

Street Photography for the Purist by Chris Weeks



Street Photography – For the Purist

words & photos by Chris Weeks

forwards with photos by: Severin Koller – Austria
Matthew Craig – United States of America
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Darren Abate – United States of America
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Michael Kaiser – Germany
Rainer Pawellek – France
Errol Lyons-Rainey – United Kingdom
Massimiliano Mortillaro – Czech Republic
Patrick Kahn – Los Angeles/Paris

Forward by Severin Koller – Austria (edited by Chris Weeks)

When I started photography about two years ago I had a compact digital camera with no mentionable resolution. I soon started to focus on structures and abstract photography because anything else wasn't possible due to the low quality.

It soon led me to architectural photography, which turned out to be the subject and style I master the best. It also makes my living at the moment. With that small digital camera, street photography were just ridiculous attempts that never turned out as they should have. As I investigated new photographic gear about a year ago, I still had the opinion that digital is the way ... the future. Last summer I got the Canon Eos 1Ds Mark II, which I use for my commissions and some conceptual and architectural work. I used it for personal work sometimes as well. The moments you want to make should be personal, intimate, close and unobtrusive photos ... you can throw these 7000 bucks in the rubbish bin !!

My point is ... I fell in love with street photography the moment I started analogue photography. I never took portraits. I never did journalism. I never dared to do street photography the classic way. Why? Because it's not possible with a digital... the feeling is missing. You can see the photo right after taking it, which destroys the whole flair. You don't have real black and white film and you will never be able to see the beauty of a fiber print. You don't have to wait until it's developed, which is another pity. You lose all the joy of the darkroom. Digital cameras are too big, too loud, ... they're simply too flashy. Small digital ones don't offer any useable quality when it comes to print; digital street photography simply doesn't look like a street shot. Street is about life and digital is lifeless.

Today I'm using digital for my work and I never carry that big tank around with me, if I don't really have to.

I'm thankful I discovered the joy and passion of street photography, which includes spontaneous portraits, capturing moments, capturing joy, capturing anger ... it's life and it's a good feeling to shoot and look at your results ... later.

I need that sort of photography as some balance. It's so different than my commercial. It's great to do both but without street photography I wouldn't have half the joy of photography. It helped me to fall in love with that art form again.

It's relaxing in a way. You don't *have to* capture something. You simply can if you want. Nobody assigned your time. Nobody tells you what photos they want. You just sit there or walk somewhere and take a photo and no matter if it's great or normal in the end ... making it is just a good feeling ... something I want to keep my whole life.

Street photography can also be challenging and exciting. Be it a spy shot or a photo right in front of the (human) subject... both give me an adrenaline rush. My finger is itching and my heart is beating ... then I decide to take the photo, no matter what will happen. As long as you stay unnoticed, it works wonderfully.

The best you can do is taking a photo without having any influence on the scene at all, then you have a real street shot and therefore you need the right gear as well. The rangefinder was built for it and is still the number one choice.

Something else I enjoy about street shots are when the person (be it in main focus or someone else in the frame) is looking at you or at the camera. I like these photos when you don't see that the person realizes the camera but just looks in your direction. That happens when you're so quick that you take the facial expression and look of the eyes before the person realizes that you take a photo. It's a question of seconds or even milliseconds!

In short ... street photography made me love photography even more and that's why I'm so thankful that I went analogue. Because of street photography I can enjoy my work more, since it is more balanced. I have a counterpart to my commercial work.

You can capture with your mind or with your heart. Sometimes with both.. but mainly street photography and analogue is with my heart and displays my feelings. Work is a technical challenge and conceptual or private architectural photography is a challenge for my mind... but the heart, the heart is street photography and when I write this, I realize it more and more.

Severin (=kinderschokolade)

Blog: <http://severinkoller.blogspot.com/>













Forward by Michael Kaiser - Germany

Why is it so hard to define what Street Photography is about? Why do all attempts to describe this genre remain so oddly diffuse? Why is there no 25-pages-manual, something you can read and (hopefully) understand and off you go? You may be able to operate your gear well, you may have done amazing macros, table-tops, architecture-shots and even portraits, you can and should read all of the following – and yet you may not have a frigging clue afterwards, what Street Photography is about. Because it is something very personal. Because you have to leave your shell. Because you have to – in some cases – expose yourself. Because you have to love people. Street Photography is about sympathy, not hate. It is about community, even if it pictures solitude. It can be ironic, but never offending. When you are taking street shots you are commenting, much like a journalist. And this gives you a good deal of responsibility.

Street Photography is easy. And it is difficult.

It is easy because you find your subjects virtually everywhere. You don't need to go for the extraordinary. Far from it. The ordinary, everyday-thing is our matter of interest. It is difficult because the line to taking snapshots is very thin. Snap-shooters produce pictures, but don't take photos. Snap-shooters just direct their camera to whatever comes in sight and press the button. The gear is not important for this matter. A snap-shooter with a Leica is still a snap-shooter.

Street Photographers work differently. Their photo has been created in their mind - long (seconds or milliseconds) before they release the shutter. Street Photography is – we have all read this on dA, when submitting photos to this category – “about seeing and reacting”. Quite close to the core of the matter. “Seeing” is the important part. Light, lines, fore- and background, movement, things and people that happen to interact for a second. If you don't see these moments, feel them, live in them, all the time, with or without camera, then Street Photography is probably not for you. The “reacting” part is craft mainly.

Although photography is magic, you can train your photographic view. But don't try to be someone else. Not even like Henri Cartier-Bresson (HCB) or Eugène Atget or Martin Parr or Lee Friedlander or Rainer Pawellek or Chris Weeks. Idols are fine. Learn from them. But don't imitate. Be yourself. When you go out hunting on the street, it is you, with all that you know and feel. You react to people, people react to you. This is what makes the really special photos special.

If you don't feel well in public places, if you happen to be the autistic type of guy, Street Photography is probably not for you. If you think that using a 300mm makes you a Street Photographer, you are dreaming. Get close, be part of the scenery, visible or unnoticed, but don't behave like an intruder or bully.

If you still carry the manual of your camera with you in your bag, come back when you are able to operate it blindfolded and/or from your hip. But if you feel that your camera is an organic part of your body and the lens your third eye, go out and play.

HCB once said: “Photographers are like butterflies. They flutter from photo to photo.” Be a butterfly.

Michael (*micdt)







Forward by Matthew Craig – United States of America

The concept of capturing time; savoring moments, emotions, actions and thoughts will eternally captivate man's intuition and imagination. The search for eternal life has remained fruitless, but for over a century photographers have been able to do second best.

The photographer has an unique opportunity to seize a moment, freeze time, and at the end of the day hold something tangible to remind him/her of that precious 1/15th, 1/60th or 125th of a second. The fashion photographer draws upon the color, composition, grace, and mood of a contrived setting to create images symbolizing tomorrow's hottest design aesthetics and trends. A Photojournalist, armed with high speed zoom lenses and magnesium alloy enforced Canon 1dmk2 bodies, create images to tell the story and deliver reportage that represents the people and places they encounter. While they both work within the broad spectrum of "art", each has a defined purpose.

The question then is: what is the purpose of a street photographer? What is the importance to society and photography as a whole, of a street photographers images?

The truth remains, our world is filled with an untold amount of images waiting to be captured. A street photographers challenge is not finding the shot.. but missing it. Bottom line, street photography is a tradition. The art has been carried down by those who cannot take another step before capturing that moment. This tradition of capturing the world around us, for the sole purpose of retaining the unique situations that make life charming and exciting, is what separates street photography from the rest.

A true street photographer is armed with a Leica M body and a roll of tri-x. Consider the physical dynamic.. putting a large digital SLR between you and your subject is a considerable metal barrier. A Leica, on the other hand, is a mere 6 inch long by 1 inch thick solid metal contraption that translates light unlike any other photographic instrument. A street photographer, making his way from A to B, is not a pedestrian. He/she is a recorder of the world around them. This is not something you start or stop doing. Street photography is a practice that goes on 24/7, 365 days a year. Unlike a photojournalist who searches for an iconic moment of action and emotion, a street photographer relies on the common, everyday exchanges between people to reflect the mood from a bustling metropolis, to a calm midwestern suburb.

The light glistening off the chin from a child hastily gulping from a water fountain.

The moment of relief from finally taking a seat on the Green Line train after a long day of work in the office.

A conversation between a young boy and an elderly man, digress on the finer points of life.

These are the moments that are cherished by a street photographer. These exchanges between people; the small details of our daily lives that would go unnoticed- they define our humanity... and it is the role of a street photographer to isolate those moments in order to show how beautifully simple our world really is.

Matthew (~londn)

Blog: <http://asyouwere.wordpress.com/>







@Matthew Craig



Forward by Rainer Pawellek – France (edited by Chris Weeks)

So that I wasn't influenced in any way, I didn't read what Chris wrote before writing my own forward.

If there is a place where I love to hang around and make photographs ... it's the street.

One can find all that he needs: Geometry, angles, different light and, most importantly, people.

Many kinds of people! I love showing them in their environment. Doing this type of photography one needs the correct tool. This tool is certainly not a long lens with which one acts like a paparazzi but a short lens on the right tool.

For me that tool is the Leica M. The lens on this tool is the 35mm. I love getting close to people. Smiling. Creating a contact. Only after having done this – making conversation – will I pull out the camera and, perhaps, make a photograph.

You must take your time! It's very important to always get to their level ... or even lower. Talk to them when you shoot. Try to do that with a 300mm lens; it doesn't work. When people make poses ... wait. There is always a short moment when they aren't posing, then you shoot. That is sometimes the moment that is magic.

I often carry a few prints in my camera bag. People are always happy to get a print. I love when the fog falls on the port where I live. At night I can make sharp photos with my Leica Summicron 35/2.0 ASPH up to a half second with a small table-pod. You can also use the table pod on your chest but I rarely do that. Not having to look through a mirror in your camera body is nice in that you don't have to worry about it blurring and shaking your frames. Have you ever held a Leica M? It's very heavy and that in and of itself helps you steady your photographs.

Once I made a photograph of a guy and went back a few days later with an 18x24 cm print. He said, "Did you make that with your old camera?" I love when people say that. People are not afraid of the Leica and rarely refuse a photograph. This is a different case with a huge SLR and a huge telephoto lens. The Solm-Germany-tool that is the Leica costs a lot of money – this is true – but you can find many suitable cameras for street photography for less money. Remember that you want to find an unassuming camera.

I can walk around for hours and find a spot in town. Perhaps at the moment I find it the light is not so good. I go somewhere else and come back and the light may be better but something is missing. I wait. Maybe someone passing through my frame would be great. I wait.

This is what I did for "Havana Café" on page fourteen. For "Mendiant Pommeraye" on page fifteen I spotted the boy sitting and I waited for a while so that more people could be included in the frame as passersby. For "Market Rennes – 4" on page sixteen I followed those guys who were announcing their theatre piece to people in the market.

Rainer (*rain1man)

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Forward by Deborah Delasio – Italy (edited by Chris Weeks)

I started photographing the street about 2 1/2 years ago.

I decided to learn on the battlefield; looking at people in the streets.

I started with a 50mm lens – even though it was the less expensive choice it was a *winning* choice. It forced me to learn. Now I love the 50mm and almost all my photos are taken with it.

My bag is always light: A Leica M6 TTL and some rolls of Tri-X. Nothing else. Nothing needed.

No zoom lens for me, I love to be where things happen. Right in the scene. With a telephoto you are just an observer. In street photography you have to be in the scene ... part of it.

I spend a lot of time looking around, watching what people do and waiting for the right moment. The greatest work for me is pre-visualization: I make very few photographs.

Street photography turns everyday acts into the extraordinary.

To be a street photographer you need the right mix of sensitivity, agility and sense of timing ... not to mention being a little brazen.

