Collecting Souls...

What Street Photography means to me

"Street Photography Basics"
Online Video Training

If you want to learn even more about Street Photography, there is an online video training which complements this eBook. With the coupon code **CollectingSouls** you get 40% discount:

https://www.udemy.com/streetphotography/?couponCode=CollectingSouls

"It's neither our culture nor our race which interconnects us. It's Street Photography."

Thomas Leuthard

About Me

My name is Thomas Leuthard and I'm a Street Photographer from Switzerland. I travel around the World to document the ordinary life on the street. For me Street Photography is a passion, a way of life and not a job or something I do for a living. That's why I enjoy doing it in my spare time without any pressure. I will do it for as long as I enjoy it and maybe one day I will do something else. I started writing down my knowledge in May 2011 as a blog and then as an eBook.

Why another book?

My first eBook ("Going Candid…") was about the basics of Street Photography and should encourage beginners to find a starting point. It contains a lot of hard facts, tips and tricks. This second eBook is more about my personal view on things and is a bit more advanced. It should give you an insight to my way of thinking and should also provide a lot of tips around Street Photography.

Why is this book free?

There are a lot of people who ask me why I don't charge for my eBooks. There are several reasons for that. First of all I have a full time job, which feeds me more than enough. I also have the latest gear available to perform Street Photography. I'm happy with my life so far and more money would not make me happier. Also my photos would not get any better with more money in my pocket. It makes me happier investing my money in a good thing than spending it for myself. That's why I donate some of my money, invest it in other people and write free eBooks. If you still believe that I should better ask for money for this eBook, you have not understood what life is all about. Life is not about money, it's about friendship, happiness and good photos.

Table of Content

What it means to me…

I have done Street Photography for about 2 years now. At the beginning it was much different than it is now. I was often shooting alone and uploading my photos only to one website called Fotocommunity.de. Last year I started to organize photo-walks in cities I was traveling to but my method of photography changed when I met Eric Kim who taught a Street Photography workshop in Beirut, Lebanon in November 2010. I sponsored 2/3 of Eric's trip with the condition that I could join him. This gesture really changed a lot for me.

First of all I was able to teach Street Photography for the first time to a highly motivated audience in a place I had never been before. It turned out to be the trip of a lifetime and for the people there it was life changing as well. They founded the Beirut Street Photographers (BSP) group which is growing massively. They organize street tours within Lebanon on a monthly basis and give TV and radio interviews. I was with them on a trip in Istanbul in July and it was great to see them all again.

"United we shoot…" - BSP

Since my time in Beirut I started to use Flickr, built up an online community and take even more photos on the street than before. I got in contact with a lot of Street Photographers around the world and people started to ask me for advice about their photography.

In these last 9 months I really feel that Street Photography is what I want to live for. It's not mainly the act of shooting in the streets, it's the whole package; traveling around, meeting new people, shooting with them, talking about photography and sharing knowledge. I often meet with complete strangers for the sake of Street Photography. This doesn't really make anyone a stranger anymore; it's like a big family spread around the World.

For me it's a big thing to know after a shot that this will be a "keeper" (normally I know it right away which brings a bright smile to my face). Then I go home, process it and upload it to share with my community. I like when people admire and comment on my work. This feedback is very valuable to me and it helps me grow bigger and get better.

I would also like to share my knowledge with people who are interested in Street Photography. Not for the sake of money but to give something back to the community. I have the privilege to be a Street Photographer who has a full time job, is able to travel around the World, carry a good camera and shoot what I want to. Not everybody has this privilege. I try to encourage people to go out onto the streets and shoot good photos, regardless of their situation. I publish my workshop presentations, write blogs and will even publish an eBook about Street Photography soon, just to help people understand how it works and that everyone can do it.

For me, sharing and caring is more important than enjoying my life here in Switzerland. Here I have everything; I could just hang out with friends in a bar after work and watch TV every night. This is not what I want. I want to go out into the World, meet people, take photos, share information and enjoy Street Photography… This is what keeps me going and smiling. I hope I can meet a lot of the people I know virtually one day somewhere on this planet.

I will keep up my upload stream, I will keep traveling the World, I will keep meeting people and I will keep helping other people become better street photographers.

I can clearly say that ***"Street Photography has changed my life…"***

It's a way of life…

For some people, Street Photography is just a hobby like doing sports or any other leisure activity. Maybe you can do it as a hobby, if you like, but for some people this is a life's work. For them it means everything and they could not imagine that people could pose for a photo, that you could use a flash light to setup a scene, that there is make-up and other fancy stuff. Street Photography is the reality and you don't want to change that. You hold up your camera like a mirror to society.

I'm not sure if an outsider can really understand the spirit of Street Photography. It's more than just pressing the button out in the street; you have to have a deep interest in people and life in public. It's more like social studies than a leisure activity. You do something for humanity; you show the World how life is. You have a mission; it's not just fun. I deeply believe that I somehow was born to document life; although it took me 37 years to figure that out. It's the only thing I really want to do. I just want to go out and take photos of life and portraits of strangers in public.

I have to admit that it might also be an addiction. You cannot really stop doing it. Sure after a week of New York you have seen enough faces and people but as soon as you are back home, the itch starts again. It's the feeling of going out to get some good shots. It's like hunting or fishing. It's also about traveling to new places, something I really like.

I think I have not met more interesting and friendly people in my whole life than in the last two years of Street Photography. It has been a real pleasure to be in all these different cities of the World meeting up with strangers who have the same passion. It's all about our passion, nothing else is relevant. You can talk to a complete stranger you would not talk to in real life but, when it comes to Street Photography, you are fully connected. I've had these feelings of connection with people very seldom in my life, as I get bored by a person very fast, but when it comes to Street Photography, I'm fully concentrated and into the conversation. People who know me very well can see that from my eyes; they are going to shine when I talk about my passion.

Don't try this at home…

A lot of people don't have the guts to do Street Photography. The reason for that is obvious: It's not a piece of cake and if you really want to go close you might get into trouble. There might be trouble with the people you shoot, there might be trouble with the law in certain countries and there might be personal issues with yourself not getting close enough. That's why I say that you would be better to shoot landscapes or flowers if you cannot point your camera at someone's face without problems.

I used to say that you can learn how to get close to someone. Today I don't really think that you can. Either you have this ability or you don't. It's the same with a good eye; some people have it, some haven't. Those who are not gifted with one of these talents will never be more than an average photographer. There is too much average stuff out there; random photos that don't tell a story and look boring. Everybody has to start small and I did that as well. I still upload some average stuff but I can tell you very quickly if there is talent in a beginner's shot or not.

You cannot call yourself a Street Photographer just because you point your camera at people in the streets. You cannot just turn a street snapshot into black and white. It's not that easy. You really have to practice, have a plan, get close, study people, be interested in humanity and spend a lot of time walking up and down the streets. You cannot learn Street Photography. You have to have it inside your body. It's a feeling, an interest in everyday human life, characteristic faces, interactions between people and life in general. It's more a kind of hunger to document life happening in the streets than voyeurism. It's a kind of lifestyle.

"Focus on humanity, not on technology..." - Thomas Leuthard

I have seen a lot of people with big cameras, long lenses and too much technical knowledge going up and down the street to hunt for people. That's not how it works. Gear is not relevant, as only your knowledge about life and humanity will bring you forward. This is one of the most important things in Street Photography. Think about the balance between humanity and technology before you go out. Street Photography is more a social interaction, although you don't really talk to people.

Don't listen to others…

Street Photography is the optical capture of someone's personal view of an everyday moment in public. This means that your personal view might be interpreted differently by your viewers. This is not a bad thing as such. Art is always something that people have different opinions about. The problem starts when people try to give you advice. Sure some amount of advice can be useful but often it can be confusing.

You should have a plan, an idea and a personal point of view. This personal view you should want to put into your photography. The better you can achieve this goal the easier it gets for attaining your own style. The more you listen to other people, the more you will be distracted from this goal and your path will not go straight. You have to know that you cannot please the World and that not everyone will like your work.

