

Tineaux | Part One

Twitter Updates | November 11/2009 to March 24, 2009

Sono Tineaux.

If you look over your shoulder or out of the corner of your eye; you will see me. Yes, that's me that guy with the camera. The man in the long grey coat wearing a dark hat and a twin lens reflex camera in his hands, leaning up against the wall to steady the shot. The Paparazzo.

The head bowed staring through the fresnel screen observing you through the viewing lens finger gently resting on the shutter release ... Waiting. Ready. Shutter cocked. Subject in focus. The exposure will be perfect. Just hoping for a decisive moment. Your face turns. Now. Click! Did you hear that? Your eyes seemed to shift to one side for a second. But your head did not turn toward me. I am safe, and so are you.

We go on as if nothing ever happened but it's too late for that now. Something did happen. I took something from you, yes, but I offer this, something you would not be aware of unless

I told you. What? You find this all very silly, don't you? It's just another photo. Millions upon millions are taken every day. What's one more? What could I possibly do with it? Post it? Print it and display it? Mail it to someone in a manila envelope? Like a spy? It's not incriminating evidence. It is just a photo. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

But aren't you forgetting something?

This image that I captured on film with this metal box & curved glass will tell the world that you exist, existed when the image was taken.

And what's more, the negative which may outlive you will offer you a whole new life. Have you seen that photo by Robert Capa? The Soldier. The soldier at the moment of death? In Spain during the civil war? I know what you are going to say. It's a fake. [\[Story Link\]](#)

It does not matter what happened to the soldier or how he died. What matters is that he is still alive in our minds today as he was before.

It does not matter if the negative were lost in a Mexican briefcase stashed in the house of a dying diplomat nor if any print were ever made. What matters most is you being there before my eyes as I gently press the shutter release button. It is in that moment that you become real

Montreal | Mont Royal | November 26 | 1:57 AM, I followed you ... [\[photo\]](#)

You are silent as I tell you this little truth. It is La Verità. You will exist because of me.

Because

I was there hunched in the corner, motionless & waiting for your moment: your moment to be real and in time, new again. This is my gift to you.

It is probable that you will never know of my gift. We will both walk in opposite directions.

We will not speak nor touch. We will not acknowledge each others presence. But I will carry this little truth, your reflected light captured on film, with me as I walk away and vanish.

My right hand winds the film advance mechanism while the left hand holds the camera steady.

I check the dials and settings: 125 (ASA) f11 60/sec. Distance is 10 metres. Depth of field at f11 = 5 metres to infinity. Good. Take a long breath, exhale slowly. Wait for it. Shoot.

"An object dies when the gaze that lights on it has disappeared." Chris Marker, Commentaires II, 1967.

The subject is now back in Toronto. I took this shot of a possible location where he has been frequently seen: [\[photo\]](#)

Still. It could all be different. I could be right there in front of you. Invisible in a crowd of people or photographers. In a noisy flurry of flashes, shutters and voices, feet pushing against feet, arms wrestling for space, a wide angle lens from below, out of sight capturing you in a moment in time, unaware, disarmed, moving toward a safe place away from me

... [\[photo\]](#)

Tuesday. Winter creeps back in. This time with a bit of a vengeance. The pace on the street quickens with the holiday season in full swing.

Over the radio the complicit news media goes through their usual seasonal scripts. Buy something or we will all starve. I just don't care. All I care about today is the quality of light.

It's snowing. That means: dull, dull, dull. Your face will be tired later when I shoot it.

Wednesday. Scouting locations for surveillance photos. [photo]

It's been hard. Nothing for a week now to report. Back to Montreal tomorrow for better luck.

I am back in Toronto on assignment downtown ... [photo]

The thrill of the hunt is often an illusion. It's more about patience and the right moment: [photo]

"When someone seeks then it happens all too easily that his eyes will only see the thing he is seeking: finding means being free being open"

Still it could all be different. I could be right there in front of you. Invisible in a crowd of people or photographers. The camera with auto winder firing in rapid succession in a noisy flurry of shutters and flashes and voices, feet pushing against feet, arms wrestling for space, a wide angle lens from below, out of view you in a moment in time, unaware, disarmed, moving toward a safe place away from me ... but it would be too late, our paths would have crossed, the moment recorded on black and white film. Each new frame a perfect new sensor. Each fragment of light exposing you onto the film emulsion etching you in between the plastic and the layer of chemicals and then wound tight onto the take up spool ... sealed.

If you see me, notice me. study me, I will look the other way. Our eyes will not connect this way. My eyes will only see you through glass, several layers of it. The light reflected from your eyes and skin are bent through the optical glass of the camera while I hold your light by means of the mirror of my twin lens reflex.

It's the other way around. I get to study you: your light, movement and shadow. Your being there before me. And I need something of you to reveal itself to me. A look, a wish, a simple gesture, the movement your long fingers make when you are thinking. The shutter snaps shut.

Thursday. Cold day. The light first thing in the morning was perfect. I worry about the batteries in the camera again. Better keep her warm Preset the dials, zone focus and ready to shoot in a flash. In my mind I practice the procedure: lift camera to eye, pan, shoot. Wind film.