I use only black and white films because I feel they are more akin to my viewpoint of the world - essential and melancholic. Then I print my photos by myself in a little darkroom. I love the manual side of photography. It's pure.

Street is really a great school and the city is a great organism pulsating with its' inhabitants' life. This is street photography.

Deborah Delasio (*deborahdelasio)











Forward by Errol Lyons-Rainey (edited by Chris Weeks)

Street photography is a game that is never played twice in the same manner, a game that that is you against the world, a game that you control – you decide when to start, when to finish or when to have a tea break.

It's a way of reacting to the surroundings you are placed into at the time.

People are afraid of the 50mm, 35mm or 28mm lenses affixed onto their cameras that are held in their hands with nothing but pride. Camera. Photographer. Film. Street. Moment.

I am personally a fan of “people in public” photographs ... doing their thing and taking a snap, hoping to capture a natural pose or just an ordinary moment and add it to my collection.

A photograph tells a story and with street photography that story usually remains untold/unknown but never unthought-of – because I made a photograph to remember it by and perhaps share with others.

I prefer to use black and white film usually at 400 ISO. I prefer a 28mm lens (as I love below the belt) and also like a rangefinder, although an SLR is fun to use as well.

That's what it's all about ... fun.

Errol (=erainey)









Forward by Darren Abate

Street photographers are one of many flavors of modern historians. Bloggers. Filmmakers. Writers. We all do our part to record our own versions of history, but why do we do it? Do we do it to help ourselves remember what life was like in our own pasts once we are gray? Or do we do it to help others to see what we see, now, in the past, and in the future?

I can only speak for myself. So... I will tell you why I am a street photographer, and why photojournalism is so important to me.

To me, everyday life is fascinating. The routines, the surprises, the mountains of new things we all experience every day. One can walk down any given street and see thousands of individual stories being played out in real time. We see slices of life; a few sentences, or maybe a paragraph, of someone else's life as you brush past them in a shop, or a coffee house, or anywhere. Where do those moments go once you're finished with them? Who records them and keeps them safe? Who proves they ever existed?

I do. You do. Anyone who carries a camera with them in every day life. I will tell the story of the fish monger and the street artist. I will tell the story of the girl and her great-grandmother; the man on the street and the boy at the funeral. The woman in the window and the little girl who just needed to dance. I will even tell my own story from time to time.

It terrifies me to think that these moments could be lost forever. I don't know why that scares me, but it does. I need to remember. We all need to remember – that's how we learn. You can learn more about life by keeping your eyes open during one average day on the street than you can from a week of news broadcasts. News is fed to us in a straight line. Life lessons are all around. News is archived, but life rarely is.

As a photojournalist, my mission is to tell a story. An objective, candid, story. The goal is to tell this story in one amazing photograph. When I was younger I was taught that the perfect news photo doesn't need a caption. Is this possible? Is it common for all elements of a photo to naturally fall into place? No, of course not. In fact, it's maddeningly rare.

But sometimes – sometimes – it happens. And when it does, it's like the most addictive drug in the world. Sometimes when you push the button, and you hear the click, you know. You just know that you've recorded something special, and your stomach flutters, and your lungs fill with a rush of air, and you feel truly wonderful. I liken it to the rush you felt after your first kiss. You know the feeling I mean.

I always have a camera with me. During jury duty. Sitting in the ER after injuring myself. While eating lunch. I learned that my camera should always be with me, and that lesson was kicked off by Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist David Hume Kennerly, who once told me, after I had asked him if he had any advice for a young shooter, "Shoot shoot shoot." At the time I felt a little ripped off but it wasn't long before I realized that his advice was spot-on.

Shoot everything. Always be ready. The best photos are often made by surprise.

Darren (*FideNullo)

Blog: <http://peakaction.wordpress.com/>







Forward by Massimiliano Mortillaro (edited by Chris Weeks)

I've started taking photos in 2002, with a digital camera, and joined deviantArt very soon after. I was just playing around with it as it can be seen on my earlier shots. It took me three years to reach a passion for photography and to seek a way out of the limitations of a digital point'n'shoot with automatic mode. I arrived in the world of film cameras and especially rangefinders because I wasn't able to afford a dSLR and fell in love with classic cameras.

As with many people, I started with taking photos of objects, buildings or landscapes. After a while, it was evident that what drew most of my attention was photos engrossed with human feelings and depicting people – either portraits or people in the street. I slowly started to switch from landscapes and architecture then to street photos. It wasn't easy. People are alive. They're moving or busy... and they can notice you. They can even bother you. And if you're shy by nature, it's even more difficult. But I told myself I'm a big boy and that there is nothing to fear. It's a huge step switching to street photography.

I always carry a camera with me: A rangefinder. Why not an SLR? SLRs are excellent. They tend to be bulky and with their “zoom lenses” as people call them, people on the street can feel aimed at almost akin to having a gun pointed at them. Not all people will do this as some are just too busy noticing someone is taking a photo of them. Granted, if you have the balls to take photos of unknown people, you can do it with an SLR. I do it. With a medium format SLR... 6x6 negatives, baby, and 180mm lens made with glass from hell... it provides stunning results. And the people will hardly bother you; they'll think either you're a pro or that you might beat them with that sturdy tool. Let's be practical ... try to stick a medium format SLR or even a normal SLR in your pocket. I swear you won't be able to. Let's bet. Now try to stick a rangefinder in your jacket or jeans pocket or even to carry one around your neck. Not all rangefinders will do but they're much more compact ... and they are more stealthy ...

I do not deny it, I'm a gear whore. I like shiny or black little things with all sorts of rings on top of it. But most of all, I love taking photos. And nothing, I swear ... nothing gives me more freedom than to load a roll of 400 ISO film into my Kiev-2A and shoot. My habit is to go around either with a 50/2 or a 35/2.8 lens. I usually pre-set my camera after evaluating the luminosity of the area where I am. Evaluating, because I'm shooting with fully manual cameras. That's a part of the fun. You see something, a scene that catches your eyes, a face... beautiful faces, sad faces, rough faces ... faces... are the most beautiful landscapes.

You aim and ... Swoosh! Now you've trapped the scene in your box and you'll have to wait for it to be developed before you can see it. You'll get worried that all photos are fucked up but it will be worth the wait. Sometimes I'm aiming with my eye on the viewfinder ... and sometimes, I'm estimating the distance/depth of field through the camera markings and shooting without aiming by holding the camera on my chest. The result is not always guaranteed ... but at least you've done something. Maybe you perfectly grabbed the mood of the scene without seeing it through the viewfinder. But you grabbed it nevertheless ... because you're the photographer and because you know your tool. You know what you wanted and you got it. Because I'm deeply convinced that although having a technologically advanced camera is certainly a great tool, nothing must replace the human mind and I wouldn't accept that a chip does the thinking for me.

Don't get me wrong here... I'm a systems administrator and I deal daily with servers and network systems BUT they deal in the way they have been setup because I have been programming them to do the job I WANT them to do. Because I am the one who thinks and who sets the context. And it should be the same with photography. I want to use a tool that is mechanical because I want to estimate the light and I decide what depth of field.

want and because I also want to choose my speed settings, my film and then even how I will develop my photos on paper. And because I want to learn more everyday and to learn from my mistakes. As a photographer, you are the person who MAKES the photo, who CAPTURES the instant and who SETS the mood. You. Not a machine. Be it worth \$20 or \$5000. If you think you'll be better because you own the latest camera, you're wrong (and you're a loser).

About my Kiev-2A: I paid about 70 dollars and that's a bargain. Russian rangefinders are THE alternative to get into rangefinders if you're on a budget. A bit of talk about my camera: the Kiev rangefinder line is a russian clone that is based on the pre-war Contax-II rangefinder design. Mine is from 1956, and has a flash sync. That is the only thing that differs from the original design of a Zeiss-Ikon Contax-II camera. In 1947, as a part of war reparations, the whole Contax assembly line was moved from Jena in East Germany to Kiev, Ukraine. Zeiss-Ikon employees assisted and trained (I wouldn't say they were especially happy) the comrades to start the mass production of a quality rangefinder. The lens designs are copied from Zeiss and use a bayonet system like on the Contax-II. I also take photos with a Zorki-S, a russian rangefinder based on the Leica-II design. It has a collapsible lens that makes it very easy to carry around because you can fold the lens inside the body and slip it in a pocket without troubles.

No matter what your budget there is a camera system qualified for street photography.

Massimiliano AKA Max (~darkkavenger)







Forward by Bernhard Wolf (edited by Chris Weeks)

I have a checklist when I leave home. Everyone has that (or at least I assume so). Mine contains: a cell phone, money and a camera. Taking the camera with me is some sort of addiction – I try to refrain from taking it everywhere but at the same time I'm afraid of missing that shot – the shot that will never come again. For instance, George Bush being naughty at the next supermarket I visit.

I was not always this way – the obsession actually started about a year-and-a-half ago when I got my first SLR – not just any SLR, it was a brand-new DSLR. My first lens, besides a crappy zoom, was a 50 mm prime. I guess it's been one of the best teachers I've ever had. When you're shooting primes you have to work on your subject. You have to move. You have to interact – zooms make you lazy. Additionally, primes are fast glass – I started to appreciate shallow depth of fields and I learned how to use f-stops correctly.

I started to become interested in street life. In fact, I found myself hanging around and just watching people: How they treat each other, how they talk, smile, laugh and shout. I love watching people. I started to photograph people – with the D70. I now feel like a bit of a coward because of the different field of view due to the smaller sensor. Whenever I check my digital street shots, I feel that something is missing. It feels like part of the scene is missing because of the fast, spot-on auto-focus and the long (way too long) focal length. As I said – it is hard to explain. I guess it is what fascinates me about street photography – the connection with your subject .. to be part of the situation .. to interact.

I switched “back” to analog at the beginning of this summer. I don't regret it. In fact, I am happy I did because there is so much more to explore. Nothing matches a fiber print or a Kodak Tri-X negative. Right now I am shooting a fully manual Nikon FM – admittedly not the perfect camera for street shots. By far not ... but it works. At least its better than the *digital* Nikon D70. Shooting is far more personal.

It is hard not to sound like Mr. Weeks but using a Leica M shows you a different world – a world that can only be seen through a range finder. Sadly, I have shot only a few rolls of film with Severin's M6 but it has been a frustrating experience because all you've done in the past regarding street shots becomes obsolete. I did some of my most personal shots with that camera. There is no loud shutter, no camera-body in your face – eye contact, a smile. Everything you need.

I seek candid moments – ordinary people at ordinary places ... just acting the way they are ... that's the street.

Bernhard (*zort)

Blog: <http://zeitgeistler.wordpress.com/>









Forward by Patrick Kahn, Publisher of The Book LA and Panelist for the LUCIE Awards

Street photography is an art and a way of life.

It is not just, as Chris Weeks modestly suggests, taking your fucking camera everywhere. It is that too, though, most importantly, it is your eyes, that you have to take everywhere. Your eyes and your brain and your heart and your gut.

Live your life as a tourist, and you'll record it like a tourist. And your images will be just pictures. As cool or "artistic" as they may be, they will just be consumable, disposable pictures.

Street photography is about immortalizing a moment, a mood, an image. It's about capturing the essence of a moment, with all its emotional weight and/or its poetry and/or its flavor.

My friend Chris asked me to do this foreword, and I am very happy to do it for him, because he is the real deal. He lives and breathes photography. He captures life with rawness and poetry, like very few can. And he does it in every situation, over and over again.

What strikes me most with Chris Weeks' photography, is that he you obviously feel the influences such great classic masters as Cartier Bresson, Doisneau, Robert Frank, Brassai, Lartigue or even Helmut Newton, yet his vision and delivery which is deliberately modern and sexy (in the conceptual sense) definitely bear his mark.