It may be possible that you will face a lot of criticism while showing photos from the street. This gets worse when you get closer to people, when you show faces and when you may show situations which are not to everyone's taste. If you want to stay away from critics and comments, you may not wish to shoot in the streets. Comments are often useful but you should just take them and not think too much about it. If you want to put every comment into your next photo, you will not be successful over time.

After publishing my first eBook I got a lot of positive feedback but also some negative. Some people were really pissed off and even called my photos meaningless. This is a personal opinion and I would not challenge it. The difficult thing is to continue what you are doing, especially when there is a lot of criticism. It is essential for your own style and also your personal development as a Street Photographer to get where you want to go, no matter what other people say. You have to stay on the bus. This needs a lot of self-confidence and a strong will to believe in what you do. If you don't have this, you better stop now. It's not that nice but you get used to it over time. And when you can see how many people like what you do, it is easier to handle. Just keep doing your thing and be passionate about it…

How to handle critics…

There are always people who don't like what you do. There are often different reasons why someone is giving you a hard time but if you cannot handle such a situation, you should not do Street Photography. I was given a hard time in forums and through other comments very often and always tried to defend myself. I've started not to do that anymore as it is too tiring and a waste of time. You cannot please everyone and there will always be people criticizing your work. The only thing you should do is to accept the fact that there will be a lot of criticism on certain street photos.

You may prevent criticism by not shooting too close or not publishing certain photos but in the end it is your style/work and you want to show this to the World. The more your photos polarize the more you have to live with critics; it's that simple and you may have to be prepared. If you are not used to it, it might be difficult for you to accept this fact. I can say that you will survive it as long as you don't take it personally. Just remember that there are people who have different views and obviously may not like what you do. It's like in real life; there are conflicts nearly everywhere and this is just another conflict.

Per definition, Street Photography is a kind of journalism of life in public. You show what everybody sees with their eyes everyday but do not notice; you capture this with your camera and highlight it to the World so they can see it as well. There is nothing bad about it. Maybe not everyone wants to be published on the Internet, but this is another story. You have to believe in yourself and be sure that you do the right thing. If you cannot do that, you will have a hard time in the Street Photography scene.

Of course you can choose your style and find a way to get the least critical response possible but you should never forget that you shoot for yourself and only for yourself. There is no other reason for you to press that shutter button. If you at any time make a photo for someone else you should stop and think about it. You will start losing your personality as a Street Photographer if you stop doing things because of criticism. It's your style which makes you unique, not the amount of people who like your work.

Don't lose the lesson…

Based on the famous quote "When You Lose, Don't Lose the Lesson", I have to admit that I've lost a lot of good shots. This happens to every Street Photographer probably always in his life. You have to really learn from these losses and try to figure out why you couldn't make the shot. There are of course several reasons for a lost shot but there are also several ways to avoid it the next time.

When I miss a shot, I'm always happy in the first place that I have seen the situation. It's important that we see the things before we can capture them. Then I'm wondering why it happened. Most often I didn't have my camera with me. Sometimes I was too slow. Sometimes there is something in between me and the subject. Sometimes the person sees me before I could get the shot. Sometimes the settings were not correct. Sometimes the light was not ideal. Sometimes I crop something off by not framing correctly.

As you can see, it happens to me and probably often to other people as well. So it's not a big deal when it happens to you. The bigger deal is that you should learn from your mistakes and should analyze the root cause of the mistake. This sounds now very theoretical but, when you want to get better, you have to understand why it didn't work out. Street Photography is a lot to do with self-education; if you can figure out and analyze your mistakes yourself, you can improve much faster.

Always try to look at your photos from a viewer's perspective and figure out what can be done better - what did you miss in this photo, what adds something to it, what takes something away - as it's your analysis which makes yourself a better photographer, not the critical response you get from others. When you listen to others, you will get confused. You have to grow yourself, based on your thoughts, ideas and views about your photos.

Change your mindset…

I often get asked the question about how people react or if I get beaten up after a shot. This has never happened and people very rarely ask me about what I'm doing. The problem is that when you approach people with this kind of thinking you will not be able to make a good photo. You should see someone and the only thing you're thinking should be: "How do I get this shot done?" Any other thinking is not helping you to get a good photo and will only disturb the process.

Get over your fear and focus on the composition of how you will make a good photo. If there is communication after you have pressed the shutter release button, you can handle this when it happens. Then you have plenty of time to discuss and think of a good answer. The important thing to remember is that only a few people will approach you and therefore it's not worth the effort being frightened of something that rarely happens.

It's all about practicing and gaining the confidence to know that most of the people will not care about you taking their photo. It's the fear of the photographer who thinks he is doing something bad. Shoot as it would be the most normal thing in the world. Shoot as you would shoot your best friend. Shoot as you would be asked to shoot any person. It is all about the mindset when you shoot a candid portrait.

Fear kills the Shot…

In Street Photography there is something you should not have: Fear. A lot of aspiring Street Photographers are struggling with the fact that they cannot point their camera towards a stranger in public. Since this is one of the main features in this genre of photography, you will have to get over it. If you cannot get rid of your fear, you may never become a good and solid Street Photographer.

I would say that the fear is not really worth it; it's an overreaction to fear the response of the person you are photographing. I very seldom get a response and have hardly ever experienced really frightening moments. The first thing you should do is forget everything you read about shooting in the streets. I've been a Street Photographer now for over two years and I know what I'm talking about. There is no such thing as a person beating you in the face or someone smashing your camera. It's not happening, whatever people are telling you.

The best way to get over your fear is to try it out. Go out and start shooting people. Maybe you could start with shoes, hands, bags, dogs or whatever first. Maybe you could use a longer lens and get shorter over a period of time. The most important thing is really doing it and getting the experience and the feedback. You will see that it is not as bad as you think it will be. Street Photography has a lot to do with experience. You cannot get over your fear in one day. Your fear will fade away slowly over time.

When I first shot people from a really close distance my heart really went mad. Now I can do it without feeling a difference in my heartbeat. You will be more relaxed and open to composition when you are able to approach people without fear. On the street you should be able to relax and concentrate on your kind of photography. This is very important and any distraction will hinder you taking really good shots. So get rid of your fear and enjoy the relaxed way of shooting people in public.

Now I only get a faster heartbeat when I see something really exciting which I really want to capture. When I see something which would really make a killer shot, I get nervous, but this is different to fear. It's more a kind of fear of losing the shot.

Expect the Unexpected…

On the street you cannot really expect what you will get at the end of the day. You cannot even expect how people will react before, while or after you shoot them. This keeps Street Photography interesting and challenging. It's like in real life, you have no idea what is happening and you cannot predict anything. This is exactly what makes it different to other genres of photography. On the street there are no rules. On the streets there are no laws. On the street you have to survive with your camera; there is nothing else that can help you. If you want to get a good shot, you have to go close.

If you cannot do that, you will never become a good Street Photographer. You cannot stand there and wait until something happens. You have to approach people and take the shot; they will not pose for you. Nobody would call you and ask for a street shot. It's all about you, your ideas and your eye. For me this is the interesting thing; to go out into the streets not knowing what will happen and making something out of nothing. Of course this is not everybody's thing and I can tell you, it is not as easy as it sounds and looks. It takes a lot of experience, practice and a very good eye.

The success on the street is not just based on your knowledge about Street Photography. For me it's my personal condition which is most relevant to a good street experience. Often I either see a lot of things or I don't. The longer the breaks of non-shooting are, the better I feel on the street. Sometimes you have to take a break or do something different in order to get back into a good state of mind. If you have an overdose of Street Photography it will blind you to new shots. But this doesn't happen very often…

Get better with every shot…

I have only one piece of advice with regards to becoming a better street photographer: Shoot, Shoot, Shoot. Don't study the work from the old masters, don't go into exhibitions and don't read about photography; just go out and shoot in the streets. Observe the people and what they do, study their life in public and try to document it. Street Photography is the documentation of everyday life in public. It's nothing more and nothing less. The better you can transfer some ordinary situation into an interesting photo, the easier it is for you to become a good Street Photographer.

