THE ESSENTIALS OF STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

A CONTEMPORARY GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHICALLY CAPTURING THE STREETS

FORWARD BY
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BY JAMES MAHER

VERSION 2

To Sara,

the best friend and editor anyone could have.
(And for putting up with my camera.)

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Crossing the Brooklyn Bridge by Dave Beckerman.

Most types of photography can be easily defined by their subjects. A wedding photographer takes pictures of weddings. A portrait photographer poses someone and takes their picture. The nature photographer covers a wide area, but it is easy to categorize.

Street photography is difficult to define because it can encompass just about any subject.

If I were to ask you to name a few famous street photographers, you might pick Garry Winogrand, Henri Cartier-Bresson, or maybe Robert Frank. But if I asked you to define street photography – that would be more difficult. You might say that street photography is candid pictures of strangers on the street. That might be a good start, but it doesn't really describe street photography.

To start with, street photography does not need to be done on 'the street,' and it does not need to be pictures of strangers. In fact, it does not even need to be pictures of people, though it usually is. Although there are common subjects for street photography, it is not so much about the subject as it is about the style of the photograph. I can easily imagine an astronaut orbiting the earth, using a street photography style.

Just as any object or scene can be painted in a cubist style, just about any subject can be photographed in a street photography style. I say almost any subject because the one thing that all street photos have in common are human beings, or human artifacts: things that were made by human beings.

If street photography were a musical form – it might be jazz. It might be rock and roll. The style of music would have a measure of improvisation. The moment is not enough. To play by the rules, the shot really does need to be unplanned. It also needs to allow the eye to wander around and make its own conclusions about the meaning of the photograph.

The street photographer is a perpetual tourist. They may never leave their own town, but

as they walk around, they can see things that the rest of the world is oblivious to.

The street photographer can best be identified not by what they shoot, but why they shoot. If their purpose is to make a discovery, to find a surprise, to give expression to their own curiosity about people and the things that people construct, then there is a good chance you have run into a street photographer. The best ones are like Zen hunters. I say Zen hunter because you cannot force the unexpected. You can only be open to it.

Looking for that moment is as useless as casting a fishing line and saying, "Now I will catch a fish." It does not work that way. You cannot force it, but you can put yourself in a place where there are enough people milling about to increase your odds.

I knew a street photographer who became fascinated by the different ways that people hailed cabs in New York City. For two years, whenever he saw someone hail a cab, he tried to find a new angle, a new way of shooting this most ordinary of urban moments. One day, after years of keeping an eye out for people hailing cabs, he glimpsed a young girl with crutches waiting to get into the cab. This might have been just another shot, but as he got closer to take the shot, he saw an old man with crutches getting out of the cab. You look at the image and think – what a stroke of luck to find this coincidence, but he took years of maintaining this obsession to make something from the idea. And other times you just walk out of the house and are greeted with this sort of coincidental image.
The street photographer is the mirror image of the commercial photographer. The commercial photographer sets up the product to be photographed, arranges the lighting, controls as much of the image as he can, and takes the picture. The wedding photographer urges the various families to stand and smile at the camera. The idea of posing subjects is anathema for the street photographer.

The street photographer is often an unwanted guest. They need to develop ninja-like techniques so that they remain unseen in the middle of a crowded street. They may even dress in camouflage. Rather than using a high-powered rifle to pick off wild beasts at a distance, most street photographers prefer to capture strangers at close range. This can

be scary for the beginner.

I am sure that many street photographers dream of a cloak of invisibility. One photographer I knew would dress like a typical tourist in New York and bring a tourist map with him. He might stand near the Empire State building and gawk up at it, all the time taking pictures of the people around him. So here he is, a New York City native for fifty years, play-acting the tourist so that he can blend in with the strangers around him.

There are formal elements that can be used to define the street photograph: the mysterious decisive moment that is shown in context; the use of juxtaposed elements to form a new synthesis that is unusual, although the juxtaposed elements may be ordinary; the desire to let the scene play without disturbing it; and most of all, the desire to experience and communicate the surprise that the photographer feels in the frame, which is pointed at the world of human beings and their creations.

But as you can see, it is much easier to talk about techniques that street photographers use to achieve their ends then it is to define the style.

INTRODUCTION

Street photography is a broad subject with many different opinions, styles, and techniques involved. Wide-angle lenses, telephoto lenses, manual focusing or auto, some people swear by certain techniques while others disavow them.

The goal of this book is to take a well-rounded approach to the study of street photography, focusing on both the technical and conceptual issues that are involved in the craft along with the issues in editing our work.

Part of this book will address the way I approach the street and the way that I shoot. That is inevitable in a 'how-to' book, but please do not take everything that is written here as how you should approach your street photography. That is not the point. Instead, you should approach this book with a critical eye, take in everything that is said, and then form your own opinions. Use what is said here to aid you in formulating your own theories about street photography and your own strategies for approaching the street.

The beauty of street photography is that we all bring something unique to the table. We each have different ideas, interests, personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. Two people standing in the same place at the same moment will always take a different photograph because they each see and react to the world in a different way.

There is no correct way to shoot street photography. There is only the way that works best for each of us. For some of you, it may be with a small rangefinder camera and prime lens at close distances. For others, it may be with an SLR and zoom lens. For many, it can be both. When you are learning about street photography you should try out many different techniques to see what fits best. Part of the impetus to writing this book was to create a work that moves away from the narrow and the specific and opens us up to a broad range of street photography ideas and techniques.

About Me:

I grew up in New York City, and like most Manhattanites, I am a terrible driver and cook, but I know where to get the best dumplings in Chinatown (Shanghai 21).

I have been photographing NYC since 2002, and my enjoyment for photography has stemmed for my fascination with the city, its history, its people, and its everyday issues and happenings. I feed off the endless energy, passion, diversity, fashion, and collective neuroses of the city.

In addition to being a street photographer, I also work as a portrait and documentary photographer, I am a certified tour guide, and I give frequent photography tours and workshops around New York City.

You can view my work at http://www.jamesmaherphotography.com.

Most of my ideas have been picked up by learning from other street photographers over the years. Studying other street photographers and learning how they work is an important step towards learning the genre and eventually finding your own voice. The collection of conversations in the accompanying ebook, *Street Photography Conversations,* highlight the varied personalities of seasoned street photographers. It also reflects the unique styles and ways of shooting that each have developed for themselves.

The book begins by covering the content of street photography and is followed by reviewing technical strategies for capturing this content. You can read the technical chapters first if you prefer, but as with any form of art, the conceptual is the most important aspect. I would prefer a blurry, badly framed photograph of an amazing concept any day over a technically perfect photo that is lacking in concept. Ideally though, we want to strive to capture both in a beautiful harmony.

Many times, the technical issues can become so overwhelming that we forget to think about what we are doing. We lose sight of the concept, the idea, or the inspiration and only focus on trying to get our shots sharp and our compositions correct. Try to avoid this. That is why we must practice the technique. As street photographers, we need to master the way we use our camera so that we can forget it is there and focus on what is going on around us.

The third section of the book will address editing. Developing strong editing skills is just as important as developing meaningful concepts and mastering shooting techniques. As a result, you will notice that editing has a constant presence throughout the book since a major aspect of becoming a strong street photographer is based on our ability to edit our work, to organize and select our best shots, and to review our work with a critical eye. In addition to studying the works of others, it is critical that you continue to study your own work and progress.

The fourth section, added as part of version two of this book, will cover advanced street photography topics. The goal of this section is to cover topics that typically go beyond

beginner and intermediate street photography and to cover more nuanced ways of thinking about the possibilities of street photography and working with the images that it can produce.

Finally, the book will conclude with an exercises section and an expanded section of websites and resources for further education, covering street photographer research, street photography books, educational books, general street photography resources, and street photography documentaries

I hope you enjoy the book!

Dior, 5th Avenue, 2013.

While it may seem like we are just taking snapshots of the world around us, that is not the case. We press the shutter deliberately; we had something in mind; we were searching for something that presented itself in the frame. As moments unfold before us, something about them resonates within us, which drives us to take the shot. Street photography is an inherently subjective form of art, which communicates how the photographer sees the world.

Lambo, West Broadway, 2014.

A rare few of you will pick up your camera for the first time and be fearless on the street. The rest of you will be apprehensive at first like I used to be. I have always loved people and loved to interact with them, but being comfortable around strangers was never my strong suit. If someone told me when I was a teenager that I would find enjoyment in photographing strangers on the streets of New York City, I would have told them that they were crazy.

It takes time to get comfortable shooting on the streets. It is a skill that needs to be developed through years of practice. As Joel Meyerowitz once said, *"You have to pay your dues to the streets."* It takes time, practice, and patience. Your goal should be to improve incrementally every single day.

To be honest, I still get somewhat nervous when shooting, but I fight through it. Nerves are something that you will have to slowly conquer in order to get closer to your subjects. The fear may never fully go away, but over time you will start to notice yourself ignoring it.

There was a famous comedian that once said that the best experience of his professional life was the first time that he bombed on stage. It was then that he realized that bombing on stage was not as bad as he had anticipated, and from that moment on he was not afraid of it and his routines improved. On this note, getting caught photographing everyday people on the streets is not always as bad as you might think. It might be if you decide to photograph a lot of angry-looking people, or if you are aggressive in the way that you shoot, but a large portion of everyday people will not care or may even be flattered.

If you get caught, smile, shake their hand, tell them you are a photographer trying to capture the area and say that you found them to be extremely interesting and had to capture them. This will diffuse most uncomfortable situations instantly. If they ask for you to delete the photograph, then delete it. You do not have to, but most likely it will not be the best photograph of your life.

TIP

It is much easier to capture strangers candidly if you pick a spot and wait in it, rather than trying to shoot while walking around. Wait for people to come to you and it will be much easier to photograph them.

Also, this may sound obvious, but the more crowded the area, the easier it will be to capture strangers candidly. In crowded areas, especially at times such as rush hour, most people will be too busy to notice and so this will give you a great chance to practice. But do not only shoot in crowded areas as this will limit the type of image that you are able to capture.

Finally, it can help at first to use a light prime lens or a smaller camera. Big zoom lenses are noticeable and cumbersome and will make you much more self-conscious.

If you are a beginner and afraid of photographing strangers on the street, then I suggest starting with street portraits. A street portrait refers to when a photographer interacts with their subject and asks for permission before taking a portrait of a stranger on the street. There is no candidness to these shots like in traditional street photography, but it is a good way to help you become more comfortable with photographing strangers. Most people will be excited when you ask to take their portrait.

If shooting on the street is new to you, you are going to be unsuccessful at first. We all were. You will be timid, scared, and hesitant. As a result, your photos could be blurry, probably too far away, and many of them will be boring. You will have days where you will take 400 photos and they will all be disappointing (and this will sometimes happen as you gain experience). However, do not get discouraged and give up.

Like anything, if this is something that you are passionate about learning, then you need to keep going and keep progressing. The learning curve is the steepest at first and time, practice, and constantly pushing yourself out of your comfort zone are the keys to success.

I go months sometimes without taking a great street photo and I will think that I am the worst photographer in the world. Then I will suddenly capture that epic shot and the world will feel right again.

If creating great photography is something that you want to do, then be prepared to work hard, be prepared to push yourself out of your comfort zone, and be prepared for some tough times and lots of frustration, not only at first. You must fight through it because once you do, that is when the real fun begins. Once you get that timeless capture, then it will all be worth it.

Zuccotti Park, Occupy Wall Street, 2011.

The term 'street photography' is tough to define because it means something slightly different to all of us. In general terms, street photography is a pictorial study of the human condition that surrounds us all. This is why street photography can take place anywhere. All that needs to be present is something related to humans or human nature, presented in a natural way.

The beauty of street photography is that we each bring something unique to it. We each bring a different viewpoint and a different focus. Some street photographers focus on people and expressions, some on beauty and form, some on the dark side of life, some on the surreal, and some on the random, existential moments that occur all around us. Their photographs are an expression of how they see the world.

Street photographs, when viewed alone, may seem like singular moments frozen in time. However, almost always, when looking at the body of work of any street photographer who has been shooting for long enough, strong themes will emerge from a collection of these singular moments. These themes tend to go hand in hand with the personality of the photographer. Street photography is our representation of how we see and think about the world. It is a movie of specific and independent moments in our lives that have interested and influenced us. It is also an adventure of sorts with unplanned moments around every corner.

Street photography is a very personal pursuit. We are capturing our own lives and our own feelings one shot at a time. We are capturing the meaning of what life is like at this point in time in our neighborhoods and cities. We are documenting the beautiful, the ugly, the unique, the existential, the surreal, the special, and even the mundane aspects of life in our time.

The idea is not to focus on what street photography means in the broader sense, or what it means to society as a whole; it is much more personal. Ask yourself, what do you want to capture? Why do you want to capture it? What ideas do you want to convey to others through your photos?
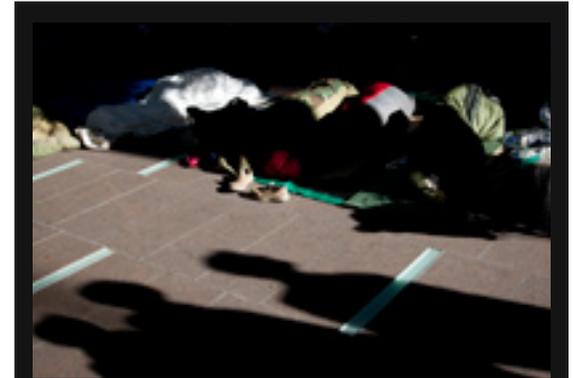
Zuccotti Park, Occupy Wall Street, 2011, was taken the morning after I had interviewed many of the protestors in Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street Protests.

When interviewing these protestors, one of their constant gripes was that they felt like 'zoo animals,' constantly intruded upon by the onlookers and tourists.

However, that is exactly what they were and what their purpose was. They were creating an experiment that the world was watching. The shadowy figures in the scene are these onlookers staring at the sleeping protestors and waiting for something interesting to happen, just like in a zoo. This photo is about the relationship between the protestor and the onlooker.

The real question is, what does street photography mean to you?

Smoke, Canal Street, 2019.

Three Men, Burberry & Gucci, 2003.

There is no specific definition of a great street photograph, nor is there a formula. Street photographs can be great for so many different reasons. But is a street photograph great because it is beautiful or because it is technically perfect? I would argue that possessing both of these characteristics would define a decent street photograph, but not a great one.

The key to creating a powerful street photograph is the content within the photograph. Photos with content are ones that portray ideas, feelings, or that have some special quality that is hard to quantify. There is a feeling, story, or an idea hidden within the visual context of the photo.

Creating a beautiful photograph never hurts and this should be an important aspect of your photography; however, without meaning, a street photo becomes your everyday, run-of-the-mill landscape. A great street photograph is one that makes a person think or one that stirs up a specific emotion or feeling.

However, just because a photo possesses strong content does not diminish the importance of technique. It is very rare that a photograph has enough power to overcome technical or aesthetic deficiencies. The relationship and balance between the two is something that street photographers must contend with daily.

So how can we take more street photographs with meaning? Unfortunately, there are no clear answers to this question. We can try to plan our street photos by thinking of ideas ahead of time, finding the correct context and then waiting for the desired characters to walk in. Street photography is not solely limited to being purely reactionary and spontaneous. However, a majority of street photography is about quick reactions to the world around us, and it begs the question of how can we create photos that are thoughtful, poignant, and intentional, while we are at the mercy of our spontaneous surroundings and our reflexes.

I think this is where we need to focus on what is most important to us. Go back to the

Three Men, Burberry & Gucci, 2003, confronts the issue of conformity, with the three identical and perfectly retouched faces in the Gucci advertisement mimicked by the businessmen positioned in front of it, with matching Burberry coats, identical poses, collared shirts, dark pants, and boots.

This photo has a message to it, a story, and a foundation under its visual appeal. You can also have your own interpretation of this photo. That is the beauty of street photography.

question about what street photography means to you. What do you know best and what do you want to capture most with this genre?

Knowing what interests you will aid in filtering the plethora of activity and content on the street. It will allow you to more effectively notice particular ideas, feelings, and aspects of your surroundings. As a result, it will be easier to quickly see and catch these moments.

When we take that immediate shot of a changing moment there is some driving, instinctive force in us that pushes us to do it. We can visualize the moment happening before it does. We may not know exactly how the moment will come out until we view it, but we know that it is happening. We may not know it at the time, but over time, these instinctive photographs will band together into themes that describe how we see the world.

The more time we spend on the streets and the more that we "pay our dues," the better we will get at this. The more time we spend thinking about photography, reading about it, and looking over our work for themes, the better we will become at this. Most importantly, the more time we spend away from photography, reading and learning about life, and improving ourselves, the better we will become at finding these moments. The more interesting we are as human beings, the more interesting we will become as photographers.

Just pay attention, study, think, be ready to react, and you will be able to create meaningful photographs. Think about ideas that you would like to capture ahead of time and your mind will

Sneaker Seller, Broadway, 2017.

Couple in Sheep Meadow, 2010.

be more in tune on the streets when those moments appear.

However, not every street photograph has to have a message behind it. A lot of street photography can be strictly based on the visual, the play of light, or the interesting and unique view. Not every street photo needs an explanation.

A stunningly beautiful street photo is still a stunningly beautiful street photo, and that can be all you need.

Beauty

Think of street photography like any other form of art. You are allowed to express yourself in any way, shape, or form through the medium.

You can go with a straight, 'raw' photographic look and be as realistic to the true scene as possible, or you can get creative with the negative. You can crop, add contrast, burn and dodge, or anything that your heart desires as long as it does not change the true meaning of the original scene.

Street photography is an art form and, fundamentally speaking, art is meant to be beautiful, whether through being thought-provoking or visually. A strong concept is only made stronger when it is photographed in a graphically pleasing way. Strong colors, graphic lines, and powerful compositions are not reserved for the realm of landscape photographers. Having these elements in your photos will only make them stronger. Beauty is an emotion as well, one of the most powerful emo-

Shades of Red, 2011.

tions, and while it may be a bit more elusive in street photography versus landscape photography, it still is there and all around us.

Do things that traditional landscape photographers do to make their photos beautiful. If you want quick and easy ways to add more beauty to your photographs, then go out in the snow, fog, rain, or at the golden hours. Photograph bright colors or make stunning black and whites. There is a reason that they do it.

Seek out beauty.

Imperfections

Street photographs are real and unplanned moments, and they should feel real and unplanned. This gives us a lot of leeway technically, and the lack of perfection can even improve a photograph. Sometimes this will screw up the image, but other times it will improve it. Garry Winogrand, for instance, was known for skewing his horizons in ways that landscape photographers would not typically do, and this was important to the feel of his work.

Often these imperfections will not only be tolerated but will be encouraged. This is why grain works very well in street photography. So next time you see an element that you screwed up in the image, consider the fact that it might make the photograph even better.

Ineffective Street Photography

I have personally taken a LOT of bad street photographs. Perhaps a better term for bad is ineffective. So what makes an ineffective street photograph?

Shades of Red, 2011, celebrates the confident woman. The subject in the photo not only embraces her unique features but has selected bold clothing and accessories that work to enhance them. Even the shape of the flowers on her shirt matches the swirl of her hair.

