

Photography as a Visual Diary: Entering the Stream of Becoming

What's poppin', people? It's Dante, taking a quiet stroll through the Centennial Arboretum this beautiful morning. Ricoh GR III in hand, GoPro Mini rolling. Today's thought rises out of the cold air, the sound of geese, the running water of the creek: **photography as a visual diary** — what that actually means, why it matters, and why this approach has completely reshaped the way I move through the world.

Living With the Camera, Not Hunting With It

When I'm walking through the woods or the city, I'm not looking for a "great photograph."

I'm not trying to say anything.

I'm not trying to express some grand idea.

I'm simply **living my life** and letting the camera come along for the ride.

Photography becomes an act of *affirmation*.

My next photograph is my best photograph.

Each frame is a step deeper into the **stream of becoming** — my day, my week, the month, the year, my lifetime.

When you stop trying so hard, you enter a kind of photographic **flow state**.

You shoot what you find, what finds you, what's in your immediate surroundings.

That purity — that simplicity — is where the beauty lies.

The Power of the Mundane

Every morning, I see the same geese fly over the Arboretum.
Every morning, I make the same photograph.
And every morning, it puts an honest smile on my face.

There's something profound about the **quiet, ordinary, repetitive things**:

- the pattern of geese flying south
- the coldness of the air on a brisk day
- grass under my feet
- water trickling through the creek
- the simple sensation of moving through space

Photography becomes less about “capturing” and more about **being present**.

The mundane ages well.

The mundane is eternal.

The mundane, somehow, becomes the most beautiful.

Do Photographs Express Our Internal State?

This is where things get tricky.

A photograph is not a diary entry written in words.

It doesn't literally express everything you felt in that moment.

Instead, it becomes a **fragment** — an artifact left behind from an experience.

The viewer doesn't feel what I felt.

They feel something rooted in *their* life, their memories, their emotions.

So the photograph isn't about me.

It's about the world.

The ambiguity is the point.
The removal of the photographer is the point.

Vivian Maier, Atget, and the Disappearing Photographer

When I look at the works of Vivian Maier, it almost doesn't matter that she made them.

We're left with a visual record of life — a diary of the world through her walking.

Same with Eugène Atget.

He walked Paris with no intention of being “artistic.” He documented doorways, streets, storefronts, trees, parks, people — the ordinary life of a city in transition.

But today?

Those simple documents have aged into something surreal, ethereal, transcendent. Time has elevated them.

By **removing the photographer**, the images become universal.

We don't see Atget.

We see *Paris breathing*.

We see *time itself*.

This is the paradox:

The less the photographer tries to “say,” the more the images ultimately speak.

When a Photograph Outlives Its Maker

Think about the “Napalm Girl” photograph.

Nobody talks about the photographer first.

They talk about **the emotional punch of the image** — the raw human condition made visible.

The image stands alone.

The authorship dissolves.

The photograph becomes:

- a historical fragment
- an emotional document
- a symbol of humanity’s capacity for suffering and survival

This is what happens when images transcend intention.

This is when photography becomes **ubiquitous**, woven into the fabric of the world like a water bottle, a brick path, a trellis, a Do Not Enter sign. Millions of hands built our environment. Nobody asks who made each thing.

Some images belong to everyone.

The Visual Diary as an Act of Disappearing

What excites me is the thought that **photography-as-diary** might be the purest way to reach this universality.

By not trying to impress, by not trying to say something profound, by not performing for the camera — you allow your photographs to become *life itself*.

The camera becomes a vessel.
You become a vessel.
Life flows through both.

Your images become:

- ambiguous
- ubiquitous
- open
- timeless

And the less you say,
the more the images say.

Closing Thoughts

I don't even know exactly what I'm trying to articulate — and that's the beauty of it. These are my candid thoughts from a morning walk: geese overhead, cold air, creek flowing, Ricoh GR III in hand.

All I know is this:

Photography becomes the most powerful when you stop chasing meaning and simply bear witness to the world — one frame at a time.

This is the visual diary.

This is the stream of becoming.

This is the life we get to live with a camera.