You should spend all your time outside on the streets with your camera and your eyes looking at life and how it is happening. If you cannot spend most of your spare time walking down the streets, you should perhaps look for a different kind of photography. You have to feel the street to capture it. You have to become a part of it. It's all about getting into the street, shooting everything around you and making a lot of photos. You cannot burn the soul of a person onto your sensor without confronting yourself with humanity. You have to learn a lot about life in public and on the street to really be able to catch such a moment.

At the beginning you might only get good photos 1% of the time. This is normal and you should not be disappointed because of that. This figure will rise over time but might not get over 5-10%. Just keep shooting and keep the best shots only. Delete the rest of them to keep your mind and your computer clean and lean. Always motivate yourself to take even better shots next time. This keeps you following the right track and you will become better. When you look at your old work you will realize that, out of all your early work, only very few shots are really good. This is also normal. You may even delete some old shots you liked at that time. This is a good sign that you have naturally improved. Maybe there will be only 12 good shots a year but it's not the good shots that keep you doing it; it's your interest in humanity that keeps you walking down the street.

Preparation is everything…

Having the guts to shoot a stranger in the street is one thing, being prepared to get a shot is another. Often I see people walking around with their camera switched off, the lens cap on the camera, the settings from the day before, and so on. You have to be prepared and concentrated at all times when you want to capture something really stunning. The decisive moment is not waiting until you are ready to shoot.

First of all, your camera must be switched on every moment you are on the street. On a DSLR a switched on camera doesn't really use a lot of battery power. You have to be ready and this can only be reached by having the camera available. Keep holding your hand with your finger on the trigger. You may have to shoot fast, so be prepared to get the camera to your eye and press the trigger. You may think now this is weird but we are here to shoot and not to walk around.

You don't have the time for adjusting the settings when you see something. The settings must already be set while you are walking down the streets. I normally work in P mode on my Lumix and A mode on my Nikon. Everything is set and I normally ensure that my shutter speed is 3x my focal length. Meaning when I use a 50mm lens, I use a shutter speed of at least 1/150 (3 x 50 = 150). This is the only way to ensure your photos will not blur by motion, either by you or by your subject. When it's getting darker you have to increase your ISO value to keep a fast enough shutter speed.

On my Nikon I use the single auto focus settings. I normally point the auto focus to the eye of the subject. You always have to know where this auto focus point is located. When I press the OK button in the middle of my navigation wheel, this point will be centered. Then I can press twice the up button and once the left button and I have the auto focus point on the eye of my subject. This I normally do in the seconds I approach someone to shoot a candid portrait. I see a person, know on which side of the frame I will position him, put the auto focus point there, get my camera to the eye, shoot 2-3 shoots and walk away. This should take about 3 seconds but only when you are prepared and everything is ready to shoot.

The direction you are walking is more important than you may think. It's all about the correct light and good view of your subjects. When it's bright sun light, you always walk on the shady side of the street. When this is not possible, try to walk with the sun in your back. Never shoot against the light, which will not give a good result, except if you use a flash to light up the persons face. But that is a different story.

Choose the side of the street where there are more people. I always believe that in a crowd with a lot of people there are more interesting characters. Especially for candid portraits this is important to me. I don't like to shoot average faces. A face must have something special which attracts me and my camera.

It relaxes me when I know that my camera is set up correctly and I can trust it. It feels good when you can be sure that it will work when you press the trigger. You can reach this confidently by practicing a lot and knowing your camera inside out. It's no secret but, the better you know your camera and its settings, the more you can concentrate on your subjects.

Getting good ideas…

Maybe you are wondering how I always get these ideas and stories to tell. Actually this is very simple to explain: I think quite a lot about life. Naturally, during such thinking about life, I also get ideas about Street Photography projects.

Most of my ideas I get while taking a shower in the morning, sitting on the toilet or being in boring meetings or presentations; actually it just happens automatically when I do anything where my brain is not needed. Now you might think that I'm bored quite often but this is not the case; it's more that I quite often have moments of inspiration. These normally happen in the morning after a lonely evening on the couch surfing the Internet and watching meaningless TV. Then it seems that my brain works during the night and is very fit the next morning. Maybe it's also the case that I normally go to bed very early these lonely nights.

It also helps to talk to other people about a certain topics. Then you start thinking more intensely and you build certain ideas in your mind. The worst thing would be not to write them down. You cannot have too many ideas and if you don't write it down, the idea could be lost. Recently I have found it very useful to carry a small notebook with me so I can take notes of my ideas.

pain
relief

coughs
& colds

opening

mon   9.00am
tues   9.00am
wed   9.00am
thurs   9.00am
fri   9.00am
sat

What you see is what you get…

I know that I have mentioned the topic about seeing already in my first book but since it is one of the key success factors in Street Photography, I have to mention it again.

You have two eyes which you should use and train to see the things you want to see. It maybe sounds weird but you have to know what you want to see and then you will see it. I was walking through the Zurich main train station today without a camera. I saw so many things I would have photographed. Did I see more because I didn't have my camera with me?

No, I think the reason is mainly that I was aware and actively looking for the photos I like to take. You should not wait and see, you should look around and find. It's an active not a passive process. You can define what you want to see. As soon as you have pictured it virtually you will also see it physically. There is a saying that a photo is first created in a photographers mind before the shutter button is pressed. This is exactly what it is all about.

Maybe you are wondering what you should wish to see. Maybe you look at other people's photographs to find ideas. Maybe you just walk around with wide open eyes. The most important skill is to have enough imagination that you can compose a photo in your mind. You will know exactly how it will look before you have taken the shot. With this skill you will also know upfront if it is worth taking a shot or not. Maybe the background is not nice, the light is difficult or you will be too late to get the shot. All of this needs a lot of experience but once you have this ability it will help you a lot.

Look how you look…

I'm not sure if you have ever thought about your personal look when you go out onto the streets to shoot. Sure if you could become invisible, you would choose this feature. But, as we cannot become invisible, we have to adjust our look to the surrounding street. Don't wear colorful clothing and don't dress too funky. Just wear something normal, which is dark instead of bright. Wear good shoes so you can walk far and run fast.

When you go to tourist places, dress like one of them. The better you fit into the location you are shooting, the more invisible you are. If you want to shoot in a slum or a poor area of a city, the tourist look might not be the right choice. In that situation you have to dress as local as possible. Maybe even hide your camera somewhere until you will use it. In some places you cannot just walk with your camera. You have to be sensitive about how you look and how you act. Maybe at first walk around without your camera to see how people react to strangers. This is important in countries where you attract attention by a different look of your body. Like when I was in Turkey, everybody could see that I'm not Turkish. There you could wear the most local clothing and they still can see that you are a foreigner.

It also helps if you can speak some words of the local language so you can at least say thank you or ask for permission for a photo. Always be friendly when you shoot in places where you are the only tourist and where there are not too many people around you. You never know what can happen if someone doesn't want you to take their photo. It's just a measure of precaution.

I think I don't have to say that you should take only your camera with one lens with you and that this camera should be as small as possible. When you wear cargo pants you can put your spare battery and memory card into one of these pockets. Don't take too much money with you and nothing else which you would not need to shoot. You are out to shoot and nothing else. The more stuff you wear or carry with you the more you are handicapped to do what you originally set out to do: "Shoot in the streets…"

The stealthy photographer…

The most difficult thing when shooting in the streets is to be invisible. You may think that this is not possible but I would say that it is important to act correctly so as not to attract the attention of the other people. There are several things you can do to achieve this. First of all, it's important that you dress not too colorfully and instead wear very discrete grey or dark colors. 'Dress for success' is the key phrase.

