

Daniel Hoffmann
Street photography

with photos by Daniel Hoffmann
comments and analysis by Ronald Beams

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Foreword by Gene Lowinger:

What is a street photograph or for that matter, street photography? There are as many definitions as there are 'street photographers'. The genre certainly lends itself to considerable flexibility, but I think there are limitations. It's something more than simply a photograph taken on the street. Magnum photographer Bruce Gilden is often quoted as saying, 'If you can smell the street by looking at the photo, it's a street photograph.' But this too is open to interpretation. Does a photograph of overflowing dumpsters in a deserted alleyway constitute a street photo? Or is it urban landscape? Does calling a photo 'street' require it to have people? Is a posed portrait a street photo? Many photographers who consider street their genre shoot in b/w, but is that essential?

Here's my personal take on street photography: it should be b/w (but not absolutely essential); it should constitute a moment of synchronicity between unrelated elements, or it should seek to capture a particularly significant moment of expression, gesture, or attitude of the subject(s); and most importantly, a street photo should evoke some kind of visceral response by the viewer – some kind of identification with elements in the image.

In the images that follow, Daniel has in some measure hit them all. When I look at his shots, I imagine that if I had been at that spot at that time I would have tried to get that same image. His chapter on the ten tips for better street photos reads as though it could come directly out of my own book. Most importantly, the images display his intuitive sense of composition and his innate sensibility for the human condition.

Gene Lowinger

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Daniel Hoffmann -

About My Photographic Interest:

Born 1959 - Living in Viborg, Denmark

I have been an amateur photographer since I was 14 years old, when I got my first camera with shutter speeds, apertures, film speed, but without a light meter. The first photos I took were in black and white and were developed by the camera shop. I didn't know anything about photo techniques, so the photos were very poor quality.

To learn more, I borrowed some books about photo techniques from the local library. These taught me about the importance of shutter speed, aperture and ISO. After some months of careful saving, I bought an SLR camera and I found out that if I developed the films and photos myself, it was only half the price of the camera shop, so I bought a darkroom. Suddenly photography became my biggest hobby.

Since then, my interest in photography has grown, and I have experimented with many different types of photography, but mainly landscape and travel photos. Throughout this time, I have taken some street photos, but not as many as I would have liked to, as I have felt uncomfortable taking photos of people on the street.

It was first after I started using the photo sharing site 500px.com in 2011, that street photography really caught my interest. Two street photographers, who were very active at the time on 500px.com were Gene Lowinger and Thomas Leuthard. Both of them have taken some very interesting street shots.



I learnt the “shot from the hip style” from Gene Lowinger and this gave me the confidence to take more street photos without feeling uncomfortable. It made me feel much less inconspicuous when taking street photos.

Gene is now mostly writing about street photography on his blog, which I follow weekly. Gene is currently living in New York, and most of his photos are from Manhattan. I had the great pleasure of meeting Gene, when I visited New York.

Thomas Leuthard is from Switzerland. He has taken some very inspiring photos too, but it was his first two e-books about street photography that inspired me most. You can download his e-books for free from his website.

Should you wish to contact me about any of the content of this book, please write to me at daniel@streetphotography.dk

Should you wish to purchase my book as a hardcopy, visit BLURB.COM. Use the link on www.streetphotography.dk

Useful links:

My own sites:

www.streetphotography.dk

www.danishphoto.dk

Gene Lowinger: genelowinger.blogspot.com

Thomas Leuthard: thomasleuthard.com

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Ronald Beams - About My Photographic Interest:

My personal photographic approach is primarily documentary. I enjoy taking pictures of regular people doing regular things in regular places. Daniel's images often do this, and I found myself stopping frequently to examine them in detail – exploring why they appealed to me with the force they did. When photos like these are posted where remarks are encouraged, I invariably comment. I'm always quick to acknowledge, however, that I am not a critic of any merit. I simply find elements in the photos I would have missed had I taken a casual look only, and moved on. Once an image arrests my attention, I look for what most photographers look for: line, shape, tone, color, pattern, focus, blur, angle -- trying to understand what these elements added to the subject matter of the photograph -- subject matter is my primary interest.



I once judged an in-house photography contest for a large American corporation. The only photo I remember of the several hundred I examined that day was of a young girl with an enigmatic smile, her hands behind her back, standing in front of several boys who openly displayed lighted cigarettes between their fingers and smoke curling up out of their mouths. To this day, I still wonder if that young girl in the pinafore also had a cigarette behind her back. It had such strong subject matter that has stuck with for over forty years.

