

How High Contrast Black & White Transformed My Photography

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

Today I want to share some thoughts on how I've been shooting **high contrast black and white photography** for over three years now—and what I've learned.

I've been photographing for around 12 years. For the first seven years, I photographed in color, making RAW files in a documentary, humanist approach.

But over the past three and a half years, I've been shooting **high contrast black and white JPEGs**.

No friction. No processing. No bullshit.

Honestly, this has completely transformed my practice.

The Power of Abstraction

It's incredible what stripping away the complexity of color can do.

After more than three years of dedicated practice, I can confidently say why.

Black and white naturally abstracts reality.

We see the world in color.

Life is color.

We don't experience reality in black and white.

And that's exactly where its superpower lies.

It has accelerated my growth as a photographer because every day now feels like **day one**.

There's always infinite potential to evolve.

Simply by removing color, I can walk through an ordinary, seemingly mundane place and discover something entirely new.

The interaction of light and shadow.

Shape and form.

Contrast.

All of these elements become elevated through abstraction.

Suddenly, there's always another way to play the game.

Beyond Reality

To me, the ultimate gift of photography lies in spontaneity.

It lives in surprise.

It lives in mistakes.

It lives in imperfection.

When I photographed in color, what I saw was essentially what I got.

But black and white gives me something different.

When you photograph in black and white, what you get back is what you didn't see.

You're going beyond reality.

That surprise has become my greatest motivation to continue making photographs.

It's the reason I adopted this workflow in the first place.

I had hit a wall.

I no longer saw room to grow.

So I simplified everything.

Not just so I could improve—but so I could sustain photography for the rest of my life.

Removing Every Point of Friction

I never want to burn out.

And I realized the best way to avoid burnout was to remove everything unnecessary.

No RAW files.

No endless hard drives.

No complicated editing.

No Lightroom.

Just a small JPEG workflow with the contrast pushed to the extreme.

Everything lives on my iPad.

I import directly into the Photos app using a USB-C dongle.

That's it.

The entire practice has been reduced to its simplest form.

Drawing With Light

Photography literally means **drawing with light**.

When I photograph with high contrast black and white, it feels like I'm creating an instant sketch made entirely of light itself.

Even traditional black and white photography contains layers of tonal complexity.

But by pushing the contrast to the maximum, those complexities disappear.

Everything becomes immediate.

Fast.

Simple.

Frictionless.

With automatic settings on the Ricoh GR, I simply press the shutter and the image already exists.

But the beauty is that the photograph always surprises me.

The camera reveals something I couldn't fully see with my own eyes.

And that's what keeps me curious.

Curiosity Over Perfection

At the end of the day, I'm simply curious about what life looks like photographed.

If I shoot in color...

I already know.

But black and white introduces uncertainty.

It introduces wonder.

And ultimately, this entire practice is about cultivating curiosity.

It's about approaching everyday life with a sense of discovery.

400,000 Frames

Over the past three and a half years, I've made around **400,000 photographs**.

Every single one of them fits comfortably on a **2TB iPad Pro**.

No complicated backup systems.

No massive storage costs.

No unnecessary software.

Everything remains lightweight.

Everything remains accessible.

Printing Has Never Been Easier

The simplicity extends into printing.

A small JPEG easily produces a beautiful **17×22 inch print** on my Canon Pro-1000.

The files remain tack sharp.

But honestly, some of my favorite prints aren't expensive at all.

I love printing on ordinary copy paper.

Monochrome laser printers.

DIY zines.

Staples copy paper.

The imperfections of toner.

The texture.

The slight inconsistencies.

They feel honest.

They feel alive.

High contrast black and white looks beautiful on almost anything.

I've printed on:

- Shirts
- Thermal printers
- Label makers
- Stickers

- Office copy paper

The medium simply adapts.

The technical friction disappears.

Looking Beyond Reality

This workflow hasn't only changed my technical process.

It's changed how I see the world.

Now it feels like I'm looking beyond ordinary reality.

Every moment feels interesting.

Not because the subject is extraordinary.

But because black and white continually surprises me.

I'm no longer dependent on:

- Interesting locations
- Interesting subjects
- Perfect conditions

Instead, I focus on something much more important.

My instincts.

Style Comes From Instinct

The biggest lesson I've learned is this:

High contrast black and white is one of the fastest ways to cultivate instinct.

When you remove technical friction, you naturally begin responding from your gut.

And I believe that's where authentic style comes from.

I don't think style comes from choosing color or black and white.

Style comes from consistency.

Repetition.

Responding to your instincts over and over again.

Eventually, thinking disappears.

Only instinct remains.

Photography Without Thinking

These days, I photograph loosely.

Spontaneously.

Using the LCD screen.

Rarely bringing the camera to my eye.

I respond from my body rather than my intellect.

Over time, that consistent relationship with instinct becomes your visual language.

That's what I love most about this practice.

Everything unnecessary fades away.

Only seeing remains.

The Simplest Way to Practice Photography

My theory is simple.

This is the simplest way to practice photography in 2026.

I honestly don't believe you can strip the medium down any further than:

- A Ricoh GR
- High contrast black and white
- Small JPEG files
- No editing
- No friction

Everything else becomes secondary.

Because the real practice isn't about technology.

It's about cultivating your instincts.

The simpler the process becomes, the easier it is to hear your own voice.

Final Thoughts

Shooting high contrast black and white photography for the past three years has completely transformed both my life and my daily practice.

It's simplified everything.

Technically.

Philosophically.

Creatively.

Most importantly, it's allowed me to approach photography with curiosity instead of expectation.

And that's the practice I want to sustain for the rest of my life.

If this inspired you, thanks for reading.

Peace.