In a world where the definition of physical beauty is perpetuated by portraits that have been tweaked in post-production to reflect homogeneous characteristics, this print highlights the inherent beauty of human individuality.

Ineffective street photographs are ones that do not convey any emotion or stir any thought, nor do they have any special visual impact. They lack meaning, beauty, and are a dime-a-dozen. They are scenes captured on the street, often with people present and reflecting strong technique; however, they show nothing.

We all take bad street photographs; they far outnumber the good ones. It is impossible to be a street photographer and not take a significant number of bad street photographs. Often we shoot because we think there is potential, or we shoot to see how a scene will turn out; however, the finished product is nothing like we had envisioned. A camera cannot always capture an image exactly in the way that we see it with our eyes. At times we will take a photograph when we instinctively know that it will be a throwaway. This is a habit that I continue to struggle with.

Being a good street photographer is not about avoiding bad street photographs since that is impossible. It is about being able to differentiate between your good and your bad work. Editing yourself is one of the most important skills that you can learn as a street photographer. Great street photographers are usually the best at hiding their bad work. You need to be critical of your work and of yourself. A couple of bad or mediocre street photographs mixed in with your best work will dilute the effect of your portfolio significantly.

You should not get overly attached to a photo just because it is great technically, because you got closer to a person than you ever had without them noticing, because the moment was there but you did not quite get it technically, or because you thought it was going to be good when you shot it. The first two are feats that you should be proud of, but try to look at your photos through the eyes of someone who has no vested interest in their outcome, the moments that actually happened, or how hard they were to capture.

Here is a test. Take a photograph and write a quick poem about it. Try to recreate the qualities and feelings in the photograph in words. It is a very enjoyable thing to try and it can help you to get to the heart of what the photograph means and how effective it is.

Layers of the City, 2011.

When shooting on the street, it is important to focus on areas that you know well and things that you enjoy. This is why you are photographing in the first place, isn't it? The best photographers are the ones that have a passion for their subjects. Their work is a reflection of their passion. If you are knowledgeable about and interested in your subjects, then you will be better able to portray them.

If you have a passion for people, photograph people. If you love architecture, photograph architecture. If you are romantic, humorous, angry, or sentimental, then try to search out these feelings for your photographs. If you have deep, existential thoughts, then try to notice scenes that will portray these thoughts. You will be much better at noticing these sentiments than people who do not share these ideas. If you have a passion for fashion, then photograph in areas with fashionable people.

Style

There is often a misconception when talking about style and photography. Many people attribute style to a particular way of shooting or a particular look. I prefer to think of it differently. A style is primarily about the content that you photograph and how you choose to edit. It is how you see the world and so you should think about what is important to you and then go out and photograph it.

For instance, when you read the conversations with Matt Weber and Dave Beckerman in the accompanying book, *Street Photography Conversations*, pay attention to the differences in their work. Both photographers shoot on the streets of New York City, often in black and white and with wide-angle lenses, but their work could not be more different - Matt's work is gritty, sentimental, and realistic, while Dave's work is magical and enchanted. From the encounters I have had with these photographers, these adjectives are evocative of their personalities.

Developing a style is not something that can happen overnight. Some themes in our work will only become apparent after years of photographing, after tens of thousands

Layers of the City, 2011, contemplates the constant growth and change in New York City, from the gritty underbelly to the polished skyline. It also represents the rapid redevelopment of many New York City neighborhoods, where the old and often worn urban fabric is replaced with the sleek, the shiny, and the new.

This is an example of how a street photo can represent much more than just a fleeting moment. A narrow, telephoto view can sometimes describe an entire neighborhood or city, or provide commentary on a much larger issue.

Grand Central Eagle, 2010.

of captures, after we have tried many different techniques, and after we have given our-selves enough time to come across a range of subjects that fit into these themes.

There is nothing wrong with mimicking other people's techniques at first when learning about photography. It is part of the natural cycle of learning about something. Practice shooting street photography with a flash like Bruce Gilden, practice with a 50mm prime like Henri Cartier-Bresson, or make grainy, energetic black and whites like Daido Moriya-ma. Capture the energetic streets of a city like Garry Winogrand or the quiet, eerie sub-urbs like William Eggleston. Try it all. But then keep in mind the famous quote by Picasso, *"Bad artists copy. Good artists steal."*

Most artists practicing in a myriad of mediums (painters, photographers, and sculptors alike) were trained in the various techniques of their craft before spreading their wings and going in their unique direction. Similarly, you should try out the techniques of differ-ent street photographers and learn from them. Practice these techniques and work to excel in them. This will aid in your personal development as a photographer. But when the time comes, take all of these techniques that you have learned and use them to create your style.

You should experiment, especially when you are learning. Learning and developing your unique way of shooting is all about experimentation and you cannot truly explore some-thing and develop a style that is uniquely yours unless you try out many styles. If you listen strictly to the way someone else has done it, then your work will end up looking like that person's work. You do not want to be an exact copy of another photographer.

Try different lenses and different focal lengths; I still switch up my techniques frequently. It helps to keep my mind fresh and to keep me from getting in a rut. I typically will use a 35mm or 50mm lens, and I will stick with one choice for a few months before switching it up to keep fresh. Try a zoom. There is nothing wrong with a zoom. Use flash. Test out different techniques, even if you are a street photography veteran with a specific way of doing things. It will create a spark and help with your creativity.

Do not photograph a certain subject or shoot in a particular way just because others are doing it. Similarly, do not capture images strictly because you think other people will like them. The best photographers are the ones that look in the opposite direction from everybody else. Photograph what interests you and shoot it in your own way. Take those techniques you have learned and strive to evolve them. Strive to be unique, and from this your personal style will develop.

Jerry Delakas, Astor Place Newsman (Candid), 2012.

Photographing people is at the heart of street photography, and while there is an entire world of subjects outside of this, most likely if you are a street photographer you will capture lots of people.

While the face is the strongest conveyor of emotion, there are many other aspects of the subject that can be powerful. Jay Maisel uses the term gesture. When a person is the main subject in a scene, you need that person to have a strong and unique expression or gesture, whether it is in the face, the body, or both. Posture, pose, and the position of our hands or feet can tell as much of a story as a good facial expression can. For a quick example, you should not be trying to capture a face; you should be trying to capture an expression.

Gesture has the power to add feeling to a photo more than any other element. As viewers, we relate to other people that we see in a scene and so we feel whatever it looks like they are feeling. You can have a great scene, a great perspective, and great lighting, but if the main subject is disconnected from the surroundings, then it can ruin the moment. Accurately capturing sentiment is the bedrock of good storytelling and as street photographers we want our photos to tell stories.

Candid shooting strips away the subject's fears about being photographed and keeps them in their own world. If you want to photograph someone's raw emotion, you usually do not want them noticing you. You want to catch them in their moment, untroubled by your presence.

Occasionally, it can be necessary to sacrifice the perfect framing to be able to capture that perfect gesture. If you waste that precious second to frame correctly, then you may never get that same expression again. This is a factor to weigh when you are photographing people.

Sometimes, you do not even have to see a person's face to know that they have a good expression. Often, scenes develop so quickly that you have to frame and shoot almost

instantly to capture them. However, you can tell when a person's expression will be strong by their body, by the way they are walking, by the position of their head, by how their hands are moving, or by the attitude in their step. These are all things to pay attention to.

Furthering this idea, the face does not even need to be present to show strong emotion, but when it is hidden it amplifies the importance of the rest of the body. *Blonde* is an example of a photo where the face is not visible, yet the expression is still there. This photo highlights the subject of female self-image. Technically, it was shot in a stream of light that highlighted parts of this woman's body and then the shadows were darkened to black in post-production to further emphasize this effect. The result is that the most sensitive and seductive parts of a woman's body are highlighted. The message and feeling of the photo are created without any facial expression needed.

However, because the face is not visible, the posture makes all of the difference in the world. This photo would not be successful without the stride and particularly without the lowered, contemplative angle of the woman's head. If the head was stiff and straight, then the feeling of this portrait would change entirely. As it is, this is a contemplative moment.
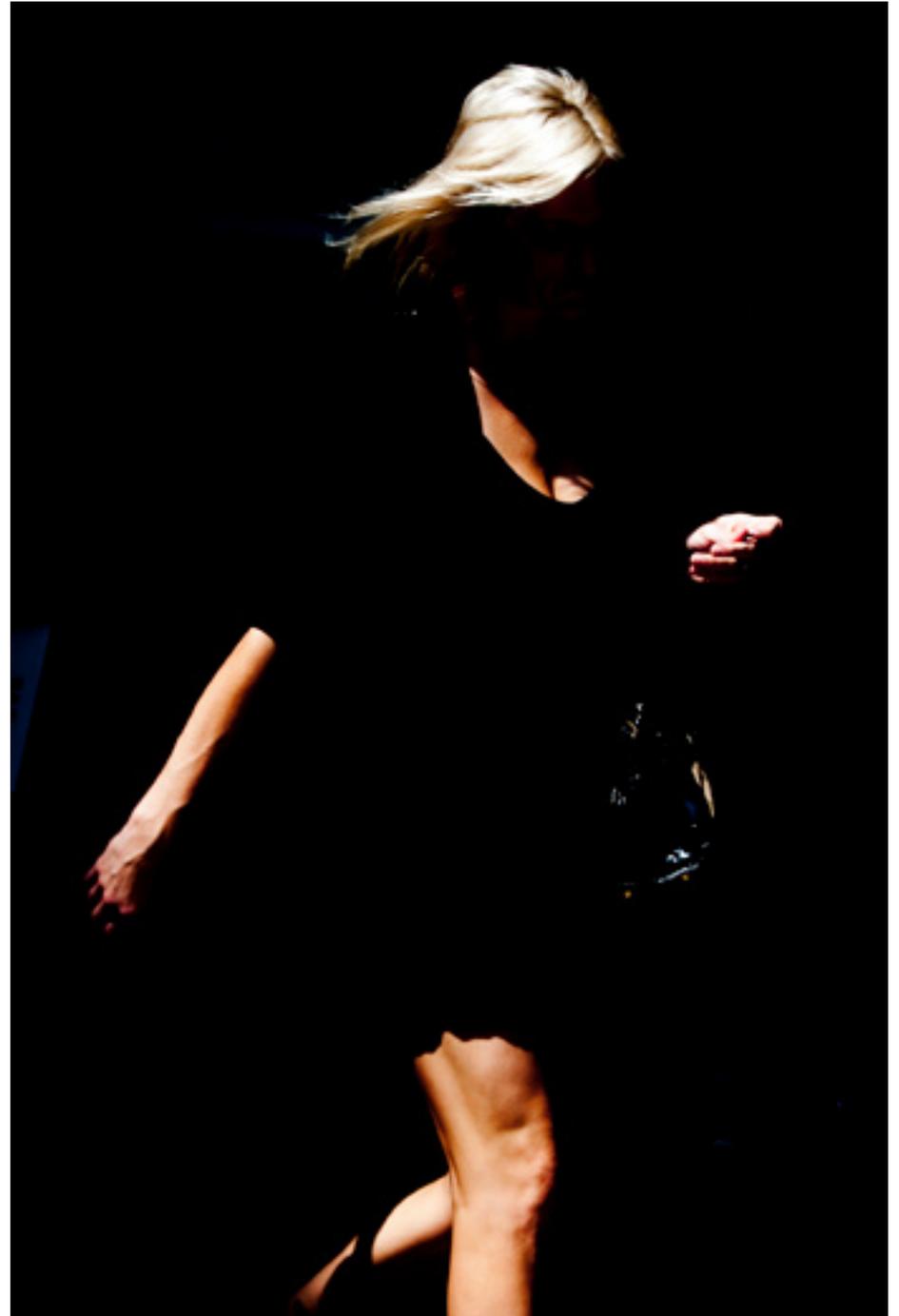
Blonde, 2010.

When exploring the streets, you cannot plan what is going to happen. You can choose certain backgrounds and create street photographs as mentioned before, but if you go out with the sole purpose of capturing a specific thing, such as close-ups of people, then you will miss everything else that is around you. This is not to say that you should not search for themes, because you should, but you do not want to hyper-focus on a certain subject, which could distract you from the larger context.

Keep an open mind; look up, look down, look close, look far away, pay attention to the lighting and how it interacts with your surroundings, look at angles, backgrounds, signs, pay attention to people as they walk by. Look at the details. Look for moments or ideas.

Keep this in mind when reviewing your negatives. If you notice that you have been shooting a lot of close-ups of people lately, then maybe you are getting too focused on that. Try to focus on your surroundings more.

Street photography is a balancing act; you want to be vigilant about noticing pre-determined themes and content, while at the same time opening your mind to absorb the larger context around you. The challenge is to take what comes to you, whether it is something you were looking for or a surprise that you find interesting and meaningful. Moments are never repeated and if you are overly consumed with a specific idea then you will be more susceptible to missing a lot of what is happening around you.

Keeping your mind open does not mean that you cannot actively search out scenes, content, or scenarios. You should do this. Creating groups of photographs based on an idea is an integral practice to have as a street photographer. Think about it as if you were creating a street photography book of your work. You cannot solely include a random hodgepodge of your best photos. It will not flow correctly and it will not have a uniform message. Books need a focus. Each image is strengthened when surrounded by a set of complementary work.

Occasionally, I will try to go out knowing exactly what I want to shoot, but mostly my aim

Gentrification, 2013.

is just to wander around and see what happens. I will have multiple thoughts of long term ideas in mind and I will gravitate towards areas where they might happen, but I will still try to keep my mind open to everything.

I rarely get what I am looking for when I am purposely searching it out. I will just end up with a bunch of mediocre photographs based on a theme that I tried to force and I will try to convince myself that they are good.

It is better to build up these themes or add to larger projects over time. You should not pigeonhole your mind into thinking about only shooting specific subjects when you go out. Instead, you should have a list of things to notice if you happen to come across them.

By shooting this way, your work will not seem forced and your ideas will have time to simmer and develop. With more time to search for these ideas on the streets, you will give yourself more of an opportunity to encounter ideal moments that fit these themes.

If you are looking for a place to start, a good starter project is to explain your neighborhood in twelve shots.

TIP

Take your time when shooting on the street; you do not need to rush to get someplace. You are already there.

Walking at a fast pace while shooting is not recommended. The faster you walk, the harder it is to pay attention, to focus, to think, and to react. Take your time, pace yourself and wait for things to come to you. Find a good spot and stand there. Your eyes should be doing the moving, not your feet, and when something catches your eye, then you can run to catch it if you need to.

Canal Street, 2015.

The majority of street photographs are spontaneous and unplanned. However, while it is impossible to plan every single aspect of a street photograph, you can still exercise a significant amount of control over a scene. Street photographs can be planned and sometimes without much difficulty.

The three elements of any scene are the stage, the lighting, and the characters. You can find a background, wait for the correct lighting, and then wait for the corresponding characters to enter your scene. It is like casting for a play.

You must pay attention to the lighting. The lighting is such an important aspect of street photography and if it is not good enough at a particular location, make a note to come back when it has improved. On the other hand, if the lighting is perfect, then park yourself there. You never know when the lighting will be the same or if it ever will be.

The key is that you must wait. The more time you spend, the more of a chance you give yourself for that successful recipe to happen. Do not settle for pretty good if you see the potential for greatness. Wait it out. Occasionally, the moment may never happen. But usually, if you wait long enough, something will.

As Henri Cartier-Bresson wrote, *"Sometimes one remains motionless, waiting for something to happen."* I have been going back to one location for over a year trying to get a single shot. The shadows that I want off a building are only good for about 20 minutes a day in the warmer months and I have yet to be able to capture the crowd in the correct way to accompany this lighting. I can see the shot in my mind but it has not happened yet. Hopefully one day I will get it.

Sometimes a background will be so fascinating that it does not need a person to complement it. Often, I will see photographs ruined because the photographer will take a fantastic background that holds up on its own and wait for any person to walk through to complete it. To complete a scene like this, the person needs to be interesting on their own - they need to be just as interesting as the background, otherwise, leave them out.

It is a very powerful feeling once you capture an image you have been patiently waiting for. A lot of street photography is based on waiting for moments of luck to hit, but it is extra special when there is absolutely no luck involved, only you and your patience.

The flip side of this is that sometimes you can do too much planning. Photographs where every element is waited for and planned can feel forced. Everything looks too perfect. There is no feeling of surprise, imperfection, or spontaneity, which are characteristics that run at the heart of street photography. Use planning to your advantage when the situation presents itself, but try to do this within reason.
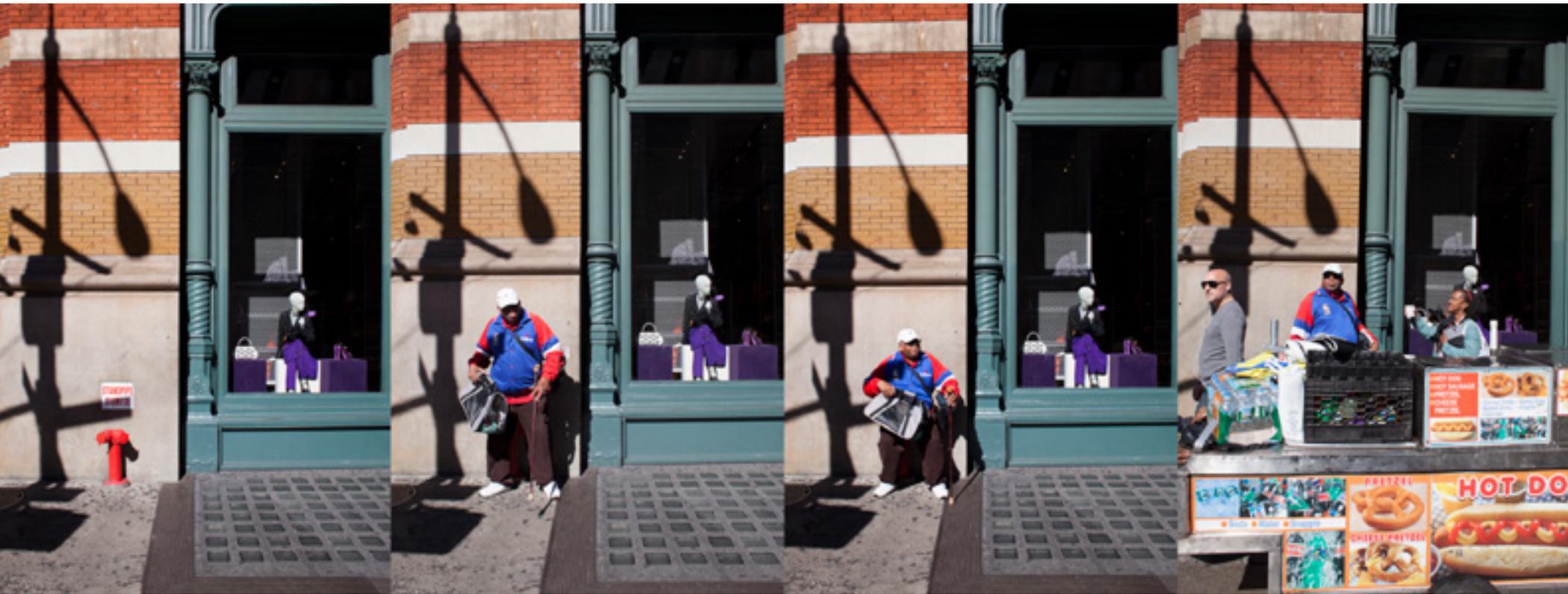
Prada Store, SoHo (four moments), 2012. Which is your favorite?

