

# Street Photography

Creative Vision Behind the Lens

*Valérie Jardin*

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## CHAPTER 1

# What Is Street Photography?

The photographer will walk the streets mile after mile, day after day, chasing the light, looking for stories. Most frames will be uninteresting. The light is perfect at times, but the subject lacks interest. Other times, the story is there, but the gesture was missed by a fraction of a second. And then there are those rare moments when preparation and serendipity meet. There is nothing special about the light, but the moment moves you because it speaks to your heart. You just captured humanity in its pure form, and you are reminded that this is the reason why you picked up a camera in the first place.

What is the definition of 'street photography'? Sometimes referred to as 'candid' or 'social documentary photography', this genre usually includes people, or the idea of people, generally in a public place. It is important to add that the photograph doesn't have to be captured on the street. For example, the human element can be on the beach or inside a building. The notion of 'people' is more important than the notion of 'street'. Street photography doesn't require a street or even a city, but it requires people, or at least the idea of people. If the human element is not present in the frame, then there should still be an idea of humanity that shows through. The subject can be a still life photograph of a discarded shoe on the sidewalk, for example. It is often debated whether the street portrait, when the subject is aware that he or she is being photographed, is part of street photography. The purpose of this book is not to add to the controversy. Personally, I don't pay attention to those discussions. Street photography is simply recording life. It doesn't need a definition.

The first part of this book is aimed at giving you an introduction to the many different ways of approaching street photography. If you've been dabbling in it for a while and are ready to step up your game, then you will benefit from the sections on the many different elements that will make a stronger photograph.

The second, and more personal part, is a large series of street photographs from my own collection captured around the world. Each one is accompanied by a few words about the creative process and my personal experience, from seeing to capturing the story in a frame.

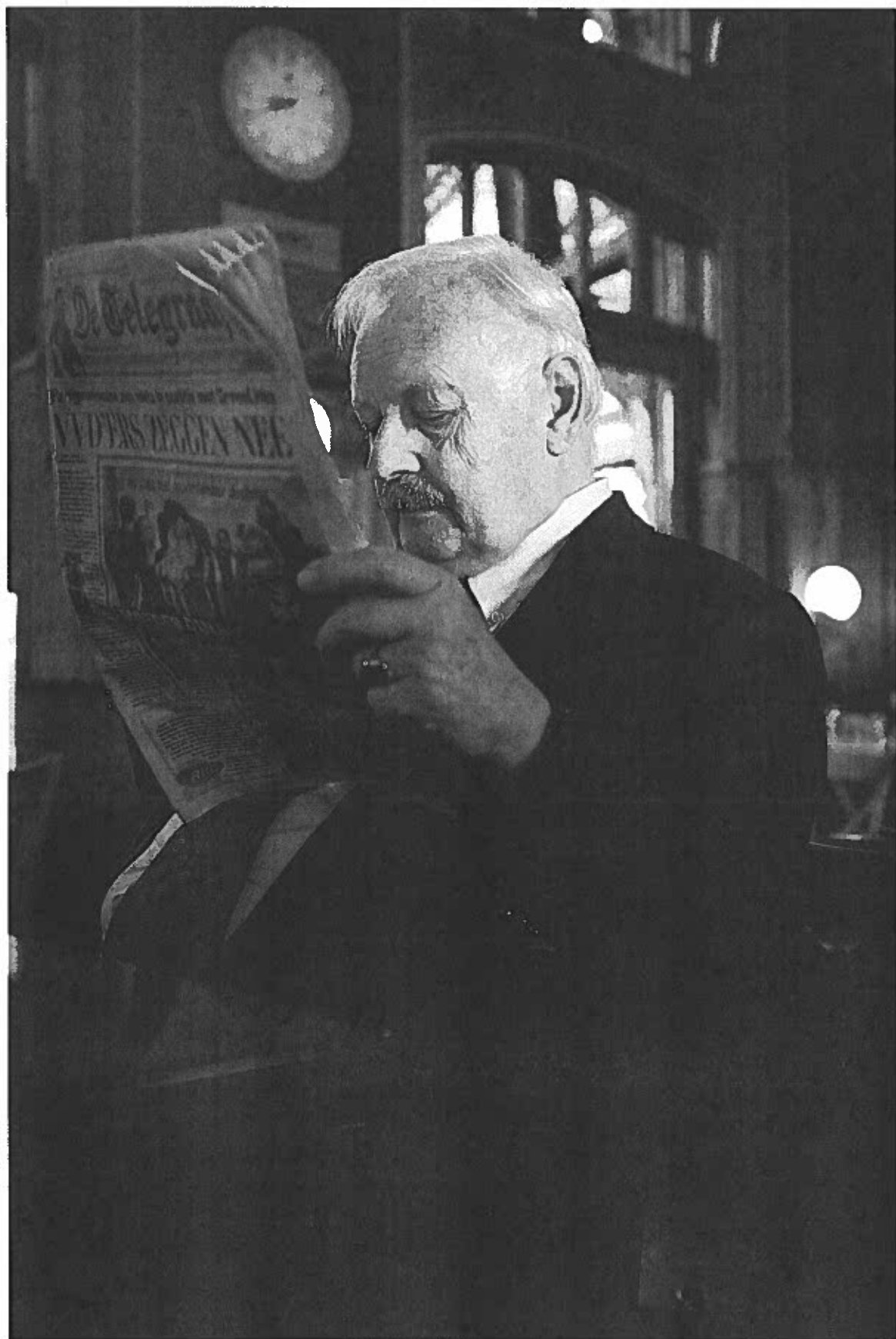
(facing page)  
Dancers. Fujifilm  
X100T 23mm ISO 1250  
F/4.5 1/250 Sec.



The Embrace. Union Square, New York City.  
Fujifilm X100F 23mm  
1/125 F/3.2 ISO 640.

Regarding street photography, there is no shortage of interesting subjects in New York City, and it usually pays off to stop and observe, as shown in the photo above. I spent a few minutes watching people coming and going at the busy Union Square subway station. I was just about to leave my spot behind the metal railing at the top of the stairs when the moment happened. A young woman rushing to the subway and a young man going in the opposite direction saw each other and hugged. She was wearing a cap, which she removed quickly before the embrace. There was so much joy in the moment that it touched my heart and soul.







## CHAPTER 2

# Getting Started

### WHAT DRIVES STREET PHOTOGRAPHERS?

Some are extroverts, while many are introverts. What drives us? Is it our passion for mankind or our curiosity to catch a glimpse into strangers' lives? No matter what it is, we all have one thing in common: We see the extraordinary in the ordinary. We are light seekers and storytellers, and we have the need to freeze the moment in a frame.

### IF THIS IS NEW FOR YOU, THEN RESET YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Street photography is not like any other genre of photography; you have to approach it differently. The decisive moment calls for a different standard, one that is subtler than any other photographic expression. You have only one opportunity at capturing something special, a moment that never happened before and will never happen again. You cannot expect everything to come together perfectly in every frame. With street photography, it's often about compromise. You have control only of your vision and your camera, nothing else. On some rare occasions, compositional elements will fall into place with the right light, a great background and the perfect subject, but it is often the 'imperfections' and surprises that make a great street image. Some of my favorite street photographs are technically imperfect but emotionally charged.

### IS IT LEGAL, AND DO I NEED PERMISSION?

In most countries, as long as you are in a public place, it is legal to photograph people for editorial or fine art purposes without their permission or knowledge. Some countries have stricter privacy laws than others. This doesn't mean you won't be able to photograph strangers on the streets, but you may run into more resistance in those places than in others. However, if you intend to use any images with identifiable people for commercial purposes (which is very unlikely if you are a street photographer), then you would need a signed model release form. Each country has its own regulations, so make sure you do your homework before you get started.

