

Times Are Hard for the Hopeful | Flux Weekly Witness

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

Welcome to this week's **Flux Weekly Witness**, where I look at the photographs submitted by members of the Flux community.

Today we're looking at "**Times Are Hard for the Hopeful**" by **Matt Newman**.

These photographs were made between **January 1, 2025** and **June 23, 2026** in **Frankston, Australia**.

Matt, thank you for submitting your work.

Let's get right into it.

What Is Flux?

Flux is a chronological publishing system that I've developed on my website.

If you'd like to create your own zines at home, visit [**flux.dantesisofo.com**](https://flux.dantesisofo.com), click the **Tools** tab, and open the **Flux Generator**.

You can upload **36 JPEG files** and automatically generate your own photographic zine.

The only limitations I ask are:

- **Monochrome photography only**
- The work should be sequenced chronologically

I'm intentionally constraining this community around monochrome photography, and I also print these zines on a monochrome laser printer, so the aesthetic stays consistent across everyone's work.

Now let's take a look.

A Body of Work About Isolation and Hope

Right away we're introduced to a lonely pigeon framed between two fences.

Immediately after, we encounter a photograph depicting tragedy—a man asleep beside his shopping cart outside a pawn shop advertising **Cash for Gold**.

The title, **Times Are Hard for the Hopeful**, is felt almost immediately.

It's actually the reason I chose this body of work.

I think it's important as street photographers that we don't only photograph joyful moments, children playing, or family life.

Life is far more complicated than that.

This work embraces those complexities.

Throughout the sequence we encounter struggle, isolation, loneliness, and alienation.

A lone figure disappears into the distance.

Rain-soaked pavement reflects the light.

Murals, alleyways, empty streets, and quiet nighttime scenes all contribute to an emotional atmosphere of solitude.

Photographing Humanity With Empathy

One of the things I appreciate most about Matt's work is that it never feels exploitative.

There's empathy here.

We see portraits of people living difficult lives, but they're photographed with dignity.

One image, in particular, really stands out.

Rather than revealing the identity of a man sleeping rough, the photograph focuses on the elegant gesture created by his hands and arms.

Compositionally it's beautiful.

Emotionally it's devastating.

The balance between making a visually compelling photograph while also creating emotional resonance is incredibly difficult to achieve.

Matt does that consistently throughout this work.

There are clear moments where he's spoken to people and asked permission to make portraits.

That human connection comes through in the photographs.

Looking Beyond People

The work isn't built entirely around portraits.

There are pigeons in flight.

Cracked glass.

Graffiti.

Rainwater pouring from a ceiling.

Empty alleyways.

Broken infrastructure.

These quieter details become just as important as the people themselves.

The monochrome laser printing adds another layer of texture that I really enjoy physically.

If you're curious about this body of work, I encourage you to print it out yourself.

The tactile quality is part of the experience.

The Serendipity of Chronological Sequencing

One of the exciting parts of using the Flux Generator is that everything is sequenced chronologically.

Unexpected relationships begin to appear naturally.

Here we have cracked glass paired with a tiger tattoo on the back of someone's head.

The two centered compositions work beautifully together.

These are moments you don't necessarily plan.

They're discovered through sequencing.

That's one of the things I love about this publishing system.

Finding Emotion in Empty Spaces

Even when people disappear from the frame, the emotional tone remains.

A waterfall pours from a parking garage ceiling.

Simple graffiti catches the light.

A discarded mattress sits beneath a bridge.

A security camera sign hangs above it.

There's something incredibly bleak about that relationship.

The photographs aren't simply documenting urban environments.

They're communicating a feeling.

Seeing the Overlooked

Throughout the work we meet people who exist outside conventional expectations.

Individuals expressing themselves in unique ways.

People carrying visible signs of hardship.

Characters with tattoos, piercings, weathered hands, worn boots, and tired faces.

Matt approaches all of them with empathy.

Life isn't always sunshine and rainbows.

I think it's important that photography reflects that reality.

As photographers, we shouldn't avoid difficult subjects simply because someone tells us we shouldn't photograph them.

Photograph everything.

Strong Compositions Support Strong Emotions

What impressed me wasn't only the emotional content.

The compositions are excellent.

There's a photograph of a man smoking with a cane that uses an enormous amount of negative space.

Normally that might feel empty.

Instead, the vent above him creates enough visual tension to balance the entire frame.

Little decisions like that matter.

Another portrait places a man in front of an advertisement while, opposite it, a photograph of flowers becomes almost abstract through reflections and contrast.

The flowers appear to float in space.

It's a beautiful pairing.

Filling the Frame

One of my favorite spreads includes a close-up of a cigarette held by a rough, weathered hand opposite a portrait of a man looking downward.

The emotional relationship between the photographs is powerful.

Compositionally they're equally strong.

The hand occupies nearly half the frame.

The cigarette becomes the center of attention.

Behind it, the wheel of a bus fills the remaining space with shape, light, and contrast.

Matt isn't only photographing emotion.

He's filling the frame intentionally.

That balance is difficult to achieve.

So shout out to you, Matt.

Paying Attention to Detail

Throughout the sequence there are wonderful detail photographs.

A bird captured at exactly the right moment.

A discarded gravestone lying across scattered bricks.

The subtle relationship between that image and the following photograph of boots decorated with skulls creates another beautiful visual conversation across the page.

These little discoveries reward slow viewing.

That's one of the strengths of this body of work.

Final Thoughts

Today's Flux Weekly Witness comes from **Frankston, Australia**.

I'd never heard of the location before, but I really appreciate you submitting your work.

Times Are Hard for the Hopeful is a thoughtful body of work that balances empathy, strong composition, and emotional honesty.

Thank you again, Matt.

Submit Your Own Flux Zine

If you'd like me to review your work here on the channel, head over to [**flux.dantesisofo.com**](https://flux.dantesisofo.com).

Go to the **Tools** tab and open the **Flux Generator**.

Generate your PDF, click the **Submission** tab, and send it through.

If I enjoy the work, I'll print it, review it here on the channel, and share it with the community.

If your submission is accepted, you'll also receive an invitation to join the **Flux Community Discord**.

If you'd rather join immediately, you can also become a member here on YouTube and receive access that way.

I know I keep comments and likes turned off on this channel.

That isn't because I don't want community.

It's because I want to cultivate authenticity and stay focused on sharing the work that matters to me.

The Flux Community is where those conversations happen.

Thanks again for watching.

I'll see you in the next video.

Peace.