

Looking

Seeing photographs

Elements of Composition

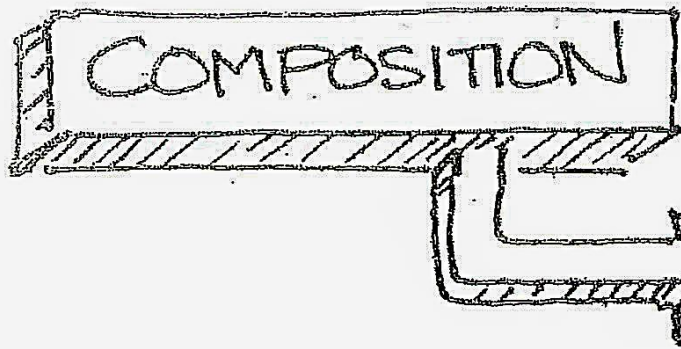
“Maybe the best we can do, is do what we love, as best as we can.” - Galway Kinnell, American Poet



4x5 Viewing Card

1. Your first step to see your options is to see the potential photograph in front of your camera.
2. Imagine you are looking at your print.
3. What can you leave in, and what can you leave out.
4. Look for the “windows of light” those high value areas that can attract and distract the viewer’s perception of the photograph.

Relationships within the elements of composition, your involvement, and your interest in your subject will reflect visually in your photograph.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

THE ORDERLY ARRANGEMENT OF
THE PARTS OF A WORK IN ORDER
TO FORM A UNIFIED WHOLE

(A) 7 ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

LINE
SHAPE
FORM
VALUE
TEXTURE
COLOR
SPACE

(B) 10 PRINCIPLES OF ART

UNITY	CONTRAST
BALANCE	MOVEMENT
PATTERN	HARMONY
FOCUS	RHYTHM
VARIETY	EMPHASIS



GUIDELINES TO BETTER 2-D COMPOSITION

1. SIMPLICITY

2. RULE OF THIRDS

3. LINES

4. BALANCE

5. FRAMING WITH FOREGROUND

6. MERGING

“The heart sees clearly what the eye cannot.” -The Little Prince.

Light

Types of Light

- Sunlight
- Skylight
- Artificial Light
- Available Light: light that already exists in a scene.
- Sweet Light or Magic Light.** Enveloping light found approximately 10 minutes before sunset lasting for approximately 20 minutes after sunset.



Charles Harbutt

1960

Direction of Light

- Back Light
- Side or Cross Light
- Front or Axis Light
- Overhead Light

Quality of Light

- Soft or Diffused Light.
- Contrasty or Harsh Light.
- You must determine if the quality of Light is compatible with the desired mood that you wish to photograph.*

Visual Elements

See how you respond and what you notice about your subject.

Light:

Type, Direction, Quality.

Tone & Contrast:

High-Low key. Scale of tones.

Texture:

Emphasize, Minimize.

Focus & Depth of Field:

Sharp, Shallow, Selective focus.

Viewpoint:

Camera position. High, Low. Frame edges.

Space & Perspective:

Shallow, Deep, choice of angle of view. Telephoto, Wide Angle. Space around subject.

Line:

Straight, Diagonal, Curved, Implied.

Balance & Movement:

Left & Right sides, interest, subject, tonal.

How eye moves through photo along lines, forms, contrasts, objects.

Quality of Light

Dramatic Light



1999

Rodney Smith

Window Light



2005

Roy Pope

Storm / Squall Light

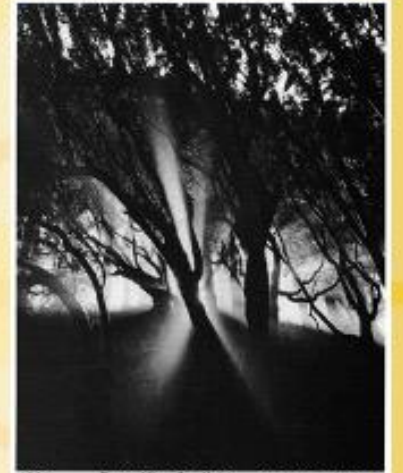
Shadowless Light



1965, Sparky & Cowboy

Danny Lyon

Diffused Light



1901

Trees, Mist, Sunlight

Patrick Jablonski

Contrasty Light

Make photographs of what you see, but more importantly of how you feel. Feel life of the moment in time.