(facing page)  
In Amsterdam, NL.  
Fujifilm X100F 23mm  
ISO 3200 F/2.2 1/250  
Sec.

Respecting your subject is the number one rule in street photography. Personally, my goal on the streets is to immortalize a special moment that will never happen again. I make a point of never photographing people in vulnerable or embarrassing situations.

Be aware that security guards will regularly stop you. They are only doing their jobs but can often be a bit overzealous. Know your rights. If a security guard stops you, then explain what you are doing. Make him or her aware that you know your rights. If you are still asked to leave the premises for no justified reason, then decide if it's worth pursuing further. For example, if you are within your rights and you drove a long way to the location in order to get a specific shot, then do not hesitate to ask to speak to a supervisor or a police officer to make things right. If the location is not worth it, then just drop it. It's important to choose your battles. Is a long argument that means getting more people involved just to prove your point really worth your time and energy? Most of the time, I get my shot before a security guard asks me what I'm doing. Then I simply wish them a good day and leave.

Always remember this important caveat: If someone confronts you, even though you are within your rights, then *never* become confrontational. Some people don't like to be photographed, period. They may even get angry if they catch you photographing them. Always try to appease people, and explain what you are doing. If things get heated, then just thank them and leave quietly.

### IS IT ETHICAL?

We all have a different definition of ethics. We are influenced by our education, culture and upbringing. But there are, in my opinion, certain 'rules' of ethics that derive from simple common sense, no matter who you are and where you live.

If I inadvertently photograph a subject in an embarrassing situation, for example, then I will most likely never post the image publicly. I always ask myself, "If I were the subject of this photograph, would I feel bad having it displayed for the world to see?" If the answer is yes, then the decision is quite simple. Humor can also be interpreted differently from one culture to another; more on that later in the book.

If, for example, I photograph lovers who are not 'supposed' to be together but are in a public place, then I see nothing wrong with it. It's their choice to display affection publicly, knowing that security cameras at every street corner are filming them. I will certainly take the liberty to make a beautiful photograph of the moment if serendipity allows me to cross their path.

## WHAT GEAR SHOULD I USE?

If there is one genre of photography where less is more, then it's street photography. Could it be the most affordable type of photography you can get hooked on? Quite possibly! Unless, of course, you're a 'gear head' and cannot resist the latest and greatest camera or lens. For my part, I can honestly say that I spend more money on good shoes than I spend on photo gear in any given year.

I shot street with a DSLR for years, and it was fine. I used a small prime lens to make my camera look less conspicuous. Now that much better and smaller cameras are available, it is unnecessary to buy a DSLR system to get started in the genre. Smaller is better, and quiet is gold!

I don't care about pixels and dynamic range. I care about easily accessible dials that get the job done quickly. I currently shoot with a mirrorless rangefinder type of camera, the Fuji X100F. It has a 23mm fixed lens that is equivalent to 35mm on a full-frame camera. It's simple and gets the job done.

There are no bad cameras out there. You just have to find one that feels right for you. It should become an extension of your vision: You should forget that it is even there, and never let it get in the way. I often go on iPhone photo walks; it's an exercise in limitations. Others go out and shoot film for a day. Whatever you decide, remember that the camera is only a tool: The only way a new camera is going to make you a better photographer is if it takes you on more photo walks. So yes, buy a new camera if you can. If you feel good about it, then you'll take it out more, shoot more and grow in your craft as a result. Just remember that your camera has no vision, and the success of the photograph is 100 percent up to you and you only.

## WHAT SHOULD I BRING ON A PHOTO WALK?

Comfortable shoes are the most important non-photo-related accessory a street photographer must invest in. I also carry some special blister Band-Aids in my camera bag just in case. Nothing will ruin your photo walk like a blister. It is also important to stay dry. Walking for hours and hours with wet feet is not conducive to creativity, and yet rainy days are filled with new photo opportunities. All it takes is a little preparation and a positive outlook. I also make a point to dress in layers. I dislike being too hot as much as I dislike being cold. Protecting your precious gear is also important. Many cameras are now water resistant, but my favorite one isn't, and I find that a small travel umbrella is much more convenient than a protective rain sleeve to keep shooting in the rain. Small cameras require only one hand to use.

I highly recommend adopting the one camera, one lens philosophy on the streets, preferably a fixed focal lens, also called a prime lens. You will shoot with more intent and be more comfortable without carrying extra weight.

Extra batteries and memory cards are a must. All batteries are not equal. Some will drain faster than others. It's always a good idea to carry one more than the number you think you will need. The same goes for memory cards. Buy from the top brands online to get a good deal. You never know what will cross your path, and you may shoot more frames than you think. I've seen many students in workshops resort to deleting their work to make space. This not only wastes time, but you will likely miss something while you're going through your pictures. You may accidentally delete a keeper, and deleting in camera may increase your risk of card failure.

Bring some cash. You may strike up a conversation with a street musician, for example, and do a series of portraits. The least you can do is give a few dollars to support them.

I always have a small snack in my bag. I often lose track of time when I'm 'in the zone', and I can suddenly feel extremely hungry. Rather than finding a place to eat, I prefer to have a healthy snack to keep going while I look for the perfect café or bistro that will offer some photo opportunities. The street photographer never puts the camera away!

The only reason I need a camera bag is to carry my personal items. My camera never gets a break.

