

FLUX ACADEMY

LESSON 039 · A SCHOOL FOR SEEING

Zone & Snap Focus + Settings

MODULE 7 · THE STREET

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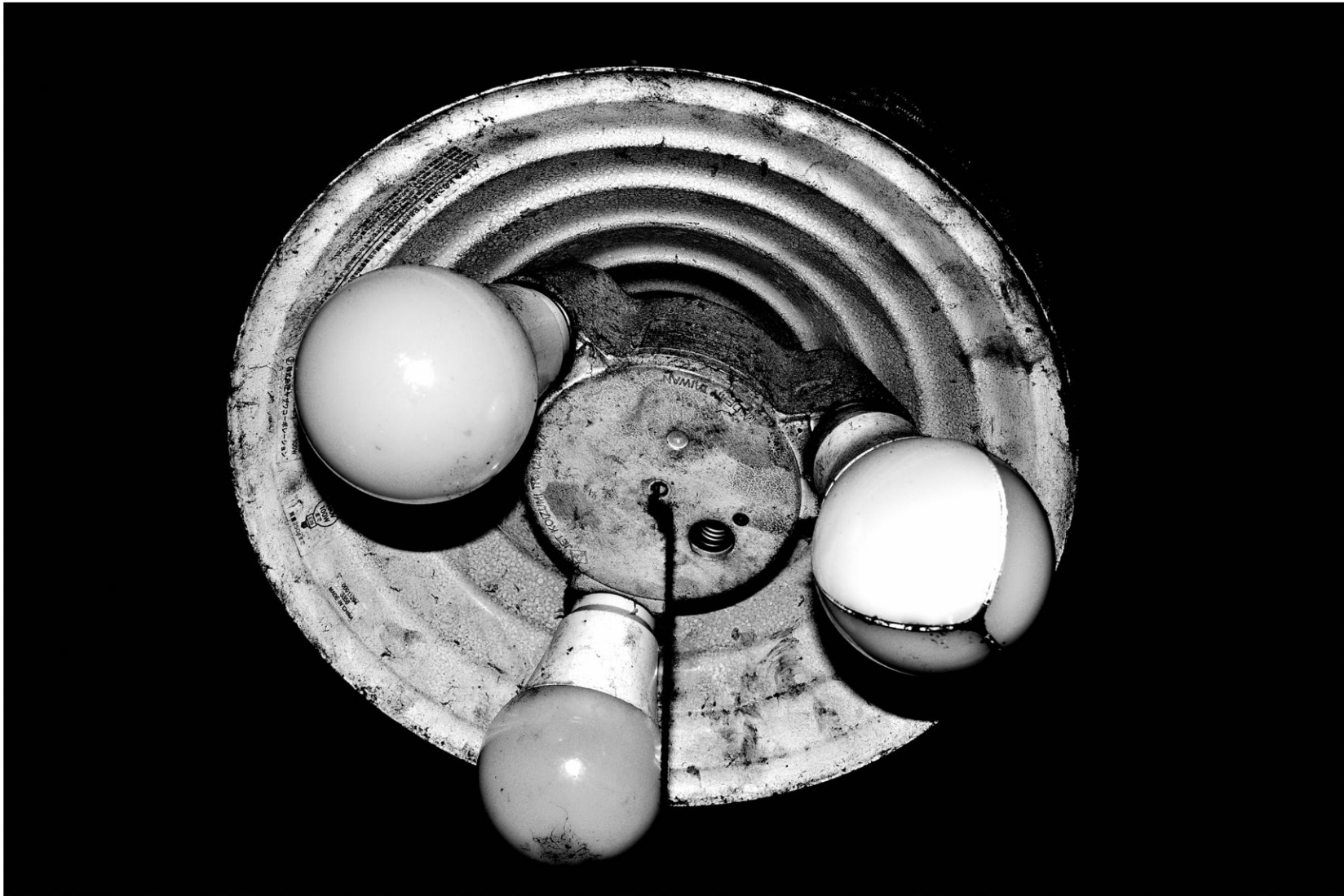


Focus Less, See More

- Zone focus and snap focus eliminate the focus barrier
- Technical friction is the enemy of presence
- Set it and forget it – so you can see

What's popping, people – it's Dante. Here's the thing about focus: the camera shouldn't be thinking when you are. Zone focus and snap focus exist for one reason – to get the technical decision out of the way so you can stay locked into the moment. Set it. Forget it. Photograph.