The luminosity that makes a photograph can be thought of as ambient and reflected light.

Ambient Light is the light from a light source (the sun) that falls upon the subject we are photographing.

Ambient Light causes the overall “mood” or aesthetic character of the image (foggy, hazy, bright, etc).

Reflective Light is the light reflecting from the subject that causes its texture and form.



Contrast

Contrast between light and dark draws a viewer's eye.

Contrast sets off one part of a scene from another.

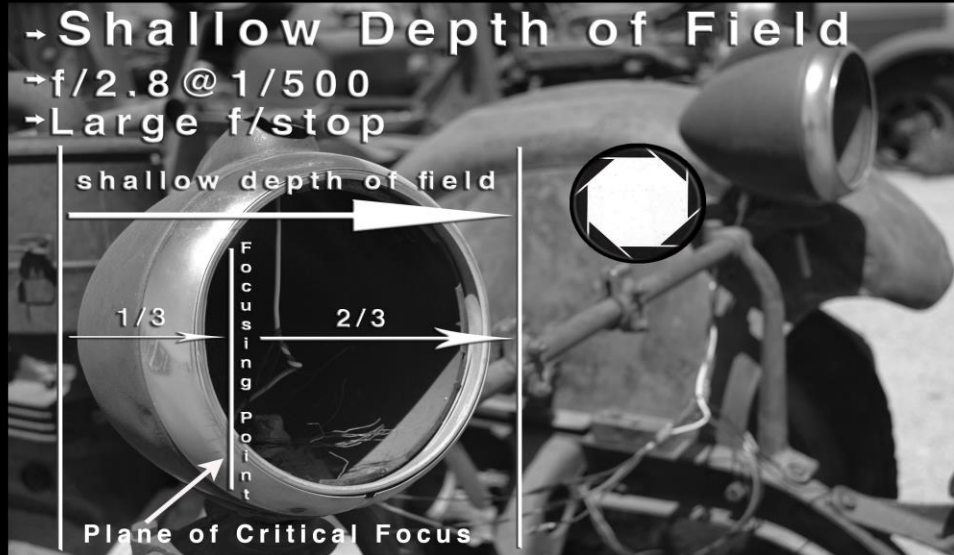
Shadows and Highlights can be shown as separate shapes.

Light along the edge of a subject can make its shape stand out.

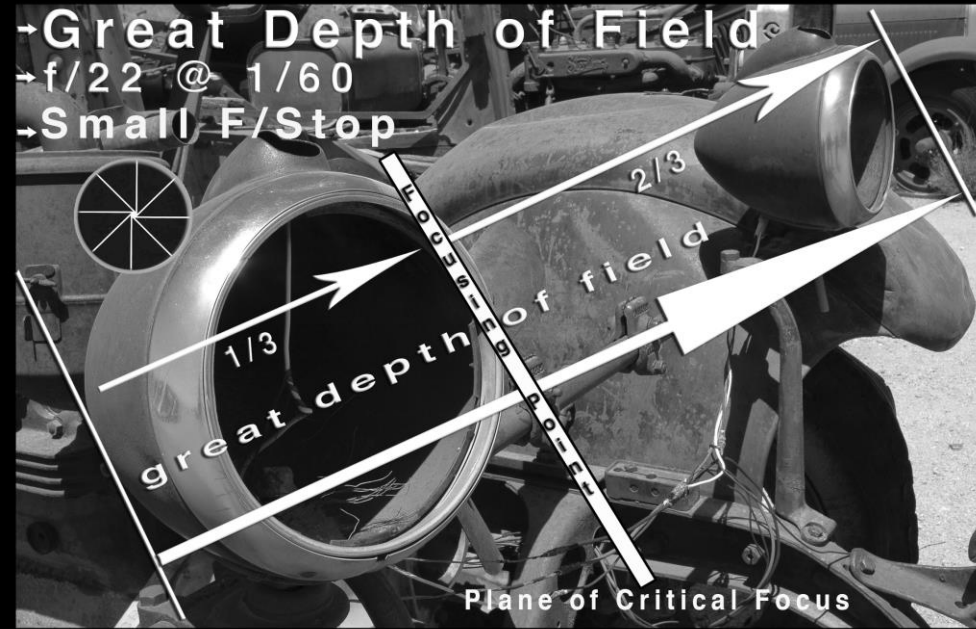
Contrast can be adjusted during film processing, and printing.