Why this book?

by Daniel Hoffmann

I got the idea for writing this book when I started posting my photos on the website 500px and received comments like “great shot”, “excellent” and so on. I greatly appreciate these comments, as it proves that people have not only taken the time to view my photos, but also to express their opinions of them.

I often received comments from a guy called Ronald Beams in the US. Ronald made some very thoughtful and in-depth analysis of my photos. This encouraged me to look at my photos again and see details I hadn't noticed before.

I had never seen this type of in-depth analysis before on Flickr, 500px or any of the Danish photo sharing sites I use.

So I approached Ronald and asked if he would be willing to comment on my street photos for this book. I was very happy, when he replied “YES”!

I think, that when amateur photographers meet to talk about their hobby, they spend too much time discussing “photographic equipment and tools” instead of talking about what they see, feel and experience, when talking and looking at photographs.

Hence my message for this book: “More photo talk, less equipment talk”



Chapter 1

“MORE PHOTO TALK, LESS EQUIPMENT TALK”

photos by Daniel Hoffmann
comments and analysis by Ronald Beams



Title: Waiting for the train
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: Lecco, Italy



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Both figures on the right show an inordinate interest in what the figures on the left are doing, one reading a newspaper and the other texting on a cell phone. The expressions of the two observers suggest they disapprove of what they see. Nothing in the image suggests why. Two figures are involved in what they're doing. Two other figures are involved in a sort-of visual kibitzing. The guy with the large, open newspaper is absorbed in what he's reading. The other guy with the small, closed paper stares a little malevolently, perhaps disapproving of the other paper's editorial policies. The girl with the scarf may simply be a little cold in body heat as well as temperament, and disapproves of how the "texter" is dressed and how she's impervious to the weather. I find the fun in this image is how freely you invites conjecture.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

Whilst on holiday at Lake Como in Italy with my family, we decided to take a day trip to Milan. We drove to the nearest train station, Lecco, and took the train to Milan. As we had plenty of time before the train departed, I decided to spend the waiting time taking some street photos.

The first thing that caught my eye, was an image of two men, one younger and one older, standing reading a newspaper and a magazine respectively. The younger was holding his briefcase between his legs in a rather comical way. In front of them were two girls sitting on a bench. I took 4-5 photos of this scene from different angles, but I think this one was the best of them all.



Title: Playing games on the step
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The strong slanted horizontal lines in this composition direct my attention to your two main subjects. Your corresponding slanted vertical lines lock your subjects into a tight frame that arrests my attention exactly where the you intended. The black circle off to the right repeats the shape and tones of the two boys, while the two chained circles add an interesting contrast. The angle of the boys' legs and arms provide a reinforcement of the array of angles and lines your image emphasizes. The shoes illustrate both the basic "angle" scheme you present, and also, the pair on the right contrasting in direction with the pair on the left, capture an interesting visual tension. The concentration on the faces of the boys indicates a typical teenage fascination with typical teenage electronics, suggesting something of the common activities of all young people (boys).

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I just passed these two boys playing games on the step, I turned around, took the shot, and carried on walking. They were so engrossed in their games, that I don't even think they noticed me taking their picture.



Title: Dogs meeting in the street
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: Ebeltoft, Denmark



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Both dogs are straining to touch noses and both grinning owners add tension to your image by holding them back. If the event turns into a “dog fight” of any sort, the gentleman in the middle appears ready to referee. I like the way you centered the “observer” in the middle of the sun-lighted fence and then repeated the design behind him in shaded pickets that seem a little out-of-place on what could be a roof. The dog on the left looks more intent on making friends than the one on the right. The right-side dog, even though it leans against the pull of the taut leash, comes across as more guarded and perhaps a little fearful. You’ve captured a wide array of squares and rectangles and circles and lines that serve to mold your image into a whole. The larger shaded area subdues a portion of your composition and helps direct my attention to the figures interacting in your scene. The two men’s opposite hands in their pockets, neither of which is thrust in deeply, adds a slight connection between the pair that seems to give them a more intimate relationship. Interestingly, the graphic on the refuse container mimics the outstretched hand of the man next to it. A little subtle humor, perhaps?

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This photo was taken outside a shop in Ebeltoft, whilst waiting for my wife to finish shopping.



