

BASICS CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

Jeremy Webb

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Second Edition



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Title: Dusk

Source/Photographer: Jeremy Webb

An effective design often results from an approach that trusts in limitation as a creative driving force behind the process of image creation – doing more with less. Once one or two separate elements are isolated and emphasized, the transforming nature of light can effectively and dramatically blend these elements together.

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Introduction

The idea of studying design principles in photography can sound a little off-putting – much like the tedium of learning scales when starting to play a musical instrument. This book will hopefully remove that kind of negative association and show how photography underpinned by the power of design principles is photography that has the power to last and affect us deeply. Design plays a vital role in turning images into long-distance runners, not simply sprinters.

Our resistance to design principles partly lies in our attitude and approach to design in the widest sense. We've simply become immune to design's overwhelming effect on our daily lives. From the moment we wake up and hurl our alarm clocks to the floor, to the moment we close our eyes and turn off our digital radios, our days have been filled with well-designed furniture, cars, magazines, packaging, town planning and so on. Most of it works, although much of it doesn't. But design always promises something – mostly, the idea that it is intended to make our lives a little better.

It could be argued that design principles make our photography a little better. However, this is a feeble underestimation of their usefulness to photographers or lovers of photography. Rather than existing as a strict set of unchallengeable rules or guidelines, design principles applied to photography can act as a kind of fluid, flexible and unseen nervous system that brings images to life. Some great photographers naturally have the wisdom and insight to work with design principles. However, not all photographers share this talent. Luckily, it is a skill that can be learned and developed to create memorable and lasting images.

The continuing rise of digital culture has reignited interest in the world of photography as a mass art form, and new channels of distribution have opened up to send billions of photographs spinning across the globe at a bewildering rate. It's not simply the technological new age that facilitates this volume and speed of image distribution – our collective mindset and greed for speed also grease the engine. The world is simply crammed full of photographs like never before.

This appetite for photography, however insatiable, is still hungry for photographs of substance, craft, meaning and powerful intent, despite an overwhelming landslip of the mediocre and mundane. What makes photographs endure? A photographer who calls upon his or her sense of design and delivers with style and vision sends images out there that are worlds apart from those generated with mere speed and convenience in mind.

An understanding of design doesn't slow you down, trip you up or stand in your way. It is a skill available to everyone at all times and unless we reach out and grasp the full potential of the medium, photography just sits and runs in 'sleep mode' when it should be life-affirming, vivid and impossible to ignore.



Title: Red sofa and banana

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Design awareness enables photographers to see potential in situations that are not apparent to others. It improves your photography and increases your ability to see the world differently by understanding how even the simplest scene can provide opportunities to be playful with the principles of design.

Basic design theory

The opening chapter takes a close look at a few of the most important steps in the process of photography – how you frame your subject and where you take your photograph from. Decisions over distance, angle and viewpoint can profoundly affect the overall appearance of the final image, and the use of space within photography can give life and substance to your subject, influencing how we ‘read’ photographic images.

The elements of design

These elements are widely considered to consist of six design features or characteristics that photographers can utilize within their picture-taking to create images with vision and creativity. Like raw ingredients ready to be powerfully combined by the design process in the following chapter, we’ll take a look at each one in turn and evaluate how they can be used as aspects of composition.

First design principles

Having looked at the raw ingredients or elements of design in the previous chapter, this critical section of the book shows how the elements of design can be processed, combined and manipulated to create powerful images that have design at the heart of their appeal.

Depth and scale

All photographs are two dimensional, but this doesn’t have to limit our thinking or our intuition. The use of design principles can create the illusion of depth and this can influence our involvement within the image. We’ll look at how proportion and scale

can confuse and delight the eye, and how the art of the abstract is derived from an awareness of simple but essential design principles.

Movement and flow

When photography appears too static or limp, it's often because the image contains no real sense of motion. Motion means life. A sense of movement can bring an image to life with powerful directional forces that demand an active engagement with the image rather than a passive acceptance. This aspect of photography can be easily accessed through the use of dynamic design.

Emphasis and emotion

To a large extent, successful photography relies on the ability of the photographer to construct his or her image so that its audience will respond to the same point of interest (POI) or feel the emotional response the photographer intended. This chapter looks at how the use of colour, focusing and a range of compositional techniques subtly or profoundly influence our emotions.

Putting it all together

What good is all this knowledge if it simply remains theoretical? Applying design principles to your work puts you in charge of the whole picture. We wrap things up in this chapter by looking at symbolism, presentation and a range of ideas to help keep design at the heart of your work.

Applying design principles to your work puts you in charge of the whole picture.



Title: Trolleys

Source/Photographer: Jeremy Webb

The mundane sight of supermarket trolleys is given a different twist by shooting through a rain-soaked car window. The vivid blues and reds of the webbing straps have softened and bled almost like watercolour paints on paper, providing a softer and less distinct image of the everyday.

1

Basic design theory



Title: Gallery

Source/photographer: Hannah Starkey

Within this beautifully constructed image, so reliant on straight lines and blocks of different tones, only the plastic cup and the plastic chair stand out as isolated elements within the angular and very graphic study of the space.

At its most basic level, design applied to photography is simply the skilful arrangement of picture information within a frame. Photographers can include or exclude information, emphasize or diminish areas of content and adjust their position by a fraction of a degree if necessary in order to capture the image required.

Design and composition are like two sides of the same coin – design being the process and composition being the outcome. Acknowledging and responding to the role design

plays within your photography enables you to create images that can be 'read' and understood by the viewer. However, it is crucial that the gaining of this knowledge does not in any way destroy the magic of photography or detract from its power.

Many photographers agree that there is no winning formula or easy route to consistently producing good photographs, if a 'good' photograph is held to be one that is clear in its intent and strong in its composition. It's really a question of juggling with a set of design variables and being able to see what is really there, not what we might expect or assume to be there. Once we can approach a subject with an uncluttered vision and a childlike curiosity, we have the opportunity and the motivation to capture an image with the uniqueness of our own vision and the greatest efficiency required.

[The role of the viewfinder in photography](#)

The viewfinder creates a precise boundary between what's captured and what's not. Unlike painting, where an image begins with a blank surface, photography can be called a reductive pursuit. It starts out faced with everything and it extracts a minute aspect of that by using the viewfinder edges to consciously or unconsciously create a something by excluding specific elements.

Here, the term 'reductive' is not used in a negative sense, but rather it highlights the essence of photographic image capture in the way it is normally practised.

The viewfinder is the greatest compositional tool known to photographers. However, its power to influence our engagement with images is often poorly considered because we are too concerned with subject and centrality rather than imaginatively framing a scene in innovative or extraordinary ways.

After our imagination and our creative expectations, the viewfinder is where we first encounter the design process at its most raw. How the viewfinder frames our intended subject is based on a range of decisions taken by the photographer, the most critical factors behind these decisions being height, angle and distance to subject.

By using the viewfinder consciously and effectively, photographers can create bold and compelling images that frame the world in unusual ways.

The edge

Using the viewfinder's full capability allows the photographer to consider 100 per cent of the image space available, right up to the edges. As an intentional choice, using the viewfinder edge to visually dismember a subject or cut off something into nothing has both positive and negative consequences. There is no escaping the fact that an image has to have some kind of boundary, but that does not mean we have to take a passive approach to its inevitable restrictions. We must look for opportunities to use it creatively.

Some photographers are acutely aware of the power of the defining edges of the viewfinder; their images creatively play with what is included or excluded from the photograph.

By using the viewfinder consciously and effectively, photographers can create bold and compelling images that frame the world in unusual ways. In addition, they enable the viewer to address a familiar subject matter through a new perspective, while emphasizing and reconfiguring the various design elements into fresh arrangements of greater visual appeal.



Title: Snow wave

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Sometimes nature lays the simplest forms right in front of us. By using your judgement of

distance, proximity and viewpoint, you can let the frame take over and bypass all that is unnecessary for an exercise in simplicity.

The frame: whole truths and half truths

Photography can never present the whole truth, but it can shape history because of the notion that photography is bound up with truth. For example, world events have been initiated, recorded and sometimes turned around by the influence of photography in news journalism.

A famous TV advertisement, “Points of View” created for *The Guardian* newspaper in 1986, depicted the scene of a skinhead walking down a street, before breaking out into a run and heading aggressively towards an older man. The message was clear: here was a menacing and dangerous individual out to rob or beat up a defenceless victim in broad daylight.

As it turns out, the film reveals the man is running towards the older man in order to knock him out of the way of some scaffolding about to fall on him. The carefully controlled filming and framing of the scenes plays to our prejudices and only tells part of the story at first. After a dramatic pause, the full facts of the scenario are revealed and the whole truth is presented. The advertisement shows that the frame can capture part of the scene to create one carefully contrived meaning, while taking an alternative view presents another.

Inclusion vs exclusion

Deciding what you should and shouldn't include within your frame presents not only moral dilemmas, but also design issues about whether what you include benefits your image or detracts from its overall power.

Ideally, what you frame within your viewfinder should only contain the detail and substance necessary to communicate your vision as powerfully as possible. The greatest photographers get to the heart of something or someone in a way that leaves amateurs envious because they have developed an intuitive ability to get close to their subjects or to use their sense of design (in terms of arranging the elements within the

viewfinder) to carefully exclude unwanted detail or to emphasize certain components at the expense of others.

The inclusion of unnecessary or distracting details will allow your audience to miss the point or become troubled by the sheer number of possible interpretations and responses that could arise from a cluttered or busy image.



Title: Pat Sabatine's 8th Birthday Party, Martins Creek, April 1977

Source/photographer: Larry Fink

Many of Larry Fink's black and white shots were taken in square format or cropped to fit a square image. By getting really close, his images often make dynamic, energetic moments of social interaction by allowing subject matter to drift to the edges of the frame. Heads and limbs are cut off by the frame edge or are only partially shown in many of his images. But the containment of his unusual angles and high-contrast black and white technique always creates compelling images from social gatherings and family occasions of every

kind.



Title: Miss Appleton's shoes II, 1976

Source/photographer: Olivia Parker

Olivia Parker creates beautiful compositions with her still life images. In this image, the scene is contained by a black border, which is created by the edge of a processed sheet film that also references the photographic nature of her images.

Frame proportions and format

Photographers often adopt very rigid preferences about the proportions of the frames their cameras offer. In turn, this can lead to an equally inflexible approach towards the way we build and construct our frames within a design aesthetic. Our creative vision can become a little stifled as a result of sticking with one frame size and format that we've simply become used to using without considering other possibilities.

Image format and proportions are determined by the cameras we use, and whether we shoot 35mm, medium format, large format or even pinhole, the frame proportions our cameras produce allow us to adopt new ways of viewing a subject and framing it, with design at the heart of many of those choices. An image opportunity may require a very different compositional 'build' when captured in a square format if the photographer is simply conditioned to view scenes and subjects through the traditionally proportioned rectangular frame.

Square format photography often allows key graphic elements to become visible with a far greater force – diagonal lines can appear more dynamic, simple shapes or areas of space can assert themselves far more powerfully than when contained within the more familiar landscape-format frame. Diane Arbus created many of her portraits of America's marginalized or dispossessed with her square format Leica; David Bailey often used square format to create many of his iconic portraits of rock stars and actors from the 1960s, often using the top edge of the square frame to cut into the top of his subject's head. More recently, landscape photographers like Michael Kenna have combined the square format with black and white and a minimalist aesthetic to produce a powerful body of work.

Contemporary examples of square format photography appear in the millions via Instagram, which is founded on this format, although Flickr and Pinterest also display galleries and portfolios of square format photography, often by photographers who enjoy making the most of the fashion for toy or junk film cameras, in addition to those who remain loyal to the pixel.

Panoramic images can be usefully employed by landscape photographers in particular, where a long sweep of horizon can be contained within the wide stretch of a letterbox-style frame, the photographer thereby emphasizing the flat, extended horizon much as the way our eyes naturally scan left-to-right or right-to-left. Architectural photography

often employs the use of bold, narrow vertical formats to contain tall structures and draw attention to their height.

Circular frames are rare in the many presentations of photography and yet an image area without rigid vertical and horizontal edges has a certain integrity about it if we consider the way we actually see and experience the world – peripheral vision drifts into awareness without clear straight lines or edges denoting something here/nothing there. Our view of the world as witnessed with our own eyes is a giant radar dish of reception, from which we place focus and attention on a smaller area or cone of vision within that vast gathering of light and detail. Photography is never more reductive than when it remains so fixed and prescribed within predetermined edges of specific angle and length. Unorthodox image formats allow photographers to present subjects framed in new ways that sometimes allow us to examine the subject with a fresh perspective or to perceive the intent of the photographer with greater clarity and purpose.

The use of space

Ike Turner once said, 'It's the spaces in between the notes that are important'. Space is every bit as important as substance – it is substance as far as design is concerned. Within design, space can be used to isolate something, to throw emphasis on something, to provide contrast against something and to show the scale and scope of a subject, among a thousand other uses. Its presence is just as visible within an image as any tangible subject that may emerge from it.

Awareness of space

Awareness of space as a design principle allows you to confer emphasis on a subject or create stronger separation between a subject and its environment or background.

Positive and negative

Many simple optical illusions rely on the eyes' perception of space for their effect. Space can define where an object lies in relation to others, and thus allow us to make sense of a scene or situation. Many illusions exploit our habit of assuming that dark or black areas of tone represent subject, while light or white areas equate to the absence of subject – emptiness or space.

Photography, too, can play with these assumptions. After all, the eye makes sense of a flat two-dimensional image and accepts it as a facsimile of the three-dimensional world almost without question. Using space as a design tool enables us to manufacture depth, and depth takes us just that little bit nearer to closing the gap between the frustrations of two-dimensional representation and the three-dimensional experience of life being lived. The gap is still vast, but at least it's going in the right direction. Depth, in terms of photography, allows us to peek beyond the conventional limitations of two-dimensional imagery and creates a vicarious version of experiential reality.



Title: Burger café

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

By positioning the burger café within the lower half of the viewfinder, the vertical forms of the scene are given more space to penetrate. In giving greater emphasis to the featureless background and the bland surrounding sky, the white overcast backdrop also appears quite oppressive in this misty winter image from an out-of-season promenade.



