

Cheap Materials Made Me a Better Street Photographer

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

This morning I want to share some thoughts on how using **cheap materials** has transformed my photography. Embracing **low-resolution, small JPEG files** has genuinely brought me more joy in my practice.

For example, recently I've been shooting video on an old-school Sony Handycam. It records in **480p**, and I'm displaying the footage on a CRT television.

With my photography workflow, I'm using a Ricoh and shooting **small JPEGs** with the processing and high contrast cranked up in-camera so I don't have to edit anything afterward.

When it comes to the physical materials I use, I'm printing all of my work on **regular copy paper** using a **Brother monochrome LaserJet printer**.

Every photograph you see is printed on some of the cheapest materials possible.

And honestly?

I absolutely love the quality.

I love the grit, the grain, and the imperfections that come from a regular monochrome printer, toner, and basic copy paper from Staples.

I even own a **Canon Pro-1000** professional printer.

But if I'm honest...

I prefer looking at my work on regular copy paper.

Oh, check this out.

This is me as a baby. I'm on the right, and my brother is on the left.

Imperfection Is Creative Freedom

I think using cheap materials liberates you because it removes the pressure of things needing to be perfect.

As artists, photographers, and creative people, we're constantly trying to perfect our craft.

You want to make the hardcover book.

You want to exhibit your work in a gallery.

You want everything to be technically flawless.

But when you embrace imperfection, you actually start making things instead of endlessly thinking about making things.

Perfection creates hesitation. Imperfection creates momentum.

Building a System Instead of Chasing Perfection

One thing I've done is systematize the way I print my work.

I've built an archival system and presentation style using:

- Manila folders
- The aesthetics of bureaucracy
- Typewriter fonts
- Visible staple marks
- Cheap monochrome prints
- Regular copy paper

These aren't compromises.

They're **creative decisions**.

I've also embraced automation.

AI generates these zines for me automatically.

Everything is organized by date, time, photographer name, and sequencing without me having to do anything.

I literally drag and drop my photos.

The books are assembled automatically.

That combination of software automation and a simple photographic workflow—shooting quickly with small JPEG files—is incredibly liberating.

The Joy of Low Resolution

This isn't some deep philosophical insight.

It's simply something I've been feeling lately.

Using cheap paper and low-resolution outputs has made photography more enjoyable.

When you stop chasing the sharpest possible image...

When you embrace grit and grain...

You realize something.

The work looks **great**.

The imperfections become the aesthetic.

To me, imperfection is perfection.

Life Is Too Short to Hesitate

I think hesitation is one of the biggest creative problems photographers face.

We get trapped trying to make everything just right.

But life is too short for that.

The goal is to keep producing.

By designing a workflow where my photographs look aesthetically beautiful even on the cheapest materials possible, I remove the friction from making work.

High-contrast black-and-white photography has become the perfect solution.

A Simpler Photography Workflow

As printing costs increase...

As ink gets more expensive...

As storage becomes more complicated...

I've found myself moving toward an incredibly streamlined workflow.

All you really need is:

- A Ricoh camera
- An iPhone or iPad
- A USB dongle or SD card reader

- Small JPEG files

No giant hard drives.

No complicated editing.

No expensive printing process.

Sometimes I'm perfectly happy just looking at small thumbnail prints pinned to my wall.

When the day comes that I want to make something more permanent, I can always use a print-on-demand service like Blurb to create a hardcover book.

And that's satisfying.

But I also think serious projects often come with serious pressure.

Ship at 80%

When I make a hardcover book, every sequencing decision feels permanent.

Every edit feels important.

That seriousness creates hesitation.

I'd rather make something that's **80% perfect**, ship it, and move on.

Because...

It's really not that serious.

The important thing is continuing to make work.

Open Source Photography

One of the coolest parts of this system is that other people can use it too.

If you visit:

<https://flux.dantesisofo.com/generator>

you can use the exact same generator I use to automatically create printable PDF zines.

Print them at home.

Submit your work to me.

I'll print it here physically and review it on the YouTube channel.

I've already received work from photographers around the world—including Germany—and because the system is so inexpensive, it's incredibly easy to print everyone's work.

Everything is open source.

Anyone can participate.

Physical Work Should Be Accessible

Books are becoming increasingly expensive.

Printing is expensive.

Materials are expensive.

So my philosophy is simple.

Why not open-source the work?

I love experiencing photography physically.

And I think the most accessible way to do that is by embracing cheap materials rather than fighting against them.

It's become one of the most joyful parts of this entire project.

Seeing your work arrive.

Printing it.

Holding it in my hands.

Reviewing it here.

That's what photography is about for me.

If you'd like to create your own zine, use the generator linked below and submit your work.

I'd love to see it.

And if you'd like to join the Flux Discord community, click the **Join** button here on the YouTube channel.

Thanks so much for watching today's video.

I'll see you soon.

Peace.