

Why I Shoot High-Contrast Black & White JPEG (Pure Instinct Photography)

Speed, Simplicity, Instinct

What's poppin', people? It's Dante getting my morning started here along the Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia, photographing with the Ricoh GR IV monochrome.

Got the high contrast black and white small JPEG files cranked to the max so that I can embrace my instinct.

So why photograph this way?

Why shoot small JPEGs, high contrast black and white?

It's for **speed and simplicity**.

I want to strip away everything from the medium of photography and return to pure instinct. Not trying to impose a visual style — I'm trying to remove everything until all that's left is a black box with a shutter button.

Just point and shoot.

No technical noise.

Photography Is Physical

Photography isn't just visual — it's physical.

Your eyes connect to your brain, sure. You can recognize leading lines, composition, all that.

But what actually makes the photograph?

Your body.

You are responsible for positioning your physical body in relationship to the subject.

If you don't move, you don't make the photo.

You can see everything perfectly in your head — but if you don't physically step into position, nothing happens.

Photography is psychological, yes.

But it's ultimately **physical positioning** that determines the result.

Why the Ricoh GR

The reason I use the Ricoh GR — especially this monochrome setup — is because it's always with me.

It lives in my pocket.

Hidden.

No one even knows I'm photographing.

And because of that, I'm always in a **flow state**.

When I have to wear a camera around my neck, clean the lens, “be a photographer” — I limit myself.

That friction kills the moment.

The lack of a viewfinder?

That's not a limitation.

That's **freedom**.

Constraints = Freedom

My theory:

The more constraints, the more creative freedom.

You might think freedom is having unlimited choices.

But that's overwhelming.

If I step off this path, I fall into the river.

If I go the other way, I get hit by a train.

So the only way is forward.

And in that constraint?

Endless possibility.

Staying in one lane unlocks infinity.

When I stop switching cameras, colors, lenses — I move forward.

That's where the work happens.

No Good or Bad Photos

There's no such thing as a good or bad photograph.

Only **new photographs to make**.

I'm chasing a perpetual flow state.

Not results.

Curiosity.

What does life look like photographed?

That's it.

Returning to Light

Photography = *drawing with light*.

By stripping away color, I return to the essence.

Now I'm curious about light itself:

- How it hits surfaces
- How it renders in black and white
- What it looks like when reduced to extremes

High contrast black and white?

It's like a charcoal sketch of reality.

No Post-Processing, No Safety Net

There's nothing to fix later.

No RAW files.

No editing.

No safety net.

I throw myself into the deep end.

And that's liberating.

Now all I'm left with is **play**.

From Friction to Flow

I remember being in Hanoi in 2022.

RAW files. Hard drives. Backups.

It was slow. Tedious.

Felt like a burden.

When I got back, I sold everything.

Picked up the Ricoh GR.

Since then?

3+ years.

Around **370,000 frames**.

I've never been more prolific.

And the quality?

It's there — because of the quantity and the flow.

Infinite Novelty

I can walk the same path every day.

Still find new photos.

Because light is always changing.

Because life is always changing.

You cannot make the same photograph twice.

Now I photograph everything:

- Family
- Daily life
- Self-portraits
- Textures
- Plants
- Trash
- Everything

Everything is photographable.

Beyond Style

I'm not trying to create a recognizable style.

I'm trying to become a **vessel**.

To just be.

To exist in the moment.

To feel deeply.

Say yes to life with every shutter click.

The Sublime

There's something beyond words.

That feeling when you're walking...

Sun on your skin.
Birds. Cars. People.

And you click the shutter.

That moment?

It's **sublime**.

Life is fleeting.

Flowers bloom, then decay.

That's what makes it beautiful.

Destroy to Create

To create something new, you have to destroy.

If I made the same photos every day, I'd be bored.

To change is happiness.

To evolve.

To grow.

That's the goal.

Don't Blame Your Location

Your city isn't the problem.

Your perception is.

Even in the same place, every day:

There's infinite novelty.

You just have to see it.

Pure Instinct

Too many choices kill creativity.

Too many decisions.

Too many systems.

I want none of that.

Just instinct.

When photography becomes an extension of your body, it becomes effortless.

That's the goal.

Say Yes

Photography isn't a chore.

It's not something you force.

It should be natural.

Seamless.

Sustainable.

And when you reach that point:

Flow is inevitable.

Joy is inevitable.

Final Thought

You might not live forever.

But you can make a photograph.

Your next picture – that's your best picture.

Say yes to life.

Click the shutter.