Another thing you have to be aware of is that you don't look like a photographer at all. Don't take your biggest DSLR with you; instead take your compact Micro 4/3. Hold it in your hand, the strap around your wrist, hold it down while not shooting and take it up to your face when it's needed. If you see something, get the camera up and shoot. Don't wait too long until you press the trigger. A photo can be captured in 2 seconds.

Pretend that you are shooting something else. Hang around shooting everything around you. They will think that you are a freaky tourist or someone who is doing some kind of art project with their camera. After a few shots they will not take any notice of you.

Another trick is to hang around at a certain place and just stand there for a while. Then you are part of the scene. People have seen you but they will forget about you after some time. This is not only handy in big places with many people but also in smaller locations. It is important that everyone has seen you. As long as they are familiar with you standing there, for them you are not a stranger anymore.

Off-Street Training

Street Photography combines a lot of different aspects of photography. Therefore you could also practice Street Photography off the street. This means you can improve your Street Photography by shooting other things or even that you should become an expert in other disciplines before you go out into the street:

Sports
In Street Photography things happen very fast and are unpredictable. It's like in sports where you have to observe the game, see what's happening and look a little bit ahead to capture the action. You have to know where something leads to ensure you get the right shot and of course you have to be quick with a fast shutter speed. There are a lot of different disciplines in sport you can use to practice this.

Concerts
I practice my low level performance at concerts. Nowhere else is there action in low light. If you can handle concerts you can handle the street. There is the crowd of listeners who might get in your way, there are people who might push you and it's tight, loud, hot, and dark like on the street. You have to get your shot no matter what happens around you.

Portraits
In order to get a good candid portrait, you have to practice portraits. This can be done with friends and family. Be sure to practice outdoors with different light situations. You will learn everything about light, composition and camera settings. Until you know everything about portraits, you should not be on the street and jump into people's faces.
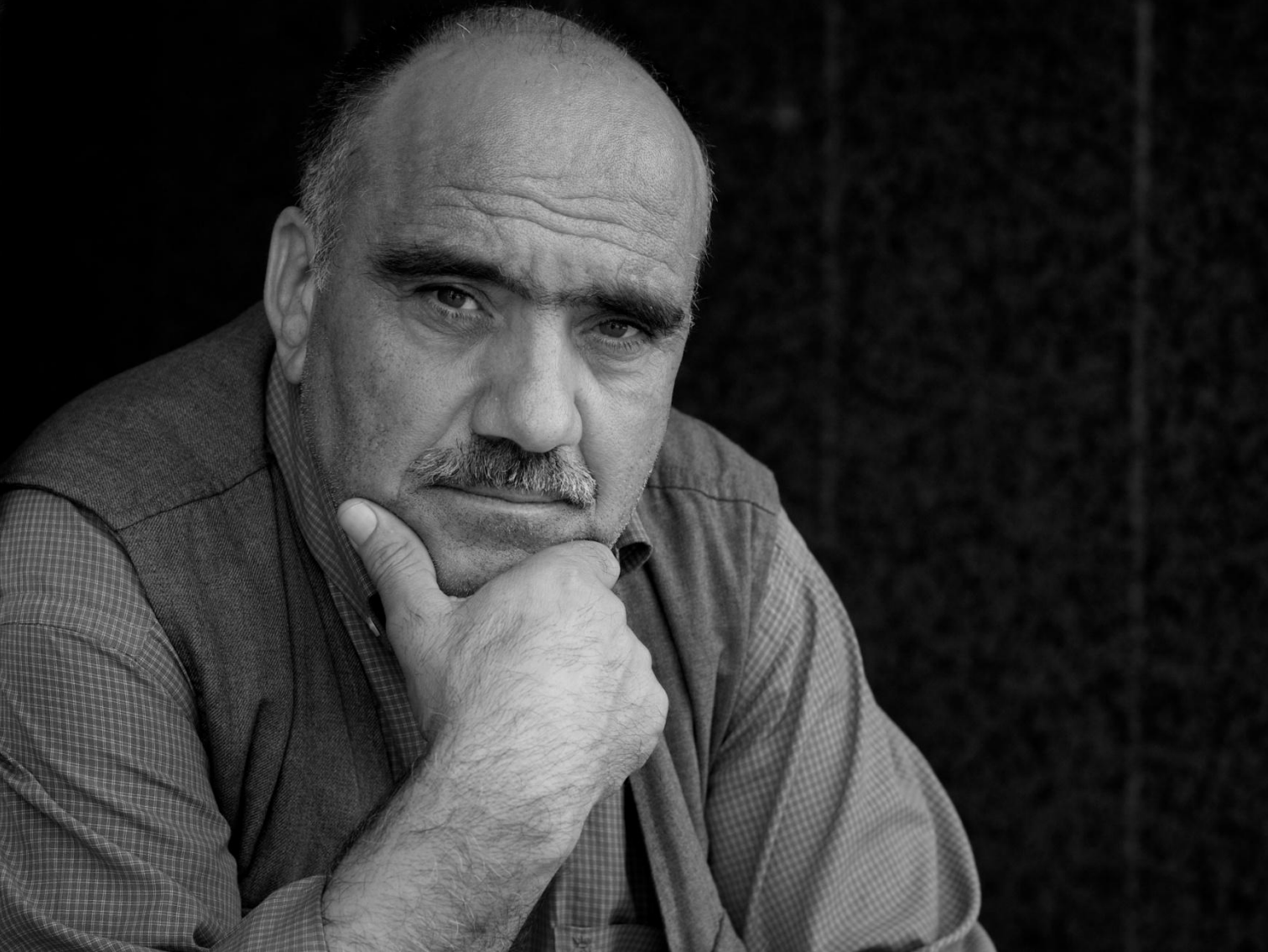
Close-up's
I like to shoot flowers and insects sometimes but also this kind of photography is off the street training for a Street Photographer. You have to be fast and stealthy somehow. You have to get as close as possible not to disturb nature but still get a good shot. Not an easy task. It's another good exercise to hold your camera still and get a sharp photo. You really have to concentrate on doing this which helps in the streets as well.

Architecture
In architecture photography it's all about lines, forms and shapes. I did a lot of architecture before I became a Street Photographer. I can really say that this helped me in composing my street shots. Especially with some leading lines which make a photo interesting. Some photos even combine architecture with street and I think these are very interesting. I would not see these kinds of situations if I had not shot a lot of architecture in the early days.

Should I walk or should I run…?

Often people ask me how I approach the people I shoot. They think that I go up to people, take the shot and run away. The main thing in Street Photography is to remain calm as long as there is nothing unexpected happening. First you find your target, you approach it, you take your shot and you walk slowly away. The calmer you are, the more discrete you are. Only slow moves will prevent your target from thinking that you took a shot of them. If you act hectically, they will realize that you took a direct shot of them. This will not help you to get a good shot and it will definitely not help to prevent confrontation.

Always walk at the same speed, continuous and like you would just walking naturally down the street. There should be a continuous flow of walking, taking photos, looking around and pretending to shoot something else (if necessary).

Sure there are situations where you might need to run away but this would only be in an emergency situation and will not happen often. Sometimes you cannot be sure how people will react. In such unpredictable situations you may wish to walk a bit faster. I have never really gotten into trouble but you have to be sure that you are able to run fast, if needed. That's why you should wear good shoes and take only the most necessary stuff with you. I don't want to scare you but Street Photography is not always a piece of cake.

Killers shoot twice…

There is a reason why killers in the movies always shoot twice. The same is valid on the street. You have to be sure that you get the shot. Therefore set your camera in continuous shooting mode and press the button until at least two frames are taken. This doesn't take more time but is very valuable. I would even go for three frames in a row to be 100% sure. On a candid portrait this feature is priceless as you often only have a fraction of a second of time to get the persons portrait. Therefore you have to use this short amount of time to your advantage, as it never comes back. There is no second chance in candid portraiture.

I know that some people don't like the fact that I shoot people from a short distance straight to their face – that it's maybe not respectful, not honorable and not compliant with the law - but there is something in such a photo which keeps me doing it. There is this special look in their face, which you cannot get otherwise. If you have seen my videos, you know how I work and how close I go.