Title: Mask

Source/photographer: Oleg Dersky

The creative use of negative and positive space enables photographers to play with our perceptions of what appears to be coming forward and what appears to be retreating. The full craft and construction behind Oleg Dersky's image only reveals itself when we peer beyond the surface presentation of the image.

Positional decisions

The distance between you and your subject is fundamental to the design of an image.

We've already seen how the edge of the frame can be used creatively to tease the viewer and give an audacious and innovative treatment to even the most mundane subject. The communicative power of an image can change dramatically with the slightest adjustment to position, distance or angle.

Positional decisions have the power to manipulate our feelings at a deeply unconscious level. For example, a politician photographed from above may appear diminished or belittled, their stature literally and metaphorically reduced in size, making them appear vulnerable or childlike. The same politician photographed from a position below eye level may appear statuesque and important, as though we are looking up to them.

Your viewpoint must be adapted in order to contain all the significant information you need for the image. This may require you to go in close in order to give your subject a bold treatment full of impact and authority, or it may require you to pull away, thereby allowing other detail and information to be included within the frame to intrigue the viewer.

Many of the greatest photographers arrive at a scene and without thinking, quickly and quietly 'size up' the situation from many viewpoints intuitively. This approach is the result of a honed and internalized way of working gained through personal vision and experience. Where you choose to capture your image from must be driven by the willingness to create a forceful and absorbing composition, rather than any attempt to simply apply an artful style over a subject that needs a bit of 'spicing up'.

The communicative power of an image can change dramatically with the slightest adjustment to position, distance or angle.



Title: Old tulip

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Adopting a suitable distance and placing your subject against a plain background allows your images to be free of distracting backgrounds and unintended clutter.



Title: Iris 1

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The iPhone and other smartphones contain lenses that are limited by any comparison to those used by modern digital SLRs. Although such camera phones offer ease of use, along with portability, storage and simple image editing and integration, they can't offer the quality and clarity of larger lenses that aren't compromised by the requirement to be pocket-sized. Even the most basic digital SLR camera kit lens will provide depth of field and user operability way in excess of the camera phone lens, and capture clarity in low-

light situations impossible for a smartphone camera to deal with. But given its limitations, it's possible to photograph some subjects in good, bright light that compare well with those achievable with a digital SLR camera, provided the print isn't too large. This simple floral shot was captured using an iPhone. The mottled background to this Iris was created simply by increasing the distance between the wall and the subject in order to create a defocused background.

Distance to subject

The perceived distance between you and your subject is usually determined by two key factors: the physical distance between the photographer and the subject, and the lens on the camera.

Telephoto lenses can take you closer to a subject without the need to physically walk up to it. However, they can also distort the spatial relationships between objects – for instance, they make figures in a landscape appear closer together than they really are.

The viewer's emotional engagement with an image can be increased by simply getting closer to the subject and then framing the subject in such a way that it is emphasized and strengthened by its isolation against a plain background or given a sympathetic position within the frame. Crucially, the distance you adopt must contain enough significant information within the frame to accurately communicate your intent and exclude anything superfluous or detracting from the principal purpose behind the construction of the image.



Title: The pioneer trumpeter, 1930

Source/photographer: Aleksandr Mikhajlovich Rodchenko

This is an iconic image which for many Americans heralded the beginning of a new era in pictorial modernism. It is one of the earliest examples of a more radical approach to photography exemplified by a brave and unconventional image.



Title: Deal Sleeping Man

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

From a series of solo figures in the landscape, the isolation of a single element against an empty, uniform background can powerfully convey a sense of subject isolation. The landscape format frame contains three elements – the subject, the environment and the inclusion of a small area of the shoreline top/right of the frame – that give just enough situational information to create a tension between the subject and the sea.



Title: Urban Man

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Urban man photographed through a curved window against a backdrop of built environment. This image also required some distance between camera and subject in order to isolate the figure within its surroundings.

Proximity to subject

How close you are to your subject is fundamental to successful photography. Too distant, and the audience to your images is often underwhelmed or disinterested. Get closer, fill the frame when you can, and send your images out into the world so that

your intent is clear. Let others see what you wanted to communicate by simply being there, right in front of it.

Nowhere is this more apt than in portrait photography. When we take a close look at so many of the great portraits, we receive a very powerful signal, sensing that we are almost literally within their personal space. When we get that feeling of a photographer's subject looking back at us or sharing some expression of confidence or uncertainty, it's because we are somehow there, in front of them.

The requirement to go in close or keep your distance should be driven solely by what you want to say with your image.

Too close and the frame can feel claustrophobic – a subject forced to the very edges of the frame can give off a kind of visual dissonance, simply the discomforting sensation that it just doesn't look right, and it's uncomfortable to view. Getting the balance right between showing the subject close enough and allowing some background or environmental space to provide context to your subject goes right to the heart of the kind of judgements we have to make in order to create a compelling frame, give prominence to our subject and allow the audience of our images to understand and appreciate the significance of this subject in relation to its surroundings.

In most cases, we crop into an image because we've made a poor judgement about a subject's distance or position within the frame. Cropping (post-capture) gives us another chance to re-frame the image but with this comes the danger of excluding potentially important context or (from a technical point of view) reducing image quality by effectively magnifying the original resolution or making those original pixels larger – which is, in effect, lowering the resolution of the digital image. Many images that go through this process of post-capture cropping emanate that sense of dissonance, the newly cropped frame being somehow less appealing, even perhaps giving away the fact that it is a cropped frame because the image content just somehow looks forced. For this, and so many other reasons, many of the great photographers will talk of the importance of getting your distance-to-subject right the first time around. They stress the importance of meeting this challenge, and how the ability to meet this challenge is the result of good judgements based on years of experience and learning the craft of photography. Others will also no doubt talk of how they 'rescued' an image from the dustbin of history by re-framing the image in a more meaningful way.

Angle of view

Faced with a subject you'd like to frame in an interesting way, do you simply photograph your subject front-on? Or do you move to the side or underneath to produce a more dynamic view? Many portraits appear quite static if the photographer and subject simply face each other in the style of a typical passport image.

By adopting an angle of view that sidesteps the obvious, you can apply a fresh approach to your subject, be it architecture, landscape, portrait, fashion or the everyday. Your decision to use a bold or unconventional angle of view should be based purely on whether your approach reveals your subject in a fresh or revealing light, rather than attempting to mask a poor shot by using an unusual view.



Title: Ely Boilers

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Some subjects and situations require unusual or unorthodox viewpoints. These Victorian boilers inside Ely Cathedral were photographed from floor level – partly to steady the camera against camera shake as light was low and no tripod was available, but also to emphasize their scale and importance by exaggerating their height and imposing nature within the cathedral environment.

The rules and when to break them

Vantage point and viewpoint

By examining your subject from many angles and distances, you can decide the best position to shoot from. In many cases, the simple act of slowing down your observation (if time allows) will enable you to find a position that will show your subject in an unfamiliar or unorthodox way. This may require a view taken from an unusual height or from below – where the ground or the sky may offer a plain background against your subject.

It's often considered that rules, such as they are, should only be broken once they've been learned. Photography is an art form full of rules, most of which we tend to pick up when we are young in order to prevent us from going wrong. As we get older, compositional rules are received and absorbed almost without question. But these rules often inhibit our creativity rather than allow us to strike out with confidence and a fresh perspective. Many rules end up in tedium and predictability.

Why not abandon all rules? Most likely because we'll end up with a kind of shapeless, routeless art that rules were meant to counteract in the first place. Anyone hoping to read anything on design principles in order to become a master photographer will be disappointed – you can't just endlessly replicate what so-called best practice is and end up The Master by slavishly following every bit of advice and regurgitating it. The advice provided in this book is simply a summary of known and trusted wisdom, and hopefully a useful guide, too, but it takes judgement and insight to understand when

and where these various design techniques are best applied.



Title: After Van Dongen, United Kingdom, 1959

Source/photographer: Norman Parkinson

This famous fashion image by Norman Parkinson uses deliberate blur to defocus the model but capture the sharpness of the background. By deliberately disrupting our expectations of what we have become conditioned to accept about 'good' technique and 'poor' technique, the image successfully evokes a recognition that our eyes have been provided with all we really need to know – the lips, the eyes' directional glance, the hat, the pale skin and so on are made somehow more vivid. In that regard, why does this image require absolute

subject clarity when the features of the model and apparel are so capably communicated via an indistinct and defocused image? Would we learn any more if she were in focus?

Composition and design skills – learned or intuitive?

It's that old nature vs nurture debate: how much of your visual design style is integral to your personality and how much can you acquire above and beyond what you were born with?

Most can be acquired, although it takes time to develop style, which often stems from photography with a clear sense of design at its heart. Many photographers take decades to get into their stride and the work they are often best known for can be vastly different from that which they set out with. This doesn't mean that what they learned in their formative years was wasted – far from it. Moving through different styles and artistic approaches within your photography is not a sign of weakness but of strength – the courage to explore and to keep your vision fresh and curious.

Moving through different styles and artistic approaches within your photography is not a sign of weakness but of strength.



Title: Untitled

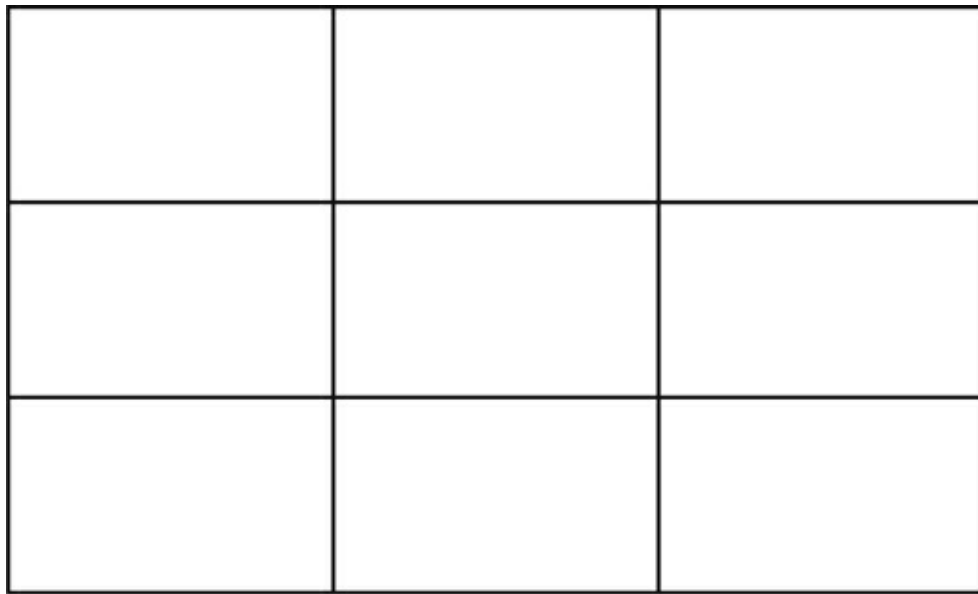
Source/photographer: Marie Pejouan

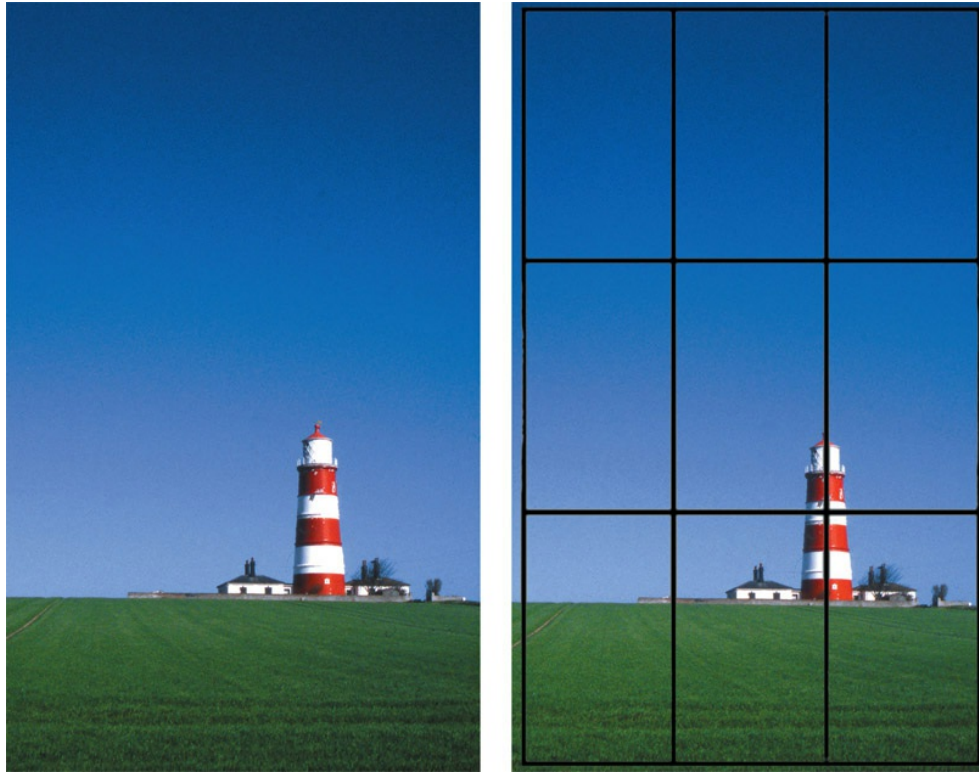
This image is a celebration of colour that skilfully combines strong reds and blues which contrast sympathetically with each other within the overall design.

The Rule of Thirds

Of all the 'rules' about 'good' photography, the Rule of Thirds is one of the most-quoted of them all, and relates to the idea that a rectangular frame should be divided firstly into 3 equal sections across, and then 3 equal sections vertically, giving the image 9 equal sections and 4 intersecting points within the frame.

It is on these intersecting points that focal points or points of interest within a composition should be placed. This is generally thought to create a composition with more interest and is more appealing to the eye rather than simply placing the subject centre frame.





The origin of this term is a little uncertain but it dates back to the early 1800s when painters began to debate whether horizon lines should be placed one-third from the top edge or one-third from the bottom edge, or where vertical focal points should be placed on an intersecting point one-third from the left-hand edge or the right. Central positioning of the subject, it was generally agreed, was flat and uninteresting. The Pictorialists adopted this rule with enthusiasm and today its use is commonly found within film, print media and two-dimensional art of all kinds.