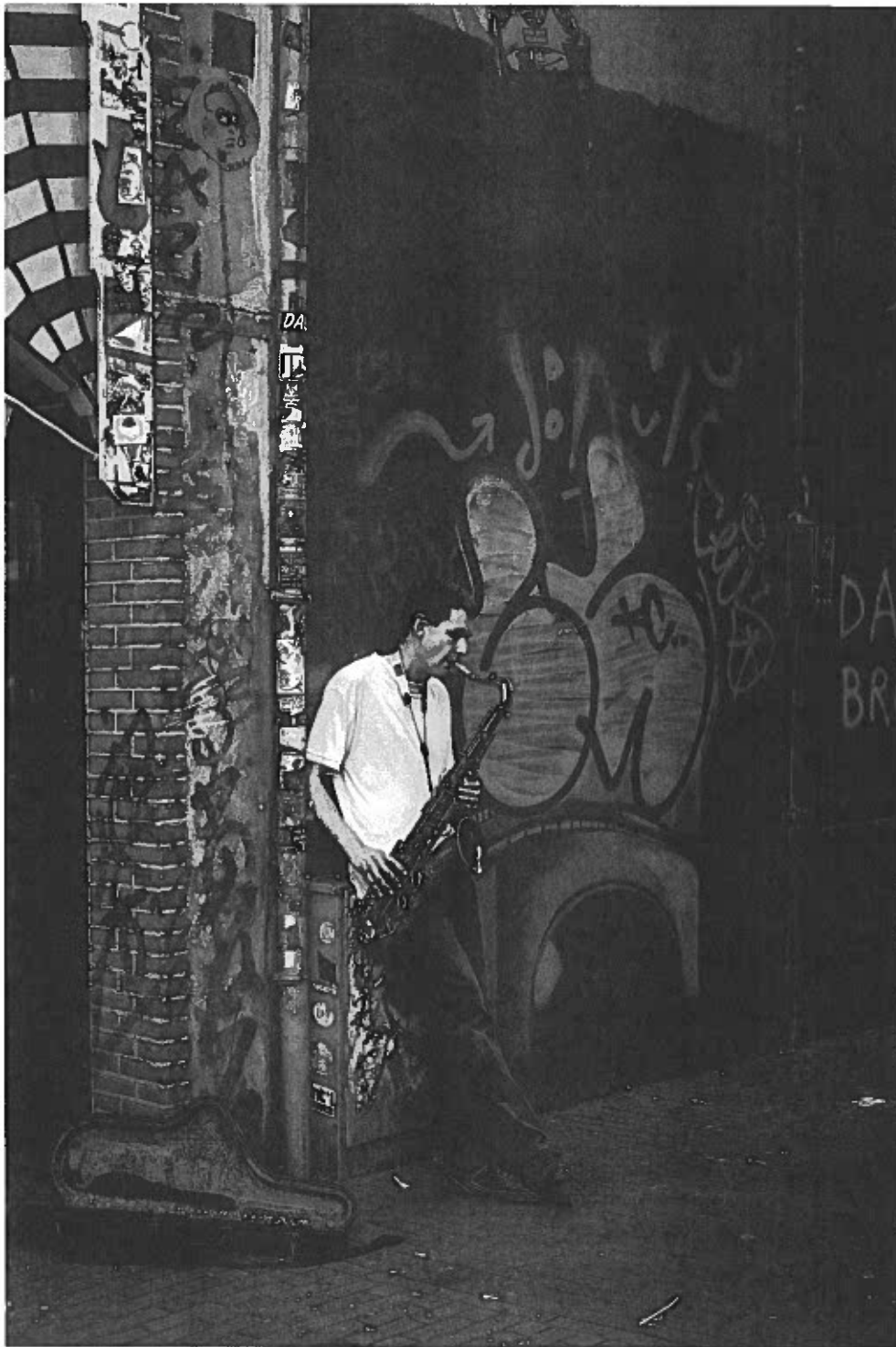
### THE FEAR OF PHOTOGRAPHING STRANGERS

Many photographers freeze at the thought of photographing strangers in the streets. It's a natural feeling. It is a very intimidating thing to do until you reach a point where your fear of not getting the shot becomes greater than your fear of getting the shot. At that moment, street photography becomes a way of life.

Many street photographers will tell you that photographing street performers doesn't count, that they are "too easy." If you are new to street photography and a bit shy, then I highly recommend that you start with photographing buskers. They are performing to be seen and heard. They are great subjects to get your feet wet and to help you get over the fear of photographing strangers. Don't forget to have some change in your pocket: Remember, they're performing to make a living.

Street performers also allow you to practice a series of storytelling images with a single subject. Start with an establishing (wide) shot where you show some of the surroundings to give your viewer a sense of place. Get closer for a medium shot of the artist, and don't forget creative angles for more dynamic images. Then get the close-up shots, such as the fingers on the saxophone or guitar, the money in the instrument case and so forth.

Street performers are also ideal subjects to practice removing distracting elements from your frame. When you are in a real-life situation, witnessing a moment that will last only a few seconds at most, you must react very



Street performers are easy subjects to practice on, and they are definitely part of the street scene. Amsterdam, Netherlands. Canon 5D MkII 50mm 1/200 F/5.6 ISO 200.

quickly. Like most street photographers, I do not remove anything from the frame in postprocessing. It is part of the challenge, and also takes some skill, to remove distractions before pressing the shutter. Moving left or right to prevent a distracting element in the background from ruining your shot, such as an antenna sticking out of your subject's ear, requires quick thinking. Practicing those skills on subjects who are sitting still is a lot easier. Take your time, and as long as you dropped some money in the hat first, musicians will be more than happy to be photographed.

Busy markets or fairs are excellent venues in which to get started in street photography. You will blend in with the crowd, and no one will notice you or your camera. It is generally better to shoot street photography on your own because you are more invisible that way. But if the thought of going out alone is too intimidating, then take a friend. You will not only be emboldened but also surprised at how differently two people see the world.

Taking portraits of strangers can also be intimidating, often even more so than doing candid street photography. We will delve into this in more details



Taking portraits of strangers can be very intimidating—often even more so than doing candid street photography—but they are very rewarding for the photographer. Manhattan, New York City. Fujifilm X100T 23mm 1/125 F/2 ISO 640.

further in this book, but here is a word of advice: If you are an introvert, then start interacting with strangers daily without a camera. Make small talk at the supermarket or the bus stop. You will be that much closer to the next step of making a portrait.

We all need to face our fears to overcome them. I started rock climbing to face my fear of heights. It is often by doing so that you develop a lifelong passion. Remember that creative people grow by going outside their comfort zones. This is certainly true in photography.

### SHOULD YOU PICK A THEME OR GO OUT EMPTY?

Depending on the situation and the place, I occasionally leave the house with a theme in mind. This is especially fun if you are at a fair or other large event. I spent the day photographing people eating food on a stick at the state fair one year. This year, I photographed faces in the night using the available lights coming from the attractions and fair rides. Another time, while visiting a large outdoor car show, I focused my attention on people who 'look' like their cars (yes, people tend to match their collector cars!). The possibilities are endless and can turn an ordinary photo walk into a treasure hunt. You can also pick a color or search only for people wearing hats. This works well to focus your attention, and you will come home with a good series of shots.

Focusing on a theme can also be helpful when you are visiting a new place. When you visit a large city for the first time, the photo possibilities can often become overwhelming, and you may try to see too much, finishing the day with lots of mediocre frames without any consistency. If you focus on a theme, such as lovers or people walking their dogs, then you will still see other photo opportunities, but you will end the day with a good series of photographs and feel good about yourself.

Most of the time, I go out empty and completely open to possibilities. Something always catches my attention along the way—a story will unfold, or the light will be magical. Those moments are so rewarding!

### THE POWER OF LIMITATIONS

Just like limiting yourself to a theme, limiting yourself to a single focal length or a number of frames can help you grow as a photographer. Although the digital age has made the learning curve much faster, it has also made photographers lazier. Many street photographers resort to the 'spray-and-pray' approach. Except in situations when you need a large number of frames, to get a good shot, during street demonstrations or in low-light situations, for example, the spray-and-pray method will not teach you anything to improve upon. Moreover, the lucky shot is often not very satisfying for the





I was working on a 'Lovers' project for a few months and never missed an opportunity to catch some public display of affection while roaming the streets. Paris, France. Fujifilm X100S 23mm 1/950 F/4 ISO 200.

photographer. The best photographers are discerning and consistent in the quality of their work. Having a vision, being in control of your gear and pressing the shutter with a purpose will yield more keepers at the end of any photo walk.

### SHARE YOUR WORK

Those photographs are useless if they stay on your hard drive. Share them on a blog or social media platform. The more you share, the better you will feel about yourself, and the more you'll want to go out and shoot. Be aware that you do not go into street photography for the 'likes.' Many people do not know much about street photography or how to appreciate it. Grand landscapes or kittens will always get more attention than street photography on social media. It is important to share within groups that are a bit more discerning and specialize in the type of photography you are shooting. Whether it is on Facebook, Flickr or Google+, some groups may even give you constructive feedback and run contests. Always remember that no one makes the rules, yet, the street photography community seems to have its own 'police.' Do not let the negative people deter you from enjoying what you are doing: You are the only person you need to please with your new hobby. Although everyone enjoys recognition, do not let it become a crutch you can't live without. Look at others' work for inspiration, and keep raising the bar. Do not try to fit a style just because you think you will get more likes. Be true to yourself, and you will find your own voice.



## CHAPTER 3

# Different Ways to Approach Street Photography

Street photography is not necessarily synonymous with being in your subject's face. There are many ways to approach this exciting genre of photography. You may enjoy shooting all the different ways or just one of them. The important part is to have fun in the process; do not try to fit in a certain style just because you think it will get you more likes on social media. If getting too close is really uncomfortable and unpleasant for you, then why do it? Maybe your personality will fit with a different, more minimalist style.

