

Curiosity, Embodied Reality, and the Future of Photography

This morning I'm on a hike in the woods with my Ricoh GR III and the Ricoh GF-2 flash, making macro photographs of leaves, textures, and small details that catch my eye. The joy of this technique is simple: isolate what matters and crush the rest into shadow. Highlight-weighted metering, small JPEGs, high-contrast black and white — four corners around the thing I care about.

And that act of caring led me to think about **curiosity**.

Curiosity: From *cura* — “To Care”

The word *curiosity* comes from *cura*, meaning **care**.

To be curious is to care about something — to desire to know it, feel it, understand it.

Curiosity isn't just a mental process. It's an **emotional resonance** with the world.

A gut instinct. A tug from the heart.

A bodily sensation that guides us toward what matters.

This is the first major difference between us and the machine.

What Separates Us From the Machine

A machine can process information.

A machine can render images.

A machine can generate infinite worlds.

But a machine cannot:

- feel instinct
- experience embodiment
- walk through a cold morning and smell the leaves
- have consciousness tied to a physical body
- resonate emotionally with what it sees

You and I can.

We have a brain connected to our eyes, yes — but also a **heart**, a **gut**, a lifetime of experiences, and a **subconscious instinct** that pulls us toward certain things in the world. That’s why the photographer will always differ from the machine.

The Temptation of the Digital World

In theory, you could plug yourself into a digital universe forever. Put on goggles, sit in a chair, and create endless worlds through VR and AI. I was even using Grok AI the other day — animating my photographs, prompting them to do whatever I wanted.

You can create anything now.

But photography is not creation from nothing. It is creation *from being here*.

Embodied Reality: The Photographer’s Advantage

What separates photography from AI art is **embodied experience**.

I am out here:

- touching the leaves
- smelling the earth
- feeling the cold air
- hearing the wind
- responding to gut instinct

There is a real-world experience happening in my body, and that reality imprints itself into the photograph. A machine can produce a “strong image,” but it cannot produce a lived moment.

Your photographs are not just visual.
They are slices of your **personal story**.

That is the photographer’s advantage.

Artists Will Rule the Future

Curiosity and imagination are going to become even more important as technology accelerates. Machines can automate tasks, optimize workflows, and produce endless content — but they cannot replace curiosity.

Modern society ties identity to work:

- the job title
- the routine
- the loop of obligation

But what if we weren’t meant to simply *do*?

What if we were meant to **create**?

Creating requires imagination.
Creating requires curiosity.
And those things cannot be replaced by any machine.

The Future of Photography

As we move forward into an age of abundance and AI, the most interesting photography will be:

- **personal**
- **embodied**
- **instinctual**
- **born from lived experience**

The external goals — books, zines, galleries, shows — are fine, but they are not the point. The point is to put four corners around something you care about. The point is to affirm life by creating.

Photography will not die.

As long as there are humans with bodies, hearts, instincts, and curiosity, photography will survive — because the medium is tied to the act of *being alive*.

The Spirit of Play

So I'm going to keep photographing in the spirit of play.
It gives my life meaning.
It makes me feel good.
It connects me to the world.

No machine, no AI, no digital universe will replace the feeling of being out here in embodied reality with a camera — which, after all, is also a machine, but one that extends my perception rather than replacing it.

Photography is alive.
And curiosity will carry it into the future.