Title: Walking the dog
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

All of the primary figures move almost in unison, their march emphasized by the low dog-level camera angle you chose. The dog and one man look in the same direction, likely directly at the camera. This gives your image an additional impact, in that it jerks my attention up along the same low angle and into your composition. The woman closest to the animal has a purse in her hand with a design totally at odds with the patterns on her dress, and brings up a slight question about fashion. The lady with the dog has it on a leash that winds and unwinds, and she uses a special wrap around the dog's neck that strongly indicates the animal is not trained for the leash and likely charges away often enough that the woman is forced to use something to cushion the dog's abrupt misbehavior. One guy is wired for stereo and one woman is on a cell phone, unaware of those around them. All of the background figures are walking off, as if retreating into oblivion. The rigid vertical lines in the buildings provide an austere background that reflects the indifference and lack of involvement for which New York City is notorious. Telling shot of a big city.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I was sitting down on the pavement to get some low angle shots, when the dog went past. The dog owner smiled at me when she saw me taking the photo. I think she thought it was nice of me to be interested in taking photos of her dog.



Title: “Late night discussion”
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Looks like a hot summer night with a serious conversation going on. The “Roasted Nuts” sign doesn’t refer to the trio, but, still, adds a touch of humor. I even took the “Titan” word above the leaning gentleman as symbolic of his intensity. You have a lot of fun elements in your image. And your exposure is dead-on.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This photo was taken about 11 p.m. near Times Square. The two stall holders were deep in conversation whilst on a break.



Title: Come here, baby!
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The man sitting in the foreground and gesturing may be talking, as the woman seems to react to him in a way that suggests she's comfortably involved with him. The man just beyond the doorway in front of her appears impatient, or perhaps even a little disgusted. The central figure is sitting on something that looks make-shift and has some folded reading material he doesn't seem especially taken with. The lady's shoes are particularly interesting, as they add inches to her height. You have a lot going on, and you provide a lot interaction between your subjects. I find all it kind of fun.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This shot is from Manhattan. I liked the image of the guy sitting on a fire hydrant calling out to the young lady in the doorway. It wasn't until I received Ronald's comment, that I noticed the man standing impatiently behind her.



Title: Granddad pushing buggy
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: Milano



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Your image has a mild touch of irony to it. The elderly man is guiding a baby in a stroller and the two women are hurrying by with purses slung over their shoulders, like frenzied shoppers or perhaps office workers. The woman's image closest to the building is reflected in the window, which subtly draws attention to the reflection of an otherwise unseen lady standing perhaps at the curb and facing the other way. The way you've positioned her cleverly establishes the other buildings reflected in the window and clearly emphasizes a street in a major city. Your camera is angled slightly to the left and creates an array of oblique lines that combines with the moving figures that nicely blend into an overall effect of motion. The man's face is the only one clearly shown. This effectively singles out his expression, which seems a little austere, perhaps even disgusted, and is totally at odds with the caring action he has involved himself in. I find this an interesting, even puzzling dichotomy that piques and holds my interest.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I assumed the person with the buggy was a grandfather taking his grandchild for a stroll. He was walking very slowly, as if he had plenty of time, whilst busy businessmen and women and younger students were passing him by. To me, this photo symbolises why children love their grandparents - they have lots of time!



Title: Cool Britannia
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: London



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The mannequin on the cycle is visually interpreted with such a clever placement and exposure it presents the lifeless figure with enough life-like elements that only the subtle reflections and lettering at the bottom right of the window provide positive proof that the scene is of a window. The man with his legs crossed, a can of what could be beer in his left hand, stands with an inebriated expression that contrasts dramatically with the happy world shown in the window display. His hand is without a wedding ring, which adds a telling element to his loneliness, as well as to what may be his desolateness. These kinds of juxtaposition subjects are becoming more common, but the expression this one captures on the man's face makes your image special.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I took this photo of the lonely beer drinking man in front of a "Cool Britannia" shop, hoping to show the contrast between rich and poor.



Title: Hey you...

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Because of the city's reputation for rudeness and crass behavior, the "New York" lettering on the window blends with the man's facial expression and evocative eyes to combine into a menacing expression that is reinforced by his size and bulk. He seems to tower over the girl with an almost threatening presence. She's looking into his eyes and clearly sees where his eyes are focused. Her short dress and bare shoulders are both appropriate for the warm weather and sensual without being suggestive. The man sports a cheap pen in his pocket and what might be a loose bow tie draped across one shoulder. The young woman looks special. The man looks common.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

Just a lucky shot taken near Times Square, of a young girl in a pretty dress being "noticed" by the security guard.



Title: Love in New York
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Wow, you show two people clasped in each other's arms, which for me expresses a moment in which they are the center of their universe. The gentleman in the white shirt on their right reacts to their joy with an expression of his own joy at their happiness. The lady with the cell camera pretty much does what seems universally true of users of those devices – she's so intent on what will surely be a picture that is so routine that she'll soon dump it from her phone's memory. All the while, her involvement with her cell phone makes her impervious to the touching couple that caught your attention and that of the fellow standing near them. By visually recording the pair in the midst of busy sidewalk traffic you isolate their universe from all the others happening around them.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

It was important for me to get the top of the tall building in the background in the frame, to catch the mood at Times Square.