For many, its ubiquitous nature reassures us that formal qualities of expression still have influence and demonstrate the importance of compositional 'tools' that aid visual impact or appeal. But there are others who find it formulaic and over-utilized. Artists and photographers will apply the rule when the formal qualities of an image demand a careful arrangement of elements within the image frame, and many simply apply the rule intuitively, without even recognizing what they're doing. For others, the rule is given far less importance where imagery is created from a more conceptual approach or from photographers of the vernacular.

So how does all this apply to photography?

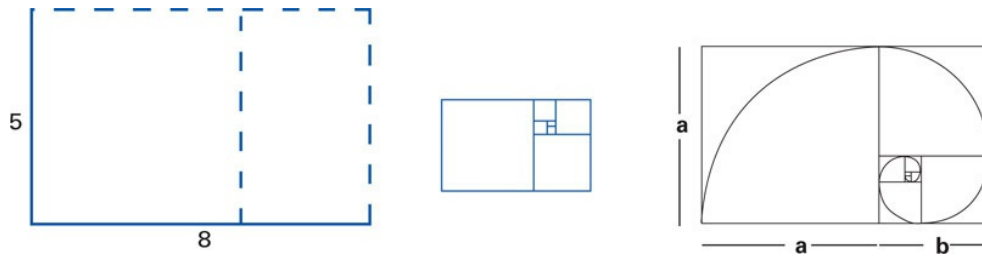
The Rule of Thirds is a practical application of the theory of the Golden Ratio. The 9-area grid is a simple approximation of the process by which focal points and image content can be placed on intersecting points that equate to points placed a third of the distance inside the frame, either vertically or horizontally.

Compositionally, an image constructed using the Golden Ratio can create dynamic and energetic images using space and focal points that map directly onto the Golden Rectangle. A quick Google search will find millions of examples. We often apply the Golden Ratio unknowingly – it's in our DNA, remember.

Where 2D photographic image formats are concerned, we find that frame proportions of roughly 8" × 5" give a pleasingly proportioned ratio between width and height – and 8 divided by 5 = 1.6, or Phi (see image below left). It's interesting to see how most of the current image formats are a little too 'fat' or not quite wide enough to fit Phi. 36mm × 24mm, 6cm × 4.5cm and 10" × 8" for example, produce ratios of 1.5, 1.3 and 1.25, respectively. And yet, we still apply the Rule of Thirds within these rectangular formats.

Within the 'design' of our images, we don't have to slavishly defer to this magic formula, but we should recognize its power to influence the impact and visual appeal of an image. There's always room for imbalance, for deliberately positioning focal points in unorthodox positions within the frame or for completely subverting the theory where justifiable. But whether we're aware or not, the Golden Ratio produces a kind of invisible template we are exposed to constantly, so it is no wonder it wields such power over our lives, let alone our artistic images.

The history and timeline of the discovery and application of the Fibonacci Sequence and the Golden Ratio is a fascinating journey and a subject that has absorbed artists and historians for centuries. For those with curious minds and time to explore, it's an area that can only be introduced in its simplest form here, rather than explored in-depth. After all, getting right to the heart of all this, the theory seems to provide an explanation for the 'don't plonk your subject right in the middle of the picture' lesson. Or rather, from an aesthetic point of view, placing your subject to the side provides a more interesting tension, as opposed to the simple comfort and predictable blandness that arises from placing your subject centre frame.



Read widely and seek influences from cinema, graphic design, sculpture, literature, poetry, wherever you can. Look at how cinematographers create beautiful and compulsive images in the movies or how page layouts in magazines make you stop in your tracks. Design inspiration is bursting from the arts of every kind.

Photographer Viviane Sassen was inspired to create her Photobook *Roxanne II* by the lines of a poem by Maria Barnas called “You and I”; “When I unbutton the sleeve of a shirt/Shades of sky under my skin awaken”.*

Literature and the arts, song lyrics and ancient and modern culture are all rich sources of inspiration for a creative photographer.

* British Journal of Photography, May 2017

The Fibonacci Sequence

Here’s where it gets even more gripping. Going back in time again, many centuries on from the Greeks and Egyptians, a learned Italian mathematician named Leonardo Fibonacci in the twelfth century discovered that he could compile a sequence of numbers by adding one number to the previous number, then adding that number to the one before, and so he came up with a sequence known as the Fibonacci Sequence:

$$1 + 1 = 2$$

$$2 + 1 = 3$$

$$3 + 2 = 5$$

$$5 + 3 = 8$$

$8 + 5 = 13$ and so on

So the sequence goes 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, ad infinitum.

This sequence has a number of useful applications within architecture and musical composition and is commonly found in nature: pine cones, daisies and sunflowers in particular all exhibit spiral patterns or petal configurations that follow the Fibonacci Sequence exactly.

But the bit that we're most interested in is how all this relates to frame proportions and aspect ratio. Disregarding the lower single-digit numbers, divide one Fibonacci number by its previous number and a special number results: 1.618, or Phi.

Exercise 1 Cropping

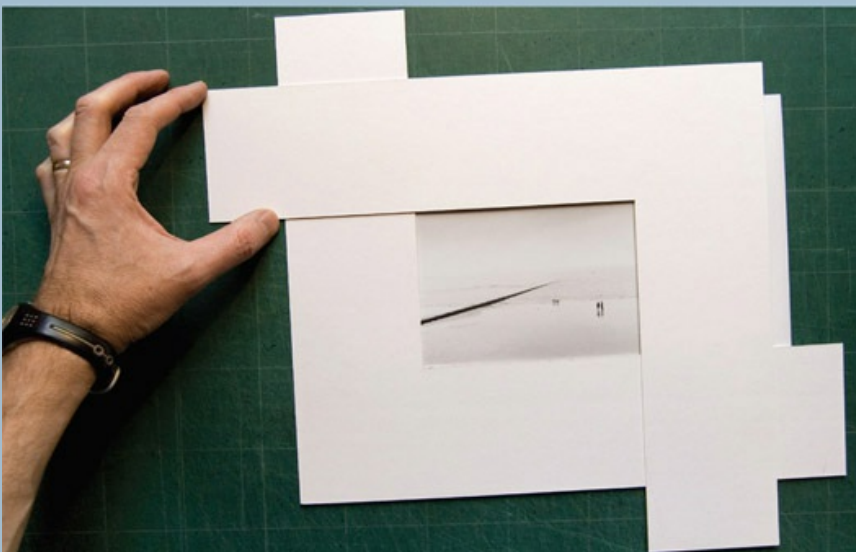
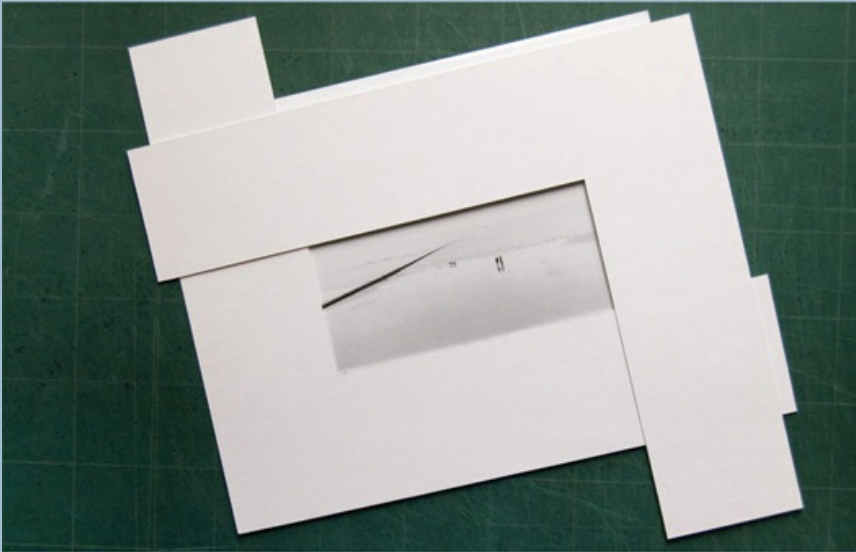
Most photographers (including photographic masters) have always viewed cropping as a continuation of the process of photography – a chance to fine-tune images at a later stage. The act of cropping exercises the design muscles further and allows the photographer to continue working on an image in order to present their vision in the best possible light. While many purists believe that any 'tampering' with an image should be minimal or non-existent, most pragmatic photographers regard cropping decisions as just another tool in the box.

Adopting a 'no cropping' approach to your photography can be very rewarding indeed. This approach means that prints can only be made from the image at full frame. Working in this way can help to develop vision and strengthen photographic awareness. However, it can also become self-defeating and counterproductive to stick so rigidly to such a purist methodology.

No photographer should be without a pair of L-shaped croppers. Using a scalpel or craft knife and a piece of stiff white A3 card (11.69×16.54 inches), make a pair of L shapes like the ones shown. Make sure you have good, clean edges and that your internal corners all have right angles of 90 degrees.

Using your croppers, try to find alternative compositions to some of your best prints. By experimenting with a series of extreme or minimal formats and going

in closer, can you create alternative meanings or more absorbing compositions? Can you add more impact and improve on the originals by simply adjusting this new viewfinder frame? Can your cropping bring design lines or shapes into play that strengthen or diminish elements within your image? If necessary, make notes on your findings or sketches of these new compositions for future reference.



Title: Croppers

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Adjusting the frame proportions and size can dramatically alter the compositional appeal of an image. If you've never had the opportunity to experiment with different camera formats, here's your chance to discover how altering the very edges of the frame can reposition the image elements and powerfully affect the image as a whole.

Photographic genres Still life photography

From its infancy, photography was used to photograph the stationary subject, simply because the long time exposures required for early photographic processes required things to be still in order for them to be recorded in detail.

Once film emulsions were able to record images at faster shutter speeds and lenses and shutters became more mechanized, the possibility of capturing subjects in motion opened up to photographers who relished these new opportunities: trains speeding past, sporting images, animal and wildlife images previously thought impossible to capture. This allowed a greater range of subjects for photographers to point their cameras at, and also allowed those who were still concerned with all things stationary to continue to record their still subjects at moments of contemplation and reflection on an idea or subject either relevant or aspirational.

Still life takes a back seat in the world of photography today, an unglamorous genre for many when the world seems so full of human endeavour and energy, of the pace of a fast-lived life and the world of moving subjects of all kinds around us. But how on earth are customers going to buy a widget if they can't see the proof of its existence? In the commercial world, still life sells widget products, and still life skills in lighting and composition in particular lie behind every dull pack shot and every finely crafted plate of food.

So still life remains popular within several spheres: advertising, editorial and fine art most prominently. Many photographers of the fine art world enjoy using still life to subvert its very existence. Others re-frame historical approaches to the still

life or mock the ubiquity of advertising imagery that we're exposed to on a daily basis.

Where advertising photography is concerned, photographers have to develop a strong design awareness, not only for the compositional power of their images, but to negotiate the difficulties of producing images to order, where space must be left here for a strapline, or there for some text. Or simply to be mindful of the art director's requirement to create a particular kind of page layout, where images might be placed within an exciting double- or single-page spread. For this kind of work, attention to detail is paramount. Although some advertising appears to be highly creative, much of it is pre-designed by a magazine art team, turning the photographer into a tradesman to simply follow their designs, rather than the artist, able to apply their own highly prized artistry to the shoot.

Contemporary still life seems to split into a number of different threads. Some photographers prize beautifully soft and directional lighting for the rendering of their sparse sets. Others develop a very punchy graphic style that uses design principles to the full – complementary or clashing colours for backgrounds or the set and background divided into diagonal boxes or sharply defined areas of different colour or tone. The diagonal line is a very popular graphic device at the moment, used to disrupt the rectangular nature of the frame and to guide the eye within a cleverly composed frame. A strong eye for colour and graphic design in a general sense are essential for the still life photographer, as of course is the use of great lighting, for in advertising photography in particular light is used to seduce, to tempt and to guide our gaze where required according to the design of the image.



Title: Early American, Melon and Morning Glories 2008

Source/photographer: Raphaele Peale

Food photography is one area of still life that requires all the elements of a photographer's armoury to come together, and editorial food photography is often where the best of this work can be seen. Where small businesses have products to sell online, a more simple pack shot may be required for information purposes or specific detail on size and finish options. Many businesses keep their more simple pack shot requirements in-house, possibly skilling-up a member of staff to use a digital camera and a light tent to produce clear, well-exposed images of their products for online browsing.

Photographers to research

Laura Letinsky

Olivia Parker

Karl Blossfeldt

Robert Mapplethorpe

Mat Collishaw

Styles and movements Pictorialism

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw modern photography in its infancy, appropriating the concerns and aspirations of painting, particularly the Impressionists. Its Victorian roots reflect the way the world was changing for artists as advances in the development of the photographic process and faster travel became possible, and there was much debate about how painting would be affected by the emergence and adoption of this new medium. Photographers started to split themselves in two – those who demanded a straight record of their subjects (the Modernists) and those who aspired to tap into the artistic and expressive capabilities of the medium (the Pictorialists).

Due to the influence of painting, Pictorialist photography from this era becomes a little difficult to describe, as if common features or a ‘house style’ could be seen within all works from this period. But there are aspects of style and technique that link photography directly with the desire to place photography at this time on par with painting, and moving photography from the constraints of mere documentation and an unmediated approach towards expression and emotion, and this lies at the heart of Pictorialism.

For this reason, photographers tried to evoke very emotional feelings through their images, and soft focus or toning techniques could be employed within their work, as well as subjects that glorified or made heroic or tragic their depictions. They often staged very dramatic images full of theatre and expression, all the while promoting the idea that photography is on an equally artistic footing as painting. Photography of this time often contains very painterly ideas around composition as it moved away from documentation and the limitations imposed by long time exposures.

The creative collision between Pictorialism and Modernism is still visible today, but much of it is a hybrid blend of the driving forces behind both worlds. The Pictorialist approach demands a desire to impart beauty, to create a single image where someone or something could be bathed in glorious light, or where street scenes or rural idylls are ‘romanticized’ through the transforming power of photography. The Modernist adjunct applied allows for a kind of assumed

distance or objectivity, as if reflecting on the nature of the medium itself or demanding a less personal, more forensic examination.

Henry Peach Robinson and his championing of the Rule of Thirds still influence debates about photographic practice today. Websites and magazines continually implore their readers and subscribers to improve their compositions by applying the Rule of Thirds, regardless of how formulaic and repetitive this becomes. He was also not averse to creating melodramatic images from a constructed montage of other elements from other photographs – and not letting on until years later. This approach shows an early adoption of copy and paste digital image editing so common today.

