Composition in Photography

## Nancy Rosenbaum

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Composition

- Components
  - Rule of Thirds
  - Leading the Eye; Lines
  - Rhythm and Patterns
  - Framing and Orientation
  - Focus
  - Depth of Field
  - Focal Length
  - Point of View
  - Distractions, Mergers, and Intrusions

- Portrait Photography
- Nature Photography
- Gallery

Where Is the Subject?

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Rule of Thirds

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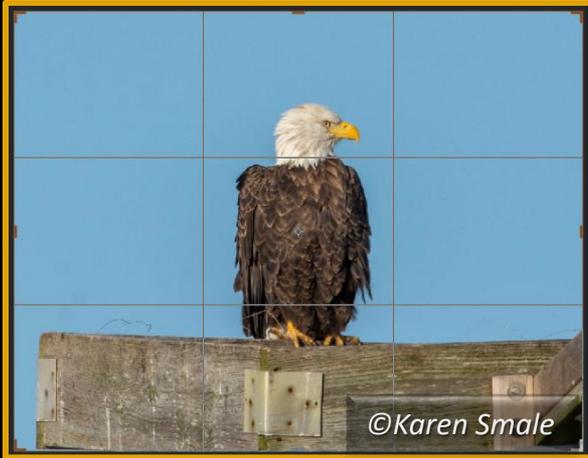
Rule of Thirds – Where Is the Horizon?

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Find Lines

- Lines lead the eye from one point to another
- Horizontals can convey stability, calm
- Verticals can convey strength, solidity, and power
- Diagonals can convey motion and energy
- Arcs and semi-circles can isolate, emphasize, and frame an area
- Patterns create rhythm and movement

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Lines

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Lead the Eye into the Picture

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Rhythm and Patterns

- We are attuned to finding patterns and find them interesting
- Rhythm and patterns use elements that are repeated:
  - Lines
  - Shapes
  - Colors
  - Tones
- Types of rhythm:
  - Repetition
  - Alternation
  - Progression
  - Undulation
- Emphasize the pattern:
  - Fill the frame end-to-end to suggest that the pattern goes on
- Break the pattern:
  - Capture the disruption in the flow and give the image a focal point

Rhythm and Patterns

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Rhythm and Patterns

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Rhythm and Patterns

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Framing

- Filling the frame
  - How near or far will be the subject appear to the viewer?
  - Do you want the subject to fill the frame?
  - What other objects are in the frame (e.g., foreground and background objects)?
  - Do they support the visual story you are telling?
  - How do they contribute to or detract from the composition?
- Natural frames - use to your advantage
  - Look for natural elements to draw the eye to the subject
  - In landscapes, foreground objects can provide a sense of scale
- Arrangement of objects in the frame
  - Zoom in or out
  - Move closer or farther away

Filling the Frame

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Natural Frames

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Orientation

- Does the subject lend itself to either a vertical or horizontal orientation?

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Orientation

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Focus

Out-of-focus objects in the foreground can be distracting

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Use Focus to Isolate the Subject

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Where Is the Focus?

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Depth of Field

Distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear <u>acceptably</u> sharp in an image

- Small f/ number = large aperture = shallow depth of field
- Large f/ number = small aperture = long depth of field
- Longer focus distance = longer depth of field
- Longer focal length lens (e.g., telephoto = shorter depth of field)