Let's look at the different ways to 'shoot street'.

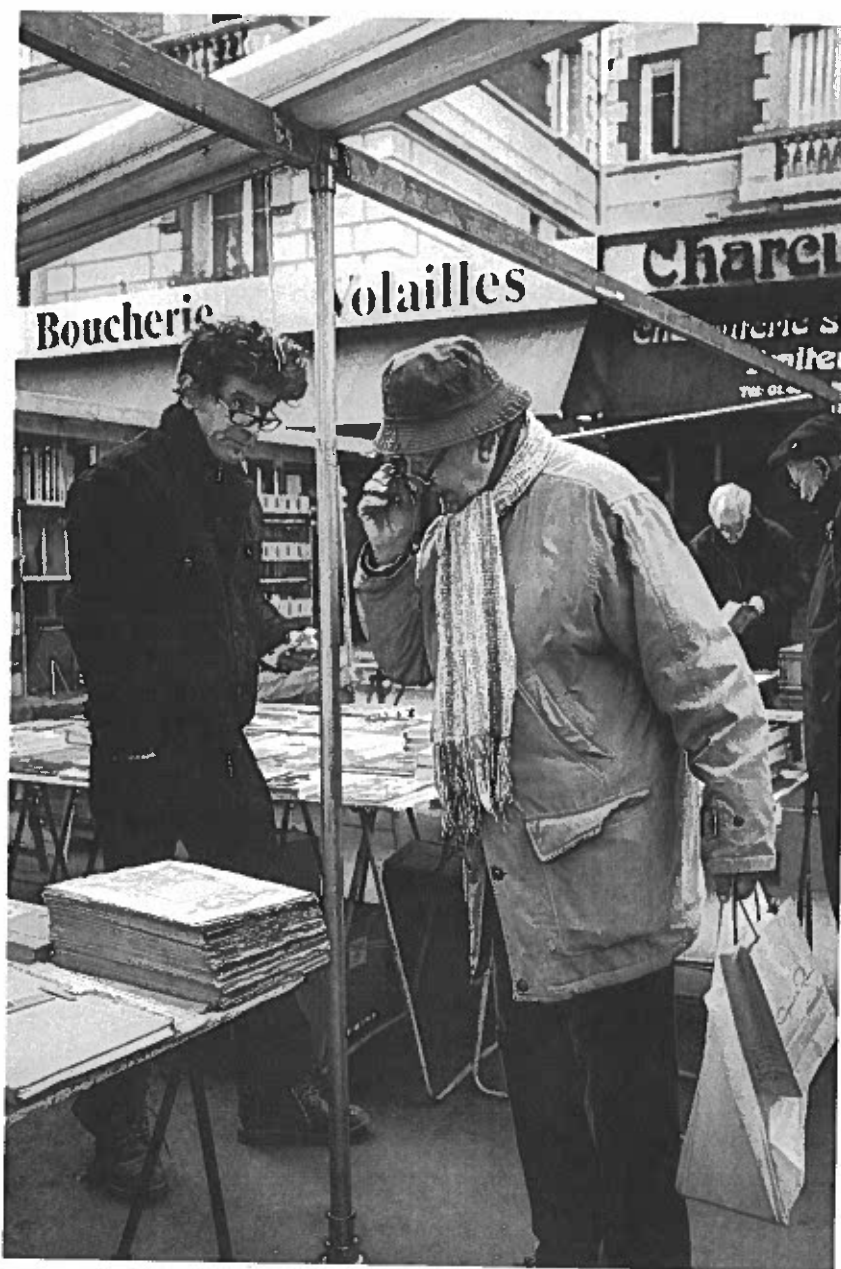
### REACT TO A SITUATION

The most common way to do street photography is by simply walking the streets of any city, small or large, and reacting to a specific scene, light or subject. You may be struck by the way the light is illuminating lovers sitting on the riverbank, an interesting expression or gesture, a color and so on. The more you photograph people on the street, the more in tune you will be with your surroundings. Nothing escapes the seasoned street photographer. I always joke that our peripheral vision is so enhanced that it would be hard to pickpocket a street photographer. You will become so aware of life on the streets that you will kick yourself whenever you leave the house without your camera.

Once you see your subject, be ready. You may have only one shot at capturing that moment or gesture. You will have to do some quick thinking to position yourself in a way that will allow the best possible shot. Scan the frame to avoid any distracting background elements—you may need to adjust your framing by quickly repositioning yourself. Don't expect your background to be perfect, but it's best not to have a tree branch sticking out of someone's ear.

(facing page)  
Impromptu Twirl,  
Minneapolis, MN.  
Fujifilm X100F 23mm  
ISO 320 F/5.0 1/60 Sec.

You may have to run to get ahead of your subject. Very often, I will pass someone really interesting or see a really cool subject across the street. In times like these, I quickly make the decision to run ahead of the subject to find a spot that will give me the best possible angle, light or background. This doesn't always work, and at times, my subject will enter a store or make an unexpected turn. Yet, more often than not, this quick thinking pays off, and I get the shot I envisioned.



At a book fair, I could not resist photographing the men with their reading glasses. Paris, France. Fujifilm X100S 23mm 1/340 F/2.8 ISO 400.



Anticipate the next move. A big part of successful street photography is the photographer's ability to anticipate the subject's next move. This is achieved by observing people all the time, with or without a camera. Of course, there will always be an element of surprise, but the better you become at observing and anticipating, the more keepers you will have at the end of the day. Also notice how people's actions are very predictable. It's human nature; we are creatures of habit.

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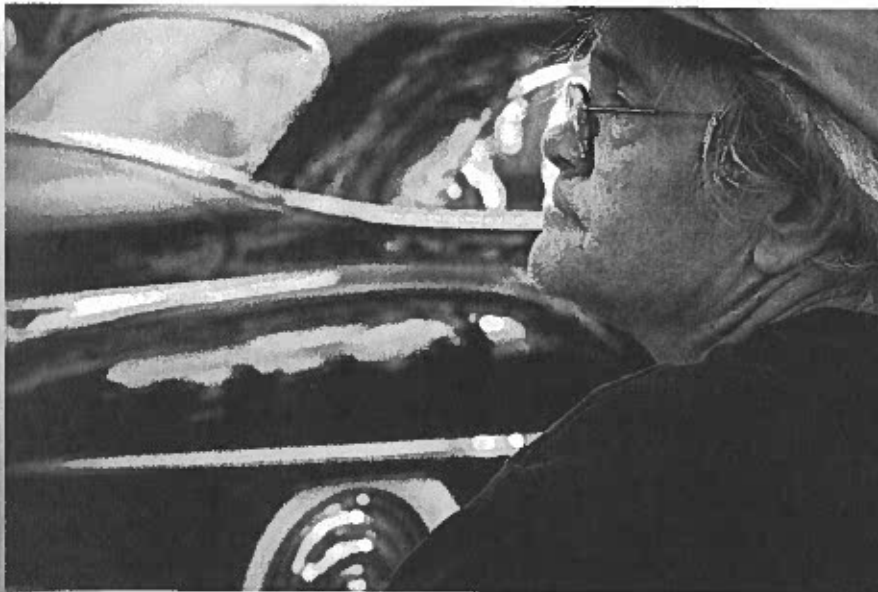
*Assignment:* Put your camera on full auto, or take your smartphone to focus all your attention on seeing. It may be an interesting subject, the way the dappled light makes patterns on the sidewalk and so forth. Do not worry about settings; let your camera do all the work. Just learn to see.