Julia Margaret Cameron had not the least interest in ‘improving’ her images technically or being more mindful of her depth of field as those Modernists around her implored. She preferred to simply work with her subjects and her surroundings and take the picture when light and pose made everything look beautiful.



Source/photographer: Julia Margaret Cameron

Title: Iago, study from an Italian

Key concepts

Idealism
Composition
Innocence
Tragedy

Heroism
Painting/painterly
Soft focus
Theatrical/dramatic

[Futher resources](#)

Five photographers to explore

Irving Penn
Alexander Rodchenko
Lewis Baltz
Louise Dahl-Wolfe
Edward Weston

Suggested reading

<http://www.gupmagazine.com>: A Dutch photography website and magazine offering some of the most compelling contemporary photography with an international perspective.

http://www.robertmorat.de/ausstellung_B.html: A portfolio of work by Andrea Grutzner.

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-siskind-aaron.htm>: An introduction to the work of Aaron Siskind, and a great resource to view the work of many great photographers.

<http://www.photolucida.org/critical-mass>: One of the best collections to showcase the work of emerging photographers.

<https://www.lensculture.com>: Contemporary photography presented, discussed and reviewed, with a wide range of interviews and portfolios.

Discussion topic: Fashion photography

Take a look at the work of British fashion photographer Nick Knight and the German American photographer George Hoyningen-Huene. With regard to the visual 'construction' of their images, critically evaluate:

- What design elements do they share in common?
- Which elements differentiate them?
- How are these elements used to communicate an emotional 'charge' for the viewer?

2

The elements of design



Title: Gemstone in clamp

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Torch-lit still life presents many challenges, especially where subjects of varying light reflectance exist within the same image. This still life combines various shapes and textures positioned harmoniously within the frame while the light was 'painted' around the scene during an exposure of 40 seconds.

From the earliest scratchings on cave walls to our current image-saturated world, a multitude of artists, theorists and art historians have all immersed themselves enthusiastically within an analysis of the visual arts (painting and photography in particular) in an attempt to establish a general set of principles – the so-called 'elements of design'. These elements or 'raw ingredients' determine the compositional appeal of an image – how easily it can be read by an audience, how positively the audience responds and how much value an audience places upon the image viewed.

Composition is first and foremost the result of a dynamic design process that the photographer undergoes during the act of image capture. This process naturally extends to include the act of cropping, contrast changes, saturation adjustments or any number of post-capture techniques that arise from the photographer's quest to create the best possible composition for an image.

Design elements can be skilfully incorporated to an image as a kind of invisible blueprint in order to create a structure that supports compositional appeal or power. Design principles exist at every stage of the image creation process – from the moment a photographer adopts a position to shoot from, to the placement of the subject on the printed page, up to the positioning of an image at an exhibition.

Line

In the visual arts, the use of line is perhaps the single most important element of design. It denotes boundaries and can be actual or virtual. It can be real and apparent or an invisible structure that guides our gaze between points on canvas or print.

The use of line can significantly affect the compositional success of photographers' images. Lines are powerful design elements that re-enforce the three-dimensionality of the world. They are a deeply primeval impulse – as children, our first scribbles on paper are lines, as were the first cave markings recorded by humankind. Lines are always used in artistic terms as the primary tool to represent our understanding of the world.

Horizontal lines

Horizontal lines often reflect concepts such as stability, continuity and restfulness. Think of table tops or the horizon line over the sea. Within the rectangular format of a traditional photograph, horizontal lines lie parallel with the top and bottom edges where they promote a feeling of harmony and unity within the image.

Vertical lines

Vertical lines can provide notions of strength and certainty within an image. Towers, trees and even our age-old ideas of spirituality and religion can all be reflected by vertical lines – actual or virtual. Vertical lines that shoot upwards have always held a symbolic relationship between heaven and earth – between the gods and mere mortals.



Title: Airplant

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Light reveals form. Even the simplest shapes and lines can be emphasized by the way light enhances the three-dimensionality of a subject.



Title: Posts, Burnham Overy

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Vertical lines set within a horizontal frame can add interest by imparting an upward movement that is at odds with the sideways structure of the landscape format.



Title: Dog walking, Gorleston-on-Sea

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Against the single line of the horizon, figures are picked out against the foamy shoreline in

an image that emphasizes the empty space of the Norfolk coastline.



Title: The Enron building, Houston, Texas

Source/photographer: Damien Gillie

The architectural density of many of our large city centres provides opportunities to create dynamic images infused with design. Damien Gillie's image shows an interesting convergence of diagonal lines and forms full of contrast and colour, cut off by a dense triangular form entering the scene from the opposite side of the frame.



Title: Moonrising/light tubes

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A digital image created in the Surrealist tradition. Predominantly straight lines and edges, the composite image combines fluorescent light tubes with the path of moonlight created over a long time exposure of several hours.

Diagonal lines

Diagonal lines disrupt the certainty and simplicity of horizontal and vertical lines.

They almost always impart a more energetic and active feeling when set against the passive north–south journey of the vertical or the west–east route of the horizontal. In the three-dimensional world, diagonal lines represent motion and action. A leg that is vertical is stationary, but a leg that is diagonal is a leg in motion – one that is walking or running.

Curves and arcs

A curved line often adds a softer dynamic to an image. Compared to the rigid straight lines of the viewfinder or print edges, a curved line can indicate something soft or subtle. Many curves or arcs are found in nature and in the folds and multiple forms in the human body.



Title: Curves

Source/photographer: Alberto Oviedo

The use of architecture as a backdrop to fashion is a powerful combination that relies on the use of bold shape and form to accentuate or emphasize the model's pose. The curved sweep of the building's roof in this image counteracts the otherwise right-angled nature of the background and provides a strong shape that draws in the eye towards the standing

figure.

A curved line can indicate something soft or subtle.



Title: Dune protection, Winterton-on-Sea

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Converging lines often meet at a point outside the frame. By deliberately framing your image in such a way, converging lines often emphasize depth and distance as they travel through the image.

Intersecting lines

When one line crosses another, the lines are said to intersect each other – they pass through or cross over each other's path. Photographers can place subjects at the points of intersection to maximize subject impact and emphasis.

Converging lines

Lines that meet at a point in the far distance are said to converge. Stand on a railway line and look into the distance – you will see both sides of the track appearing to merge into one. In photography, converging lines can represent distance, scale, height and power. If a subject is placed at the point where lines converge, powerful compositions can be made.

Shape or form

Shape or form is often the end result of boundaries created by lines. In photography, three-dimensionality is reduced to two-dimensionality and so the use of design awareness to maximize interest in the shape or form represented is critical.

For this reason, photographers will often talk of images being ‘flat’ where a subject may be rendered without much emphasis on its form or the space it occupies. This may be the result of poor lighting or poor positioning, or it may simply be that the scene itself is too cluttered to allow a single subject to be isolated and focused on.



Title: Lily

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Simple shapes and forms often require controlled lighting to bring out the most interesting aspect. This single lily was bathed in soft daylight from above and slightly behind to make the most of its soft appearance.

Created or revealed by space

The use of shape is often applied with the greatest effect when a distinctive form or outline is set against a plain background, thereby minimizing any distractions and allowing the viewer to focus squarely on the shape presented. In design terms, this is often referred to as good foreground/background separation. This is why silhouettes are so universally understood – they present a strong and recognizable shape that is contrasted easily against a light background.



Title: Red tulips, Japan, 1980

Source/photographer: Ernst Haas

Unusually, for many photographers of Haas's era, the black background to this image was used quite deliberately to give strength and richness to the red colour of the tulips. The effective use of lighting reveals the droplets and the positioning of the flower heads also gives this image an unusual, but very forceful composition.

Lighting

Photographers who are successful in allowing their subjects to appear 'solid' are photographers who have a keen eye for the properties of light. In the hands of a skilled photographer, the lighting allows subjects to be rendered in high or low contrast; shadows can help to define the subject or reveal the subject's positioning within the wider scene.



Title: Yurt kitchen

Source/photographer: Libby Double-King

Photographs allow us to embrace and interpret the effect of light on our subjects. This simple 'found' still life shows the effect of a small and diffused overhead light that seems to bathe the curve of the wooden shelf in a soft light; it allows our curiosity to explore darker areas as the light recedes into the background.



Title: Audrey Hepburn, 1950

Source/photographer: Angus McBean

The above image is one of many famous portraits by Angus McBean. The surreal nature of this image is further heightened by the appearance of a strong shadow from the column in the background. It appears to signify strong light from a completely different point to that which lights the actress herself.

[Space](#)

Objects

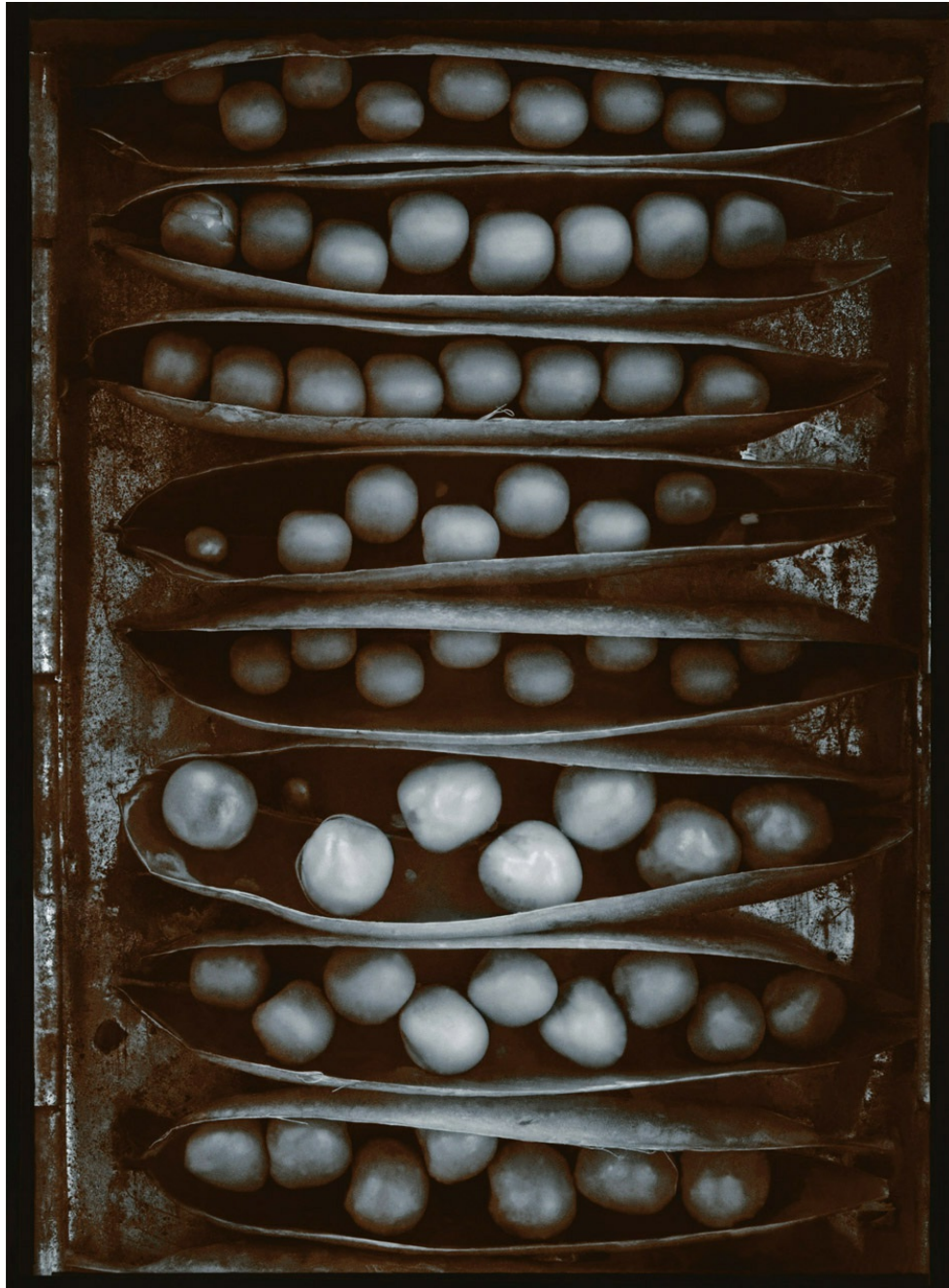
The photographer who carefully considers the shape or form of the subject will seek to give great emphasis to it. There are many design elements to consider and experiment with – lighting, positioning, vantage point and distance, for example. However, the complexity and character of the object itself is critical to how you generate interest and engage with your viewer.



Title: Early morning boudoir table

Source/photographer: Smart Photography Ltd

Bright sun or studio lighting picks up the highlights and reflections in this colourful advertising image rich in warm reds and oranges. The direction of the light allows the glass to reveal its contours and shape in a way that flat soft lighting would be hard-pressed to achieve.



Title: Pods of chance

Source/photographer: Olivia Parker

Natural subjects offer a huge variety of strong shape and form to play with. Olivia Parker uses soft lighting and an eye for simplicity to create this wonderful image.

Space is often the last aspect considered when composing an image, but it deserves the attention of a creative photographer. We grow up conditioned to fill space when what we often need to do is take something away in order for the entire image to have more

power and impact.

In photographic terms, space can either be the two-dimensional space on a print or flat image or it can mean three-dimensional space – the real or actual space present at the scene.

Space can reveal a subject forcefully; it can create the impression of depth within an image. Manipulating space allows the photographer to overcome the challenge of placing a fragment of the three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional piece of paper.

Negative and positive

Negative space is the absence of volume or mass. It's what lies behind the subject and often takes on a passive role in the image. Positive space plays a more active role within the image – there's a sense that the photographer consciously manipulated the space to emphasize the subject or that the use of space compositionally has had a positive effect on the subject.



Title: Yellow boot

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Black backgrounds can make bright colours behave in a way that is very different to the way the same colour might behave against white. The R, O, Y end of the colour spectrum in particular can appear more vividly rendered when set against black.

Foreground/background relationship

When the subject and background are too similar, the viewer's ability to 'read' the image is hindered. This often happens when the photographer tries to show too much or frames the scene poorly.

