

## How Constraints Create Better Street Photography

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

Welcome to FLUX Weekly Witness #9, where I look at the photographs submitted by members of the FLUX community. Today we're looking at FLUX 4 by Brad Pickle, a collection of photographs made between June 1st and June 10th.

:contentReference[oaicite:0]{index=0}

One thing that immediately stood out to me was a conversation Brad and I had before this project. He told me he wanted **more constraints** in his photography. More limitations. More structure.

And honestly, that made me really happy.

One of the constraints he imposed on himself was committing to the **square format**. He found that choosing between horizontal and vertical compositions was creating unnecessary decision fatigue. By removing that choice, he simplified the process and freed himself to focus on seeing.

Most of these photographs were made using the **71mm crop mode on the Ricoh GR IIIx**, pushing compression to become an active part of the visual language.

:contentReference[oaicite:1]{index=1}

### Compression as a Tool for Abstraction

What really resonated with me throughout this work were the graphic elements and textural qualities.

Many of these images have no clear sense of time or place. They exist almost outside reality.

The compression isolates details so effectively that the photographs begin to function less as documents and more as visual artifacts.

A bird framed within empty space.

Parking lot lights floating in darkness.

A mattress leaning against a wall.

Leaves emerging from shadow.

These aren't just photographs of things. They're photographs of shape, texture, light, and mystery.

*The image becomes less about the subject itself and more about the relationship between form, geometry, and space.*

That's where the work starts to move beyond documentation and toward something more emotional.

## **Working With What You Have**

Brad is photographing in Birmingham, Alabama.

He's not walking through Times Square. He's not surrounded by endless streams of people or dramatic street scenes.

And that's exactly why I appreciate this work.

Too many photographers believe they need a better location before they can make meaningful photographs.

Brad proves the opposite.

He's looking at:

- Sidewalk markings
- One-way signs

- Shadows
- Textures
- Patterns in architecture
- Small details most people overlook

He's finding material in ordinary life.

And that's what excites me.

*Great photography often begins when you stop waiting for something interesting to happen.*

### **Looking at the World Like a Canvas**

As I moved through the zine, I kept coming back to the same idea:

Brad isn't looking at the world as documentary material.

He's looking at it like a canvas.

The photographs are organized around visual relationships rather than narrative ones.

Leaves overlap and create texture.

Signs become graphic symbols.

Patterns become compositions.

The world gets reduced into shapes, forms, and tonal relationships.

That approach creates photographs that feel closer to drawings or fine art prints than traditional documentary photographs.

## **The Importance of Mystery**

One of the strongest qualities in this work is ambiguity.

There's a photograph featuring what appear to be handprints layered beneath a pattern of lines.

I don't completely understand what's happening in the frame.

And that's exactly why it works.

The compression creates uncertainty.

The square frame isolates the subject.

The photograph leaves room for interpretation.

*Mystery invites the viewer into the image.*

Instead of explaining everything, the photograph creates questions.

That tension is what keeps certain images alive long after you've looked at them.

## **Building a Personal Mythology**

What impressed me most is that Brad is creating his own visual world.

Despite photographing in familiar surroundings, the images feel detached from everyday reality.

They become fragments.

Artifacts.

Remnants of something larger.

A blurred figure in a tunnel.

Paper textures on a wall.

Dark surfaces with strange markings.

Graphic signs transformed into abstract forms.

Taken together, they create a feeling rather than a description.

And that feeling is what stays with me.

### **My Favorite Images**

A few photographs stood out immediately.

The spread featuring the handprints and the sign with tape layered across it is probably my favorite in the entire sequence.

The human element adds impact, while the tape introduces a subtle texture that elevates the graphic quality of the frame.

I also loved:

- The isolated leaf emerging from darkness
- The minimalist spread featuring dirt and leaves
- The photograph that resembles the side of a spaceship, split perfectly down the middle
- The bird sequence moving from wire to flight

These images demonstrate a strong sensitivity to composition, texture, and visual reduction.

## **Why Constraints Matter**

The biggest lesson from this project isn't about square format.

It's about constraints.

By limiting his options, Brad discovered a new way of seeing.

The square frame changed how he organized information.

The compressed focal length changed how he interpreted space.

The combination led him toward photographs that feel less like documents and more like works of art.

*Sometimes the fastest way forward is by removing choices.*

And that's exactly what happened here.

## **Final Thoughts**

Brad, I really resonate with this work.

What you're doing with compression, texture, ambiguity, and the square format feels fresh.

It feels personal.

It feels like you're discovering something.

And that's the most exciting place a photographer can be.

Keep pushing.

Keep experimenting.

Keep following this thread.

I genuinely think you're onto something.

Peace.