I can always tell ... Yeah, this is a Chris Weeks shot!

Preface – By Chris Weeks

First off, I'd like to thank Sev, Michael Kaiser, Matt, Rainer, Deb, Errol, Darren, Massimiliano, Bernhard and Patrick Kahn for collaborating in their collaboration and allowing me to include several of their own street photographs with their respective forwards. So very cool of all of you.

All of them share my love for walking a street. Here in Los Angeles. There in Prague. Or Paris. Or New York. Wherever. In the chaos of the city or the town we find the beautiful details of life. We give them order through our simple observation with composition.

All you have to do is look; it's there. That photograph you've had in your mind forever. There it is. Thwaap.

I think it was Mr. Cartier-Bresson who said, "A successful street photograph – or any photograph for that matter – is when eye, mind and heart come together."

I may agree with him although I hardly ever do on many things.

For me street photography is not only going on my own – often solitary – photographic quests but looking at other's work. By looking at this work I can tell much about a photographer. His or her worldview comes to mind the most. No matter your worldview I think the successful street photographer should leave his or her politics at home or on their blog. I don't believe they should intersect one's work documenting chaotic life on the street.

The best work is unforced; it comes naturally; moments either happen or they don't.

Or ... your skills of observation need honing and practice.

Then and only then will you discover that there are no laws or rules – except, of course, having to do with exposure and composition.

Develop the eye of a fetishist voyeur. A spy. A ghost. A voyeur spy with a great eye.

Even though many of the photographers I've chosen to contribute with forwards – myself included – have made photographs of exotic locales, I find that there is actually more mystery in places one knows intimately.

Open your eyes.

Go for a walk.

Right in the middle of the chaos.

Find your photo. Then find another. Don't force it. Just go and see and make photos of the history happening around every single one of us. It's out there.

You see the photographs by Mssrs. Cartier-Bresson and Doisneau and perhaps Mssr. Boubat and you think, “This is what I want to do.”

Is it really that simple?

Photographer.

Camera.

Film.

A slice of real life on the street? Or a café? Or a restaurant? Or anywhere where humans are just being themselves?

If it were true in any endeavor, everyone could cook the perfect soufflé, play scratch golf or make movies like Kubrick.

It is not true.

Making portraits – environmental, editorial or otherwise – are easy compared to recording moments that happen on streets in Paris, Prague, Cedar City or even Los Angeles. For no matter what you do as a photographer in the context of a portrait – no matter if you are Andrew Eccles or Annie Leibowitz or Herb Rits – they are contrived.

Real moments are not contrived.

They happen.

Without your input.

In as much as I think that much of HCB’s work was soft or “only famous” because “he’s famous” I will give him credit where credit is due. I fully agree with him that perfect moments exist. These perfect moments can be framed within a composition that lend to what could be considered a great photograph.

Notice I haven’t said anything about exposure or light?

To succeed at street photography light and exposure and depth of field should all ...

ALL ...

Be second nature to the photographer.



Urban landscape doesn't count.

Just so you know.

Street photography is its own genre.

There may be buildings in your photographs, however, the building cannot be the subject. A human subject adding scale is still urban landscape. But it can, in fact, be street photography.

Street photography is about its humans ... those people inhabiting a particular place. At a particular point in time.

A city.

A town.

A holler.

Where-the-fuck-ever.

If you think I'm going to say you can make street photographs with any type of camera, you are sorely mistaken.

You can flame.

I can ignore.

I can delete.

Because you just don't know.

I think a ghost would make best street photographer.

But ... not in the way Wee Gee was a street photographer.

He used flash.

Flash is contrived.

Even well-balanced strobe.

It's contrived.

Life is not contrived.

Unless one is on a Hollywood film set.

Or banging an actress.

Then you're just fucked.

Because they're always acting. And you just never know.

Yeah, I know ... you're feeling, "He already wrote 'An Ode to the Leica M' get the fuck over yourself."

Some of you know where this is going.

One must not stand out.

One must blend.

One must manifest with all their being and psyche ... being ghostly.

Blending in by being right out in the open.

You'd be better off studying the art of shadowing and surveillance than photography to be a successful street photographer.

If you've gone through the trouble of blending in with "the locals" of wherever you are, you know what I mean. You see this moment developing between a mother and child or a group of teens up to no good or an old man perhaps reflecting on his life near a church where he may have married the woman who "made his life" but now is gone ...

And ...

You put a giant camera to your eye

You're noticed.

Your moment is fucked.

An SLR has its place. So does a view camera. As does a little digi. Even medium format.

None of the aforementioned belongs around the neck or on the shoulder or hidden under a jacket of the street photographer.

This is the world of the rangefinder. Go ahead chop down a fucking tree with a hammer.

Whether your budget is limited and all you can manage is a Bessa with some Voigtlander glass or your dad's a dentist and he's turned on by "hot gear" and buys you the latest Leica and the fastest glass ... I implore you to start off your street photography quest with a rangefinder.

If you counter this that you can use an SLR with a long lens and stand away from the action, you're not of the correct mindset to really understand.

Close this document.

Go back to macros.

They're easier.

You have to be in the "middle of it."

Immersed in the action.

There's an energy which is palpable ... when you're onto something.

You can feel it.

Right down to your fingertips.

You're a hunter.

Not some pussy with a scope up in a tree waiting for some hapless fucking deer with no chance against a 30.06.

So what you froze your ass off for a day and a half? You killed a deer.

Up-fucking-close-and-personal. Go kill that deer with a knife. Then I'll be impressed. ;)

That's what this genre is all about.



Humans in their human-zoo.

Doing the things that humans do. I fucking rhymed!

Experiencing what humans experience.

The grand gamut of human life.

Life on the street. Or anywhere just off the street. Where humans gather. And have solitary moments. Or interact with their brethren.

Could there be anything better than a camera with thirty-six chances, an iPod and a foreign city or your own for that matter to explore?

I think not.

Except for the occasional coffee and cigarette breaks and perhaps a conversation. Or two. Or three.

I will disagree with Mr. Cartier-Bresson that one must be a local in order to blend. Perhaps back in the day when he made the comment there were not as many tourists. Maybe they were less common.

But today they *are* common.

Almost anywhere. Maybe less so in Red States.

That said, no, I haven't donned boots and a cowboy hat and conquered the streets of Texas.

Maybe I'm missing something.

In fact, I'm sure I am.

The carnival of life on the street is everywhere.

I prefer Los Angeles – because I will defer to Mr. Cartier-Bresson and admit that because I live here – and Europe. People tend to walk to their destinations in Europe. Being isolated from your human zoo-mates by steel and aluminum and carbon fibre takes something away.

Like I said, “You have to be in the thick of it.”

In the middle of the action.

With a tool that is well suited for its job.

The rangefinder.

Whatever your flavour or taste or budget dictates.

The rangefinder is the benevolent concealed weapon.

They are known for fast lenses.

They make an almost imperceptible sound when the shutter is tripped.

Being able to see compositional elements come and go in and out of one's frame lines is invaluable.

There is no substitute.

You can make your arguments against what I just said.

But ... you just don't know.

If it's because all you have is an SLR or a little digi-cam, that doesn't make your point valid.

I don't photograph the street because it makes me money. It doesn't.

I do it because it is what I love.

No other moments – besides those relating to my daughter or family – are more important to me to record onto cellulose.

You notice I said cellulose and not sensor.

Maybe someone will come up with a valid argument why colour film or digital colour has a place in the genre that is “the street” but I haven't heard one yet.

The street needs to be shot onto a medium, which is a level playing field for all.

We all see colours differently.

Even dogs see grayscale the same way.



Colour should not offer it's own definition of what's going on.

Street photography is black and white.

And many lovely shades of gray.

And shadow.

That are ONLY film.

Go ahead and flame.

You're a neophyte and really don't know why you're flaming.

You probably don't even know what depth of field is.

Do you pound nails with a pair of pliers?

Do you turn screws with a chisel?

Maybe you do.

Maybe you're fucking super-MacGyver – making reference to the popular U.S. television show from the nineties.

Maybe you're God.

If that's the case, go, be my fucking guest.

There are tools for every task on the planet. In the context of street photography the tools are a rangefinder and black and white film with a suitable ISO/ASA.

That's it.

Oh, yeah, that and an uncanny ability to measure light and distance with one's brain.

Luckily, one can practice.

And practice.

And be patient.

And have the ability to pounce like a fucking cat when the mouse makes the wrong move or pauses just long enough.

Because in that instant where the mirror is in the way of your eye, that's when the moment really happens.

Only with a rangefinder do you know if "you nailed it."

Nailing it feels good.

And, believe it or not, not nailing with a rangefinder it feels good too?

Why's that?

I believe that the moments we don't get are meant to teach us things. We should reflect on these missed moments.

Taking a digi-cam photo and stripping the saturation in a photo manipulation programme such as PhotoShop is **not** street photography.

Just so you know.

Hate me.

Whatever.

I don't care.

Street photography is defined by what the greats did back in the twenties and thirties and forties and fifties. It's black and white. It's made with a rangefinder.

If it were discovered and defined in the nineties or even last-fucking-year with colour film or colour sensor and shot with an SLR, then so be it.

But it wasn't.

The icons of the couple kissing, the boy leaping over the water, the welcoming of U.S. soldiers into the streets of Paris ... they were all made with black and white ... and ... shot with rangefinders.

Most specifically, Leicas.



A street camera will get knocked, spilled upon and generally fucked.

They must be strong and durable.

I cannot *completely* vouch for the Voigtlanders, the Contaxs ... the old Zeiss stuff.

I've heard they're good.

I know what I've personally tested and can vouch for.

One of my M6's has been dropped from more than 1 meter to the street and then onto a curb. The focus was a bit stressed. The rangefinder needed to be realigned. But ... I could still make photos.

It wasn't optimal.

But, really, what is in life?

I forgot something.

Let me digress.

There are some rangefinders that are NOT well suited for the street. They are the Contax G-series. The lenses are pretty nice. None are faster than two-oh but the Zeiss glass is wonderful. Too bad that the primarily auto-focus bodies suck to high hell. Yes, they have a manual capability but it's like churning butter with a fucking toothpick.

You will get more missed moments not by your own fault but by the fact the camera is not meant for street photography.

Why?

I know.

I shot with one for a while.

The thirty-five-two-oh was nice.

But ... that extra stop in the Summilux one-four – not to mention the superior build quality – is truly awe-inspiring.

I remember the first day I held my first Leica M in my hands.

I remember the first time I saw the framelines.

I remember the first thwaap.

So will you.

And if you're thinking, "You Leica fucking snob," go ahead.

You just don't know.

Those that know.

Know.

And they'll never look back.

Yes, I know that the majority of people who purchase or collect Leica equipment are doctors and dentists and well-to-do engineers. The collective fondlers. Some of my fondler-friends tell me that the Leicas only come out for birthday parties and trips to make sharp-yet-shitty tourist photos.

I know this.

Buck the trend.

Use the Leica.

Don't fondle it like you fondle yourself.

Use it like a tool.

A tool that is the only perfect tool for making street photographs.

Seriously, a used M6 from the mid-nineteen-eighties should cost you a grand. Take it to a technician and have it CLA'd – fondler-speak for Clean, Lube and Adjust. You can buy a Summicron or a 'cron as the happy-fondlers call them for about eight hundred. All figures in U.S. dollars. You do the conversion. I make photos.

A 'cron is a two-oh. You can make wonderful photographs with them.

Mr. HCB did.

What he could have done with fast film and one-four glass. Ah ... I'll bet he wished.

With a two-oh lens you'll be limiting yourself to making photographs before dusk and almost never at night.

The one-four is a perfect lens for almost any situation.

There is a one-oh lens.