You need a fast auto focus, a fast series of frames per second and the guts to get close. As soon as the person looks at you, keep shooting 2-3 frames. It sounds very simple but most people fail by not having the guts. You will realize that shooting 2-3 times in a row will save many shots. You will get better results than by shooting just once. It's simple but effective.

It's not just about shooting…

Think about this situation: There are 50 Street Photographers doing the exact same kind of photography in the same way. Their work is completely equal and they are spread around the World. Which of these 50 Street Photographers will become the most famous and will most likely sell the most prints…?

What I have learned so far from life is that it doesn't really matter what or how you do something; it's more important that you know the right people and that these people know what you are doing. Of course they have to like what you do and it somehow must attract their attention. In the example above, the photographer with the biggest and widest network will become the most famous Street Photographer while others do exactly the same thing in a different area of the World and nobody really cares about it.

This is something which happens in photography very often. There are many talented people out there who don't market their work well enough to share it among the interested people. They have all the skills it takes to be a good photographer but in the networking area they fail. Nobody will ever see their work as it is not published anywhere. Sure there is also an element of luck to getting noticed by the World but you can help that luck along a little bit. Try to share your work with friends, find other Street Photographers around the World to discuss and share your work and join groups and forums on different platforms. It's all about networking nowadays. And maybe it's the girlfriend of the boss of your wife who tells you at a boring Christmas dinner that she knows this guy who knows this curator who has an empty space in his gallery because the artist killed himself. Then you are glad to be at this place at this very moment; even though it was terribly boring until that moment.

I'm coming back to the Vivian Maier story once again; she got World famous because of two things: She made some good photos and the story behind it was so incredible that everybody shared it around the World. If the story had not been that interesting, she would not have become World famous. I guess there were other Street Photographers at that time who haven't become famous until now but it's only because they didn't have this background story.

It's all about passion…

When it comes to passion I can really tell you a lot about it. I see a lot of people doing so many activities in their lives but who are not really passionate about any of these things. For them it's more the quantity of activities they do which is important. In my opinion it is only the passion that counts. You have to be passionate about something and you will be able to reach everything. Street Photography must be the No. 1 thing in your life and you will become an expert at it. You should think about it before you go to sleep and it should be the first thing on your mind when you wake up.

For me it was always a big thing but it got even bigger over time. I started to build an online community, started to meet other Street Photographers, people started to really follow and like my work and I got a lot of views and feedback. This all together made me even more passionate. I even wrote a book and this would not happen if there wasn't interest in my work and my thoughts. Sure I cannot turn my passion into money, which I also don't want. A passion should remain a passion and should not become a job. If it's a job it would be much different; you would not feel the same excitement as before when you have to do it from 9 to 5. At least for me this would be the case.

The only thing you have to remember is that if you don't really care about Street Photography then you should probably do something else. It will not work out and you will not get very far. It's not the amount of activities you do; it's the passion you put into these activities that counts. You cannot be passionate about several things. It's like you cannot love more than one person in the same strong way. I hope you understand what I mean.

When you hear and see me talking about Street Photography you can see the passion in my eyes. I'm not a person who talks a lot but when it comes to something I really like, you will see a big difference. The same happens when I write about my passion. I only have to set a title and then it writes itself. This is what happens when you are passionate about something.

Being fed up…

When I travel to the big cities of this World, it is always very exciting at the beginning. I take a lot of photos in the first 24 hours and then this number goes down and gradually becomes less every day. I personally think that this is a normal behavior as the effect of a new city is always "Wow!". This "Wow!" effect will slowly drain and in the end you can become fed up with a city and its people. You look at the same faces again and again, you shoot similar situations and you even get tired of Street Photography. At least that's how I experienced it.

I even experienced this in New York City, one of the best cities for Street Photography. This happens to me everywhere I travel to. I get fed up after a certain time and it takes a while to get this hunger back. I don't even feel much like processing those images during these days - I just need a break from it. I'm glad I don't do this for living as I would not want to shoot in the streets every day. This would kill me and my creativity would fade away over time.

Since Street Photography is so versatile, it's easy for me to recover from these fed up days. It normally goes away naturally after a certain amount of time; I don't even have to shoot flowers to heal from it. In order to not get fed up, you should not travel longer than a few days. Normally a longer weekend of about 4 days is enough to keep the hunger alive. When you stay longer, you will soon get bored. Maybe you should also shoot less and use the evenings to choose and process all the photos of the day. Then you can get up in the morning and know you have no pending processing on your computer. Probably everyone experiences this in a different way. You just have to find a way to keep your fire burning…

Don't look back...

Street Photography has a long history and most people think of black and white photographs when they think of the old masters. A lot of these photographers try to get inspired by these Leica guys of the old days. They would love to shoot exactly like them.

I'm not sure if this is the right approach. There has been a lot of change since Henry Cartier-Bresson took his photos on the streets. There have been huge changes in technology, laws, culture, society and media since that time. We have to be aware and of course take advantage of these changes. This is our time and our chance to do it in a more modern and high-tech way.

We now have 6 frames per seconds and ISO 6400. We can shoot with our mobile phone and can share this photo with 10,000 people within seconds. We can geo-tag our photos so that everyone can see where it was taken. We can even sell prints online without even knowing or meeting the customer. We can "Hangout" on Google+ with another 9 street photographers around the World talking about our passion.

This is something people forget and a rangefinder camera with black and white film is not necessary. Just be aware where we are and why we are here. Street Photography is not black and white anymore; it can be colored. The photos are of very good quality regardless of whether you took them with your mobile phone or your DSLR. There are thousands of Street Photographers out there. Things have changed…

What I want to say is that you have to be aware of these changes and embrace these new features to improve your photography as well as your marketing strategy. I don't mean to say that you have to spam the World with all of your shots, including the bad ones. There are big opportunities nowadays which we have to consider and take advantage of it. If you don't take these advantages, someone else will.

I have tried a Leica M9 and failed. Maybe I'm just too spoiled to handle a manual Rangefinder camera. Maybe I got used to fast auto focusing with a lot of focus points, high ISO values and frame rates which can make a movie. The choice is yours. Either look back or look forward. There are nice things out there. Street Photography remains the same, although the tools, methods and media have changed a lot. You still have to make the shot in the right moment: compose, shoot and process it.

Flash Those Faces…

Using a flash on the streets is nothing new. I guess everyone has seen the video of Bruce Gilden from NYC. When you look at it for the first time, you may be shocked and you may wonder, 'How this is possible'?

I tried this out some months ago with my Nikon D90, my Nikon SB-900 Flash and a flash cable. I was not successful because I didn't feel comfortable but some months later I tried the same thing in Istanbul with a slightly different setup. The same Nikon SB-900 flash, a wireless trigger (Yongnuo RF-602) and my Lumix GF1. The new technology and the night of a foreign city let me feel very comfortable or maybe my balls have grown in the past months so I'm not as shy as I used to be.

It was an interesting experiment. First of all there is the advantage that you can still shoot although it's dark. Secondly it's a completely new thing which you have to try out. The setup is simple and you can try it out with a friend. The most important thing is to set everything to manual, use a prime lens and keep always the same distance when you shoot someone. I used auto focus, while others use a fix manual focus with a high aperture value.

There is not a lot you have to consider. Just be sure that you are fast enough and that you hold the flash a little bit to the side. People with dark clothes appear underexposed and people with brighter clothes will be overexposed. You should consider that with the distance you are shooting them. The rest is practice.

Please have a look at these videos to see how I did it and how people reacted. There was nobody saying anything and nothing did happen. It's a myth that there are people breaking your camera or hitting you in the face. A myth the wimps of this World are spreading around…

Video 1 | Video 2

These videos show how to do it but the photos taken were not keepers.

