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MAGAZINE

# 14

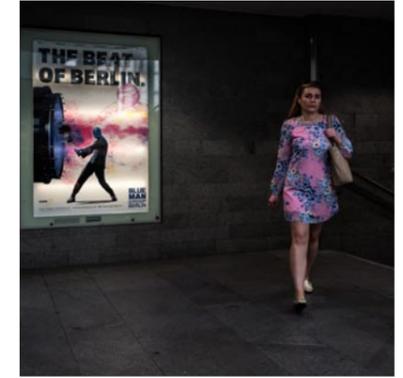
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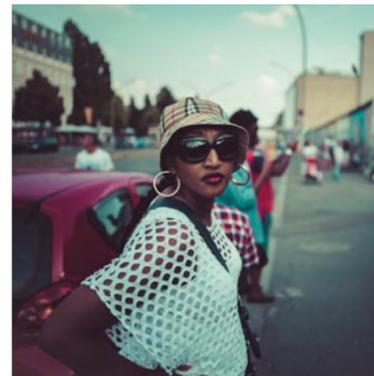
INTERVIEW WITH

*CHRIS CANDID*

PHOTOGRAPHER, BERLIN,  
GERMANY



INTERVIEW # 14



Dear Friends and Readers!

Our next issue of featured photographer, the interview, takes us to Berlin Germany, where Christian Schirmacher aka **Chris Candid** is capturing the vivid essence of not just Berlin's street life.

His photos are stunningly lively and rich in contrast. The portrayed persons are captivating characters and the situations are from intoxicating atmosphere.

Please join us on this fantastic journey.

Enjoy reading



Stefan Cimer  
Founder and Editor

***Please tell us a little bit about yourself to begin with.***



First of all, thank you for having me, for this interview here. My real name is Christian Schirmacher. I was born and still living in Berlin. I am 49 years old, married (25 years with the same woman) and have three children.



**Could you share with us how you first became interested in street photography?**

It has been many years ago, as I saw some photographs by Bruce Gilden and Jeff Mermelstein, but basically I've always felt a strong passion towards photojournalism. In my opinion photojournalism is closely connected to street photography.



***Your work is a vivid mix between colour and black and white street photographs. What do you think about colour in comparison to black and white in street photography?***

Yes, I attach great importance to the liberty to publish my photos in either color or black and white. Life on the street is colorful - so why not publish photos in color as well? Jeff Mermelstein and the pioneer of street photography in color - William Eggleston - have indeed shown the way. However, black and white also stands for the classical language of photography. But above all, black and white photography allow to focus attention on what is essential.



***Seeing your pictures, I am curious how your observational skills evolved from a normal eye to the eye of a sensitive street photographer.***

This is a long development process - and it will surprise everyone - it is not completed yet. Perhaps it will never be complete. I am in constant motion - always on the quest. The street is a colorful bouquet - so why pick out only one flower and leave all the others behind?

You will also getting better by and by, the more you photograph, of course. I'm rather looking for context - the context between human and environment.

My motto: Don't photograph what others see - photograph what you see.  
The documentary photography sharpened my eye for the essential.



 **WATCH**



***What is it in your subjects that make you want to capture them?***

My intention is not only to take pictures secretly but to get in touch with people directly. I enjoy getting in touch with people a lot. If it results in getting a beautiful street portrait – all the better!



***How much does your equipment help you to execute your artistic visions and what kind of equipment are you using?***

Cameras and lenses are just tools. You can use almost every camera to capture street photographs. Some prefer the inconspicuous Ricoh GR – other prefers a DSLR to go out on the street.

After a long search I bought the new Leica Q. And since I had turned away from classical portrait and people photography, the Leica seems perfect for me. Yes - it is insanely expensive - but very good and fitting like a glove.



***Do you like to shoot in groups or are you rather out alone?***

Short answer: alone.

Groups are an abomination to me.

However, I like to meet like-minded people. If you plan to visit Berlin feel free to contact me if you like.