Great and Shallow Depth of Field - Focus



As you stop down your lens, depth of field is gained half as fast toward the lens as it is away from the lens.



Depth of Field

b is the plane of critical focus.



LARGE APERTURE, LESS DEPTH OF FIELD



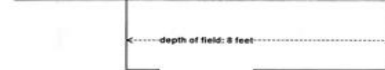
A photographer can limit focus to one plane of sharpness by opening the lens up to its maximum aperture f/2, and allowing objects in front of the *plane of critical focus*, and behind that plane to fade out of focus.

Depth of Field

b is the plane of critical focus

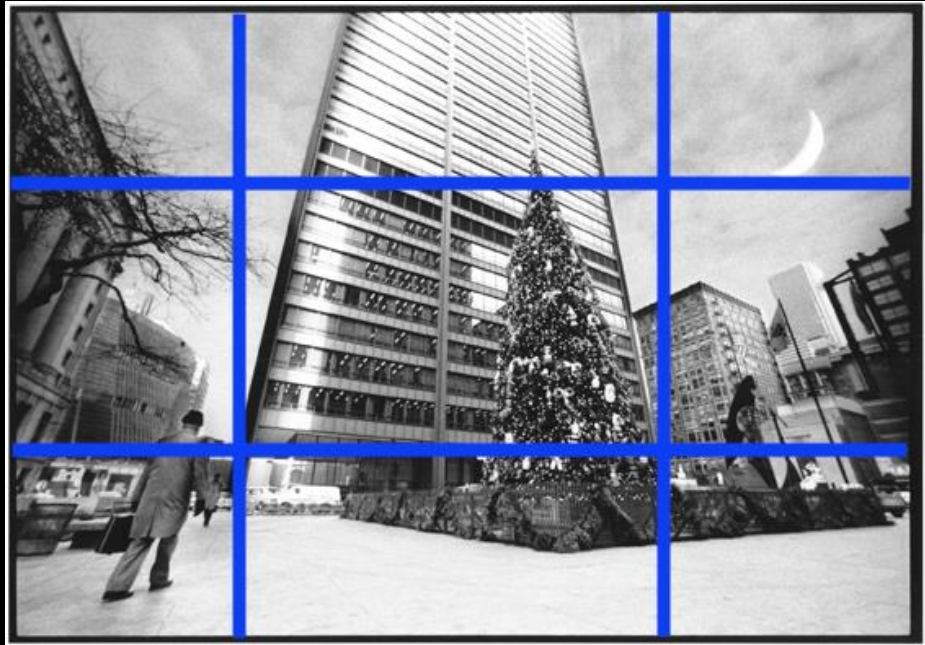


SMALL APERTURE, MORE DEPTH OF FIELD



Or, the photographer has the option of bringing virtually everything into sharp focus by closing down the aperture to the minimum opening for the lens F/16.

Rule of Thirds



Placing the horizon near one of the grid lines in the frame will raise or lower the horizon in the frame and give emphasis to either a dramatic sky or an interesting foreground.

Rule of thirds

Important subject areas should fall on the intersection of the lines, or along the lines of the grid.

