

Flux Archive 019 — Photograph Your Life

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

Welcome to Flux Archive Session Number 19, where we look at some of the photographs that I've made along my black-and-white photography journey.

Here we have some photographs made from the months of June to August of 2024. We're looking at photographs I made throughout the summer, working in the park here.

I photographed this beautiful Japanese tree, and unfortunately, we had to prune some of it and it's no longer looking like this. However, I made this photograph before that.

I spent a lot of my time working in the park throughout the summer of 2024, so maybe we'll see some of that in the imagery.

But today I simply want to share this:

Photograph your life.

Where Are You in Your Life Right Now?

If you're confused about what to photograph, how to photograph, where to photograph, or why you photograph, I think the simple question to ask yourself is:

Where are you in your life right now?

Photograph where that is.

Don't worry about the outcome.

Start photographing.

In my hometown, Philadelphia, I have access to walking the city streets. I genuinely enjoy walking as a flâneur and observing humanity, so you'll find a lot of my photographs reflect that.

However, I also spend a lot of time in nature.

I photograph myself. I make self-portraits. I photograph dead animals that I find along my morning walk at the Schuylkill River Trail.

I'm really using photography as a way to discover who I am.

As much as I'm looking at the external world, once again, I'm simply photographing my own life.

Bring the Camera Along for the Ride

Here we have a self-portrait. Here we have a photograph of some hands.

I find that the most simple way I can orient my practice is by slipping the compact camera into my front right pocket and just living my everyday life and bringing it along for the ride.

I start to photograph more because I'm no longer hesitating or thinking that something I have to photograph needs to be interesting.

The moment I find something, I'm prepared.

I'm ready to click the shutter.

Here we have this basketball dunk along Broad Street. There was a celebration and a huge event.

I simply dropped low and allowed myself to frame the subjects going for the dunk against that beautiful sky between the architecture.

I wasn't necessarily expecting anything extravagant on this day.

But because I'm always out there with my camera, walking, observing, and photographing, sometimes the streets will deliver you gifts.

Stay in a Perpetual State of Practice

I think the point is that you should be in a perpetual state of practice.

Always have the camera with you.

Don't make dedicated trips just to photograph.

Instead, always have the camera with you and allow the act of living your life to deliver you the surprise.

Go slow. Let life flow towards you.

Then you're simply there and ready to click the shutter when the birds align mid-flight and the gesture is just right.

Or when you're walking through Central Park and you notice something, that sort of decisive moment, that composition, that thing you're looking to create with the outcome—it arises naturally.

You don't have to force this thing.

You're simply living your life and exploring the places that bring you joy.

Follow What Brings You Joy

I enjoy the beach.

I love going to Coney Island on the Fourth of July simply because I love the environment itself.

I'm not attached to the outcome of making something interesting.

I love walking through the park. I love walking through Central Park specifically.

Whenever I'm in New York City, I gravitate towards this location. I go back and find myself simply following my own inner childlike curiosity.

Then that reflects in the imagery.

When I look at this photograph of a little boy walking through the forest, to me, that's a reflection of myself.

That's me right there in that photograph.

When you look through your images, you should see your soul. You should see yourself reflected through the images.

I find that I'm able to achieve this by photographing the things that bring me joy, going to the places that bring me joy, and photographing simply because it brings me joy.

There doesn't need to be a reason.

Cultivate Your Curiosity

The reason is fulfilled within itself.

The reason, the outcome, and the goal that you seek should be found through the simple cultivation of your curiosity.

I believe that's where the most authentic expression of your photography will be born.

I'm not looking for anything.

I'm not seeking.

I'm not striving.

I'm not hunting.

I'm just living my life.

I'm photographing what I find.

I'm walking through Chinatown and looking at gestures. I'm exploring the trails of Philadelphia with my friends Humberto and Dennis.

I photographed a rock held in my hand.

I wound up photographing a wound on Humberto's hand because we were riding bikes. He hitched onto the back of my bike, fell, and hit his hand.

Here's the trail from that day, going through the streets and riding my bike with some friends.

Once again, this is simply a visual diary.

Timestamping Life

This is what I experienced on this day in space and time—July 21st at around 1 PM.

I'm timestamping these moments in time.

You can see the date.

You can see the time.

You can see my name and when the photograph was made.

There's something special about the Flux system of timestamping and chronologically sequencing the work because when you flip through the photographs, you naturally go back through these memories and re-experience those days that you were out photographing and living your life.

When I think about it, really, I wasn't out there photographing.

When I look back at these pictures, it's not like I was out on these particular days thinking to myself, *Today I'm going to make my next best frame. Today I'm going to work on my photography.*

No.

I'm simply going for my morning walk and catching the sunrise.

Then I align this sculpture at the right time for it to look a little bit more otherworldly.

This photograph was made at 8 AM in July.

Photography Gives Me a Reason to Live Fully

The reason why I love photography is because it gives me that excuse to wake up with enthusiasm simply to catch the sunrise.

To be outside at this hour and to catch the sunrise, I believe, is a privilege in life.

Photography is what fuels that curiosity and eagerness for me to go out there and explore.

To walk.

To be outside.

To see people.

To interact.

To experience and live life.

When you're immersed in life, living fully, present, observant, and responding, the moments will come to you.

Let the Themes Emerge Naturally

Here we have a photograph I made of a coworker and the silhouette of her pruning a tree and elevating something.

That gesture repeats throughout this body of work.

Here we have another gesture of a sculpture, an inanimate object.

Going back to the photographs I made at Coney Island, we have a very similar gesture with the birds.

You start to cultivate that instinctual response to click the shutter when you see these moments that trigger you.

You can see the repetition.

In another spread, we have the gesture of this man going to feed the birds and this boy moving through the park.

We have the gesture of the woman cutting the tree, and then the gesture of this child beneath the trees, in the plants and bushes.

These themes naturally emerge through your photography.

There's this sort of childlike wonder and explorative spirit that naturally reflects in my photography because I believe that's the spirit I carry when I'm on the street.

The Humanist Approach to Photography

To me, that's the essence of the humanist approach to photography.

Allow your internal state—the way you feel about life and engage with the world—to reflect through the images.

I'm simply living my life.

I'm not out there photographing.

The camera is an extension of me.

The camera is always with me. I'm always photographing.

But once again, I'm just living.

I'm experiencing.

I'm looking out my window and watching as the storm clouds come through.

I'm walking through the Wissahickon Forest where I spent my youth as a child, and I'm exploring.

I'm not out there photographing.

I'm waking up in the morning and photographing my godmother before we go and walk along the boardwalk in Ocean City.

Just Live Your Life

That's the thought of the day.

Just live your life and photograph your life.

You don't have to go out there with anything particular to say.

Allow whatever you have to say to reflect back through the photographs, through time and consistency, by simply doing the thing daily.

I believe that's the path to authenticity in photography.

If you'd like to create your own Flux Issue, you can click the link in the description. It will take you to the Flux Issue Generator.

Essentially, you upload 36 JPEG files, and the system will automatically read the timestamps, preserve the chronological order, and create an issue PDF that you can print out, share, and enjoy at home.

Otherwise, you can submit the work directly to me. If I enjoy the work, I'll add it to the catalog, print it out myself, and review it here on the YouTube channel with some commentary.

If you'd like to join the Flux Discord server community, click the Join button on the YouTube channel and you'll receive a link with access to the community.

That's pretty much all I have to say today.

Thank you for watching today's video.

I'll see you soon.

Peace.