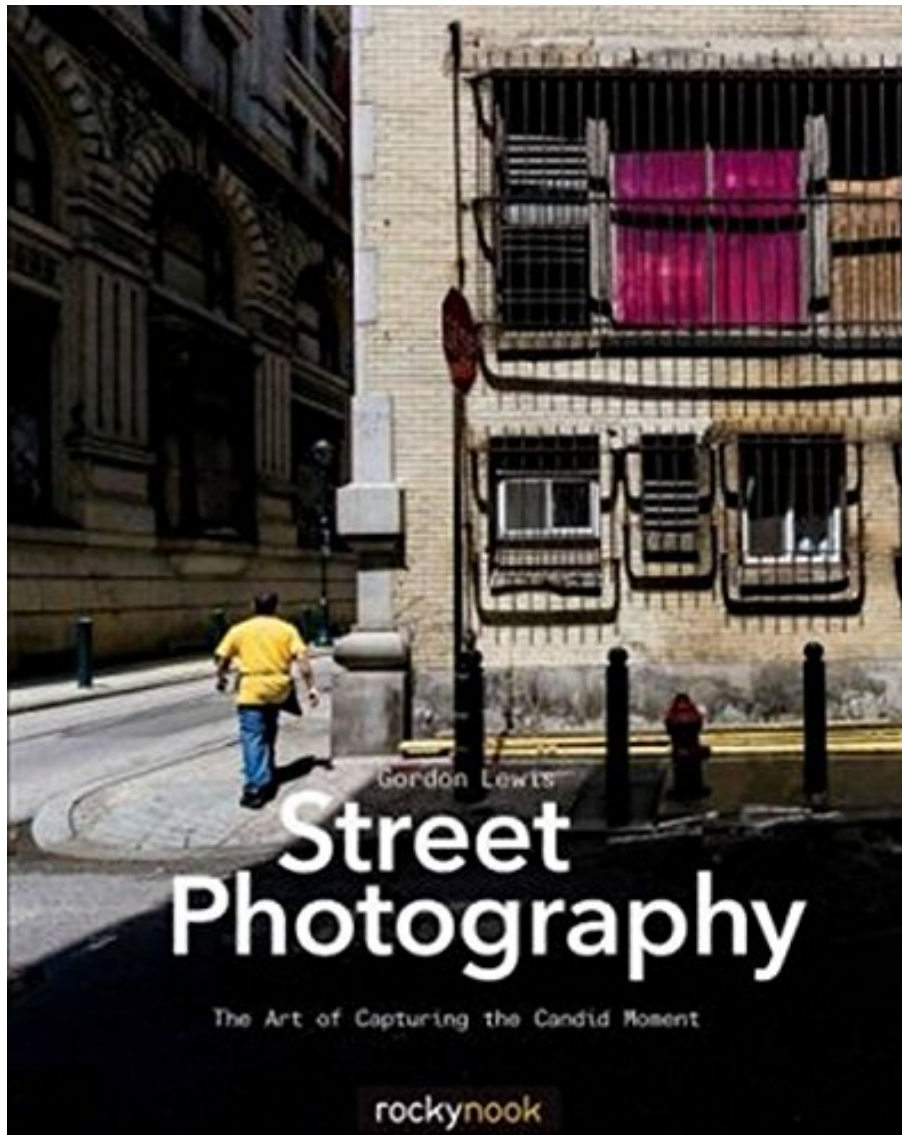


STREET PHOTOGRAPHY: THE ART OF CAPTURING THE CANDID MOMENT BY GORDON LEWIS



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About the Author

Gordon Lewis is a dedicated street photographer with over 40 years of experience. He began his writing career answering letters from owners of Olympus cameras, Vivitar flash units, and Kiron lenses. From there he graduated to being a contributing editor to magazines such as Camera 35, Petersen's Photographic, and Camera & Darkroom. Through unforeseen but fortuitous circumstances, he leveraged his irreverent wit into a TV sitcom-writing career, with hit shows such as Amen, Family Matters, and In Living Color to his credit. Now reformed, he earns his living as an e-learning instructional designer for Fortune 500 companies. Gordon lives just outside of Philadelphia-which, not coincidentally, is an excellent location for street photography.

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Since the advent of the camera, there have been photographers whose mission is to record and interpret the public sphere in all its aspects. Eugene Atget documented evidence of everyday life in the streets as well as the buildings and monuments of Paris. Henri Cartier-Bresson pursued what he called "The Decisive Moment," the moment in which the meaning of an event was most clearly captured in a photograph. Their work, and that of many other masters, has inspired generations of photographers to wander public spaces, camera in hand, searching for meaningful moments in time.

Success requires the street photographer to be proficient with their equipment, to be constantly aware of their surroundings, and to have a keen eye. Quick reflexes and self-confidence are essential: Street photographers know from experience that hesitation or procrastination could mean missing a once-in-a-lifetime shot. The adage "it's better to ask for forgiveness than permission" was probably coined by a street photographer.

In *Street Photography: The Art of Capturing the Candid Moment*, Gordon Lewis helps readers understand and conquer the challenging yet rewarding world of street photography. The book includes discussions of why photographers are drawn to street photography, the different styles of street photography, and what makes a great street photograph. Lewis then goes on to explore how the choice of location can change a photographer's approach to image capture: from city streets to fairs to beaches, Lewis discusses the impact different environments have on the process of street photography.

Another crucial element to becoming a good street photographer is learning to travel light, with minimal equipment. Lewis gives readers practical advice on everything from cameras and lenses to camera bags and clothing. Lewis also delves into the techniques and approaches that will help novices master the art of street photography.

Whether your style is to engage your subjects or to remain unnoticed and take candid portraits, Lewis offers ideas on how to capture fascinating moments in time: a gesture, expression, or composition that may exist for only a fraction of a second, but can leave a lasting impression of the wonders, challenges, and absurdities of modern life.