Horizons can be placed on either the top, or bottom line of the grid.

Leading Lines

Leading Lines form a pathway into the composition.

Diagonal Lines are dynamic.

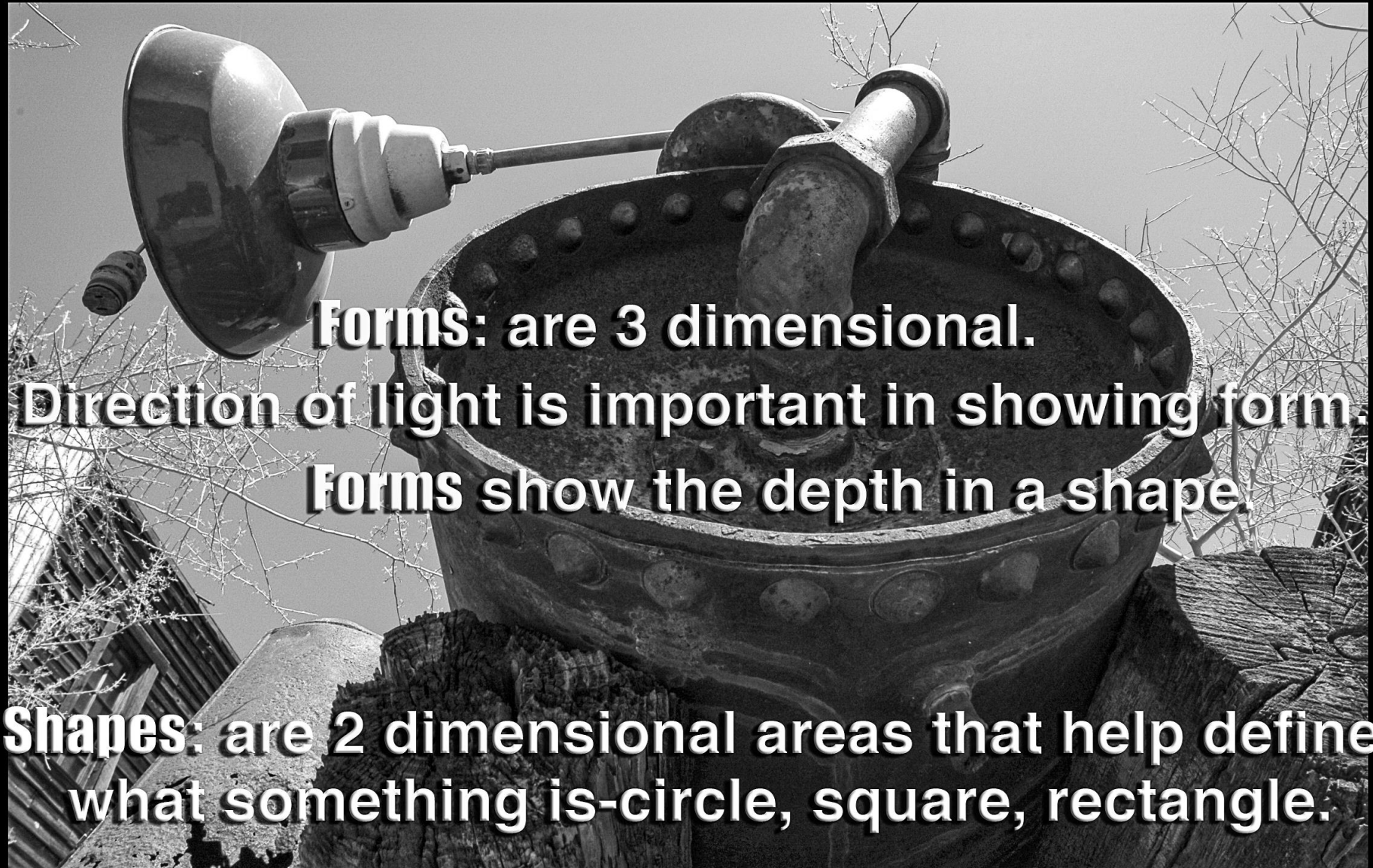
S-Curve Lines are Graceful.