Pushups, Rucker Park, 2004.

A candid photo does not necessarily mean that a person is not looking at you or does not notice you. It means that the sentiment present before you entered the scene is the same as what was captured in the photograph itself.

There are many street photos where a person is looking directly at the photographer, yet the feeling is natural and uncontrived. If you look at the work of Mike Peters, he often creates a connection by waiting for his subjects to look up towards the camera but takes the shot before they realize that they are being photographed, so the feeling is still natural. I believe that this is still candid. Once a person is taken out of the moment, that is when the candid nature of a shot is lost.

There is a special quality to a photograph when a person is in their natural state. It is more authentic. People usually freeze up when they notice a camera and all of that natural emotion disappears. It is this natural and real feeling that is the most important aspect of a street photograph.

If you want to be able to capture emotions on the street, then you need to learn how to shoot discreetly. Otherwise, your photos will become a collection of frozen stares, quizzical glances, or looks of complete surprise, which is probably anything but the emotions your subjects originally had. Candid shooting is difficult and to be successful you must practice. You have to act in a certain way, shoot in a certain way, and still have the wherewithal to get the technical settings correct.

So then why would we ever want to take street portraits?

Many people tend to believe that a true street photograph needs to be candid. I prefer this type of street photography, but at the same time, I do think there is room for street portraits in the genre, and I do think that you can capture candid moments while taking a portrait. Just as you can take a subject out of the moment, you can allow them to slip back into it.

TIP

Eyes can be the most important aspect of showing emotion through a street photograph. Pay attention to people's eyes when you capture them.

In some cases, waiting for eye contact can even be beneficial. In the photo *Pushups, Rucker Park,* I waited for the boy to look up, but his expression was still natural since I captured it immediately. The result is an authentic and candid shot in the sense that the powerful feeling of the original moment is still there. In this case, the eye contact was necessary. The powerful stare is what makes this photograph successful.

Young Women, SoHo, 2014.

A completely contrived moment is one thing, such as where the person is posed, acting, or where the scene is scripted. That is not street photography. But I think when you photograph a person that you come across and capture a natural and real moment of them, this can be considered somewhere in the realm of street photography.

A portrait is a collaboration between you and the subject, and often you can capture a person more accurately by shooting this way because you get to know them first. If you stop a person and converse with them, you will be able to get a sense of who they are. As a result, you will often be able to more accurately portray them, as long as they are comfortable around a camera.

The result can be a photograph that reflects a natural scene in the traditional sense, or one that reflects a spontaneous moment within the portrait session. This portrait could even reflect a truer representation of your subject than a candid shot.

The photo of the two young women on the previous page began as a portrait. The primary woman leaned against the post and in a moment where she thought I was taking a break from photographing her, looked down with a powerful and contemplative look on her face while showing a clear view of her cross, cigarette, and a very full notebook. As I noticed this, I also saw another young woman walking by with two hands filled with Starbucks coffee cups. The resulting image, while begun as a portrait, captured a real, candid moment. Who cares if it is a portrait. It is a photograph about youth.

Even if you prefer candid images, it can be beneficial to shoot street portraits on occasion. As we covered previously, it can be an important method to become more comfortable with street photography, especially when you see how enthusiastic many people are with having their photograph taken. There are also moments where you just cannot capture a good candid photograph but the person is too interesting to move on from. In these moments, it is a great idea to try to capture a portrait of them.

Shooting street portraits can improve your portraiture and studio photography skills while

providing you the opportunity to meet many subjects and practice your people skills. As photographers, we need all the practice we can get, and if you live in a populated area, then the amount of amazing people that will pass you every single day is simply staggering. On the flip side, if you live in a suburban or less populated areas with fewer and potentially more suspicious people, capturing portraits might be the only way that you can possibly include people in your work. In these cases, it can be very important to try to capture portraits that still have a candid feel to them.

Engaging people is the golden rule for any street portrait, particularly if you want to capture portraits with a candid or real feel to them. Ask interesting questions about your subject. Get them to be interested in what you are doing and thinking about themselves. Learn about their life. These are all keys that can help lure a powerful candid moment from a spontaneous portrait session.

While having a short conversation with you, a person will let down their guard, get comfortable with you, and realize that you are not just some creep with a camera. Think and learn about the person, pay attention to their expressions, engage them, and explore the background to surround them with the best scene. If they allow you to enter their world, you owe this to them.

There is no rhyme or reason to which method is better. Use your own instincts and preference, but know that both candid and certain types of portraits can have their place in the world of street photography.

Louis Vuitton, SoHo, 2017.

Subways in Motion, 2010.

The majority of street photography involves people, but there is an entire world of the genre that goes beyond this.

Street photography can focus on changes within the fabric of a neighborhood, on fascinating scenes, on buildings and architecture, on shapes and light, on abstractions, on storefronts, on objects, or on random occurrences.

The best street photographs that do not include human subjects have the same effects as those that do; they evoke emotion and make you think. You do not need a person in the frame to achieve this result.

Street photographs are different from landscapes in that the primary purpose of the shot is not beauty. The primary purpose is to portray something. With urban or suburban landscapes, there is often nothing more to it then what you see. They are straight shots, no different than a beautiful shot of rolling hills or mountains.

On the other hand, while *Subways in Motion* could also be classified as an urban landscape, it is also a street photo. There is meaning behind it. It conveys a feeling that most New Yorkers experience daily; life in the city moves at a frenetic pace, faster than we can keep up and if we do not keep moving, we are going to be left behind. Cities are a contradiction. They are densely populated and people are always present, yet amongst all these people, one can feel very alone. The absence of a human subject in the photo helps to position the viewer as if they are the main subject of the scene, standing alone as the trains full of passengers pass them by.

For reference, take a look at the work of William Eggleston, Lee Friedlander, and Stephen Shore. Each of these photographers captured the American landscape in completely different ways, yet their work has meaning behind it; it goes beyond the straight snapshot.

Gowanus (now the site of a luxury building), 2012.

I would like to share some of my insights regarding practicing good ethics while shooting on the streets. The most common question about street photography is, "Do I need permission?" The problem with asking permission is that it ruins the candid moment. You will not be able to take the same type of shot if you ask a person for permission beforehand.

The issue of permission is complicated since each country has its own laws regarding this, so before going out to shoot I would suggest conducting your due diligence and familiarizing yourself with local laws. I live in the U.S., where there is no right to privacy in public. I can show or sell these photos as art without permission as long as it is not for advertising or commercial purposes. The ruling that allows this is Nussenzweig v. DiCorcia. But the laws for each country are different and some countries are very strict about photographing people without their knowledge or even photographing in public in general. When in doubt, please read up on your local laws.

The issue of ethics is personal and I understand that not everyone shares the same views. To some, capturing a person without their knowledge on the street and then printing it or showing it on the internet is unsavory. This is a valid opinion, yet I do not subscribe to this belief.

There are certain populations, such as the homeless, the sick or other vulnerable groups that I generally try to avoid photographing unless there is a story behind it. If I feel bad or guilty about taking a photograph of someone, then I do not press the shutter. That is where I personally draw the line. It all depends on the situation.

Photograph things that are important to you, but make sure that your conduct towards other people is respectful.

Some photographers include homeless or troubled people in the content that they capture. They see them as an important group to not forget about. Some photographers will befriend them before capturing the photos, while others will do it candidly, but they each have a purpose behind what they are doing.

Other photographers will photograph children in the same manner that that they will capture everyone else. This has become a tougher issue in recent years, due to increased sensitivities.

If you look through the history of street photography, you will see a large percentage of it captures children. These are some of the most incredible and tasteful photographs. Yet you can make people angry, and I have heard of some photographers getting themselves in some bad situations due to this. If you decide to do this, you need to have some good situational awareness. Sometimes it is just not worth it to take the photograph.

While I will capture children, the photograph has to be very strong for me to go through with capturing it. The rest just do not seem worth the risk. In these situations, I will either be very quick and candid with my small camera, so there is no chance of people noticing, or I will be very obvious about it. Sometimes being obvious, smiling, and even showing the photograph to the parent and offering to send it to them is the right way to handle the situation. Carrying a photographer business card can help in these situations as well.

I once photographed a Hasidic man walking down 5th avenue and I captured him right as a bus with an advertisement for the movie *Eat, Pray, Love* passed by, so it just said 'Pray' behind him. I liked the photo and put it on my blog.

About a month later, I got a call from an unknown woman who asked if I took the photo. I said yes and she told me that

D&G, 2009.

the photo was of her family member and, even though she liked it, they wanted it taken down. So I obliged. It is a decent photograph, but I did not want to cause any discomfort. In these situations, I am usually inclined to take the photo down. However, if the photograph is a show-stopper, then I reserve the right to go back on that statement.

After I told the woman that I would of course take down the photo and I was sorry for making them uncomfortable, she then asked if the photo was taken on 5th avenue because that is what it said in the title. "Definitely," I said. She asked if I was sure and I said, "100 percent," to which she replied, "Well he is not allowed to go into Manhattan and he promised us it was not taken there."

I blew up his spot.

Most street photographers love people and that is why we photograph them. We may be invading people's privacy but we are not striving to create harm for others. Sometimes we will take images of people that they would not like us to take, but that is just part of what we do and it is not something that we should feel badly about.

Greene Street, SoHo, 2016.

There are many technical aspects of street photography that need to be considered in order to be successful, such as camera settings, focusing techniques, gear selection, light and perspective, and tricks for getting close-up and candid. We will not be able to focus on the conceptual ideas of street photography if we do not have proper technique. We need to be fast and instinctual with our cameras. The goal is to be technically proficient enough that we can forget that the camera is even present. If the camera becomes part of us then we can focus on our surroundings and capture those split second moments without even thinking about our tools.

Selfie, Spring Street, 2014.

There is a wide range of cameras and lenses that can be used for street photography and so it can be hard to choose a direction. While you can use any camera for street photography, the camera you select will play an important role in the images that you will ultimately be able to capture and the techniques that you will be able to utilize. A perfect camera for street photography currently does not exist. Each camera has its strengths and weaknesses, but certain cameras will make your life as a street photographer much easier.

Using a rangefinder sized camera, such as a Leica, a mirrorless, or a micro 4/3rds will give you a lot of flexibility in certain ways. Due to their small size, they are not as readily noticeable as larger cameras, which will make it much easier for a photographer to remain discrete. They are also lighter, easier to maneuver quickly, and are much less cumbersome than digital SLRs. As a result, you will be more willing to take them with you everywhere, which is very important in street photography. However, rangefinder sized cameras can hamper you in other ways, although the gap is quickly closing. Many do not have zoom lenses, some have slower or no autofocus, and some have less image quality and do not work as well at high ISOs when compared to larger SLRs. This being said, the image quality has become outstanding in a lot of these cameras, and if you are serious about street photography, I highly suggest using a smaller camera with a prime lens.

A digital SLR will generally provide better autofocus speed, more features, superior image quality, especially at higher ISOs, and a wide range of fast lenses to use. However, as I alluded to above, these cameras are much larger, heavier, and much more conspicuous, making it much tougher to capture candid photographs. If the size of your camera discourages you from taking it with you, then its quality is irrelevant.

The micro 4/3rd cameras can be a fantastic way to get into street photography on a budget, and many people love them, but the sensor size can be a little small for some. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Leica, which creates fantastic but extremely expensive street photography cameras. The sharp lenses and image quality are un-

My Gear

These days, I use the Fuji X100 line of camera with the 35mm equivalent lens and the 50mm equivalent lens. Those two lenses are all that I feel I need.

When I began shooting on the street, I strictly used a large DSLR and out of necessity I developed many techniques for remaining unnoticed, which we will learn about.

With the advent of the original Fuji X100, I was able to experience what using a smaller camera was like and I never turned back. The small size gives you a quickness and a level of freedom and inconspicuousness that is impossible to achieve with an SLR. And the image quality is there as well.

matched when compared to cameras of similar sizes. However, Leicas do not have autofocus or zoom lenses. Many do not mind this; in fact, some even prefer it.

My recommendation is to go with a mirrorless camera with an APS-C or full frame sensor. My recommended brand is Fuji and either the X100, X-T, or X-H line. Fuji has the quality, ergonomics, and design factor that no other camera other than Leica has right now, and they cost a lot less. Canon, Nikon, Sony, Ricoh, and Olympus all make good smaller form cameras as well, but each have their quirks. And when investing in a mirrorless camera, make sure that the lenses are small as well. A small camera with a big lens defeats the purpose of using mirrorless for street photography.

We will compare zoom lenses to primes in a later chapter, but I recommend trying a 35mm (full frame equivalent) and a 50mm (full frame equivalent) as your primary lens. A mid-range zoom such as a 24-70 or 24-105 can be a great tool as well.

For me, what is of the utmost importance is that I have a camera that I enjoy enough to take with me everywhere. As I mentioned earlier, it does not matter how good your camera is if it is not around your neck. Also, there is no street photography camera that will universally work for all photographers. For example, Jay Maisel prefers a Nikon SLR and a 28-300mm zoom lens. The camera complements his shooting style well and the way that he visualizes scenes on the street. However, other photographers only shoot with wide-angle primes. The key is that there is no correct gear to shoot on the street with; use whatever is most comfortable for you and best complements the way that you prefer to shoot.

Polka Dots and Pink Shoes, 2012.

Learning to choose the correct camera settings is one of the most integral skills in street photography, and while it can seem daunting at first, it is not hard to do. With a little practice, you will have it in no time, but there are some factors that you will need to focus on. Before we talk about the exact settings to use, I want to get you up to speed with what the shutter speed, aperture, and ISO do.

Shutter Speed

The shutter speed stands for how fast your camera's shutter opens and closes to let in light. The longer it is open, the more light that reaches the sensor, but the more chance there is for motion blur. So if your aim is to freeze a scene, the most important thing to remember is to make sure that your shutter speed is fast enough to be able to stop the motion of your subject. If you are shooting something that is not moving, then you can choose a much slower shutter speed.

For still shots, 1 over the focal length is what you need to achieve sharpness. So if you are shooting with a 35mm lens, then you would need to shoot at around 1/30th of a second. Image stabilization can add a few extra stops to this.

For people or things in motion, I try to shoot at least at 1/200th of a second and preferably at 1/250th or faster. People move quickly through the streets and we are often walking in the opposite direction of them, so we do not want to take any chances by using an overly slow shutter speed. At night, or in very dark situations, I will feel comfortable going down to 1/125th and still getting sharp enough photographs.

One of my biggest pet peeves is when photographers do not stop their motion when taking a photograph. I see it all of the time, people who aim, focus, and capture without even breaking stride. If you are shooting at an insanely high shutter speed, then this might work some of the time, however, you should be fully stopped to correctly take a photograph, even if it is only for a split second. Taking a photo while in motion is a hap-

Greene Street, SoHo, 2017

hazard practice and if you feel the need to do this, then you are probably walking too fast to begin with. Slow down.

If I am trying to capture a shot and I am in motion, I often use a stutter step. It is basically a very quick stop in full stride, almost like you freeze for a second in mid motion, and then you continue walking. It probably looks a bit ridiculous to anyone who is actually paying attention, but it happens so fast that nobody will notice or care.

Aperture

The aperture stands for how large or small of a hole will open in your camera to let in light. The smaller your aperture, the more of the scene that will be in focus (small apertures are the higher numbers, such as F11, while large apertures are the smaller numbers, such as F2.8). We need to use this to our advantage. Whether using manual or automatic focusing, the fact is that focusing quickly and accurately is extremely difficult when shooting on the streets. By using a small aperture, more of the shot will be in focus and so it will give us more leeway to capture our main target in focus. As a result, I often default to an aperture of F8 (and sometimes more), which will give me enough depth of field, but still allow a fast enough shutter to freeze motion during the day.

However, the lighting conditions are often very poor and we do not always have the option to shoot at F8 or more. Some people use flash in these situations, but I prefer to shoot at lower apertures to capture the natural light, even at F2 or F2.8

Prince and Broadway, 2014.
A tricky lighting situation.

in extreme low light situations. While I miss some photos shooting this way, I catch enough to make it worthwhile. But as long as we have the option, I prefer to shoot with a smaller aperture.

ISO

If we are trying to shoot at 1/250th and F8 and the light is not perfect, then something has to give. Lighting conditions are rarely ideal, especially in cities where tall buildings can block the sun. This is where our ISO comes into play. We want to raise the ISO to give ourselves the ability to shoot with these shutter and aperture settings. Most newer cameras these days, especially the Fuji X100 line, are very good at high ISOs, so I do not hesitate to shoot at ISO 800, 1600, 3200, or even 6400 at night. I shoot at ISO 800 or 1600 a majority of the time. The added digital noise (which still looks pleasing) is more than offset by the faster shutter and deeper depth of field.

My general recommendation is ISO 400 for sunlight, 800 for light shade, 1600 for dark shade, and 3200 to 6400 for early evening into night.

You should test your camera's ISO capabilities and figure out the maximum you are comfortable shooting with. With older or entry level cameras, I will typically half my recommendations. So if I recommend shooting at 800 or 1600 ISO in normal lighting conditions, I would recommend 400 or 800 for an entry level camera.

Also, you have to make sure to expose correctly if you are shooting at a high ISO. The absolute worst look is when you take a high ISO photo and significantly raise the exposure in post-processing. It takes this beautiful grain and destroys it with a terrible digital look. If you can avoid it, do not underexpose significantly when shooting at high ISOs.

Remember to consistently check your ISO settings. It can be a bummer to go out and take an amazing photo in great lighting conditions and then realize that your camera is still set at

ISO 3200 from the night before. This is the most common mistake that I make.

When shooting in a city, I will always choose an ISO for the shady side of the street. So even on sunny days, I will default to ISO 800 instead of ISO 400, since I want the camera to work well in the darker and shadier areas, and I don't mind shooting in ISO 800 on the sunny side of the street. The photographs will turn out great. If you choose your settings for the sunny side of the street (and you are moving between shady and sunny areas), the shady shots will often come out blurry.

Which Mode to Use

There is no correct mode to use between Shutter Priority (TV), Aperture Priority (AV), and Manual (M), and each mode is used frequently by many street photographers. That being said, I typically prefer to shoot in Aperture Priority during the day and Manual mode at night. I try to stay around F8 when possible and go lower as the evening gets closer. If I'm shooting in pure sunlight with no shady areas, then I will use F11 or F16.

Shooting in Aperture Priority gives you exact control over your depth of field, but the key to shooting in this mode is to set your ISO high enough so that your resulting shutter is fast enough. You will need to occasionally pay attention to what shutter speed the camera is choosing, to make sure it does not get too slow. However, I prefer to set the ISO a little higher than I need, so I'm sure the shutter speed will be fast enough throughout the day. This way, I do not have to check my camera constantly, and I can be confident in the settings to put my focus on what is really important, the moment.

Since exposing correctly is much tougher at night but the environments are typically pretty consistent, I prefer to shoot in Manual mode. This allows me to lock in the exact settings that I need without having to worry about the camera messing up.

