

Flux Archive 001 — Why I Switched to Black & White Photography

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

Welcome to today's Flux Archive session where I'm going to look through some of my photographs and simply talk about them candidly.

Here we have **Flux Issue 001**. These are photographs I made during my early journey in black and white photography, from **November 2022 through February 2023**. These were some of my very first experiments after completely changing the way I approached photography.

Returning From Vietnam Changed Everything

When I came home from Hanoi, Vietnam, I was still photographing in color.

I was looking for my next best photograph.

I was walking through bustling markets, searching for interesting moments, practicing within the realm of documentary photography, always hunting for something visually compelling.

When I returned home, I completely transformed my practice.

I sold all of my Fujifilm equipment and picked up the Ricoh GR.

From that point forward I began shooting JPEGs in a high-contrast black and white workflow.

It completely transformed the way I experience life and the way I see the world.

I stopped looking for my next best photograph.

Instead, I began affirming that **my next photograph is my best photograph.**

Photography became a visual diary.

"I went from looking for my next best photo to affirming my next photo as my best photo."

Photography Needed To Become Sustainable

As soon as I got back from Vietnam, I realized I needed to change my process if I wanted photography to remain part of my life for the long term.

I found it exhausting to constantly go out hoping to make something.

Always searching.

Always hunting.

Always feeling like I needed to find the perfect photograph.

It kept me from actually living.

Now I simply carry the Ricoh GR in my pocket, live my everyday life, photograph what I naturally encounter, and honestly...

I don't take photography that seriously anymore.

Ironically, that's exactly what made my photographs stronger.

The Beginning Of Flux

The first frame in this issue was made during the Thanksgiving Day Parade when the fountain opened in Logan Square here in Philadelphia.

A young boy climbing on the Native American sculpture.

The relationship between the hands.

The gesture.

A simple, elegant frame to begin this journey.

From there...

Christmas Village in Center City.

People dancing.

A man with a cross tattoo bending down along Walnut Street.

Reading Terminal Market.

Shafts of light.

Once I switched to black and white, I wasn't only focused on humanity anymore.

I started paying attention to the mundane.

Light.

Landscapes.

Simple moments.

Things directly in front of me.

Learning To Let Life Come To Me

Some photographs were made while riding my bike.

Others while walking home as it started raining.

Everything became much more instinctive.

In the past I spent a lot of time thinking about composition.

Foreground.

Background.

Balance.

Structure.

Those lessons were valuable.

But with this new process, I intentionally started breaking those habits.

The photographs became less perfect.

Some frames tilt.

Some feel accidental.

Some only show fragments of people.

Because now I'm treating photography like a visual diary instead of trying to construct perfect images.

I'm no longer hunting.

I'm letting life flow toward me.

And I think that naturally reveals itself in the photographs.

Finding Beauty In The Mundane

You'll notice clouds.

Buildings.

People standing in front of walls.

Weather.

Shadows.

Reflections.

I'm looking upward at skyscrapers.

Looking downward at the ground.

Paying attention to everything.

The biggest takeaway from this first body of work is simple:

Black and white creatively liberated me.

It returned me to day one.

It gave me permission to play again.

And I think that's ultimately where I want to stay.

Using photography simply to fuel curiosity.

Curiosity Is The Entire Game

My process is simple.

I crush the shadows.

I expose for the highlights.

Then I let the camera surprise me.

Sometimes faces emerge beautifully from darkness.

Sometimes backgrounds disappear entirely.

Sometimes the abstraction created by black and white reveals something I never expected.

Those surprises are what keep me coming back every single day.

"I'm simply curious about what life looks like when it's photographed."

That curiosity feels endless.

Photographing Differently

I'm no longer limited to horizontal photographs.

Sometimes I hold the camera high overhead.

Sometimes I shoot vertically.

Sometimes I'm looking at birds.

Street signs.

Power lines.

Shoes hanging from wires.

The back of someone's head.

Tiny gestures.

Small details.

Macro mode.

Things I would have completely ignored before.

My primary interest is still humanity.

But humanity isn't only faces.

It's posture.

Movement.

Hands.

Clothing.

Texture.

Presence.

Infinite Possibility

Front-facing portraits.

Single isolated figures.

Close-up details.

Clouds.

Architecture.

Decay.

Rain.

Light falling across buildings.

A tarp covering a parked car.

The Eagles parade.

Everything became worth photographing.

By stripping away color, I found infinite possibility inside everyday life.

Whether it's sunny...

Cloudy...

Raining...

It doesn't matter anymore.

I no longer wait for perfect light.

I'm interested in how light simply exists.

Three And A Half Years Later

I've now been photographing this way for over three and a half years.

It has completely transformed how I experience everyday life.

It has brought me more joy than any previous way of working.

Over the coming weeks we'll continue looking through my work.

We'll also review photographs submitted by members of the community.

My hope is to help orient you toward a sustainable photographic practice.

One that removes friction.

One that keeps you making photographs for decades.

Removing Friction From Photography

The entire system I've built revolves around removing unnecessary decisions.

- A compact camera.
- Automatic settings.
- JPEG processing baked into the file.
- Culling on an iPhone or iPad.
- Publishing to my own website.
- No dependence on Instagram.

Every step removes friction.

Every step makes photography easier to return to.

More joyful.

More authentic.

Your Style Comes From Instinct

I believe you and I can use the exact same workflow and still produce completely different bodies of work.

Because style isn't created through aesthetic decisions.

It isn't color versus black and white.

It isn't presets.

It isn't editing.

Your style emerges after you've removed as many decisions as possible.

When all that's left is instinct.

I've reduced photography to a black box.

A shutter button.

Light.

Shadow.

Pure instinct.

That's where I believe your real photographic voice begins.

"Your style as a photographer isn't something that arises through aesthetic decisions. It arises through removing decisions and cultivating instinct."

Hopefully sharing this process helps you discover that for yourself.

I hope we can all continue making work together and find more joy through photography.

Peace.