

## Why Light Keeps Me Curious in Photography

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

Today I want to talk about **light in photography**, and look at some photographs recently made with the **Ricoh GR IV monochrome**. Later down in the slideshow, we'll look at some photos made with the **GR III**. Everything was made with **high-contrast black and white**, small JPEG files, cranked to the max, point-and-shoot automatic mode.

### Photography Is Drawing With Light

The thought about light is interesting.

When I think about photography—*phos* meaning light, *graphie* meaning writing or drawing—we're **drawing with light**, we're **writing with light**. And when I make a photograph, I'm merely curious about light.

I'm curious about the way that light goes through the lens and touches the sensor, and how an image is rendered in my camera at the end of the day. As much as I'm looking at reality in front of me, underlying all of that, I'm actually curious about how reality is interpreted through the camera—through the way that light refracts through the lens, touches the sensor, and creates the image.

*I'm not only curious about life. I'm curious about how light interprets life through the camera.*

### Experimenting in Philadelphia

Recently, I've been experimenting and tinkering in the **Reading Terminal Market** here in my hometown, Philadelphia. I've been photographing at **1/4 of a second**, using slow shutter speeds as a way to push the boundaries in my own personal

practice.

By experimenting, tinkering, and trying new things, I remain more curious about life, and ultimately I keep practicing my photography daily.

It's important for me to remain curious. My ultimate aim, my ultimate orientation, is to **increase my curiosity by 1% each day**.

### **Stripping Photography Down to Its Essence**

By stripping the medium bare—to a **Ricoh GR monochrome**, automatic settings, point-and-shoot, pure instinct, light and shadow, high contrast—I'm becoming infinitely curious about how light is interpreted through my camera.

Ultimately, **light is my underlying interest** with photography.

As much as I am photographing life, my deeper curiosity lies in the way that light renders upon life, and how my camera interprets the world.

### **A More Prolific Way of Working**

When I walk around and photograph, I'm photographing loosely. I'm photographing more prolifically than I ever have in my life since adopting this streamlined workflow.

Honestly, I'm finding **infinite novelty in the world through photography** and the way that my curiosity guides me. It has to do with the way that I'm seeing the world and interpreting life through the camera, and it has to do with my return to light.

When I throw my camera into a chaotic scene and photograph something, I'm not necessarily trying to photograph life as it is, but what it could be through my own personal, subjective interpretation of reality.

At the end of the day, I'm merely curious about how reality will manifest in a photograph.

### **Surprise in the Frame**

When I'm photographing and tinkering, I like putting my camera up to a surface where I don't know what I will find.

These days, I sometimes find myself photographing the reflections on cars. I think the reason why is because cars have these peculiar shapes, and when the light is bouncing across those surfaces, and you move your camera around them, there's just a **surprise in the frame**.

And I think it's really that surprise that keeps me out there photographing.

*It's the surprise in the frame that keeps me out there.*

### **You Can Photograph Anywhere**

A lot of the time, when you're out there walking and observing life, it seems like people are just moving from point A to point B. There's nothing to photograph. Maybe you're walking around your hometown and don't feel like you can find anything interesting. Maybe you live in a rural area and don't feel yourself becoming more interested in the life around you.

But when I strip photography down to its essence, and I'm simply curious about light, it no longer matters where I'm located in the world.

It doesn't matter if I'm in a small town or a bustling city. Ultimately, I can look up at the clouds in the sky and watch as the light peers through and touches my sensor. Then when I come home and look at the result, I have something. I'm curious about something there.

There's something about the way I'm shooting these days that keeps me infinitely curious about the mundane.

## **Light Makes the Mundane Interesting**

I'll see a bus roll by on a seemingly boring day in my city, make a photograph in harsh light, and get a surprise back in the frame. I'm just curious about the way the light casts upon things, and how it etches shape and form into surfaces.

I'm snapshotting throughout the day. I'm almost like a **human camera**.

I ran into a street performer yesterday on the street—shout out to Red—and he was like, *“Man, you're a fiend. You're always out here shooting.”* And I'm like, *“Yeah, I'm the most prolific photographer in the city.”*

I'm literally like a human camera, marching through the streets every single day, just curious, in the spirit of play, wondering:

- How is this going to look photographed?
- How is that going to look photographed?

That's what I'm doing.

I'm not hunting for a banger picture, a decisive moment, or something the street photography community will appreciate in my frames. I'm curious about the way that **light renders upon my sensor**.

## **Light Is What Guides Me**

That's really what keeps me out there—this insatiable lust for light, and of course my love for life. But really, it's **light that guides me**.

Whether it's a cloudy day, a sunny day, harsh light, or golden light, I find that the way light casts upon the world creates **infinite possibility** through photography.

And that's the essence of the medium. It's light itself.

You think about a painter using paint, or somebody drawing with charcoal. We use **light**.

That's why photography is so infinitely fascinating to me. We work in embodied reality, out there in the physical world, using light as our medium. And at the end of the day, we don't necessarily have to state a fact in the frames we make. We have the ability to interpret the world subjectively.

### **How Will Life Look Photographed?**

When I'm out there photographing, I'm not trying to make a great photograph. I'm simply curious about how life looks photographed.

And so I encourage you to think more critically about the way that you can use light as a way to remain curious about life.

That's my underlying curiosity these days:

**How will life look photographed?**

**How will light be interpreted by the sensor on my camera?**

And so yeah, those are my thoughts for the day.

Thank you for watching, and I'll see you in the next one.

Peace.