

Thank God for Photography

The reason why I am so abundantly grateful and joyous about photography—still after a decade of shooting—is that it provides endless meaning in my everyday life. One of the most interesting ways in which I’ve been framing my practice is just treating it like a visual diary of my day. What this means is, I simply photograph for myself and myself only. I think through making pictures this way, you can reflect your most authentic voice as a photographer.

Delete Your Instagram

Checking your Instagram in bed when you wake up in the morning is the equivalent of taking a shit in your hands and smearing it all over your face, your eyes, putting it in your mouth, and just having this disgusting sludge that you consume every morning. Would you wanna wake up with poopy in your eyes every day? No. So just delete your Instagram account.

Why? It’s so distracting. There’s infinite ads and degenerate content, mediocre photography, and pretty much just an endless place for you to scroll and let your brain rot away. If you want clarity and purpose and give your photography a place to live and breathe, just start a wordpress.org website and host your first name and last name on bluehost.com. It’s very simple—just use the Astra theme and create your own little space to put your work each day.

Even if you don’t wanna publish work, that’s cool too. Just buy a little sketchbook and the Canon Selphy CP1500, print out small thumbnails, cut them out, and paste them with double-sided tape in the sketchbook. You don’t need a book deal. You don’t need a gallery show. You don’t need anyone looking at your photographs, frankly. Just put them in a sketchbook and call it a day. You can get back to the photos at a later date. The goal is to **stay in the flow state**.

How to Enter the Street Photography Flow State

The more I think about flow, the more I realize how much it derives from your physical body. For instance, the vagus nerve connects from your gut to your heart and your brain and is responsible for like 80% of the information that is sent up to your brain. All of your emotional winds and feelings and thoughts are all starting within your physical body, not your mind.

And so when you recognize this very fundamental fact, you recognize the importance of gut health, and the connection between your gut health and intuition is most critical.

And so what is the most fundamental trait that a photographer must possess—especially a street photographer who is making candid photographs of strangers, indecisive moments?

Intuition.

Intuition is King

I think we should stop thinking so much, living in our brains too much. Yes, I have a brain that's connected to my eyes that allow me to see and perceive the world with sharp visual acuity, but that's not the thing that's telling me to press the shutter.

What's telling me to press the shutter is that **gut instinct** that I have that is very primal within my physical body. There's a dopamine rush. There's a hormone that fires. There's testosterone in the air, and that's what's channeling my inner energy to then click the shutter.

It's not like some visual game of me looking at the world like I need to make something so beautiful and perfect—it's a **gut feeling**. It's a very primal thing that derives from my body that makes me press the shutter.

Wanna replace the dopamine hit you get from using Instagram? Very simple:

Click your fucking shutter.

Join the Cult of Flux Photography

So I've been thinking about my process and came to the conclusion that I'm embracing **flux**, change—and this to me is at the forefront of my philosophy and practice.

You cannot make the same photograph twice.

The way the light casts upon surfaces, people, places, and things will always be different and will never be the same.

You cannot make the same photograph twice.

Is this not the most abundantly liberating and inspiring thought to have as a photographer? For ultimately, the name of the game is in the **mundane**.

And the ultimate question that you should ask yourself as a photographer is:

Can you walk the same mundane lane every single day, but still find something worth uplifting in a photograph?

If you find embracing the mundane to be challenging and you can't find anything interesting to photograph—well, then maybe you're just a boring human being.

But the audacious, courageous, and curious photographer is ultimately going to be able to go out into the world and articulate the unknown, put order to chaos, no matter what comes their way.

We enter a flow state, a stream of becoming, **through making images**.

What's the Mindset?

Life affirmation.

Our next photographs are our best photographs. I simply know that the next click of the shutter will be my next best shot. I'm not throwing on the photos I made yesterday or tomorrow or even 10 years ago. Whatever. I'm just in the moment, making pictures in a stream of becoming, and moving onto the next one—letting the chips fall as they may.

I'm not thinking like I'm some serious documentary photographer with my vest on, wiping down my lens, putting my camera on my neck and my photography hat on, going out into the world to tell visual stories and change the world and make a gallery show that depicts what it's like to live in the city as a youth or some mediocre topic that contemporary art loves.

I'm simply following my joy.

I'm following my courage, my spiritedness, my **Thumos**, and letting that guide my photography.

Put on the Armor of God

When David slayed Goliath, he was a simple and small farmer boy. But by armoring himself with **courage**, with **God**, he overcame the beast and became king of Israel.

We should be more like David—having an ultimate and undeniable conviction, and knowing of God's protection over your physical body, over your spirit—so that when you go out into the chaos and the open world, you come out unscathed on a feather bed.

When you recognize the fear that's within you—that is natural and normal to have—but overcome it through courage and the conviction you have in God, nothing can break your spirit or your love for life. When you have no more fear of death itself, **anything is possible.**

But this only comes through tapping into the source: God.
Something greater than yourself.