What You'll Walk Away With

- Understand zone focus and snap focus as presence tools
- Know Dante's actual settings on the Ricoh GR
- Walk away with a system you can set up today

By the end of this lesson you'll know exactly how zone focus and snap focus work, why they matter for street photography, and the precise settings Dante uses on the Ricoh GR so you can replicate the system and stop thinking about focus entirely.





Technical Friction Kills the Moment
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Technical Friction Kills the Moment

- Autofocus hunting = lost moments
- Every second the camera thinks, the moment moves
- Friction between seeing and shooting costs you everything

Here's the cold truth: while your camera is hunting for focus, the moment is gone. In street photography, the gap between seeing and shooting has to be zero. Any technical friction – any delay, any hunting, any half-press – is a tax on your presence. Zone and snap focus eliminate the tax.





Freedom to Live First, Photograph Second
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Freedom to Live First, Photograph Second

- The snapshot approach means camera in life, not above it
- No separation between being human and being a photographer
- Settings that disappear let presence expand

The snapshot approach is about integrating the camera into your life so seamlessly that there's no separation between living and photographing. That only works if the camera is invisible in your hands. The right focus system makes the camera disappear – and that's when real photographs happen.





What Zone Focus Actually Is
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What Zone Focus Actually Is

- Pre-focus to a set distance – say, two meters
- Everything within your depth-of-field range is sharp
- No shutter lag, no hunting, no hesitation

Zone focus is simple: you pre-focus the camera to a specific distance – Dante uses two meters – and anything within the depth-of-field zone at that distance is acceptably sharp. You're not focusing on anything when you shoot. You're already focused. Raise the camera. Press. Done.





What Snap Focus Actually Is

- Snap focus is the Ricoh GR's instant jump to a preset distance
- One button press = camera locks to your chosen distance
- Purpose-built for street, purpose-built for speed

Snap focus is the Ricoh GR's version of zone focus on demand. You assign it to a button, set your target distance – say two meters – and a single press snaps the focus there instantly. No hunting. No half-press. The camera is always ready before you decide to shoot.





Dante's Core Settings

- Ricoh GR · Program mode or Aperture Priority
- Snap focus set to two meters
- High-contrast black-and-white JPEG · small file size

Here's the actual setup: Ricoh GR, program mode or aperture priority, snap focus locked to two meters. High-contrast black-and-white JPEGs cranked directly into the file — crushed shadows, highlight-weighted metering. One thing adjusted manually: exposure compensation. Everything else? Automatic. The system is built to remove every obstacle between seeing and shooting.





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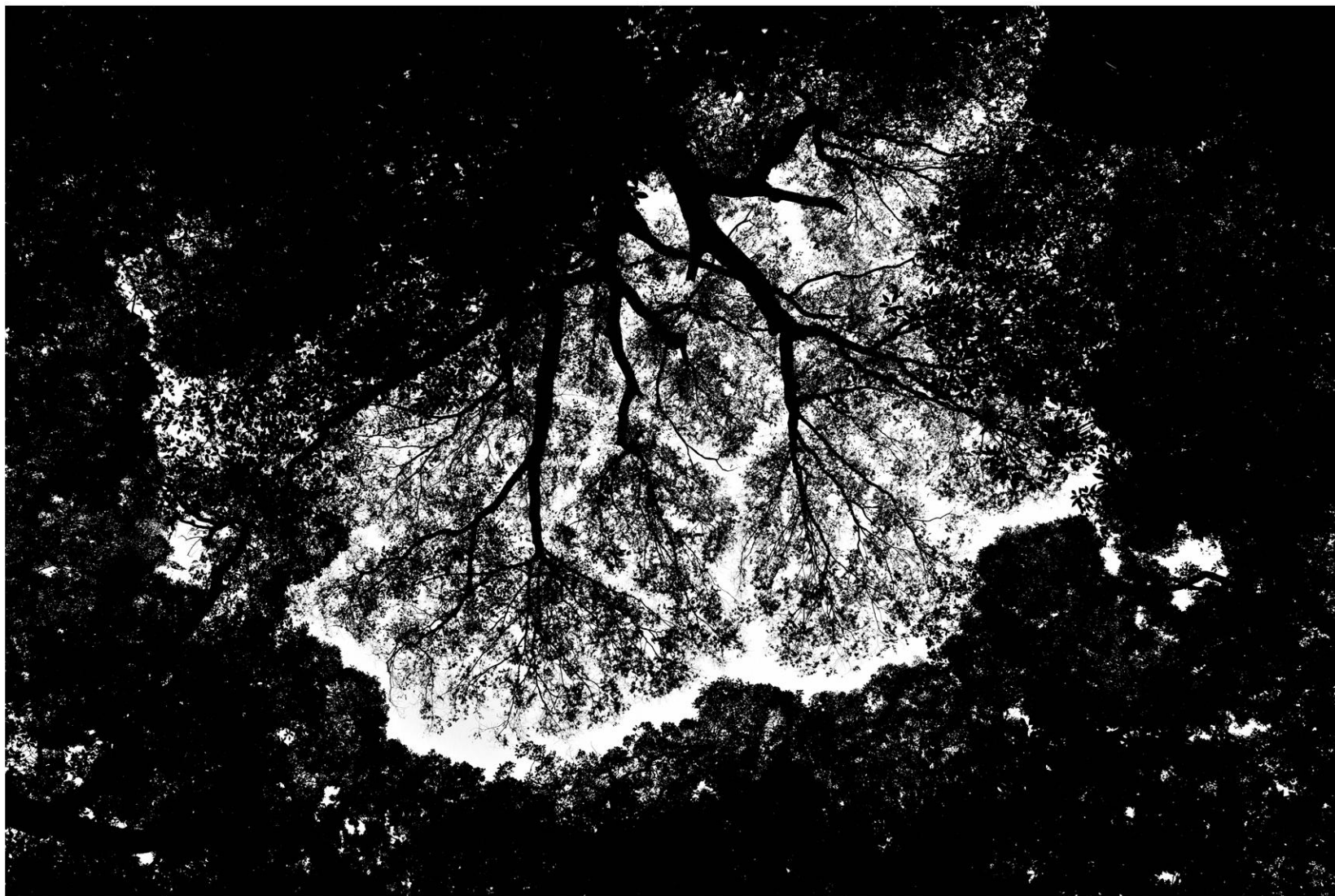
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Why Two Meters?