As a result, the viewer's attention will wander and, without a clear point of interest, any further involvement with the image will be lost. The foreground/background relationship can be strengthened by increasing the contrast or difference between the two elements.



Title: Motel telephone

Source/photographer: Bryan Schutmaat

The symmetry of this image is disturbed by a single element – the wire that climbs up the wall from the bed on the left.



Title: Fist impression

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Confusion between negative and positive space can easily deceive our eyes. Is the fist impression on the florist's block extending towards us? Or is it receding away from us?



Title: Soccer pitch, Mousehold Heath

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The flatness of any image has to be seen through in order that the spatial relationships between different areas can be untangled and made sense of. The distances between different areas of an image are often confused by the focal lengths of lenses, where telephoto lenses, for example, make subjects appear closer than they really are.



Title: Adday floating

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Deliberately shooting out of focus only really achieves its effect when applied to a simple subject such as this. Too much detail or too little foreground/background separation will overpower the simple forms necessary for this type of approach.

Spatial relationships

Spatial relationships denote the distance and positional relationship between one subject and another within an image. If the distance between subjects is confusing or unclear, it is an ambiguous spatial relationship. For example, the subjects may be closer to (or farther apart from) each other than we think. Photographers who can shoot their images from unorthodox positions where ambiguous spatial relationships occur can create some very absorbing images that force the viewer to work a little bit harder to determine a sense of the spatial relationships on offer in an image.

Creating depth or confusing the eye

Creative photographers are often finely tuned to the power of space and can play with the concept of space to achieve illusions of depth and distance within their photography. This can be achieved with careful positioning (for example, allowing similar subjects to blend into each other, thereby obliterating their outlines or edges) and effective use of equipment. Lenses show wide variations of depth depending on their focal length.

Wide-angle lenses, for example, take in a wide area and can adequately show both near and distant subjects clearly in focus. As such, they can exaggerate the distance between near and far, often giving the impression of greater depth. Telephoto lenses, on the other hand, tend to compress a scene and subjects that are far apart appear to be closer together than they really are.

Texture

Keep a notebook, always keep a notebook

It's a creative collection of ideas, waiting to come into life, and a storeroom of possibility. When you see an image in a magazine and you understand the lighting used, tear it out and paste it in. Try the idea out later, or leave it for the time being until you find the right opportunity with the right subject. Unlike Pinterest or other online options (as good as these are), a notebook allows you to quickly and easily make comparisons and connections between different pages, or different ideas in a way that screen-based browsing can't offer.

Photography manages to combine the dual power of texture with light in many extraordinary ways. Without light, texture could not be seen, only felt. The synergistic effect of light on texture has the strength to affect us deeply through the photographic medium.

Many of us marvel at photography's ability to show detail – some images present

surfaces and textures that make us want to reach out and touch them. Such is the astonishing power of texture.

Rough

Rough surfaces such as gnarled wood or coarse fibre material can often be best revealed by strong directional lighting rather than flat, soft lighting such as that produced by an overcast sky.

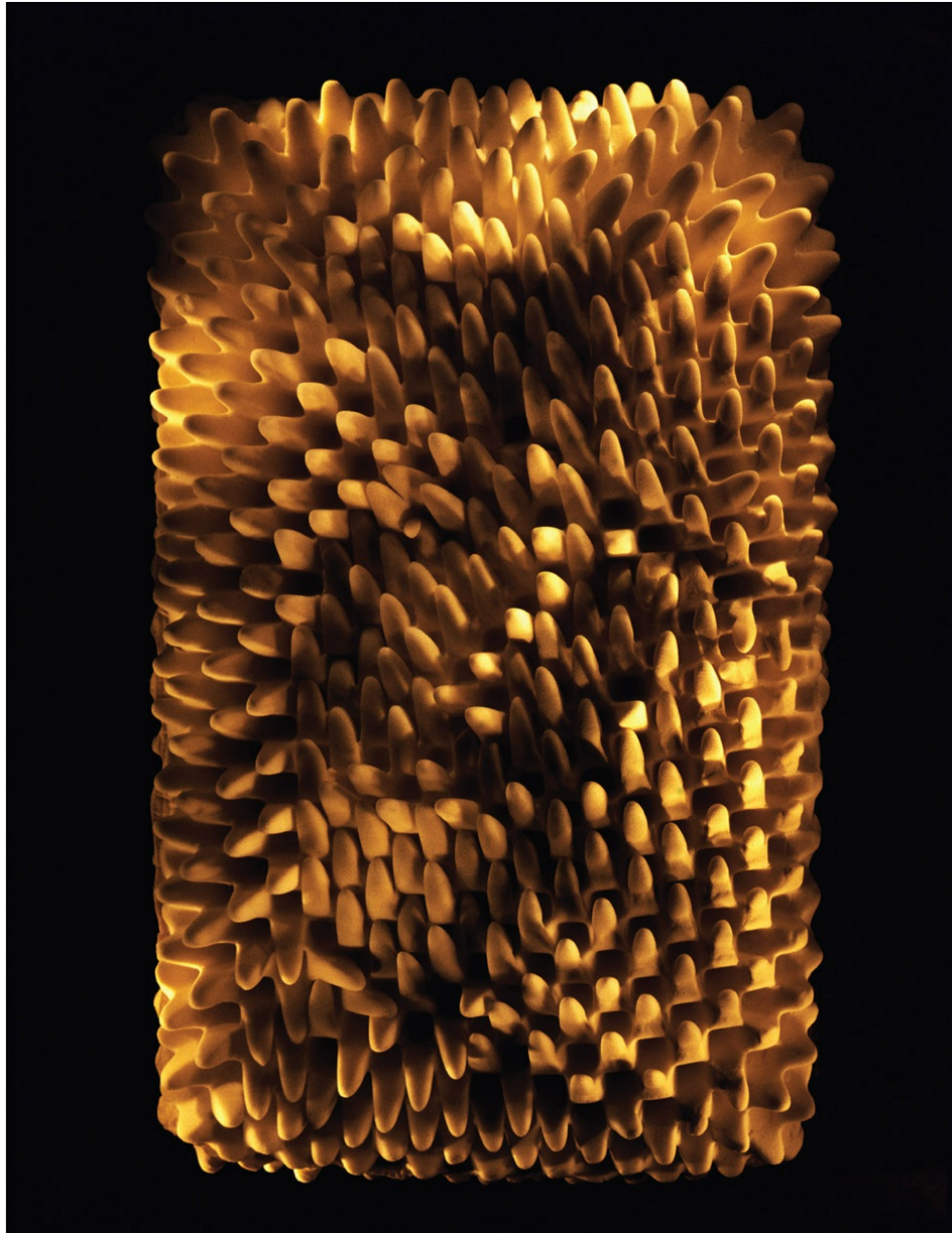
Strong sidelight, for example, easily picks out the detail and contours of a craggy face or a dune-filled landscape that contains a multitude of dips and peaks. These variations in surface texture, when illuminated by a low raking light, for example, will trap light or let light escape, thereby producing stronger contrasts of highlight and shade. This in turn results in an image with a strong pattern.

Smooth

Many smooth textures, such as polished glass or metal, may be said to have no texture at all and yet we know from the photographic evidence in front of us what they would feel like due to the combination of light falling upon the subject and other elements within an image. Smooth surfaces often impart a sense of calm or relaxation.

Random

Different textures appearing in one subject or image can present problems to the photographer. While one type of surface may suit one type of lighting, other textures may require something else altogether.



Title: Memory pillow

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Lightpainting is a technique that allows you to use a simple torch to light a subject from multiple angles all within the same time exposure. During a 40-second exposure the light was literally 'painted' around this foam pillow in a raking light from all sides, revealing the depth, texture and dimensionality of the subject. The exposure contains lighting from multiple points and positions within the same image and creates a unique image whereby shadow directions appear to fall in impossible places that seem to confound what the eye expects to see.

Light

Light is the fundamental currency of photography – light is what makes it all happen. Without it there is no image. Light transforms everything it touches and photographers have their own vast language to describe its many forms.

Look at the world's greatest photographs, from Edward Weston's Peppers to a Rankin portrait, and the photographer's respect, understanding and control of light is probably of equal value (if not more) to the subject itself. How we see light, how we understand its properties and how we control and manipulate it is what sets great photographers apart from the journeymen. To many photographers, there is simply no such thing as bad light, just 'challenging lighting conditions'. Some photographers thrive in low-light situations where tripods and slow shutter speeds allow the process of photography to pause the world for a brief moment – enabling us to capture the motion of water or to freeze the speed of a hummingbird's wings.

Quality

The quality of light usually relates to the source, direction and amount of light in a photographic image. Mood and emotion are heavily influenced by the quality of light applied.

Large, broad sources of light will deliver soft lighting to a scene or subject, much like the overcast sky on a landscape. Small, narrowly focused light, such as that produced by a flashgun or the bright sun, tends to produce harsh light that gives hard shadows, which provide greater contrast.



Title: Sky reflection

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The light from a winter sky shows the smooth surface of the shallow water and the texture of the sand.



Title: Windowlit figure

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Soft daylight is perfect light for figurative work in photography.

Direction

Photographs often provide useful clues that lead us to understand some component of their construction. This in turn often leads to an understanding of a photographer's

intent or motivation.

Shadows are an obvious example of this since they imply both the quality and the direction of the light the subject is cast in. Light can come from above the subject, from the side or from below the subject.

Again, the direction of light can have dramatic effects on the emotional reading of an image. Heroic figures in action-movie posters, for example, are often shot in bright overhead lighting that emphasizes the masculine features of a face or a sculpted torso. A horror villain or vampire, on the other hand, will often be lit from underneath in order to maximize the sense of threat or evil.

And for anyone who doesn't believe that these lighting effects are more fantasy than reality, look up the portrait of Alfred Krupp by Arnold Newman and find out how this image led to real ramifications for both photographer and subject.



Title: Asian girl

Source/photographer: Barry McCall

The drama of this image is heightened by a lack of light from the front (photographer side) of the model, and increased further by the use of backlighting and sidelighting, which emphasizes the sculptural nature of the pose.

Strength

The strength of light is often called 'intensity'. Bright light has many benefits for the photographer. It may create shadows that can be useful for composition and it can also give a sense of depth to the image. Strong light may require fast shutter speeds that can allow action to be temporarily 'frozen' and studied. It may also require the use of a small lens aperture, which would provide good depth of field, thereby allowing the photographer to achieve good focus and sharpness throughout the image.

However, strong bright light can have negative effects as well. All of the benefits above can also be drawbacks or limitations if different creative approaches are required. It may be that the shadows generated destroy the detail of something present within the scene, or that a wide aperture is required as the photographer intends to apply a small depth of field in order to emphasize only a certain aspect of the scene.

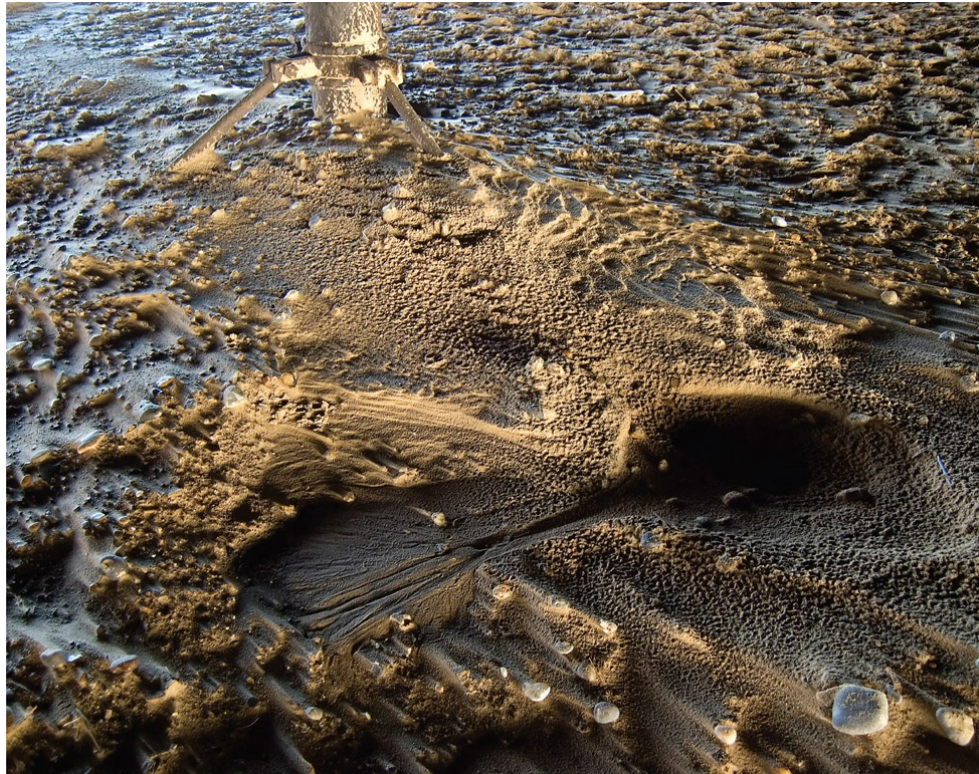
There are, of course, many technical solutions to these problems, but photographers must not assume that bright light equals good and low light equals bad. There simply exists a range of different lighting intensities, all of which provide opportunities and challenges to the creative photographer.

How light reveals hidden patterns

Different subjects demand different treatments from photographers. Beauty portraits, for example, require broad, bright and soft sources of light that soften and conceal wrinkles and the natural texture of human skin.

On the other hand, the craggy features of an old person's face, for example, may require the photographer to reveal the rich pattern of random creases in stark contrast, exposing the crevices of the skin's surface by using directional side lighting to emphasize the texture.

Photographers must not assume that bright light = good and low light = bad.



Title: Under the pier, Great Yarmouth

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Winter sunlight rakes across the surface of the sand under a seaside pier, revealing a textural pattern created by the wind-blown sand.

Texture

As we've already seen, texture is simply 'touch sensation' without the illuminating properties of light. Texture can be felt, described in words or understood spatially. Without light, however, it remains in darkness like the rest of the material world.

Photographers who understand light, and who know how to control and manipulate light, will expose texture in a multitude of innovative ways to make it as powerful as possible within the limitations of the two-dimensional image. There isn't another medium that can act so powerfully on our perception of touch. Photographers who are fluent with their technique and who are sensitive to their subjects learn how to capitalize on textures through careful use of lighting, positioning and viewpoint.