Converging Lines form Perspective.

Implied Lines such as the direction someone is looking (eye line).



Shapes and Forms



Forms: are 3 dimensional.

Direction of light is important in showing form.

Forms show the depth in a shape.

Shapes: are 2 dimensional areas that help define what something is-circle, square, rectangle.

Perspective

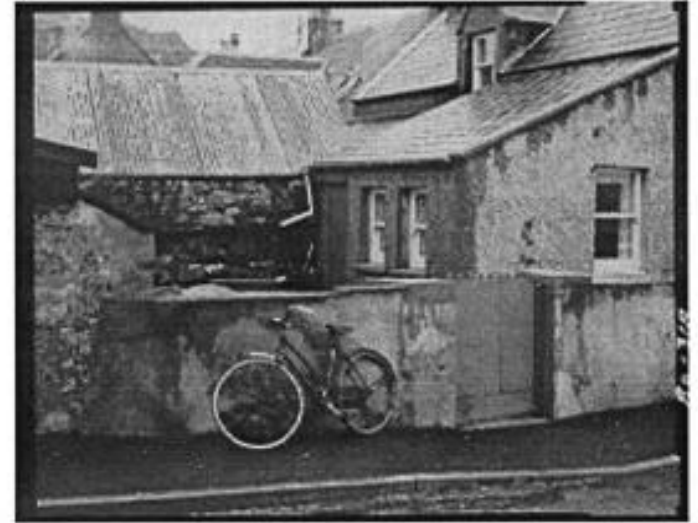
- Where you place your tri-pod brings out the compositional elements in your photograph.
- As you move exploring your subject, watch how the visual relationships change.
- Photographs of Landscapes often gain from an impression of depth from the dwindling size of objects.

Perspective

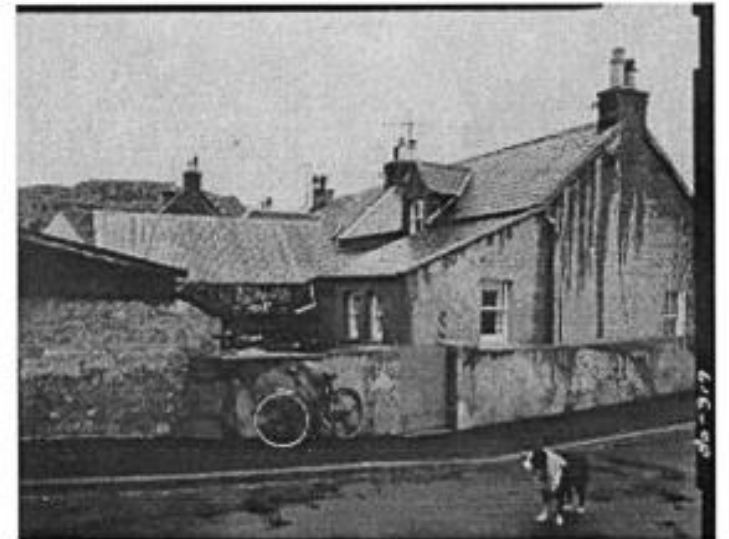
Perspective: the relative size of objects at different distances from the camera. It is one of the principal indicators of depth in a photograph, the dwindling size of objects indicating greater distance from camera to subject.

Changing the focal length of the lens does not change the perspective, for every element in the scene remains in exactly the *same relationship* to each other.

The only way to change *perspective* is to change, or move the camera position.



