



THE CHARM OF A RETICENT STORYTELLER

Dotan Saguy's candid street photography leaves the viewer to imagine their own stories

25/09/2017 *Inspiration Sehen, Leica M, Made With, Street photography*
Estimated reading time: 9 minutes 2 Comments

Dotan Saguy was born in a small kibbutz five miles south of Israel's Lebanese border. He grew-up in a diverse working-class Parisian suburb, lived in Lower Manhattan during 9/11 and moved to Los Angeles in 2003. As well as receiving many awards, Dotan's work has been published by National Geographic, PDN and ABC News. He is currently working on an in-depth photo essay about the culture of Venice Beach and a photo documentary about the journey of people coming out of homelessness. We caught up with the talented photographer to get his take on shooting street photography with the [Leica M Monochrom](#).

Discover the Leica M Monochrom







Could you tell us a little about your route into photography and anyone, who influenced you on the way?

I had been an avid amateur photographer my whole adult life having fun with travel photography, landscape and then photographing my kids as they were growing up.

A few years ago, just as I started getting interested in street photography, the sudden passing of my dad at a young age made me realize the importance and the urgency of pursuing my passion for photography. I started shooting a lot more street photography and study classics such as Cartier-Bresson, Erwitte, Winogrand, Friedlander, Davidson, Koudelka, Robert Frank and Alex Webb. Matt Stuart (now with Magnum) taught me how to shoot street with a Leica and I haven't looked back since! I also attended the Eddie Adams and Missouri Photo Workshops where I got to hang-out with super talented students and learned from some of my all-time heroes.

What is it about street photography, in particular, that interests you?

What I love about street photography is that it documents everyday people and moments that otherwise go unnoticed. I also love the thrill of hunting for those fleeting moments at the intersection of time and space. Of course it's hugely satisfying to capture them but even when I miss I feel lucky to have been present enough to witness them fully. I think street photography to me is an excuse to be fully present in the world. It's a meditation really.

How do you approach shooting on the street in comparison to other forms of photography?

I love capturing moments, ideally with emotions, storytelling elements, so I have to be a bit strategic about where and when I shoot. For example, going to a deserted area of town in the early morning isn't going to yield these kinds of moments very often. Hence my choice of this project about Venice Beach. Venice is such a lively place. My approach there is to try and locate moments that are happening or have the potential to happen soon (pregnant moments as Cartier-Bresson would call them). Following interesting characters works too sometimes.

How much do you think the photographer is responsible for explicitly relating the story of their subjects?

As the witness who documents a place and a culture, the photographer is definitely responsible for relating the accurate story of their subjects. That said as photographers, we can't help but having a point of view and I think it often enriches what we're depicting, so that's OK.

What do you think it is about LA that seems to produce so many good street shots?

LA is a city of extremes and extremes often make for good subjects. You have extreme consumption, extreme wealth, extreme celebrity and then you have extreme poverty right next door to all that. With Venice, I chose to

document extreme eccentricity and anti-materialism, which in a way, is the antithesis of LA and what I can identify with the most.

How do you approach the subjects of your photographs and do you like to remain incognito while shooting?

It really depends on the situation. Ideally I like to remain undetected to preserve the purity of the emotions and expressions but that's not always possible, especially when getting really close. It depends for example on whether I'm part of a crowd or I'm alone, whether you can approach the subject slowly or you have to move in quickly. If there's no other choice but revealing myself to the subject then I try and establish some kind of a rapport with them first: they won't act natural again until they start trusting me.

Was it a conscious decision to shoot this series in black and white with the **Leica M Monochrom? If so, why?**

I wanted this series to feel timeless. So many shots in it look like they could have been taken in the 60s, 70s or 80s. The Monochrom combined with a Silver Efex Pro workflow is the closest to that B&W film look. I love the intentionality of shooting with the Monochrom: There's no thinking "I'll shoot it this way and then decide if I leave it in color or convert it to B&W". It's like having a roll of Tri-X in your camera: you're committed to B&W so you see everything just for how it will look in B&W.

Do you favor a particular lens depending on what and when you are shooting?

