

Building Confidence to Shoot Street Images **by Monique Campbell**

Definition of Street Photography: a genre of photography that features subjects in candid situations within public places and does not necessitate the presence of a street or even the urban environment. Street simply refers to a place where human activity can be seen a place to observe and capture social interaction. The subject can even be absent of any people and can be that of an object or environment where an object projects a human character or an environment is decidedly human. Framing and timing are key aspects of the craft, with the aim of creating images at a decisive or poignant moment. Alternatively, the street photographer may seek a more prosaic depiction of the scene as a form of social documentary. Quoted from Wikipedia

Definition of Street Portraiture: Some street photographers like to interact with strangers and make portraits in the moment. They can be minimally or heavily directed. It requires patience, hard work and sometimes bravery to approach and photograph a stranger but it can be so rewarding. Check out Sal Patalano's street portraits @patalanosal for examples of his series of meeting people on the street and photographing them in black and white.

I'm scared of taking people photos: begin by going to an event or shooting subjects that have a human element but without the person in the image. Photograph people in silhouette, shadows, self portraits, from behind, or a part of them like their hands. Build up your confidence until you can stand on a street corner and photograph people around you at point blank it that's your interest.

The 3 P's: Practice, Perseverance, and Passion. Practice using your gear, gaining instinct and storytelling. Persevere especially when you're hitting the same streets all the time as you can become caught in a rut of seeing the same people and places. If you're not passionate about this style of photography then try something else....you gotta love it with all your heart and soul!

Themes: Try these easier to photograph themes including: people on their cell phones, shadows, silhouettes, perspective, people sleeping, self portraits, people walking, people with architecture, people with graffiti or signage, reflections, and images without people but that have a human element.

Storytelling: Look for moments that tell a story. A connection between people or simply

between the subject and the viewer. Capture a moment when a person is engaged with what they are doing or say a look between people. Try looking for and photographing two people kissing on the street. Take your images to the next level and have more depth to them.

Build your instinct: Study other photographers by reading books and seeing images on social media, getting out onto the streets on a regular basis and pushing your own limits you will make better images and develop your own style.

Masters of Street Photography: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Andre Kertesz, Robert Doisneau, Saul Leiter, Vivian Maier, Fred Herzog (CDN), Helen Levitt, Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander, Jill Freedman, Dorothea Lange, Diane Arbus, Walker Evans, Eugene Atget, Elliott Erwitt, Brassai, Robert Frank, Fan Ho. Check out Magnum photographers too many to list.

Contemporary Street Photographers on Instagram: JT White @jtinseoul (CDN), Linda Wisdom @lindawisdomphotography (London), Suzanne Stein @suznne_stein (American), Colin Templeton @colintempleton (Scotland), Daido Moriyama, @daidomoriayamphotography Japan

Canadian Street Photographers on Instagram: Monique Campbell @Moments_by_Monique, Daniel Dunlop @the_stash, James Ip @james_ip_photograph, Colin Corneau @winnipegdiary

Check out street photography hubs that showcase photographers and their work... Hubs like @womenstreetphotographers on Instagram, Toronto Photographers Collective on Facebook, Steeltown Streets on both, @IG_Streetclub

Equipment: “Any camera you have in your hands.” From compact cameras to full frame dslr cameras are used. Obviously the smaller the gear the less obtrusive the photographer is but street photography can be done with a big camera, it just takes more attention. Typically it is easier to use one body and one lens. While traveling I use a zoom lens that is set at the widest angle but can be zoomed in for closer images.

Colour or Black and White? Depends on the subject, as the grandfather of Photojournalism, Ted Grant said: “When you photograph people in color, you photograph their clothes. But when you photograph people in Black and White, you photograph their

souls!"

Settings: It really depends on the photographer whether they use manual, aperture priority or shutter priority. The easiest to start out with is aperture priority and adjusting your iso to give a higher shutter speed. It is important if you want to freeze the frame by using a high shutter speed. Try setting your aperture at f8 or f11 and getting a shutter speed of 500 or higher by adjusting the ISO. Play around and see what works best for your style. Know your camera so you can forget it and focus on the image you want to capture.

High ISO is your friend: using a high iso increases your ability to capture a moment. If you can see it you can shoot it. Don't be fooled by needing a lower iso because you'll lessen your chances of freezing the action. Remember "grain is your friend."

Know your gear: Understand how your camera works. Know what your lens is seeing without looking through it. Practice different techniques of holding your camera.

Focus: There are three types of focusing. 1] Auto focus directed by your camera...usually set to the centre weighted point{s}. 2] Setting your lens to infinity and working within that range at high aperture. 3] Pre-focus on a spot and wait for your subject to enter the frame.

Approach: There are two ways of approaching photographers can shoot a single frame at a time or set their camera to take multiple frames with a touch of a button. Just remember that the "spray and pray" method results in numerous photos that will clog your hard drive if you don't cull them. You may also want to make insurance photographs or what I call "safe shots" in case you don't get a second chance.