Collision, SoHo, 2015.

There is nothing worse than capturing the perfect moment and ruining the focus.

Focusing well is the toughest and most important technical aspect of street photography, and it is the one that you should, no pun intended, focus on the most. As a result of the unpredictable and constantly fluctuating nature of the street, getting a shot in perfect focus is extremely difficult and requires a lot of practice.
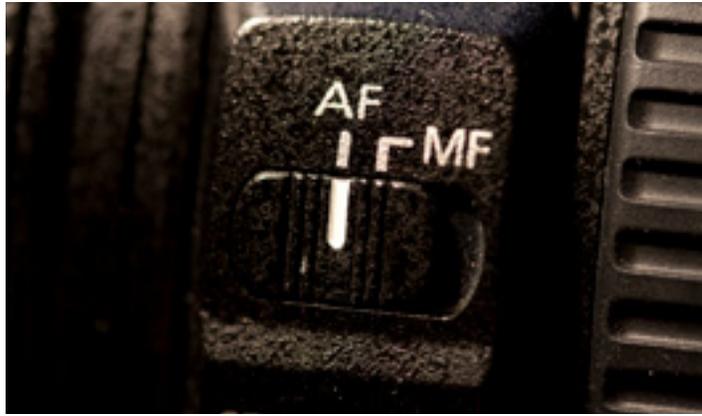
The Auto-Focus / Manual Focus switch. Get used to quickly switching back and forth.

Auto-focus is a great luxury. Our eyes may get older and fuzzier, but as long as that red or green square is highlighted over the area that we want in focus then most likely the focus will be correct. Also, if an unexpected moment happens and you need to change your focus quickly, then auto-focus is a powerful tool.

However, auto-focus is far from perfect. You have to look through the viewfinder to use it (unless you are using live view) and you have to select the focus area, so there is a good chance that you will miss some split second moments. At times, the auto-focus will mal-function, especially in low-light. In many cameras, the auto-focus systems do not work particularly well in low levels of light.

For about 50 percent of my photography I use autofocus with the focus spot in the center. I will then lock-in the focus and recompose as quickly as I can. Manual focusing, or

more specifically zone focusing, is the technique that I use for the other 50 percent of my street photos. Manual focusing involves turning the manual focus dial until the subject of your shot is sharp. Zone focusing involves keeping your focus distance set to a certain range, which for me is typically about eight or ten feet away.

With zone focusing, you want to maximize your depth of field to make it more likely that your subject is sharp. This is why many people prefer to do it with wide angle lenses, such as 35mm. I find it too difficult to zone focus correctly with a lens longer than 50mm. The more depth of field in your image, the easier zone focusing will be.

Then simply wait until your subject enters the range that you are focused on, and understand that you will have more flexibility with the sharpness the deeper your depth of field is.

Here is a technical example. If you are shooting with a 35mm lens at F8 and you pre-focus your camera to 8 feet, then everything from approximately 5.5 feet to 15 feet away will be in an acceptable range of sharpness. The closer that objects get to 8 feet, the sharper they will appear.

Here is a link to figure out the depth of field depending on your focal length, aperture, and focus distance. You can see how much tougher it gets when you go below F5.6. Http://www.dofmaster.com/dofjs.html

Also, keep in mind that the closer you get to your subject, the smaller the range of acceptable focus will be. If you are shoot-
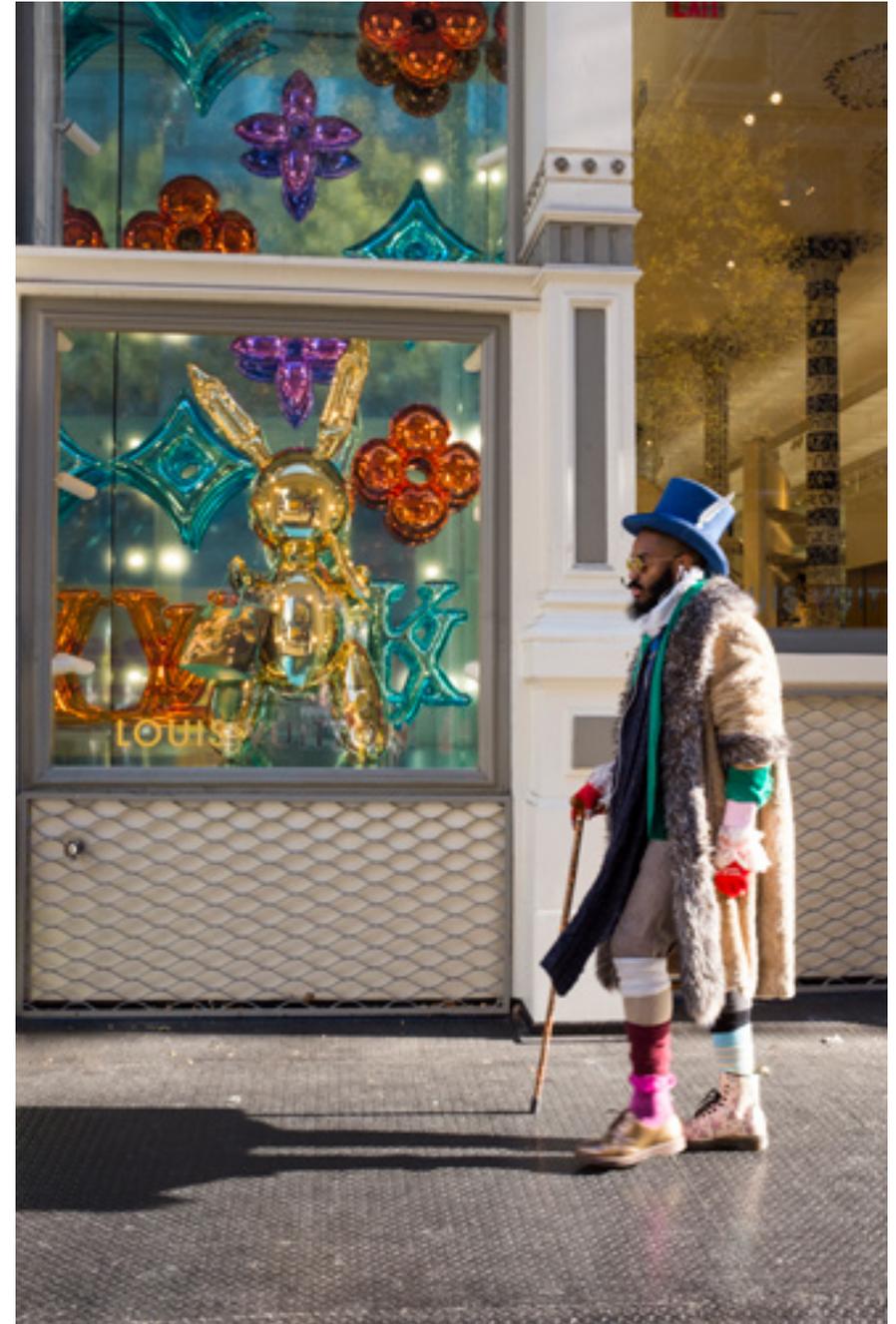
Louis Vuitton, 2017.

ing at F2, then it can be extremely difficult to be accurate consistently at close distances, such as 3 feet away. Trying to focus on something 8 feet away at F2 is much easier.

Manual Focus Meter. Get used to using this. I often walk around with my camera set to focus 8 feet away and then adjust as necessary on the fly. Occasionally, I zone focus as close as 3-5 feet.

Learning to zone focus with a smaller aperture is a difficult but very important skill for street photographers to master. There are few technical skills that you can master that will have a better effect on the outcome of your photos.

If you practice, then it is possible to zone focus even at F2 with a wide-angle lens. I shoot often in low light situations, particularly on the subway. I will ruin the focus on

Zone Focusing Exercise

Hopefully, your lens or camera has a manual focusing meter on it. If not, many newer cameras will have focusing meters somewhere on your camera's screen.

If you have either of these, I have an assignment for you. Go outside with your camera and auto-focus on objects that are different distances away, particularly between five and 12 feet. Guess their distances and then check the meter to see how close you are to the exact numbers. Remember that the auto-focus is not always accurate, so check each distance by auto-focusing twice on each object.

Do not be discouraged if you are off at first. This is a difficult exercise. However, you should work on this until it becomes second nature.

many of these shots; it is impossible not to, but I catch more than enough to make it worthwhile.

Above all, remember, if you have time to use auto-focus and your subject will not notice, then use it. In this case, it will be much more accurate than zone focusing.

Grand Central, 2003.

Blur can have a spectacular look to it, and sometimes this is easy to forget when you try so hard to get your photographs to be as sharp as possible. I get stuck in the frame of mind of trying to get everything tack sharp and forget that there is an entire other world out there.

Blur can add energy, movement, beauty, abstraction, and even a painterly quality to a photograph. It is very easy to get creative when using blur.

There are two types of blur. The first type is motion blur, which is due to a slow shutter speed that causes the moving subjects in a photo to be blurred, as well as the entire scene to be blurred if our hands and body are not steady. The second type is out-of-focus blur, often due to a large aperture, a telephoto view, or not focusing directly on your subject. In general, I prefer the look of motion blur due to a slow shutter, where the background is still sharp.

You can always capture motion blur on a tripod with very slow shutter speeds. The longer the shutter speed, the more your subjects will turn into wisps floating through the scene. However, you can also do this handheld. With a wide-angle lens and steady hands or image stabilizing, you can handhold at 1/20th or 1/30th of a second and capture the background sharp. In certain shots, it will not matter if the background is sharp; a little blur can add to the look.

I often prefer shutter speeds in this range (around 1/30th), because they add enough blur to people to add the feeling of movement and energy, yet it still freezes them enough that they have shape and you can make their features out.

In addition, an interesting look is to capture crowds with motion blur. I love the play between sharp, stationary people and the different rates of movement and motion blur with others in the crowd.

I also prefer my photos with blur to be in black and white. This is just a personal prefer-

Cigarette, East Village, 2010.

ence, but I think it looks better without color. The lack of color allows you to focus more on the shapes themselves and on the movement within the photo.

The best time to try some blur is during dusk when the light levels are low and it gets harder to capture sharp and steady street photos. If you have a camera that does not shoot well at high ISOs, then you can compensate when the light is not perfect by experimenting with blur. The effects you can create are infinite depending on the light available, the shutter speed, and the rate of movement of your subjects.

Soft Focus

As a result of the constantly changing nature and perpetual movement associated with shooting on the street, it is not expected that every image captured is going to be perfectly in focus. Often, the lighting conditions will be poor, the scene will develop too quickly, and people will be moving too fast. This is the nature of the game.

A soft-focus shot is not always a reject. Occasionally a photograph, no matter what you do, will be impossible to get sharp. Most likely, it will ruin these shots, but sometimes a photograph with a strong enough concept or visual look will be stunning, whether sharp or not. Sometimes it will even look better with a little blur.

In *Cigarette*, I captured this peripheral shot in the early evening and it came upon me suddenly. I reacted quickly, and as a result, there was slight motion blur because of all these factors. Luckily, the blur ended up to be pleasing and makes the cigarette look ethereal. I actually prefer it to a tack sharp print because it gives it a painterly quality.

Strive for sharpness, if that is what you are aiming for. It is one of the most important technical skills in street photography, but also realize that occasionally a photo will be just as good (or better) with a little blur.

Aesthetically, *Cigarette turned* out beautifully, with the flowers, the two locks, the ornate grating and post, the cigarette, and even the framed eye in the background, but what I have realized over time is that all of that stuff is just a beautiful frame for that face.

This shot is all about that face; the self-reflective face of an exhausted hairdresser in a city that is not kind to workers in this sort of low-paid position. I see this same face many times each day.

Greene Street, SoHo, 2018.

The term 'shooting from the hip' refers to taking a photograph without looking through the viewfinder. The camera can be at your chest, at your knees, above your head, or anywhere where your eye is not looking through the viewfinder. The most common way to shoot from the hip is with the camera at your chin or chest.

The two primary purposes of shooting this way are so that your subject will not notice that they are being photographed and to capture those split-second perspectives that do not allow you time to bring the camera to your eye.

I often shoot from the hip for these reasons, but it is a very tough way to shoot and it should only be used when needed. To be able to shoot successfully this way takes a lot of skill and practice, and if you are a beginner, I do not recommend trying it until you have spent some serious hours practicing on the streets shooting through your viewfinder. For some of you, this technique might be the wrong way of shooting entirely.

Many veteran street photographers prefer to never shoot from the hip. Some people have a strong aversion towards it and I do not disagree with their reasoning. They argue that you need to frame your shots perfectly and cannot do this without looking through the viewfinder. Photographers who primarily use autofocus cannot shoot from the hip because they will have no way to focus. Many photographers also believe that this technique is a sloppy way to shoot. Others dislike shooting from the hip because it is sneaky.

That being said, I do think it is necessary for many situations and even more so with a large DSLR. Many of my best shots have been taken this way and I would not have been able to capture some of my candid shots without the technique. I think it is a skill that some of you should eventually try out.

A valid concern regarding shooting from the hip is that your composition may not be perfect. But after enough practice, you should become proficient at guessing how the composition will appear without looking. However, when shooting from the hip you need to use a wide-angle lens. Even doing it at 50mm is tough. It is hard to deal with both focus-

Vape smoke, 2017.

ing and framing as you inch closer and closer towards a telephoto view. Regardless, who needs to shoot from the hip when you are photographing from that far away anyway?

When I 'shoot from the hip,' I typically hold the camera right near my chin. This allows me to have the camera so close to my eyes that the eyes feel like the viewfinder, and I know exactly how the photo will be framed. It does not actually feel like shooting from the hip because of this. I can look like I am just holding the camera, looking at something behind the subject, while shooting. Then, if I decide to use the viewfinder, the camera is right near my eyes and so making the transition is easier. I also choose to zone focus, because it is incredibly difficult to lock in the autofocus correctly without looking through the viewfinder.

It helps to shoot with a prime lens when you shoot from the hip because it will allow you to get used to the perspective and field of view so that you can begin to accurately guess the frame lines when you are not looking through the viewfinder.

Shooting from the hip will also allow you to be quicker and more spontaneous. You cannot walk around with the camera stuck to your eye and sometimes things happen so fast that the moments are gone before you are able to raise the camera to your eye, particularly in very crowded areas. Holding the camera, zone focused and ready to shoot on your chest, allows you to fire immediately when something happens, and it also allows you to see everything that is happening around you without blocking your field of view. However, please do not become careless with this type of shooting by clicking the shutter at random and hoping to get lucky. Shooting from the hip does not mean you should shoot haphazardly. It is a skill to refine.

Live View

Live view is a camera function where a real-time view of the scene is displayed on the LCD screen of a camera. Photographing using this technique provides the photographer with

the ability to be discrete while shooting since it appears that one is just fiddling with their camera. However, the beauty that this method allows is that you can easily see the scene, focus, and frame it in a very precise manner. It may sound like a gimmick, and I do not use it, but it can be very effective. It can be good for times when people seem aware that you could be taking their photo.

If you think about the way that Vivian Maier, the famous Chicago nanny and street photographer who photographed in the mid-20th century, took her photos, it is the same concept. Maier used a Rolleiflex, which has a viewfinder on the top of it that aims upwards. This allowed her to look down at the camera yet still see the image, and since her camera was not up to her eye and her face was not looking directly at her subjects there was much less of a chance of them noticing or at least reacting. I think this played a large part in the natural feeling of many of her photographs.

People will still notice your camera but they will not be as conscious that you are taking their photo. It guarantees a level of candidness and it is an excellent tool to use, especially if you are not yet comfortable with zone focusing or shooting from the hip without looking.

170mm (zoom lens) - Trash and Vaudeville, St. Marks, 2010.

Choosing whether to use a zoom lens or a prime lens can be a difficult decision. The decision depends on your camera, your personality, and what you prefer to shoot. Some of you will be more comfortable with a prime lens, while others will not be willing to give up the flexibility of the zoom.

If you use them the right way, then you will find that neither type of lens is better than the other; they are just different. Dave Beckerman once told me, *"No matter what camera or lens I use, I will still get the same amount of keepers. They will just be different shots."*

This being said, I prefer to use 35mm and 50mm (full-frame equivalent) prime lenses, and I am a huge believer in the advantages of prime lenses, which are many. If you use one constantly, then you will get used to the perspective and it will make you much faster and more spontaneous. Because of the fast-moving nature of street photography, any tool that makes you quicker is a big advantage.

You will learn to see how the lens sees, which is very important. In addition, wide-angle and normal prime lenses are usually much smaller, less obtrusive, and lighter than their zoom lens counterparts, and so it will help you maneuver around and shoot candidly in a much easier way. An SLR is much smaller and lighter with a smaller prime lens. Prime lenses are also cheaper than zoom lenses, so you can get a fast lens for a fraction of the price of a fast zoom.

So then why would we ever want to use a zoom lens? Primarily because they are beneficial for the flexibility to change your focal length on the fly and to be able to shoot at a greater distance when needed. I cannot deny the incredible work done by many photographers with zoom lenses.

35mm (prime lens) - Greene Street, SoHo, 2014.

Canal Street, 28mm, 2013.

The study of perspective is a vast topic upon which many books have been based. This chapter will highlight the key aspects of perspective and how they relate to street photography.

Wide-Angle Versus Telephoto

A wide-angle lens refers to a lens that is 35mm or smaller (on a full-frame sensor), a telephoto lens refers to a lens that is 85mm or longer, and a normal lens comprises the middle ground.

It is widely believed that the ultimate objective when shooting on the street is to get as close to your subjects as possible with a wide-angle lens. I usually strive for this when photographing since photos have a completely different look when captured close-up with a wide-angle lens as opposed to with a telephoto lens from a further away. Having the main subject in close proximity and subsequently consuming much of the frame can be very important. It is often the difference between a good and a bad shot.

A wide-angle lens will widen the perspective between foreground and background, making objects that are closest to the camera much larger, while making objects further away from the camera proportionally much smaller. This is a great way to incorporate many elements together in the same scene. You can simultaneously make the larger foreground elements a focal point of the photo, while still fitting a wide area of the background in the frame since the background elements will be proportionally smaller. The background will also be much sharper than if you were to shoot with a telephoto lens from further away.

Also, getting close provides a certain type of intimacy. It makes the viewer feel like they are an active participant in what is happening. You will be able to notice small foreground details such as facial expressions much easier. With a longer lens and a more compressed view, the viewer feels more removed or uninvolved, observing the scene from a far distance. A telephoto view will compress the scene, which means that objects that are further away

51mm - Chico Mural and People, East Village, 2013.

will appear larger and more similar in size to the foreground elements. Telephoto views can be very pleasing. They effectively capture details or a small portion of the surrounding area. You do not always need to show the entire background or multiple foreground elements for a photo to have impact. Generally, telephoto views tend to be much more graphic in nature. When you compress and reduce the number of elements in a scene, lines, shapes, and colors become much more prominent and important. Lastly, there are the scenes where all of the elements that we want to capture will be far away from us and we will be unable to move closer to them. The only option for these cases is to use a telephoto lens.