I use a 35mm lens almost exclusively. Right now I use the Leica Summarit 35mm, which was ideal for this Venice project because of its small size, light weight and how resistant to flare it is, even in harsh backlit conditions. I strongly believe in simplifying one's gear to the extreme. Gear adds decisions to your shooting process and you can only make so many decisions before the moment is gone. I prefer to spend those decisions on things like where to stand, how to best frame the scene or where my focus point should be.

What are your greatest technical considerations when shooting on the street?

Matt Stuart taught me to always pre-set my Leica to anticipate the next moment that might come-up. For me that often means having the camera on Aperture priority with the aperture set somewhere between f/5.6 and f/8, ISO set around 400 and my focus point set from 3-5 feet away and of course I readjust those settings constantly as the light changes and I anticipate various things that might happen. That's one of the reasons I love shooting a Leica M so much: you don't even have to lift the camera to your face to adjust any of those settings. They become second nature.

When and why did you start shooting with Leica and how has your relationship to the brand evolved?

*I started shooting Leica in mid-2014. At the time I was shooting the first generation of Fuji X-series cameras and liked it quite a bit although I was definitely Leica-curious. I was in Paris for a few weeks and decided to rent a **Leica M9** with a 35mm Summicron for the July 14th holiday weekend. When that weekend came to an end and I had to return the camera, my fate was sealed. I've been shooting Leica ever since. Lately I have been using the Monochrom Typ 246 for B&W and the **M Typ 240** for color work but with the arrival of the **M10** I am still feeling things out: the RAW files coming out of the **M10** convert quite nicely to B&W and it is easier to deal with only a single camera, especially when it's so responsive and has such a nice compact form as the **M10** does.*

How important is photo editing as part of your process and what techniques do you like to employ when

How important is photo editing as part of your process and what techniques do you like to employ when editing?

Editing is hugely important. I often use a formula that my friend and fellow Leica shooter Craig Semetko once taught me. It spells out the 3 key elements of a good street photograph. Craig calls it DIE, which is hard to forget! "D" stands for Design. That's the composition, the lighting, the shapes, good separation of the subjects, etc. "I" stands for Information: in other words, what happens in the image should be fairly obvious to the viewer. There's nothing wrong with abstract fine art images but street photography demands some sort of understanding by the viewer about what is actually depicted and ideally it should be interesting. Someone walking through the frame sometimes works but I think it's overdone and that's where "E" comes in. "E" is for Emotion. For me, that's the hardest to get. It can be a strong emotion triggered by viewing the photograph or the actual subject's emotion depicted in the image, usually contagious to the viewer anyway. If a photograph has all 3 of these elements, there's a good chance it's a keeper.

What advice would you offer any aspiring street photographers?

Find a project you love, shoot it a lot for a long time and edit mercilessly. You'll end up with a great body of work.

You have a book coming out next year with the Kehrer Verlag, which focuses on the culture of Venice Beach. Could you tell us a little more about this project?

I met Kehrer Verlag at the Photolucida portfolio review event in April. I'm lucky to be working with them for this first book. Not only have they published some of my heroes like Bruce Gilden, Martin Parr, Saul Leiter and Alain Laboile but they're real craftsmen when it comes to designing and printing art books.

For those who are interested in learning more about how this book project came about, I am scheduled to give [an extensive talk on this topic at the B&H Event Space in New York City on October 25](#). The talk will be live streamed and posted on YouTube as well.

Check out more of Dotan's excellent work on his [website](#) and [Instagram](#).

(Visited 4,635 times, 2 visits today)

SHARE THIS:



PETE LITTLEWOOD

TAGS: [black and white](#), [Dotan Saguy](#), [Leica m monochrom](#), [Street Photography](#), [Venice Beach](#)

Previous Post

NATURAL NATURE

Next Post

THE WALKING PHOTOGRAPHER

2 COMMENTS



AARON C GREENMAN
September 25, 2017 / [Reply](#)

Nice first image!



JOHN WILSON
September 26, 2017 / [Reply](#)

You learned Mr Semetko DIE system, very well indeed. Thank you!

SUBMIT A COMMENT

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

COMMENT

NAME *

EMAIL *

WEBSITE

SUBMIT COMMENT

NOTIFY ME OF FOLLOW-UP COMMENTS BY EMAIL.