$f/1.4$ $f/2$ $f/2.8$ $f/4$ $f/5.6$ $f/8$

Depth of Field

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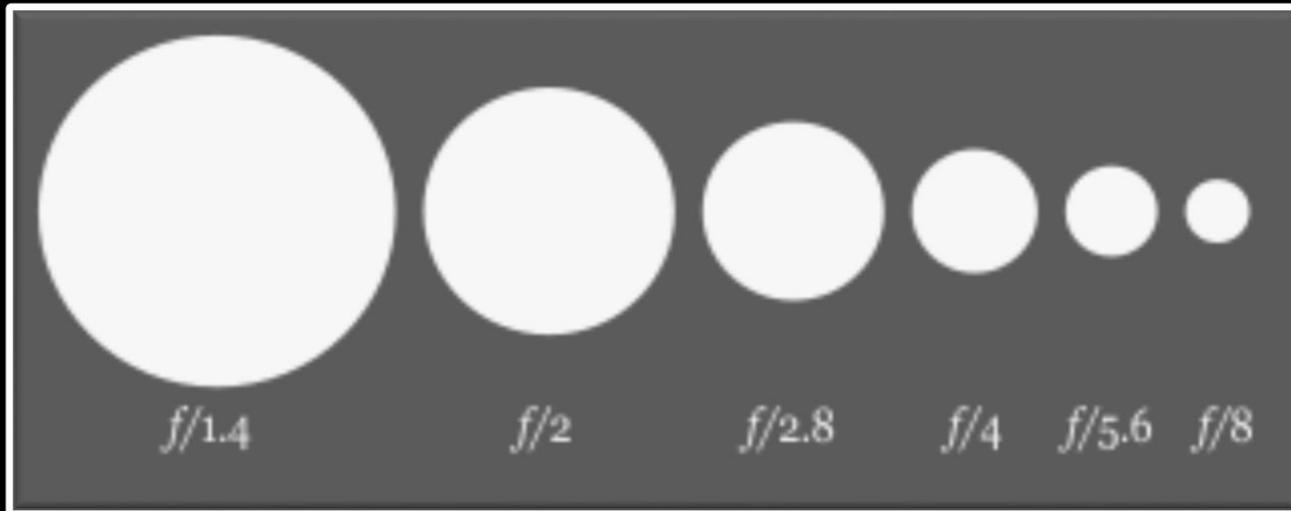
Focal length: 135 mm
Aperture: f/5.0
 Subj. distance: 6.9 ft

Focal length: 18 mm
Aperture: f/3.5
 Subj. distance: infinity

Depth of Field

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Focal length:	82 mm
Aperture:	f/8.0
Subj. distance:	4.6 ft

Focal length:	200 mm
Aperture:	f/5.6
Subj. distance:	41 ft

Point of View

- Changing your position relative to the subject can make a scene more exciting
  - Get high; get low
  - Find a unique angle
  - Try going eye level with your subject

Point of View

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Point of View

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Point of View

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Point of View

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The Golden Hours

Period of daytime shortly after sunrise or before sunset, during which daylight is redder and softer than when the Sun is higher in the sky

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Pay Attention to the Light

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Focal Length

Focal length = distance between the point of convergence in your lens and the camera sensor

- "Normal"
  - Field of view reproduces what the human eye would see
  - Relationships between distances appears "normal" to us
  - FL = 50 mm in a 35 mm camera; 28 mm in DX sensor camera; 22 mm in a four-thirds sensor camera)
- Wide angle
  - Field of view is wider than the eye would normally see
  - Objects appear farther away
  - Relationships between distances appear greater
  - FL numbers are less than the normal FL
- Telephoto
  - Field of view is narrower than the eye would normally see
  - Objects appear closer
  - Relationships between distances appear smaller
  - FL numbers are greater than the normal FL

Telephoto

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Wide Angle

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# Distant vs. Close-In

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Cropping Can Work Wonders

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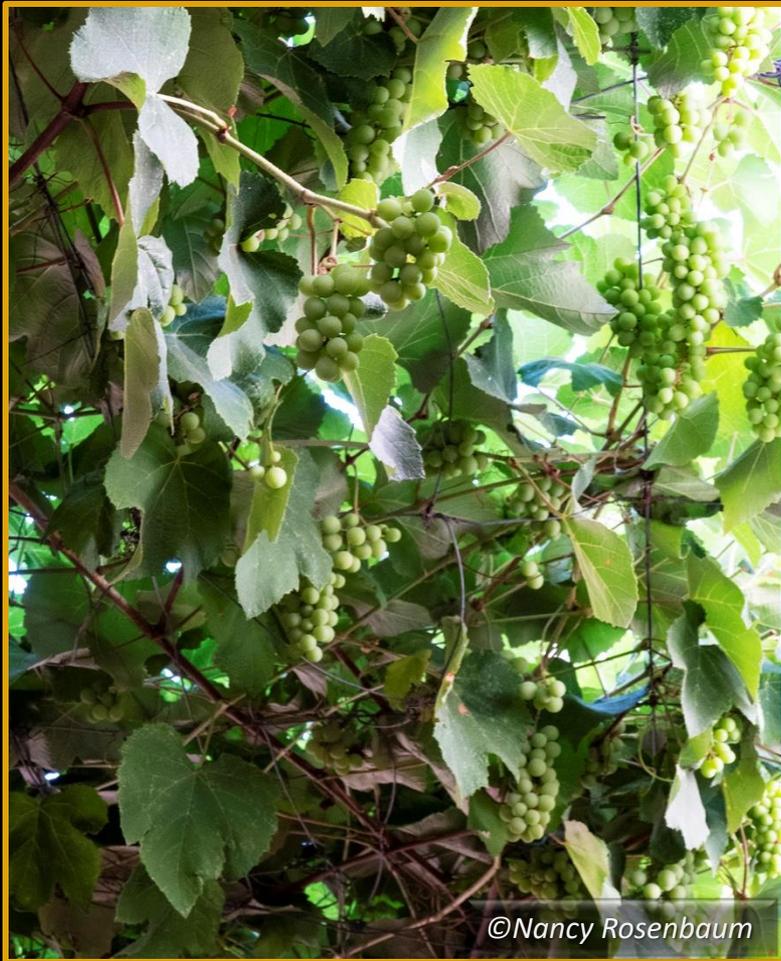
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Focal Length