- Two meters keeps subjects close – intimate, not distant
- Close enough for gesture and expression to read
- Far enough to stay out of confrontation range

Two meters is the sweet spot. Close enough that gesture, expression, and human detail read clearly in the frame. Far enough that you're not in anyone's face. At a small aperture, the depth-of-field at two meters covers enough ground that you don't have to be surgical about your position. Just get close and shoot.





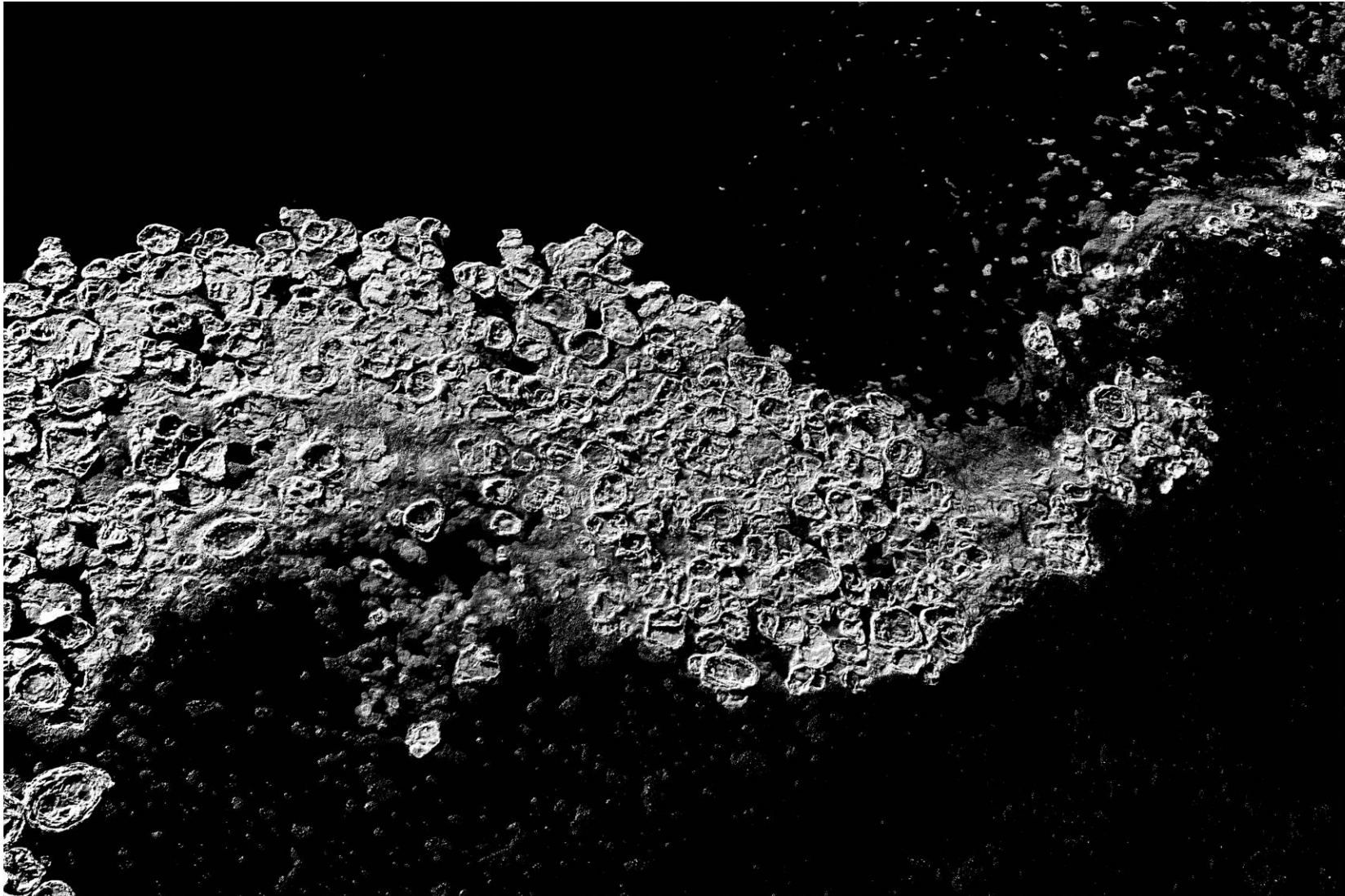
Exposure Compensation Is the One Control
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Exposure Compensation Is the One Control

