

How Archiving My City Changed the Way I See Street Photography

Yo, what's poppin' people? It's Dante.

Today I want to share some thoughts on archiving your city and how this can bring more joy to your photography practice.

I've been practicing street photography for around 12 years. I've spent countless hours wandering aimlessly through cities, traveling the world, looking for my next best photograph. Always searching. Always hunting. Always looking for something visually and emotionally interesting.

And if you've done street photography for any length of time, you know the reality:

It's hard.

It's difficult to come home with a photograph that feels meaningful. A frame that checks all the boxes—content, subject, composition, light, timing, emotion.

All of these things have to come together at once.

And most days, they don't.

What Are We Actually In Control Of?

One thing I've learned is that in street photography, you're really only in control of two things:

- Having your camera with you
- Moving your physical body through the world

You're not in control of whether something interesting appears.

You're not in control of whether you make a powerful photograph.

You're simply responsible for showing up.

And that realization can be overwhelming.

What do I photograph? Where do I go? How do I increase my chances of making something meaningful?

For me, the answer has been surprisingly simple:

Find a route and repeat it.

Walk the same streets.

Build a routine.

Return again and again.

Surveying Philadelphia

What I'm working toward now is surveying Philadelphia street by street and documenting the entirety of the city.

So far:

- 80 miles walked
- 13 street projects completed
- 42 hours spent walking
- 13 zines produced in two weeks

And I'm just getting started.

The most recent work came from Allegheny Avenue.

Every photograph is geotagged.

Every image lives on a map.

Every walk becomes part of a growing archive.

There's a digital archive you can scroll through, and there's a physical component too. You can add photographs to a zine and print them when you've collected enough images.

The archive exists both digitally and physically.

And that's where things started to change for me.

From The Single Image To The Archive

Instead of chasing one great photograph, I've become interested in the accumulation of photographs.

The archive.

The document.

The record.

When I'm photographing now, I'm no longer thinking about myself as an artist searching for something poetic.

I'm thinking about photography in its most basic form:

A tool for preserving space and time.

I'm documenting what Philadelphia looks like today.

June 15, 2026.

Maybe a photograph isn't remarkable right now.

But what about 100 years from now?

What if someone wants to know what North 35th Street looked like at 10:24 AM on June 14th?

What buildings were there?

What signs existed?

What condition were they in?

That's where this becomes interesting.

Every image includes:

- GPS coordinates
- Camera settings
- Time and date
- Location metadata

You can open the exact location in Google Maps and stand where I stood when I made the photograph.

Preserving A City In Transition

Philadelphia is changing.

Buildings are decaying.

Signs are fading.

Neighborhoods are transforming.

And I want to preserve this period of change.

Not just the people.

Everything.

The windows.

The doorways.

The houses.

The fountains.

The sculptures.

The infrastructure.

The signs that have been hanging for decades.

The details we walk past every day.

All of it.

Because these things tell stories too.

Removing The Pressure

One of the biggest benefits of this project is that it removes the pressure of street photography.

I'm no longer dependent on finding something extraordinary.

I'm no longer dependent on creating sensational images.

I'm simply surveying the land.

Documenting space and time.

And it brings me an incredible amount of joy.

The endless decisions disappear.

Where should I go?

What should I photograph?

How do I make something better?

Those questions become irrelevant.

The mission is already clear.

Walk the street.

Document it.

Preserve it.

The Archive Is The Artwork

Something unexpected happened.

The artwork stopped being the individual photographs.

The artwork became the archive itself.

Watching the map fill up.

Seeing miles accumulate.

Creating a zine every day.

Watching the city light up street by street.

It feels like playing a video game.

And it's incredibly satisfying.

The output isn't the single image anymore. The output is the archive.

The Power Of Constraints

I've given myself a very strict creative constraint.

Start at one point.

End at another.

Stay on one street.

Don't wander left.

Don't wander right.

Just follow the route.

And I believe these constraints will eventually lead to creative breakthroughs.

By surveying the city repeatedly over years, I increase my chances of discovering something unexpected.

A new way of seeing.

A new way of photographing.

A new relationship with the city.

Constraints create possibilities.

Photographing More Than People

For most of my life, I've been interested primarily in photographing people.

Now I'm interested in photographing everything.

The mundane.

The ordinary.

The overlooked.

Most of the images I'm making are buildings.

Doorways.

Infrastructure.

Objects.

Not people.

And yet I believe these things reveal just as much about humanity as a portrait ever could.

Human beings inhabit these spaces.

These structures are reflections of us.

This shift has completely changed the way I photograph.

And that's exactly why I can't stop.

Change Creates Joy

I've realized that repeating yourself endlessly leads to stagnation.

Burnout.

Frustration.

The goal is not to preserve a style forever.

The goal is to remain motivated.

To remain curious.

To keep moving.

For me, that means embracing change.

Both internally and externally.

Changing the way I think.

Changing the work I make.

Changing the subjects I pay attention to.

And through that change, I've found more joy in photography than I've felt in a long time.

Preserving The Fleeting Nature Of Life

At its core, this project reflects how I think about photography.

And honestly, how I think about life.

Photography is about preserving what is disappearing.

It's about holding onto moments that are already slipping away.

The fleeting nature of existence.

The temporary nature of cities.

The impermanence of everything.

This project allows me to express those ideas through the work itself.

And the resulting photographs feel completely different from anything I've made before.

That's why I keep returning.

Join The Project

If you're interested in archiving your own city, you can use the Geotag Catalog on my website.

Photographers are already documenting places around the world.

We've got projects from:

- San Francisco
- France
- Los Angeles

All using the same format.

You can submit a walk, upload your photographs, and I'll review and process the project.

Every project is downloadable.

You can even host the archive on your own website and maintain a permanent record of your work.

The goal is simple:

Document your city.

Preserve your environment.

Create an archive that outlives you.

And enjoy the process along the way.

Those are the thoughts of the day.

I'll see you in the next video.

Peace.