I remember the first time someone called me a shooter. It was a young African photographer who also owned a studio art gallery downtown I looked at her for a moment, confused. Something in me thought she meant something else. Something more sinister. Right, of course not "Sure", I said. "Yeah. I am a shooter." I must have sounded like I was trying to convince myself.

Truth be told at the time I did not think about what it meant to be a photographer. All I did was take pictures that interested me. I know what you are going to ask. How did I become a shooter?

Three days left. The client is getting anxious, leaving worried messages on the voicemail I set up for him: [photo]

No point calling back or leaving a message for him. No exceptions, not part of the deal. Besides, there is no problem. It's a simple job. You wait until the subject shows up and you take their picture. Right place, right time. And no one gets hurt. I shoot film, not people. Time to get the job done. It's dark and bitterly cold. The radio announcer in the crappy coffee shop is claiming time is coming to an end. It's that cold. I am ready. Outside even the bike couriers have had enough for the day. They snake by traffic the cold tall boys making the Chrome bags sag. Faceless riders in facemasks.

The client claims that the subject hangs out at the Paradise on Bloor [photo] All he needs is a photo of the guy going in and out. Thursday is as good a day as any. I figure my chances for getting the shots needed are good. The best moment to catch the subject is when his hand is on the door. There would be a pause, enough for a longer exposure without flash from across the street. The subject never showed.

February. On the shelf in the office by the coffee can there is a box. It is full of old black and white negs. They all have their faults. But in a way they are all perfect. Like small forgotten gems. Unpolished and yet already quite shiny. Small truths untold in hopes of being. Being something bigger: immutable realities. There are eyes and feet, hands and facial expressions, love and solitudes, doors and windows summers and sky. Simple things. Things we sometimes do not truly see since we are too close to them.

Or things we sometimes dream. [photo]

In the company of wolves [photo] ... [photo]

The phone rings ... [photo] It's not good news. The client wants his photos. No longer leaving messages he's calling me at home.

"Photographs may be made to lie but they never make mistakes. We change our memories as we change our minds, but photographs do not. Our mental photographs continue to develop in the dark. They are retouched by unknown fingers while they are stored away and when we bring them again into the light of consciousness they have been altered though we suspect it not. But a photograph tells the same story until it is destroyed."

(Edward E. Slosson, 'The Influence of Photography on Modern Life, 1923)

Needless to say, I did not get the shots I wanted. Will try again tonight. The phone rings again. I let it ring six times before I pick up. I already know who it is: the client. The old kitchen faucet drips louder. 'These things take time.' I tell him. The client pauses for a few seconds. 'You got until Friday.' he says matter of fact, then he hangs up.

This Thursday just ain't any better. Instead of the usual bitter cold it is raining Macondo-style with 60km winds sparring with your face Dark huddled rush hour zombies scurry past the cryptic Varsity Stadium billboard ... [photo]

Inside the coffee shop the customers act overly friendly: a survival instinct. You never know who your friends will be should things really get bad.

The client liked the photos I delivered. I don't ask questions. I just take the pictures. The subject looked like he had too much time on his hands which usually, in my experience, spells trouble ... [photo]

Staking out a photo location near Keele and St. Clair <http://is.gd/jt6X> [photo] Back alleys always break my heart. They are the loneliest of places.

And there is fear out there in the suburbs. You can sense it everywhere. They are waiting, trying hard not to panic <http://is.gd/jP6F> [photo]

In behind the houses where the railroad tracks meet the brush my path is obstructed by a discarded chair. <http://is.gd/jY00> [photo]

If you really want to know a city, walk along the railroad tracks. Look into the backyards from its back alleys: <http://is.gd/kXDt> [photo]

Visit the beds of the homeless, the dilapidated doors and broken fences, the ones we forgot to mend in the spring and cursed in the fall.

You can collect the discarded loves and lives in your back pocket behind the old trees and leftover bricks. <http://is.gd/kYId> [photo]

It is where shopping carts go when they die. <http://is.gd/kYLh> [photo]

"Hey Pal!" "You can't take pictures here." It's a security guard, of course. They hate pictures. I do what all shooters for hire do: I keep shooting.

I finish taking more pictures, look at him and nod. Then I take his picture. That usually pisses them off or on occasion makes them go away. This one is persistent. "Did you hear me, Pal?" Amuses me to no end every time. Pal. It's sarcastic and to the point. Translation: F Off.

"The owner of the property does not want any pictures to be taken." "You got that?", he barks. I look up from my camera and study him, nod.

His face turns vicious, like a dog ready to sink some teeth in. He's got nothing and he knows it. He cannot arrest me, detain nor stop me. I am standing on public property. He's behind a stupid fence. I take another picture of him and say sorry to calm him down.

I start walking down the rail path. Then I just laugh.

Ruin Wins. <http://is.gd/kXBc> [photo]

Rainy day but the subway is dry. Rain and cameras are a bad mix. Makes you appreciate the simple pleasure of walking and observing outdoors. A young black woman in Leopard leotards and fur sits down beside me to wait for the next train. Maybe. She has seen better days.

