

Daily Photography Protocol: Keep the Camera With You

The Daily Photography Protocol

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

Currently going for a glorious walk here in the sun at Penn's Landing, Philadelphia. And today's simple thought and idea is for daily photography, you know, the protocol.

Just keep the camera with you.

I mean, when you have a camera that just slips in your pocket, you take it out, you turn it on, you pop that red filter, and you snap the button, you just find that the whole practice, the whole medium of photography is effortless.

It doesn't get in the way of you living and experiencing life.

That's the whole protocol.

Just integrate photography so radically where it disappears from your day-to-day life.

Photograph What You Genuinely Enjoy

Only photograph things and only go to places to photograph that you genuinely enjoy photographing.

I think it's really simple.

If anything in your practice is becoming a bore, or a chore, or feels like a job, where you're making these checklists and ideas that you have to execute each day, I don't think it's sustainable.

We have to go beyond these basic notions in photography:

technical mastery, storytelling, the ability of the photographer to synthesize the content with the formalities of composition, and all of these superfluous things.

Set these to the wayside.

Photography is merely a way for me to affirm my life, to say yes with the click of the shutter.

It gives my life purpose and meaning despite the external outcome of whether or not the photos are good, or somebody validates them, or checks them off with some metric of success.

The Noise of Contemporary Photography

These ideas in contemporary photography are very lame to me.

This contest culture of judging photos based upon whether the photographer has the ability to stock more complexity, or add this little sprinkle in the background that ties things together in the foreground.

Or these basic ideas around photography:

Is that street photography or not?

Is this documentary photography or photojournalism?

All these categories and topics of discussion are such a distraction.

99% of contemporary photography culture is noise. The 1% signal is within your heart.

It's within that spiritedness, within your core, that drives you to make photographs.

It's not about fitting yourself in a box and working on this story, this theme, this contrived narrative or idea that you're trying to impose with your ego upon the work.

As if you have this duty to the world with your practice.

Like you're going to change the world with your photography or something.

It's kind of funny to me.

Photography Beyond Photography

The idea is to use photography beyond photography.

It's just a way to exist.

It's a way to affirm life and that you exist.

I think about photography as a way for me to combat against the existential fact that you're going to die.

Photography is merely a vehicle that gets you closer to the moment, that keeps you here right now.

My approach is photographing every single day, repetitively walking the same mundane space and the same streets daily, but finding new ways to articulate everything for the way that I internally feel and perceive life.

What it comes down to is your inner curiosity, your courage, your sensitivity, the way that you feel about life, and the way that you engage with humanity.

That influences the way that you practice your photography.

And I find that the most impactful photographs are the ones that go unnoticed.

The quiet moments.

The personal moments.

The ones that carry emotional weight.

Forget Everything You Think You Know

Honestly, I don't even necessarily consider the act of making photographs an act of self-expression.

I think about photography as a way for me to unlearn everything.

A way for me to discover the novelty and mystery of life.

There's such a mystery of everyday existence that we overlook as we move through the motions each day and force ourselves to be productive.

But when you sit back, relax, allow your mind to go fallow, walk slow, embrace the moment, respond with your camera, and chip away each day at things, you become more grateful for life generally.

You become more joyful as a human being.

And as you're photographing from that state of being, you discover new things, learn new things, and increase your curiosity and joy for life.

Life Is a Video Game

After meeting somebody out here dancing by the water, the vibe is basically this:

Stop taking your life so seriously.

No, seriously.

Life is a video game.

Just explore, have fun, interact with people, and be more open to all people.

That's one of the things I'm most grateful for with photography.

It's given me this ability to engage with humanity in such a nuanced way, where I can interact with pretty much anybody and just have great conversation, make memories, go on adventures, photograph, and live.

I'm Not Hunting

You can argue that you can tell a story about a moment, a place, or a thing. You can follow somebody around and make photos of their everyday life, or go to a new community and photograph that community and tell some sort of story.

But what I am most interested in with this medium is that it allows me to forget everything I think I know.

It allows moments, people, and interactions to flow toward me.

And then I'm simply there, prepared with my camera, photographing my way through everyday life.

I'm not hunting.

I'm not looking.

I'm not trying to say anything.

I'm not trying to tell stories.

If anything, I'm just trying to discover new things.

I'm trying to uncover the mystery of everyday life.

Craving the Surprise

Even on the most practical technical level, with the way the camera interprets light, the way the light emanates through the lens and touches the camera sensor, what I seek to achieve through this practice is surprising myself.

Keeping myself curious about life.

I find that curiosity is fueled through the medium, through the way that light touches my camera sensor.

Ultimately, the way I'm thinking about photography is about going beyond reality.

Trying to discover what life looks like when you photograph it.

The way that I find my curiosity these days is through returning to day one each day.

Just snapshotting through the day.

Not trying to contrive the composition.

Not trying too hard visually.

I kind of just throw the camera around, move my body into the scene, and arrange things naturally and physically.

Through those imperfections, I discover new things with the medium.

New ways that light is interpreted through my camera.

The way moments and gestures align.

The way composition falls in place.

I'm craving the surprise.

The surprise of the medium.

Surrender to What Is Out of Your Control

You have to surrender yourself to the medium.

Surrender yourself to what is out of your control.

What is out of my control is the light.

I can't control the way the light is going to cast upon the world, or the way it's going to interact with the surface.

I'm not in control of whether or not I'm going to see a joyous moment of somebody dancing on the outskirts of the city where there's hardly anybody.

I'm not in control of these things.

But what I'm in control of is waking up with eagerness and enthusiasm for life.

Through that enthusiasm, curiosity, and courage, I carry myself out there to photograph more and surprise myself more.

Through playing more.

Through letting go.

Through forgetting everything I think I know.

When you recognize that you know nothing, you let go of all these superfluous ideas about photography.

Because it has nothing to do with photography.

This medium is a way for you to cultivate a way of being, a way of engaging with everyday life, and affirming your existence.

Just waking up in the morning and pushing your rock uphill.

And then you smile when it rolls back down each night, because you know that you're going to come back out in the morning and push it right back up again.

So after meeting my new friend Dominic Sofia, Dante Sisofo is going to return to his mythos of pushing his rock endlessly.