

Instinct Is the Purest Expression in Street Photography

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

Today I want to discuss **instinct in street photography** and why I believe the purest expression derives from that instinct — the kind that comes from a *natural physical response* we all possess within our DNA.

I find that by really honing in on this physical nature of being a human — where we're these kind of *flesh animals with consciousness* rumbling and fumbling through life — we have a physical response to the things we encounter. We have something in our nature as human beings, with our ability to perceive, our ability to feel, to hear, to see, that ultimately guides me as a street photographer.

That physical response... that irrational pull... that thing within me that's extremely primal — the thing that tells me when to move left, when to move right, when to raise the camera to my eye and click the shutter — that's what I allow to take over me while on the street.

Street Photography Is a Somatic Experience

I think this comes from recognizing the **physical, somatic experience of life**.

When you're in embodied reality — responding to the sights, the sounds, the smells of the street — looking at the light and feeling the experience of walking on the concrete, looking at gestures and responding to things... you will tap into that state of being where photography becomes effortless.

And at that point, *the flow state is inevitable*.

But it really does require you to recognize that **life is physical**.

Because the mental — all the thoughts in your brain — can cloud you. It can remove you from that instinctual state.

Go Out With No Preconceived Notions

On a practical level, when I'm approaching the streets, I like to go out there **without any preconceived notions** of what I will see, what I will photograph, or where I will go.

A lot of the time, I simply go with the flow.

I bring the camera with me for the ride and photograph through my life, responding to the gut — responding to that primal pull that tells me when to click the shutter.

I'm removing the control of me trying to be this "conductor photographer" that knows all the compositional tricks and decisions to make... and instead I'm just responding to the instinct.

And I believe that's where the beauty lies in street photography:

recognizing the serendipity, recognizing the spontaneity, and also recognizing what is out of our control.

What's Out of Your Control (And What Isn't)

What's out of our control as street photographers is simple:

We're not in control of whether or not we see something interesting.

We're not in control of whether or not we come home with a great photograph.

But we *are* in control of **our state of being** while approaching the streets.

So empty your mind. Forget everything you think you know about photography. And simply embrace the physical nature of life on the street.

Embrace the sounds. The sights. The feeling of being out there with the sun on your skin.

Really hone in on the present moment.

Because when you arrive at that present moment... that's where the flow state is born.

It's born when you turn off the mind, stop thinking, and you're simply living your everyday life.

And from that primal physical state of being, you can respond to your instincts so much more intuitively.

Remove the Technicality, Remove the Outcome

Ultimately, what I'm trying to do now with my photography is remove all of the technicality — remove all of the superfluous details about photography.

Remove the goal.

Remove the outcome of a project, a book, a theme, a show.

Remove the outcome of whether or not I come home with a good or a bad photo.

And simply step into this stream of becoming — of clicking that damn shutter, responding to the moments that come my way, and thinking about it later.

Because while I'm on the streets, I very much try to respond to the instinct.

I believe that's where your authentic expression is born.

When you strip everything back down to the bare instinct — that's where your style emerges. That's where your authentic expression lies.

Your Voice Emerges Through Instinctual Repetition

That primal physical instinct guides you to click the shutter.

And over time, that compounds.

Through you consistently going out there and practicing your photography from the instinct, you will reveal your authentic voice.

You will find your way of seeing and playing the game of photography.

I believe everybody has their primal instinct to tap into — but you have to go out there in a way that doesn't get in the way.

Make the Camera Disappear

For me, that means removing the technical hurdles.

I'll photograph with automatic settings — **P mode / program mode** — and I use a very simple point-and-shoot camera.

I make sure that when I'm out there, the only thing I need to do is raise the camera to whatever's within my view, click a button, and move on to the next one.

The way that I'm photographing is instinctual.

The way that I'm photographing is intuitive.

The things I find arise from the gut — from the physical embodied experience of being out there in the world.

Let the Chips Fall

So I encourage you to think more critically about instinct.

Remove this notion of control from your vocabulary as a photographer, and let the chips fall as they may.

Simply go out there in the spirit of play — and respond to your instinct.

With that being said, thank you for watching, and I'll see you in the next one.

Peace.