

Solitude, Alienation, and Photography

On the Front Lines of Life

What's poppin' people? Dante.

Currently enjoying the day here under the sun at the Delaware River. Check it out. Beautiful view. Beautiful day.

Summer is here, and I'm here to play.

Today's thought is about **solitude, alienation, loneliness, photography, and art generally.**

I recently was speaking to an artist who was discussing these themes in their art, and I think it's interesting because as photographers, we're bystanders. We're observers. We're noticing patterns in nature, human behavior, looking at the light, engaging with people, and sort of on the perimeter of life.

We're chipping away at the life around us. We're observant. We're sensitive. We're feeling deeply.

Despite that act of observation, and perhaps a feeling of alienation in terms of you not being within the scene that you're photographing, I feel like I am there.

I feel like I am a participant in life, in the thing itself that I'm photographing, as much as I'm simply observing that.

Photography is a way for me to feel alive.

Photography as Connection

For me, photography is a way to feel alive. I'm engaging my senses. I'm observing and feeling and following my curiosity.

There's this spiritedness that carries me out to engage with life.

While we are observers of life, I find that ultimately, we're on the front lines of life as photographers.

We might be observing things from this period of solitude, walking and navigating aimlessly through the streets, but there is something so profound and hard to articulate through the way that I feel about life.

There's this connectedness as the observer to the subject that is fueled by love and joy and this abundance of gratitude for life.

The Alienation of Modern Life

In this modern world, we're isolated.

Working from home, in cubicles, offices, going through the routine of day-to-day existence. Returning to your little box inside, going to sleep, watching TV, going to bed.

A lot of life is in a period of isolation in cities.

Not naturally, but due to the way everything is set up with hierarchies and bureaucracies. You have to go through this whole rigmarole, this ritual of telecommunications, sending emails, resumes, interacting with HR, listening for phone calls, setting alarms, responding to emails.

Now all these things are being automated with AI agents, which is kind of funny.

What we experience in cities is this strange sense of alienation, considering modern communication. It's an unnatural way of communicating.

The antidote to that is embracing solitude, but simultaneously being engaged in reality on the front lines of life.

Using photography as a way for you to communicate and interact with the world despite that feeling of alienation that's inevitable when you're within a modern city like Philadelphia, where we stack ourselves on top of each other and work within confined spaces, interacting with technology as a way to communicate.

Alone, But Connected to Everything

Photography is this profound experience.

While you are alone, while you are photographing, despite that, I feel this abundance of connection to the world.

Despite being this speck of dust orbiting around a ball of fire, floating out into the void of space, here on this earth, on this 3D plane, you feel like you're connected to everything and everybody.

When I'm at spaces like this, where I can see the horizon, look at the clouds, enjoy the sun, I feel this more so.

There is something about the openness of the space. Even just looking out at those cars moving on the bridge, I feel everything at once.

It's a sublime feeling. It's kind of overwhelming, but it's really beautiful.

What I'm ultimately articulating is that while alone, while in solitude, while wandering through life with your camera, you feel connected to everything.

And that, to me, is why I love photography.

It makes me feel something. It makes me feel alive.

The Beauty of the Physical

Perhaps these themes of solitude, alienation, and loneliness are evoked through images.

I'm making lots of minimalist compositions. A lot of subjects are isolated in frames. These days, I'm mostly photographing single subjects, not necessarily focused on scenes.

Those qualities maybe just naturally evoke through the imagery.

Ultimately, you're not going to live forever, but at least you can make a photograph.

Through making photographs, you find yourself more connected. Despite isolation, you feel connection. You feel something.

In this world of consumption, numbness, passivity, and strange ways of communicating, photography makes me grateful.

It gets me to that point where time kind of doesn't exist.

Life is worth living.

Life Worth Living

Maybe one of these thoughts resonates with you, if you also contemplate these ideas as street photographers.

You're pretty much 99% of the time alone.

But the beauty of this medium is the physicality of it.

While it's easy to get caught up in your head, photography puts you into your physical body. You're required to walk, to be under the sun, to observe, to be physical.

Life is just so beautiful.

There are so many possibilities. So many people to meet, places to visit, things to photograph.

Photography unlocks this infinite expanse in my imagination that fuels me with gratitude and sensation.

The life worth living is physical, engaged in the world, observing, responding.

Through photography, I feel more connected, despite perhaps being viewed externally as the photographer who might seem disconnected.

The Thought

I just wanted to reflect on this idea and share these thoughts because it's definitely something I consider.

There's something about these kinds of locations. The water flowing, the vastness of the sky.

I don't know why, but it makes me feel alive.

It makes me feel connected to life.

And that's the thought.

Let's try to make a photograph of that couple that's connected and sleeping on the benches here.

Maybe that's the perfect moment to photograph now.

Ricoh GR IV. Monochrome. Snapshotting.

Yes.