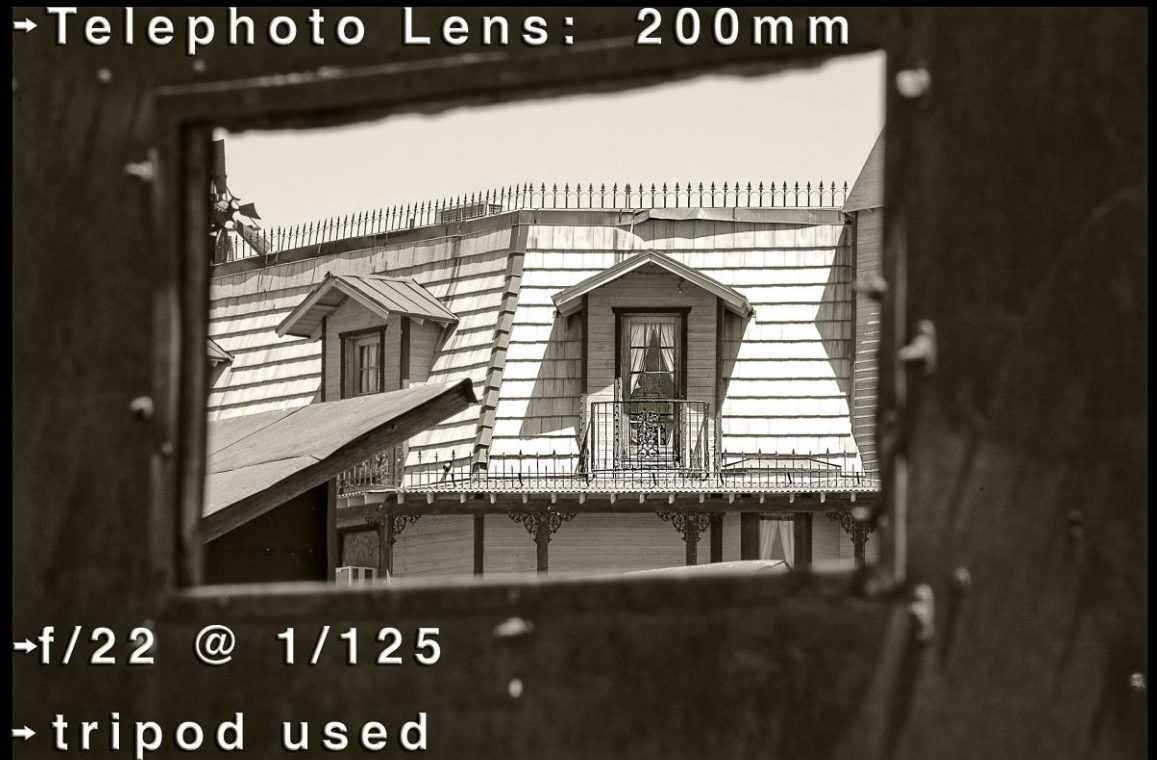
TELEPHOTO LENS



WIDE ANGLE LENS

Perspective

Cropping by changing Focal Length of Lenses



Framing the center of interest with objects in the foreground adds the illusion of depth, and creates a sense of scale.

Framing

- ❖ Frame the center of interest with objects in the foreground. This adds the illusion of depth and creates a sense of scale.
- ❖ A standard recommendation for landscape photography is - put something in the foreground to give the scene depth.
- ❖ Looking down on a subject can appear to flatten space and reduce a subject to its graphic elements.
- ❖ Shooting from below the subject can exaggerate its height.



Thoughts on Texture



If a photograph conveys the conviction of texture, it will usually convey the impression and substance of light.

In a photograph one cannot feel detail with the fingers, but texture is appreciated by both touch, and vision.

Pattern - Balance - Simplicity

Pattern:

- Repeated use of lines or forms.

Balance:

- Equality between the left and right halves of the photograph.
- Tonal balance in the photograph.

Simplicity:

- The Center of Interest and Focus is arranged to complement the compositional elements of line, shape, form, and contrast.
- The Arrangement of compositional parts is to create harmony.