**Has your style of shooting changed since you started?**

Yes sure.

First, all possible influences collapsed over me. Over time I have learned to distinguish between important and unimportant.

Especially in direct contact with people I'm looking for characters that are telling a story.



**You have many spontaneous pictures. What can you tell us about the factor „luck“ in street photography?**

Fortune, of course but also the predictable. Some situation is immediately apparent. I saw an advertising poster of the Blue Men Group recently. The poster had pink and purple color elements. It happened that a young woman appear around the corner, wearing a dress in just the same colors. Sometimes it's simply luck.





**Among all your fantastic work, could you name one as your favourite, and if yes, why?**

95% of my photos are crap - and just the half of the remaining 5% is OK.

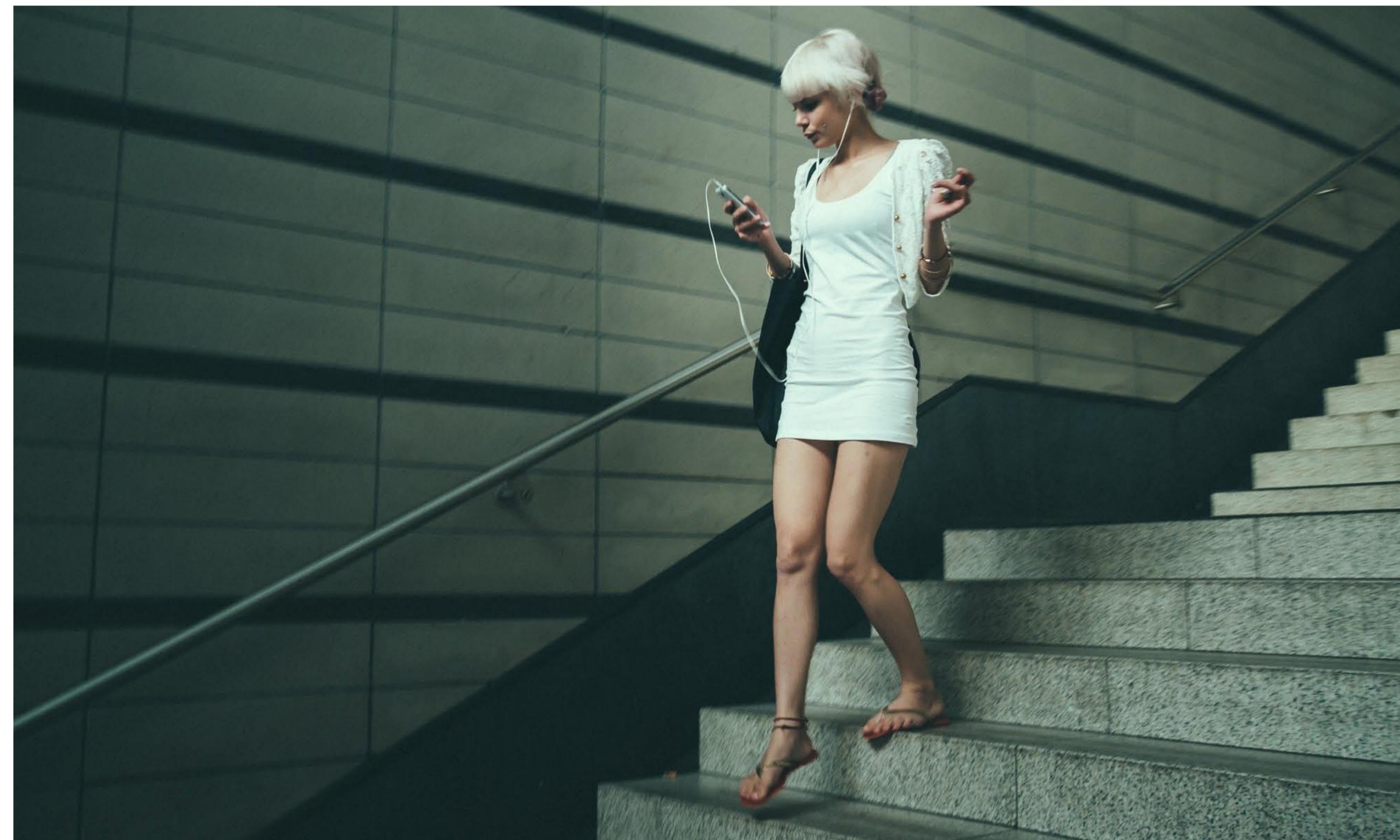
A favorite picture?

