

The Visual Diary Approach to Street Photography

My new way forward with street photography is extremely simple and has been providing so much more joy in my everyday life. I simply live my life and bring my camera for the ride. I don't go out seeking photos — I just let them come to me.

Flow State

The goal is to remain in a perpetual flow state throughout your day, week, month, year, and lifetime. By simplifying my process from the ground up, shooting with a small compact camera like the Ricoh GR1, contrast black-and-white small JPEG files cranked to the max, literally gives me the simplest workflow you can possibly adopt as a photographer. Using automatic settings, a simple camera, and a processing solution that requires zero post work is so seamless to the point where I genuinely never think — I just shoot. And from this state of being, I enter a flow state where the images I create become much more authentic — a true representation of my soul.

Soul Photography

We already know how to make great pictures, or at least I do. I know street photography is difficult for most to master, but what about people like me who have already achieved this? Once you achieve mastery, you have to let go. You have to break everything you know because otherwise it just gets boring and stale. There is really no point in me trying to make pictures like I've always done in the past, where I can pretty much drop myself in any location and come home with a successful street photograph. It just gets boring after a while, frankly.

How I Mastered Street Photography

I mastered street photography very early on because, in my early days, I was photographing in one of the most challenging cities you can possibly photograph in the world. Photographing in the neighborhood Santa on Winchester in West Baltimore is probably the most difficult place you could photograph in the United States. Seriously, there's nobody in sight — just a bunch of boarded-up buildings and abandoned streets, maybe a few scenes here and there, drug dealers, and gangsters roaming around. It's pretty bad and not necessarily an easy place to shoot.

And so, because of this, I learned the hard way, photographing in a place that required deep commitment, overcoming fear, and challenging myself to get closer to humanity in my own unique way, allowing me to photograph pretty much anywhere in the world seamlessly. If anything, photographing in West Baltimore was way more difficult than photographing in the West Bank. And then from there, I could pretty much go anywhere and come home with strong photographs, because I've already practiced in the most difficult way possible.

In fact, now that I'm thinking about this visual diary approach, I remember one of my best photographs I've ever made in Napoli, of the Italians eating watermelon by the sea. I wasn't even on that trip to practice my photography — I was simply on vacation with my brother, reconnecting with our Italian roots, and just chilling on the rocks, swimming. I feel like, deep down, I've always approached photography this way, despite all of my travels. All the traveling and all the places I've gone to have come simply due to my inner curiosity and following that. And despite me making photographs of the external world, deep down, I always knew that they were reflections of my inner world because that is what I was exploring after all.

I've always known that as a photographer, I have this ultimate excuse to explore and to conquer new places, and so I would just keep pushing myself to go where the intersection between the unknown and curiosity leads me.

And so I think the moral of the story is, if you're looking to master street photography, you actually should throw yourself into the unknown — into the abyss, into a dangerous or challenging situation — so that you learn and adapt on the fly, because from there, you can pretty much conquer anywhere.

Self-Destruct

Self-destruction is my greatest satisfaction right now. Completely destroying everything I think I know about photography — my approach, my philosophy, etc. — provides so much more joy these days. Every single morning when I wake up, I just pretend like I've picked up a camera for the first time, and when I go out and photograph, I just shoot whatever I find that piques my inner child's curiosity. This puts me in a place where I feel like I can shoot endlessly with longevity, and from there, I just find so much more joy.

I think more people should start to destroy, because from that destruction comes creation. If you're like me and you're dissatisfied with the current state of street photography, maybe join me in my approach and create a new school, a new philosophy, a new approach that is liberating and free, simply embracing the snapshot and the visual diary.

The New School of Street Photography

The new school of street photography is very simple. We are anti-style. Street photography isn't a style. Your approach to the medium isn't a style. The way you process your pictures isn't a style.

When you strip yourself down to the bare bones — to a point-and-shoot camera with automatic mode and high contrast black-and-white baked into the file — you return to the essence of the medium itself: light.

And so we bring our cameras for the ride, simply living our everyday life. We detach from the outcome of the photographs we make entirely, and don't care if anybody sees them because we treat them as a visual diary. And from this place, we

photograph light itself, which I believe — through simply photographing light, treating this as our subject — will reflect the inner light of our soul in the photographs we make.

Yeah, it probably sounds ridiculous, crazy, or stupid. But honestly, in this current state of photography, where 99% is junk, perhaps it's time to create an entirely new philosophy.

Flux Photography

And so what is this philosophy? It's embracing change, evolution, and flux. The simple mantra is this: **your next photograph is your best photograph**. We treat the snapshot as life affirmation, simply saying yes to life itself. And through this process of photographing, we enter the stream of becoming.

By embracing light as our medium and subject, we recognize that we cannot make the same photograph twice. The way light casts upon surfaces, people, places, and things will always be different and will never be the same. And so, through photographing our way through our everyday life, while we are photographing the external world, we are creating a new world — by embracing change and photographing our souls in flux.