

A World in Flux

In a world that is rapidly changing—with technological advancements, the advent of the digital compact camera, and contemplating the future of photography—I've been developing my own personal philosophy around why I photograph and how I photograph.

The purpose of this essay is to flush out some ideas candidly. Nothing is perfect. But I believe *this* is the ethos of my philosophy.

At the end of the day, our imperfection—and our impermanence—as flesh-bound human beings, who cut, who bleed, who are imperfect in our design and have a timeline, is ultimately what makes us so divine.

I find that recognizing change, flux, and the movement of each fleeting moment is what makes photography such a powerful medium. Because as I'm out in the open world, moving my body, photographing—the past and the future are not of my concern.

When I'm photographing, I exist outside the passage of time.

At the end of the day, we all eventually die.

However, at least you can make a photograph.

My Critique of Perfectionism

I've spent about seven years traveling the world, working on my photography, and I can tell you that I've essentially during that time simply strove to be the best photographer I can possibly be.

I was seeking perfection.

I wanted to become the best there could possibly be. And so, with that in mind, I traveled to places all across the world, with my camera in hand, documenting life as it is. Seeking to achieve the most *perfect* photographs—combining the elements of a strong moment, an interesting subject, story, color, light, and composition. All synthesizing both the formal and emotional elements that make a compelling photograph.

I'd say I was a hunter for most of my journey.

Always onto the next photograph.

Always onto the next location.

Always in search of that next best shot.

But eventually, the process became very repetitive—sterile, even. I found that the photographs I was making were no longer pleasing to my eyes or my soul.

By striving for perfection, I was limiting myself within the infinite possibilities of what photography can possibly be.

Now, by letting go of perfection, I'm no longer seeking to photograph what life *is*—but what life *could be*, through my own imperfect lens. By recognizing my imperfections, and the imperfect and impermanent nature of life, I'm able to be more forgiving with my photography—and play.

Photography as Play

I remember being a little kid, growing up with the forest in my backyard—exploring the unknown by myself, blazing trails, sharpening spears, attempting to hunt deer, building teepees and forts, building bridges with stones, climbing trees, swinging with vines—in the spirit of play.

I believe this is where we should be with our photography—voluntarily playing the game.

Photography shouldn't be a chore, a burden, something you feel like you *have* to do. Photography should be effortless—like a child waking up in the morning, simply eager to catch the sunrise and to go to the playground another day.

And so, my philosophy around photography has everything to do with embracing this childlike spirit of play. What this means is: **I put fun at the forefront of my practice.**

I'm no longer on the hunt for my next best photo.
I simply affirm: **my next photo is my best photo.**

This mindset makes me more forgiving, allows me to embrace imperfection more openly, and encourages me to play more—tinkering, experimenting, breaking things, and rebuilding again.

Think of a child building a castle with blocks—just to see how it looks when he knocks it over.

I think this is how we should approach our photography each day. Embracing the unknown—at first into the chaos with danger—but through curiosity, we find new discoveries.

The Philosophy of Flux

The philosophy of flux is very simple:

The photographer must first return to their inner child.

The way I do this is by shifting my mindset—by waking up each morning like it's a miniature birth and treating each night like it's a miniature death. This way, when I wake up in the morning, I'm simply eager to watch the sun peer above the horizon, eager to set my body in motion, without preconceived notions of what I will find.

I go out into the open world, curious about life and all of its complexities.

When I look at the trees and the way the leaves wiggle, and feel the oxygen go through my body and touch my lungs—giving me fresh air—I feel inspired again.

This is where I find my inspiration now: **in nature.**

If you look at the word *inspiration*, it means *to breathe into*—where God breathes the spirit into you.

And so, when you return to nature—to God’s most pure creations—you quite literally become inspired by allowing the fresh air to enter your lungs.

Why do I find my inspiration in nature? It’s simple:

Nature is the most pure creation. The most pure form of art. A divine creation—where I find beauty and perfection *in the imperfections*. Watching the way the leaves and the colors of the trees and all the plants around me change throughout the seasons—grow, die, and bloom again.

Nature is always in flux.

And we too, on the biological level, are always evolving and changing.

