

## **From Color to Grit: My Evolution to Hardcore Black & White Street Photography**

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

This morning I wanted to talk about how I went from shooting street photography that was color, bright, and full of energy — to gritty, hardcore black and white street photography.

When I first started, I was photographing in color simply because that's what the camera produced. I was shooting with a Ricoh GR II at the time, and I was working with RAW files. The camera naturally saw the world in color, and honestly, I never made a conscious decision to shoot in color. That was just the default.

Nowadays, I purposely shoot JPEG with high-contrast black and white baked into the camera. And I want to share some ideas with you about street photography, my evolution, my journey, and how I've developed my own way of working in the streets over the years.

### **Photography Has Nothing to Do With Photography**

One of the first things I learned is that photography has nothing to do with photography.

Especially in street photography — with the spontaneity and candid nature of it all — it has everything to do with how you engage with the world. How you engage with humanity. That's what ultimately reflects back in the photographs you make.

Early on, I was photographing in neighborhoods where people don't usually walk around with cameras. And I quickly learned that I had to present myself openly — through my body language, through how I physically exist in the world.

There's that famous Robert Capa quote:

***“If your photos aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough.”***

Most photographers think this means physical proximity. But emotional intimacy is far more important than how close your lens is to someone.

## **Engagement Over Aggression**

There’s this blown-out idea in street photography that you have to be aggressive. That you see a moment and you just grab it. No interaction. No connection.

But what I learned over time is that engaging with the world openly — forming brief relationships in scenes — gave me access to far more impactful photographs.

This realization transformed my photography immediately. It elevated everything I was doing.

I learned how to make candid frames while maintaining open body language and acceptance in different environments. And once I had that foundation, I could focus on composition, timing, and impact.

Street photography is deeply tied to how you engage with life itself.

## **Repetition, Fear, and Getting Close**

Some people are shy. Some fear confrontation. That’s okay — but it *will* show up in your frames.

The only way through that is repetition. You have to put in the reps.

If you want to photograph people, you need to get better at interacting with people. Simple manners. Simple gestures. Eye contact. Smiles. Body language.

The first fundamental thing to master in street photography isn’t composition — it’s how you engage with the world.

## Always Carry the Camera

One of the most important shifts for me was never separating photography from life.

I always had the camera with me.

There was no “now I’m photographing” and “now I’m living.” Photography became integrated into my everyday existence.

Some of my favorite photographs happened when I had no intention of making a photograph at all — like laying by the sea in Napoli with my brother, reconnecting with our Italian roots. After hours of just being there, a scene unfolded naturally.

I was ready because I had the camera with me.

## Travel, Immersion, and Time

I’ve spent a lot of time traveling — volunteering in hostels, photographing throughout Israel and Palestine, and serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia.

Those immersive experiences expanded my horizons and pushed my limits as a photographer.

But here’s the truth: going somewhere “interesting” doesn’t guarantee good photos.

You still need repetition. Consistency. Familiarity with your camera and lens. Years of practice.

I started taking street photography seriously in 2014.

I didn’t make my first frame that truly made sense to me until **January 12, 2016**.

Two years.

That's how long it took before I felt like I finally aligned with my vision.

## **Hitting the Wall**

For years, I photographed life as it was — documentary-style, single impactful images, complex frames.

And it worked. It taught me a lot.

But eventually, it became repetitive. Exhausting. Unsustainable.

I hit a wall — especially while traveling in places like Mexico City and Hanoi. Working scenes. Waiting. Repeating the same process over and over.

I realized I had to change everything.

## **Returning to Day One**

My solution was returning to day one.

I stopped looking for single images.

I stopped photographing linearly.

I stopped chasing moments.

Instead, I started photographing *everything*.

Details. Buildings. Landscapes. Portraits. Myself. My personal life.

By stripping away expectations and removing the idea of what a “good photograph” is, I started making work that excited me again.

## **Letting Go of Outcome**

For years, I was chasing my next best photo.

Trying to top the last one.

That mindset is unsustainable.

Now, I remove the outcome entirely.

I don't try to say anything.

I don't force meaning.

I don't hunt.

I respond to intuition. Instinct. Gut feeling.

And by doing that, I enter a flow state — daily.

## **Photographing Light Itself**

Technically, I simplified everything.

I shoot automatic mode.

Small JPEGs.

High-contrast black and white.

Highlights exposed. Shadows crushed.

Everything is baked in.

This frees me to play.

I'm no longer dependent on interesting moments. I'm curious about light — how it interacts with surfaces, bodies, spaces, and forms.

Light never repeats itself.

You can't make the same photograph twice.

### **Compact Camera, Loose Composition**

I only shoot with a compact camera now — the Ricoh GR.

Using the LCD screen loosens my compositions. It makes me more fluid. More experimental.

I photograph family. Home. The in-between moments.

I'm not hunting anymore.

I'm living — and bringing the camera along.

Photography has become a visual diary of my life.

### **The Goal Is the Process**

I'm grateful for everything I learned photographing in color. For the discipline. The repetition. The craft.

But now, the result is no longer the goal.

The process is.

Every morning is a blank slate.

Every day, new frames.

My next picture is my best picture.

And honestly?

I don't even know which images are "better" anymore.

That's freedom.

This is my candid take on street photography — my journey, my philosophy, and why I work the way I do today.

Take what resonates. Leave the rest.

Go find your own way.

Peace.