- Everything else is automatic - EC is the single dial
- Blow out bright backgrounds to reveal faces and gesture
- Against snow or any bright field: push positive to expose for the subject, not the white

When everything else is automatic, exposure compensation becomes your one creative lever. Against a bright field - snow, a white wall, a blown-out sky - push exposure compensation positive, around +1.7, so the background blows clean and the faces and gestures in the foreground pop. The bright field becomes a clean stage the subject stands out against. One adjustment. Maximum impact. That's the whole game.





Snap Focus to Infinity for Landscapes and Abstraction
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Snap Focus to Infinity for Landscapes and Abstraction

- Snap focus to infinity for open scenes and abstraction
- River trails, open roads, skylines - no subject at two meters
- Switch modes fluidly as the scene demands

Snap focus isn't locked to two meters forever. When there's no subject up close - an open trail toward the horizon, a river, a distant skyline, a field of texture and light - switch snap focus to infinity. Wide, open, abstract scenes need a different setting than intimate street portraits. The system is fluid. Read the scene, adjust the preset, keep moving.





JPEG, Not RAW: Committing In-Camera

- Shoot JPEG: the image is decided at the moment of capture
- High contrast cranked in-camera – no fixing it later
- Commitment forces presence and sharpens instinct

Shooting small JPEGs in high-contrast black and white is a commitment – what you get is what you made. There's no RAW file to rescue later. That constraint is the point. When you know the image is final at the moment of capture, you start paying more attention before you press the shutter. The limitation sharpens your instinct.





Highlight-Weighted Metering
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Highlight-Weighted Metering

- Highlight-weighted metering protects the brights
- Shadows crush naturally — adds drama and graphic quality
- Pairs with high-contrast JPEG for maximum punch

Highlight-weighted metering tells the camera: protect the bright areas, let the shadows go. Combined with high-contrast JPEG processing, the result is deep blacks, clean highlights, and a graphic quality that makes images read immediately. You're not correcting in post — you're designing the tonal range at the moment of capture.





Pre-Set Settings Free You to Respond on Instinct

- When a fast, high-energy moment erupts, there's no time to think about settings
- Snap focus at two meters, program mode – dialed in before you left home
- Your only job is to see it and respond; the camera does the rest

Picture the kind of moment that arrives without warning – someone bursting into motion, jumping, arms flailing, pure energy, gone in a second. There is no time to adjust anything. This is exactly why the settings are locked before you leave home: snap focus at two meters, program mode, no hesitation. When the energy explodes in front of you, your only job is to see it and respond. The camera does the rest. That's the entire reason the system exists.