Photography Has Nothing to Do With Photography

One of the myths about photography is that the photographer is a magician that knows a bunch of tricks—how to make a composition and make a certain photograph.

But ultimately, **photography has nothing to do with the medium itself.**

Photography has everything to do with how you engage with humanity—out there, in the open world, on the front lines of life.

If you go out there like a child—eager, curious, full of zest and love for life—you will naturally approach strangers, ask questions, photograph moments, explore unknown places.

The photographer is responsible for engaging with the world through their curiosity and openness to new experiences.

Through this openness, there's an endless possibility of photographs you can make. You can manifest any photograph you dream of—if you have the will, the courage, and the curiosity.

The intersection between courage and curiosity is where great photography is born.

Great photography isn't born from understanding history, technique, or all the superfluous things most photographers believe.

The truth is: **courage**—and virtues like **curiosity**—are what I hone in on to improve my photography.

I Photograph My Soul

When you look at the word *courage*, from *cor*, meaning **heart**, I believe this is what is reflected in the photographs we make.

A photograph is a reflection of our courage—our heart.

Of course, sharp visual acuity helps.

You can observe light, birds in flight, human behavior, gestures, timing.

But this is the easy part.

Photographing from your *gut*, your *heart*, your *soul*—is something else entirely.

Going forward, I'm no longer caught up in my brain when I photograph.

I tap into my second brain: **my instinct, my intuition.**

Let's evoke our soul in the photographs we make.

Let's no longer photograph the *external* world—but turn *inward*.

I find that through turning inward—through my personal philosophy and perspective—I’m able to evoke a much more **authentic image**.

What is Soul?

Before we discuss how to photograph the soul, it’s important to understand what this means and why I’m thinking about it.

My idea about the soul is that it is ultimately a reflection of your physical body. This means: whatever you ingest through your eyes, your ears, your mouth—whatever you consume—determines the quality of your soul.

I don’t think the soul is some mystical thing.
It’s quite literally your physical body.

Example:

- **Person A:** Eats one box of Oreos a day, consumes Reddit, TikTok, and the news.
- **Person B:** Doesn’t watch media, spends time in nature, creates art, and eats steak and eggs.

What will the quality of soul be for Person A?

Obviously—broken, unhealthy, anxious, maybe even depressed.

So the goal is for us to be **vessels**.

To treat ourselves *like we are a soul*.

To live *as if there is **not** an afterlife*—and even if there isn’t, to treat this life as **paradise**.

If you were in Paradise, how would you cultivate it in your everyday life?

It becomes obvious: **physical health is the priority** in order to have a healthy soul.

- With a healthy body, we have a healthy mind.

- With a healthy mind, we have a healthy soul.
- And that soul is on display in the photographs we make.

We must cultivate **vitality** at the forefront of our practice.

This means fasting, eating animal-based foods like meat, getting deep, restorative sleep—so we can wake up and walk endlessly.

I consider myself a **vessel**.

I treat my body—and my photographs—like they don't belong to me.

With the assumption that we won't live forever, let's seek to allow our **soul to live on through the photographs we make**.

Become a Vessel for the Medium

Most photographers are seeking to have a *signature voice*, a *style*, so that someone might say:

“Wow, that must be a photograph by so-and-so.”

We do **not** seek this. That's base-level. Boring at best.

The future photographer goes **beyond style**.

We become **a vessel for the medium**, seeking to photograph our **souls**.

To do this, the first step is: **fasting**.

We do not consume food when photographing.

We don't do it to be virtuous. We do it because it improves our brain-gut connection. It sharpens our instinct. Our inner curiosity guides us.

When your stomach is full, your instinct is dull.

When you're digesting while making photos, you suffer decision fatigue.
Your intuition becomes cloudy.

If our goal is to photograph the soul, we must photograph through the **gut**.
So our gut must be **empty**.

We should become **empty vessels**.

And then, through this emptiness, we fill our cup with **visual nourishment**.
As we walk, observe, and photograph life, the images we make become *pure*.
Not influenced by substances. Not altered. Not compromised.

You know the types—those photographers out at night with a flash after hitting the bars.
That's not the way.