Horizontal, Vertical and Diagonal Framing

When framing your scene, you need to determine whether shooting horizontally, vertically, or diagonally is appropriate. Horizontal or diagonal framing is usually my preferred choice. Horizontal is the natural way our eyes view the world and so we feel more comfortable viewing images this way. It can also be difficult when photographing on the streets to capture a person with a vertical perspective without sacrificing a majority of the background content and it is more difficult to shoot candidly while holding the camera in this manner. If showing a lot of background is important, then horizontal framing is recommended.

Vertical framing can be an effective tool used to focus on a specific person or object while often de-emphasizing other aspects of the surrounding background. If you want to emphasize height or vertical lines or have a particular person consume the entire frame then this is a good choice. This is why vertical framing works extremely well for fashion street photography, where the clothes, accessories, and the person wearing them are of the utmost importance and the background of the shot is not a priority.

The diagonal lines of diagonal framing provide energy, dynamism, and movement into a capture, which can complement the fast-paced energy of a city well. This is one of my favorite ways to shoot. By diagonal, I do not mean that you need to shoot at a dramatic 45-degree angle. By shooting with your camera tilted slightly, the entire feeling of a scene can be

transformed to feel less formal, more dynamic, and more 'part of the moment.' It can feel more real and unplanned.

If you look at Garry Winogrand's famous street shot, *Hollywood Boulevard,* this photograph would have had so much less energy had it been shot straight on. If you look through Winogrand's work, you will find that many of his photographs are skewed, and this adds to their chaotic and energetic nature.

Height

Another trick that we can use as street photographers to change the feeling of a scene is to alter the height at which we shoot.

If we shoot from below, then we see the world through a child's eyes. Everything appears larger, more prominent, and sometimes more imposing. This angle can elongate people or shift the focus to what they are wearing. We can focus in on tiny details about them. Subjects can appear more menacing, powerful or dangerous. Take a look at William Eggleston's Tricycle (Memphis, 1969) for an example. From such a low angle, the Tricycle gains a measure of importance that it would not have otherwise.

On the other hand, shooting from above will have the opposite effect. Everything will appear smaller and more compact. If the angle becomes extreme enough, then the context of the shot can appear almost toy-like. When viewed from above, scenes tend to be more graphic, abstract, and removed from reality.

Broadway, Corner of Broadway and Prince, 2010.

6th Avenue Buildings, 2015.

One of the most important ways that visually striking photographs are created is through shooting in areas with interesting lighting. When photographing, you should pay attention to the quality of light in a scene as well as to patterns created by shadows.

You can use light to highlight a primary subject, to create interesting patterns or shapes, to add contrast or softness, or to add glow or warmth. You should try to photograph in all different lighting conditions on the street, such as in the early morning, during the harsh brightness of midday, when it is foggy, in the glow of twilight, or even under lampposts and artificial light at night. There is no correct light. Each type of light has its own qualities that you will need to pay attention to and account for.

While landscape photographers generally avoid shooting during the midday, this can be a great time of day to shoot on the street. The streets are hazy and hot, the sun beats down harshly on people's skin, and the difference between the highlights and shadows is very pronounced. Even lens flare can be an interesting lighting effect if used in the right way. You will lose a few photographs because the light just does not work out. And the light may not have the same warm and pleasing look of a late afternoon glow but this is not bad, it is just different and should be treated accordingly.

You should make sure to pay attention to where the sun is in relation to your subject. Is it in front of the subject, behind the subject, or to the side? How high in the sky is it? It makes a huge difference as to how the photo will turn out. I have heard people say to try not to shoot directly into the sun, but if done correctly I enjoy this hazy look immensely. However, often you will have to darken the shadows down in post-production.

The challenge with shooting on the street is that the light changes constantly. The lighting in street photography differs greatly from shooting in a studio, where lighting is easily ma-nipulated and remains constant. When shooting on the street, you need to be aware of the light in order to identify good photographic opportunities and to make sure that your exposure is correct. Compromising a great shot with a bad exposure is never a welcomed outcome. You can only correct so much in post-production.

Photographing at night under the light of streetlamps can create some wonderfully moody portraits. You can shoot this handheld with a high enough ISO, but make sure to stay close to strong light sources such as street lamps or illuminated signs. If you photograph handheld in the dead of night, far from lighting sources and with no flash, then not even the highest quality cameras can help you out. Stakeout some locations with acceptable lighting, such as near lit storefront signs or lampposts, which can give a painterly glow.

Flash is another way that you can illuminate night scenes or even day scenes. I rarely shoot flash on the street since it is a little too intrusive for my taste; however, I do like the look. In fact, I am a huge fan of the look, but as a technique, it does not mesh with my personality.

There are a couple of ways to shoot on the streets with a flash. The first is to blast people with a strong flash and forget about the background. This will expose for the foreground and illuminate everything in the range of the flash; however, the background will be completely dark.

The second approach is to expose for the background and then use the flash as a fill light to freeze and illuminate the foreground. You can shoot around 1/8th of a second at a high ISO to keep the background fairly well exposed, steady, and sharp and then flash your subject so that they will be sharp and well-lit. If the subject is moving quickly when shot in this manner, then there will be some ghosting, but this can provide an interesting look.

Model, SoHo, 2017.

Bearded Man, 2004. 1/90th at F11, ISO 400 (notice the dark background.)

Bruce Gilden is probably the most well-known flash street photographer. If you are inter-ested in this technique and the creative use of flash, then I suggest you study his work. He uses flash in a way that adds energy and chaos into his scenes that seem to match the energy of his subjects. However, do not mistake his use of flash as the defining aspect of his photography style - the subjects that he captures are. Also, Bruce Davidson is another incredible photographer to study who often used flash in his work.

Bruce Gilden at Work.

Mona, 5th Avenue, 2011.

Hesitation has ruined so many great street photos.

You see the moment, think for a second about whether you want to take the shot, and it is gone before you have made up your mind. You get nervous and hesitate for too long and it is gone. Or you see the moment, spring into action, and realize that your lens cap is on or your settings are off.

You can only anticipate so many moments before they happen. Many moments will spring up in front of you without any warning, and you have to be ready. Your camera has to be on, lens cap off, in your hand, and set for the lighting. You have to be paying attention and looking around. Then you have to react.

It is tough to react quickly, especially if you do not have much experience shooting on the street and are apprehensive about it. I start to daydream and miss shots all the time. Reacting is a skill that takes practice. If you do not shoot regularly, this is a skill that is easily lost. If you are a street photographer, then you should try to be out there consistently to hone your instincts. There is no way around it.

However, there is a difference between seeing a moment and attacking it and shooting constantly without purpose. When shooting, you do not need to take a thousand photos of everything that moves. The digital age makes it easy for us to do this. We think we can shoot like crazy and edit it down later. We think that if we take more photos, then it will give us a better chance of capturing better photographs.

This could not be further from the truth. If you shoot frantically, then you actually give yourself less of a chance of capturing the moment. The more selective you are when shooting, the more of a chance you will have of capturing the moment. We have a wonderful luxury with the digital medium, but I think we should still treat things as if most shots are precious. We should be methodical and careful with our photography.

When you sense a moment happening, you need to think about the angle, the fram-

For the shot *Mona, 2011,* I was walking down 5th avenue during holiday season. The streets were packed with people, to the point of being almost too crowded to shoot in. There was a man in front of me and suddenly, he veered off to the right and I saw this girl with this powerful, knowing expression, not usually seen in your typical young person. The expression looked so familiar, but I could not put my finger on it.

Fortunately, my camera was ready, under my chin, framed correctly, pre-focused to the right distance, the settings were set, and my finger was on the trigger.

About a month later, I finally realized why that face looked so familiar. A lucky moment, but one that I was prepared to quickly capture.

Subway, 2013.

ing, the content, and you need to trigger the shutter at the exact moment that everything is in place. Some moments will be spontaneous and you will not have a choice but to shoot quickly, but more often you will see a moment as it begins to come together and so you will have a brief moment to get into position and have control over the framing. And not to worry, framing will become more instinctual as you gain experience.

You do not want to hold the shutter down because you are afraid of missing the shot. The photographers who take the most shots of a subject are usually the ones that miss the moment. Try to anticipate when a moment will happen and capture the photo with careful shots at the right points. Shoot with your gut. You should be able to feel when the moment is right. If the scene starts to further develop, then you can continue to shoot more quickly, but make sure that the first shot counts. You will often find that the first or last shot in a sequence is the best one.

You will miss your shot often, especially the spontaneous ones, and it is easy to get discouraged, but the ones you hit will be exceptional. And remember that shooting in a spontaneous manner does not mean that you can close your eyes and rapid-fire. It just means that you should use your gut and instinct to your advantage. They will take you a long way.

Mott Street, 2017.

Cell Phones, Broadway, 2015.

Sometimes you can just jump in front of a subject and take your photograph, but many times that will not work, especially if you want to capture a candid moment.

As a street photographer, you can benefit a lot from acting if you are going to try to get close to a subject while being inconspicuous. This acting is usually subtle. You might play the part of a spaced-out tourist, engrossed in a building or something happening across the street, or perhaps someone who is lost and has to stop for a moment to collect themselves. While people are generally more perceptive of SLRs, an advantage of shooting with these cameras is that no matter what you look like, people will usually assume you are a tourist.

Never point your head directly at your subject or make eye contact until you take the shot. There is something evolutionary about eye contact that will make a person immediately notice you. Even for a split second, it will ruin your cover. Instead, try to look through the person, as if you are looking at something behind them and slightly to the side. This will tend to make you look like you are a little spaced-out or engrossed in something.

I like to seem like I am walking around daydreaming, thinking about what I want to photograph, just lost in my surroundings and looking in a slightly different direction of what I want to photograph. However, I will consciously ensure that my path intersects with my subject and then I will stop as if I am gathering myself or as if I see something interesting. My body will often be slightly angled away from the subject while I get my camera into position so as not to arouse suspicion. Then I will quickly move the frame into place, take some photos, and walk away as if nothing happened.

This is not how I always shoot, but only when I need to. A lot of times I will just shoot in a manner that is so quick that the subjects will barely notice, and then I will quickly move on. Only be sneaky when you need to be. There is a time and place for shooting in this fashion. Sometimes there is no way around it and you just have to be sneaky to get the right photograph. But most importantly, try to not look self-conscious. Always walk

around with a smile and keep an air of confidence like you belong there and there will be much less of a chance of you being noticed or of people caring if they do see you take their photo. The more you look and act like you belong there, the less people will notice. Sometimes, if you stand in the middle of a sidewalk intersection, you will be so obvious there that people will give you no thought. It is usually the times where you try to hide and slink in the background that people will notice you.

And if you get caught, just acknowledge the subject with a friendly smile. If they are curious, complement them and explain what you are doing. Always act friendly and confident and never defensive about what you are doing.

Noodletown, Chinatown at Night, 2012. 1/60th at F2.8, ISO 3200 - Fuji X100.

As digital technology continues to develop and improve, street photographers are quickly being provided with the ability to shoot high-quality photos at high ISOs. As a result, we now have the ability to shoot on the street with ISOs of 1600, 3200, 6400 and even more for certain cameras. This capability will only increase over time.

Because of this, we can now shoot handheld at night with fast enough shutter speeds to freeze motion. We still have to compromise a bit, such as shooting at F2 to F4, staying closer to artificial light sources and sometimes going under our minimum threshold to completely freeze movement. But, while it is still somewhat difficult, it works and it is only getting easier.

Take a look at the photo on the previous page. This photo was shot with a handheld, rangefinder sized Fuji X100, the original version from 2011. It has some grain, but the quality of the RAW file is fantastic. It was not brightened in post-production and it is sharp. Because of this technology, we now have a new range of photos that we can capture. To say this is exciting is an understatement.

Photographing at night is more difficult, and it presents safety concerns, but it is worth it. I often have to psych myself up to leave my apartment, but when I am out there at night, especially when it is rainy, I feel alive. New York has a dark, eerie, and romantic essence at night that cannot be replicated during the day.

The quality of light at night is gorgeous. The street lamps quietly highlight shadowed figures as they pass by. The colors and textures of the city are enhanced in such a stunning way, especially from colored, glowing signs reflected on wet pavement. Huge buildings that are stark and monotonous by day are transformed at night to look ominous and menacing. The city flat out sparkles.

When shooting in the rain, make sure to bring a good quality, lightweight umbrella and not one of those cheap ones. A good umbrella makes a world of difference for photographing in the rain. Make sure it is a small traveler size as well because you are going to

Punk Rock, East Village, 2012. 1/250th at F2, ISO 3200 - Fuji X100.

be holding it in one hand for a long time. Primes work very well in the rain because you are then able to hold and trigger the camera with only one hand while holding an umbrella in the other. Also, bring multiple hand towels to wipe off your lens since it will continually get wet. Hand towels are the most important thing to bring when shooting in the rain or snow. There are camera covers that you can purchase as well, but I find that these are too cumbersome, and an umbrella and towels for the lens are all that I need.

When I shoot street scenes at night and want to get people sharp, I tend to either get very close to a strong light source or not get as close to the subject as I do during the day, so there is less motion blur. You also want to stand in locations where the light source

Lower East Side, 2011. 1/8th at F4, ISO 800.

will be behind you and hitting your subjects. If you photograph into the light sources at night, you will have a lot of dark faces, whereas if you place yourself between the light source and the subject, the person will be lit well. At night, I normally shoot from 1/125th all the way to 1/30th at F2 through F4.

Street Photography with a Tripod

Because of the increases in ISO capability of digital cameras in recent years, you can capture most night images handheld these days, and so tripods are not usually needed. However, they can still be an option for those inclined. It is much harder to capture that spontaneous moment with a tripod, but the objective here is to find a background and wait for the correct characters to enter and create your scene.

You can create some amazing effects on a tripod that you could not otherwise capture shooting handheld. You can photograph movement in such a beautiful way, while still having the background sharp. It is a fantastic tool for showing off the energy and variance of a crowd. Slowing down the shutter adds vibrancy, movement, and the passage of time into a photograph. It opens up a world of opportunity from the frozen moment.

But if your goal is to strictly walk around and look for unique moments at night, ditch the tripod, raise your ISO, and seek out light sources.

In *Lower East Side, 2011*, I was commissioned by the Daily News to capture the energy of a summer weekend evening in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan, known to many as the party hot spot in the City. I wanted a photo with depth that included late-night partiers covering every inch of the photo, from the foreground to the background. I wanted some subjects in motion and some still. I also wanted to capture the lights and signs of the bars, restaurants, and shops. I found this location around 11pm and parked my tripod. It took about three hours to finally get this shot.

If you know there is potential for a great photo, then wait for it. There are so few great street photographs out there that the potential for capturing one is worth waiting for.

Grand Central, 2015

Athens Economic Protest from Hotel Grande Bretagne, 2011.

Capturing great photographs is only half of the battle. It is what happens after we return, the work we do in our homes, offices, and studios, that ultimately defines us as photographers. The term editing comprises two main aspects: post-processing and organizing and reviewing our work. Our goal as street photographers should be to create beautiful prints from our negatives and to organize our work into consistent, concise portfolios.

Many factors are involved in turning a negative into a print, which we will go over in this section. Some photographers alter their images minimally in post-production, while others prefer to process their images more intensively. There is no correct process. It comes down to personal preference and the final print is all that matters.

The tools and programs that are available to us to assist in our post-production are vast and powerful. However, while they should be used to aid us in creating the finest quality prints, they should not be used as a crutch to fix shots whose errors could have been avoided by changing the camera settings at the time the image was captured. It is important to create the best possible negative in the camera.

The second aspect of editing involves looking over our work on a conceptual level. It is seeing our captures for the first time outside of the moment. It is organizing them, fitting them into themes, and choosing which photos mean something to us and which are throwaways. Editing is evaluating our development, our strengths, and our weaknesses so that we can improve. It is learning about ourselves and the themes in our work and understanding what fits and what does not. It is when we have a second to slow down and think about our work.

It is often in front of the computer or in the darkroom where a personal vision is born.
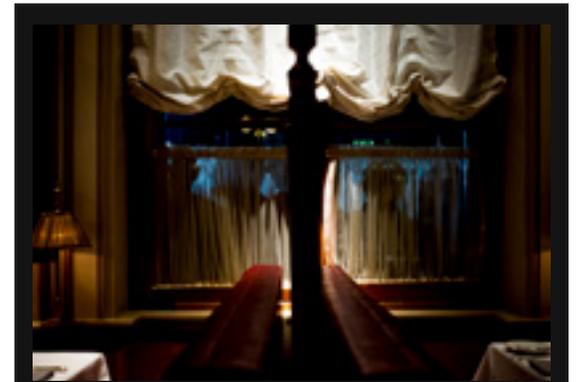
Athens Economic Protest, 2011, was taken from the empty restaurant of the luxury Hotel Grande Bretagne, located on Athen's Synatagma Square. The silhouettes are of economic protestors.

This image highlights the economic conflict between the wealthy minority and the struggling majority. There is a feeling of fear in this image in the sense that the angry masses are just outside of the window, but also a feeling of safety brought on by the curtains and shades, and the luxurious features of the hotel interior.

Greene Street, SoHo, 2017.

*"**P**hotographers mistake the emotion they feel while taking the photo as a judgment that the photograph is good"* – Garry Winogrand

Whether you are working with file cabinets of film or thousands of digital files, you need to use the best tools available to organize your archive and edit your work. Being able to organize your work, pick out your best moments, and weed out your worst is one of the most important skills in photography and it is a skill that will develop over time. There is a lot of junk out there and you do not want to add to it. As photographers, we are not only judged by our best work but by our worst work as well.

A good rule is to not edit your photographs the same day you take them. What matters most is that you separate your emotions from the day of shooting. You do not want your judgment clouded on what is a good photograph and what is not. If you were excited about capturing a specific scene and you review the photo on the same day that you took it, that excitement might influence you to believe that the photo is good, even if that is not the reality. You should treat editing as if you are an impartial viewer and the only way to do this is to separate yourself and to give yourself time to clear your head from the day of shooting.

I break this rule all of the time. Often, I want to see and edit photos right away. But I also make sure to come back to them weeks or months later to re-edit. I will go back to the same folders frequently over time, reassessing photos, searching for diamonds in the rough, and sometimes altering already completed photos. I sometimes strongly dislike images that I had been very excited about when I first saw them. It is surprising how many changes I will make when coming back to a folder at a later date.

Be organized with your files and be diligent about going through them. Do not just edit a folder and be done with it. Come back over time. You will feel different about your photographs months or years later.

If you find that you are capturing great street photographs all of the time, then you

should alter your definition of what a great street photograph is. Those moments, those feelings, those thoughts, that beauty just does not come along in the right way that often while your camera is present.

As Ansel Adams once said, *"Twelve significant photographs in any one year is a good crop."* That might even be pushing it. Try this. Take your favorite street photographers and try to remember more than fifteen of their photos. Most of these photographers worked for decades and, odds are, you cannot remember more than fifteen of their photos.

Be critical of your work; highly critical. Ask the advice of people who you know will give you honest answers. Most people are hesitant to be critical of an artist's work and as a result, some artists never get the critiques that they need. The internet can be a tough forum for this as well because there is no dislike button. If you hear the comments, 'great,' 'wonderful,' and 'amazing' over and over again then maybe it is time to ask some different people about what they think. You want someone who will be tough on you. Honest answers and conversations are key to your development as an artist.

