

## Ricoh GR4 Monochrome: The Closest Thing to Not Having a Camera

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

Today we're going to be looking at some photographs I made recently with my Ricoh GR4 Monochrome. We'll be diving into the photos and looking at the camera in its everyday practical function on the streets.

And yeah — just diving into it.

### The Zen of the Ricoh

Firstly, I want to discuss the camera itself.

I find that this may just be the most innovative, interesting camera ever created since the conception of photography. I think about Niepce inventing this thing with chemistry. I think about Atget lugging around a big wooden bellows camera with a rectilinear lens on a tripod in 19th century Paris.

And I just think... what would he do with a compact point-and-shoot that you can carry around with you?

Not to mention the built-in image stabilization that allows you to basically be a **human tripod**. You can shoot in low light. You can shoot with 25,600 ISO straight out of the box.

One of the most surprising things I noticed was that when you get the camera, the minimum ISO is set to 160 and the maximum is set to 25,600.

And I was just like:

***What?***

That's the first time that's ever happened to me when looking into camera settings.

But the reason the Ricoh is so special is because it **strips away all of the superfluous technical aspects of photography**. What you arrive at is simply a black box with a shutter button.

That is the Ricoh.

You could argue that every camera is a black box with a shutter button. But I believe the Ricoh simplifies everything down to the **bare bones**.

If you're looking for the smallest, most compact, simplest camera to use every day – it's inevitable that you land on Ricoh.

And there's a kind of **zen** to that.

The zen of Ricoh is subtraction.

When you subtract more, you arrive at the **essence of the medium**.

## **My High-Contrast JPEG Workflow**

With my workflow, I'm shooting **small JPEG files with high-contrast black and white**.

I crank the contrast and all of the settings within the camera to the absolute maximum.

My setup is simple:

- Aperture priority mode
- f/8 or f/16
- Snap focus at 1 meter or 2 meters
- High contrast monochrome
- Automatic settings

- Processing baked into the file

From the moment I slip the camera into my front right pocket to the moment I come home and cull the photos — **the result is already there.**

The process is baked into the file.

This kind of approach gets photography to the point where it becomes **effortless.**

And the flow state becomes inevitable when you're using a compact camera that simply doesn't get in the way.

I find this camera to be the closest thing to **not having a camera.**

And that's where I want to be on the street — just bobbing and weaving through crowds endlessly.

## **The Power of One Camera**

Coming from the Ricoh GR III to the Ricoh GR IV Monochrome, the camera is slightly smaller and more compact. The exposure compensation dial has shifted, and I'm actually starting to enjoy it.

Nothing drastic has changed.

But I do notice that the processing with my high-contrast workflow looks aesthetically more beautiful. There's a bit more shadow detail and a small boost in quality.

But honestly — those things don't concern me.

I shoot **small JPEG files.**

What matters more is the simplicity.

By stripping away color entirely and committing to a monochrome sensor, I'm reminded of the **power of limitation**.

One camera.

One lens.

One processing style.

Run with it.

And that's why I'm a fan of the JPEG workflow.

Because it removes choices.

### **Returning to Pure Instinct**

When you remove all the decisions — color or black and white, this lens or that lens, what camera to use — you arrive at **pure instinct**.

Photography returns to its essence:

#### **Drawing with light.**

When I make photographs, I'm creating **an instant sketch of light**.

By removing color and technical decisions, I can return to pure instinct at the moment I press the shutter.

***When I'm photographing, I'm not thinking. I'm just being.***

I'm not hunting with a checklist, a theme, a project, or a book.

I'm simply living my everyday life and bringing the camera along for the ride.

Photography becomes a **visual diary of my day**.

## The Spirit of Play

Because the Ricoh is small and inconspicuous, I look like a tourist.

And that allows me to embrace the **spirit of play**.

Through play, I tap into a **childlike curiosity**.

I look at:

- faces
- gestures of hands
- hair moving in the light
- small details

From that state of childlike wonder, authentic expression begins to reveal itself in the photographs.

And that's where style actually comes from.

Style isn't about whether you shoot color or black and white.

***Style is revealed from instinct.***

## Synthesizing Content and Form

When I made a photograph of hair blowing in the light on Canal Street in New York City, I noticed how the light was casting on the hair.

That alone intrigued me.

That was enough to raise the camera and press the shutter.

But the duty of the photographer is to **synthesize content with form**.

To put **order to chaos**.

So I physically move my body in relationship to the subject — positioning the hair with the facade of the garage in the background.

Those decisions are made instinctively through movement.

Not thinking.

Just responding.

## **Sketching with Light**

As I walk through the streets, I'm constantly looking:

- up at the clouds
- down at the ground
- at people
- at objects blowing in the wind

Everything becomes a fleeting moment of intrigue.

By crushing shadows and exposing for highlights with high-contrast black and white, I create **mystery and drama**.

Sometimes I photograph clouds using:

- a red filter
- underexposing 1–2 stops
- multi-segment metering
- crop mode into 50mm

On the Ricoh, I have the video button set to crop mode. I tap it twice and instantly switch to 50mm.

This allows me to create **more dramatic imagery**.

### **Elevating the Ordinary**

A moment in real life might be interesting.

But the goal of the photographer is to **elevate that moment in the photograph**.

To make it more powerful than it appeared in real life.

To uplift the **ordinary into the extraordinary**.

By underexposing, isolating faces, and capturing gestures in slivers of light within crowded scenes, I create a visual solution to the chaos of the street.

It becomes a form of **visual problem solving**.

Especially in a place like New York City where crowds are constant.

### **Infinite Novelty in the Mundane**

Returning to black and white has allowed me to find **infinite novelty in the mundane**.

Because light is always changing.

It is always in flux.

For instance, I walk the same street in Philadelphia every single day and photograph the same sculpture of a revolutionary hero.

Every day.

But I remind myself:

***You cannot make the same photograph twice.***

Because the light is always changing.

And that gives photography an **infinite game to play**.

## **The Flow State of Photography**

Through this simplified workflow, I reach a point where I forget that I'm even photographing.

The past doesn't matter.  
The future doesn't matter.

When I'm photographing, I exist **outside the passage of time**.

I'm just watching the light.

Watching people.

Responding to instinct.

Over time, with consistent daily practice, instinct compounds and reveals itself in the photographs.

## **Photography as a Way of Being**

When I go out in the morning, I treat it like **day one**.

I'm not thinking about photos I made yesterday.

I'm not thinking about projects tomorrow.

I simply affirm:

***My next photo is my best photo.***

Photography becomes a way of saying **yes to life**.

Not a way to make great photos.

But a way to remain present.

To stay curious.

To stay sensitive to life.

Photography is a **somatic experience**.

You walk the streets.

You feel the atmosphere.

You hear the sounds.

You smell the city.

All of your senses remain open.

And you respond.

## **The Best Camera Is the One That Disappears**

To wrap things up:

The Ricoh is the closest thing to **not having a camera**.

And that's why I believe it's the best camera.

Because it doesn't get in the way of living your everyday life.

Photography stops being work.

It stops being a chore.

You're simply living your life and bringing the camera along for the ride.

No longer striving.

No longer hunting.

Just living.

And responding to whatever you find.

And that's why I enjoy photography — and specifically the philosophy of the Ricoh.

Alright.

That's pretty much it.

Thank you for watching today's video.

And I'll see you in the next one.

Peace.