Respect those Rights…

I'm not the right person to talk about this topic but I think I can give you some insight about my point of view regarding rights. When I do a candid portrait I get very close to a person and shoot him directly in his face. No asking, no talking, no eye contact. This is how I do it. I guess this is not the big problem. The big problem comes when I publish this photo on the Internet. There I violate some rights or laws. I'm fully aware of that and I can live with this.

I know that we should respect the rights of the people on the street but there would be no Street Photography if we all followed the laws of our countries. At least in Switzerland (and many of the European countries) Street Photography would die if we had to follow the rights of every individual. If you want to do that, you need a model release signed by everyone you take a photo of. I'm not sure if people would sign such a document from a complete stranger in the streets. You will have to store this document together with the photo to have it available if any issues arise.

Respect is more about who you shoot and how you shoot a person. I think it is more respectful when someone sees that you shoot them (straight to the face) rather than using a long tele and shooting them from across the street. Sometimes you may even ask a person if you can take a photo if you are unsure; it will be different but you can still get a good photo.

In the end it is your personal decision on how and who you shoot. You will always get different answers to the questions about right and wrong. You will always get critics about your candid shots where people are visible. This is Street Photography and you have to live with it. Once more, you have to stay on the path you have been following so far. You can either ask everyone or not ask everyone. I have my way of working and my sense of respect and dignity while others have their own. Don't judge someone by the way they are working. Look at the photo only. If you like it, it's fine. If you don't like it, it's also fine. There should not be judgment on rights and laws. It will not make a photo better or worse. We document life in public and normally don't ask. That's what it is about...

They are all the same...

...in front of my camera. Life happens in the streets and there should be no difference who is in front of your lens. Whether it's a child, an old man, a hot girl or a beggar; they should all be equal when it comes to Street Photography. Sure there are pedophiles, perverts and other people who take advantage of such situations but I'm neutral and I try to show life as it happens on the street no matter who is in front of my lens.

There are people saying that they don't shoot kids. There are people saying that they don't shoot beggars. Some people care about such shots, others don't. It's the responsibility of the photographer to decide if he wants to take such a shot or not. It should not be society or any common sense. If you as a photographer think it is worthwhile to point your camera towards someone, you should do it. Do it with respect and dignity, in a way that fits the purpose and maybe even ask for permission. You shoot for yourself and not for your audience. You shoot for the sake of documentation of life in public. Don't forget that.

I know that not everyone wants to look at the sadness of life. I'm interested in life as a whole and I also want to document it as a whole. Therefore I shoot everyone from kids to beggars, from rich to poor, from young to old, from good to bad. I'm privileged to travel to different cities of this world. There I want to get a complete portfolio of life in public. Sure this is not always possible. I normally try to shoot the things we don't have or see in my home country. This is what interests me on the street. The things which are different, unique, touching, make me think or might be interesting to others as well. This is what should drive you. It should be the hunger to document the variety of life, no matter who is in the frame.

The Perfect Camera…

I know that there is no such thing as a perfect camera but I still believe that one day I will hold it in my hands or maybe I can work for one of the big camera brands to help them design it. Until then I keep dreaming of a piece of technology which will change my life and will perfect my Street Photography. Here are my honest thoughts about the perfect camera for Street Photography as I perform it:

The perfect camera must have a full frame sensor. This is not really a problem nowadays and there are already a lot of brands which have that. The problem comes with the second requirement…

The size of the camera should not extend the volume of a cigarette box. Here a lot of camera sellers struggle. They have small cameras but the sensor shrinks with the camera. The only brand with a full frame sensor and reasonable body size is Leica, with their M9-P, but there we have another problem…

The autofocus should be fast and accurate like on a DSLR since the autofocus lets you focus fast and easily; this is the heart of a sharp street photo. The auto focus cannot be too fast. The faster the better is the key. I normally shoot pretty fast and continue walking. I don't hang around taking a shot.

Interchangeable lenses might be an advantage to use the camera also for other purposes than Street Photography. I would say that this is not a criterion which is mandatory. It's just nice to have. You could use different lenses also for different techniques on the street. If the lens is fixed (like on the X100) it should be between 28mm and 35mm.

Another important factor is the ISO performance. High ISO values are something common on the street. You should be able to shoot concerts with your street camera. If you are not able to do that, it is not a suitable camera. It's not only the ISO value but also the maximum open aperture which counts towards this requirement.

The lens of the perfect camera would be a prime lens. The maximum open aperture of a prime lens is wider than any other lens on the market. You need as much light as possible on the street. With a kit lens you will not be successful. Invest in a good wide angle lens or buy a cheap 50mm to start with.

While walking down the streets I often take a lot of shots. Sometimes I shoot 500 times or even more. This is battery consuming and if your camera cannot handle that, it is not worth buying it. That sounds a bit hasty but I don't want to end up going home because my battery dies. I also don't want to carry more than one spare battery with me.

You may not like it but, for me, sometimes it would be great to have a swivel display. I often shoot from different perspectives and then such a display would be handy. Sure this is not a must but it would be nice to have.

There are cameras available with touch screens. As I have not tested them so far, I cannot say anything about them but it might come in handy as well. Sure it's not like a viewfinder but the times have changed and there is new equipment with new features available today. Get used to that if you want to take advantage of it. People will not see that you are taking a photo of them when you shoot with a touch screen. I think there are even more advantages.

Now! I have a huge list of requirements but there is no brand which has it: The Perfect Camera. The best thing would be for you to choose the features you want and check which camera is fulfilling your requirements. Maybe you will find a camera closest to your dream device.

He doesn't even use a Leica…

This was a comment about my first eBook on the Leica Rumors website. This made me think about today's photo communities where gear is more important than the eye. For me, you cannot see in a photo which camera was used. You will not even see what the settings of the camera were. You don't see if the photographer was focusing manually or automatically. This is all not really relevant to a photo. Either someone likes a photo or they don't like it. Good photography has nothing to do with technology. Technology should help to enable you to express your view of life.

Many photographers have not really realized that they should get away from the technology hype and get into photography. Maybe everyone should get a really old camera with manual focus for one day - even I should do that - to realize what kind of skills you should bring with you to the streets. No matter which camera you are using, it's the skill of you and your eyes that make a good shot, not the camera.

I don't know where this gadget loving comes from. Maybe we have too much money and there is too much new stuff out there. Maybe it's marketing or advertising which makes us believe a new camera will improve our photography. I always share my EXIF data where you can read everything about the gear I was using. When you judge me on this information, this is your own fault. Just look at the photograph, don't care about the title, the gear used or how the photo was created. Just look at the photograph itself. When it is working for you, that's fine. When it is not working for you, that's fair enough. There are so many other photographers out there you may like but never ever judge me on my camera.

You can buy quality…

…but your photos will not get better. A photo can be perfectly exposed and as sharp as possible but it might still be a boring or average photo. There are too many people thinking that a better camera makes a better photographer. There are even people thinking that if they take their shots in M mode they are better photographers. The end result is the photo coming out of the camera that will be hung in the galleries of this world. On such a print you will not see the camera that has been used or if the exposure was done manually or by the camera. You may guess at certain aspects, such as the sensor size or the focal length, but that would be it…

A good photo has nothing to do with an expensive camera or manual settings. A good photo has soul. It has something you cannot see, something you cannot buy, something you cannot touch, something you cannot learn. A good photo will contain everything of your experience as a photographer; it will be the result of all of your shots taken so far and it will be the perfect moment captured in a fraction of a second. This moment cannot really be planned, setup or fabricated. It will just happen and when you are ready, you will be able to capture it.

Some people would…

…not even see this moment happening.
…not have the balls to press the shutter release button.
…be too slow to get the shot done.
…make a boring photo out of this special moment.
…ruin this moment with some manual settings they are not mastering.
…not even have their camera with them.

What I want to say is that there are so many factors relevant for the perfect photo. I would even say that you cannot take the perfect photo on the streets but you can try to and you should always try to. It should be the reason why you go out with your camera. There is only one way to get closer to the perfect shot and that is by practicing. No amount of money will give you an advantage over practicing. There is no Dope, like in certain sports, that will give you some advantage in Street Photography. You could have the top DSLR, read all the books, attend all the workshops and know all the old masters of Street Photography and it will not help you to get better photos.