Title: Smile, BABY, smileeeee...

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

While the curly-haired baby being held is cute, the expression on the cell phone guy's face is priceless. Then, too, you provide a touch of mystery -- Why is the guy with two cups holding one that looks empty or near it and the other looks full and over-flowing? Also, who is Minnie Mouse waving at? Great fun!!

Comments by Daniel Hoffmann:

Times Square is filled with all kinds of people dressed up. Here it costs just two dollars to be photographed with your favourite cartoon character.



Title: Making a phone call
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Terrific. Getting up close with a wide angle lens creates an intimate treatment of three people, two in animated conversation and one texting -- two dressed informally and having fun, the other in a suit with an expression that is the opposite of fun. But wait! The guy scurrying past with his backpack appears to be on a cell phone. The woman's face and the man's gesture make this a compelling image. The range of activity in it adds to the fun. Really nice.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I took 4-5 shots outside our hotel, where this businessman had stopped to make a phone call, but it was first when this happy couple walked past, that I got the shot I wanted.



Title: The eye is watching you
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Perhaps “the eye” feels threatened by the circular shapes displayed near their cartons, shapes akin to his own. Your humor comes off uninterrupted as you composed your image without faces to compete with “the eye”. Clever -- and perceptive.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

In Chinatown I noticed this man with the big eye on his shirt. Suddenly he looked down, and I got this great shot.



Title: Don't take a photo of me
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: London



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The young man on the right shows an almost inordinate interest in your gentleman with the cane. This impression is helped along by the man's robust physique and the way you've placed him front and center, yet crop him from his shins down. This technique emphasizes the looming figure, and presents him in a visually dominating posture. The young fellow to the left stands in rigid contrast to your other two, who are tilted in the same direction. They seem integral to the action of your photo, while the other figure is rigidly uninvolved, his tense body almost projecting a sense of fear. The cluster of figures in the background, unessential as they are to the action, add a visual interest to what would otherwise involve a series of rectangular tiles and lines leading to a blank space.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This photo is from the London Underground. It wasn't until I got home and saw the photo on my computer screen, that I realised that the man was looking directly in my camera, so he **MUST** have seen me take his photo.



Title: The “mobile” photographer
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: London



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The two men from different cultures, facing in different directions, yet apparently performing the same action is terrific. Their bodies are even bent in the same way. The third seems interested in one guy. The fellow off in the background seems interested in the other guy. I see the shoe that indicates the one man is actually with someone else, but it doesn't detract from the fellow seeming to be interested in the cell phone photographer. This is a fascinating image.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This photo is taken on Tower Bridge. I thought the man with the long beard and turban was a great street photo character.



Title: Ghost chasing boys
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: Aarhus, Denmark



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The two boys and ghost, leaning in the same direction, provide a striking oblique movement to your three figures, which is further enhanced with the leaning posts, especially the lamp post. The boys appear put into flight by the towering figure in translucent white. The ghost's black eyes add a threatening touch, giving your treatment an extra macabre element that sets a dark tone, in spite of the figures being in daylight. One of the ghost's hands is drawn back and, rather than appear threatening, gives extra dimension to your figure, as do the two stilt columns underneath the costume that provide a floating aura that makes this photo something special. You chose to shoot at eye level. This adds to the ethereal quality of ghost and is the perfect perspective.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

The circus was in town, and approximately 100 meters away from the circus arena, there was a smaller tent being used as a dressing room by the different artists. The ghost appeared out of this tent and made it's way towards the circus arena. The two boys in the picture were chasing the ghost, shouting and teasing. Suddenly the ghost turned around and started chasing the boys, and at this moment, my camera said "click".



Title: Hurry up Mum!
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: London



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Catching a great candid expression is always a major accomplishment. You caught two! The pair of males being outside a Ladies' shop looking in is special. The boy's hand stretched out in back of the man gives the two a connection of real warmth.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This boy and his father were waiting patiently outside a womens clothes shop for a long time, waiting for his mum to come back.



Title: “It was like this!”
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: London



Comment by Ronald Beams:

The contrasting expressions of the two men are delightful. The raised hand and open mouth suggest a real commitment to whatever the man is saying. The other man leans forward with hands behind his back, a friendly smile on his face, all showing he is both agreeable and interested. The window reflection nicely establishes the area the men are conversing in.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

These two friends were having a animated discussion outside a café in London. You can just see my reflection in the upper right corner of the picture.