Personally, I just consider myself a **disciple of Christ**. I don't even like the term "Christian." I don't know why—I just like the idea that I'm a disciple of Christ. I think that ultimately the human being must strive for the divine.

I think Christ is the truth.
And I think that by following this inner light within you, you feel so much more **abundantly powerful.**

Every single day, I start with gratitude and prayer and just thank God for the day. When I go into the chaos, I have **Saint Michael the Archangel** on my shoulder. I'm a warrior, and I feel like he's always guiding me and watching me and protecting me.

Ever read *The Iliad*? I found the most fascinating thing about that book is the way in which they summoned the gods to protect them in battle or called for Athena to guide them in war.

I think this is what's missing in modern life—a connection to something **greater** than yourself. And so, my way of connecting to something greater than myself is through **Christ**—through not only his teachings and moral guidance, but the **symbol of sacrifice**—of him dying on the cross for the forgiveness of all of humanity.

The ultimate victim.
The perfect sacrifice.
God manifested in the flesh, shedding his blood for all people.

The most radical person who's ever lived on earth.
More radical than the myth of Achilles.
More radical than the myth of Hercules.

More radical than the myth of any ancient Greek or Roman god or goddess.

Why?

Because he was a real-life human being who walked this earth—God, manifested in flesh.

Created in the Image of God

And so if you tap into the source, you recognize the divine signature of **love** within you.

When you're connected to Christ, not only do you have an insatiable love for life itself, but you have love for all people—whether they're good or bad, enemies or friends. You have love for nature and animals, plants and trees, and all of the things of this world.

You have **no hatred** in your heart, because you're so full of love and gratitude.

So when you recognize that all humans are divine manifestations of God, you can't help but see God within all of humanity. You can't help but see the light within another person.

My thought is that maybe some people have a little flicker in their candle, and they just need to be **ignited**.

Some people are in limbo—still atheist or in denial. And maybe these people are the ones that are always going to be stuck in the material world, in the rat race, in the pursuit of status and money and all the boring things that provide no sustenance in life.

But when you look at the birds, and the way that they fly from canopy to canopy, or the way the worms crawl through the dirt that then nourish the birds, or the way the spiders weave their webs—they're all simply **being**.

They're not striving to become anything.

They are **provided for**, because God provides for all of His creations.

But we make up this illusion in our head that we have to become something or try to do something to be worthwhile or valuable in society.

But when you no longer give two shits about what society thinks about you, and you're connected to God, you know that **that's the only person watching that genuinely matters**.

Once you no longer need validation from anybody of this world—because let's be real, if you're following Christ at the forefront, you're really not *of* this world, you're just kind of *in* it—well, then you can go out there and **play**, dance, sing, live your life like a living work of art.

Because ultimately, **Providence is guiding you**, and **God is always watching**, and **Saint Michael the Archangel is slaying all the beasts** over your shoulder as you go through the chaos.

Be Like a Child

I think that **nature** and **children** are the most pure forms of inspiration that you should find as an artist.

When you look at nature, and the different complexities of patterns in the trees and the leaves and all the natural things, and you surround yourself on a nice hike in the woods, you're allowing life to **breathe into you**.

When you look at the word **inspiration**, it basically just means *to breathe into*. And there's this spiritedness that breathes into you when you were created through God's manifestation and will.

And so when you have that inner spirit within you guiding you—that fire within—you’re fueled with **courage** and **curiosity**.

And when you look at a kid—or even just remember my time as a kid—exploring in the woods, climbing trees that were insanely tall and I could probably die if I fell, building teepees, trying to hunt deer with spears, building bridges with stones, just exploring the unknown, all on my own—I was fearless and courageous and basically in the **Garden of Eden**.

But then once we ate the apple and we got all in our heads and started thinking so much, we lost our innocence. We were no longer in the childlike state.

But through **letting go of the mind**, and **listening to your gut and your heart**, I find that you can actually find the **Kingdom of God here on earth**.

The kingdom is a metaphor.

It’s a philosophy.

A way of life.

It’s the way of the **child**—unbothered by societal norms, embracing their most authentic self, not thinking, but **just doing**.

Think of a child and the way they play—they’re simply eager to wake up and go play tag with their friends or go ride bikes.

I remember growing up, I used to love just hopping on my bike, biking over to my friend’s house that was my neighbor, knocking on his door, and we’d just go from there—door to door, getting all our friends together, going for a bike ride, going to the woods, etc.

We were **voluntarily playing**.

But as you get older, you start to **involuntarily play**.

Nothing feels like playing anymore. Why?

Because the **school system has indoctrinated the entire mass of our population** to succumb to mental and physical slavery. We listen to the bell ring. We move from class to class. We're playing in a way that is not necessarily in our control or what we're designed to be doing as young men.