Title: Hemsby sand, Norfolk

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The texture of sand is revealed by hazy overhead light as it picks out the ridges and contours of the dune.



Title: Provence, 1976

Source/photographer: Martine Franck

The shadow created by the boy in the hammock is essential to the compositional strength of this bold image. In your mind's eye, try removing the shadow and see if the image remains as strong without it.

Light creating long shadows

Shadows are as important as light. You simply cannot have one without the other. They are fundamental to our emotional connection to an image and affect our subconscious at a deep level. As children, we may invent danger lurking in the unseen or enjoy the ability to hide ourselves from view within a shadow. Under controlled situations you can, of course, choose a lighting style that minimizes shadows or makes the most of their dramatic presence.

Hard, solid shadows are the result of a single, strong, directional source of light such as the sun or a flashgun. Soft shadows arise from softer, broader sources of light such as light reflected from a ceiling or an overcast sky. Long shadows are created by low-angle lighting, and their visual strength can be emphasized by simply making these dark shapes integral to the overall composition of the image.

However, we don't simply have to accept what nature (or expensive studio lights) throw at our subjects. We can control the strength of shadows by reflecting light back into shadow areas, thereby softening the contrast between highlight and deep shadow, if that is the effect we require.

Backlighting

By positioning your light source directly behind an opaque subject, a silhouette is created – that is, if the three components of this arrangement (light, subject and camera) are all aligned along the same axis. From the camera/viewer position, a bright rim around the edge of the subject can appear as the backlighting spills over the rear of the subject like the bright ring that the sun creates around the edge of the moon during an eclipse.

If the light is at an angle to the subject or the subject is off-centre, then light will spill over further into the shadow areas so that the features and detail of that subject start to reveal itself. Now that the light is still facing us, but it's at an angle and its source is not directly hidden behind the subject, the camera can pick up lens flare and this can be detrimental to the image. However, it can sometimes be welcomed by the photographer if the image deliberately seeks to obscure something or to reference the medium of photography itself.

If your subject is transparent or translucent, backlighting will reveal its substance and structure in a way that uniquely reveals not just the exterior surfaces of the subject, but its interior as well. This is ideal for glass, crystal, liquids and so on.

Advertising and still life photography make extensive use of the backlit image. Bottles of white wine are carefully placed on a restaurant table as the sun sets in the Mediterranean harbour behind, revealing the beautiful honey-coloured liquid waiting for our lips to savour this perfect moment.

Wynn Bullock (b. 1902–d. 1975) was an accomplished photographer who believed that light was the most powerful energy in the universe, and much of his work was driven by this belief. Although known for his black and white work, many of his colour abstracts feature representations of this fascination with light and colour, shot with shards of glass backlit with coloured gels. The images he captured were far ahead of his time, but he felt that the technology wasn't yet available to be able to show these colour abstracts with the vivid colour he wanted to express.

Backlighting is a powerful lighting style to apply, but its use is most effective where emphasis of a particular form or shape is required (to the exclusion of detail), or where the nature and structure of translucent material is the primary aim.



Title: Deliberate over- and underexposure

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The image on the top was a deliberately overexposed shot intended to convey a positive and summery feel by emphasizing the light and space at the top of Ivinghoe Beacon. Deliberate underexposure in the image on the bottom allows just enough light to pick out form and shape successfully. This provides the eye with the opportunity to fill in the missing gaps (where no light exists) in order to piece together the image as a whole.

Colour

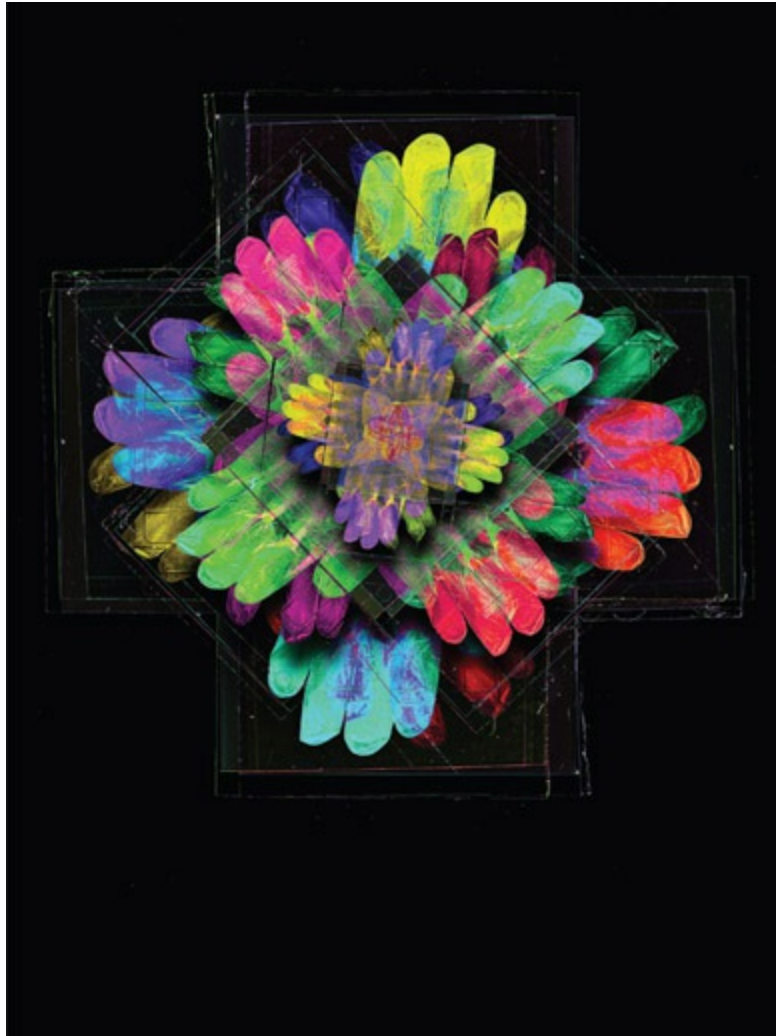
Understood and celebrated by every culture and every stage of human development, our sense of colour is a primary visual force in our lives; it is of critical importance to photographers. Colour affects our moods and perceptions – it has a direct and measurable impact on our heartbeats, body temperatures and metabolisms. For the photographer, colour provides a massive avenue for experimentation; immersing one's self in its potential for photography is wildly fun and thrilling, yet also complex and unnerving when one realizes its power to affect our perceptions of the world.

Colour psychology

There are many well-known and scientifically proven connections between our experience of colour and the resulting states of mind that they induce. Photographers with a keen sense of this power can access the palette of the rainbow to powerful effect. In the simplest terms, blues and cyans can induce a sense of cool, while warm reds and oranges impart a feeling of warmth. But the power of colour goes far deeper than this.

Colour can be used to create contrast in a number of ways. The so-called warm colours appear to move forward and out of the page or print, as if advancing ahead of other colours. On the other hand, cooler blues and greens often give the illusion of holding back – they provide a hint of reluctance to come forward and do not present themselves with confidence in the same way as warm colours do.

Contrast can also be created through the positioning of strong colours against pastels, or the more obvious dark against light. Impact and immediacy are the result of strong, active colours positioned together, while a sense of calm relaxation often results from dark or neutral backgrounds used to promote a single colour subject.



Title: Digital flower

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A single glove formed the basis of this digital composite image. Although its origin was resolutely photographic, the final digital montage was constructed within Photoshop using a range of powerful tools and techniques that firstly inverted the selected glove. Then each glove 'petal' was selected and its colour altered, before pasting into place within the design. The use of Photoshop's drop shadow effect on the layers gave the design an impression of depth between the layers, which would otherwise be lacking. The drop shadow was used in this design to effectively 'manufacture' a lighting situation that didn't actually exist.



Title: Red velvet cake

Source/photographer: Mary Amor

This image uses unconventional framing for impact, which makes the most of a single colour at the heart of its construction.



Title: Merry-go-round

Source/photographer: Ricki Knights:

The deliberate placement of colour opposites evoke an emotional response. In this image the cool blues of the dark sky and the warmer, more inviting reds create an image rich in colour psychology.

Complementary colours

The most commonly known and recognized complementary colours are red paired with green and blue paired with yellow or orange. However, with photographers now being more adept at manipulating both primary and secondary colours, green and magenta or red and cyan are now used as powerful combinations that provide strong contrast.

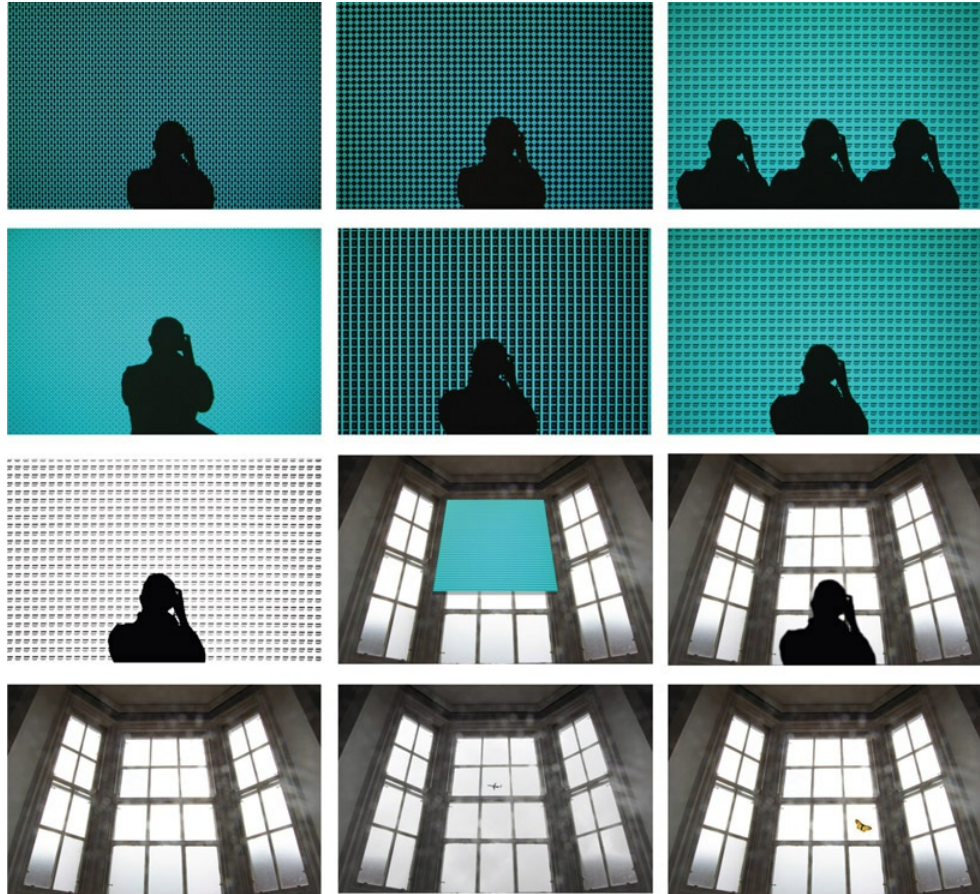
These 'dynamic duos' come from opposite areas of the colour wheel and produce powerful effects on the retina. However, their effects can be dulled or lost by introducing further colours or shapes to the composition.



Title: The unbearable brightness of seeing

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Using two colours only, alongside black and white, this series represents a digital narrative that relies on simple graphic shapes. Each image is intended to be viewed small, so that the sequence is 'readable' as small images presented in a grid format.



Single colour strength

Sometimes an image comes alive when one colour dominates the scene. For example, a single splash of red amidst an image of greys and muddy browns will immediately grab the attention of the viewer.

More often than not, a primary colour will achieve this result faster than a predominant pastel hue of subtle shade. It's interesting to note that a simple red square will appear to be of a darker hue when placed on a black background, and yet the same identical square will appear to be of a lighter hue when placed against white. This is an extremely simplistic example of the phenomenon by which colours can be manipulated in terms of their perceived hue, depending on the context or background within which they are placed.



Title: Colour wheel

Source/photographer: Gavin Ambrose

The colour wheel for photographers is different from the colour wheel for paint and pigment. It shows the primary colours of red, green and blue equally spaced within the wheel. An understanding of the colour wheel is important if photographers are able to correct colour casts, for example, in their digital image editing. Opposite colours are introduced to cancel out a colour cast on the opposite side of the wheel (for example, cyan can be increased in order to reduce a red cast).



Title: In medio umbrae, thurmoil, broken dreams

Source/photographer: Rommert Boonstra

These three images emphasize vivid reds at the core of their construction, but their vibrancy is strengthened further by lighting, texture, strong composition and a powerful appreciation of the visceral.

Bold colour vs subtle colour

The strength of colour can be utilized to affect our mood and level of engagement with an image. Bold and assertive primary colours often announce the intention of an image – to shock or surprise – whereas a palette of soft and subtle colour invites us to form a quieter, more contemplative relationship with an image.



Title: Spanish farm

Source/photographer: Libby Double-King

Photographers should work with colour in all its forms, from brash and bold to soft and subtle. This beautifully simple image shows how pastel colours can blend harmoniously when used with a strong compositional eye.



Title: Mushroom on a winter beach

Source/photographer: Vadim Tolstov

The cold blue shadow created by this structure mimics precisely the same shade of blue found on the structure itself.

Bold and assertive primary colours often announce the intention of an image.

Mono in colour

Occasionally, photography offers us a situation where the subject itself provides little, if any, colour, and appears to be completely monotone. Some examples are silhouettes against a cloudy sky or patterns revealed by the play of light on water.

Presented within a colour series, such images immediately stand out, appearing as if they don't belong, but also remaining tied by theme or subject to the set. Many photographers enjoy monochrome precisely because it focuses their ability to experiment with design principles in a slightly different way.

Photoshop monochrome conversions

Many photographers who begin to explore Photoshop assume that monochrome conversions can simply and easily be made by desaturating the image of colour. This will result in a bland and tonally incorrect conversion. Use the channel mixer instead, with monochrome checked, then edit each colour channel in turn until the desired effect is achieved.



Title: Beach running

Source/photographer: Ernst Haas

Ernst Haas was well known for his use of slow shutter speeds. Shooting into the light, the photographer has created an image full of movement that requires no colour to succeed.

