

What Is Street Photography?

Walking through Old City, Philadelphia—brick roads underfoot, Ricoh GR III on the wrist strap—I find myself reflecting on street photography. What is it? Why does it matter? And why do I keep returning to it?

Beyond Candid Snapshots

I was speaking with another photographer recently. He told me he prefers portraits and lifestyle images, working when people feel comfortable around the camera. That's valid. But for me, street photography has always meant more than candid snapshots or rushing into people's faces.

Street photography is often misunderstood as invasive or disruptive. In reality, it can be empathetic. Sometimes I chat with strangers. Sometimes I blend in quietly. Both paths can lead to strong, candid work. My best photos have come from being present—working a scene, engaging with people, and giving time for meaning to emerge.

Photographing Humanity

When photographing people, you're not just taking their picture. You're photographing another human soul. Life. Meaning. To approach this carelessly—to just “take”—misses the point.

Street photography is less about rigid rules of composition and more about how you engage with humanity. The way you interact with the world reflects back in your photographs.

Street Photography as Philosophy

I don't even think of street photography as a genre. To me, it's a philosophy. An ethos. I'm a flâneur, a wanderer, a tourist in my hometown.

Street photography is about curiosity and intuition. You step into the world without preconceived notions of what to find. You embrace the unknown, cultivate courage, and carry a love for life and humanity. If you don't love these things, perhaps street photography isn't for you.

Finding Beauty in the Mundane

Street photography isn't just people on sidewalks. It's architecture, infrastructure, markings on the ground, light on glass buildings, sounds of church bells, and fragments of urban life.

It's the parks, the lampposts, the signage, the posters. It's everything that makes up human existence in the city. The role of the street photographer is to uplift the ordinary, to find beauty in the mundane.

Anywhere, Everywhere

Despite the name, street photography isn't confined to streets or cities. You can apply its ethos in a rural village, on a mountain trail, or at the beach. It's about approaching the world with openness, courage, and curiosity.

Ultimately, street photography is about sharing your unique point of view.