Men aren't supposed to be sitting on their balls for eight hours a day.

And I think that ultimately, a lot of modern society is trying to **suck all the energy from your balls.**

Harness the Power of the Sun

Our body is the vehicle, and we are driven by **courage.**

Charge your soul through the power of the sun.

There's a reason why Jesus said that **we are the light of the world**, and that **we are like lanterns**, that **the eye is the light of the body.**

The more time you spend out in direct sunlight—with the light literally emanating into your eyes by waking up in the morning and catching the sunrise, and getting the sun in your eyes at sunset—you're fueling your physical body with **vitality.**

You're setting your **circadian rhythm**, which will then allow you to get **deep sleep**, and the more deep sleep you get, the more energy you're gonna wake up with.

And so the body is like a **battery**, and we must plug ourselves into the source that will charge our souls—which is the **sun itself.**

I'm not saying we should worship the sun like some sun gods, but if you think about it, there's a reason why the ancient Greeks and Romans worshiped Helios or Apollo.

It's a **very practical** and **physical** feeling that you get through having the vitamin D and the UV rays emitting through your eyes, and charging your body through touching your skin and producing melanin.

People always ask me how I get so tan, and it's very simple:
I just go for walks with my shirt off in direct sunlight, with no sunscreen.

The more tan my skin becomes, the more **power** I feel I have—the more **energy**, **vitality**, **Thumos**, and **spiritedness** that I possess.

So just go out, every single day, for at least a half an hour, and get direct sun exposure.

I actually think that sunlight **boosts my testosterone and energy** more than anything.

It's a very primal feeling that you get from just basking in the glory of the sun.

Follow the light. Chase the light. Charge your body in the sun.

Shoes and Sunglasses Are for Domesticated Zoo Animals

So my theory is that we are domesticated like zoo animals.

I'm walking on the trail and I'm writing this essay out loud, watching as people are rattling their bones around going for runs in the morning—with sunglasses on. They're all very pale.

And I think it's because of the sunglasses.

When you're wearing sunglasses and spending all your time locked away inside of an office, you're not giving your body the natural ability to **integrate sunlight** into your life.

It's really a strange behavior that we've adopted—spending eight hours inside, sitting down in cars and offices, wearing sunglasses when we're outside—it's all just very unnatural.

Domestication.

Almost like **self-imposed slavery**.

So the primal way is simple:

Just remove your shoes. Buy the Vibram FiveFingers EL-X Knit version. Walk with your shirt off. Embrace direct sunlight.

Don't run. Don't rattle your bones. Just **simply be**.

You don't have to do anything. Go play. Go run up a hill if you wanna rattle around, or go for a hike in the woods. You don't have to do anything forcefully like a hamster on a wheel, living this routine existence of mental and physical slavery.

Philadelphia is Street Photography Paradise

Philadelphia is the perfect city because you can be surrounded by the woods, in nature, in parks, chilling by the river, finding your Zen, your peace, your calm...

But you can also go straight into Center City, surround yourself in a bustling environment with chaos and people rushing around.

It's the **perfect city** for a street photographer because it's just big enough and just small enough and just populated enough for you to go out there and get the shots you need—and cover the entire city every single day.

I can literally walk the entire city every day and find candid moments every single time. There's always something going on, always enough chaos and energy, and always a way for me to escape and find clarity in nature.

This, to me, is what makes Philly so perfect—how walkable it is, and how natural it is for you to walk from river to river, from neighborhood to neighborhood.

You don't need to own a car. You can get around as a pedestrian easily.

I have **zero desire to travel anymore** because I've realized that paradise is where you are now. Paradise is right here in my hometown.

I feel like I'm in Athens and I never wanna leave.

Or it almost feels like ancient Rome at the peak of its civilization—where there's pretty much nowhere you wanna be but Rome, right?

Philly is the new Rome.

And I am very grateful to call it my home.

Photography is the Ultimate Excuse

And so I find that ultimately, **photography is the ultimate excuse** for me to go out into the world and do whatever the fuck I want.

I can wake up, grab my camera, and move forward with **purpose and meaning** every single day.

I can walk endlessly—even aimlessly—and find meaning in it. I can find infinite ways for me to engage with humanity, chatting with people, traveling to new cities or places—even just within my hometown I can go from river to river, find myself on the outskirts of the city, in places that are more gritty, and experience all of life's complexities because of photography.

Without photography, sure—life is still beautiful.

But photography is what makes life **worth living**.

When you're full of **vitality** and **curiosity**, and you have the spirit within you that needs to unleash itself—what better vehicle to drive you out there into the world than a camera?

The camera is like a **sword**, and I wield it to strike through the chaos.

The camera is like a **passport** that unlocks all the experiences and places that I can have and go to.

With the camera, **anything feels possible**.

There are no more limits. There's just an **endless horizon**, an **endless canvas**