Title: Pizza delivery?
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: Randers, Denmark



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Great treatment. The two figures hurrying down the sidewalk with their pizzas perfectly match the leg movement in the graphic behind them, Clever!

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I saw this wall art and waited for about 15 minutes before these interesting people passed by.



Title: Multi-tasking
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: London



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Delightful. The lady is in her own world with her book and what looks like a cell phone. The graphic of the boy to the far right seems almost to have come to life and to wave at the disinterested woman outside. What a nice, humorous touch.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

The girl leaning on the shop window was reading her book whilst texting on her phone and I thought her reflection blended in well with the shop display behind.



Title: Cool dudes!
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: Aarhus, Denmark



Comment by Ronald Beams:

Graphically, these two fellows could be taken for twins: hair, hands in pockets, expressions, sunglasses, pants – or leaders of the march. Everyone seems to fall into step with your main characters, one guy even carrying his coffee the same way and wearing similar sunglasses. How interesting that two women walk side-by-side with their arms folded and hair nearly identical. To the far right, both the male and female have heads turned, albeit in opposite directions. You present a parade of characters worth spending some visual time with. Thanks.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

I spotted these two guys walking down the street, and thought their fashionable clothing and similar faces would made an interesting photograph.



Title: An unusual face
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City



Comment by Ronald Beams:

This image stopped me dead in my tracks. You cleverly position the vendor so you emphasize her hanging scale -- with which you replace your head and face, giving a fresh interpretation to a common event. You also have three male figures who tilt their heads at the same angle, although facing in differing directions. The diamonds in the lady's blouse contrast overall with the round shapes of the various fruits and vegetables, as well as two curved arcs that nicely complement roundness of the scale. This is a fun treatment well done.

Comment by Daniel Hoffmann:

This photo was taken in Chinatown, New York, and was just an ordinary tourist shot for my holiday album. When you take a lot of street photos, you sometimes get lucky and get unexpected results. I didn't notice that the "face" of the scales had replaced the woman's face in this picture, making it a rather special photo.

Chapter 2

My top 10 tips for better street photos

1. Shoot from the hip

Shooting from the hip is in my opinion the most important way of getting good candid street photos.

This can be done by letting the camera hang in a strap around your neck and resting on your stomach (best for horizontal shots) or by carrying the camera in your arm against your left or right hip (best for vertical shots).

That means, you can shoot pictures, without having to look in the camera viewfinder.

Of course, you will need to practice a lot in the beginning, but it gets easier. I think it works very well with a 16-24 mm lens. (24-35 mm fullframe)

I like to rest my left arm on the camera and press the shutter with my thumb or I use a wireless remote control in my jacket pocket.

You can control the camera's vertical angle by leaning backwards. To get the perfect picture at exactly the right angle I like to hold the shutter button down for continuous shooting whilst leaning.

Shooting from the hip gives a lower photographic perspective, which I don't consider to be a problem and most of the photos in this book are actually taken using this method.

This photo is a good example of shooting from the hip.

In Queens, the temperature rose to 40 degrees (104 Fahrenheit) and many people were using umbrellas to protect themselves from the heat of the sun.

Title: Protection from the sun

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: Queens, New York





2. Shoot at a close distance

For me, street photography is all about taking candid shots of everyday people doing every day things - generally in black and white and using a wideangle lens. To achieve this, you have to get very close to the people you are taking photos of.

The famous Magnum member and war photographer Robert Capa once said: “If your photographs aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough”. I say: “If your street photos aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough”.

It’s generally not a problem to take photos at a close distance in a big city because of the huge number of people constantly moving around and the noise levels of both people and traffic. It’s even easier in tourist areas as people are so used to having their pictures taken.

It’s a good idea to check if your camera has a silent mode for use in quiet locales, as the noise from the shutter may be heard by the subject.

My camera has a silent mode, but actually I don’t use it, because I think the noise from the people and the street is enough to hide the shutter noise.

This shot of the lady selling hats on the streets of Manhattan is both shot from the hip and as you can see, at quite a close distance.

Title: New York Hatseller

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City





3. Use a poster or an interesting background and then wait...

You might notice an interesting poster, wall painting or other type of background, which can in many cases be used as a good basis for street photos, as shown in the example below with the poster of the young well-dressed woman.

The window display caught my eye, and I waited a few minutes for an interesting subject to walk past. The old lady with the walking frame came strolling past me and I took the shot to show the contrast between young and old.

What I didn't see when I took the photo was that the old lady was looking for "extra virgin minerals"?! That was just a piece of luck, and I think it completed my photo.

Instead of using the old lady as the subject, I could have waited for a young well-dressed woman similar to the one on the poster to walk by, or for a man with his head turned to look at the woman on the poster.

