

DAY ONE PHILOSOPHY IN PHOTOGRAPHY

What's poppin, people? It's Dante.

This morning I'm thinking about **day one philosophy** in photography.

The goal of the photographer is to find *meaning in the process itself*. It's an **internal goal**. The goal has nothing to do with the external validation of whether the photographs are good or bad, whether we make something great today, or whether we fulfill our dreams of making a book, a zine, a gallery, or a show.

The goal is to return to day one each day.

The goal is to return to the childlike state—the spirit of play.

To return to that place of being where you're simply an **amateur** every single day.

The word *amateur* derives from *love*.

I simply love to make new pictures.

And so I want to be an amateur photographer for the rest of my life.

I think the difference between an amateur and a professional is that a professional like myself goes out every single day with repetition and consistency. This is how any great art is born. It's through repetition—walking the same mundane lane every single day but still finding something new to say. It's putting your sword to the grindstone.

It's like Skyrim: you arrive in Whiterun, make daggers, sell them back, increase your XP, and level smithing to 99 so you can eventually seek the Daedric armor.

But **what if you never find the Daedric armor?**

What if you never reach the peak?

What if you never create the masterpiece?

When you detach from the outcome, that's where liberation is found.

The freedom from your work needing to be good or bad is pure.

THE CHILDLIKE STATE

Return to the childlike state—not childish, which is immature, but **childlike**, which is curious, open, and full of wonder.

The imagination of a child is the purest expression of an artist. A child scribbles outside the lines. A child climbs trees, falls, gets hurt, and tries again. A child is courageous.

The artist is born the moment you self-destruct—when you break the foundations of what you think should be done, all your preconceptions of what is good in art or photography—and return to the blank slate with infinite potential.

When you plant a seed in the ground, the seed takes a long time to grow. The tree standing before you might have taken decades to reach its peak height. Yet it continues to grow, always transforming, always seeking the sunlight.

The child is that seed.

And we can return to that seed in our practice by chopping the old tree down and propagating another.

When I watch a child playing in the playground, those little revelations—those *eureka* moments—are pure inspiration.

EXPERIMENTATION THROUGH OPENNESS

Transformation, change, and evolution are where I find meaning.

Recently in Japan, photographing in Tokyo, I experimented with the crop mode built into my camera. I experimented with flash and slow shutter speeds—simple techniques I never imagined myself trying.

Because I stayed open and curious—because I adopted the childlike state—the things I made were completely new. They were born from destroying the foundation of my past preconceptions of street documentary photography and exploring freely without attachment to the outcome.

And because I've deleted Instagram, nuked this YouTube channel, and removed likes and comments—because I'm no longer aware of anyone engaging with my work—

I now create from the purest childlike state.

SISYPHUS AND THE ARTIST'S BURDEN

The myth of Sisyphus is the perfect metaphor for the artist: endlessly pushing the rock up the hill, watching it roll back down, then pushing it again.

Affirming that you may never reach the peak.
Affirming that you may never finish the creation.
Yet waking up enthusiastic to push the rock again.

That's the true artistic state.

Amor fati—love of fate.

My fate is inevitably death, so I treat each day and each photograph like it could be my last breath.

Mastery is repetition.

Even as an amateur, mastery comes through doing the thing over and over again.

Distractions are the thief of all joy.

The news, the media, the movies, the TV—junk for the brain.

When you eliminate these, you return to the childlike state.

You hear the leaves rustle.
You see the way they wiggle, fall, and transform.
Everything becomes novel again.

The Amish sit in their living rooms without TVs. They place a birdhouse outside the window and simply watch the birds. That purity is inspiring.

MEANING IS FOUND IN THE PROCESS

Meaning is in the process.
Joy is in the process.
The goal is internal, never external.

For the past three years of photographing this way—experimenting, tinkering, stripping everything down—I’ve found more joy in my life than ever before.

I encourage you to think about transformation and change.
Enter the **stream of becoming**.
Everything is in flux.
The light is changing.
We are changing.
The leaves fall and die.
New plants are reborn in spring.

There is so much to photograph.
There is so much happening all at once.

Through photographing your way through your life, maybe you can channel your own evolution as much as you photograph the life outside you.

I want to be endlessly changing—never staying the same.

RICOH GOSPEL & COLD-WEATHER TIP

Praise be to Ricoh.

Ricoh GF2 flash:

- Turn it on by holding the button.
- Switch to manual mode.
- On the GR III, shoot at **f/16**, ISO **100**, or use **ND mode** if needed.
- Macro mode at f/16 is wild—everything in focus? We'll see.
- Shutter speed: **1/2500s**.
- Small JPEGs, high contrast B&W, grit, grain maxed.
- Highlight-weighted metering.
- FN button switches between snap focus and single-point AF.

Cold weather pro tip:

If your lens retracts slowly or locks up, the camera is too cold. Keep it in your coat pocket, close to your chest. Let it stay warm. When it's freezing, the mechanism gets finicky.

If it still struggles, press your finger lightly under the battery door as you turn it on. This improves the connection between the battery and the contacts.

Just something to keep in mind when shooting in winter.