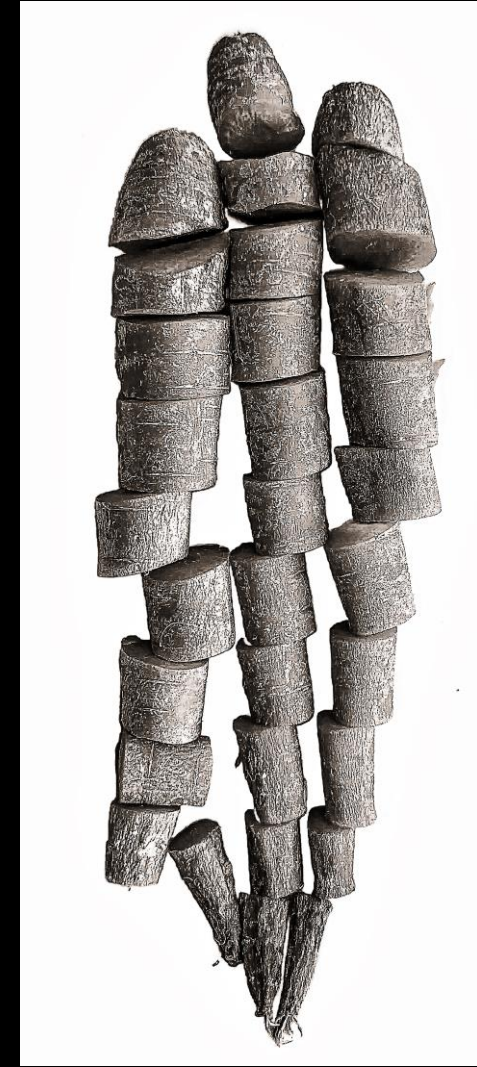
Positive/Negative Space

Positive Space:

is the most important subject or form.

Negative Space:

is that which surrounds the subject or figure.



Motion



Motion



Panning



A **slow shutter speed** and a 4 stop ND filter was used to deliberately create motion in the wind clouds.

The sharpest part of the scene is emphasized because the viewer tends to look there first.

The subject in motion should usually lead into rather than immediately out of the image area.



Tri Pod Used
Impression of Movement

Portraiture

These examples captured a moment - a slice of life.

In the right photograph: the eyes, face, hands, and jewelry are composed to generate interest, and to engage a viewer's reaction and response.

Both photographs are moments that become impactful, meaningful, and motivates the viewer to ask questions.

Moments are emotionally engaging.





Vertical

Vertical Camera
Compositions

Simplicity

Element of
Design

Ask yourself: What is
the center of interest
when making your
photograph?

Arrange the other
parts of the
composition to
complement.

Make the choice of
vertical or horizontal
format.



Camera Position

- Camera position is critical to bring out the strongest relationships. Your point of view or vantage point can have a strong influence.
- Take time to see, think, investigate, and react to your composition.
- Camera placement is selected after initial analysis for the scene.

Example for setting up your tri-pod and camera position:

- When you find your spot, point one designated leg toward the subject.
- Then put your chin on the tri-pod head and make adjustments to the legs for height, and any refined movement left to right.
- After the legs are set and tri-pod is level, the camera is then placed on the tri-pod, this is where your eye was.



Compositional Checklist

Initial Response:

Your intuition, what caught your attention.

Subject:

Scout Area, walk around. Look, see into the subject. Use a viewing card to isolate and study your subject.

Relationships:

Elements that are most important and interesting, are those that are supportive. Look for elements that are unimportant to your composition.

Light:

Quality, Luminosity, and Direction of Light.

Camera Position:

Horizontal or Vertical.

Focal Length of Lens:

Wide or Long (Telephoto).

Subject placement:

Point of focus; Rule of thirds.

Eye travel:

How does your eye travel through the scene.

Find your spot:

Set up your tri-pod.

Envision the Final Image:

Plan a processing and printing strategy.

D



Be Curious

“If we wonder often, the gift of knowledge will come.”

-Destiny: Dreams and Vision

“I wish I had another day to photograph”- All Photographers