

Photography as a Way of Being

What's poppin people? It's Dante.

This morning I'm thinking about photography as a way of being. The somatic experience of photography is what excites me. Just being out in the world — feeling the sun on your skin, enjoying the sights, the sounds, the smells of the streets, tasting the street. This, to me, is what it's all about.

In order to make a photograph, you have to move your physical body. And when you look at the word motivation — deriving from *movere*, to move — the first step to making a photograph, to being motivated, is moving. Motivation isn't some external force pushing you or guiding you. It's your two legs, your two feet, connected to your spine. You've got a brain on top of your head, eyes looking around, perceiving the world, making pictures.

I don't think we need to be so caught up in a rational mindset or approach to the streets. I actually think the gut is more intelligent than the brain. Recognizing the physical nature of life — and engaging with photography in a more embodied way — is what guides me. I obey my gut. I don't really think. I just shoot.

I believe the vagus nerve, connected from our gut to our brain and carrying all this information, is much more intelligent than our conscious mind. When I'm in the street, in the world, I'm fasted. I don't have food digesting in my belly. I believe fasting heightens my intuition and allows me to see and perceive the world with clarity.

By embracing this way of working — where I'm empty — I become a vessel for the medium. I allow myself to be receptive to all my senses. To touch. To smell. To feel everything bodily. Once I'm aligned physically, everything else falls into place.

I believe the only life worth living is a life full of vitality. A life full of energy and power. That overflow of vitality is what fuels me creatively. Without vitality, there is no curiosity. Think about waking up sluggish after a bad night of sleep. How are you going to get out of bed and make anything?

At the forefront of our practice, it's important to recognize the somatic experience of life — the bodily sensation of feeling — and to fuel yourself with physical power and vitality.

On a practical level, that means deep sleep. Going to bed early. Waking up at dawn and catching the sunrise. Being outside. Walking throughout the day in the spirit of play so that I can create.

Making a photograph is a physical act. Composition is physical. You can have ideas like the rule of thirds, leading lines, and all the jargon in your head, but ultimately it's about physically positioning yourself in relation to a moment, to a background. When you click the shutter, intuitively, from instinct — that primal gut feeling — that's what creates the photograph.

Walking, moving, clicking the shutter rushes my body with dopamine. It feels good. When I walk, I feel joyous. When I follow my bliss and embrace the physical nature of life, that overflowing vitality fuels my curiosity and spills into the work I create.

Photography requires recognizing the somatic experience. Not thinking so rationally or dogmatically. Being present. Grounded. Letting life flow toward you while you're prepared with your camera as a vessel. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to try to say anything.

We should only focus on what's in our control. What we're in control of is moving our body. Walking more. The more you walk, the more you see. The more you see, the more you photograph. The more you photograph, the more curious you become — increasing curiosity by 1% each day.

Whether you come home with a good or bad photo is out of your control. What you *are* in control of is being here, now, walking through life with your camera.

Photography, for me, is a way of being. It's a way of saying yes to life. A way of grounding myself in everyday experience. The somatic experience — the bodily sensation of walking through life — is what fuels me creatively. It all stems from physiological health and vitality.

Now let's catch the sunrise. Beautiful, beautiful morning. I can catch the sunrise right here.