# Flux Archive 020 — Return to Childlike Curiosity

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

Welcome to Flux Archive Session Number 20, where we look at some of the photographs that I've made along my black-and-white photography journey.

Today we're looking at photographs made from August to September of 2024.

The first photograph that we have is a photograph made on the Ocean City Boardwalk.

This is a very nostalgic kind of picture for me to look at.

I woke up early in the morning looking at the fog and the interaction between the fog, the amusement rides, and these ice cream shops that I actually spent my childhood eating and playing at.

These environments that you revisit as an adult that you experienced as a child are very ethereal.

Especially on this morning, waking up and looking at the quality of the light and the fog, it felt like I was looking through a memory.

## Photograph From a State of Childlike Curiosity

Today I wanted to discuss this idea of photographing from that state of childlike curiosity.

As I look at this imagery, it reminds me of being a kid.

Going to these candy stores.

Walking along this boardwalk.

Exploring the beach.

These photographs in the beginning were made in Ocean City, New Jersey, where I spent my youth on that boardwalk every summer. They were even made around the same time of year that I would've been there as a kid.

I'm currently 30 years old, and I still feel like I have this sort of spirit of a child.

As we get older, we become burdened by societal norms. We get burdened by expectations about outcomes and goals.

We start to work and toil.

We let go of that sense of play and that sense of curiosity within each and every one of us.

I believe that as an artist, it's very important to cultivate that curiosity and that childlike spirit.

***That's where the creative spirit lies. It lies in the inner child.***

## Photography as a Reflection of the Inner Child

As we look at these photographs that I've made of children, specifically this image made on the Wonder Pier, I'm reminded of myself.

There's this little Thomas the Tank Engine on top of the frame.

I remember riding that amusement ride.

I remember being this kid here.

I literally remember standing on the fence looking out towards the ocean, just as this kid is doing in the photograph.

These photos have become a reflection of my inner child.

The thought really is that there is so much to do, to see, to explore, and to photograph.

There is so much possibility in life generally.

***Photography is the vehicle that unlocks that inner sense of curiosity.***

I'm looking beneath my feet at these horseshoe crabs. I'm spending time under the boardwalk, looking out at the beach and watching the waves crash.

I'm exploring.

## Never Miss Another Sunrise

I find that there's this goal of mine that is just so simple.

That goal is to essentially **never miss another sunrise**.

The goal in my life is to orient myself towards enthusiasm.

That feeling of eagerness for the day.

Curiosity.

Simply being excited to wake up in the morning.

There's something powerful about photography and the way that it gets me there.

The reason it gets me there is because the way the camera interprets the world and delivers me a surprise through the way light interacts with life is forever fascinating.

It’s this infinite novelty that keeps me going back out there and photographing.

## Create Your Own World

Of course, I’m interested in humanity.

I’m looking at life as what it is.

But the power of photography is that it almost taps into that inner childlike imaginative spirit, where you can then create your own world and discover what life *could be* through your subjective interpretation of things.

Here we have two photographs.

One is a boy flipping upside down and exuding his courage on the sidewalk of Philadelphia.

The other is a coworker, a photograph of her eye revealed in the light, crushing the shadows upon this tree canopy.

I think this spiritedness is something I carry with me.

I remember being a boy exploring the forest.

Building bridges with stones to cross the creek.

Climbing trees.

Building teepees.

Riding my bike on the trail.

Going out there with that spirit of adventure.

I want that to carry with me throughout the rest of my life.

## Every Day Is New

With that inner spirit and curiosity, anything is possible.

Every day feels new.

Every day there are new opportunities to do something, to explore, to make new work, and to simply be out there and experience life deeply.

I believe that feeling derives through the cultivation of curiosity.

Photography is the vehicle that gets me there.

***Photography gets me curious. It gets me looking. It gets me experiencing.***

I'm not just passing by these moments on the street looking down at my phone.

I'm awake.

I'm receptive to the sights, the sounds, the smells.

I'm looking closely and feeling deeply.

And I'm allowing that to reflect in my photography.

## Photography Gets You Closer to Life

I love engaging with humanity, meeting strangers, and talking with people.

There was this man in the mall practicing some sort of tai chi. He was with his patient that he watches.

I started to interact with him.

I asked to make a photograph.

I spoke with this man for around an hour, and his patient was there behind him.

I made this frame through my curiosity.

I went up to this guy and asked him, *What are you doing? Who is this man behind you? How was your day?*

We started to engage, talk, and chat.

As we were interacting, I made some photographs.

Now I have this memory.

I have this image of the scene, this powerful gesture, this moment between the man and his patient, and that memory that I shared with him in the four corners of this frame.

***Photography gets you closer to life. It gets you closer to these experiences.***

Then you have these everlasting memories through the imagery.

## Wake Up With Enthusiasm

There truly is a power to photography in the way that it wakes you up in the morning.

It's like the cup of espresso that I have in the morning.

It kickstarts my day.

It gives me this excuse to go out there and seize the day.

Here we have some Mormons coming up to me and a portrait of me thinking about God.

When you look at the word *enthusiasm*, it derives from God. It derives from this idea that you're possessed by God.

I simply want to wake up in the morning feeling possessed by God, curious about life, excited for the day.

## Return to Day One

I think one of the simplest practical ways I can share with you how to orient your day this way is this:

When you go to bed, assume you're not going to wake up in the morning.

Treat each night like a miniature death and each morning like you're born again.

Then from that blank slate each morning, like you were just born again, you're going to seize each moment.

***I treat each photograph like it could be my last.***

Maybe that reflects in the photography.

From this boy twisting and turning upon that bike stand on the street, doing a backflip, to the rainbow emerging across the skyline of Philadelphia and the breakdancer on the street.

All these scenes and things that I photograph, I believe, are a reflection of my inner child and my inner curiosity.

## Look Closely Like a Kid

I'm looking at the leaves, the veins, and the way that the light emanates through that surface.

I'm simply curious.

*What will this leaf look like photographed?*

I'm holding it up close and making 10, 20, 30, 40 frames of this one leaf.

I'm trying to make a photograph of this thing.

I'm looking really closely, like a kid inspecting things.

That's how I approach the street.

***I'm looking at life like a big kid.***

I want my photographs to reflect that feeling.

That feeling of simply being a big kid who's imperfect, who knows nothing, who's stumbling through life and photographing.

That's the kind of imagery I want to make.

**Imperfect but curious.**

I want that eagerness for life that I have to reflect in the imagery.

## Return to the Childlike State

What a perfect frame to end this with.

Here we have Spencer and his child.

This special moment.

I couldn't plan this any better.

Look at this perfect final photograph of this smiling baby.

I mean, this is where we want to be.

***Return to day one each day. Return to the childlike state. Return to curiosity.***

That's the thought of the day.

Here's the contact sheet.

Here's the manifest document.

If you'd like to create your own Flux Issue, click the link in the description to visit the Flux Generator and upload 36 files.

The system will read the timestamps of your photographs, preserve the chronological order, and generate a PDF that you can download, print out, and share online.

If you'd like my commentary over the work, you can submit the work directly to me. I'll review the work, add it to the catalog, and potentially make a commentary video here flipping through your work on my YouTube channel.

Otherwise, if you'd like to join the Flux Discord server community, click the Join button on the YouTube channel and find access to the community through the link shared on the channel.

That's pretty much it for today.

Thank you for watching today's video.

I'll see you soon.

Peace.