For another example of using background for street photo, you can go back to page 43 and look at the photo to the photo "Pizza delivery?" where the background was a painting on the wall. A background could also be patterns or stripes on the ground, like looking down on a pedestrian crossing.

Title: Maybe I need some "extra virgin minerals"

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: Aarhus, Denmark





4. Do a tight cropping

There is an old rule in photography saying: When you look in the viewfinder - look to the four corners and if you don't see anything important there, then GET CLOSER.

Of course the rule can also be applied, when you have taken the photo, just crop it away using computer software as I've done here (original uncropped photo to the right).

I saw this girl on the other side of the street walking quickly and purposefully with a key in her hand and wearing earphones from a mobile phone or an MP3 player. I presume she was listening to music. I wanted to get a photo before she passed the graffiti and the bicycle, as I thought this would be a good background for a street photo.

I only had a few seconds, so I just raised the camera and shot from the hip, there was no time for changing focal length.

As a result of this, there was too much wall and too much of the street in the foreground, so I cropped the photo to give a bolder image.

Title: The key to music

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: Randers, Denmark





5. Use your photo to tell a story

It's great if your street photos can tell a story, pass on a message or information, or just make the viewer smile. In my opinion, this is best done using a simple composition.

In this photo from Brooklyn, I noticed the unusual way the man was standing, with his arms turned back and his stomach pushed forward as if he was trying to stand to attention, while the woman talking on a mobile phone passes him by. Just before she walked past him, he looked directly at her and I took the shot.

Title: Looking at women in Brooklyn

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City





6. Shoot in low light using high ISO

Don't be afraid of shooting street photos in low light, as shooting with high ISO is not a problem for modern cameras. Generally, the background light in cities is enough for taking pictures, and can give great light and fantastic shadows.

I find it better to get a sharp photo at high ISO with just a little bit of noise, than to get an unsharp photo at low ISO with no noise.

When you are in tourist places, you are often stopped by people trying to sell you something. It could be to ask you to rent a bike, see a theatre performance, or as in the photo below to visit a certain restaurant. This is what I do: Tell the person you will take a photo of them with the advertising sign on so you will remember the restaurant and the phone number. That's what I said to this young man, and he stopped, stood still with his sign and looked directly into the camera and I got my shot.

Title: The sign holder
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City





7. Street photography can be taken anywhere in public

Remember, street photography is not only photos taken in the streets, but can be taken anywhere in public. You could be at the beach, the train station, at an art exhibition, a football stadium, or in the park as shown here.

This photo was taken in Central Park. At first sight I noticed these two older ladies sitting and relaxing on the bench. Suddenly a runner stopped to stretch her legs. I think it completed my photo and in a way told a story about what people are doing in Central Park.

Title: Relaxing, reading and running in the park

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City





8. Ask for permission before taking a street portrait

Normally, I prefer to take candid photos of people, because then the photo shows them acting naturally. Nearly all my street photos are taken that way. But sometimes I want to take street portraits, so I ask the subject kindly and politely for permission before taking their picture. I find it helps if I explain why I want to take their picture, eg. “You have a cool beard” or “I am a tourist, documenting life in the city” and then I usually get a “yes” .

Sometimes I have to persuade the subject to let me take their picture, so I tell them that I will email a copy of the best shot to them. I give them my visiting card with my contact details and add the file number of the photo sequence I have just taken and ask them to email me this file number and I will send the picture. Then it’s up to the subject to remember this. When you send the photo, you don’t need to send it in full resolution, I suggest a low resolution photo of max. 1024 pixels.

I asked this bicycle rental man if I could take his street portrait, and without asking any questions he took his sign and placed it on the ground beside him, looked in the camera and smiled - I got my photo!

Title: Bicycle rentals

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City





9. Use lines, curves, pattern and geometric figures

If you use lines, curves and patterns in your street photos, you can create even more interesting street shots. Buildings, walls, stairs, pedestrian crossings etc., can help to give your street photos a great composition. The father of street photography Henri Cartier-Bresson used this a lot. A typical example is his photo “Hyeres, France 1932”.

In my photo from Chinatown New York, I used the stairs to create a diagonal composition, pointing down to the man. This photo is not shot from the hip and maybe that’s why I managed to get eye contact with him for just a few seconds, in the time he was trying to locate his lighter in his pocket.

Title: Cigarette break in Chinatown
Photo: Daniel Hoffmann
Location: New York City





10. Convert to black and white

The great Canadian photojournalist Ted Grant once said: “When you photograph people in colour, you photograph their clothes, but when you photograph people in black and white, you photograph their souls”.