SEARCH

Enter keyword and hit enter

POPULAR RIGHT NOW

[Gangs of Paris by Yan Morvan](#)

[Windrush – Portrait of a Generation](#)

[Escaping Death in DR Congo](#)

[Pink Girls © John Lou Miles](#)

[Modern Geisha \(color\) © John Lou Miles](#)

RECENT COMMENTS

Neil McGahee on [Gangs of Paris by Yan Morvan](#)
William Yan on [Gangs of Paris by Yan Morvan](#)
Ruth Kumpertz on [Wasserlust](#)
Sacha Miller on [Windrush – Portrait of a Generation](#)
Heinz Schick on [Windrush – Portrait of a Generation](#)

CATEGORIES

[Made With](#)
[Stories](#)
[Photographers](#)
[Leica M](#)
[Guest Blog Posts](#)
[Discover](#)
[Inspiration Sehen](#)
[Compact Cameras](#)
[Leica S](#)
[Videos](#)
[See the whole picture](#)
[Leica M](#)
[LFI](#)
[Leica & Magnum](#)
[Thanks to the Leica M...](#)
[Leica SL](#)
[Your visual companion](#)
[African Photographers](#)
[Tips and Tricks](#)
[Oskar Barnack Award](#)
[Leica Q](#)
[Frame in Frame](#)
[How to](#)
[Reviews](#)
[Made in Germany](#)
[Made With](#)
[Rolling Through The Shadows](#)
[Sustainability](#)
[Leica Voices](#)
[Leica Akademie](#)
[Leica Q](#)
[Leica TL](#)
[Discover](#)
[Leica SL](#)
[Guest Blog Posts](#)
[Leica X](#)
[Nature Photography](#)
[Portrait Photography](#)
[Architecture](#)
[Travel](#)
[Street photography](#)
[Leica CL](#)
[Monochrome Photography](#)
[Photojournalism](#)
[Sports Photography](#)
[Leica Camera](#)
[Leica Hall of Fame Award](#)
[Leica CL](#)
[Fashion Photography](#)
[Leica CL](#)
[Photojournalism](#)
[Fashion Photography](#)
[TL2](#)
[Leica TL2](#)
[Leica TL2](#)

TAGS

Aaron C. Greenman Alex Coghe black and white Claire Yaffa Daniel Zvereff David
English f/Egor gREGORy Simpson leica leica Leica Camera Leica D-Lux 5 Leica for AICR

Leica M [Leica M \(Typ 240\)](#) [Leica M2](#) **Leica M6** [Leica M7](#) [Leica M8](#)

Leica M9 [Leica ME](#) [Leica m monochrom](#) [Leica MP](#) [Leica Q](#) [Leica S](#) [Leica](#)

[S2](#) [Leica SL](#) [Leica T](#) [Leica V-Lux 2](#) [Leica V-Lux 20 camera](#) [Leica X1](#) [LFI](#) [Magnum Photos](#) [M](#)

[Monochrom](#) [Monochrome](#) [New York](#) [Olaf Willoughby](#) [S2](#) [S system](#) [Street](#)

[Photography](#) [Street Photography](#) [ULTRAsomething](#) [Varun Sharma](#) [X system](#) [X vario](#)

LEGAL

[Submission form](#)

[Imprint](#)

[Data Protection](#)

MORE

[About us](#)

[General Social Media and Blog Guidelines](#)

[Documentary Photography](#)
[Made in Germany](#)
[Leica V-Lux](#)
[Behind the scenes](#)
[Sustainability](#)
[Travel](#)
[Tips and Tricks](#)
[Black & White Photography](#)
[Frame in Frame](#)
[Street Photography](#)
[Monochrome Photography](#)
[Fotopark](#)
[Leica Cine Discovery Prize](#)
[Black and White Photography](#)
[Nature Photography](#)
[Reportage](#)
[Leitz Park](#)
[Leica X-U](#)
[Aquatic Photography](#)
[Sports Photography](#)
[Reportage](#)
[Macro Photography](#)
[Thambar](#)
[Uncategorized](#)
[Reviews](#)
[Portrait Photography](#)
[Conceptual Photography](#)
[See the whole picture](#)
[Leica V-Lux](#)
[Your visual companion](#)

[Leica Camera AG](#)