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Focal length: 55 mm

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Focal length: 98 mm

Focal Length

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Normal
Focal length: 35 mm

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Wide Angle
Focal length: 18 mm

Distractions

- Intrusions
- Mergers
- Bright spots/black holes

Distractions

- Distractions
- Train yourself to look at every element and object in the frame:
- Are there unwanted objects in the foreground or background?
- Are there places where colors or values (light/dark) are so similar that the subject seems to disappear into the background?
- Is there an extremely bright or dark spot that draws the eye away from the subject?

Intrusions

Unwanted objects that detract from the composition

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Intrusions

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Intrusions

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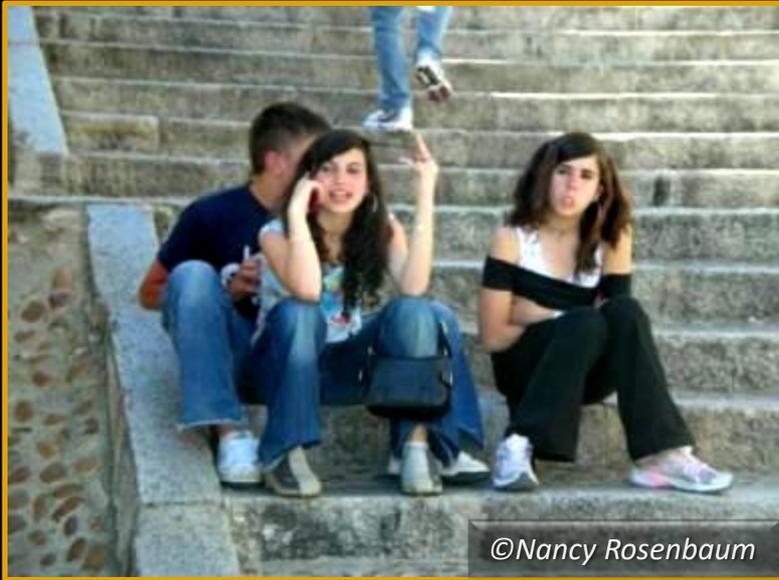
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Mergers

Two or more overlapping objects that appear to be joined

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Mergers

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Fresh
RESTROOMS

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Mergers

Border merger: object(s) cut off in an awkward place

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Bright Spots or "Black Holes"

- The brightest values pull our attention
  - When using flash, closest objects will be brightest
- Large areas of low value can also be a distraction

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Portrait Composition

- Fill the frame with your subject
- Focus on the eyes
- Keep eyes in the upper third
- Use framing to concentrate all attention on your subject
- Create texture
- Use lines
- Change your angles

6 Tips for Perfect Composition in Portrait Photography by Christina N Dickson
Read more: http://www.digital-photography-school.com/6-tips-for-perfect-composition-in-portrait-photography#ixzz1mB7Y82zC

Portraits

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Seven Principles of Nature Photography Composition

- Clarify your message

- Keep it simple

- Be patient

- Fill the frame

- Consider verticals

- Find lines

- Place subjects off-center

from the *Beginner's Guide To Nature Photography* by Cub Kahn

Low OBX Sound, Ed Campion
https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17634635099/in/photostream/

Dawn in the Dunes - Karen Smale
https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17237914874/in/photostream/

