Flux Archive 027 — I'm Trying to Unlearn Everything

Yo, what's poppin', people? It's Dante.

Welcome to Flux Archive Session Number 27, where we look at photographs that I've made along my black-and-white photography journey.

Looks like we're looking at photographs from October to November of 2025, and this is a pretty pivotal point in my practice because when I visited Tokyo in November of 2025, I had a pretty big creative breakthrough during that trip.

So yeah, let's just talk about some shit.

Let me get my espresso.

Cheers.

Detachment

Today I'm thinking about photography, but more specifically my personal philosophy around photography and what I've been thinking about over the past four years shooting in black and white.

I'm transitioning from photographing in full color and making pictures, traveling the world, photographing in this sort of documentary humanist approach.

And this is the foundation of my practice, right?

Making pictures with that sort of way of exploring the world, looking at people, photographing decisive moments, looking at humanity this way.

So I have this foundation in my personal practice of working in that sort of vein.

However, I transitioned to shooting this way in high-contrast black and white for the past four years, and it's opening up so much possibility for me.

Essentially, what I've decided to do is shift my mind and the way that I think about photography and life generally.

Of course, aesthetically it looks incredibly different with black and white versus color, but that's not the point.

The point is the mindset shift that I've completely adopted to transform my practice.

Detachment.

And detachment meaning, when I'm photographing, I'm not thinking about photography.

When I'm photographing, when I'm making pictures, even when I'm traveling and going to Tokyo, I'm not thinking about the outcome of the photograph.

I'm not thinking and worrying about what the photograph will be.

I'm simply embracing the spontaneity and the mystery of life and then allowing that to display itself in the photographs I make.

Affirming Life

I know that I can position my body in a certain place in the Shinjuku train station and look at the casting light and the shadow play.

But I can't predict or control the fact that these little bits of highlight details are going to emerge, with the lips revealed, with the face revealed.

And I guess the point is, when I'm photographing, I'm just affirming life.

I'm just living life and bringing the camera with me.

I'm very radically detached from the photography.

I'm radically detached from this idea of going out there thinking, *Today I'm going to make something. Today I'm going to make my next best photo.*

I think in the past, shooting in color, I had this very systematic way of knowing that I can make a photo.

I know how to make a photo.

But through black and white, I'm unlearning all of that.

Looking for Mistakes

I'm unlearning by purposely removing the outcome of the photography.

And then it allows these kinds of surprises to emerge.

Here in Tokyo, when I was photographing, my shutter speed dropped because I'm shooting in AV mode and it was low light.

It just dropped naturally.

I wasn't controlling anything.

It was an accident that occurred.

And that accident that occurred, if I'm looking for anything with the output of my work, it's that.

I'm looking for mistakes.

I'm looking for something that I didn't see before.

Because it's very easy to affirm what you already know.

I can stand here, look at life this way, and nail the shot.

It's very easy to control the lighting and the timing and have an understanding of the compositional decisions that you can make.

I feel like I've gotten to that point with my practice.

And now I'm just trying to unlearn everything.

Forget Everything You Think You Know

For me to unlearn everything, it requires me to forget everything that I think I know about not only photography, but life generally.

Through that state of being, I increase my curiosity because I'm allowing myself to photograph freely.

I'm allowing myself to experiment more openly.

I'm dropping my shutter speed.

I'm purposely now, after experiencing that mistake, forcing that technique.

So I went from making a mistake to then iterating upon that mistake, and then intentionally using that slow shutter speed to create more mystery in a surrealist kind of frame.

I'm looking to explore the medium in ways that go beyond my previous approach of knowing how to make a great photograph.

> ***Now I'm trying to unlearn everything I know about making a great photograph so that I can surprise myself with my own photographs.***

That's what I'm seeking.

I Seek the Surprise

I'm seeking the surprise.

I'm seeking the mystery.

I'm seeking to go beyond reality through the medium of photography.

I'm not trying to control everything.

I'm not trying to really say anything.

I'm really just curious and exploring openly and trying to evoke mystery.

I'm trying to extract something from the world that I didn't see.

Not only something I haven't seen or done previously, but something I don't even see with my naked eye.

My naked eye isn't seeing this right here.

My naked eye isn't seeing the sliver of a face crushed against the black background.

This isn't something I saw.

I'm trying to surprise myself.

At the end of the day, I'm just curious about the surprise of the medium itself.

And that's what I'm finding with this black-and-white workflow.

It's forcing me into this place where I can actually surprise myself daily.

Maybe that's, after all, what I seek.

I just seek a surprise. I seek something I didn't see with my naked eye.

Relinquish Control

Previously, it was very easy for me to know what the photograph would be.

Through my physical positioning and my understanding of lighting and timing and the synthesizing of the content with the formalities, I know how to control everything.

But now, I'm just letting go.

I'm relinquishing control.

I'm almost treating my practice as if I'm never going to see the photographs.

Of course, we're looking through the photographs. I printed them out. We're flipping through them and everything.

But as I'm shooting, I'm completely detached from the outcome of what I am shooting.

I'm trying to remove any sense of control and allow the spontaneous nature of life that's out of my control to surprise me.

So I keep remaining curious to go back out there and start photographing.

And that's, at the end of the day, what I seek.

Seek the Mistake

I seek the surprise.

I seek the mistake.

I seek the imperfection now openly.

> ***I'm trying to unlearn everything that I know about life and photography so that I can return to photography each day.***

Maybe some of these thoughts make sense.

And that's pretty much all I have to say.

Flux

If you'd like to create your own Flux issue, you can visit the generator. It's in the description.

Just upload 36 pictures and you can create your own PDF, print it out, or submit it directly to me.

If I enjoy the work, I'll add it to my Flux catalog, print it out myself, and do a little video commentary flip-through of your work.

Looking forward to any submissions sent to me.

Otherwise, if you'd like to join the Flux Discord server community, feel free to click the Join button on the YouTube channel and you'll receive a link to join that server.

And yeah, with that being said, thank you for watching and I'll see you soon.

Peace.