In my photo of the red and white dressed “Gray Line” salesman, I can see exactly what Ted Grant meant.

I’ve thought a lot about why I convert nearly all my photos to black and white, and it’s simply because I love black and white photography. I like the tones, the beautiful shadows and I think it’s easier to tell a story or communicate a message using black and white because you don’t get confused by the colours.

I started my photographic hobby, by developing my own black and white photos in the darkroom, and it’s difficult for me to say how much the magic of the darkroom has influenced my current work in the digital age.

The “Gray Line” salesman, was trying to sell me a bus trip whilst at the same time talking to a customer on his mobile phone. I was standing very close to him, which you can tell from the low angle of this shot resulted from my shooting from the hip.

Title: Hallo...

Photo: Daniel Hoffmann

Location: New York City





CHAPTER 3

ADDITIONAL STREET PHOTOS:

Title: Now even more on sale.

Location: New York City

I noticed this well-dressed business-like woman sitting with the “Now even more on sale” sign over her head. I found it so funny that I just had to take the photo...



Title: The suspicious look at the bubble machine saleswoman.

Location: New York City

The story behind this photo is that the bubble machine saleswoman standing on a corner in Manhattan has caught the attention of the two children, hoping they will ask their mother (who has her back to them) for money to buy a bubble machine.



Title: “That’s my car - that’s my doll”

Location: New York City

On a busy shopping street in New York, these two families meet to show their recent purchases. Both children are very protective of their new toys.



Title: Telling jokes to the street cleaner

Location: New York City

These two building workers were teasing and telling jokes to the street cleaner.











Chapter 4

Street stories from China

(March 2015 - This chapter is added to the second edition of the book)

A month after finishing and publishing the English (first) edition of this book in June 2013, I travelled to China as a tourist with my family for 9 days. It was an amazing experience.

Wherever we went, we met friendly and smiling people. It was a fantastic experience to visit this beautiful country, and I would love to visit China again.



A stranger is a friend, you have not yet met. The author and the oldest man of a small village near the Great Wall.

Although we spent most of our time visiting tourist attractions, I managed to find some time for street photography. On the following pages - I will show you some of the street photos I took, mainly in Beijing, Jixian and a village by the Great Wall.

As a street photographer - it is fantastic to visit a country with such a different approach to being photographed that I am used to in Europe. If you want to take a street photo of a Chinaman - just smile and ask.

Of course, the majority of the people I communicated with were not English speaking, and I could not speak Chinese. So I used gestures and pointed at my camera and then at the person I wanted to photograph, together with simple English words. They then had the possibility of shaking their head or waving their hand in front of their face if they did not want me to take their photograph.



The street photographer in action

Not one of the friendly people I asked if I could take their photo, said no!



A mother and her lovely boy



The Opera House and National Grand Theatre is in my opinion one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. I took a photo in front of it, of some cleaners. They were cleaning the water in front of the building, just as I arrived and I took a few photos. I think that this one is the best photos, because the three people are shown on different levels.



In this photo from Jixian, I first noticed the elderly man on the right with a hat, thick lensed glasses and a walking stick. I thought he was a great street photo character. He was looking in his bag for something. At the same time a man and two women stopped right in front of me. They practically emptied one of the women's bags, as if they couldn't find what they were looking for.



When we were walking through the old Hutongs of Beijing, I saw these four men sitting outside a house having a cosy chat. I took a photo, waved to them, said thank you, and continued walking.



I took this photo in a village next to the Great Wall. The man with the glasses was a tourist, who shared his pipe tobacco with some of the local men in the village. Although they could not communicate because of the language, they laughed and had fun together just like old friends, whilst sharing the tobacco.



When children are playing, they sometimes like to tease each other. That was what these two boys were doing in one of the streets of Beijing. The girl in the right hand side of the photo, running in to view, was trying to get the ball from the two boys. She did not succeed in getting the ball, because every time she was close to the ball, one of the boys threw the ball to the other and vice versa.



These construction workers were restoring some of the old buildings in a Hutong in the centre of Beijing. I thought the building materials of the big white board, together with the workmen and the passing cyclist was a good setup for a street photo.



This photo was taken in a market street in Jixian. There were a lot of outdoor shops like this one in the street. I asked these two shopkeepers for permission to take a photo of them in their shop.



This photo was taken shot in the Beijing Planning Exhibition Hall. Here it is possible to look at Beijing in the small scale of 1:750. I went up to the first floor to take a photo showing the scale of the exhibition against that of an actual person. I liked the relaxed way the man on the ground stood with his arms behind his back.