GALLERY

Photo Club Member Selections

On the Other Side of the Fence, Bob Haines: https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17690996118/

Brittney - Child's Play, Bonnie Bradley: https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17240888853/in/photostream/

Don't Hate Me Because I'm Beautiful, Scott Hull:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17659197010/in/photostream/

Ocean City Boardwalk at Sunset, Ed Campion:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17818083992/in/photostream/

Untitled, Bob Peters: https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17176673254/in/photostream/

Los Morrillos Lighthouse, Adán Rodríguez-Arroyo:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17565712510/in/photostream/

Cascade, Buttermilk Falls, NY, Melissa Meyers:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17454899399/in/photostream/

Tree Hugger, Karen Johnson: https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17020599483/in/photostream/

Peruvian Boat Ride, Kimberly Engle: https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcphoto/17584982156/in/photostream/
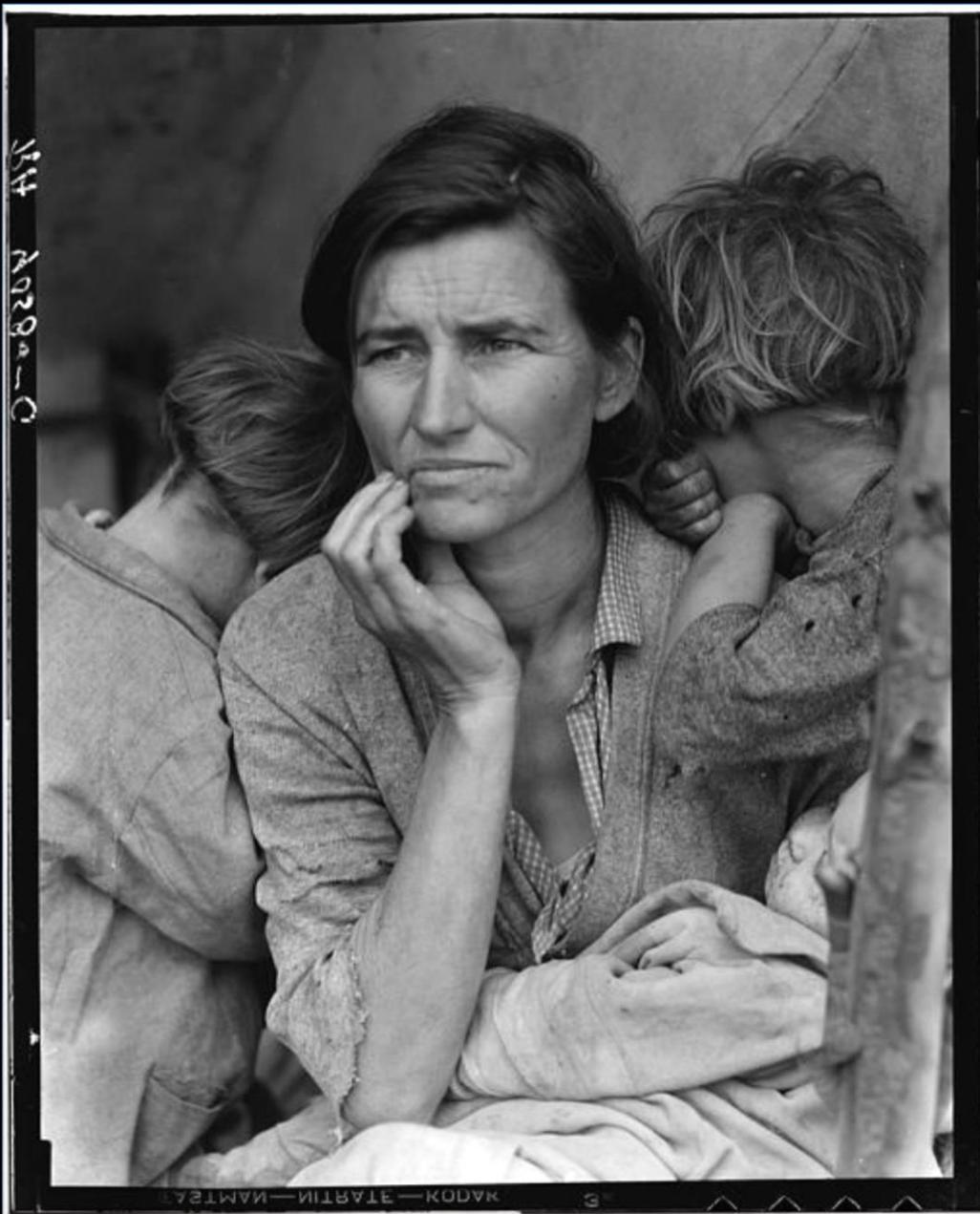
Dorothea Lange