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Most helpful customer reviews

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

10,000 Images

By Conrad J. Obregon

The idea of street photography seems easy. You get an impromptu photograph of someone on the street. That shouldn't require much thought, it might seem, until one has tried to do it, and returns with a sad collection of uninteresting images. There seems to be a real need for photographers interested in doing this kind of work to get some help as the publisher presumed when he asked the author to create this book.

The author offers chapters that talk about things like cameras and technique, look at the work of a few practitioners, suggest places where one can take street photographs, and discuss the styles of street photography. Lewis finishes up with his ideas on what makes a great street photograph. But most of this boils down to: have a small, unobtrusive camera; learn to work fast, at a moment's notice; and have a deep reserve of chutzpa to take pictures of complete strangers with or without their knowledge. A large supply of luck is also desirable. And yet with all of that, anyone who has tried (but not persevered) at street photography can tell you that you won't get many good pictures.

That's because street photography has to have content and knowing how to find it, recognize it and capture it probably can't be found in a book. Looking for something strange or wonderful is probably good, but some of the great street photographers have looked at the ordinary and in looking, made it extraordinary. In fact the most useful tool for a street photographer may be an inquiring mind. As folks say about tennis, or anything else that requires great skill, you've got to do it 10,000 times and you still may not master it. So far I haven't found much street photography skill between the covers of a book, although spending as much time as possible with masters like Henri Cartier-Bresson, or Elliot Erwitt, or Garry Winogrand can certainly help. I would have had greater confidence in Lewis' advice if his own photographs had approached closer to those greats.

That's not to say that this book can't help you become a street photographer. It does tell you the basics of the set-up of street photography, and if you haven't been able to figure that out from looking at street photographs, or you need a little encouragement, the book can be useful. Just don't expect to read this book and take great (or even good) street photos. After you've shot 10,000 you can decide if the book helps.

10 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Less art, more randomness

By Andrew D. Lossing

I'm usually careful about being negative when it comes to books; even if it's not a great volume it probably took the author a lot of work to create. But all the same, there are good options and there are not-so-good options for spending your hard-earned dough. This particular book doesn't quite make the cut.

If you're buying this book for technical, or skill-based, learning, you're better off going somewhere else. The

content is largely generic and the sort of thing that can be found anywhere on the web. I didn't get a good sense of the author's personal style or ethos. A better bet for technique would be *The Street Photographer's Manual*, also to be found here on Amazon.

Of course, another main reason you would buy such a book is to look at great examples of street photography, and enjoy the author's personal style. Sadly, most of what is contained in this book is very commonplace, with little to recommend it. I'm looking for poignancy, juxtaposition, humor, energy... all of those things which make a street photograph transcend time and location to speak to the larger human experience, but I'm having a hard time finding it in the work the author has chosen to show. It's almost as if the decisive moment was not waited for. I would like to be kinder, but I'm left with a feeling that this book was rushed to press by a publisher who wants to get in on the rising tide of modern street photography and not as a showcase of unique and powerful craft.

Also, the book itself is of very low quality. The cover and pages both feel too thin and just cheap.

Edit: 6-20-15. After letting this book settle in further, I actually took an additional star off of my review. Often street images bear multiple visits to really soak in their flavor and contents, but I can honestly count on one hand the images in this book that even interest me. On the other hand, dozens of them exhibit what I would call the wrong moment, or lack of patience or vision... "Uninspiring" is the word that really describes the author's work here depicted, just as "uninspired" is the right word to describe his advice. There is just no insight to be had here. I wanted to like this book, but it has left me quite cold.

8 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Immerse Yourself in a Creative Perspective

By Mandragora

Gordon Lewis' *Street Photography* is both a creative inspiration and also a pleasure to read. If I had to summarize it in one word, it would be "witty." By that I mean that Lewis is elegant, illuminating, and often funny, both in his writing and in his photography. Being able to hear his voice come through in his writing and in his photography (and the photography of others that he includes) really helps the reader understand Lewis's creative point of view. He shows us instead of telling us, and it is contagious.

This is a book for someone who already knows how to use their camera technically, and who wants to improve their aesthetic/artistic ability in the domain of street photography. Obviously, the ability to "read" street photography competently helps one's creative ability to produce quality street photography. Because Lewis's voice comes through in both prose and images, one learns how to see the world as Lewis does.

Let me give a simple example. Early in the book, he shows a photo of rich reds, complex architectural structures, and warm sideways light streaming in to bring it all alive. Only after admiring the photo did I read the caption, where I discovered, to my shock, that the photo was taken in the entryway of a Target department store (!!). When I looked back again at the photo, I realized that it could well have been my own local Target, and I wondered: how many times have I blithely walked past this incredible play of light, color, and structure, not bothering to look, because it was a Target? Throughout, Lewis shows how apparently boring everyday scenes can be turned into very interesting photos--if you just know how to look.

I have many photography and art books with titles that have variants on "how to see," "how to read," "seeing like a photographer" and so on. Rarely do I come away from them--whatever else their merits are--feeling like I am more capable of seeing like a photographer or of reading photography; like anything else, such knowledge is slowly and painstakingly acquired. Yet this beautiful little book *Street Photography* delivers as much of that as one could reasonably hope in a surprisingly compact space.

Again, I think what made the book work so well is the unusual connection between words and images. Commonly in photography books, the images are stunning and the words are either so few that they don't do much, or so turgid that you know why the author became a photographer and not a writer! This connection between words and images immerses the reader in Lewis' creative point of view. I'm glad for the few hours I spent in it, and I look forward to revisiting this book next time my creativity seems dried up, to remind myself that I have merely forgotten how to see.

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