Composition in Photography

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February 2012
Composition

• Components of Composition
  – Rule of Thirds
  – Leading the Eye; Lines
  – Framing
  – Focus
  – Depth of Field
  – Angle of View
  – Distractions
• Nature Photography
• Portrait Photography
• Gallery
The Rule of Thirds
Find Lines

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

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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?

• Arrangement of objects in the frame
  – Point of view – left, right, down, up
  – Zoom in or out
  – Move closer or farther away

• Natural frames - use to your advantage
Filling the Frame

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Natural Frames

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Horizontal or Vertical?

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Focus
Depth of Field

- Depth of Field – the range appearing in focus
  - 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)
Depth of Field

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

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
Angle of View
Angle of View, cont’d.
Angle of View, cont’d.
Focal Length

• “Normal”
  – Field of view reproduces what the human eye would see
  – Relationships between distances appears “normal” to us
  – Focal length = diagonal size of the film or sensor
  – 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
Focal Length

Focal length: 55 mm
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Focal length: 98 mm
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Focal Length, cont’d.
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, cont’d.

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Intrusions, cont’d.
Mergers

Two or more overlapping objects that appear to be joined
Mergers, cont’d.
Mergers, cont’d.

Border merger: object(s) cut off in an awkward place
Bright Spots or “Black Holes”

• The brightest values pull our attention
• Large areas of low value can also be a distraction
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
Pay Attention to the Light

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Portrait Composition

• Fill the frame with your subject
• 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
GALLERY

Courtesy Library of Congress
Dorothea Lange

*Migrant Mother, 1936*
Walker Evans

Laura Minnie Lee Tingle, 1935
Thomas Askew

Weeding sugar beets for $2.00 an hour, 1972
Photographer Unknown

Vietnam... A Marine walking point for his unit during Operation Macon, a marine moves slowly, cautious of enemy pitfalls... 1966
Thomas Askew

*Atlanta University, Georgia, 1899*
American Colony (Jerusalem), Photo Dept.

Egyptian camel transport passing over Olivet, 1918
Alice S. Kandell

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

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Sikkim, Oversized Melons and Fruit Grow, 1969
Abdullah Fréres
*Tuberculosis Ward of the Hasköy Hospital for Women, btw. 1880 - 1893*