"It's the shutter count that counts, not the value of the gear."
Thomas Leuthard

When I say 'shutter count', I mean the experience you get from every shot, especially from every missed and every bad shot. From the missed opportunities you can learn the same amount as you can from your bad shots. Stop reading articles about new gear, get out and increase your shutter count.

Fix it in your Camera…

When I was in Beirut for the first time, there was a guy there called Andrew. He was very young and very motivated about Street Photography. He once showed me a shot on his camera and I made a comment about something which was not good (I can't remember what it was). He said "I can fix that in Photoshop." Wrong answer, Andrew. You have to fix it in your camera. Forget about your computer and Photoshop. Photoshop is not needed in Street Photography. Save that money for a good lens.

You always have to try to make it right in the first place. The camera can do a lot for you and you should take advantage of that. You should compose your photos with the idea of not having anything else to rely on, as if there would be no computer available to pimp certain things. Only this kind of thinking will help you get better. You have to ensure that you spend the least amount of time in front of your computer processing your shots. When you sit in front of your computer you should be socializing, marketing and networking.

Of course you cannot do it right in the first place as a beginner but you can try to get better and better. The camera settings contain three values only and the P mode is already pretty solid. You may have to do some exposure correction but that should be it. You just have to know your camera and your lens very well. If you use the same camera and the same lens all the time, it will become easy to get the right shot. After some hundred shots, you will figure out how you have to use it and why it might be a bit too bright or too dark sometimes. It's all about experience and practice. Therefore I suggest not changing lenses or cameras. It will only confuse you and you will not learn as fast as when you only use one set.

This is also valid for cropping: You should not crop a photo. The idea is that you fill the frame in your camera and keep it like that. For some people this might sound strange, but you will strengthen your eye by knowing how to compose in your viewfinder and not on your computer. After two years of shooting in the street I can compose a shot pretty fast which I will not have to crop at all. This is a skill which really helps you get better. Try it.

The photo below is not cropped or straightened at all. I took the shot with my GF1 and just did some post processing to it. There was not much time for the shot and the composition. But is seems that I got it pretty well. Doing it right in the camera has to do with experience only. The more you shoot, the faster you can compose. The better you compose, the less time you spend in front of your computer. The less time you spend in front of your computer, the longer you can shoot. The longer you can shoot, the more experience you can get...

Title before exposure…

I know that a good photograph doesn't really need a title and I don't want to say that a title is important; I just want to explain that it happens very often to me, that I see something on the street and a title pops up into my head before I take the shot. I know how the photo is being titled even before it exists. In such moments, for me, it is worth taking this shot because it already tells a story and it makes me think.

With a good title you can steer the thinking of the viewer. Maybe they look at your photograph and think something completely different. Maybe they don't even get the point of the photo. In those situations a title can help to draw the viewer's attention to the right point. Sometimes it is also difficult to express something just with a photo only; then the title helps a lot to get your point across.

Maybe not everyone agrees with me but for me a good photo also has a good matching title. I would even say that a good title can improve a photo. At least, a well-chosen title can give a certain direction to the people viewing your photos. Maybe you think of a title in the second before you take your next shot - maybe you remember my words when you see something you have to capture with your camera. A title is important, no matter what's in the photo.

I have seen boring titles like "Man smoking" or "Red Hat". Such titles are useless as they explain something everyone can see in the photo. You have to make the title interesting so that someone wants to look at your photo. A lurid title can draw the attention to a photo; when a title contains some sexual content, people seem to be more interested in the photo - especially when they cannot really see anything from the thumbnail - and people would want to open the photo to see the full content. When you Tweet your photo from Flickr, you only see the title. So if this title is good, the chance of someone clicking on the link is higher. A good title is marketing a photo.

Don't trust a photo…

I uploaded a photo from Berlin with a reflection where you could see that someone was grabbing my camera. It really looked like my camera was being stolen. The only thing was… it was just an illusion. My camera is still in my possession and it was never in danger. There was just a reflection of a hand in or outside of the bus which made it look that way. There were a lot of people who believed this story about my stolen GF1. The reason for this is that people trust photos and stories although they have no idea if they are true. Sure, in these days with the news from all over the world you cannot verify every single piece of information yourself but you should be curious about the things you see in photos and that you read in text.

Actually you should only believe what you see with your own eyes. There is so much potential for manipulation with today's technology that you cannot really trust pictures. If you know a photographer very well, you may know his style and way of working therefore you may trust his work. But all the rest of the photos out there could be fake, setup or even fabricated. This is not a call against photography; this is just to make you aware that there is potential to fake something if you really want.

Even the famous photographers did fake some photos or people doubt the authenticity of certain masterpieces. *The Falling Soldier* by Robert Capa was obviously setup. *The Kiss* by Robert Doisneau was not candid either. I wonder often, when I do a good shot, if people will believe me or not. In the end it doesn't matter if they believe me. I'm the only one who knows the truth. I'm an honest person and try to do honest, direct and candid photos showing reality. I would never setup a photo which would show something that was not happening as it happened. It's a kind of code of ethics, if you will. Street and documentary photography thrives from the authenticity and trust of the viewer that it's real. Please keep and respect this way of working, no matter what happens.

Always remember that a photograph never shows the reality; it just shows one fraction of a second of what has happened. Another second later, the same situation could look completely different. As you cannot judge a person by one portrait, you cannot judge a situation by one shot. You always have to see different photos from different angles to see and understand what was going on. There have been too many manipulations in the media in the past. Let's try not to be a part of that and keep Street Photography authentic.

On the next page you see the photo about the moment when my GF1 was stolen. It was viewed 1825 times on the first day on Flickr because the title was saying something that everyone wanted to see. There were 36 comments and 27 favorites that first day. People were sorry for my camera and only a few got it that it's a fake. That made me really think…

What about the Soul…

For me, it is difficult to judge when a photo is a good photo and when it is a B-Side. Sure I recognize the really good ones, but why are they really good? There is no checklist to tick off when making a photo. There is no rule for what you need to consider in composing an A-Side photo. I've thought a lot about this and have never found a clear answer. Looking at my top shots I can say the following:

When a photo looks old school, people like it more than when it looks modern. A candid and vintage look makes it more acceptable to the crowd. My "[Door opener…](#)" photo from Istanbul made this clear. This shot could have been made in the late 60's as the door really looks old fashioned. The boy is not dressed particularly modern; at least it doesn't appear so in B&W. It's a very simple composition but it all seems to work very well together. The large dark door and this little boy dressed in white entering; you cannot see anything from the inside but you can see that he is looking into the darkness. For me this works very well and it could also be a shot from Vivian Maier or someone else from the old masters. Maybe this makes it more rewarding but why people like it, I cannot say. Perhaps because it tells a story which is clear.

Often I notice that it's the simple photos that are liked by people the most. It doesn't have to be something really complicated, you can really simplify it. There should be a solid composition, the light must be correct and the exposure reasonable. This is all more or less basic stuff. It is the collection of these factors that makes a photo interesting and appealing to the viewer.

When a photo tells a story, there is a good chance that people will like it. The more the viewer can read into the photo and the more they can imagine a story, the better it will be accepted. You cannot create this story with a good title. It must be already in the photo. A title can help to guide the viewer somewhere he might not get to by just looking at your photo.

Generally a B&W photo is more appealing than a colored one. Street Photography must be in B&W to touch people's heart. It always has and it always will be. A photo in color cannot have as much soul as a B&W one - that is a fact. The average viewer has this expectation and you cannot change this. Although I often like colored street shots, the audience has a much different attitude.

For me it's the experience in Street Photography that gives you the ability to make really good photos. You train your eye over the years and your ability for composition grows in parallel. Together with an interesting motive and a bit of luck you can do it: the killer shot that gives you goose bumps while looking at it. If I knew how to do it exactly, I would only make those shots all day long. I guess this is why we go out to the streets for; this ultimate one shot wonder, the shot which changes our life, the fraction of a second when everything works out perfectly.