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#### BE PART OF THE SCENE

Today, we have the advantage of completely silent cameras, which are great tools in street photography. You can get close to your subject, right over his or her shoulder even, and the viewer will feel as if he or she is looking through the subject's eyes. This technique works particularly well in busy places, such as public transportation or fairs, where you can get close without being noticed.

There are many ways to get close to your subject without attracting attention. It's not about being sneaky; it's about not disrupting the scene. You reacted to something special, and any changes can ruin the moment. Not



At a car show, I was so close to the subject that it feels as if the viewer is seeing through his eyes. Saint Paul, Minnesota. Sony A6000 50mm 1/160 F5.6 ISO 160.

bringing the camera to your eye makes you less conspicuous. Flip screens are also very helpful. You can also make it look like you are photographing past your subject—after all, most people see no reason why they would even be the subjects of a photograph.

Whatever your method for getting close without bringing attention to yourself, just be relaxed! If you are nervous, then you will transmit the wrong vibes, and people will feel that.

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*Assignment:* Take the smallest camera you own or your smartphone. Silence it. Now buy a ticket to get on any public transportation that your city offers: city bus, subway, light-rail system. Find a spot with lots of people, stand or sit and take pictures up close. Practice shooting from chest or hip level.

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### FIND A STAGE

One of the countless joys of street photography is to find a stage and wait for the perfect subject to enter the frame. The background may be a variety of things: a nicely textured wall, a storefront, a symmetrical structure or a reflective surface. Writing or signage on a wall or billboard can also make the story; it can also have a comical effect when the right protagonist appears. This is where anticipation comes into play. You can see an opportunity and guess people's reactions as they walk by, but catching the right moment is up to you.

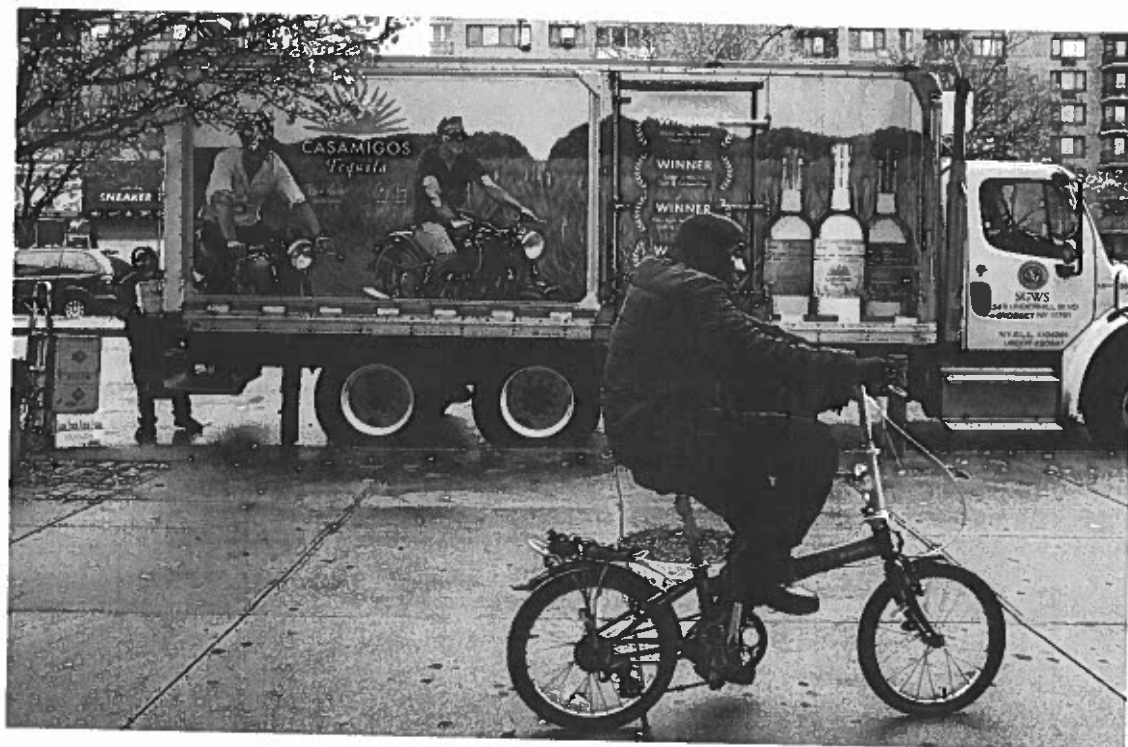
Street photographers constantly scan for those opportunities, and envision a potential shot. Of course, seeing the right subject also means capturing the right moment. The stepping is very important in a moving subject. Catching someone between steps doesn't make for a strong image. It is more satisfying if you can get the right moment in one shot rather than in burst mode, but the important part is to recognize that moment. Put all the chances on your side, and shoot several frames consecutively. You will soon learn to recognize which is the strongest image and why. An easy way to catch the right stride is to count each step as you watch the subject enter your frame. One . . . two . . . click! Anticipate the third step, and press the shutter when the subject's foot hits the ground. Better yet, catch the step at the moment when there is just a little separation between the foot and the ground.

How do you know if it is a strong subject? Part of it has to do with your subject's physical appearance. I avoid photographing people wearing baggy clothes or backpacks. I find people wearing elegant clothes much more interesting, as the clothes are more fitted, which allows for a better definition of the human form. Large writing on clothes, such as brand logos, are a distraction and draw the viewer's eyes away from the facial expression or gesture. Definition and separation are important considerations, which we will study further in this book.





The clock at the Musée d'Orsay is a wonderful backdrop. It is well worth waiting for the right subject to enter the frame. Paris, France. Fujifilm X100T 23mm 1/100 F/5.6 ISO 200.



Signage and ads can offer great opportunities for juxtaposition. Harlem, New York City. Fujifilm X100T 23mm 1/250 F/5.6 ISO 2000.

Also, you may want to photograph a subject who belongs to the place you are in. This is especially true if you are traveling and want to add authenticity to your travel images. Why photograph an American tourist clad with backpack, baseball cap and GAP sweatshirt in front of an amazing backdrop in Rome? Be discerning, and do not settle for the first person who walks into your frame.