I really wanted a photo of the cleaning woman, who was sweeping along the metal barrier at The Temple of Heaven in Beijing. I liked the round hat she was wearing and together with her broom and dustpan and the barrier, I thought it would make a great photo with good lines and excellent composition. I was just waiting for her to come closer to me, when this young couple placed themselves between us.



As a street photographer, I like people wearing hats and in this particular case also a dust mask and sunglasses, so this man in The Forbidden City was a great character for me. At the same time, two boys were taking photos synchronously at one side, which I think completed my photo. When I later had an article published in an issue of Street Photography Magazine, this photo was used as the cover photo.

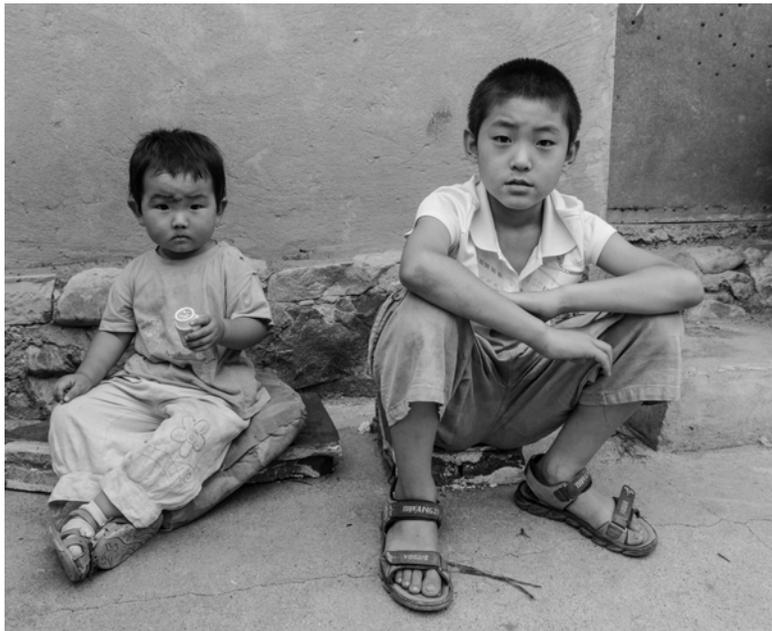


This photo is from the 798 Art Zone in Beijing. The Art Zone is a great place to visit for a street photographer. Here you can find a lot of exhibitions, art in every shape and form imaginable and artists like this street painter. The couple in the middle were waiting to be the street painters' next models.

Faces of China:



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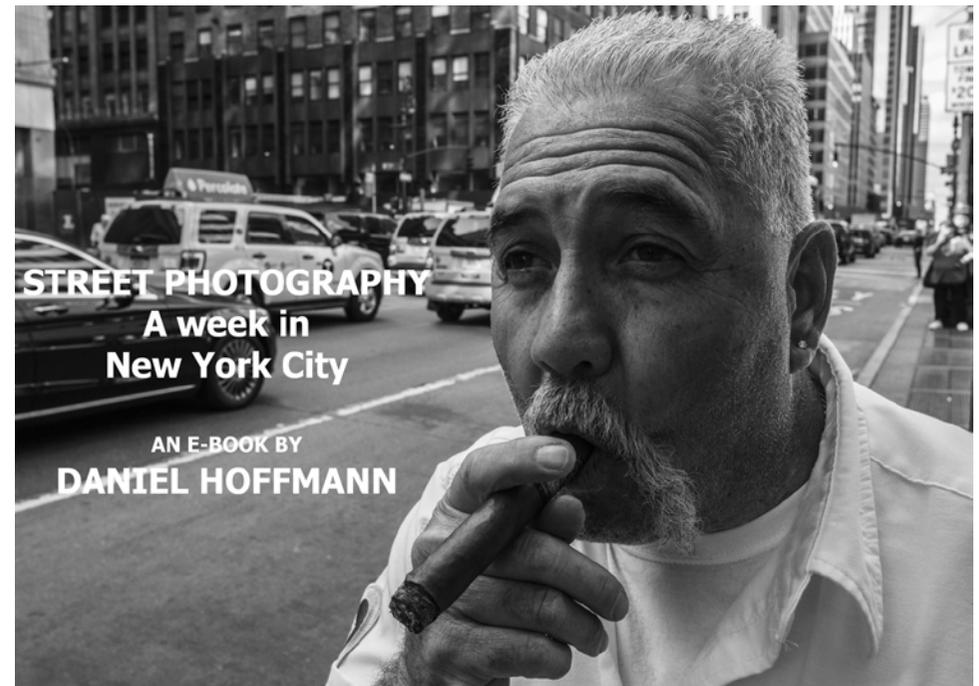
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