

Ricoh GR Monochrome Street Photography Diary #2 – Process, Instinct & Flow

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

Today we're going to be discussing my process with the Ricoh GR4 monochrome in today's Street Photography Diary entry number two. I'll be looking at photographs with you, discussing my philosophy, technique, and the way that I hit the streets.

If you're new to the channel, I've been photographing for the past decade all throughout the world on the front lines of life.

Here I have my prototype for a book I put together of my work in color. This photograph was made outside in my village in Zambia, Africa when I was a Peace Corps volunteer. I've got photographs from all over the world — from conflict situations in Jericho to the mountaintops of Mexico City and everywhere in between.

I went out in the world with my camera as a way to explore, as a way to express my courage and follow my curiosity as a young photographer learning this craft.

I learned the hard way and the long way.

And honestly, I'm thankful for that.

It increased my ability to make strong photographs.

But now going forward, my goal is **longevity**. I want to last consistently making photographs.

From Hunting Photographs to Practicing Photography

I'm no longer on the hunt for the next best scene or thing to photograph.

With this monochrome process, photography has essentially become a **solution for practicing daily.**

The reason I use a monochrome camera with JPEG settings and a streamlined workflow is simple:

Photography becomes **inevitable.**

The joy and the goal are found within the process itself – walking, observing, and responding with my camera.

Not hunting.

Not striving.

Not searching for interesting frames.

The mindset shift of being detached from the outcome is one of the most important things a photographer must face.

Photography requires enormous amounts of time in the world before you come home with anything interesting.

This book has around **63 frames from seven years.**

There were days and months where **not a single interesting frame was made.**

It took a long time to synthesize content with light, timing, and the visual power needed for strong photographs.

And honestly, a lot of the superfluous things about photography get in the way of enjoying the process.

Yes, composition matters.

Yes, you should know how to make a strong frame.

But **instinct is where your style is born.**

Your Vision vs Social Media Photography

When you look online — Instagram, social media — you may get inspired by trends or the way other photographers shoot.

But most of what you see online is junk.

Those photographs are designed to be looked at for **one second on a phone screen.**

That kind of imagery can actually get in the way of finding your authentic expression.

I purposely disconnected from that world.

And since photographing in my own space, I'm discovering the way that **I truly feel and see life.**

My vision is consistent across my work.

But color, black and white, or aesthetics have **nothing to do with expression.**

Your perspective is what matters.

Forget Photography

The goal is actually to forget photography.

Remove the identity.

Remove the ego of being “a photographer.”

Stop walking around with a camera on your neck trying to make a great frame.

Instead:

Follow the light and fall in love with life.

My philosophy is about returning to the sunrise every day with enthusiasm.

Photography becomes **play**.

Not something serious.

Not something heavy.

Just curiosity.

By creating constraints — monochrome, automatic settings, a simple black box — I cultivate instinct.

Photography becomes a natural part of everyday life.

I'm not burdened by outcomes.

I'm just enjoying the day.

Photograph From Your Childlike Curiosity

If I could give advice to photographers looking for improvement or inspiration, it would be this:

Disconnect from contemporary photography.

Delete Instagram.

Photograph your everyday life.

Your walk to work.
Walking your dog.
Your neighborhood.

Photograph the way **you experience life**.

Go out and photograph from your pure, childlike, innocent curiosity.

That's where your style will emerge.

Don't worry about the outcome.

Instead, cultivate a body that wakes up full of energy.

Get good sleep.

Wear good shoes.

Build a strong body.

Photography Is Physical

I personally wear barefoot shoes like:

- Vibram FiveFingers
- Vivobarefoot Primus Lite All Weather

Having strong feet and a strong body changes everything.

When your physiology is strong, enthusiasm follows.

And when you're enthusiastic about life, photography becomes inevitable.

Your internal state — courage, curiosity, intuition — begins to guide your photographs.

Why I Photograph in Monochrome

Photographing in monochrome gives me **infinite possibility**.

Everything comes down to following the light.

Light is always changing.

You can stand on the same corner every day and never make the same photograph twice.

That idea keeps me curious.

I'm not thinking about photography.

I'm curious about **how life renders onto the sensor**.

Monochrome strips away technical distractions.

It pushes me into a **flow state**.

And when I come home to review the photographs, I'm curious about what I captured.

That curiosity keeps me practicing daily.

Photography Has Nothing to Do With Photography

Photography actually has nothing to do with photography.

It has everything to do with **how you engage with humanity**.

When I enter a space with my camera:

I'm present.

I'm grounded.

I'm observing light and patterns.

I'm smiling.

I'm engaging with people.

Photography becomes a reflection of **how much you love life**.

Train Your Body Like an Athlete

Behind me I have a full home gym.

I recommend dumbbells, barbells, anything.

Photography is physical.

I treat it like a sport.

Lifting, walking, staying strong — it absolutely influences my photography.

All the frames I make stem from **courage and physical energy**.

You're not going to make photographs sitting on the sidelines scrolling Instagram.

You have to wake up and seize the day.

And when you live like that:

Photography becomes effortless.

Flow becomes inevitable.

A Crazy Day in Philadelphia

Today in Philadelphia was a crazy day.

There was a fire in the subway system.

Transportation shut down.

The entire city was backed up.

People were stuck on the streets trying to get home.

There were fights, police, firefighters — chaos everywhere.

But honestly, the photographs I made still came from instinct.

Shooting With the Ricoh GR

The Ricoh allows you to move seamlessly through scenes.

You can shoot from the hip.

Hold the camera by your waist and just click the shutter.

Your instinct tells you where to stand and when to shoot.

You don't have to overthink composition.

For my practice, that's the goal:

I don't want to think. I want to respond.

If you're curious about the work, check out Flux Volume 1 — the link is in the description.

And with that, thanks for watching.

I'll see you in the next one.

Peace.