

Street Photography as a Visual Diary – Ricoh GR Monochrome Walk in Philadelphia

Entering the Flow on the Schuylkill River Trail

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

Today we're going to be looking at photographs I made yesterday with my Ricoh GR4 Monochrome on the streets of Philadelphia.

I started my day off with a nice walk along the Schuylkill River Trail where I typically get my day started. I simply entered the flow state in the morning with my camera.

I don't look for anything – I'm just living my life and going to the places that make me joyful.

Really, at the end of the day, I'm **following my bliss**. I'm trying to have fun when I'm out there with my camera.

I'm not out there hunting and putting on my photography hat – going out there to tell a visual story. I'm simply walking through places I genuinely enjoy inhabiting.

Photography as a Visual Diary

I want to talk today about **the power of curiosity and treating photography as a visual diary**.

When I say visual diary, I mean it simply.

I believe that the reflection of the photographer's **internal state** arises externally in the things that we make.

As you photograph your way through the day, week, year, and lifetime — you are creating your own world with the camera.

I also believe the power of monochrome is that we're **stripping away color**.

We're stripping away reality and abstracting the world, giving birth to something new through the act of making a photograph.

A Streamlined Workflow for Flow State

On a practical level, I shoot with a **small JPEG file** and **high-contrast black and white image control settings cranked to the maximum**.

The reason I approach the streets this way isn't for an aesthetic decision.

It's because **I want to enter the flow state**.

To enter the flow state, one must be in tune with instinct.

And to return to instinct and intuition, you have to **remove the technical hurdles of photography**.

By streamlining the process to a JPEG file — light and shadow, what you see is what you get — there's no going back in post-processing. Everything is done in the moment I click the shutter.

My approach makes photography **effortless**.

I use automatic settings so the camera disappears and I can enter the flow state seamlessly.

I've got a black box with a shutter button, and I'm simply snapshotting my life.

Following Curiosity Like a Child

As I walk through the day photographing things — clouds, details below my feet, everything around me — I become curious.

When I'm out there photographing, I'm simply following my **childlike curiosity**.

As a child, I grew up about five miles down this river. I used to explore the Wissahickon Forest in my backyard — climbing trees, building teepees with sticks, sharpening spears, attempting to hunt deer.

I loved exploring the unknown.

Now as a photographer at 29 years old, that curiosity still drives me.

On this particular walk I photographed a boy practicing martial arts with a medieval longsword.

Seeing that moment reminded me of that **childlike courage** — exploring the forest, conquering new terrain.

Those spontaneous surprises that arise on a walk are what **fuel my curiosity**.

But I don't go out seeking them.

I simply follow the inner voice that calls me to places where I enjoy being.

Letting Life Flow Toward You

When you let go and allow life to flow toward you, and you're simply present with your camera, you can express your internal state more authentically.

I don't believe style comes from choosing color versus black and white.

I believe **style is a direct reflection of the photographer's instinct and internal state.**

Instinct is everything in this practice.

When you photograph loosely throughout your day — whether it's a mundane nature walk or a chaotic market in the city — you begin cultivating your voice as an artist.

And while it takes time, **a simplified workflow accelerates the process.**

When the camera becomes an extension of your body, finding your voice becomes much more natural.

From Chaos to the Mundane

For the past three years photographing this way, I've become far more prolific.

Scenes like chaotic crowds outside Reading Terminal Market come naturally to me. I'm comfortable photographing people up close in busy environments.

But what once required friction was photographing places without people — barren streets, quiet paths in nature.

Learning to **articulate the mundane** became the challenge.

Returning to black and white and stripping photography down to light and shadow changed how I see.

Now I follow the light.

Following Light

Light is always changing.

The way it falls across surfaces, people, and places is always in flux.

No two days — no two moments — will ever be the same.

By stripping color away and returning to the essence of the medium, **light becomes the subject.**

High-contrast black and white allows me to find **infinite novelty in the mundane.**

I can walk the same route every day and still find something worth photographing.

Removing Friction from the Practice

My goal is to remove friction until only **pure instinct** remains.

Over time, instinct compounds into style.

Photography becomes almost like **Zen meditation.**

I'll throw the camera around in strange ways.

- Dropping the shutter speed to **1/4 second**
- Shooting from the waist
- Using crop mode
- Photographing quickly without looking at the LCD

Because the camera is an extension of my body, I understand my position relative to the moment without hesitation.

There's no thinking.

Stop Thinking, Start Responding

When I'm photographing, the goal is to **stop thinking.**

The goal is to simply respond.

I don't want to have a single thought while making a photograph.

When I remove thought and stay present, the joy of the practice appears.

I might walk into a church and notice something around the corner.

Following that curiosity leads me into unexpected scenes and small adventures.

Life on the front lines is waiting for you.

There's so much to see, explore, and photograph in this life.

Curiosity as the Guide

Since stripping away the technical aspects of photography and simplifying the process, I've found an endless ability to discover things in the world.

Treating photography as a **visual diary of daily life** changes how you see light and life.

My curiosity guides me.

I'm not looking for anything.
I'm not trying to say anything.

But whatever I have to say will be said through the photographs I make.

With that being said, thank you for watching.

And I will see you in the next one.

Peace.