

Enjoying Street Photography - Discussion/Techniques/Tips

by Arik Gorban

5 key considerations for creative photography:

1. *The Thing*

- The subject is only the start. The photographer has to make the image unique and different from the way others will make it.
- Make sure you capture and reflect your own experience, point of view, and impression.
- Consider personal feelings such as conflict, contrast, humor, beauty, etc.

2. *The Detail*

- Pay attention to fine detail that is not very obvious to the untrained eye.
- Look for special texture, colors, patterns, lines, curves.
- Also think of visual elements that the eye cannot see such as motion blur, selective focus, B&W, reflections.

3. *The Vantage Point*

- Choose unique vantage points that are not from the standard eye level.
- Show the subject from unusual angles and perspectives.
- Capture it in ways that others don't see (above, below, very close).
- Animal, birds, and people should be captured from their eye level for a natural look, but you may want to make a unique statement.

4. *The Time*

- Many subjects are not interesting unless captured at the right moment.
- Consider:
 - Light- quality, color, angle
 - Motion
 - Action
 - Composition of moving elements in the picture
 - Inclusion/exclusion of elements
 - Weather conditions- fog, clouds, sun, etc.

5. *The Frame*

- Composition affects dynamics, impact, and mood.
- Think about what to include in or leave out.
- Think about the best orientation (vertical, horizontal, diagonal).

- Keep the borders clean.
- Consider the placement of the horizon. High in the frame- gives feeling of depth and distance; low- feeling of space and volume.
- Use leading lines, diagonals, triangles, curves.
- Bright areas get the attention.
- Remember the Rule of Thirds; avoid the center.

Tips

Check the local paper or online for street events. Street fairs, parades, and events offer great photo opportunities.

Don't forget other public locations such as bus/train stations, markets, flea markets, zoos, and parks.

Less is More - don't take too much equipment and travel light. It'll make you less obtrusive and you will be able to move around for the best shot quickly.

Don't limit yourself to the touristy spots and subjects. Go to side streets to capture the real life scenes.

Anticipate action and interaction between people and be ready to capture the moment.

Always shoot in color. You may consider black and white in post work.

Watch the background. What's going on behind your subject can make or kill the shot. Buildings, people, billboards, signs, graffiti, and other visual elements can make a statement in a shot, but a busy background that distracts from the subject will ruin it.

Experiment with camera angles. Don't limit yourself to horizontal and vertical compositions.

Make it your own. Surprise the viewer. Consider unique perspective, composition, timing, and subject matter to make it your own image.

Practice by going back to the same locations. Your ability to see creatively will improve, not just your technical skills.

Always be ready. Things happen, so don't miss them. When I'm not shooting a specific subject, I set the ISO to 200 and aperture to F8.

Stay in one spot for a period of time and wait for the right moment, action, and subject.

Street scenes are busy. Be clear on whether your picture is of a single subject or the chaotic street scene. Frame accordingly. Make sure that there's a clear subject in your picture.

Don't forget Depth of Field (DOF). This is your best tool when you need to separate the subject from a distracting background.

Street scenes in rain, snow, or fog are very interesting. Wet sidewalks and pavements and small puddles often have beautiful reflections. Protect yourself and your gear but don't be afraid to go out and shoot.

Don't stop at sunset. City streets at night offer great photo opportunities.

Your safety must come first. Be smart about it.

My way of photographing strangers

I introduce myself and give my card

I explain what I'm doing and why

I tell them what I intend to do with the picture. Maybe show a project checklist

I explain why I want their picture. If I can't explain it, then I shouldn't be taking the picture. It has to be a positive reason

I spend time talking to them and give complements as I shoot

I offer to send the pictures to them. I ask them to send me an email. I don't ask for theirs

I respect my subject's wishes and don't push my luck

I prefer to walk the streets with a companion. Strangers are more comfortable with your intentions when you are not alone

Dealing with harsh light

Expose for your main subject. Let the background go bright or dark.

Get close to avoid mixed light and distracting backgrounds or get far to make the details less important

Pick subjects that are in the light or shade, not mixed

If portrait, have the sun behind the subject and have the head tilted down a little