Exercise 2 Design limitations

One of the greatest challenges facing the photographer is the requirement to

remain photographically 'fit' in order to develop an awareness of design and its impact on creativity. No concert pianist or ballerina walks onstage without going through endless hours of practice, warm-ups and exercises beforehand in order to reach a pinnacle of readiness and technique. So why do photographers expect to take great pictures all the time without undergoing similarly rigorous workouts?

As photographers, we often experience the blank page as a world full of possibilities, but also the crushing weight of responsibility to make something of it. This exercise addresses that problem by allowing you to take time out to experiment with your design skills and place restrictions on your raw materials. In this task, you're invited to combine and use only a few items in order to come up with some simple designs drawn from your creative approach to the exercise and your careful choice of lighting and background.

The raw ingredients? An egg, six small twigs, a glass lens and a length of string. You can use as few or as many of these elements as you like, but use only these items in your compositions. Limitation will force you to use design skills to create minimal or complex designs, explorations of line, tone, contrast, texture and so on. Remember that you also have two very important additional ingredients to work with: light (soft, side, harsh, raking, etc.) and background (black, textured, plain, crumpled, etc.). Approach this opportunity with an open mind and plenty of time, and you can learn a lot about yourself as a photographer.



Title: Raw elements for a design exercise

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Restrictions placed on a creative exercise can provide meaningful boundaries within which to work; they enable you to design your image with more creativity and focus.

Photographic genres Fine art photography

Any photographer whose primary aim is to please themselves, without the requirement to please a client or fulfil a brief set by others, could be said to be a fine art photographer.

Quite simply, it is work that places the photographer as artist, to communicate through their images their view of the world or their own personal 'take' on a specific subject or theme.

There has been a huge rise in the population of fine art photographers over recent years. Along with the mass adoption of digital technology and a dizzying multitude of opportunities to gain exposure online, almost anyone with an iPhone and an Instagram account can call themselves a fine art photographer.

As a broad term, it's almost outlived its usefulness. It's become a badge that can be stuck on the work of many photographers, regardless of their skill or ability. At its best, fine art photography is transformative, meaningful and powerfully resonant. It may lean heavily towards the 'craft' of photographic practice by using film, black and white techniques, specialist darkroom processes and coated papers layered with specialist emulsions. But equally, it's digital too, sometimes heavily illustrative, but always initiated by a very personal, self-driven style and one that communicates the artistic concerns of the creator.

Big ideas and themes such as permanence/impermanence, positivity, longevity, fragility, humanity and emotion are often explored in metaphor or actuality. Subjects can be used as symbols to a deeper theme that the photographer might want to explore. Fine art photography often taps into the subjective, interior world of the photographer, where states of mind can be paralleled by subjects that act as a conduit or channel to a deeper truth. Fine art photographers sell their

work through a number of channels – mostly galleries, specialist art publishers and editioned print sales. Many landscape photographers see themselves as fine art photographers and work towards finding markets that welcome and remunerate their unique personal style and vision.

The influence of fine art photography has crossed over into other commercial areas – creative portraiture and fashion most noticeably, where publishers' appetites for uniqueness and mood allow fine art photographers to apply their vision. It also finds a natural home with small and specialist publishers of photography books. But also in the mainstream commercial world where large banks, businesses and insurance companies have appropriated a kind of lowkey, snapshot informality from the fine art genre into their mass circulation 'lifestyle' imagery.

Fine art photography is not just black and white either – it embraces colour and all approaches, from the snapshot aesthetic to the sumptuous tones of the large-format landscape. Representative themes and subjects that fine art photographers might explore include nudes, figurative studies, natural world, light, landscape, portrait and urban life.



Title: Santa Monica Pier

Source/photographer: Hiroshi Watanabe

This beautifully soft and evocative image is carefully crafted by Hiroshi Watanabe's black and white approach by blending a range of design principles that carefully balance a requirement to both reveal and to obscure.

Photographers to research

William Klein

Saul Leiter

Imogen Cunningham

Gerhard Richter

Wynn Bullock

[Futher resources](#)

Five photographers to explore

Arnold Newman
Wynn Bullock
Hiroshi Sugimoto
Uta Barth
William Eggleston

Suggested reading

The Photographer's Playbook by Gregory Halpern

Photography by John Ingledew

Photography: The Whole Story by Juliet Hacking

The Photographer's Eye: A Graphic Guide by Michael Freeman

Compose Better Pictures: A Beginner's Guide by Edwin Jones

Mastering Composition by Richard Garvey-Williams

Discussion topic: Colour versus black and white

Photographers are often uncertain about whether their images deserve a black and white conversion or whether they should remain in colour. By and large, this is a decision that should be taken at time of capture, rather than somehow chanced upon as an afterthought as a way of somehow rescuing an image they may be indifferent to. Nevertheless, for the single image, black and white conversions can emphasize form and substance as primary concerns once the 'distraction' of colour information is eliminated. But where a documentary

approach requires authenticity and accuracy, colour is critical to the integrity of the image.

3

First design principles



Title: Kusho 3

Source/photographer: Shinichi Maruyama

Liquids, powerful flash and an intuitive sense of timing (developed over many years of experience) have culminated in an explosive collision that freezes the motion mid-air and allows us to study a fraction of frozen time at our leisure.

Now that we have discussed the major elements of design, we now have the opportunity to mix these ‘ingredients’. This practice leads photographers down some very exciting paths and images.

The previous chapter looked at how the components of design can be isolated and examined within a compositional approach to photography. This chapter is all about how you can actually apply these components to your work. The principles of design are the processes by which the elements of design come into play within an image.

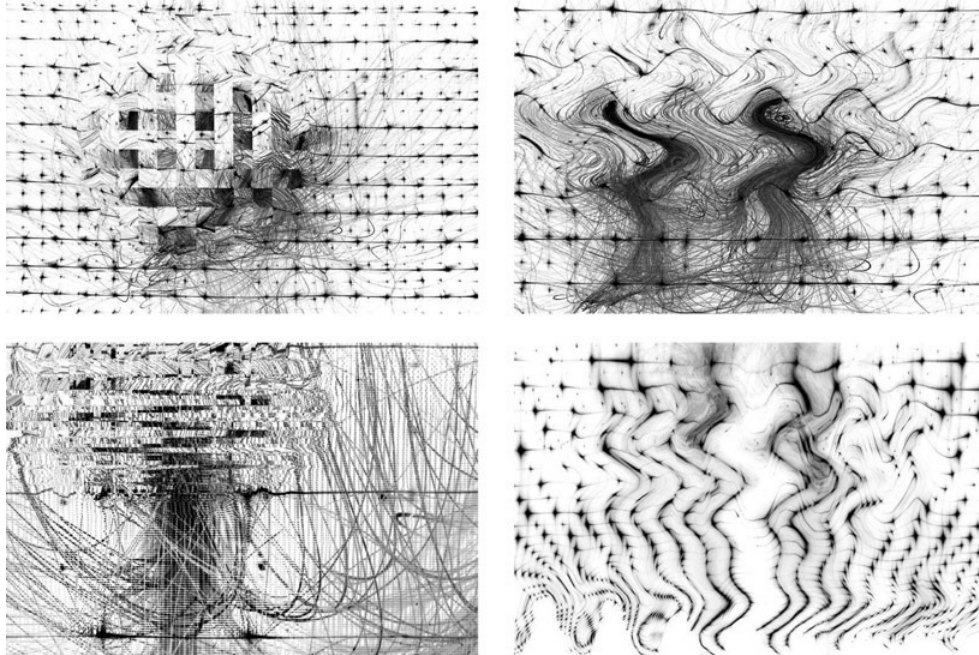
Beyond an initial gut reaction to the subject of a photograph, it's very often the application of design principles that really make us stay hooked on an image. For some photographers and/or audiences who ask 'What makes a good photograph?', we can confidently assert that a large part of the appeal of a photographic image is the application of design principles; it is the blending, manipulation and combination of different design elements that create compelling imagery.

Pattern

When any design element (line, shape, negative space, etc.) is repeated a number of times, a pattern develops. Patterns exist all around us: in clothing, wallpaper, books, paving stones – everywhere. Many other art forms, such as music or dance, use pattern because the repetition of a shape, word or form is comforting and easily understood. It reinforces our understanding of a single element by having its power amplified; it also imparts an emotional certainty, which can be reassuring.

The appeal of pattern is a universal phenomenon. However, photographers should beware of applying this process too often in their work as it can become an easy retreat into a kind of template imagery; this can impede the employment of additional creativity or compositional invention in the capturing of a scene or subject.

There are a number of patterns that photographers can capture through careful positioning and manipulation of viewpoint and distance. Even then, the skilful photographer may still need to employ further techniques to creatively rise to the challenge.



Light mesh series

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A series of patterns created in monochrome with Photoshop tools and distortion techniques.



Title: Key West, 2000 from *American Colour*

Source/photographer: Constantine Manos

Natural light, especially bright sunlight, will always create patterns that follow the random forms of their subjects.

Random patterns

This is an odd term to grasp, since the term 'random' itself means it has no specific pattern, purpose or objective. Random patterns are those where a multitude of identical shapes or forms might be present within an image, but their distribution and placement throughout the picture may be uneven and/or unpredictable.

An example of this might be the digital interference on a television screen where a picture breaks down because of poor reception or connection. The picture suddenly becomes abstract and the resulting large digital pixels or squares (the elements) might be unevenly placed in varying groups of size or colour within the frame of the screen.

Infinite patterns

An infinite pattern is created by a multitude of similarly formed elements repeating within an image, but decreasing in size towards the centre or away to a vanishing point, or repeating without end.

These patterns often lead the eye inwards just as the spiral of a nautilus shell takes the eye from the widest outer point round and round into the smallest point at its centre. If you hold two small mirrors opposite one another, you'll be able to see how an infinite pattern is generated by a seemingly endless repetition of a reflection of itself.

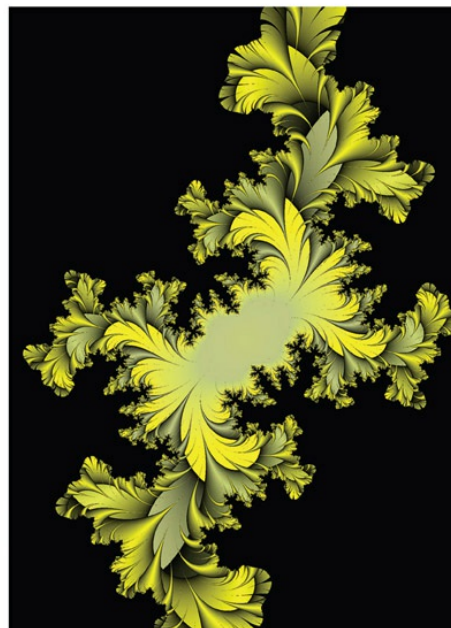
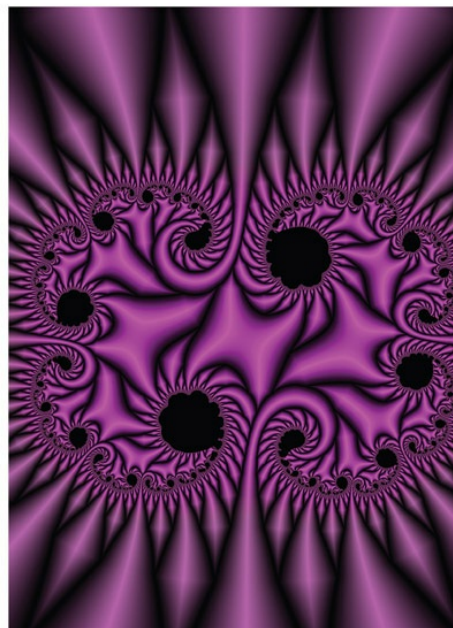
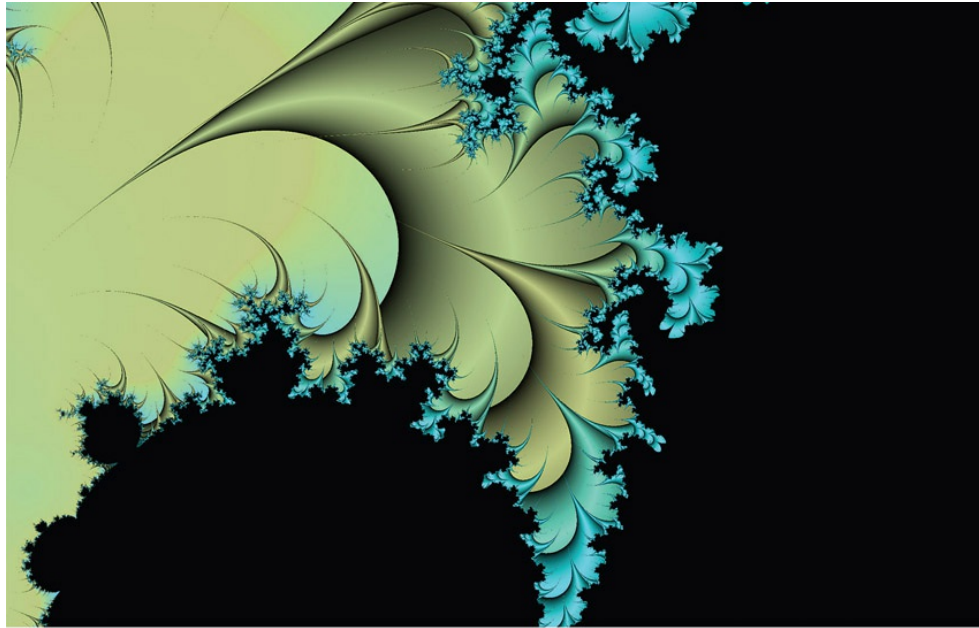
Spirals or circles within circles appear to continue inwards towards infinity. Other nonsymmetrical patterns appear to radiate away from a start point in multiple reproductions of themselves (and here, the sense of infinity can only be implied, because every page in a book ultimately has to contend with the boundary lines created by the page edges).

Fractals and Mandelbrot images show in incredible detail how, once the image is zoomed into, a repeating pattern can continue into infinity. These impressive and dazzling computer-generated images are not a new invention by any means. The

worlds of ancient art and religion, such as Buddhism and Islam, are strewn with examples of beautiful infinite patterns.