Isolate One Subject From a Crowd With Exposure
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Isolate One Subject From a Crowd With Exposure

- AV mode · snap focus at two meters · push EC positive
- Blow the busy background out to isolate a single subject
- Exposure as a tool to sculpt emotion from chaos

When you're surrounded by hundreds of people and you want one face, one gesture to rise out of the noise, exposure is your scalpel. Switch to aperture priority, keep snap focus at two meters, and push exposure compensation up toward +1.7 – the cluttered background blows to white and the subject emerges clean. In a chaotic, crowded scene, exposure becomes a tool for isolating a single moment of emotion inside the disorder.





Macro Mode and the Divinity of Detail
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Macro Mode and the Divinity of Detail

- Ricoh GR macro mode - trash becomes sculpture
- Snap focus still applies; the tool adapts
- Details become divine when you get close

The Ricoh's macro mode is where the mundane becomes extraordinary. Trash on the street, a door knocker, the texture of bark - get close enough and the everyday transforms. Snap focus still underpins the approach: the goal is always to remove friction so you can respond to what's in front of you. God is in the details - but only if you get close enough to see them.





Set Up Your Focus System Before You Leave

- Configure snap focus to two meters tonight
- Set metering, JPEG mode, and EC before you go out
- Leave the house with zero decisions left to make

Here's the practice: before you leave the house, the camera is already configured. Snap focus set. Metering dialed. JPEG mode on. High contrast enabled. When you step out the door, every technical decision is already made. Your only job on the street is to see. Walk out ready. The moment you have to fiddle with settings is the moment you miss the frame.





Work One Distance for a Full Session

- Commit to two meters for an entire outing
- Constraint forces you to move your body to the right distance
- Your feet become the focus system

For your next session, commit to one snap focus distance – two meters – for the entire outing. Don't touch it. If the subject is too far, you move. Your feet are your zoom lens, and now your feet are also your focus adjustment. The constraint teaches you how to position your body relative to the scene. That's a lesson no menu setting can teach you.





Shoot JPEG for One Month

- One month: JPEG only, no RAW
- Every image is final at the moment of capture
- The constraint accelerates intuition

Take the full commitment: JPEG only for one month. High contrast, black and white, cranked in-camera. No RAW safety net. Watch what happens to your attention before you press the shutter. When the image is final at capture, you start deciding more clearly. The constraint doesn't limit you – it accelerates you.





Over-Relying on Autofocus in Fast Scenes
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Over-Relying on Autofocus in Fast Scenes

- Autofocus hunts in low light, chaos, and fast movement
- The camera thinking is the moment leaving
- Zone and snap focus exist precisely for these conditions

The most common mistake is defaulting back to standard autofocus when things get chaotic – exactly the conditions where it fails you most. Low light, fast movement, crowds – autofocus hunts. Zone and snap focus exist for these moments. Trust the preset distance. Stay present. The system is built for chaos; let it do its job.