Migrant Mother, 1936

Courtesy Library of Congress
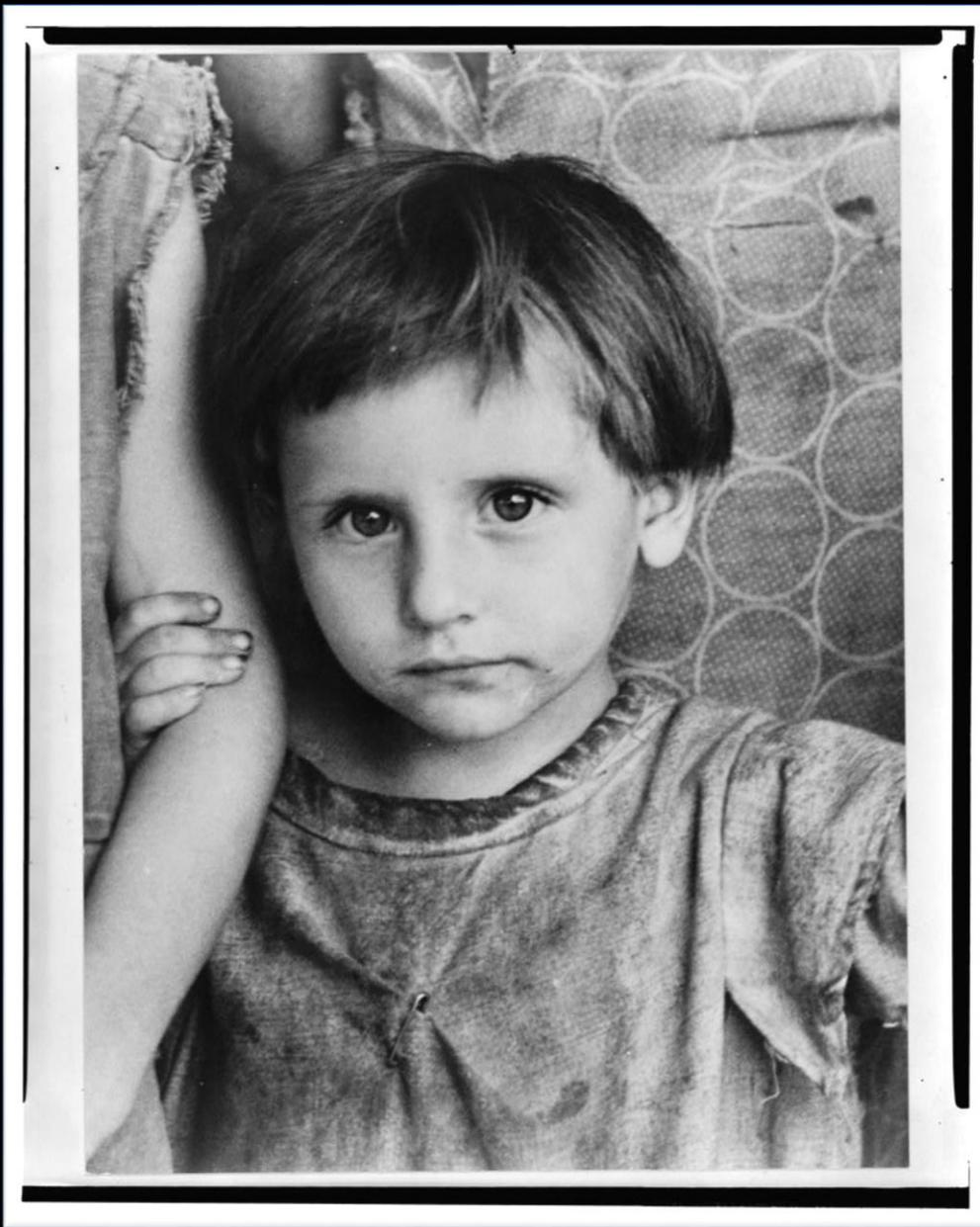
Walker Evans

Laura Minnie Lee Tengle , 1935

Courtesy Library of Congress

Thomas Askew

Courtesy Library of Congress

Atlanta University, Georgia, 1899

American Colony (Jerusalem), Photo Dept.