The Nocti.

But ... I'll get into that later.

You can call me a Leica-asshole.

Fine.

Go 'head.

You know I don't care.

Always err on the side of faster glass if you can.

You won't regret it.

You'll regret the moments that pass you by because your tool wasn't well chosen.

Trust me. Or don't.

Again, I don't really give a flying fuck.

Whatever that is or however it is performed.

A roll of film. A rangefinder with fast glass. Patience. And the desire for a simple adventure on the streets. And love.

For what you're attempting to do. That's what you need.



What is street photography?

For me street photography is defined by the work by René-Jacques, André Jacques, Izis, André Martin, Willy Ronis, Robert Doisneau, Olivier Garrou from the eighties, Elliot Erwin, of course, Mssr. Henri Cartier-Bresson, Christian Sarramon, Atget, for that matter, Marcel Bovis, Sabine Weiss, Philippe Gautrand, Edith-Claire Gérin, Albert Monier, Bernard Plossu with work from the eighties, Claude-Raimond Dityvon from the nineties, Édouard Boubat (who's work is very underrated), Jean-Claude Gautrand, Michel Lamoureux, Jean-Louis Courtinat, André Kertész from the twenties and thirties, Martine Franck, Joseph Koudelka, Séeberger from the turn of the century (not the last one, 'kay) to Brassai – naming just the very well-known.

What do the above have most in common?

True, they all made spectacular photographs of Paris.

Yes, most were French.

I mean it does stand to reason.

A significant number of the above photographers used Leicas and wonderfully rich Leica glass.

All of the photographs that are iconic to me, at least, were in black and white.

But ... foremost in my mind as a common denominator is the fact that these photographers loved their subjects. And, that said, I think one can definitely see a difference in the way certain photographers – such as Mssr. Cartier-Bresson – photographed subjects in France – with, in my opinion, respect for them – and in the U.S. It would appear to me that Henri looked at America and Americans in general with a less passionate eye.

Whether they are your neighbor, a tourist, perhaps a guest worker or anyone ... they're our global neighbors and we all – should, at least – love everyone simply because they're human. Our eye as street photographers should be tuned to their humanity. We shouldn't discriminate.

Sometimes a homeless person looks beautiful whilst during other times they appear somewhat like their environment. Conversely, pretty people have ugly moments. Nonetheless all subjects should be treated with respect.

Some of you may think I'm too purist of mindset.

Whatever.

All good.

It's just that the first great street photographs were made by a certain group of people and they had several things in common.

By this you could argue that I may think street photography can only be done in Paris.

Not true, mon frere.

Many in the list of photographers I noted made photographs in many other countries.

Perhaps your own.

My favourite films are the worlds-colliding kind. "The Professional" by Altman is one of them.

We can see that in a street every day.

You just have to be patient. Perhaps street photography is the "golf" of photography? Perhaps. Worth pondering I think.

It's there.

It's everywhere.

It's beautiful.

If you look hard enough you'll see the couple who've been married for fifty years having a moment where you *know* they had a great fifty years and not just feeding some narcissistic insecure need to "have someone." You may also find a young dad showing his son or daughter a duck for the first time. Someone looking at a menu. A private moment between two lovers whether or not they are "involved" with others.

I love Doisneau's photo of the couple – even though some say it was staged. I wasn't there. Neither were you.

I love photographs that show an inherent compassion for another human.

Seeing the culture inherent where one lives.

I love that.

Whether it's by going myself or just looking at a well-made photograph.

I want to be transported.

I want to experience a world different than my own. Perhaps someone else's emotions at the time they were feeling them.

Without reading.

Just by looking.

And being grabbed by the visual balls.

Moments of quiet introspection spied by an intrepid photographer with a fast lens didn't stop happening in the forties and fifties in Paris.

They happen today.

In Paris but also in your city or town or hamlet or wherever the fuck you reside.

The style of street photography, however, is that of a black and white photograph.

Not a sensor image.

A photograph.

Silver-halide-based.

Grainy.

Sometimes with the horizon line not straight like Mr. Cartier-Bresson did with his 1974 photo of the Jardin des Tuileries. Fast film and fast lenses can do nothing for the horizon line.

I want to see the snow in the brim of the hat.

I love seeing just a few visual clues but feeling something.

That's a successful street photograph.

I think that street photography is my golf. I used to play golf. Something had to go.

It was golf. Golf cannot be forced much like street photography cannot be squeezed as juice from fruit at will.

It's something that has to be practiced for hours and days and months and years on end. The practicing never stops. It doesn't for me. I may be a professional editorial photographer but moreover in the context of the street I'm a "Practicing Street Photographer." Would you want a doctor or an attorney who wasn't "practicing"? I think not.

As much as I don't think a perfect photograph exists I think we all hope that it actually does and we're there to make it when it presents itself.

I don't find that in the studio. Okay, sometimes, I do.

I don't expect to find it at a Hollywood party. Okay, once in a while.

I kinda think it's out there on some street.

Somewhere.

I'll settle for perfect moments for the time being.

They existed in San Francisco in 2003. Prague in 2001. Paris back in the forties and I'm sure even today. In your city tomorrow and yesterday. They are everywhere. Back when the style was defined through the past and into the future. On the street. In restaurants, cafes and bars.

And they look so nice, as the European masters pointed out, using black and white film.

They look amazing as rectangles.

I don't see life in a square neither did most of them.

As much as I am a fan of Mr. Newton I'm not sure I enjoy his fashion-vis-à-vis-street-photography sets.

I don't think contrived moments have anything of significance in the genre of street.

In fact, nothing about street photography should be contrived.

I don't believe stripping saturation from a street-like-photograph is street photography in its purest form.

It's done with film.

Black and white film. That said, I'm more inclined to think that colour is allowed after having viewed material by Garry Winograd. Somehow he only allows colour to enhance the photo and not define it or let the colours provide their own definitions.



Exposed with equipment that is both small and unassuming and tough as nails. Rangefinders, baby.

If you are afraid of scratching your gear, the fondlers will invite you to shoot a birthday party for them.

Your gear will get beaten.

Knocked.

And generally abused.

I want to know that no matter what ... I can make an exposure under any circumstance. Battery or not.

You never know when that circumstance will look lovely.

Well-composed.

Maybe not the sharpest.

Maybe there's a lot of grain.

Maybe it's even slightly out-of-focus. Never stopped Mssr. Cartier-Bresson! ;)

But it works.

I don't forgive a lot of mistakes with other photography but with street just its imperfect roots lend some forgiveness.

You have to be prepared to be the camera-geek whom always has a camera on their person.

'tis a reason I've learned to conceal one rather well.

For ... having a concealed camera, which is almost whisper silent and can allow focusing without looking through its viewfinder, can record beautiful moments when if the photographer were noticed ... it would be ... contrived.

My vision of street photography was influenced by those that "set the style."

I prefer to see the human zoo in black and white and beautiful shades in between with unsurpassed shadow detail.

Grain is beautiful.

Noise is a digitally contrived ugly mess. Digitally pumping the fuck out of your contrast is ugly and proves you don't know what you're doing while trying to achieve a "personal style."

For until they make a digital body that does everything a Leica M can do in the original format that is true 35mm ... I'm just not that interested.

When I think back to the original list of photographers I named my favourite photographs made by them are the covert variety.

Not the portraits. None with eye contact. Eye contact includes the street photographer as part of the definition of the photograph and I'm not sure I like that.

Seems to me that when there's eye contact the photographer is making his or her own impact on the subject and it comes through. Being the casual unobserved observer is what it is all about.

A bystander with a camera.

Pedestrian.





That's what I aim to achieve. If I become the "fly-on-the-wall," the viewer will become that as well.

I may not see vintage clothes on vintage children who are now our grandmothers and grandfathers, but I see life around me everywhere.

Street photography is life.

In a pure and raw form.

It happens now.

It happened then.

It happens in an instant.

And in that instant the photographer should know his or her equipment extremely well.

No-auto-anything. No auto-program will see it like the photographer sees it.

The street photographer has their aperture and shutter speed set wherever they are.

Is it sunny?

Am I in the shade?

Is it the same value everywhere because it's overcast?

Is the non-natural (e.g., tungsten or even candles) ambient light affecting how my subject's will be lit?

These are all questions that should be going through the photographer's mind.

The photographer should know these settings in an instant. How does one know this in an instant?

Practice, my boy or girl, for that matter, practice.

Practice all the time.

After enough frames and enough fucked up ugly contact sheets one will know when they “have it.”

After tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of frames one will not have a use for a light meter.

In the absence of the ability to be a human light meter you will not be able to just go out and make photos. Rather, and in the meantime, take meter readings off of your hand. Most rangefinders have centre-weighted metering systems. Yes, these areas change given the lens that’s on the body but you shouldn’t be using anything but a fifty or thirty-five millimetre anyway. Yeah, a prime lens. I know certain photographers think these went out of style but they can go fuck themselves and wake up at dawn and make solitary landscapes. The world needs more landscape photos! ;)

When you’re in the sun check the reading – given the aperture that best suits the kind of subject you may feel like photographing – and see where you’re at. Note it. Mentally. You’ll look like an idiot referring back and forth to notes. That said, make notes later. Trust me on this.

Someone’s always watching. Remember ... you’re a ghost. You’re an intelligence agent doing “advance work.” Blend. Blend. Blend.

When you’re in the shade or under trees, again, take a reading.

Check to see if some window illumination will make it necessary to adjust your settings by a stop or so.

Check your settings as the sun or the light changes as the day moves to evening.

Do this until you know your preferred ISO and what it will require of your camera equipment to make a suitable exposure.

You will not succeed every time.

But you will learn.

You will learn by doing.

You will hopefully learn by your successes and most hopefully by your failures. It’s a gradual process.

Your goal should be to know the EXACT light and how it’s going to affect your film given the conditions present.

That's why you don't see portrait photographers doing a lot of street.

Street is difficult. If you know your composition, set-ups are easy. There is nothing set-up about the street.

Nothing easy is worthwhile. Unless she has a daddy complex and an oral fixation. Sorry. Couldn't resist.

It's great fucking exercise too!

Wear really comfortable shoes. I prefer sneakers. Not Converse, though, unless, that is, you live on the East Side and it's cool. ;)

Even if you have the "general light" well estimated there will be situations when there's something that wasn't counted on. That streak of light in the shade that blows out a subject. That spot of shade in the daylight and your subject is a couple stops under what's ideal.

You'll learn.

It will all make sense.

So what if you hear, "What ... you think you're HCB? Running around a city with your rangefinder."

Just smile.

And think about light.

And making photographs.

The people who defend digital and how much better they think it is than film only think that way because they don't have the balls to make an exposure they can't see a second afterwards. They're insecure. Daddy beat them.

Go shoot.

Go fail.

Go learn.

You'll learn whilst you're waiting ... and thinking about the photographs you made ... and how they actually look on the contact sheet. Instant gratification isn't everything. Unless you're a porn star and you can only enjoy sex whilst on drugs.

You'll have a leg-up on digital photographers who depend on their insecurity that is the monitor and is used as their visual crutch.

All the greats from back in the day survived with just a rangefinder and film.

Why can't you?

Are you afraid to fail?

Then don't try street photography because you will get many more unusable frames than useable ... especially when you start out.

It's not just learning your light and how to meter it.

No fucking way.

It's using depth-of-field to either isolate or include or blend a subject into their environment.

Why would you want to do any of these things?

Look at the work of the greats.

Their work will show you why.

Then you'll understand.

Not everything is at f/8 aperture priority. Or programme. When I see a shooter's camera set to programme I lose all respect.

Some things are more vague.

And rightfully so.

I don't know why anyone would want to use shutter priority.

I mean ... let a fucking camera pick the f/stop?

A sin.

A camera does not or *should not* think.

