

Why I Love Street Photography: Finding Meaning in the Mundane

Yo, what's poppin', people? It's Dante, currently walking down JFK Boulevard. Who killed Kennedy?

And yeah, today I'm just thinking about the philosophy of photography and my personal journey of discovering **novelty in the mundane nature of life**, and why I find that the orientation of my practice is towards fulfilling personal meaning and purpose in the mundane nature of life.

The Camera Is an Excuse to Say Yes to Life

What that looks like is simply treating the camera as an excuse for me to stay engaged with the world around me—for me to say yes to life and my surroundings.

I'm not necessarily looking for an outcome, looking to impress somebody, or make something that's impactful on a viewer's eyes.

But genuinely, from the bottom of my heart, I can express to you that the way I'm engaging with the medium these days is simply as a way for me to orient myself towards **finding joy, finding love, and finding myself immersed in life**.

The camera becomes this excuse for me to see something new, to go out there and explore, to get close to people, and to engage with my senses.

The sights, the sounds, the smells of the streets. The sort of visceral experience of being physically engaged with life.

What this provides me is this ability to tap into the **eternal now**, outside of the passage of time where we have these distractions of the past and the future, which cause anxiety and this sort of feeling of uneasiness.

Photography becomes a way for me to essentially not take life so seriously and find myself in this playful, childlike state.

Photography as Play

You can see this frame I just made of myself in the mirror. It's kind of funny.

I'm just playfully experiencing life through the medium, and I feel like the way it puts me in this state of play is the ultimate reason why I practice photography.

Because I believe that with life, as we evolve and get older and go through our lives, things can become a chore or a burden or feel like work.

To have something like this that puts you in this playful spirit, this childlike way of looking at life with curiosity—to me, **this is a life worth living.**

And I think with street photography specifically, it requires courage. It requires your heart. It requires your spiritedness to go out there and explore the world and get close to humanity.

The Ethics of Street Photography

The ethics behind this thing are interesting.

It's like, am I permitted to photograph tragedy?

I don't know.

I think that if you see something interesting, if you see something that compels you to make the photograph, whether the thing itself is sad or glad or happy, or something that will enrage a viewer or make them mad, if you have that empathy in your heart where you're photographing from a pure state of curiosity about everything and what you see in your city, what you see in your town, then I think that it's okay to photograph whether or not the subject is smiling or has a frown.

When I look at these childlike drawings on the floor, these to me are some of the purest forms of art.

I think that if you're caught up in your mind and you're thinking too much about whether or not something is ethical, whether or not something is good in terms of the quality of the photography, or the subject that you're photographing, these judgments can cloud your ability to cultivate your authentic expression.

I allow myself to photograph freely and loosely without really thinking.

The portrait I just made of that sleeping man upon that little ledge there is pretty impactful.

There's a sort of closeness to the composition that I made despite me not interacting with the human or the scene. I cropped into 50mm so that I could emphasize the face and the gestures of this man.

Yes, it's a sleeping man who seemed to be distressed to some capacity. He seemed to have an unwell sort of appearance. There's something in his eyes that clearly looked like he was tired.

I'm not sure of his story.

But I think that through photography, **I can get closer to humanity**, uplift these stories, and champion the world around me through engaging deeply with everything.

Whether I find myself playfully engaging with childlike wonder, photographing in a forest, or trotting along these streets and stomping through the alleyways of Philly, I find that there is something out there worth photographing.

It just requires this sense of openness, eagerness, and curiosity.

Everything Around Me Is Inspiring

Everything around me is inspiring.

Looking up at the towers, looking up at City Hall. There's the photo I made of the snake in City Hall on my shirt.

Looking at the grit, the grime, the trash, the people sleeping, the people moving, the businessmen, the workers on the street cleaning.

There's something about the quality of the light that's intriguing.

Look at this light.

Sometimes just the way the reflected light abstracts and creates shapes is intriguing.

The shapes that form upon this street vendor's cart here, and the way that the light is reflected—it creates these abstract shapes and forms that I'm also intrigued by.

As much as I'm curious about humanity, what intrigues me is this **surprise and serendipity** that arises through the way in which light and life render upon my camera sensor.

Going Beyond Reality

When I'm photographing, I'm not only interested in humanity and reality as it is, but **what it could be through my own subjective and personal interpretation of the world.**

I find that through crushing the shadows, exposing for the highlights, and adopting a high-contrast black-and-white workflow, I'm able to much more easily tap into that flow of letting go of what I know.

So that way, when I photograph something, I'm actually receiving a surprise, quite literally, due to the fact that I'm abstracting the world through black-and-white photography.

That surprise is what's keeping me curious to continue practicing, to continue looking, to continue photographing.

I'm not looking at life as it is, but what it could be.

Through abstracting the world through black-and-white photography, I find infinite possibility.

I find infinite wonder and joy for life because of it.

This is a big part of my philosophy: **going beyond reality, almost looking beyond the veil, beyond the ordinary.**

And then everything is interesting.

I become inspired much more easily.

Remove the Friction

By removing all of this friction from the practice—from these decisions of color versus black and white, whether or not to go left or right, whether or not I use this camera or that lens—using automatic mode and having everything baked into the camera in terms of post-processing, I can enter the flow state of simply photographing, noticing, and being present in the moment.

This to me is why I love photography.

It brings me to the moment.

By stripping away all of the superfluous technical aspects of the practice and putting this camera that is compact, that fits in my pocket, on my wrist, and just always having it with me, I find this sort of superpower in my life where every day is rich with meaning.

Because now I'm open.

I'm receptive.

I'm cultivating my instincts.

I'm responding.

I'm just sort of living and being present.

And yeah, that to me is why I love photography.

Ultimately, I think those are my thoughts about this thing.

I'm gonna keep trotting around the city here, skipping around barefoot in Center City.

Shout out to Philadelphia, the birthplace of America.

I'll see you in the next one.

Peace.