Adobe Lightroom

Using Lightroom to edit and organize my work has had a transformative effect on my photography. For me, there is no better photo organizing and editing program. Lightroom is an incredible tool that allows photographers to seamlessly view, organize, rate, edit, export, and keyword photographs. It even allows you to create book mockups. It is a one-stop-shop for your entire image archive.

Lightroom has all of this functionality but at the same time, it is extremely intuitive and easy to use. I can go through a folder of images, locate the best shots, and edit them in a quarter of the time that it used to take me. My editing has exponentially improved because of the flexibility I have to test and undo visual changes to my negatives in Lightroom.

Fundraiser, Tribeca, 2016.

Whether you use Lightroom or not, the point is to find a program and create a system that helps you to organize and edit your photos in the way that works best for you. An unorganized archive will greatly hinder your progress as a street photographer.

In Lightroom, I have created a system that effectively allows me to locate my top photos. Lightroom provides the opportunity to rate images on a scale of one to five stars. I will first go through a folder of images and give every photo either three or five stars, three for decent images or ones that I am unsure of and five stars for the best. Then, I will go through the zero starred images one more time and then delete them forever. This keeps my archive as small and lean as possible.

These days, I can usually determine if I caught a fantastic image; however, sometimes I allow great shots to fall through the cracks. And while usually I will not use any of the three-starred images again, a few times a year I will realize one of those images was much better than I thought.

In Lightroom, you can also create collections of images, which I believe is the most important aspect of the program. A collection is a group of photos taken from different folders on your hard drive. It is a way of creating projects and groupings without having to move the physical locations of the files. It is how I group my work, build projects over time, and generally experiment with how I would like to display groups of my photographs.

You should take advantage of this. Many street photography projects are created over long periods. Create these collections based on your ideas, even if you do not yet have any images to put in them. This will remind you of what to look for when you are on the street so that you can add to the collections over time. It is a great way to keep track of multiple themes in your work. You will see some of these collections slowly morph in meaning over time as you build on them.

There is also the quick collection. If you click on the small circle on the top right of your image thumbnails it will move them into your quick collection. This is where I also like

to put my favorite photographs. This gives you a very fast way to come back and look through your best work. You will just need to make sure to go through it occasionally to remove images that end up not being as good as you initially thought.

You can then take one of your collections and turn it into a book mockup using the book module. Street photography is an art form that thrives in book form, and so I highly recommend experimenting with this as you build on your projects. Sequence your photographs, see how they play off each other, and see how the entire portfolio looks together. You can then export the book in PDF form or upload it directly to Blurb to create a physical mockup.

As previously mentioned, capturing a digital negative is only half the battle. Knowing how to prepare yourself prior to taking the shot and knowing what to do with the shot after it is captured is extremely important.

Part of being a strong photographer (or a strong artist in any medium) is mastering the tools and techniques that will enable you to master your craft. Once you learn these techniques then you may choose to employ some of them but not others when creating your work. Familiarizing yourself with these post-production tools will further assist in developing your personal style. To edit well means possessing the knowledge to determine when a negative needs a lot of work versus when you should hold back. Having restraint when you edit and being subtle can be key.

While I believe that you should always work in the RAW format, which allows for the highest image quality possible, some camera companies, and specifically Fuji, have some gorgeous JPEG modes, and I can't fault the street photographers who use them, of which there are many.

When working with a RAW file in a program such as Lightroom, the most important settings to concentrate on are the exposure, contrast, crop, highlight, shadow, black, and white levels, color temperature, saturation, and vignetting.

The unedited negative on the right looks straightforward and mundane; however, I had an idea in mind. I was drawn to the lighting of this scene and waited as crowds of people passed through. I was envisioning this woman with blonde features and
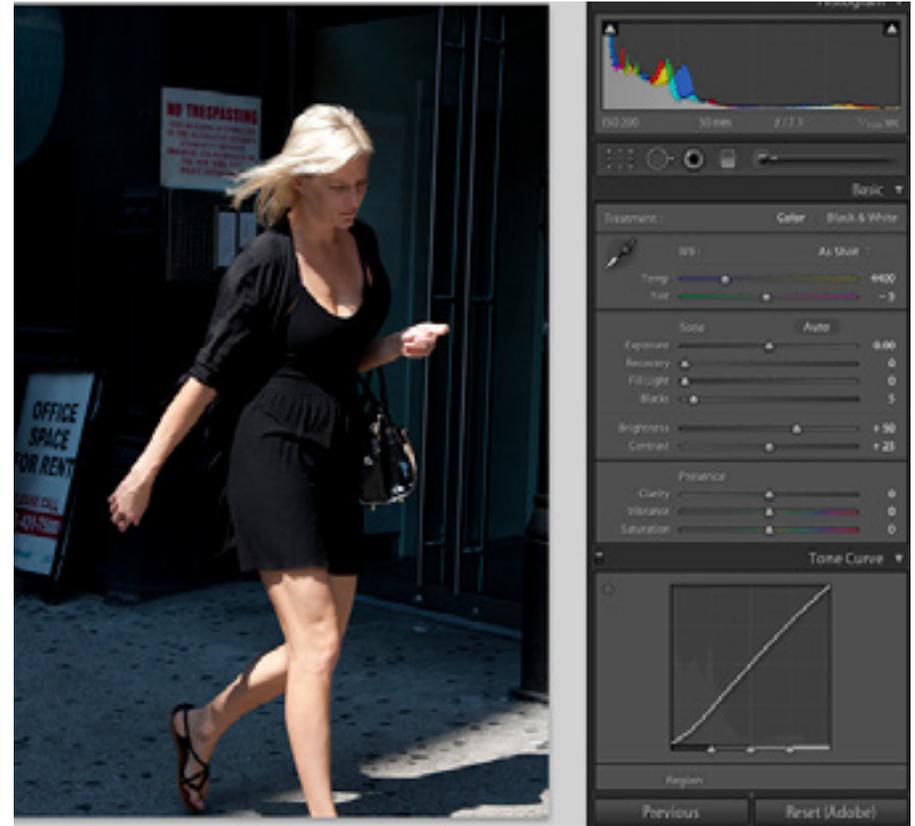
Blonde, 2010. A boring, untouched RAW negative.
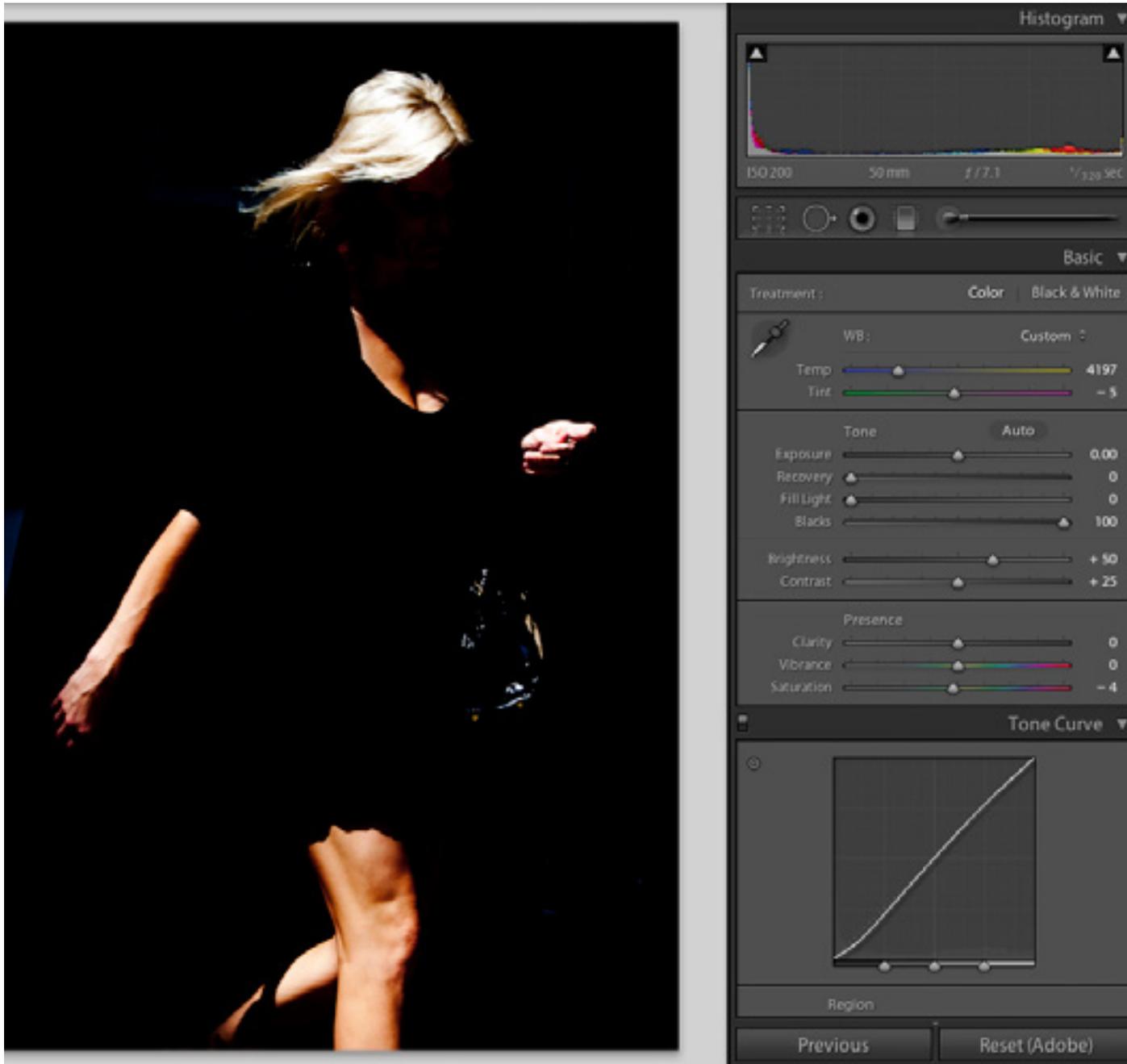
Blonde, 2010, Retouched.

I wanted for the sun to highlight her hair and skin with the rest of the frame in darkness. What I had envisioned and was subsequently able to create differed greatly from the original digital negative that was captured.

If you notice, I did not make many changes to the original negative. Besides minor tweaks to the color temperature, saturation, and crop, all this photo needed was to darken the shadows and midtones to black. It looks like a lot of work was done between the two versions because of the extreme difference, but the changes were simple and straight forward.

Had I not known this was possible to do in Lightroom then I would not have been looking for this scene in the first place. The original capture is not a great photograph until you process it.

Vignetting well is very important. Vignetting is creating a dark (or light) circle around the edges of the photo, which can be done in either Lightroom or Photoshop. Many photos need it to keep a viewer's eyes from wandering off the sides of the photograph; however, you also need to exercise restraint to prevent this effect from being overdone. Probably the most common over-editing mistake that I see is when people create vignettes that are too strong.

Cropping your shots is integral as well, although you should always aim to achieve the proper crop within the camera. Street photography is a dynamic, fast-moving medium and no matter how good you are, you will not be able to capture the exact crop that you want every single time. It is especially tough to frame perfectly when using a prime lens with a split second photo. This is not landscape photography, where we can always take our time and plan the shot. Sometimes three-quarters or a half of your negative will be the framing that you want. If a crop will create a better composition, then that is what we must do. By never cropping, you are denying yourself a critical tool for improving your prints.

With all of this being said, I urge you to have restraint in your editing. The goal of street

photography is to portray real moments, and if you over-edit your photographs, this will negate that feeling in your work. You want to edit in a way that makes the print look beautiful, but not unreal or exaggerated.

Hudson Yards, 2019.

Historically, before walking out the door, photographers had to choose whether to shoot in color or black and white. Today, photographers have the luxury to always shoot in color and then decide in editing if a photograph will be more effective in color or black and white. This can be a tough decision because it can change the focus of an image entirely, and this is why it is the first thing I consider when editing a digital negative.

Some people see the world more effectively in color and others that see it more effectively in black and white. These photographers have the luxury of not having to make this decision. However, for me, there is a time and a place for both.

I prefer to switch up between black and white and color depending on the project that I am working on. I find when creating a project, it is much easier to work in black and white, because most images will look good in black and white, while only some will look good in color. But other projects are just made for color, and you have to sacrifice some photographs because of that.

The coming sections will address both the general advantages of a photo being in black and white or in color. It is important to keep in mind that choosing one over the other is ultimately subjective and opinions vary widely on this issue.

Why Black and White?

- Photos lacking color provide an even plane for the eye. As a result, forms, shapes, lines, and contrast can be much more prominent.

- It conveys a feeling of the abstract.

- Figures can appear more powerful and dramatic.

- Faces and expressions are emphasized.

- Blur and grain can appear more appealing.

- Modern moments can be portrayed with a classic, vintage, and timeless feel. This helps to take them out of their element.

- It can convey a more thoughtful or serious feel, which while this is changing somewhat, is rooted in how black and white photographs have historically been perceived.

- Patterns and textures can be highlighted.

- Easier to include every photograph that you want to in a black and white portfolio.

Why Color?

- Color is beautiful. Sometimes you capture an image and the color is so stunning that you cannot remove it, no matter the content of the image.

- Color can enhance a humorous or playful situation.

- Color can be utilized to convey a mood. Cool tones can help a photo feel melancholy, while warm tones reflect vibrancy or energy, and muted colors such as browns can communicate grit or a dreary sentiment.

- Color can be used to convey an important message within the photo.

- Color can draw attention or focus to a particular object or subject within a photo (However, color can also draw attention to an object of less importance, which will distract viewers and take away from the focus and the impact of an image.)

Flashdancers, 2012.

- A play between two complementary colors can have a powerful effect on the dynamics of a scene.

- Patterns and textures can be highlighted.

- Colors can carry cultural significance. When I last shot in Mexico, the colors were such an interesting aspect of the culture that I felt I could not remove them. I left almost all of the photographs in color.

How to Create a Black and White from a Digital Negative

There are many techniques and programs to create black and white prints. If you are shooting digitally, the most important thing to remember when creating black and white images is to first capture the image in color. Having the color information in a RAW file allows you the most flexibility to create a black and white print.

How to create a proper digital black and white print is an issue that books have been written about, and there are countless techniques, so I will just cover the basics. I use a very simple way in Lightroom to create them. For most of my black and white shots, I will transform the file into black and white using the RAW presets in Lightroom (pressing V in the develop module will do this). I primarily alter the exposure, contrast, highlight, shadow, black, and white levels, color temperature (which will change the look of the black and white), vignette, and rarely the individual levels of specific colors. Occasionally I will do a little dodging and burning in Lightroom or Photoshop, but that is rare as well. My black and white photographs rarely need all or many of these tweaked at once, and many of them do not need much more than a slight fix to the exposure or contrast.

It is my opinion that none of the methods or programs are necessarily superior to the others for creating black and whites, as they can all provide you with similar results. However, I do believe that it is imperative to show restraint, no matter which method you use.

Selfie, 2015.

Optimal sharpness is difficult to achieve since the variables while shooting on the street are constantly changing. Lighting conditions can change quickly and are rarely perfect, camera settings are not always set optimally, the ISO is often high, and there is sometimes some slight motion or out-of-focus blur. The grain and ISO levels are different in every photo. This makes it impossible to give one-size-fits-all answers in regards to sharpness in street photography.

As I have gained experience printing over the years, I have become much more conservative with the idea of sharpening. Overdoing sharpening is a common beginner mistake and it will ruin your photos. These days, I rarely do much sharpening at all.

I add capture sharpening to each RAW file. Capture sharpening offsets the inherent softness of digital negatives and you can tweak this in the Lightroom settings in the 'Detail' panel of the 'Develop' module. I use the Lightroom standard settings for this, which work very well. If you use Lightroom already then you may not even know that this is being applied to each of your RAW images. It is a very subtle amount of sharpening.

Beyond this, I will sometimes increase the clarity levels of the photograph, particularly with blurry photographs. This is a good way to add a little punch to your photographs without making them look unnatural, but I use it sparingly. Clarity increases the contrast, mostly in the midtones of the photograph and so it can enhance textures as well. But that is it. When I capture a sharp street photograph, that is enough.

As for grain (which in digital is also referred to as digital noise), I love its look in street photographs. Grain can be one of the most beautiful aspects of street photography. It feels like a layer of grit from the street applied to the top of your photo and further works to convey the sentiment that this was a spontaneous moment that occurred on the streets. It adds a level of imperfection that makes the moment feel real and unplanned.

When shooting at high ISOs, the most important thing that you want to avoid is to excessively brighten your photos in post-production as long as you are planning on printing the

photo. When you have high levels of digital grain in a negative, brightening the exposure too much will enhance this grain in a very unpleasing fashion. The better your camera, usually the more you can brighten an image with a high ISO without it looking bad, and we have much more flexibility with newer cameras than we once had. Color grain can also be a problem at very high ISOs with certain cameras, but with newer cameras, this should not be as much of an issue as it used to be. My favorite trick for removing excessive color noise is just to convert the photo into black and white.

As you can see, the levels of sharpening and grain are unique to every street photo and experience in printing is your only guide here. Print out a photo and evaluate the print. Print a lot. That is the only way to truly learn.

Greenwood, Brooklyn, 2019.

When working with digital photography you should have a system that is color correct. Otherwise, you are pretty much working blind.

You want a monitor that is color calibrated and that is able to show the correct color, brightness levels, and shadows. Let's pretend that your monitor represents colors as less saturated than they actually are and you are unaware of this. As a result, you will end up compensating for this by increasing the saturation of the photo. However, when you display your photos on other screens or monitors, they will appear oversaturated.

Fortunately, this can be avoided by color calibrating your monitor. This is a straightforward process and all you will need is a color calibrator. I use X-Rite's calibrators. The process itself takes approximately 5-10 minutes and it is recommended to calibrate your monitor every few weeks, although every month or two is fine. Also, a good quality monitor is important.

Unless you are sending your photos to a printing service, it is not enough that the colors look correct on the screen. If you are printing digitally yourself then you need to make sure that your prints match how they appear on the screen. Digital printing is a science in its own right. However, printing is quickly becoming a dying art due to the rise of photo-sharing sites and inexpensive printing services. Technologically advanced monitors, screens, and tablets are everywhere and so many people just do not feel the need to print their photos anymore.

I have traditional sentiments when it comes to photography because I do not feel or consider a photograph to be a complete work until it has been printed. Whether you print your work yourself or outsource it, printing is important. When comparing a spectacular print to the same image on a computer monitor, the effect is like night and day. The impact, the message conveyed, and the emotion evoked from viewers when seeing a print is more powerful than when viewing the image on a screen. It is for this reason alone that you should print your best work.

While printing services are fantastic these days, I believe that printing yourself is very important for learning to do post-production well. Something that might look fantastic on the monitor can look terrible when printed. It happens often, especially with grainy or dark street photos. Printing helps to develop your eye.

Eventually, after you have printed your work enough times, you will learn to better understand what a photo will look like before it is printed. After years of printing thousands of test photos, I waste much less ink and paper than when I started. Often the first print comes out perfect.

Many people think that printing is just about pressing File-->Print and being done with it, but there is much more to it. It is not as time-consuming or tedious as darkroom printing, and a benefit is that once you complete a photo then you do not have to do it again, but learning to print well digitally takes a fair share of knowledge and practice.