That is the job for a photographer.

Can a camera come up with the best composition?

Never.

There's not one that has that ability.

Why if this is the case would any photographer let a camera pick the aperture? The most important aspect of a photographer's vision of what he or she is seeing.

I just don't get it.

That said, just because you nail your exposures doesn't mean your work will be anything but shit if the content and how the content is presented isn't "just so" and pleasing to the eye. Experienced eyes always "know." You won't fool them.

Get to the point – through review of your own work and that of others – so that composition is also "second nature" and you "just know" when you see it.

It either works or doesn't.

Make it work.

Don't visually torture us.

I am positive there are many other people who can explain how to make one's composition better. I'm probably not that person.

I make photos; I've never said I could teach another to do the same.

That said, keeping the rule of thirds in mind helps to make your photos "feel right."

Try and keep your horizons as straight as possible.

Just like making sure there are no trees or shrubbery growing out of human's heads or overhead horizontal lines don't distract from the subject.

Those are the givens.

They should be second nature.

Just like metering will be given enough patience and practice.

You will not learn this in a week.

I don't care what your fucking SAT's said.



With all the exactness in one's photographic abilities that I've outlined, give yourself some leeway.

Not all photographs are sharp.

I dare you to find one photographer I talked about who defined the style of street photography who hasn't made an unsharp photograph. They all have. Fuck ... I have.

Sometimes I've done it on purpose to convey a point of view.

I know others have as well.

I think the only place I don't want to see an unsharp photo or out-of-focus is that in the cinema.

DP's be damned. Focus-pullers be damned.

Ya' know ... I really like the photo on the prior page. The look on that massive dog's face just makes me laugh.

Once you've gotten to a place where you've been making exposure readings ...

Okay ... I'll digress.

I'm good at that.

Regression as well.

But I won't go there.

Everyone should pick a film that they like.

Everyone should pick an ISO that they particularly like as well.

Honestly, for general purpose making of photos 400 ISO works rather well in all situations and light conditions.

Stop (aperture or shutter speed) down in bright light but you'll have latitude if you're making photographs approaching dusk.

So ... given this ISO ... start guessing or estimating your exposures and see how close you are.



Practice.

Conservatively, I'd say that you may get to the "within a half-stop" consistency that one needs to be able to make exposures "on the fly."

Fuck batteries.

Photographer.

Camera.

Film.

That's all one needs.

That's all the masters of this genre ever had.

Why should you be any different?

Why should I?

When you're making your exposure calculations with your rangefinder with centre-weighted metering hold your hand out as far as it will extend making sure that you're looking at your palm. It's like a poor man's incident meter. Once you see what it's reading turn your hand so that it's now shaded and note the difference in the reading. Usually about two stops.

With the last photograph at the Getty museum café as an example take meter readings from different locations (e.g., shaded, half-shaded, light, bright, etc.) and try and come up with an average. Sure, some of the darks will be too dark and some of the bright may be too bright but you will get a pleasing photo.

Honestly, don't do this for anyone else but yourself.

Perhaps others will enjoy what you've seen and recorded but that really isn't the point.

This is for you. I do this for me.

I want to document the changing world around me. Where I live. Where I travel. But it's the world at large.

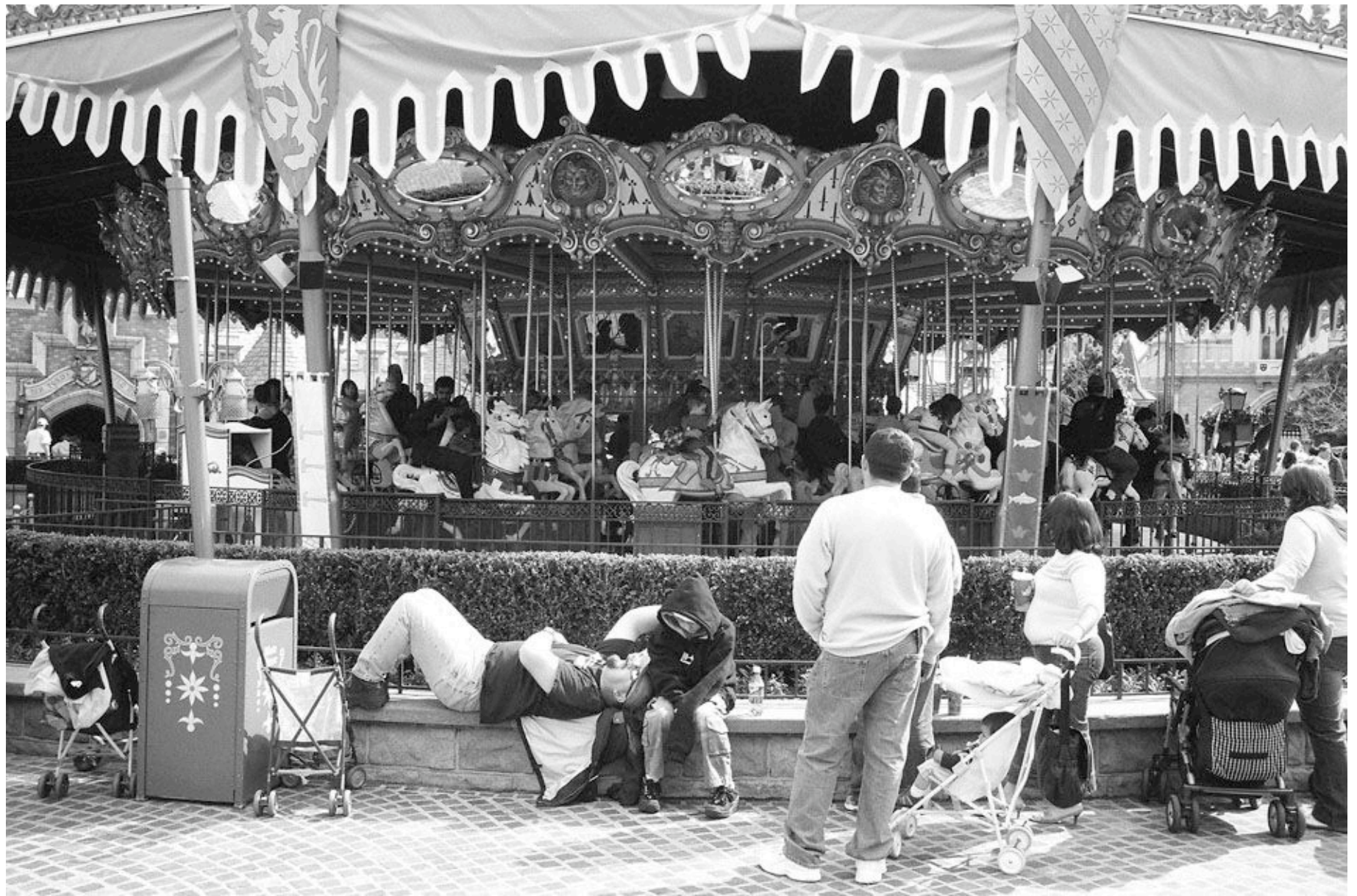
And I'm part of that world. So are you.



An American tourist making a photo of other tourists being photographed by their guide.



Everything in this frame was chosen for a reason.



A touching moment between big scary dude and his son.



Every morning in Prague I walked past about the same time on the way to the set ... she was there. I hope she still is.

I followed this girl-quote-unquote for about forty minutes.

Turns out she was a he.

Guess I didn't catch the broad shoulders and the small hips.

It was at this moment that I discovered auto-focus – as I was shooting a Contax G2 – had absolutely no place in street photography.

None. A photographer picks his or her plane of focus not the camera.

It was at this moment I knew I would say goodbye to my Contax.

Sold it on Ebay.

Sold the lenses on Ebay except for the thirty-five-two-oh as I gave it to an editor at a wire service who loved this camera.

A photographer must be able to control EVERYTHING when it comes to making photos.

As much as I loved the Zeiss lenses for the Contax G system I knew that I needed true manual focus. A camera is not going to tell me how to expose my photo – especially in the context of street.

Because sometimes making a street photo without anyone knowing is of tantamount fucking importance to me.

To the scene.

To what I remember.

To what I want to remember.

Putting a camera to eye is not possible in certain circumstances.





The last photo made in San Francisco during 2005 whilst showing my girlfriend at the time in for a visit from Italy would have been ruined if any of the three people saw me making it and were looking at the camera.

So, “how?” you say?

It wasn't friggin'-auto-friggin'-focus.

I knew that the nearest of the subjects was five feet away and the third guy was about eight feet away.

How'd I know that?

I used to really enjoy golf.

Psychotically.

I knew I had a problem.

I quit.

Like I had five hours to waste on a golf course with my friends getting all fucked up.

But ... what golf really taught me – better than I knew it before – was estimation of distance. Two foot putt. Five foot putt. Ten. Fifteen. Twenty.

Back to the photo ... I knew I needed between three and eight feet of depth ... as in depth of field.

That's really what that phrase means.

Given that I knew that with the thirty-five millimeter Summilux lens I was using that I'd need to be at f/8. We were sitting inside a compartment in the obligatory cable car.

Ya' know ... I like cable cars.

It's like one of the only fucking pieces of culture we have in America. Like Sears & Robuck. And McDonalds. And Indians.

Being at f/8 I also knew that given the fact I was out the night before and my ISO was 400 plus one at 800 I'd be at a thirtieth of a second.

I knew my angle of view from edge to edge. One only gets to know this by making thousands upon thousands of frames. I see framelines instinctually. Don't worry ... if you practice ... you'll get there.



Know your thirty-five.

Know your fifty.

In no time you'll be shooting at the hip like the masters.

At least I hope you are.

Back to the depth.

At $f/8$ I knew my thirty-five-'lux would give me about four feet of depth.

Look at the example of this lens at left. This is the "depth of field scale." Know it.

Love it.

Make it your fucking friend.

Because it wants to be your friend.

In this example I put four feet on the $f/8$ mark to the left of center as I knew the first guy frame left was about that distance away from me. The $f/8$ mark on the right side of the lens was at eight feet. Given that I knew that everything between four and eight feet would be

reasonably sharp.

You'll also see that if would have wanted to single out the man on the left I could have chosen $f/1.4$ – where this is almost no depth of field given being that close to my subjects. If you can estimate at $f/1.4$ and get it as tight as a duck's ass, you're a stud.

But it really wasn't about the man on the left. Nor the woman in the centre. Nor the man on the right.

It was about all three.

If you use the above photo of my little friend the scale as an example, you'd see that at $f/5.6$ I would have had between four and half and a little more than six feet of depth or at the end of the scale at $f/16$ I would have had between a little more than three feet and a little more than twelve.

It's all relative.

You really don't have to look through your lens to make a photo.

Know your distance.

Know your angle of view.

Know your metering.

Average your metering in your mind.

See? There's not much to it.

Not at fucking all.

I mock.

I jest.

But I encourage you to try and practice ... this quest of recording a perfect moment.

It's better than golf.

It's even more solitary ... surrounded by people.

Just you.

A roll of film.

Your camera.

And knowledge of your film and camera.

And the practice.

There are times when – given the tens of thousands of frames I’ve made – I’m just a little off. Being either one click away from the optimal exposure, though, will make you faster.

Estimate first.

Then check with the meter.

Then focus on the subject of your choice.

Frame left.

Frame right.

Centre.

Whatever makes the composition visually easy and pleasant to look at.

If you’re at $f/1.4$ and the subject is eight feet away, pre-focus the scale with the 8 feet mark in the middle at the corresponding hash mark for $f/1.4$. Let’s say you estimated that the light was at a thirtieth. You put the rangefinder – yes, I’m biased – to your eye and you see that your light was spot on but the focus was more like nine feet. You shift it. That can happen in an instant. You corrected. You nailed the moment.

