkill River Trail steps.

Stores

Chinatown storefronts, interiors, lights and signs.

Toys

Found objects: chess pieces, stuffed animals, kendamas.

Trees

From bark textures to distant silhouettes. Trees are sacred.

Urns

Urban decor. Sidewalk elegance.

Automobiles

Covered cars, reflections in puddles, garage shadows.

Water

Coastal edges, icy rivers, waterfalls. Fluid movement.

Windows

Old City views, Parisian echoes in Philly architecture.

Animals

Pigeons, stray dogs, lifeless creatures. All with stories.

Boats

Docked vessels, summer river rides, Ocean City nostalgia.

Bridges

Boardwalks, Manayunk Towpath, Ben Franklin Bridge.

Interiors

Cafes, basements, shops. Coffee with Amish families.

Mansions & Churches

Strawberry Mansion. Old City estates. Parisian churches. Rome's cathedrals.

Details

Doorways, doorknockers, arches. From Philly to Rome.

Dwellings & Homes

Train window scenes. Manayunk rooftops. Lancaster farms.

Botanicals

Foliage, flowers, leaves. Macro glory.

Fountains

City Hall, Art Museum, summer sprays.

Furniture

Sofas on curbs. Chairs in windows. Forgotten comfort.

Fences & Gates

Ironwork. Residential barriers. Texture.

Mannequins

Busts. Storefronts. Bus stops. Surreal presence.

Food Markets

Reading Terminal Market. Chinatown. Framed without faces.

Lamps & Fixtures

Subway bulbs. Wanamaker chandeliers. The glow of the city.

Evidence of Humanity

Newspapers. Gloves. Shoes. Trash.

All of it implies a presence without needing the person.

"You can photograph the human presence without photographing the human."

Shoot Without Hesitation

Wake up. Snap the clouds. See shapes. Compose.

"Can you articulate the world around you and make an interesting photo?"

I believe that's the real challenge. The *real* goal of a street photographer.

- Drop low
- Look up
- Notice patterns
- Frame details

Create *something out of nothing*.

Final Thoughts

I considered releasing this video without commentary. Just a slideshow of my images. But I wanted to share *why* I shoot the way I do.

Pick up *The World of Atget*. Use it as a springboard. Then go out there and make your own catalog. Your own record. Your own archive.

"Street photography is a philosophy. A way of seeing life."

So go out there and shoot.

**God is in the details.
Shoot without hesitation.
Peace.**