Photographing People Experiencing Homelessness: Be respectful if you choose to photograph People Experiencing Homelessness. Two approaches include portraying them with anonymity or showing their identity and giving them a voice. Check out @galefilterphotography Gale calls his work; "good trouble" imagery, inspired by civil rights leader John Lewis, providing the means to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Also Documentary and Street Photographer: @suzanne_stein who works in New York City and Los Angeles. Her website is: www.suzannesteinphoto.com

Here in Canada, Barrie photographer Leah den Bok @ldenbok photographs the faces of people experiencing homelessness while her Father interviews her subjects talking about their experiences on the streets.

Finally, @suitcase-joe who does skid row street photography in downtown Los Angeles, California. His website is suitcasejoe.bigcartel.com/

Where to photograph from: In addition to using your viewfinder you can also "shoot from the hip" literally carrying your camera at hip level and pressing the shutter. This takes some practice but can be done. The results are sometimes surprisingly great and candid. Another

tip is to set up a shot and look away so your subject doesn't think you're photographing them. Finally, use your live view screen on the back of your camera if you have one. Compose the shot and shoot away!

Angle: Sometimes shooting from the hip results in a “Dutch Angle” where the horizon line is not even. This may add to your composition or you may like to straighten the photo in post production.

Perspective: Photograph from different angles...get higher up or shoot low. Sometimes when photographing people in a street portrait try getting lower to the ground and shooting up as it clears the background. Something to try.

To Flash or Not to Flash: Most street images are made without using a flash but Masters like WeeGee and contemporary photographers like Bruce Gilden have become known for their use of flash. Definitely an acquired skill and taste.

Chase the light: Look at the light, see how it changes. In the beginning, try setting your camera to auto ISO to adjust for changing lighting situations especially if you're moving from areas that are well lit to others that are in deep shadow.

What to include in the frame: Sometimes less is more. Try getting as close as possible. Subtract elements from the frame to make a cleaner, composed shot.

Look for the emotion: Produce stronger images when you capture emotions. Sometimes it is evident right away but other times you have to wait for the moment. Try to get eye contact and most importantly is to focus on those eyes.

Post Production: There are two types of street photographers...some that do no editing at all. They are purists that believe what you see is what you get. Then there are others that straighten a “dutch tilt”, enhance an exposure or crop. Typically there is no retouching of skin or swapping out of faces etc. My photojournalism background has influenced my post production that I don't change the authenticity of an image and usually only crop and adjust exposure. It really is your personal taste and style.

Print Your Work: You'll become a better photographer if you print and analyze your images. Even if it is 4x6 prints from an online printer. When you're happy with an image print it big. You will be inspired to do more street images, guaranteed.

Learn the rules: Then break them. Break out of your familiar every now and then. Try a different angle. Shoot at night if you typically shoot by day. Limit yourself to one lens.

Use Common Sense: Don't put yourself in danger. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Be prepared to walk away from a shot, there is no such thing as a dead hero in street photography...those that risk are usually forgotten in the end.

Read and Look at Photographs: Study the masters and contemporary photographers. Read magazines that you normally wouldn't pick up for a different perspective. Study photographs and ask yourself why is it popular, what makes me want to keep looking at it.

Develop your style: look at all kinds of photographs. Study them on social media like Instagram. Don't worry about finding your own style instead develop it over time. Try different styles that you see others are doing and make it your own. The number of likes may be an indication but really "you're only as good as your last shot." Remember that someone with a lot of followers may have bought them to inflate their numbers. Doesn't make them a great photographer necessarily. Question yourself, try taking a risk. Do something out of the ordinary.

Don't start with a blank canvas: Start a series. I have multiple ones including; On Reading, On Hands, On Smoking, On Abandoned Fans don't limit your focus. Start with these and look at everything around you. It's amazing what you'll find in front of you.

Give Yourself an Assignment: Decide ahead of time that you're going to practice one thing...be it shoot with one lens, people close up, street portraits, using a slower shutter speed, people walking towards you. This approach gives you a focus but definitely photograph what is in front of you as well.

Travel: Get out and travel to other areas of your city. Walk around the suburbs. If you can travel go to other cities big and small alike! Places like Havana, Cuba and Paris, France are great street photography destinations! Just be sure to check the local laws surrounding street photography and privacy regulations. Traveling and Street Photography go hand in hand.

A Smile and a Sense of Humour go along way! If spotted, explain what you're doing with a smile and hand the person your business card. Share with them your project. Don't risk confrontation it really isn't worth the shot.

Share your work: Use social media platforms. Exhibit: try your local library first.

Please follow me on social media and I'll follow back...On Instagram my feeds are @moments_by_monique and @onhands.by.monique On Facebook: MomentsbyMonique_street photography