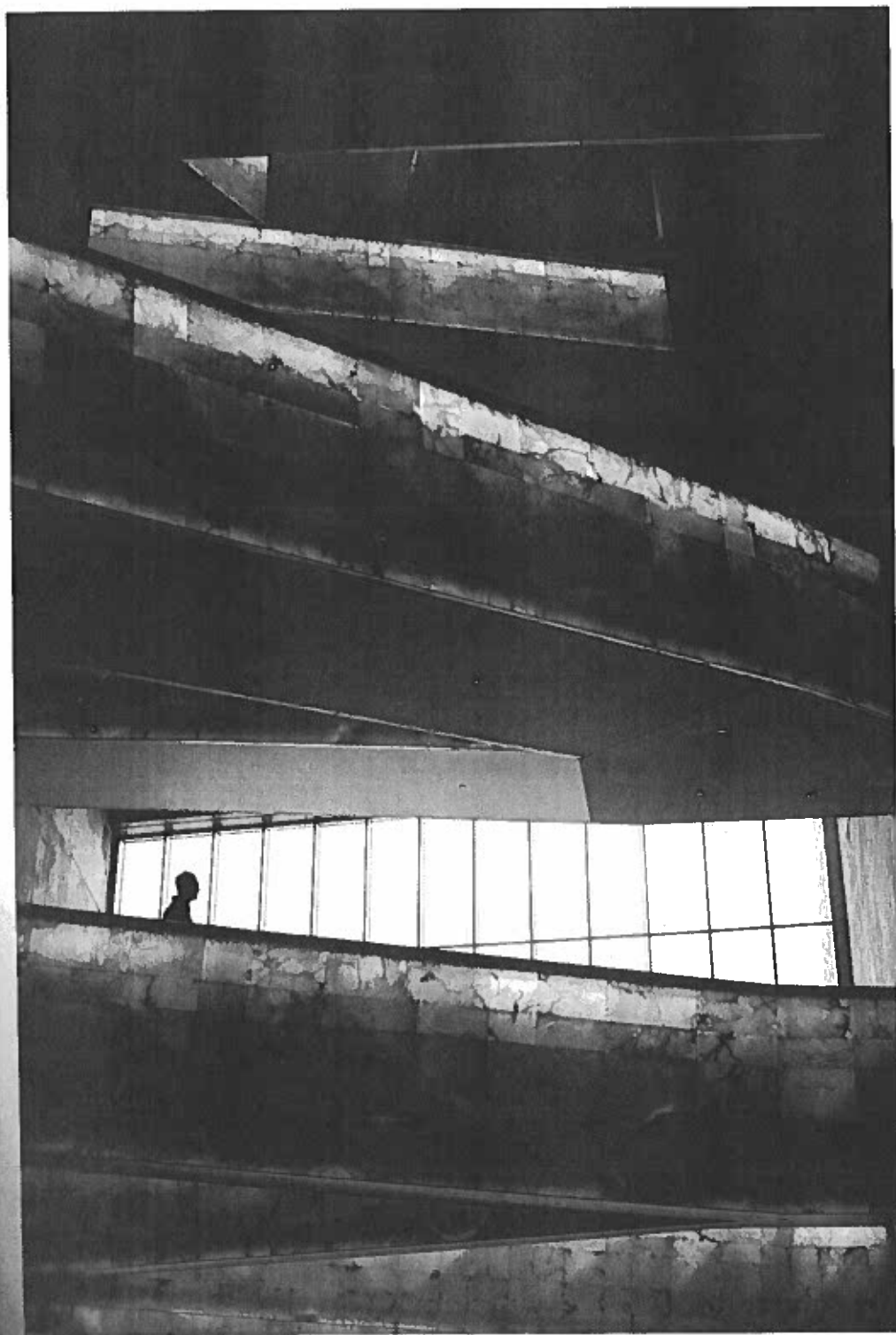
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*Assignment:* Take your camera, and find an interesting storefront with signage or a window display that could lead to a story. Envision the type of subject that would make an interesting shot and wait. Remember to look as inconspicuous as possible by not putting the camera in front of your face, or people will go around you or duck. Plan on waiting anywhere from five to thirty minutes, and be discerning!

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### INCORPORATE THE HUMAN ELEMENT INTO THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

This is a more minimalist approach to street photography. Your subject is usually quite small in the frame but becomes the focal point in an interesting urban landscape. Look for appealing architecture, repeated patterns, geometric shapes and so on. They all make for interesting backgrounds. Wait



Shalom Museum for Human Rights, Winnipeg, Canada. Fujifilm X100S 23mm 1/350 F/2.8 ISO 800.



Subway, New York City.  
Fujifilm X100T 23mm  
1/125 F/2 ISO 5000.

for the right subject to enter your frame, et voilà! Here again, not everyone will make a good subject, and being discerning is key to achieving a successful result. It's also important to find a subject who will stand out. If you are shooting black and white (B&W) and you are in a setting with a lot of contrast, then catching someone wearing a dark suit in the light will stand out more than someone wearing white, who might blend in and disappear. There are many factors to take into consideration; capturing a strong photograph is much harder than it looks. The environment doesn't necessarily have to be urban. The human element will enhance any landscape or seascape photograph. Remember to catch the right moment, the correct stepping. Separation in the body also makes for stronger images. Do not settle for the first shot you take. Wait around, and a better subject will likely enter your frame in a few minutes . . . or an hour. It's a game of patience!

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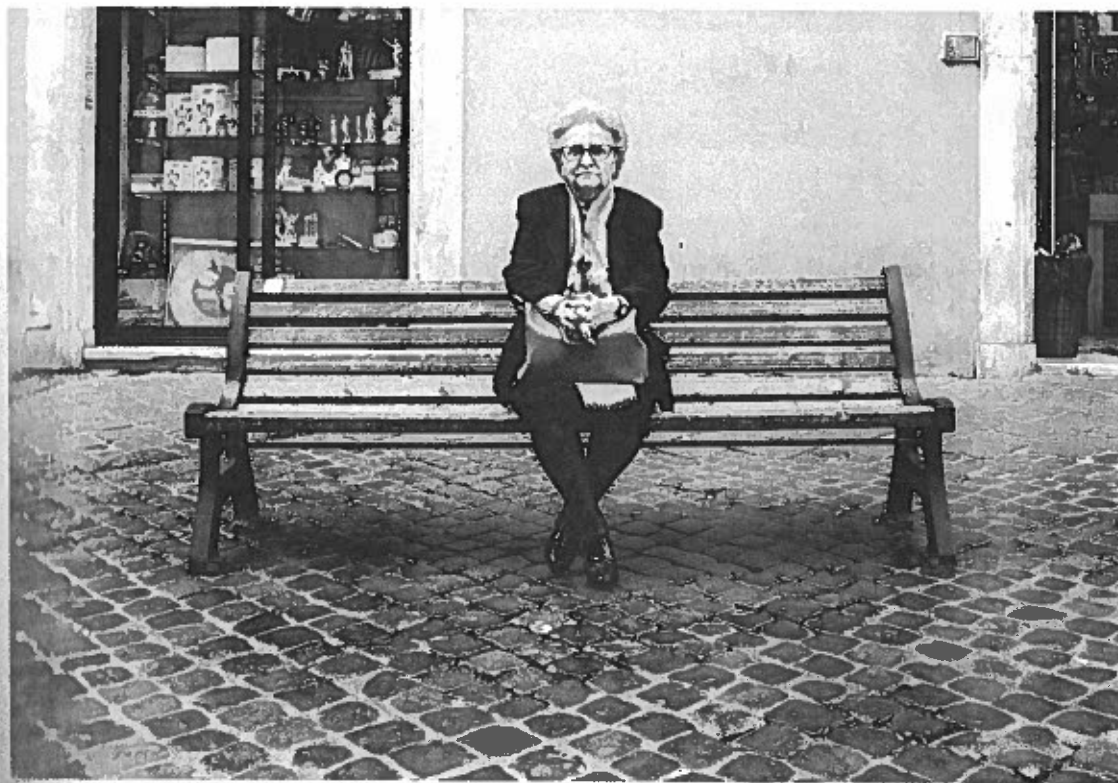
*Assignment:* Think of a building in your city with striking architecture. Maybe it's very modern and futuristic or more classic with columns, archways or a grand staircase. Compose your shot in a way that highlights the architecture in a spot where people are likely to enter your frame. Wait for the best possible subject, and pay attention to the stepping and separation in the body.

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### THE EYE CONTACT

A common approach to street photography is provoking eye contact. I do not enjoy this method, finding it a bit too bold and not a good experience for the subject. Some street photographers will go as far as using a flash and photographing their subjects up close with the use of a bright light. When done well, the images can be very powerful. However, this method does not fit everyone's personality, and there are many other ways to practice street photography without provoking your subject. No one makes the rules, and you should march to the beat of your own drum. I highly recommend that you use this method only if you are comfortable with it and are ready to handle strong reactions from your subjects very calmly. Do not—and I can't stress this enough—become confrontational. Be friendly, and step away from the situation.