The woman on the stairs (Watch your step) is such a favorite picture. It reveals the zeitgeist.

One would intend to shout out loud "watch your step" as her next step is seemingly going into nothing. She is absorbed by her smartphone - a newfangled phenomenon, which we can encounter everywhere.

A very long time I thought about whether to publish it in color or in black and white. But then I decided to post it in color as it's more expressive, in my opinion.

A good example where color simply the better choice.



***Do you expose yourself as a photographer on street or are you trying to be inconspicuous in the crowd?***

Depending on the situation. Sometimes it is better, when no one is realizing you, taking pictures. I tend to use the Wi-Fi function of my Leica in such situation. On the other hand, I prefer to expose myself to the people on streets, when I'm taking pictures. I like to get in touch with the people I'm capturing.



***Do you interact with your subjects on street and if yes, how do they react on you?***

Again, it depends on the situation. Who wants to surprise, should not be exposed when taking a picture. The surprise won't be too big. However, this situation can be dangerous sometimes. Unfortunately, the Germans are a bit paranoid in this connection - suspecting a spy behind every photo taken. But they love to make stupid selfie shots and post them to Facebook, on the other hand - sometimes even I do not understand the Germans.





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***Have you ever had to face unpleasant or even dangerous situation on street?***

Oh yeah. There was an older couple that I have photographed using flash Afterwards I sat down in a pub with a friend. It took a minute, till they approached to our table, shouting at us in English that we should delete the photos. They tried to throw the camera my friend to the floor. It was quite difficult for me to defuse the situation and I even

deleted the taken photo in front of their eyes. Nevertheless, they do not calm down. Meanwhile, they dumped a glass of beer, which spilled all over the camera of my friend. Luckily nothing more happened. Then they finally pulled off.

In Berlin, there are certain areas where you should not get caught up when taking pictures. Especially at night it is better to avoid these areas - or just visit accompanied by a few people. No picture is worth risking your own lives and health.



***What would you say characterizes your work in comparison to other street photographers?***

My street portraits are different from those of the others. My Leica has a fixed focal length of 28mm - which creates caricatured faces when it comes to street portraits. This alone makes it special. It's quite a challenge to make a portrait at that focal length. Most of the street photographers are using 35, 50 or 85mm for portraits.





**Are there any photographer who took influence on your artistic and photographic work and style?**

At the beginning I had role models - Bruce Gilden, Jeff Mermelstein, Joel Meyerowitz etc. The photos of Vivian Maier are fantastic. But after all, what is the point of having role models? One tends to copy them but I don't want that. Times have changed.

What formerly was the street photography by Garry Winogrand and Jeff Mermelstein, is not working any longer.