United We Shoot…

For me, Street Photography has a big social aspect. Of course shooting in the streets with several people is difficult but meeting with other passionate Street Photographers can be much more inspiring than reading a book about photography. It's not only about the social aspect; it's also about respect, friendship, sharing knowledge, helping, caring and much more. Shooting alone in the streets can be good to relax but it can also be very boring and depressing. Sharing photos, experiences, laughing together and having a drink after a photo walk can make a big difference. You can split up for shooting, meeting again after an hour to present your shots to a certain theme. You can build up virtual teams competing against each other over Flickr. There are so many ways to keep in touch, no matter where the other team members are located.

I like the advantage of a big online community when I'm travelling. When I plan to go to a new place I can ask my community if someone has been there already or if someone lives there. This helps me find the right spots and also helps to hook up with some local photographers. I can travel alone as I know there are people there I can meet who will show me around. You will never explore a city as deeply as when you walk around with locals. This is one of the strongest reasons to always meet with such people.

I believe that knowledge is power but only if it's being shared. Therefore you have to share your experience with aspiring Street Photographers because they want to learn as well. You can tell them everything since they will build up their own style. I cannot understand why some people don't even share the EXIF data of their shots. It's not a state secret and nobody will get an advantage which would give you a negative impact to your photography.

The title of this chapter is the slogan of the Beirut Street Photographers, to which I proudly belong. They have shown that you can build a group of passionate photographers within a short period of time and get attention in the media of a big city like Beirut. These passionate people always bring a smile to my face when I read some new story of their adventures.

Pay It Forward…

I didn't really realize how privileged I was until I met different people from around the globe. I have met people who could not afford a good camera. I have met people who could not afford a Flickr Pro account. I have met people who were just proud to be a Street Photographer, no matter what camera they were using. After all these experiences I realize how privileged I am. Since that time I am very thankful for that experience and I also try to help people in need to get some equipment or to improve their photography. This is also the main reason why this book is completely free of charge.

Old camera gear can still be useful for certain people who don't have the latest gear. I stopped selling my old stuff; I just try to give it to someone who can use it. I bought a new 50mm recently and gave my old Nikon 50mm 1.8D to Nareg from Beirut. I met Nareg last November in Beirut and he is one of these very talented and motivated photographers. He was shooting with the kit lens only and was struggling with the light. When I met him in Istanbul recently, I just gave him my old lens. He couldn't believe it and I just said: "Pay it forward in any way…" It is all about paying it forward in life. Anyone can do anything good for someone who is in need.

I know that I cannot help everyone. Sure this is just a small amount of kindness but, to the individual, it is a big deal. If more people would act like this, the world would be a better place. Maybe you should just think about it for a moment and maybe there is a way that you can give something from your old stuff to someone who can use it. Every photographer in the modern world has too much equipment. Give it away, for free. It feels good. And don't forget to be thankful that you can shoot with a camera in the streets.

Living from Street Photography...

My friends always tell me that I should turn my passion into a profession but I cannot really agree to this idea. The reason for that is very simple: There is no commercial market for Street Photography. Sure there are a lot of photographers interested in Street Photography but there are not enough people out there who would hang a photo of a stranger in their living room. Although Street Photography is very versatile, there is not a great deal of commerce you can achieve with it. If you are lucky you can sell some postcards, maybe some prints, but would this be enough to feed you?

I just published an eBook about Street Photography three days ago. A lot of people liked and downloaded it. There were about 10,000 downloads in 48 hours. I got a lot of positive feedback but the thing most people liked was the fact that it is completely free. I have thought several times if there could be a way to earn money from it but I don't think so. If I were to sell it, downloads would decrease massively. If I were to add a donation button, only about 0.1% of the readers may pay something. My philosophy from the beginning was to give something back to the community but I also knew that people would not pay for it. After I have published this book I may find a way to earn something but this is not the reason why I write books.

The only method of earning money would be to give workshops. The only issue with that is that there are only so many people out there. Therefore you can't give a lot of workshops; you would have to travel around the world to find enough people. Maybe you are lucky enough that you can cover your travel expenses but it will not be enough to cover all the costs of your living. Perhaps I am calculating in a very secure way but, knowing a little bit about economy and my monthly budget, it would be very hard to sustain. The other issue is that you cannot find enough people to give a workshop to every week.

The main reason why I don't want to work as a full time Street Photographer is the fact that I don't want to be forced to produce good photos. At present, I can just hang out with some friends in the streets and take some shots. If I do this as a profession, there must be good photos now and then. As you cannot really sell a lot of photos, taking photos would not be the main part of your profession. Is this what I like best? No, you cannot earn enough money with it. You have to find other ways to earn money.

You could build up a blog and a nice website with a lot of content and live from advertising but a professional photographer's website should not contain advertising as it doesn't look very professional. I'm also not sure if you could live from the money generated from advertising alone. I had a website in the late 90's where I earned about $1'500 a month from advertising. What I didn't like about it was that I had to do a lot of boring work for it and I stopped doing it after about a year. I want to do something which I really like in order to earn money with it so I still work in IT and perform Street Photography as a passion. If Street Photography was my job, I would have to find another passion.

I like to have a passion where you can publish and share whatever you want, all for free and all without pressure. You can perform it whenever you want and can take off as much time as you like. You just work when you want to work and you can take a rest at any time.

I have put all the photos of this eBook together in a slideshow which you can view on YouTube:

Slideshow
Background song "Hide me" by 7:pm Music

"Street Photography is like fishing.
Catching the fish is more exciting than eating it..."

Thomas Leuthard

Thank you…

Dear Community

This was my second book about Street Photography and it was the second time for free. I don't ask for money. I only ask that you pay it forward to anyone else who is in need. There are many things you can do to help someone else and which could make the World a better place. Maybe with this book I can help other people find their inspiration. Maybe someone else can share some of their knowledge for free. Just for the sake of the community and sharing.

If you feel bad now and don't know how you can pay it forward, you can also donate any amount of money. With this money I will do something good for the World of photography. There is no project yet but there are many ideas and opportunities. Since I travel quite a lot, I will probably find a way to donate this money to someone else that is in need. I will definitely write about it in one of my blogs. If you want to support me and be part of some good will to humanity, feel free to donate with the button below. The money will be paid forward in some way.

Donate

Thomas Leuthard

There is one more thing…

For those of you who haven't realized, all of the photos in this book are linked to Flickr. There you can see which camera and which settings I have used for my photos. On Flickr you can also find a [Set](#) with all the photos of this eBook. All my photos on Flickr are licensed under the Creative Commons concept. You can use them all for free, as long as you mention my name. This concept was explained in my first eBook.

There were some people asking if this book would be available in print. No, it's only an eBook so you will have to print it yourself for a paper copy. I know that there is a lot of potential and a lot of money if I was to print it but it's also a lot of work and hassle to please everyone who is involved in such a process. Therefore I like the simplicity of an eBook as you can just write and publish very fast.

And last but not least I want to thank Jack Blundell from Scotland who proof-read my entire book, chapter-by-chapter during writing. He did that for free and I highly appreciate his work. He makes me feel much better about what I have written since I know it is in slightly better English now. Jack, people like you make this World a better place. Thank you very much for your excellent work…

This is probably the last book I will write. For the moment I have expressed my thoughts enough and I will keep focusing on my photography, my workshops and my travelling. Next year I would like to see new cities I have never been to. I will post my travel plans on my website so that you may meet me somewhere on this planet. I'm always open to photo walks and having a drink with other photographers.

"Street Photography Basics"
Online Video Training

If you want to learn even more about Street Photography, there is an online video training which complements this eBook. With the coupon code **CollectingSouls** you get 40% discount:

https://www.udemy.com/streetphotography/?couponCode=CollectingSouls

Collecting Souls...

What Street Photography means to me