I use Epson printers and Canson papers, particularly the Baryta Photographique 310g/m, which is a great archival paper. Ilford Galerie Gold Fiber Silk is also a great paper. I prefer Fiber papers over pure matte, glossy, or luster papers. They hit a nice middle ground.

It is best to try out a few papers at first to see what you like best. Then stick to one or two. Using just one paper consistently will make your life a lot easier and you will become more skilled at printing on that paper.

Broadway, SoHo, 2010.

Also, do not forget that you will need to use a printer profile for your paper. Each paper company will have downloadable printer profiles for your specific paper and printer. These work great on their own and will be sufficient for most photographers. If you would like to go even further with this, you can purchase a paper profiler to do this at home, but they cost over $1,000. There are online services that will create the profile for you. They charge about $100 per profile, so if you start with one paper type, then the cost is not too steep.

Wallpaper, East Village, 2012.

On a daily basis, people are continuously bombarded by photographs and imagery, whether they are included in articles, advertisements, emails, or facebook posts - they are everywhere. They are impossible to escape and as a result, people begin to tune them out.

This trend is particularly harmful to the art of street photography. Most people (especially when viewing an image on the web) will glance at an image and move on. Photographs caught on the street may be interesting or intriguing, but they can be interpreted as just another casual moment, something that can be easily repeated, and a scene that could be caught by anyone.

This concerns me. I worry that the subtle art of these moments and their meaning is getting lost in the shuffle. I have found that people respond more positively to photos including bright or tinted colors and beautiful landscapes. I receive more feedback and 'likes' when I post beautiful urban landscape photographs of New York landmarks than when I post my more unique and interesting street photographs.

Should we just sit back and accept this? No chance.

A key to fixing this problem is engaging the public and drawing them into our work by writing about it. It can help to explain to our audience the meaning and sentiment behind our work. This will hold their attention and lead them to take another, longer look at it. We need to show people why we found something interesting and beautiful even though it may often not be what they traditionally view as 'pretty.' We need to involve them in the moment.

The additional information provided in our writing will educate our audiences. They will become more knowledgeable, savvier, will begin to take more time when viewing street photos, and will begin to look for the subtle meaning themselves.

Wallpaper, 2012, was captured in the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan. This area of the City, like many, has experienced rapid redevelopment. Seeing the inherent value, developers are demolishing many smaller structures that contribute to the historic fabric of their neighborhoods in order to maximize their returns by constructing larger and more modern buildings.

This image communicates more than just a building coming down. The wallpaper provides an element of human connection. There is a history here that is being destroyed.

This image is beautiful and fascinating, yet there is such sadness within it.

Some photographers prefer to not provide commentary on their work, to provide some additional mystery and to allow viewers to generate their own views and opinions of a photograph. I believe that even if you explain your thoughts, this does not mean that a photo will lose its mystery. It may get viewers thinking and will prompt theories and/or commentary of their own. Your thoughts can trigger a dialog. Keep in mind that although you are the photographer that caught these candid and spontaneous moments on the street, you often do not know anything more about the scene than your audience.

You do not have to write about every photograph. This is fine if you would like to do this, but it can seem tedious when overdone. Pick and choose your battles. But the most important time to write about your work is when you are showing a project. I think an introduction is a very important way of priming your viewers to receive your work in the right way. I suggest purchasing Robert Frank's *The Americans*, not only because it is arguably the best photo book of its time, but because the introduction by Jack Kerouac is a masterwork of an art book introduction. It is such an enjoyable read.

There is also a personal benefit when writing about our work. Writing is a form of creation in itself and it gets our creative juices flowing. As photographers, we are storytellers. When we write about our work it opens our minds to new ideas and helps us to think more deeply and in different ways about our work. It will help us understand more about our styles and thoughts and will help us to look more critically at our work. Writing will improve your photography.

Grand Central, 2015.

Over the past decade, street photography has exploded on the internet. The web is now the primary medium for street photographers to get noticed and to gain exposure.

It has also never been easier to learn about street photography. There are many educational articles out there as well as YouTube videos from iconic street photographers. The iconic works of almost every famous street photographer are on the internet for everyone to see. There is a vibrant photo book resurgence fueled partially by the increasing avenues for self-publishing. Amazon.com can send used street photography books right to your door with a couple of clicks. It has never been easier to learn. You can get in touch with other street photographers instantly and you can upload your photos to many different outlets to get them critiqued. What is happening is amazing.

However, there is also some danger in this as well. While this spreading of knowledge and sharing of photos is a fantastic thing, it can also negatively influence your photography. What I am most worried about is a homogenizing effect. There are so many different ways to shoot on the street, which is highlighted in *Street Photography Conversations*.

The volume of work currently being shared on the internet continues to increase, but there is still only a small percentage of work out there that is great. What was once done in small photo-sharing groups where everyone knew each other is now out in the open for thousands to see and critique. We have no idea who many of these people are or what their backgrounds are and so we should remind ourselves to not gauge our work based on how many 'likes' we get. It is better to find a small group of people whose work and eye you respect and who are not afraid to tell you the truth. Show your work to these people consistently. This type of feedback is much more important than opinions from the masses, and it grows more valuable as this select group becomes more familiar with your work and your thought process.

While it is easier to see more street photographs than ever, we typically see a photograph a day from a wide range of photographers of all different interests and skill levels. As I

mentioned previously, street photography works incredibly well in project and book form. Seeing a grouping of work by a single photographer, whether it's part of a specific project or just highlights, is the best way to evaluate the individual images. So by seeing all of this disparate work daily, it can keep us thinking more about the individual image, the show-stopper, and hinder us from thinking of our overall work and the messages we are trying to portray.

I recommend acquiring some street photography books. These books typically highlight particular topics or themes, are highly edited, and will show you a side of street photography that you cannot see by only reviewing the top works of street photographers over the internet. These famous works take on new meaning when surrounded by similar photographs. There are many street photos that you do not see on the internet and that may not be as successful on their own, but that work in the context of a book.

Even this book is a random smattering of photos that are meant to enhance the specific concepts being described. These photos are not coherent in the way that an edited street photography book would be.

Embrace street photography on the internet, but be wary of it and its effect on your work.

Toy Soldier, Manhattan Bridge, 2015 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

Greene Street, 2019 (from *100 Greene Street*).

Before we delve into the nuanced issues with photography projects, I want to dispel the notion that you have to create projects as a photographer - that is just not true.

Some photographers think in terms of projects - their thought process gravitates between different ideas and so the work can be naturally categorized. Some photographers even change their shooting style to best fit the subject matter that they are capturing. A few examples of photographers who seem to think in project form are Alec Soth, Bruce Davidson, Trent Parke, and Martin Parr.

For other photographers, this could not be further from the way they shoot. They do not go out in the world thinking about a specific idea, or with the goal of coming back with a specific type of photograph. They just wait and watch for something to happen. Many of these photographers shoot with a consistent style and technique for their entire lives. In these cases, the work will still have consistent ideas and themes, it will just not be as easy to categorize. For these photographers, their 'project' is the entirety of their life's work.

For those of you interested in crafting projects, there are a variety of ways to go about it, to the point where it becomes nearly impossible to tell you the correct path to create one. That is for you to figure out. However, there are many factors to consider as you begin to focus in on your idea.

Some projects are thought up ahead of time. The photographer comes up with an interesting idea and sets out to figure out how to capture this idea. That seems simple enough, but in many cases, this does not end up as such a straightforward path. Often as photographers set out on a path to capture their idea, they find that the idea morphs over time, maybe a small amount, maybe a substantial amount, or maybe the photographer gets lost in a tiny piece or tangent of the original idea, and that ends up becoming the final project. The path from start to end is often not linear.

For me, I prefer to let my projects grow organically. For my first long term project, *Luxury for Lease*, many of the older photographs were taken before I had a fully formed idea.

Over time, I began to notice some themes in my work emerging, showing how the people of New York were becoming more disconnected, how there was an underlying current of anxiety lurking just beneath the surface, and how the physical environment was changing around them to foster these feelings. This began as a collection of seemingly unrelated photographs and it took nearly eight years to have a fully formed project where I could talk about it, write about it, explain it. Many photos came and went, my overall ideas for the project changed substantially over time, but as I got closer to its completion, I started being very aware of moments that would fit in. It was not like I was going out specifically looking for them (except for a few), but I was noticing them in a much more nuanced way.

I started reading books and articles about gentrification, about the changes and current happenings in the city, the politics behind it, about the effects of our digitally connected lives, and many other related topics. It was a fascinating education, which helped to guide the project and some of the photographs that I looked for.

But also, I began to notice how personal the project felt. The feelings and anxieties that flow out through the book often mirrored my own. Growing up in New York, living in a neighborhood that was at the height of gentrification in Manhattan, feeling the days go faster and faster as I tried to survive and navigate in such an intense city, and eventually being priced to Brooklyn with the birth of our son, the book is about a major aspect of what is currently happening in New York, but it is also a reflection of what I was feeling in my life at the time.

For my next project, *100 Greene Street*, the project was nearly 80 percent completed before I realized that I had the workings of an interesting book. One aspect of my business is giving photography and history tours around the city, and the neighborhood of SoHo is where I take a majority of my tours for the first time since it has such a fascinating mix of people, storefronts, history, and architecture. Starting in 2013, I found Greene Street, one of the wealthiest and most fashionable streets in New York with the most incredible old factory cast-iron buildings in the entire world. I began to take all my tours and workshops here, and probably photographed it about 700 times between 2013 and 2019. There are

some similar themes and a few crossover photographs with the *Luxury for Lease* project, but even so, it is a completely different project with a much different feeling. In the middle of 2018, it dawned on me how fun of an idea this would be. 100 images, shown in order down the street, over the last seven years. There were so many interesting moments, fascinating people, strange events, gorgeous views, and weird things that occurred during those 700 trips. And once I realized that I had a project here, the last year has been spent filling in holes and being even more aware of the street. I have captured some of the best photographs in the book because of this realization.

Many of the black and white photographs throughout this book are from these two projects, but you can view them in their entirety here: *Luxury for Lease*, *100 Greene Street*.

Now that these projects have been completed (as of this writing, I am just beginning the arduous path of trying to publish them), and now that I have moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn and had a child, I am working hard to relieve these anxieties. I used to live smack in a bustling area of Manhattan, but now we are in a much quieter area, and while close to the craziness, it feels so far removed. This lead me to the beginnings of a new project, one that is still in its infancy and does not yet have a formulated direction. But instead of going towards the action, I am escaping it, looking for fascinating moments throughout the quieter and more removed areas of Brooklyn. It is a new way of shooting for me and something that I do not yet feel fully comfortable with, and all of this makes it feel exhilarating. Also, I am using a medium format camera and shooting in color (whereas my previous projects were done in black and white). While people are still a part of the project, I am shooting in a style that is more open and obvious, acknowledging their presence in a way that I previously would not have done.

Beginning a project in this way is just one strategy, but it is very exciting, and you give yourself the chance to allow your thoughts and ideas to develop. You let the pictures guide you, and over time you begin to understand more about what you are shooting and where the next great image might come from. For me, it is a very therapeutic way of photographing.

Sample Sale, SoHo, 2014 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

Street photography is like a fine wine; it gets better and more valuable as it ages and as the content of the photo becomes dated.

In twenty or thirty years, when the clothing, cars, technology and culture changes, street photos will become reminders of the past and rise in intrinsic value significantly. This is a thought that should be in the back of your head.

When you walk out the door to photograph, what do you take for granted? What do you dismiss because it has become so normal for you? Some of these ideas can create such fascinating photographs, but we all miss them every day because they do not stand out to us. Add the passage of time to this, and we are missing some of the most important moments to capture. When everything suddenly changes, we will not have these opportunities back.

The major example right now of this is cellphones. So many people now walk around staring at their cellphones. It makes capturing people with strong expressions or looks in their eyes much more difficult than it used to be, and I know photographers who avoid photographs of people on their cellphones as much as possible.

But this is a cultural change that is very fascinating. We are witnessing a cultural shift of people feeling more connected through their technology and the result of this is that everyone is much more disconnected when out in public. This is an important moment to capture. However, because so many people are staring at their cellphones, these images are a dime-a-dozen, so it means that to create a strong image of this, the photo has to go above and beyond. An everyday shot of someone lost in their phone just will not rise to the occasion.

An important exercise is to think of the most boring place that you can think of to photograph. Maybe it is a supermarket parking lot or an empty street corner of a small town. Then try to create the most interesting photograph that you can there. You may find that you will create some wonderfully poignant images.

Sample Sale, SoHo, 2014, shows a common scene these days in SoHo, a group of young people lined up to get into a sample sale or for a limited edition clothing or sneaker release.

Think about this photo in historical terms, and what does it remind you of? For me, this reminds me of the old depression-era photographs of people waiting in breadlines. It shows us one facet of how the character of New York has been changing in recent years, and I believe that in the future this image will take on even more significance as we begin to understand more about the cultural forces going on that have caused this to be a common sight.

Now compare this image to the image on the next page.

Job Search, 2012 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

Flag, Greene Street, 2019 (from *100 Greene Street*).

Street photography reminds me of a sport. The more you play, the more you practice, the more ingrained everything becomes, the better your photographs will turn out. When athletes overthink, that is when they get tight, that is when they get hesitant, and that is when they go through slumps. When they loosen up and let their experience, confidence, and their gut feelings take over, that is when the art begins to shine through in most athletics.

The same is true of street photography. So many of the best moments happen in a flash. There are times where you feel like a good photograph is about to happen even though you are not quite sure, and you just have to react. Let your inhibitions go and just go for it. Most of the time those photos will not turn out, but the few times that they do, these will be some of your best photographs. When you loosen up and let your instincts take over is when the photographs will begin to take on more feeling, and more uniqueness.

When you are in the groove, when you are not worrying about how to use the camera technically, but instead just enjoying the walk and focused on your surroundings, when you feel comfortable and confident, that will all shine through in your work. It will feel real and natural. Viewers will be able to tell the difference.

This being said, there is nothing wrong with a methodical way of shooting. In fact, this can often be the right way to shoot depending on the situation. Crafting an image, choosing a background, a specific light effect, and waiting for people or elements to complete the scene will often create wonderful moments. These images can have a complexity that is very difficult to reproduce with strictly a spontaneous way of shooting. Similarly, thinking about a type of image that you want to create and then going out and making it happen can also work well. The tradeoff is that it is often obvious that these moments were planned or waited for. While possible, it is difficult to make a spontaneous moment look planned and a planned moment look spontaneous.

Shooting methodically, I believe is easier to do at first, while shooting effectively in a spontaneous matter takes time to improve. It is one thing to just shoot quickly, frame

haphazardly, and hope to get lucky. It is entirely another to feel like your eyes are the viewfinder, looking around constantly and waiting until you feel the strong possibility that a moment is going to happen, and then to capture it in the way that feels most natural.

Grand Central, 2010 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

Street photography is a poetic forms of photography, and it can benefit you to think about it in this way. Think about how words are used in poetry - they affect you both above and beneath the surface. In poetry, words have their strict meaning, but at the same time, they are removed from needing to have such a literal interpretation. A flower can still be a flower, while at the same time having another meaning behind it. It could stand for beauty, growth, elegance, abundance, love, you name it. Similarly, while a photograph will have its literal interpretation, and some photographs are easier to discern what is happening than others, it can also serve as a metaphor.

Look at the image at the top of this chapter, which is taken of an eagle statue at Grand Central Terminal from behind. That is the literal interpretation, and it is shot from an angle, made to look like it is swooping past skyscrapers and diving through the streets of New York. On the surface, it's a magical perspective, but beneath the surface, it has a darker feeling. I chose this image as the beginning to the *Luxury for Lease* project. The goal of this photograph is to give the feeling that the book is going to take a deep dive into some issues that are plaguing the city. It is telling the viewer that they are going to be taken on a ride, not necessarily a happy ride, and that they're going to be privy to feelings and ideas happening just beneath the beautiful surface of the city.

Poetry has an elegance and a beauty to the way words are written, but it is ultimately the feeling and ideas that are brought out in the process that gives poetry its power. The goal is to make the reader feel a certain way, to take the reader down a path, and to connect the reader to the words.

When crafting a poem, a poet will often set out to trigger the senses of the reader, including sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and movement. As a photographer, these are senses that you can aim to trigger as well. Metaphors can be used in photography in the same way that they can be used to poetry. A simple object can stand for a much broader idea.

This is another image in the *Luxury for Lease* project, taken of a bubble floating high on a Broadway shopping street in SoHo from a street hawker of bubble blowing toys. This image is a metaphor for the bubble that is New York. People do not typically think of New York in this way, but when you live here, despite the fact that you are surrounded by people of all types and from the spectrum of cultures, lifestyles, and economic standing, New York is still an insular bubble. We may be open to all types of people and ideas, but we have a way of life here that we love and deep down we believe that every other way of life is crazy. It is hard to explain it, but growing up here, I feel like I would have a hard time thriving anywhere else. We live in just as much of a bubble as someone in a remote

corner of the world.

Now this is an image that I would like people to spell out on their own, but even giving you my direct interpretation, and why I included it, that is just half of the image. There is so much further to take it. What does living in this bubble mean for New Yorkers, how does it make them feel, how does this idea relate to the other photographs that you see in the book? This is the poetry in photography. A simple photograph of a bubble can mean so much more.

Poems do not aim to spell out the entire story for you, and this is the most important point in my opinion. When you are creating a photograph, project, or body of work with these qualities, the ideas and issues are too complex to spell out the entire story for a viewer. This is not a research paper where you are coming to a specific conclusion. Your goal is to set out the ideas and feelings, includes hints and nudges towards your views and perspective, and then give them room to figure out how they feel. There is a relationship that you, as the photographer, will have to the images, and then there is a completely different relationship that the viewer will have. There will be overlap of course, and you want that, but you also want them to have their own, independent thoughts and interpretations. The strongest photographs and bodies of work will do that.

Here is a poem I wrote for the end of the *Luxury for Lease* project.

A Dream Undefined

Nice threads, shoe lines, spoon fed
Feelings for five
Sly looks and tinted stares
Comparing, contrasting, craving
Dim light and huge bass
Numb conversation
Celebrating dreams undefined

Scratching neck hair pulled primed primped
Pursed arms and pinched backs
Beating chests
Howling, yelping of a dream undefined
Beats interrupting head to phone hiding, insulated from the street beat
The convenience man's ballet
Stoops chained
Anxiety dopamine auto unchecked immune systems, running wild
Staring at endless glass reflecting glass reflecting glass
Thin white coat white walls
*Luxury for lease*
A shivering exhale into cold sheets

Bathroom Wall, 2015 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

Whether in a book, project, or on a wall, there is power in how you place your photographs, and particularly with a pair of photographs. Photographs can bring out new or deeper meaning when placed next to each other. They can complement or oppose each other or have something as simple in common as a color or form. The opportunities for connecting photographs are too endless to try to classify.

Sequencing a project is an art form. Some projects are easier to sequence and others are much tougher. Some projects, particularly the ones with more of a documentary aim, will have obvious connections between photographs that will help to further the understanding of the work. Other projects that are based more on common feeling or observations can allow you to sequence and pair photographs in endless ways.