Although I never provoke eye contact, there are times when the subject will spot me, and I capture 'the stare' or the moment when the person becomes aware of my camera. I always cherish such moments. Eye contact, when it happens organically, can make for interesting photographs.



I really enjoy capturing eye contact when it happens naturally. Rome, Italy. Fujifilm X100T 23mm 1/250 F/5.6 ISO 1250.





The Eye Contact with  
Red Coat and White  
Balloons. Paris, France.  
Fujifilm X100F 23mm  
1/125 F/25.6 ISO 200.

## STREET PORTRAITS

Making a portrait of a stranger is a very different approach to street photography. It requires an interaction with your subject. Remember that the interaction doesn't necessarily have to be verbal; simple eye contact can be a silent agreement between you. In any case, it is usually considered a portrait as long as the subject is aware of you taking the picture.

If you are a very social person who talks to strangers anywhere you go, like I do, then taking the next step should not be too much of an issue. If, on the other hand, the thought of approaching a stranger terrifies you, then keep reading.

### Practice Without a Camera

Make it a goal to talk with strangers every day for a few days. They can be waiting in line at the coffee shop with you or on the subway. Make small talk, or comment on the new coffee flavor—just about anything that comes to mind, as long as it's not weird. You may find it terrifying at first, but I can assure you that it will become easier every day, and you will soon look forward to your next encounter. Make it a goal to talk to five strangers every day for a week, and go from there. Granted, there is a big leap between

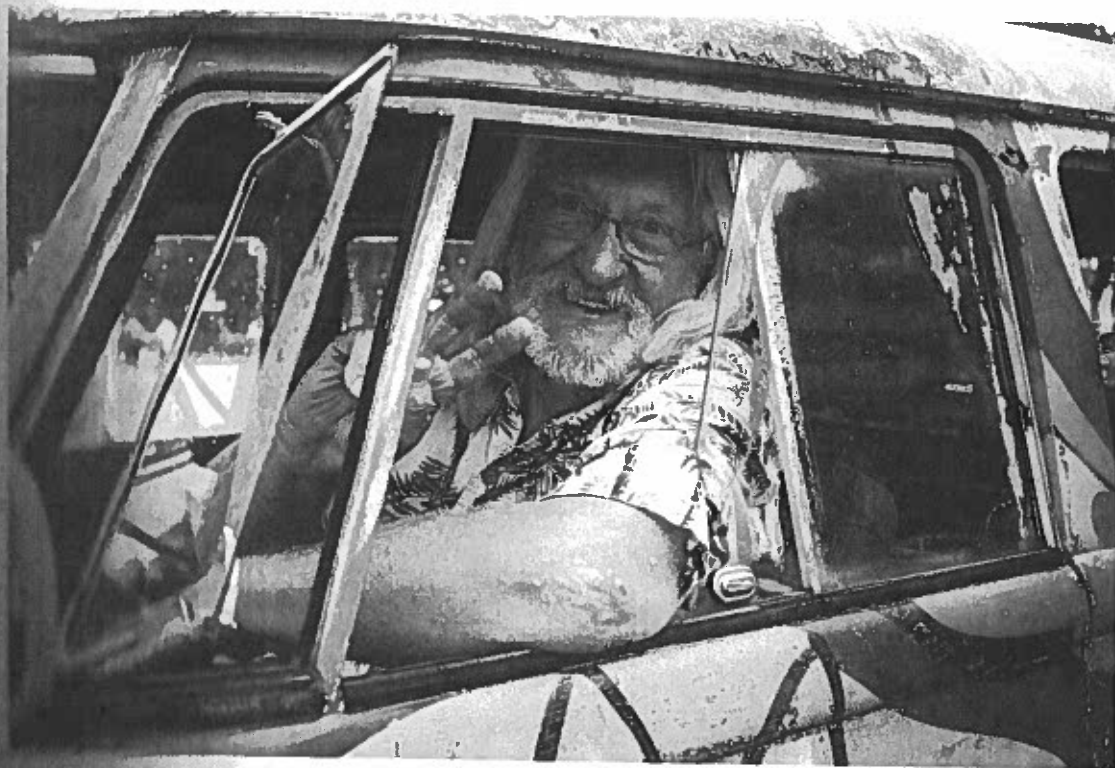
approaching a stranger to comment on his or her cool hat and asking to make a portrait. Yet, if you are shy, then this first step will help you get to the second. You have to be comfortable interacting with strangers before you can pull out a camera without freezing or giving off the wrong vibes.

### **Photograph a Street Performer**

Street performers are there to be seen, and they are easy subjects. Purists will tell you they don't count because they are too easy. As far as I know, there are no authorities or rules for street portraiture or street photography in general, so go ahead! Photograph buskers, and remember to leave a tip. Be extra generous if you are going to take your time. They perform to make a living, after all.

### **People With Dogs**

Dog owners may be the street portraitist's best friends! Start by commenting on the cute puppy and photographing it, then ask to make portraits of the owner and his or her dog. Nine out of ten times, you will succeed and make their day in the process.





**Interesting People**

People with lots of tattoos or colorful and/or unusual hairdos or outfits are both easy and interesting subjects. They obviously like to be noticed, so they will love posing for you. Take your time getting some detailed shots of the tattoos, for example, and remember to compliment your subject. Who doesn't love a compliment when it is least expected?

**Go With a Friend**

Having another person at your side will embolden you, and you will find it easier to approach a stranger. It makes it fun, and if you're relaxed, then people will respond accordingly. It becomes a social event. The friend doesn't even have to be a photographer. He or she can simply be there for moral support.

**Don't Hide Behind a Long Lens**

Just like with candid street photography, the closer the better. Also, a smaller camera will be less intimidating for your subject. A smaller camera and a shorter focal length will make it feel like you are a part of the scene you are capturing.

**Be Confident**

Introduce yourself, and explain why you want to make a portrait of your subject. You're not doing anything wrong, so don't take the shot and run. If they ask why you want to take their pictures, then simply explain that you are photographing strangers for a personal project, and you found them quite interesting. Most people will be flattered.

**Take Your Time**

You asked for their permission to take the picture, so now it's your responsibility to do a good job. The background may be distracting, or they may be squinting from the sun in their eyes. Ask them to move or to even cross the street if the light is better. Take two or three shots until you are satisfied with the result. Show them the resulting image on the back of the camera, and make sure you thank them for their time before you part ways.

