

The Photography System That Made Me Massively More Prolific

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

Today I've been thinking about **systems**—and why building a system for my photography completely changed the way I create.

More specifically, it's why I've become far more prolific and why I feel like my photography has improved much faster than it ever did before.

Build a System, Not Just a Workflow

A few years ago, I created a workflow around the Ricoh GR.

I stripped almost everything away.

All I'm left with is a small black camera and a shutter button.

I shoot in automatic mode.

Small JPEGs.

High Contrast Black & White with the settings pushed to the maximum.

That's it.

Every decision that could create hesitation has already been made.

When I pick up the camera, all that's left is instinct.

Constraints Eliminate Decision Fatigue

This is what I mean by a **system**.

You're creating constraints.

Imagine waking up every day asking yourself:

- Which camera should I use?
- Which lens?
- Should I shoot color?
- Black and white?
- RAW?
- JPEG?

Every one of those decisions costs mental energy.

Eventually, you become mentally fatigued before you've even made a photograph.

The fewer decisions I have to make...

The easier it becomes to simply respond.

Photography Is Instinct

I don't think photography primarily requires intelligence.

I think it requires movement.

Curiosity.

Gut instinct.

When you remove technical friction, your instincts become much louder.

You stop hesitating.

You simply see...

...and respond.

That's why building a system from the ground up—camera, settings, workflow—is so important.

Every Great Photographer Has Constraints

When you look closely, most prolific photographers have some kind of system.

Some always use flash.

Some stay with one focal length for decades.

Some photograph one subject repeatedly.

The specifics don't matter.

The consistency does.

I simply built a system that makes photography effortless.

And when photography becomes effortless...

It becomes enjoyable.

Why I Chose Small JPEGs

Another source of friction has always been file management.

RAW files.

Backups.

External hard drives.

Storage.

Waiting for imports.

Waiting for exports.

Waiting for Lightroom.

For me, all of those things slow photography down.

Working with small JPEG files completely changed that.

Each file is only around 4 MB.

They import almost instantly.

They're easy to archive.

And I never have to think about them.

Four Years, One Hard Drive

One of the craziest realizations I've had is this:

Over roughly four years, I've filled a single 2 TB hard drive with around **400,000 photographs**.

One drive.

No elaborate backup system.

No stack of external drives.

No constantly managing storage while traveling.

Compared to my old workflow—where every trip meant carrying hard drives and spending evenings backing everything up—it feels unbelievably freeing.

That simplicity matters.

Remove the Technical, Focus on the Moment

Because everything technical has already been decided...

I don't think about settings anymore.

I don't think about files.

I don't think about cameras.

I think about what's happening in front of me.

The moment becomes the priority.

Style Comes From Instinct

One of my core beliefs is this:

Style is born from instinct—not aesthetics.

You could copy my exact workflow.

The same camera.

The same settings.

The same JPEG profile.

And we'd still make completely different photographs.

Because what shows through isn't the camera.

It's you.

The camera simply removes the barriers.

Your instinct creates the work.

Constraints Create Freedom

It sounds like a contradiction.

But I genuinely believe:

More choices create more hesitation. More constraints create more freedom.

Decision fatigue is one of the greatest enemies of creativity.

Creative boxes don't imprison you.

They liberate you.

Because once the decisions disappear...

You can simply create.

One Street at a Time

Recently I've introduced another constraint.

I walk **one street**.

That's it.

I start at one end.

I finish at the other.

I don't turn left.

I don't turn right.

I simply document whatever unfolds along that street.

Buildings.

Architecture.

Infrastructure.

People.

Small moments.

I'm systematically archiving Philadelphia through a project called **Philly in Flux**.

So far I've covered around **100 miles** across roughly **17 major streets**.

Inspired by Eugène Atget

This project was inspired by Eugène Atget's documentation of Paris.

Rather than chasing endless novelty, he patiently recorded the changing city around him.

That idea deeply resonates with me.

Returning.

Repeating.

Observing.

Building an archive over time.

Repetition Creates Mastery

I've noticed that I naturally return to the same streets over and over.

At first that felt repetitive.

Now I think repetition is the point.

When you combine repetition with meaningful creative constraints...

You begin moving toward mastery.

The goal isn't endless novelty.

The goal is seeing familiar places with deeper attention.

Final Thoughts

If there's one thing I'd encourage you to think about, it's this:

How can you remove friction from your photography?

What unnecessary decisions could disappear?

What constraints could actually make you more creative?

Because paradoxically...

The smaller the box you work inside...

The more freedom you often discover.

That's why I've built my entire practice around systems.

Not because they limit creativity.

Because they make creativity effortless.

I'll see you in the next video.

Peace.