Egyptian camel transport passing over Olivet, 1918

Alice S. Kandell   Courtesy Library of Congress

Mount Kānchenjunga, Third Highest Mountain in the World, btw. 1965-1979
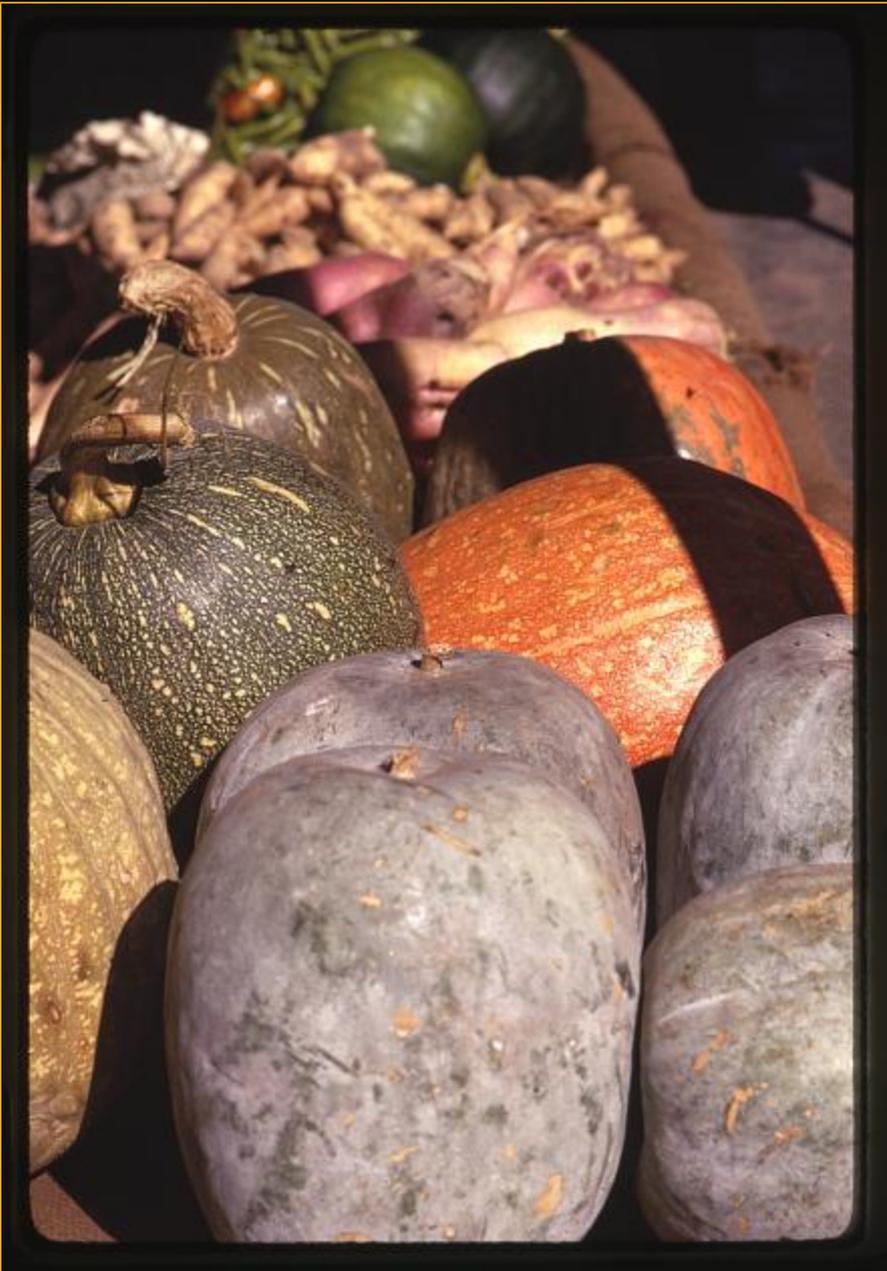
Alice S. Kandell

Sikkim, Oversized Melons and Fruit Grow, 1969

Courtesy Library of Congress

Courtesy Library of Congress