Some photographs might not be strong enough alone to make your project, but then when paired with another image, the pairing becomes too important to leave out. A photograph can become necessary just for its pairing and its ability to bring something out of the other photograph that was not there before. Here are a few pairings in *Luxury for Lease*.
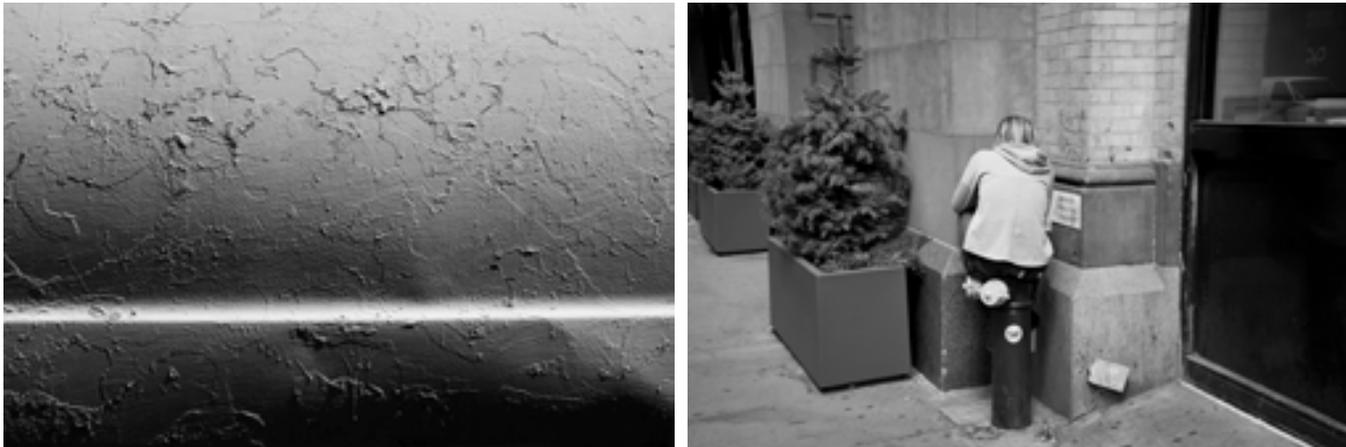
The right image shows a woman who wants to be disconnected from her surroundings, lost in her phone or something else. It shows feelings of anxiety, loneliness, lack of con-

nection, safety, and escaping reality. The left photograph shows the white, peeling paint of an old van in the East Village, an image which I do not think would have made the project on its own. In the pairing, the left photo brings the viewer in and aims to make them feel like the woman in the following image - it shows the viewer that maybe they are going through these feelings to some extent as well since this is an overarching cultural issue. The texture of the peeling paint acts a bit like a Rorschach test, allowing viewers to explore the details of the image and make out what they want to make out in the shapes and lines. And it also shows the beauty and complexity of a gritty city, one that is not always sleek and shiny, one that allows and celebrates imperfection. This is an opposing force to all the photographs shown in the book of the new, sleek, glass architecture. All of this comes out in a simple photograph of the side of an old van.

On the left, you have an image of the new Hudson Yards development, a neighborhood of expensive glass skyscrapers that sprouted simultaneously over an old train depot on the west side of Manhattan - an enclave for the richest of the rich. This photograph is starkly different from the photograph of the gritty white paint of the van that I mentioned in the previous pairing, but they both have a similar effect on the viewer. However, in this one the eyes have nothing to grab on to like in the van photograph. On the surface, the photograph looks gorgeous and fascinating, but as our eyes look for something of interest, we find nothing. It is an empty image. The architecture of a city has a powerful effect on

the psyche of its inhabitants, and you can see here the ways in which this is lacking. The paired photograph on the right shows the exterior wall of the Harry Winston jewelry store on one of the premiere 5th Avenue shopping streets. The listings of these premiere world cities alludes to the sameness that is occurring between these locations. Mixed with the previous photograph, this is a painful pairing that alludes to the direction that New York is heading in.

In this pairing, you have a young woman in a Britney Spears t-shirt taking a selfie with the graffiti-covered side of the photographer Jay Maisel's old building. On the right, you have an older gentleman sweeping a trampled and beat up triangle of dirt in the middle of a busy Manhattan street. There is the obvious comparison here of the angled sticks, the selfie stick and the broom, one pointed up and one pointed down. Similarly, the woman is facing upward while the main is looking downward. Here we see the difference of someone who is consuming the city, or the external image of the city, with someone who is looking inward and fighting to preserve a small, peaceful space within the chaos. This is the new city versus old, the surface city versus the beauty that lies beneath the surface. There is an opposition between both moments and a sadness that permeates them both for competing reasons.

Here you have some strong similarities. The left photograph is of a panhandler asking a couple for money. The look on the woman's face here is the entire photograph - you can classify this look as one of anger, confusion, uncomfortableness, or a lack of understanding. It seems as if this is not a situation that this woman is used to. On the right, you have a split-second moment after a collision, as the man lashes out at the woman, who cowers uncomfortably. This shows tension, a deep-seated anger, and a fear that seems to go beyond this isolated moment. It is the type of conflict in each photograph that is brought out by the placement. These are not just one-off situations.

For this pairing, you have a photograph of a head shop selling marijuana and vaping re-lated paraphernalia next to an image of a person vaping in a way so that just their face is covered in smoke. On the left, you see a type of store that has been spreading through the city in the last decade. These businesses sell products that relieve our anxieties, if only temporarily. With the rising anxiety and loneliness in the city, there is a reason these businesses are spreading. The guns in the middle portray a feeling of anger. On the right, you get the idea of someone's soul hiding from reality with a fence behind them that feels jail-like. This is a pairing of anxiety, loneliness, and self-medication.

Finally, you have a photograph of a bathroom wallpapered wall with floral vines and little messages written from visitors from all over the world. Next to it, you have a photograph of crisscrossing people through the busy intersection of Canal Street and Broadway. Each person has their unique look - there is significant diversity in this picture, yet everyone has the same expression, which I would describe as a look of pure business. Everybody has their own space to navigate through yet no one gives notice to any other. It is a lonely photograph despite every space filled with a person. The comparison that I am trying to make between these photographs is one about connection. On the wallpaper, you can feel the inherent need for people to connect, even if it is in witty comments with others they will never see or meet. It is the reason why many move to New York. They are look-ing to connect with people, or a place, in a way that they have not been able to do. But

on the right, you see a different story. There is so much potential here for connection, you can also feel everyone's need for connection here, but yet there is none. It is a shot of a busy moment in a lonely city.

Greenwood, Brooklyn, 2019.

I chose to locate this chapter in the advanced section because it is not a practice that comes to mind when most people begin to study street photography. It is the city that is typically connected with street photography. There is a majority of photographers I teach who only photograph in cities, when they travel, in fairs, or in any situation where a lot of people are congregating. Most of the photographers who I teach from the suburbs or less populated areas never go out to photograph suburban life, and that is a shame. I always try to convince them to pursue this.

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard someone say they have trouble practicing street photography because they do not live in New York. And that is understandable. It is easier here to shoot street photography, it just is. There are more people, variety, action. It is easier to blend in. But because so many people photograph in locations like New York, this turns the difficulty from just capturing good photos to capturing photos that are better than what millions of others are capturing. This being said, it is tough to deny the wealth of opportunities for special moments to occur around every corner in an environment like this.

The grass is always greener, and after living in the middle of the chaos for most of my life, I deeply envy the photographers who have a chance to contemplate and capture suburban or rural areas daily. As I have moved further out to Brooklyn, my focus is shifting in this direction, and while not exactly suburban, there are many areas that come close to it that I am seeking out. It has been and continues to be a significant learning process.

To photograph in suburban areas, a primary difficulty lies in becoming comfortable. A widely celebrated quality of New York is that it is anonymous, that you can blend in even with a camera. This is the same for many large cities (but certainly not all). In suburban areas, people can be much more suspect, and it can be impossible to blend in. Also, a lot of the people that you might want to photograph you will at least be acquainted with. Even though this is tougher, do not let it stop you. The key to overcoming these obstacles is just to walk out the door over and over and shoot in these environments, to face these difficulties head-on. No matter how difficult the situation feels, with enough time spent

shooting, you will learn how to conquer the environment.

Of course, you should go to local events, fairs, and places where people congregate to capture photographs, but you do not want that to become a crutch. That is only one aspect of the area. If you live in a quiet area without a lot of people on every corner, you should photograph these quiet areas. Create quiet photographs. Give us understanding behind the areas and your surroundings. Photograph houses, backgrounds, empty corners, any strangeness, sameness, or uniqueness that you come across. Do whatever you can to try to describe the psyche of the area. You can do this without photographing people. In fact, you can avoid people entirely and still continue to practice street photography in these areas.

With fewer people around, it becomes more important to capture the people you know, in candid settings. Similarly, taking portraits of strangers might be necessary to tell the story that you would like to tell. If you look at some of the photographers who do this type of work, it is clear that many of the photographs of people are in situations where they ingratiated themselves to the person or with friends and family while they are spending time with them. Interiors also become very important. In places where people spend most of their time at home, in businesses, or on the road, that is where you can capture some of the most nuanced moments. An empty living room can be just as interesting as one of the busiest corners in New York.

To gain some inspiration and learn about what is possible with this type of work, I suggest studying the work of William Eggleston, Alec Soth, Lee Friedlander, Stephen Shore, Todd Hido, Blake Andrews, and Josef Koudelka.

Cellphones, SoHo, 2018 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

have less of a problem with clichés as some other photographers do. A cliché is basically a photograph that has been overdone. As a photographer, you should copy the best aspects of other photographers, but your goal is to try to create something original to you or to improve on something that has already been done.

But who cares if something has been done before? A good photo is a good photo and it is something you should be proud of. Particularly when you are starting out and experimenting, you are going to take a lot of photographs that could be classified as a cliché, and you should! You are learning. Even after gaining experience, you will still take many cliché photographs. It is impossible not to take them, but you learn to edit yourself more over time. After taking your hundredth photo of a kissing couple, noticing a kissing couple will lose its luster somewhat unless it is an incredible moment. Similarly, after you capture a great photo, you will often find yourself seeing similar images that do not quite stack up to that great moment that you caught, and you will decide not to take the photo. You will take less and less cliché photographs over time if only because of that reason, let alone others.

But the key to working with cliché moments is to make the photograph incredibly good. Nobody will care if a photo is a cliché as long as it is a showstopper. If it is of a kissing couple, make it a phenomenal photograph of a kissing couple. The standard of excellence is much higher with subject matter that is constantly captured. Take a look at the photo at the top of this chapter. Some would argue that photos of people on their phones are now cliché because of how ubiquitous they are. I still think that this subject is very important to photograph, but this type of photo will not work these days unless it is exceptional.

All this being said, you want your work to be original. It is impossible to tell you the exact route to do this. Usually, it is through a lot of time shooting and training your eyes by studying other photographers, but originality will come over time. As you study photographers, as you shoot your own work, you will start to take the best aspects of those photographers and incorporate them into what you capture, and as you improve you will begin to add a fresh eye to it. This is how to grow out of the phase of shooting a constant stream of cliché work, although you will never completely avoid it.

Bodega, East Village, 2014 (from *Luxury for Lease*).

I would argue that the book is the perfect avenue for presenting street photography. While some street photographs look great on a wall others do not. I think of the wonderful Robert Frank photograph from *The Americans*, where a man is having his shoes shined in a bathroom next to a wall of urinals - perfect for a photography book, but you probably do not want this on your living room wall.

The book allows you to build a narrative, to grow themes and ideas, to notice details, to prime a viewer to explore more nuanced moments that they might otherwise overlook. As was written about in the projects and sequencing chapters in this section, the opportunities are endless for sharing your photographs in book form. But it also creates this tangible piece of art in motion, so to speak. You can hold the book and feel the photographers presence, and you can see them trying to speak to you as you go through photo after photo. You can see pits, valleys, and mountains.

The act of quietly sitting with a gorgeous book, away from any technology or distraction, is a contemplative moment, just as is the act of creating a book. It is a completely different and much more nuanced experience from viewing a photographer's work on the web or on Instagram. Typically in those formats, you see the photographer's best or most sellable work, their greatest hits so-to-speak. In a book, you get to see their work in a more complete form, including a whole range of photographs that you would not get the opportunity to see on the web. And you get to hold the photos in your hand on gorgeous paper. There is no comparison.

Since you are clearly interested in the art of street photography by reading this book, I urge you to start a photography book collection. Many of the masterworks, such as Robert Frank's *The Americans* are very affordable. At the end of this book is a list of photography books that I suggest considering to start or expand your collection. It will be the best education in street photography that you can possibly give yourself, and it is the next step to take after this book.

Greene Street, SoHo, 2019 (from *100 Greene Street*).

Exercises

The following exercises are meant to help you progress and become a better street photographer. They are split into four sections of development, and if you are a beginner, it is worth completing the sections in order. Take your time as you progress through them.

1. Overcoming your fears:

     This section is meant to help you become more comfortable photographing strangers on the street. If you are not comfortable enough, then will you never be able to become a successful street photographer. Forget the settings, forget the concepts, and just focus for a couple of days on capturing people and becoming more comfortable on the streets.

     A. Photograph in a crowd, fair, or festival (alternate standing in the same spot and walking around and shooting);

     B. Stop 8 strangers on the street and create street portraits of them;

     C. Capture a candid shot of a friendly-looking or stylish person, approach them, and tell them you are a street photographer, and show them the photo and offer to email it to them.

2. Technical:

     Before we can think about the conceptual issues, it can help to focus specifically on your camera settings, different focal lengths, focusing techniques, and similar technical issues. You should bring yourself up to a general level of proficiency with your camera on the street before you begin to think more about the conceptual.

A. Shoot for a session with a 35mm view, a session with a 50mm view, and a session with a more telephoto view (if you have a zoom lens, then tape it to the particular focal length);

B. Take a photograph that is all about light and shadow;

C. Take a photograph that is all about emotion or gesture;

D. Take a photograph that combines light and shadow with emotion and gesture (hint - find a location and wait there);

E. Find an interesting background and wait for a corresponding person to complete the scene;

F. Capture a photograph where the eyes are the most important element;

G. Capture a candid, wide-angle shot of a person within 10 feet of you using zone-focusing, where the person comes out tack sharp;

H. Capture a shot with motion blur;

I. Photograph at night without a flash;

3. Conceptual:

Here you should bring all your skills together and focus on creating images that tell stories and portray emotions. Content is king.

A. Describe your neighborhood in 12 shots;

B. Go to the most boring area that you can think of and take a powerful photo-graph;

C. Take a photograph that you think will be historically significant in 10 years;

D. Take a conceptual shot that has personal meaning to you;

E. Think of an idea for a project based on something that you know a lot about or would like to learn more about;

F. Photograph the same area on at least 3 different occasions.

G. Find three photography books or projects by other photographers that resonate strongly with you.

4. Editing:

Here is where you bring everything together. Go through your work and see how well you were able to capture sharpness, correct exposure, and framing. Experiment with the editing tools and do not be afraid to get creative with them. But remember that it is the content that is most important. Think about the content within your photos and the overarching themes within your work.

A. Take a color digital negative and give it a dark, cold feel;

B. Take a color digital negative and give it a warm, vibrant feel;

C. Create a stunning black and white;

D. Create a set of 10 photographs that relate to a common theme or idea;

E. Print this set of 10 street photographs at a size of at least 8x10 (use a printing service if you need to);

F. Give away five 5x7, 6x9, or 8x10 prints to friends.

G. Print a couple of your photos at 12x18 or larger.

Websites and Resources

If you would like to view more of my work or the work of any of the photographers interviewed in the accompanying book, *Street Photography Conversations*, please use the links below:

James Maher: http://www.jamesmaherphotography.com
Matt Weber: http://www.weber-street-photography.com
Blake Andrews: http://blakeandrews.blogspot.com
　　　　　　　　http://www.blakeandrewsphoto.com
Richard Bram: http://richardbram.com
Mike Peters: http://www.mikepeters.com
Jay Maisel: http://www.jaymaisel.com
Dave Beckerman: http://www.beckermanphoto.com

Street Photographer Research

Here are some street photographers to start with in your research. There are so many more photographers than this to focus on, but this is a great list to start with.

Garry Winogrand
Robert Frank
Martin Parr
Bruce Davidson
Henri Cartier-Bresson
Josef Koudelka
Helen Levitt
William Eggleston
Trent Parke
Alex Webb
Vivian Maier
Lee Friedlander
Joel Meyerowitz

Daido Moriyama

Street Photography Books

The Americans by Robert Frank
The Decisive Moment by Henri Cartier-Bresson
William Eggleston's Guide
Garry Winogrand Met Exhibition Catalogue
Subway by Bruce Davidson
Friedlander (MoMA)
The Last Resort by Martin Parr
The Suffering of Light by Alex Webb
Uncommon Places by Stephen Shore
Exiles by Josef Koudelka
55 by Joel Meyerowitz
America by Zoe Strauss
Magnum Contact Sheets
Minutes to Midnight by Trent Parke
Slide Show by Helen Levitt
Vivian Maier
A Day Off by Tony Ray Jones
Gathered Leaves by Alec Soth
Early Color by Saul Leiter
Life is Good & Good for You in New York by William Klein
Grim Street by Mark Cohen
The Urban Prisoner by Matt Weber
American Photographs by Walker Evans
Personal Best by Elliott Erwitt
The World Through My Eyes by Daido Moriyama

Educational Books

Bystander: A History of Street Photography
Street Photography Now
The Essentials of Street Photography & Street Photography Conversations
Street Photography and the Poetic Image

The Street Photographer's Manual
The World Atlas of Street Photography
Street Photography: The Art of Capturing the Candid Moment

Street Photography Resources

Magnum is THE international photography cooperative, originally co-founded by Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1947. The roster of photographers cover a variety of genres but includes a variety of street and documentary photographers. The website has a variety of resources and a wealth of photographs and photographic stories to explore.

iN-PUBLIC (now UP Photographers) is the original street photography collective set up in 2000 to help promote street photography worldwide. The website holds a variety of educational content and interviews, and the roster of photographers is impressive and worth exploring.

AmericanSuburbX is an online photography and art website with a huge number of artist profiles, essays, interviews, galleries, and reviews.

Miami Street Photography Festival is a well-known festival that always has a fantastic roster of speakers. The festival consists of exhibits, workshops, and portfolio reviews. Also new is the Street London symposium.

Hit The Streets – if you're a podcast listener, this is the street photography podcast to check out.

Art Photo Feature is an online street photography magazine and community run by Rohit and Vineet Vohra.

LensCulture is a website and online magazine dedicated to sharing contemporary photography of which street photography is a significant focus. The website shares interviews, essays, educational articles, photographer portfolios, and sponsors photography awards several times per year.

Street Photography Documentaries

Everybody Street
Finding Vivian Maier
Leaving Home, Coming Home: A Portrait of Robert Frank

If you enjoy this book and would like to receive more street photography and informational articles and tips, you may be interested in receiving the NY Photo Digest.

By signing up, you will receive the *New York Photographer's Travel Guide* free.

https://www.jamesmaherphotography.com/ny-photographers-guide