*This approach isn't for the weak.
It's for the strong.*

Snapshot Your Way Through Life

Now that your vessel is empty and you're tapped into your gut, your instinct, your intuition—the result of the composition will be a reflection of your **pure and most authentic self**.

The approach is simple: **snapshot** your way through life.

Live your everyday life—and bring your camera along for the ride.
You're not hunting. You're not searching. You're not trying to “get the shot.”

You simply move through the world at your own pace and rhythm, and **let life flow toward you**.

As life flows, you recognize things—and you make a note by pressing the shutter.

You are no longer burdened by photography.
Your camera fits in your front pocket. You photograph through your whole day in a **flow state**.

The Technical Process

The solution is streamlined and simple.

- **Camera:** Ricoh GR digital.
- **File type:** Small JPEG.
- **Style:** High-contrast black and white, cranked to the max.

You don't process. You don't alter.
Just shoot, import into your iPad Pro, and upload directly to your **self-hosted website**.

You publish your photos with the **date** and **location**, in **chronological order**, with no sequencing.

Everything stays in flux—a **stream of consciousness**.

One interesting thing I've realized:

What you see isn't what you get. What you get is what you didn't see.

With the high-contrast black-and-white screen, it's like holding up an **x-ray** to the world—peeling beyond the veil.

The shadows are crushed. The light is exposed. You see deeper into reality.

Through this camera setup, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

You uplift the mundane by observing light itself.

Light Is Our Subject

When we photograph this way, we return to the **essence** of the medium—light.

The world becomes our **canvas**. Light is our **subject**.

The way light shifts through the day, through the seasons, through weather and atmosphere—it gives us infinite novelty.

If we follow the light, we discover the infinite potential of photography.

The way light casts on surfaces, people, places, things—it will always be different.

You cannot make the same photograph twice.

Embrace Flux

Embracing flux means entering the stream of **becoming**.

Like water, ever-flowing—through a fountain, a stream, a waterfall—we are constantly undergoing change.

- Through fasting, our body replenishes itself through autophagy.
- Through weightlifting, we tear muscle fibers and allow them to grow.
- Through photography, we capture our **endless transformation**.

There's no endgame. No final destination.

We photograph for the **love of the game**.

***What if you were never recognized for your work?
Would you still photograph?***

If the answer is yes, then you understand.

The Autotelic Approach

This approach is **autotelic**—done for its own sake.

We simply enjoy photographing. That's it.

It brings us joy. It's fun.

We're curious about the world, and we explore that curiosity through:

- Walking
- Traveling
- Photographing

Each photograph is a **question**.

Each shutter click chips away at life.

We don't seek external validation.

We ask: *"What will reality manifest to be in a photograph today?"*

We come home, review the photos, and we smile—because we discovered something new.

***If no one ever saw your photos, would you still make them?
If yes, then this process is for you.***

A Call to Action

If you want to learn more about my approach, I made an hour and 20 minute video: **The Ultimate Guide to the Ricoh GR** — complete with a downloadable PDF for your iPhone.

There are resources there to dig into this philosophy and way of life.

After a decade of photography, I can finally say:

I'm having more fun, more joy, more meaning in my process than ever before.

I feel **vital, curious, alive**.

That's why I'm so eager to share this. Because if it empowers even one other person to try—then it's worth it.

If you let go of outcomes—whether you make a book, a zine, a gallery show—and simply **snapshot your way through life**, your love for life will grow.

Photography becomes a form of **life affirmation**.

Each shutter click is a **yes** to life.

The goal is to never miss another sunrise again.

To wake up at dawn with childlike joy.

To smile with exuberance for life itself.

Through the photographs we make, we reflect our soul—our joy, our love, our curiosity.

We're no longer hunting for the next best photo.

We know: **our next photo is our best photo**.

Why?

Because everything is in flux.

Everything is changing.

No two days and no two photographs will ever be the same.

We embrace infinite potential.

We reject the base-level goals of trends and validation.

We return to day one, forever **an amateur**—every day until the day we die.

We allow our love for life, our love for humanity, our **courage** and **curiosity** to guide us.

We are not attached to outcome.

We don't need praise.

We don't need to be understood.

We are here to evolve.

To transform.

To walk.

To see.

To photograph our way through the day—
in the **spirit of flux**.