If your lens was at $f/2.8$ and set for twelve feet and the camera was set at a sixtieth, you would have been clicking around to high hell.

You’d have missed the moment.

But, yes, like I’ve said before, “you would have learned and that is important.”

Very important.

For I believe this process of learning street photography is like a karate or kung fu belt system. I don’t know the progression of colours, nor do I care, but you get my point.

The first part.

Everything you learn there you apply to the second part.

And so on and so on.

In my opinion the holy grail of street photography is the ability to shoot from the hip.

You know your distance.

Your light.

Your angle of view.

To some it may be the “hail mary” (with reference to American football and throwing a long long long pass downfield) of photography but to some who’ve practiced ... it’s a sure thing.

For street photography is almost more about the “covert arts” than it is anything else.

I’d rather look like a guy on the street. Chillin’.

Perhaps I won’t “get made” as someone making a photograph.

I’d rather people didn’t look at me whilst making photographs.

Maybe in that instant they make eye contact with me I’ll look left or right like I’m looking at something ...

And pull their eyes away from my own.

And make my photo right at that instant.

Sometimes that works amazingly.

I also think all black equipment is the only way to go.

Make fun of my attempt at illustrating a covert method of photographing and ... well ... whatever.



I tried.

I set up a Canon Eos 1D Mark II on a tripod – yes, a fucking tripod, just for you – pre-focused a mark, set the self-timer and ran to said spot and tried to do what I was attempting to illustrate ... all within ten seconds.

‘twas not easy.

Yes, I could have set up the IR remote but I would have had to use my hand to trip it.

Sometimes, yes, modern luxuries that are the digi-SLR work to a photographer’s benefit.

But ... you know what I’ll say.

Not, I repeat, NOT, on the street.

Imagine that both of the prior illustrations were not made in semi-overcast light but around dusk.

The camera would have blended in.

I would have been a dude havin’ a smoke.

A dude just sittin’ and chillin’.

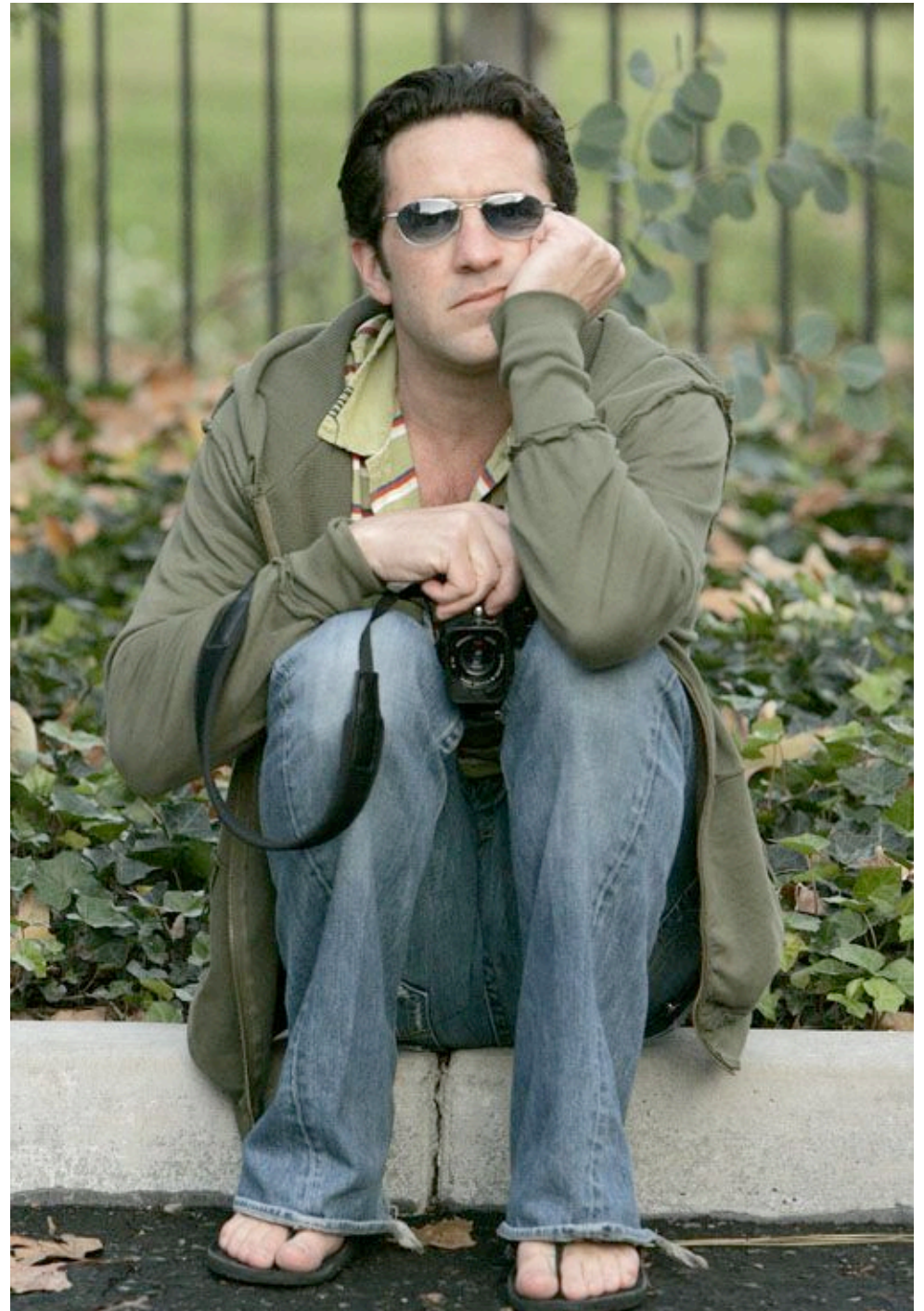
Not makin’ a photograph.

Of a moment.

A covert moment.

Where discovery of a photograph being made would have ruined everything.

Yes, I would have learned. But I prefer to nail it.





I mean, really, would her quiet moment of contemplation have been the same if she were looking at me? Maybe the Asian gentleman at Charles DeGaulle may have noticed but I think he was just staring off into space. As his wife was apparently lost in her own space.



There are little photo stories everywhere. Rather than being a technician of light or a composer of geometric objects within a rectangle or even an estimator of distance, I think a skilled photographer must also be a skilled observer.



Maybe the photos would mean nothing to anyone that wasn't there. But if it makes you remember that you were having your own contemplative moment then all the better.

Just so you know in the three hours I sat at that table pen-in-hand writing in my analogue journal this woman must have smoked four packs. Her husband would only come over to retrieve a cigarette, smoke it and then go outside and stare into space.

Wonderful conversations they must have, no?

When I know that I have the ability to use some stationary and most of the time large objects as a little sniper's nest, I use them.

Because, I mean, come on, honestly, it's much better to have the camera to eye.

Using those beautiful frame lines.

Watching elements come in and out of your frame.

'tis a wonderful way to pass one's time.

And there's that thrill you feel in your stomach.

Your heart.

Your throat.

Your balls, if you own some.

And just because you're a guy doesn't mean you have a set.

Using an object to use as cover doesn't have to apply to immobile objects. It doesn't even have to apply to inanimate objects.



Sometimes you can use a friend. In my case, a girl, usually, as a decoy.

And shoot over her shoulder.

No one is the wiser.

You're just a young couple making a holiday memory. Even though you're recording someone else's. Even though if they knew me they'd know that I never make those solitary-smile-honey-you're-in-Capri-photographs. I know my angle of view and with a thirty-five focused at the closest it can go with my arm stretched out ... I can make two-shot-smile-honey-*we're*-in-Capri-photographs.

I feel bad for tourists. They take pictures of each other but almost never together. For whatever reason I offer to photograph them both once in a while.

You should as well.



I find that a sneaky-shoot-over-her-shoulder-photo is best accomplished with a fifty millimetre.



All this old guy in Naples was thinking, first, "I hope I don't get hit by a car" and, secondly, "why is he taking her picture in the middle of a street." Perhaps he was thinking, "Ch'è STRONZO!" Non so.

I didn't follow him and ask.

Asking.

That's another thing I hear. How the fuck do you take pictures without their consent? Well, first off, I'm not using the photos in the context of a commercial endorsement. I didn't license the old guy in the street through a stock agent for use in a Herpes medication advert.

I don't know every law about every country. I know that in the United States **no one** has a reasonable expectation of privacy in a public area.

No one.

Why do you think the paparazzi really rule the streets of Los Angeles?

Why do you think it's a multi-million dollar industry?

Why does every Tom, Jose or Francois think they can buy some heavy glass, move to Los Angeles and stalk to their heart's delight?

Because they can.

It's legal.

If there are signs posted that say, "No photography," then don't fucking photograph.

I wouldn't. I mean I wouldn't put my camera to my eye at least! ;)

If you're obviously pissing someone off, stop, pretend to not speak their language, pretend to be deaf. Whatever works.

Your purpose is to be an unobserved observer.

You should hone your skills as such.

It's not about beating someone about the face with your rangefinder – even though you probably could and still make photos. It's about making photographs of the life that passes by ...

In all situations.

That said I am not above asking permission to making a photograph.



Sometimes they say yes. Like this married couple I noticed in Santa Monica, Calif. People love having their pictures taken ... for the most part, at least. It's one of the sincerest forms of flattery.

Again, that said, I don't consider it the most true form of street photographs. Yes, they're made on the street but they usually include eye contact, which involves the photographer and is sometimes reflected in how the subjects look at the photographer.

True, a photo of this couple in a passionate throe of making out would be a raw slice of life, however, this is still a slice of life.

Then again, it's also a portrait.

Just because it's a portrait doesn't mean I won't seize the chance of making the photograph, though.

I'm a photographer.

I'm not above making a photograph of any kind at any time.

Well ... perhaps I'll never make high school prom portraits ...

Or do table top ...

But when I'm on the street sometimes I will ... ask.

I don't prefer asking.

I prefer doing the covert for these moments are just so much more interesting.

Where a photographer has to be concerned is locations within private property. If you're going to make photos inside a coffee shop, be prepared for someone to ask you to leave if you're caught. I got booted from a WalMart on assignment from The Wall Street Journal. I just smile and pretend I'm deaf or don't speak English.

I could probably make up some excuse and flash my credentials, but my credentials may be noted and I don't usually feel like getting a call from my editors.

Sometimes one may be asked to not bring a camera in at all. Try putting an SLR under a jacket. Think you're being covert?

I think not.

Try it with a rangefinder. You'll see what I mean.

There are many reasons to conceal a camera.

Ask a cop. Would they rather carry exposed or concealed? Whilst it does depend upon their assignment, most will answer that having it concealed invites less problems.

Sometimes people take issue seeing a “person with a camera.” They watch you.

Sometimes they watch you because they want to take your camera.

This doesn't just happen in the metro in Spain or trains in Turkey but on the streets of Los Angeles or Hoboken or Bishop, California.

Being unnoticed.

That's what it's all about.