The dumpster dived fur coat is partially torn in shreds and the seams on the shoulders are coming apart. She has a crumpled piece of paper in her hand. Smudgy words written in ink. She sticks her elbow into my ribs unintentionally.

A good day. Sunny. Along Eastern Avenue where all the houses seem to speak of four rooms and an absence ... <http://is.gd/kXCi> [photo]

Inventory: 3 rolls of black and white film (120 format) / Kodak lens paper / flashlight (working) / medium yellow filter / lens cap / luck!

Sometimes you get lucky: <http://is.gd/lgvN> [photo]

The days are getting longer. Golden hour and happy hour are almost one and the same.

Makes me smile. The extra light that is. The way the light stretches the long shadows differently every day. I notice these things as I imagine the scene in Black and White.

The light warms my right hand holding the camera, the finger calmly on the shutter release.

Oh, how much the sun soothes skin and soul.

The newspaper boxes are strangely empty for so early in the day with nothing left to report.

The man across from me closes his eyes and leans back to listen to his iPod. His face worn & tired in hopes for a story with a happy ending.

A mother with a sweet child holding her hand walk by. She is literally dragging him along, to the delight of an elderly Jamaican woman sitting beside me her eyes glowing in memory of when her own boy was the same age.

S. is an old friend and a shooter. "Things are fucked." he tells me his usual kind face contorting into a lemon. "Just no work out there." "No one wants to pay you for anything." I nod sympathetically. A car flies by too close for comfort, he steps away from the curb and glares. "What are you going to do?" "Get another job." he replies. "You know, for now." "Right." He looks at me with a deep sincerity in his eyes.

"I couldn't do what you do."

Found a perfect spot for the next job today, a defunct factory right across the street from

the subjects home ... <http://is.gd/lZPx> [photo] Nice morning for the first day on the new

job. Love the sniper tower on the roof, best view I have ever had: <http://is.gd/m7LG>

[photo] Another long on the sniper tower with not much to show for. Time to go home in the rain. <http://➡.ws/rain> [photos]

Finally a day off. Time to play the old organ at the local Church on Jones. www.➡.ws/church [photo] Beatles 'Let it be' is always welcome.

I remember my first camera, a Kodak Instamatic made in Canada. It shot imperfect little squares. Sadly Kodak is no more: www.➡.ws/Instamatic

My father and I used to drive past the Kodak factory on Eglinton on the way to the airport. I guess buildings, like me, are just nomads too. There is a profound sense of absence on the site now. Just building #9 was left standing. It used to house the offices, gym and cafeteria. They left behind the curtains in the board room. They sway in the breeze through the broken windows, caressing old trophies no one wanted. In the rubble of Kodak I notice a shoe with a Super 8 reel inside. We recall how the memories begin but rarely how they end. www.➡.ws/super8

The strong winds are turning all the faces in the street into a grimace. Head bowed, hoodies and collars up, eyes peeled straight ahead just trying to get wherever. There is anger in the trees and a missing cat flyer on every hydro pole. A sandwich bag for every life lived.

"There's tears in the bank, and a credit card, and a backyard. Every day in the morning when you get up and crawl outta bed." (Leo Kottke)

The client ... <http://is.gd/nc6O> couriered the cheque today. Good. He would not want to see the photos I took of him.

Back from Montreal today. Easiest job in quite a while. Right place right time ... shoot!
<http://tinyurl.com/c88htg> Thanks Le Metro. The client was thrilled with the work. So much for that fake alibi ... <http://tinyurl.com/dy47lc>

Spring is the time. Old furniture with little truths on the sidewalk. Nature in all its glory human and otherwise: <http://tinyurl.com/csuwlv>

The Pink House at the end of my street is being thrown out. The two young girls decided to forgive the past ... <http://tinyurl.com/dkjkbj>

'Sentimentalism' she said and lowered her eyes to the left. 'Especially on Sundays.' I said, smiling and winding the film to the next frame. Hands in my pocket, Rolleiflex slung over my shoulder like a square can of bad coffee, I realize the afternoon is no longer just mine alone.

My day thus far = <http://tinyurl.com/crr3yw>

Getting to work in the darkroom is like riding a bicycle. Once you learn you never forget. Close door tight, switch orange safe light on, check enlarging lens aperture, f8 or f11 is nice. Power on enlarger head, colour filters off for BW, well, a bit of magenta is always nice / select negative, pop neatly into neg holder, blow off any dust with some compressed air and insert into enlarger head. Adjust print size, turn exposure light on, and begin focusing the image with the grain finder. Show me the salt and pepper. There you are, you little devil.

Across the street backlit by the brightest sun the shadows spill over the streetcar tracks like golden vultures.

Ten foot legs attached to even longer torsos with elongated heads sway as they collapse black and anonymous into the golden hour <http://www.zoomr.com/z/photos/zoom/7125090/size-16/>

almost impossible to photograph. In the window at the corner of Bathurst and Bloor I sit waiting, posing as another photoriste with a cheap digital camera hiding behind a city map, as the camera beside me records your face over and over without you ever knowing it.

End of Part One

154 Tweets / 3254 Words / 30 Photographs