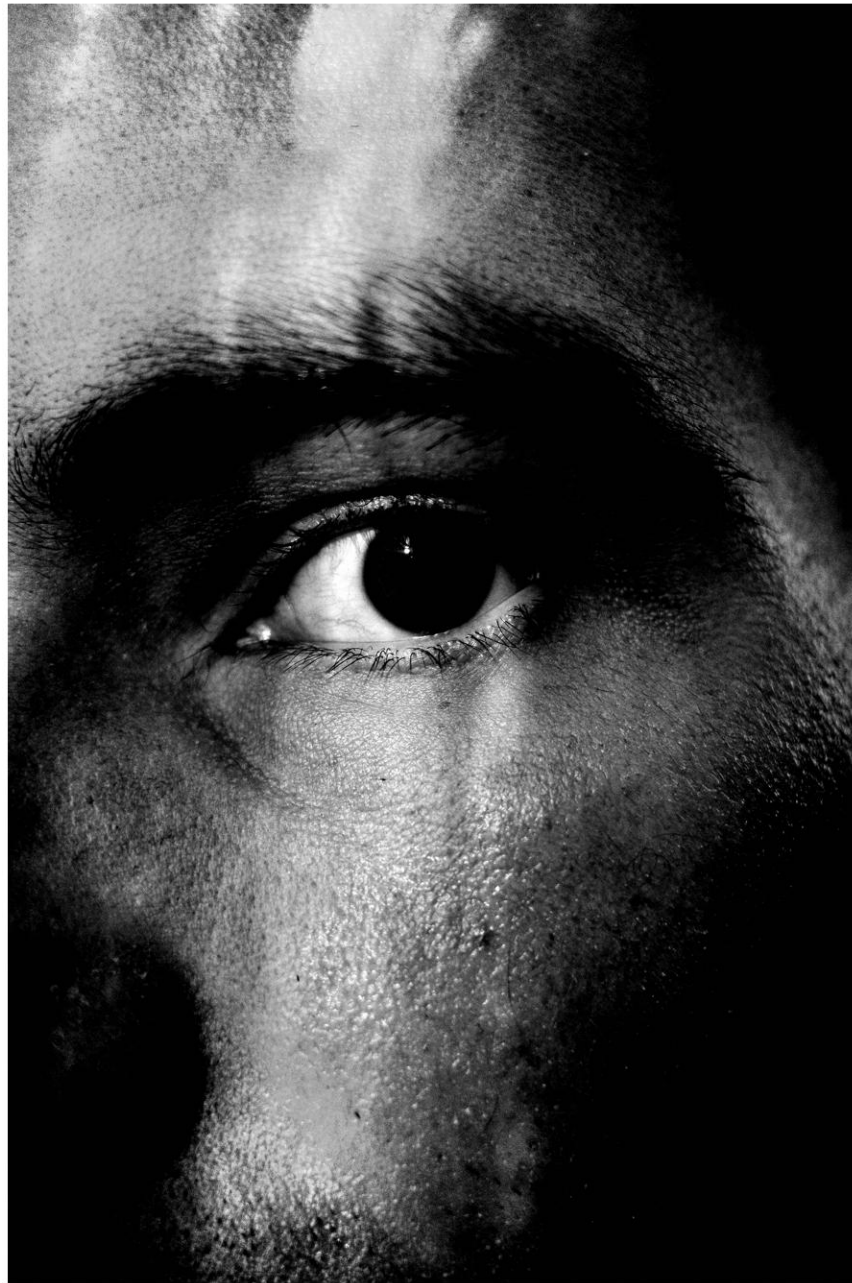


Changing Settings Mid-Session

- Changing settings mid-session breaks the flow state
- Every menu dive is a moment of disconnection
- Lock it in before you go; don't touch it until you're home

Another mistake: adjusting settings mid-session. Every time you dive into the menu, you break the flow state. You stop being a photographer and become a camera operator. Lock your settings before you leave. The only thing worth adjusting on the street is exposure compensation – one dial, done. Everything else waits until you're home.





Building on Lesson 038

- Lesson 038 established the camera as an extension of self
- This lesson makes that extension frictionless
- Technique serves presence — not the other way around

Lesson 038 established the idea that the camera should feel like an extension of who you are. Zone and snap focus are what make that extension frictionless. Once the camera is configured to disappear in your hands, you stop being someone operating a device and start being someone moving through the world with their eyes fully open.



City of God

himself, he ought to have found his satisfaction. This was contrary, for if the will had remained unshaken in its love for the changeless Good, which shed on it light to see and kindle it to love, it would not have been diverted from this love to its own pleasure; and the will would not have been so darkened and misled in consequence as to let the woman believe that the serpent had spoken the truth and the man to put his wife's will above God's commandment, and to suppose that his was a venial transgression. He refused to desert his life's companion even though the result was a companionship in sin.

After the evil act, the transgression of eating the forbidden fruit, the serpent was punished only when those who did it were already punished. The serpent had come from a bad tree.¹²²

It is contrary to nature for a serpent to be punished by being

Setting Up Lesson 040

- Lesson 040 takes on reading and chasing light
- Technical mastery here enables you to respond to light instantly
- The settings become the platform for the next level of seeing

With focus and exposure dialed in automatically, you're ready for Lesson 040 – reading and chasing light. Once you're not thinking about settings, you can give your full attention to what light is doing on surfaces, in shadows, across faces. The technical foundation built here is what makes the next layer of seeing possible.





Set It, Forget It, See Everything

- Zone and snap focus remove friction between seeing and shooting
- Dante's system: Ricoh GR · snap focus 2m · high-contrast JPEG · EC only
- Commit to the setup. Trust the system. Go photograph.

Last thing. Zone focus and snap focus aren't just technical tricks – they're a philosophy. Remove every obstacle between seeing and shooting. Dante's system is simple: Ricoh GR, snap focus at two meters, high-contrast JPEG, highlight-weighted metering, and exposure compensation as the one dial. Set it. Forget it. See everything. That's the whole lesson – catch you in the next one.



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