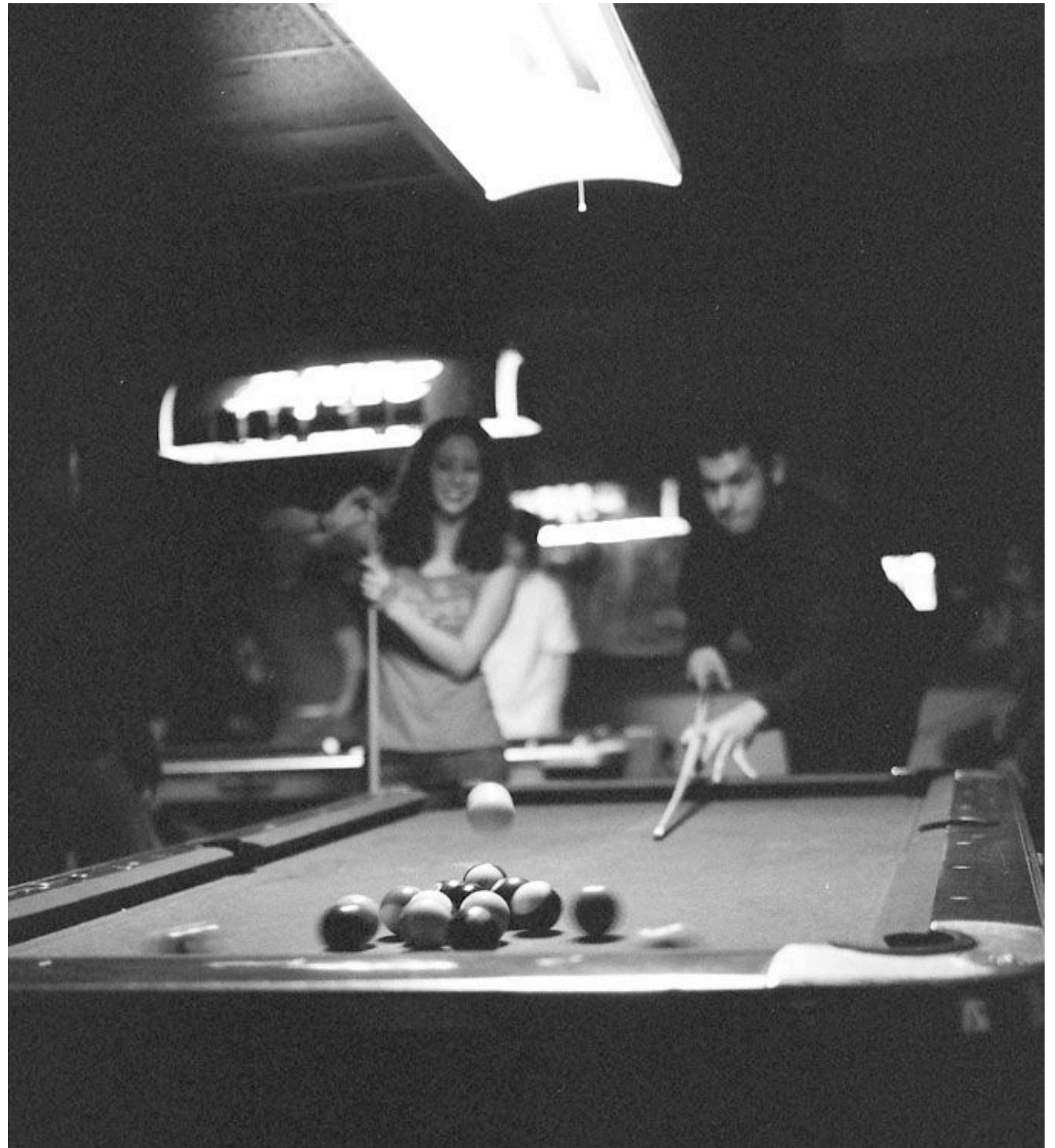
Usurping other's moments without them knowing.

Making a visual recording of something that was interesting to you as a photographer.

As a person.

That will, one day, at least, have memories that fade into the bokeh of life. Just as the Japanese intended with the word “bokeh.”

Be careful. Know yourself. Know your equipment. Don't be a dick. And you may perhaps make some amazing photos.



























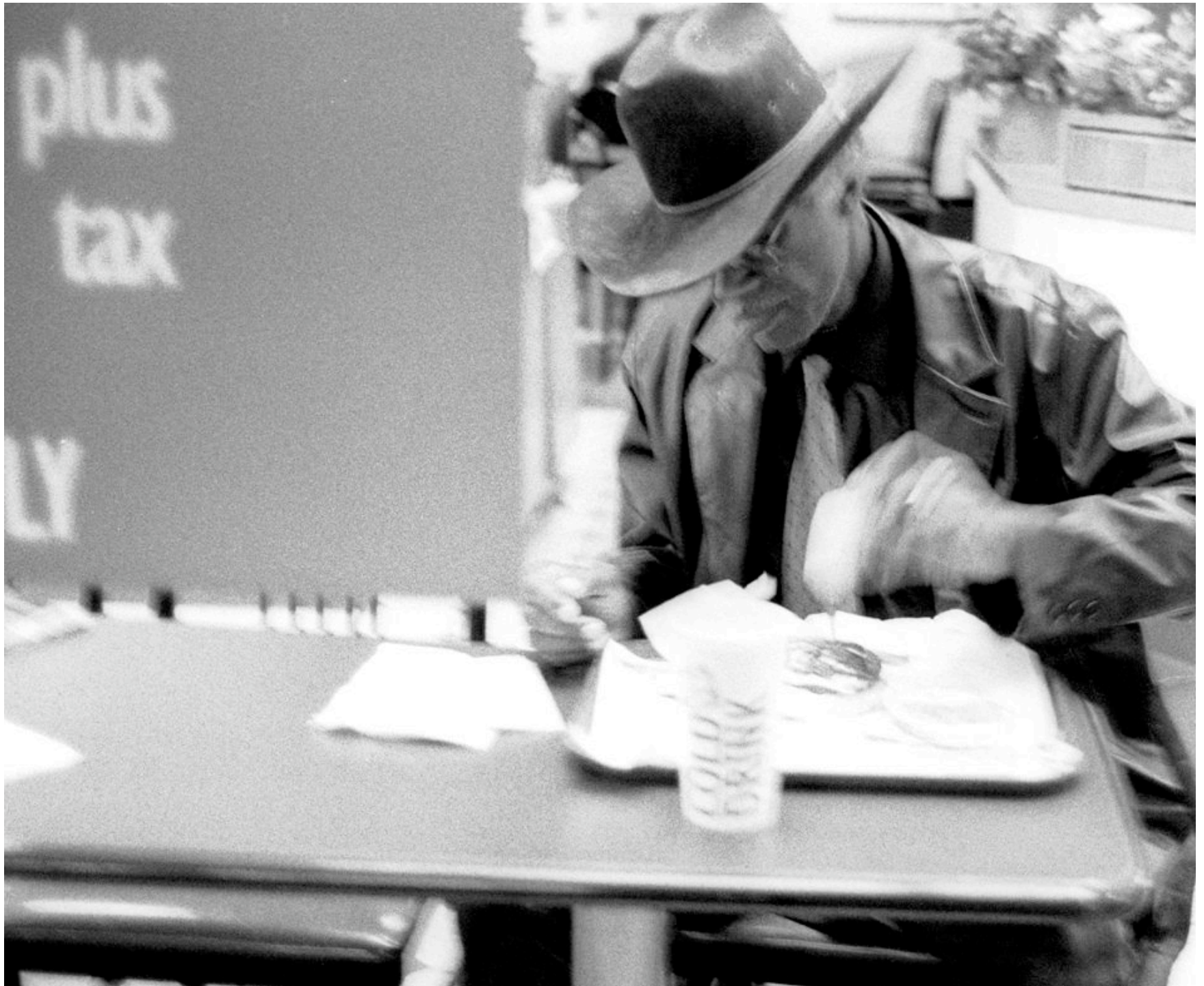












We who chose to make photographs – not just professional photographers – have one up on the rest.

I think.

I mean we not only get laid more often but, really, we see.

Seeing is wonderful.

So is hearing but I think photos and visuals say so much more. Pardon the pun.

We walk the streets without being streetwalkers. I hope, at least. I wish a hooker had a Leica! Before they sold it for crack ... ah the photos!

We make photographs.

Not just for ourselves but, perhaps, if unlike my mother who plays piano only for herself, you get to show others your work.

Not just the boring-ass Velvia-exposed fondler-type travel photographs of a street and a blown-out sunset, but real slices of life either down the street or 6,000 miles away.

A day off in a busy life can be a vacation or at least a holiday.

And that holiday may only be had ... making photos ... right around the corner from where you live.

I think that street photography really has its roots in visual or photojournalism or as they call it today, Visual Journalism 101. The skills you tirelessly practice and think about and visualize mastering will not only make you a better photographer but they can also lead to increased stock sales or commissioned assignments.

Although street has applications which can be used in wedding journalism, event work, or almost any other photographic pursuit, travel photo journalism, is perhaps the best route to follow.

Some of the best travel photographs I've seen published are definitely rooted with a fine knowledge of street photography. No, you won't see a travel reportage of just streets with people – as detail photographs are also required – but the better material you'll find in *Town & Country* or *Travel & Leisure* reflects a preference for a “true feeling” of where a discriminating reader may want to go.

Yes, there are travel reportage stories published with only black and white photographs.

Besides, aren't you really doing this for yourself anyway? Just because a photo editor or researcher likes it only makes it better.









Almost everything you see can be recorded with a thirty-five or fifty millimetre lens. I prefer both. On two bodies. Both loaded with different ISO films so that I may make many different shutter-speed-f/stop combinations.

That's the way I do it.

You can do it with one lens.

If you have the money, put another lens in your jacket pocket.

It's gonna get knocked.

Make sure it's tough equipment as there is no other photographic equipment, which takes more of a beating than street photography gear – I am much nicer to my digital photojournalist gear.

Why?

First off, digital gear is electronic. Electronic equipment is much more susceptible to knocks and bangs and drops.

Not only that but it's inherently electronic.

You need juice.

You ain't got no juice; you ain't making any fucking photographs.

I prefer the Leica MP. It has a meter. Yes, it does. And it works quite nicely.

But ... it's not necessary to make a photograph.

Shutter speed.

F/Stop.

With a battery and, more importantly, *without* a battery.

The M6, M6 TTL or M7 or the Zeiss ZM many others ... cannot claim this. One can only make exposures at 1/50th and 1/125th ... or bulb with the Leicas, at least. Emergency speeds as they call them.

I don't want to be limited.

Yes, a good photographer always has backup. But lets just say a body has a problem draining batteries. It happens. It happened to me. What the fuck are you going to do?

Think you're going to get a proper fix in Podunk-anywhere?

I don't fucking think so.

No, you don't have to use Leica.

In fact, you don't have to use new Leica. Seriously, though, what are you going to do with your vintage camera in a foreign country or even the United States when it breaks or requires repair?

Nothing.

One of the other reasons I prefer Leica bodies is that they look vintage even though you may have purchased it only yesterday.

When people see you making photographs they think you're some photo geek using some old-school camera and tend to take pity on you, "Oh look at that poor fuck using his grandfather's camera from the forties."

I like that, actually.

That is if they *actually* see my camera.

evil laugh

Or cameras.

There are rangefinders other than the Leica to choose from. I've used all of them. I don't remember them all. Some are better than others.

Build quality and toughness – tested myself – are surely won by Leica over all of the competition.

You do not have to buy new, though, as there is a brisk second-hand market.

That said I don't think – if you are going to have only one body – you should buy anything past the mid-eighties. They will break more often. They will need a CLA (see prior reference to fondler term) more often.

If you are just starting out you will need a camera body with an integrated meter. No doubt. You can use a handheld or a spot meter, however, you will be missing moments that could have otherwise been yours.











TRUST NO BITCH

















All of the preceding photos were made with either a Leica M6, Leica M6 TTL or the Leica MP – the king of all “street cameras.”

Why?

Why not your SLR or your little digi-cam? Because I can make a photo in any instance with a battery or not.

It is tough.

It is compact.

It does anything I ask it whether it's freezing or hot as shit.

The MP never fails.

All of the preceding photos were made with either thirty-five or fifty millimetre lenses with maximum apertures between one-point-oh to two-point-oh.

What someone who wants to make street photography their “photo genre of choice” should keep in mind is lens performance at maximum aperture.