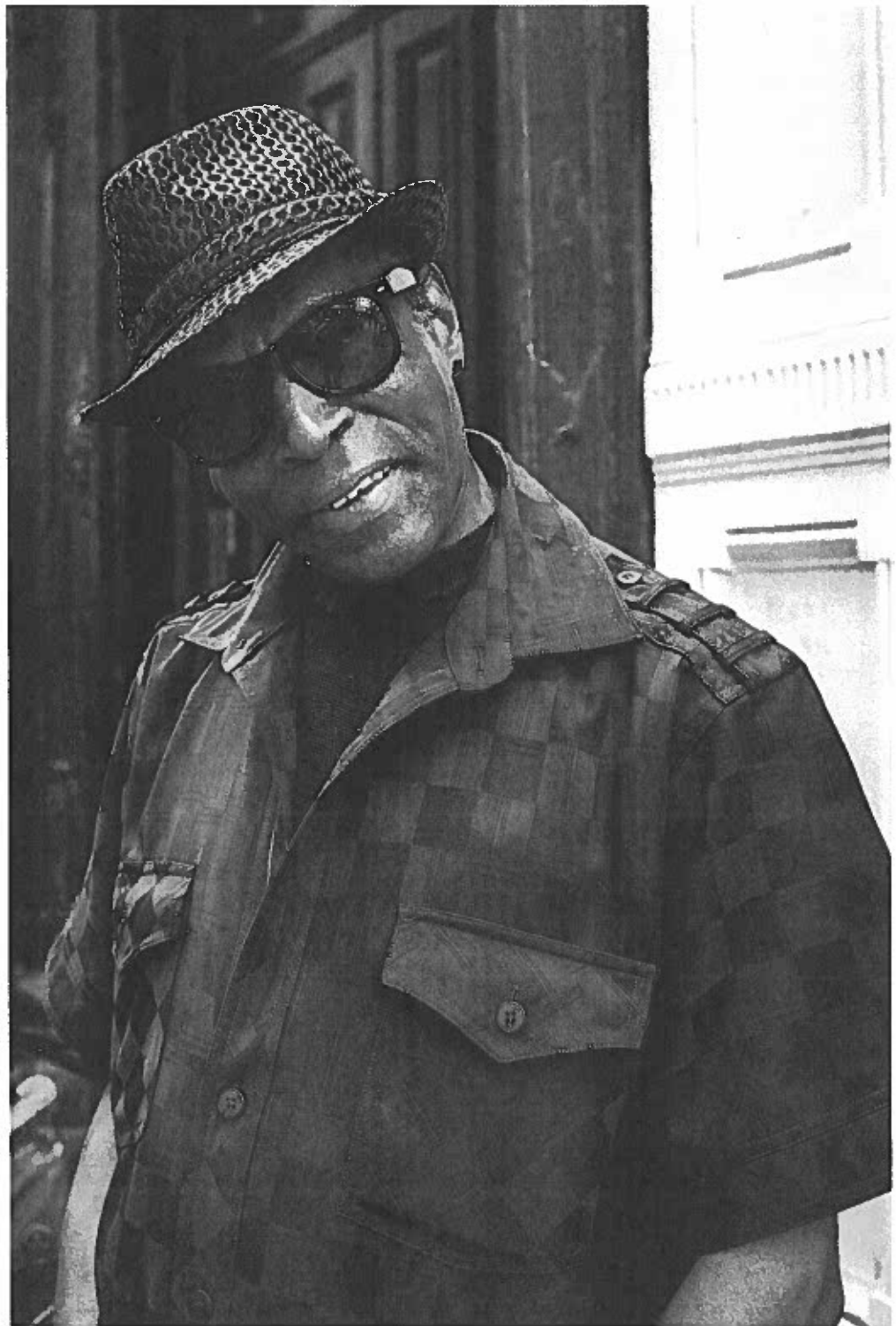
**Enjoy the Experience**

Ask for your subjects' names—maybe you'll even engage them in conversation and find out some interesting things about their lives. Share e-mail addresses, and send them the best picture if they ask. I always carry business cards. I leave it up to the subjects to contact me by e-mail if they want. You

will find that most of the time people won't bother, which always comes as a surprise to me. Other times, long-lasting friendships develop via social media, so you just never know. Some of my students have received photo assignments as a result of their street portrait projects, either due to the quality of their work or through the people they met in the process.



St Paul, Minnesota. Fujifilm X100S 23mm 1/240 F/4 ISO 400.



New York City. Fujifilm X100S 23mm 1/240 F/4 ISO 800.

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**Assignment:** Take your camera out with the goal of doing only street portraits today. Set an easy goal of two or three portraits. Just don't stop after just one and certainly not after a rejection. Take a deep breath, and relax. Be genuine, and approach your first stranger with a compliment: "What a great smile. I'm documenting people on the streets of [insert the name of your town here], and I would really like to do a portrait of you."

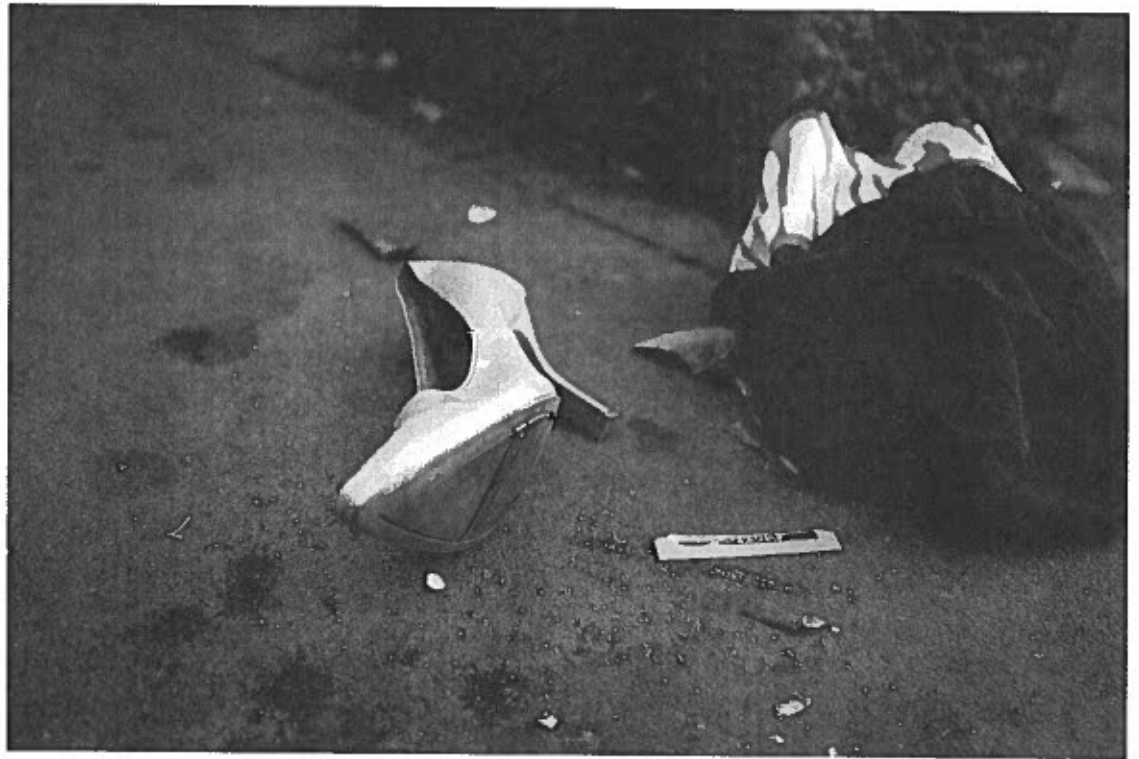
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## ABSTRACT

Let your creativity go wild, and have fun. There are many ways to create abstract images on the streets, including using reflections, shadows and natural filters such as rain or condensation on a window. The human element doesn't have to be in its pure form; the 'idea' of people can make a powerful photograph as well. Some days, you find yourself in a place where the setting or the people are not particularly interesting. Shift gears, and you will probably find a way to make the best of it. You may focus on the raindrops on the window for a change, or shoot through frosty glass. Or you may find a story



Through the Window. Paris, France. Fujifilm X100F 23mm 1/250 F/4 ISO 2500.



Discarded Shoe. San Francisco, California. Fujifilm X100T 23mm 1/125 F/2 ISO 250.

without the human element. A discarded high-heel shoe in an urban setting can be very evocative. The human element is not present, but it is strongly implied, and viewers can use their imaginations to fill in the gaps.

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*Assignment:* Hit the streets with a more abstract way of seeing. It's not as easy as it sounds. Think of creative focusing, using natural filters, reflections, layers. Forget the 'rules', and make your own.

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