

Street Photography Breakdown: Part 6

What's poppin, people? It's Dante. Today we're doing another street photography breakdown — *part six*. We're diving into the **behind the scenes** of my photographs, breaking down compositions, and telling the stories behind the frames.

Hopefully, by the end of this, you'll have a better understanding of how I approach the streets and how you can apply some of this philosophy to your own practice.

Example #1: Mexico City Shopkeeper

When you're traveling, **don't be afraid to take the roads less traveled.**

A lot of times in a place like Mexico City, people only shoot the hot spots — historic centers, bustling markets. *But me?* I like to look toward the mountains, toward the unknown.

I remember asking myself:

“What's at the top of that mountain?”

So I got in a taxi, dropped a pin at a random location, and just went.

We took a gondola ride — spontaneous — up into a neighborhood called **Idios Verdes**. It wasn't bustling, it was *local*, filled with everyday life on the mountainside.

That's where I saw him — a shopkeeper, framed perfectly in his doorway.

But what really made me press the shutter was the **relationship** between him and the **mural**. The mural echoes the shape of the doorframe. The hand gestures mirror each other. The face of the advert and the face of the shopkeeper. The working man in the mural vs. the waiting man in the shop.

"Sometimes a simple gesture can go a long way."

Example #2: Mumbai Trash Collectors

In chaotic markets, it's hard to bring order to your frames. There's *so much* going on. But when I saw the trash collectors climbing up and down a pile of garbage, I sensed **possibility** — gestures, movement, atmosphere.

I used the man in the foreground as my **anchor point**.

On the right, a single **hand gesture** crops the man's face, adding mystery. The grit, the plastic, the textures — you can practically **smell the street**.

But it all comes down to **visual problem-solving**.

"I need to physically position my body at a lower vantage point to separate that man in the middle of the frame from the background."

That clear separation — his head isolated against the blue sky — that's the compositional decision that brought order to the chaos.

Example #3: Sunrise in Zambia

I lived in a rural village called **Panta** as a Peace Corps volunteer, working with fish farmers. COVID cut it short, but during my time, *this* was my home — the yellow, blue, and green house in the background.

That's my host brother, **Bwalia Junior**, catching the sunrise. We'd do pull-ups, push-ups, just hang out. And in this moment, he was just playing with some sticks.

What drew me in was the **shadow play**. Light and shadow — *that stuff goes a long way*.

"When you spot something simple and elegant, it's worth trying to uplift it in a photograph."

The stick echoes the shape of the pole. The shadows fall perfectly. And the way I dropped low to cleanly separate the gesture from the background — it's geometry, line, rhythm.

Photography is a **visual puzzle**, and the photographer must be *physical* to solve it.

Example #4: Zambian Church

I attended **Seventh-Day Adventist Church** every Saturday with my host family. This was *my* church.

On my first visit, I saw people waiting outside — too hot inside. Lots of kids were playing. What caught my eye were the **shapes**, the **geometry**, the elegant **stage** I could build a photo on.

I stood in front of the **choke point** — the doorway — and just watched.

"Set your stage, then plug in the puzzle pieces."

The kids in the foreground fell naturally into place. That interaction between the two children in the center, the girl leaving the frame, and the three people in the background — left, center, right — it all just *clicked*.

I'm just as much interested in *humanity* as I am in **aesthetic composition** — light, color, shape, form.

"Combining candid, raw moments with a formal composition that is striking and elegant can elevate your photography to the next level."



Example #5: Baltimore Stoop Kids

I lived in **Baltimore** during university. I'd walk the streets with my **Ricoh GR2** in my pocket.

On a summer day, I stumbled across this scene — kids at play on their stoop. The superhero caught my eye — cape, mask, everything.

That gesture — his brother reaching for the mask — it became this heroic act.

"We should champion humanity and uplift the subjects within our frames to a new height."

On the left: three girls. Maybe triplets. Each with a different gesture. One eating an apple. One smiling. One smirking. Playful energy.

The mask, the tension, the interaction — that's what made me press the shutter. And then I noticed:

- Three girls on the left.
- The superhero moment on the right.

So I framed it **straight down the middle** — *two stories in one frame*.

These decisions are intuitive. Spontaneous. They come from recognizing **gesture, pattern, form**, and then positioning yourself *in the right place*.

Final Thoughts

These are the ways I see the world. This is how I make my photographs.

"Think of the world like a visual puzzle. But to solve it, the photographer must be physical."

Hopefully this inspired you to go out and make your own frames.

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Thanks for watching and reading.

Peace.