I've tried the new Zeiss glass that fits the new Zeiss Ikon bodies. I've tried the Voigtlanders. More specifically I've tried them all at maximum aperture.

They perform well.

The do not, however, perform perfectly.

Like my Leica glass.

My Leica glass performs at maximum aperture like not other lenses created by any manufacturer.

Call me a Leica snob.

I don't fucking care.

What-so-fucking-ever.

I'll laugh my way down the street making photos the way I remember seeing them. When you're at 1 second shooting 800 ISO at f/4.0.

Perhaps not laughing as I'd be drawing attention to myself.

My "go to" lens is that of the thirty-five millimetre Summilux ASPH. Having the capability to make a photo at one-point-four is very much worth the extra money over only being able to shoot at two-oh.

The two-oh Summicron ASPH is an amazing lens. In fact, some experienced Leica shooters – not fondlers, mind you, as I don't listen to these people – claim that the 'cron has better bokeh than the 'lux. I'm not into splitting hairs when it comes to this aspect of my lens as I believe in content over quality of arcane photographic resolving details.

The fondlers can fight over that whilst looking at their photos of brick walls.

The fondlers hero is a guy who writes articles about resolution and shit I don't begin to understand. These guys worship this fondler-of-all-fondlers. I could perhaps take his views more seriously if he didn't, in fact, post his own photographs. I think that the award for making hot Dutch girls look like shit should be awarded to this guy.

Why?

He always beats up on my favourite lens. The Noctilux.

Why?

I dunno. Perhaps it doesn't resolve the grout lines of a brick wall that well at f-one-oh.

Some say that it's a specialty lens. Perhaps. I just know that I can make photographs at night with 100 ISO film and ISO 25 photographs in bright daylight at the full aperture of one-point-oh.

Is it sharp? I think it's sharp enough. I prefer content over sharpness.

Sharpness is cool but it's overrated.

Just like MTF charts. Wanna know what MTF charts are? Google the fucker.

They don't mean shit to me.

The ability to make a photo whenever and wherever possible is all that I care about.







What I like best about shoot at one-oh is the fact I can make a photo with almost no light. I mean not all of life happens in the light of day, right?

Secondly, I can separate my subject yet blend them into their environment.

Not only that but when I shoot 400 ISO and 800 and 1600 and even 3200 I can make photographs when others with less aperture capability aren't going to come away with shit. Film OR digital.

No, I'm not afraid of carrying a Leica M body and a well-known lens for fear of someone approaching me to discuss the inherent capabilities of my equipment.

Most of the time they don't even see my equipment as it's well hidden.

I'm sure some of you have come away with the impression that I only feel one should attempt street photography with a rangefinder and more specifically a Leica M body fitted with Leica glass. Sure. Okay.

Buying Leica gear is not going to make you HCB or Doisneau. No way.

If you are, however, willing to commit yourself and practice the art that is street photography, learning with a rangefinder and watching subjects drift in and out of one's framelines is the best way to learn the art.

You can't do that with a little digi.

You can't do that with an SLR.

Film or digital.

You may even read this and think I'm a film snob.

Perhaps I am.

Stripping your saturation and pumping up your contrast does not make a black and white photo ...

It makes a photo-manipulation.

If you, in fact, want to print these digital manipulations as sixteen-by-twenty exhibition prints ... watch as your photo falls apart into that which is digital noise.

Grain is beautiful; noise is ugly.



Remember ... when I first started writing this I knew there would be people that disagree. I wrote that my definition of street photography was what the masters defined it as.

Black and white film.

More often than not made with a rangefinder.

More often than not made with a thirty-five or fifty millimetre lens.

Content ruling over sharpness.

Sharpness belongs in the tabletop, macro and fondler realms.

Perhaps there should be a category or genre for “digital street photography.”

Yes, there should.

It's not that I hate digitally manipulated street photography, it's just that it's not street photography as defined from way back in the day.

I'm sure it has a place.

It doesn't have a place with what I want to shoot.

It doesn't fit in the way I see the street.

Because, really, it's about how you see street photography.

I see it through framelines when I'm actually able to put camera to eye and I see it from the mental visualization of my angle of view when shooting from my hip.

Please ... attempt that with anything but a full-on manual rangefinder with fast lenses and fast film and you're not going to get shit.

Or even slow film.

Back in the day when street photography was defined as a genre 100 ISO film was considered fast.

Their maximum apertures were two-oh or even two-five.

These lenses didn't even approach sharpness until f/5.6.

Their light meters were horrible when taking today's capabilities into consideration.

And they made and recorded magic.

Most of the masters were human light meters.

They knew how to use a distance scale on their lenses.

They knew what the depth in depth of field meant.

They used it very well.

Aspire to attain the same knowledge yourself.

You can learn to measure light.

You can learn how to anticipate a moment.

You can learn benevolent stalking of subjects and their evolving situations.

I think that composition is the actual part of this whole equation that is the most difficult to learn and attempt to master.

You learn by doing.

By seeing.

By looking at work by the masters of the genre.

In fact, I think you learn by looking at and studying not just photography – in the context of composition and “light play” – but by visiting museums and checking out paintings, drawings and many other genres of art where composition is of tantamount importance.

Just like with karate or Rosicrucian philosophy you will not become anything close to a master overnight.

It will take months and years of practical knowledge.

Given the right amount of commitment you will learn more through street photography to apply other genres than any other photographic endeavor.



Not only that but if you decide to pursue other types of photography as an occupation or profession I feel that a self-led journey through street photography will put you ahead of the game.

Moments are king. You'll find that the "actual moment" is the fraction of a second before the "actual decisive moment." It's really the evolution of the perfect moment.

In fact I believe that they, moments, are the whole court.

A well-composed moment can be magic.

No other genre teaches the patient pursuit of moments better than what you'll find on the streets anywhere in the world.

Because of my love and my own pursuit of all that is street photography I believe my anticipation of moments is much better.

I'm still learning.

Gladly.

I'm still learning from the moments that escape me.

They happen.

They happen to everyone.

As much as I knew they were there to teach me something it took a while for me to smile and laugh.

Some of those moments I still see in my mind.

Many others, though, are on a cellulose material slathered with light sensitive emulsion.

Not on a sensor.

The sensor is used in the context of my commercial work ... funding my pursuit of streets ... across from my house ... down the road and six thousand miles away on a cobbled street.

The street hones my commercial work.

My event work.

And literally kicks the ass of so-called wedding photojournalists shooting digital and stripping saturation.

I love putting my book down next to someone that *calls* their work black and white.

It's saturation-stripped digital manipulation.

Above and beyond everything else I believe my street work enhances my wedding work more than anything else.

Because it's about anticipation of the moment.

About compassion for other humans.

And recording their emotions with the smallest footprint.

And not ruining their moments with flash. Or even my *presence*.

Moments only need to be recorded.

They are beautiful in and of themselves.

They don't need colour but can exist in colour.

For that may take away from what they are.

They're meant to be seen by the photographer and/or the viewer in only the space that is grayscale.

Real grayscale.

Not contrived and stripped colour digital.

For this was written not for the casual practitioner.

This was written for the purist.

As the masters who defined the genre and style intended.

Photographer. Film. Street. Compassion for the subjects and their moments. Plain and fucking simple.

Photographic Legend & Exposure Journal

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114	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/5.6	Hollywood	2005
115	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/250 th at f/2.0	Hollywood	2006
116	Leica MP / 35/2.0 Summicron ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/8.0	West Hollywood	2005
117	Leica M6 TTL / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/1000 th at f/8.0	Fontana, Calif.	2003

Photographic Legend & Exposure Journal – Continued

<u>Page</u>	<u>Camera/Lens</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Exposure</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Circa</u>
118	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/60 th at f/1.0	Miami	2005
119	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/60 th at f/1.4	Miami	2005
120	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/4 at f/8.0	Naples, Italia	2004
121	Contax G2 / 35/2.0	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/15 th at f/2.0	Las Vegas	2000
122	Contax G2 / 35/2.0	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/15 th at f/2.0	San Francisco	2000
123	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/4.0	Park City, Utah	2005
124	Contax G2 / 35/2.0	Ilford Delta 400	1/15 th at f/2.0	San Francisco	2000
125	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/8	San Francisco	2005
126	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/4.0	Positano, Italia	2004
127	Leica M6 TTL / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/2.0	Prague	2001
128	Leica M6 TTL / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/250 th at f/5.6	Paris	2002
131	Leica M6 TTL / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/250 th at f/5.6	Rome, Italia	2003
132	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/4 at f/4.0 1/2	Hollywood	2005
134	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/30 th at f/1.4	Los Angeles	2005
135	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/60 th at f/8.0	Los Angeles	2005
136	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400	1/30 th at f/4.0	Miami	2005
137	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/2.0	Los Angeles	2002
138	Leica M6 TTL / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/30 th at f/1.4	Mojave, Calif.	2002
139	Contax G2 / 35/2.0	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/15 th at f/2.0	Santa Monica	2000
140	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/250 th at f/11	Anaheim, Calif.	2005
141	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400	1/125 th at f/5.6	West Hollywood	2004
142	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/60 th at f/2.0	Hollywood	2004
143	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/30 th at f/1.0	Los Angeles	2005
145	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/30 th at f/1.0	Hollywood	2005
146	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/30 th at f/1.0	Burbank, Calif.	2005
147	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Agfa APX 100	1/125 th at f/1.0	Los Angeles	2005
148	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400 +1	1/30 th at f/1.0	Park City, Utah	2005
150	Leica MP / 35/1.4 Summilux ASPH	Ilford Delta 400	1/1000 th at f/1.4	Santa Monica, Calif.	2006
153	Leica MP / 50/1.0 Noctilux	Ilford Delta 400	1/250 th at f/1.0	Naples, Italia	2004

Afterward – By Chris Weeks

You can read this and think, “what an asshole, you can take street photos with little digi’s, big D-SLR’s or whatever. You don’t need a rangefinder at all.” Yes, you can say this.

I didn’t write this to piss off those photographers who use alternative methods to achieve their street photography ... fix. That’s what it is. A fix.

There was quite some time between my initial creation of this document, receiving both text and photos from others, editing, more editing and then letting a good friend take a look at it.

And now.

I have to thank Angelo (aka \$spyed). He read it. It made him want to try his eye – as it were – in street photography. He spent some time editing it. And, if I didn’t thank the talented and beautiful Brown Girl (aka :janinaz) for her help ... I’d hate myself.

What happened in the past ten months?

Well ... this document in an edited and http’d-up form was going to be used as a “definition” of a street photography category. I read the edited and html’d version and, well, it just lost it’s soul.

It’s not meant to be a definition.

As it’s my opinion. Having hotlinks shouldn’t replace someone tactilely Googling something of interest.

It’s not meant to take a beginner from just getting a camera in their hands and going out to make surreptitious street photographs. Certain people expect certain things from me. When I first conceived this and started writing then asked others for collaboration it was meant for a certain audience. Not the big-picture audience. Just those who love making street photographs and looking at material by other street photographers.

The edited version was too much of a Top-Gun-like movie presentation when I meant it to be something with more a raw edge – like most of the things I do. Moreover, it wasn’t true enough to the original document and I kind of felt it would be a lie. I’d even thought about letting the edited version get released, the category launched and then publishing this, the “director’s cut” as it were.

And then I thought, “Fuck it! Too much work. I want those who are meant to see this; to see it.” Plain and fucking simple.

Here it is.

Final word: TAKE YOUR FUCKING CAMERA EVERYWHERE – LOADED WITH FILM, OF COURSE. ;)



Chris Weeks is a professional photographer living and working in Los Angeles.

He is the father to the most beautiful and fascinating daughter in the world

He wishes he had more time to cook and drink Burgundy and Bordeaux.

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Dedicated to my friend Denise – she knows why.

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