

What 10 Years of Street Photography Taught Me

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

Today I want to share what I've learned after practicing **street photography for over a decade**.

When you're getting into street photography, it's easy to become overwhelmed by everything you see online.

You watch YouTube videos.

You study photo books.

You learn about Magnum photographers.

You admire Winogrand's chaos, Bruce Gilden's intensity, Alex Webb's layers of color and light.

You begin asking yourself:

How should I photograph?

What kind of pictures should I make?

What's the right path?

It's important to study the masters.

It's important to build a visual foundation and understand what makes a strong photograph.

But eventually, there comes a point where you have to let all of that go.

Photography Has Nothing to Do With Photography

After more than ten years of practicing, I've realized something.

Photography has very little to do with photography.

It isn't about making a complicated frame.

It isn't about one-upping someone else.

It isn't about winning contests.

It isn't even about impressing the viewer.

Your photographs are simply a reflection of **your internal state**.

The way you feel about life inevitably expresses itself through your pictures.

Your experiences.

The places you inhabit.

The people you meet.

The way you engage with humanity.

Everything eventually shows itself through your photographs.

Your Childhood Is Still Photographing

I've always been a curious and courageous person.

Growing up in Philadelphia, I had the Wissahickon Forest in my backyard.

As a kid, I explored constantly.

I built teepees.

Sharpened sticks into spears.

Climbed the tallest trees.

Built bridges from stones.

Rode my bike for miles.

I was always chasing the unknown.

That adventurous spirit eventually carried into photography.

It brought me to West Baltimore.

To refugee camps in Palestine.

To volunteering on a kibbutz in Israel.

To living with a Palestinian family.

To the mosques of Jericho.

To serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia.

To the streets of Mumbai.

The mountains surrounding Mexico City.

The markets of Hanoi.

Looking back now, I realize photography was never the reason I traveled.

Curiosity was.

Photography simply became the vehicle.

Style Is Your Personality

Think about Saul Leiter.

He spent years photographing quietly from his apartment window.

That was authentic to him.

Everyone has their own personality.

Their own rhythm.

Their own way of moving through the world.

That's where style comes from.

Not presets.

Not gear.

Not copying photographers you admire.

Your style is born from the way you naturally engage with life.

Don't become trapped by ideas about what you should photograph.

Instead, ask yourself:

Who are you?

Once you know who you are, your photographs begin making themselves.

Composition Is the Easy Part

People obsess over composition.

Lighting.

Timing.

Storytelling.

Honestly...

Those things are the easy part.

A photograph is simply the byproduct of where you place your body in relationship to the moment.

Life is a visual puzzle.

You move.

You see.

You frame.

You respond.

Composition can be learned.

Study great photographs.

Study your own mistakes.

Repeat.

But none of it matters if you never develop the courage to actually be present where photographs happen.

Remove Every Distraction

If you want to improve, remove everything that gets in the way.

Stick to one camera.

One lens.

Stop chasing gear.

Honestly...

Most photographers stunt their own growth because they're constantly buying something new.

Shoot with your iPhone if that's what you have.

You'll grow faster than someone constantly switching cameras.

Gear isn't the solution.

It's often the problem.

The same goes for film.

If you love film because you enjoy the process, that's wonderful.

But if your goal is growth...

Recognize when the process itself becomes friction.

The less friction you have, the more attention you can give to seeing.

Street Photography Is Difficult

Street photography is one of the hardest forms of photography.

You're working in constantly changing social environments.

You have to respond instantly.

Your timing matters.

Your instincts matter.

Nothing is predictable.

Which is exactly why you have to simplify everything else.

The camera should disappear.

It should feel effortless.

That doesn't mean every day will produce great photographs.

Far from it.

Looking back over my own archive...

If I made **one truly successful photograph each month**, I considered that a good month.

That's the reality.

Consistency Beats Talent

The only path forward is repetition.

Walk more.

See more.

Photograph more.

The more curious you become, the more you'll want to continue.

Curiosity fuels consistency.

Consistency creates growth.

Eventually, the photographs become inevitable.

Go out ruthlessly.

Practice often.

But stay detached from the outcome.

Don't obsess over making a masterpiece every time you leave the house.

The masterpiece is simply a byproduct of showing up enough.

The Photograph Doesn't Matter

Ironically...

Making great photographs eventually becomes one of the least important parts of photography.

I still go outside because I love hearing birds sing.

Watching clouds move.

Listening to water.

Meeting strangers.

Experiencing life.

The photographs simply become evidence that I was there.

Photography becomes an act of gratitude.

An act of presence.

An excuse to notice.

When you approach photography from abundance instead of performance, improvement becomes inevitable.

Return to the Same Street

If I could give one practical piece of advice after ten years, it would be this:

Pick one street.

One corner.

One place.

Return there every day.

Even thirty minutes.

Day after day.

Month after month.

Year after year.

Eventually you'll begin noticing patterns.

The rhythm of people.

The rhythm of light.

The exact place you need to stand.

Repetition teaches what novelty never can.

Final Thoughts

After more than a decade of practicing street photography, I've realized I don't photograph because I love photography.

I photograph because I love life.

That curious little kid exploring the woods still exists.

Photography simply gives him somewhere to go.

It's my excuse to explore.

To meet people.

To wander.

To remain curious.

And that's ultimately what street photography has taught me.

If this inspired you, thanks for reading.

Peace.