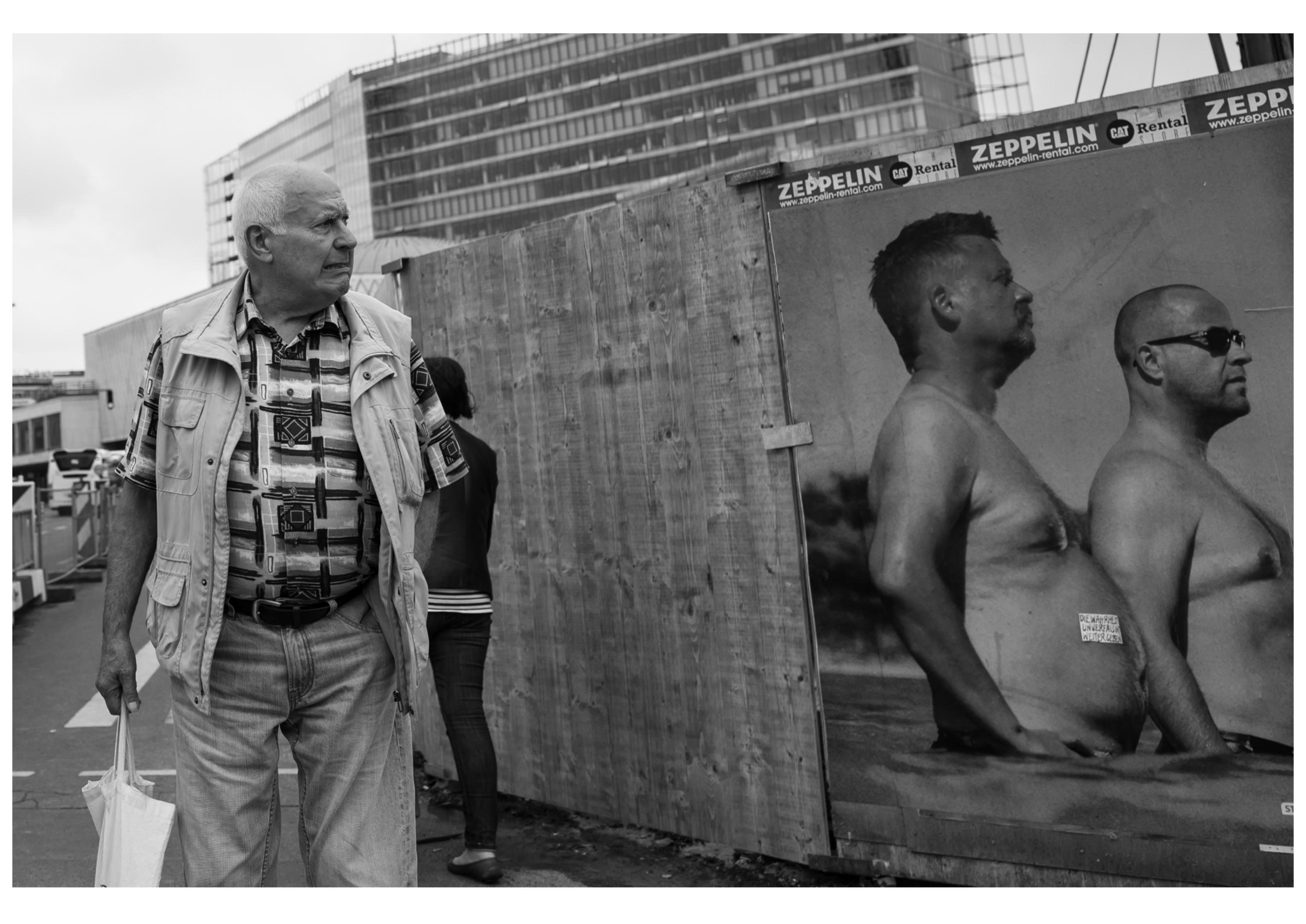
There is such an infinite variety of good street photographers who are under the radar. I am always amazed how many talented photographers are running around the world's roads - still unknown. They could all be role models - and there are in a certain way. But what's the point for me copying from other photographers? Nothing!



**Are there any special projects or exhibitions you're currently working on and which you like to introduce here?**

No projects - but there is an exhibition that I would like to do sometimes. A book publication would not be bad either.





*Chris, thank you for taking the time and for this interesting interview!*



See more of Chris' work and visit him at:

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/chris.candid.7](http://www.facebook.com/chris.candid.7)

**Flickr:** [www.flickr.com/photos/djchris](http://www.flickr.com/photos/djchris)

**500px:** <https://500px.com/csfotograf>

or his **website:** [www.schirmacher-fotografie.de](http://www.schirmacher-fotografie.de)

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