



A Different Kind of Street Photography

Bag in street, Danville

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Paint and bricks, Berkeley



When thinking of street photography one usually expects to see images of people, and masters like Atget, Cartier-Bresson, Eisenstaedt, or Winogrand come to mind. However, there is another tradition seen in the work of William Eggleston or Ernst Haas, which looks at the *details* of the street. This too is enjoyable. It is pleasant to wander the street

looking carefully around and photographing small objects, or parts of objects that catch the eye.

When taking daily walks in the neighborhood or going anywhere by car or public transport, carry a pocket camera that shows a histogram, which will alleviate concern about exposure. Look for interesting compositions of decayed paint on buildings, battered posts, fire hydrants, pipes or mailboxes almost anywhere. When visiting places like Berkeley and San Francisco carry a DSLR instead, and spend some time “exercising one’s shutter finger.” Sometimes just go to a nearby town and stroll around with the SLR for a couple of hours of shooting, and use the photography as an excuse to buy a nice lunch.

Even within walking distance of a suburban town, where it might seem that one would quickly run out of subjects, things change. For this photographer, there was a bag left in the street by some construction workers and it was possible to make an effective image of it. Another day people were using a jackhammer to dig up a sidewalk, which was so corroded that it had very interesting rust patterns. Sometimes the light changes or perception changes, so that a photographer suddenly sees an opportunity in an object seen many times before. Some of the bricks in a wall



Beads, Berkeley

can look like stylized faces and when there is a nice flat light one can make a lot of exposures.

In the Fourth Street neighborhood in Berkeley, there are a couple of junk cars on the street that were a source for several of the images published in an article on junk cars in the July 2006 issue of the *PSA Journal*, and on another nearby street is another car that provided another batch. There were also some colorful beanbags in the street one-day, whose reflection in the door of a Jeep won a *Pictorial Print Division Picture of the Month* award. A few fun shots can be found by just looking down at the curb or looking at the contents of stores and reflections in the windows. The collages of artists like Braque, Picasso, and Schwitters can inspire one to photograph some torn posters on telephone poles, which make good subjects.

Other parts of Berkeley and nearby Oakland are also worth wandering. Found there was a very colorful image of part of a kiosk in a parking lot and a subtle one of a broken wall sconce. Beads in a booth on Telegraph Avenue were worth shooting, and a banister of a nearby home made a pleasant contrast with a wall. Found in the tiny town of Port Costa was part of a demolished sign that looked like a butterfly, and in Walnut Creek, while waiting at a clinic, there were colorful knotholes in some posts used as a retaining wall.



Bannister, Berkeley

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Blue straw, Berkeley



Ringer, San Francisco

San Francisco, of course, provides endless delights. At one restaurant there was an interesting back-lighted awning. Near a photo exhibit at Fort Mason a rusted buoy in the Bay provided a good image, and on Polk Street a broken streetlamp made an attractive pattern. The exterior of the new De Young art museum is designed to be spectacular, and parts of it seem to be attractive to seagulls: they leave souvenirs whose colors work well with the metallic tints of the wall. Discovered on a hill near Coit Tower was an attractive gold wreath on a blue door. Chinatown is always worth strolling and although the buildings on the main streets are well maintained there are many subjects, like an old twist-type doorbell and a rusty standpipe, on the walls of some of the back alleys.

Brick faces, Danville



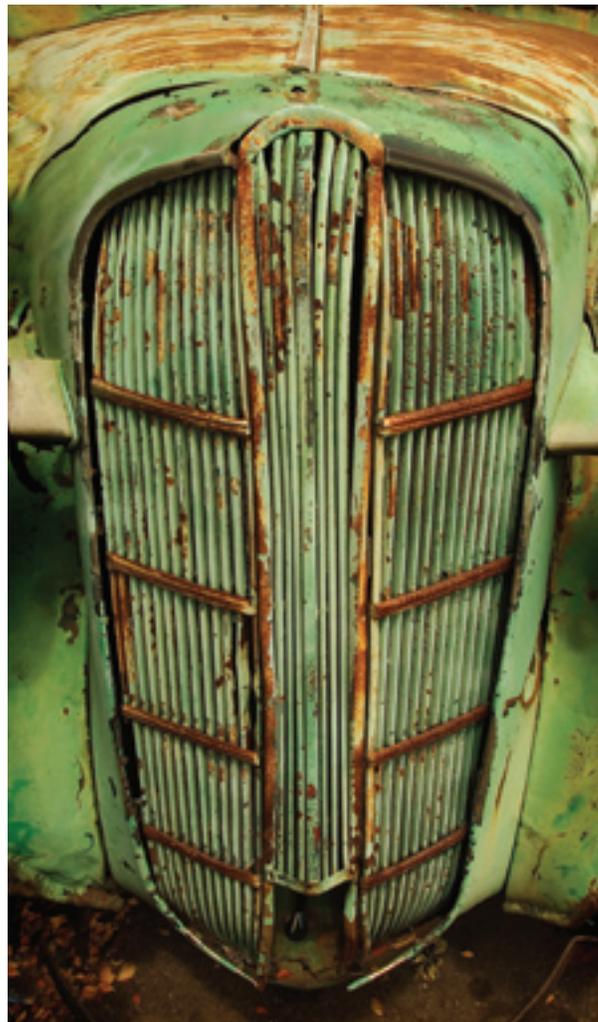
Joseph Hearst, APSA



Buoy, San Francisco

Shadows tend to be a distraction, so shoot in open shade or overcast conditions and in Photoshop® enhance the colors and use judicious cropping to improve the images. A layer filled with overlay-neutral grey can be used to dodge and burn parts of the images and put back some of the contrast lost because of the flat light. Since these street photos are not nature or photojournalism shots, it is acceptable to use cloning to improve the composition and remove distractions.

Living in the San Francisco area makes it particularly easy to find interesting subjects for street photography, but most photographers should be able to do similar work near home. Workshops with people like John Weiss and Michael Wood can help photographers “see” the possibilities. But for starters, just grab the camera and go for a walk. ■



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Grille #5, Berkeley



Hydrant, San Francisco