Fractals and Mandelbrot images

Fractals are curves or geometrical figures that are useful in modelling structures in which similar patterns recur at progressively smaller scales (snowflakes, for example). Benoit Mandelbrot is a Polish-born French mathematician who is known as the pioneer of fractal geometry.



Title: Fractals

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

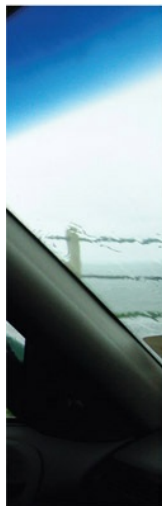
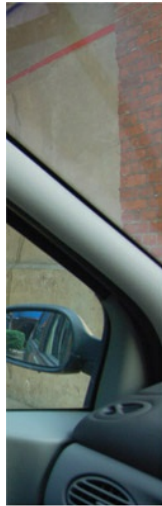
These images were created with the powerful Photoshop plug-in Kai's Power Tools, which allows the creator to experiment with fractal images. Fractal patterns show complex patterns that duplicate and repeat themselves infinitely.

Repetition

The idea that a single element can be repeated again and again within an image is one that photographers have embraced with enthusiasm. The technique seems to lend itself easily to the medium of photography.

Faced with a military parade, what would many photographers do? Shoot square-on to the line? Literally capture an image of a row of ten or more identical soldiers? This might convey the impression of military precision and pride, but other photographers, keen to create a different type of image, might nip to the end of the row and shoot 'down the line' to create an image of one soldier endlessly repeating into the distance, until the end of the line is reached. Such an image would contain the whole line in one image and create a repeating pattern of a more dynamic nature than simply shooting a portion of the soldiers square-on.

Repetition has its uses, but it can be overused by photographers who sometimes retreat into tried and tested territory instead of summoning up more creative responses or simply telling it straight. It is much better for your subject to determine your approach, rather than approaching your image-making by formulaic techniques or easy solutions.



Title: Car window series

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The front passenger window of a car was used here as a framing device to contain a series of changing urban and rural environments. The repeated use of this frame acted as a motif linking image to image to build the series.

Shape

If the repetition of a single shape or form is the aim, it helps to fill the viewfinder completely. Some shapes are instantly recognizable as silhouettes. An ordinary fork, for example, is almost impossible to perceive as anything else. Other 'nonobjective' or abstract shapes can be repeated through the medium of the photograph and their

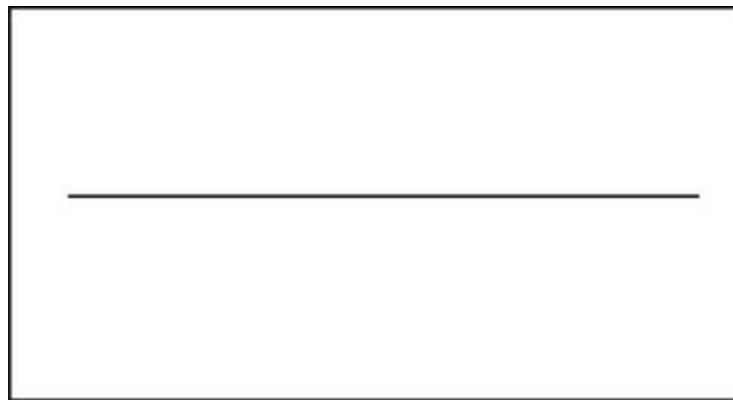
representational ambiguity becomes intriguing to the viewer. The repetition of a single strong shape can significantly amplify your photographic intent.

Line

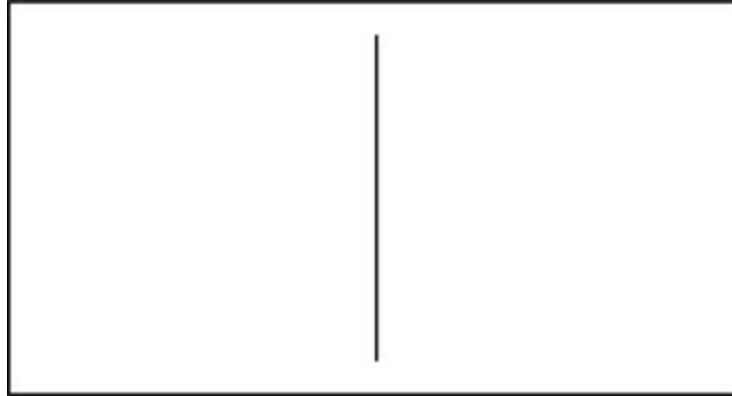
Many photographers at times enjoy the opportunity of developing what may be termed a more 'graphic' approach to their work. This often involves a self-motivated initiative to capture images that include the repetition of line.

Lines not only define the boundary area within which an image is created, but the simple act of the placement of a line within that boundary is one that can profoundly affect the visual appeal and impact of the image as presented within a rectangular frame.

The six figures on the facing page illustrate how lines can dramatically affect the composition and feel of images. [Figures 1](#) and [2](#) show how vertical and horizontal lines can appear passive within the frame, mimicking the top, bottom or sides of the frame by being placed in a parallel position to the edges.

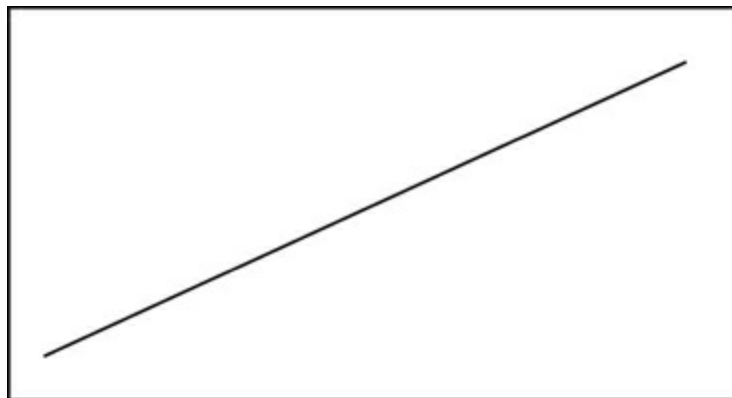


[Figure 1](#)



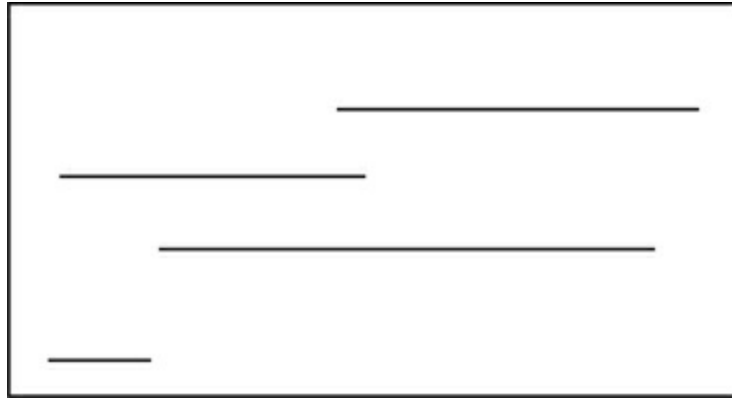
[Figure 2](#)

[Figure 3](#) shows how a diagonal line creates a dynamic effect that is quite different from the other examples. It immediately appears more energetic, implying a division of the frame into triangular sections rather than creating further rectangular shapes.

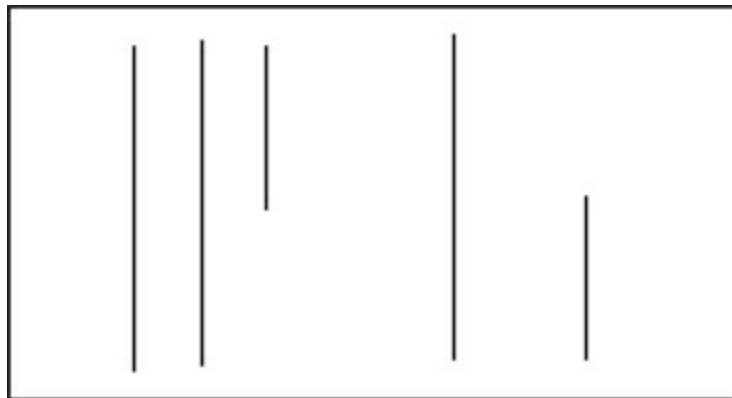


[Figure 3](#)

[Figures 4](#) and [5](#) show how repeated horizontal or vertical lines, while they impart a sense of unity and harmony in their composition, amplify their own static or fixed appearance.

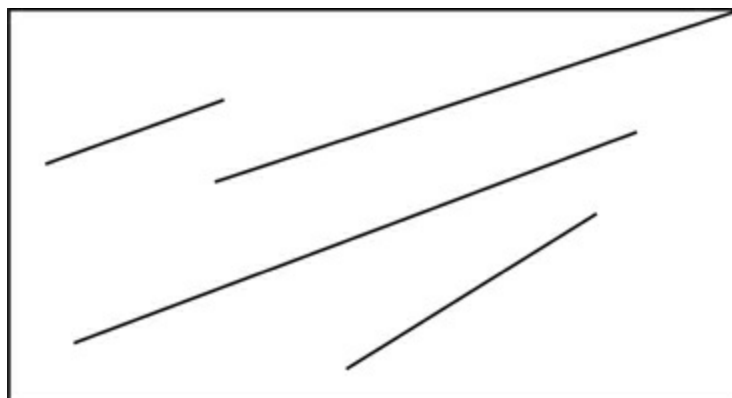


[Figure 4](#)



[Figure 5](#)

In [Figure 6](#), the repeating diagonal lines retain the same sense of unity, but create a more forceful impact.



[Figure 6](#)

The simple act of placing a line within a boundary is one that can profoundly affect the visual appeal

and impact of an image.

Motif

The use of a motif in photography enables photographers to link their images thematically through the use of a single repeating idea or element. This is much wider in scope and ambition than the use of a simple recurring pattern or shape because the motif itself is representative of a more complex idea or concept and has the power to bind together an exploration of that concept across a range of images.

Many of the great photographers build reputations and valuable collections of their work precisely because they employ their powers of enquiry to explore single themes or concepts throughout their careers. For example, the overlooked lives and landscapes of suburban America were central themes to Gary Winogrand's work. Fay Godwin produced work inspired by the mark of humankind on the British landscape, while Robert Doisneau told memorable stories of life in the streets of Paris in the 1940s.

Motifs can also be useful in producing smaller sets or a series of images – they can act as the conceptual glue that holds a collection of images together within a single project.

Motifs and symbols

A motif is a single or recurring image forming a design; it is a distinctive or dominant theme in a work of art. A symbol represents or stands for something else – a material object representing something abstract.



Title: Ribbons

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A series of images inserted into a grid formation like this can create both an image in its own right or a display of several separate images.

Symbol

Symbols appeal to photographers because they employ a separate but distinctive visual language which, like photography itself, requires decoding and deconstruction in order to be properly interpreted.

Symbols represent something. They usually appear as a simplified code for something else. A simple thumbs-up sign, for example, is code for 'OK'. The use of symbolism in photography allows photographers to add complexity to their imagery. This might, for example, slow down the viewer's interaction and reading of the image by having to

penetrate additional layers of meaning.

Great care must be taken when using symbolism because cultural specificity comes into play and not all symbolism is universally understood. In fact, symbolism understood in one culture or continent could mean the complete opposite in another. The colour red, for example can signify danger, life or sexuality depending on its use and context. In eastern cultures, for instance, the colour red may refer to luck or fortune, but it could signify danger in other places.

Interruption

The use of interruption as a design technique works on several different levels. At its simplest, it is the intentional or unintentional use of a single element that breaks the continuity and harmony of an otherwise flawless or ordered unity. In visual terms, it's the pebble thrown into the still pond, destroying the calm and creating ripples.

Disruption of order

Interruption forces you to confront a harmonious pattern that appears perfectly unified were it not for a single element which resolutely refuses to conform to the rest of the image or work. This small act of 'rebellion' can force you to examine the element itself (if this is the intention) or to ask questions of the context or harmonious environment into which the non-conformist element is placed.

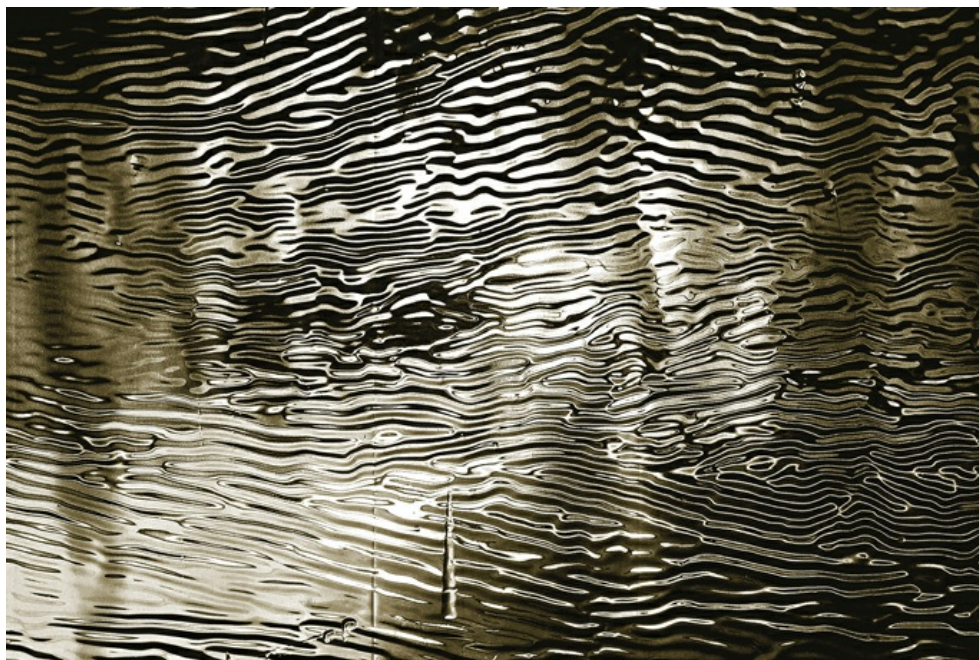
Its emotional effect can be felt in much the same way that musicians sometimes talk of dissonance – a lack of harmony or a tension created by the collision of two unsuited elements. Creative artists understand that a single element disrupting the order of an image or work can be a very useful prompt. In design terms, it simply makes the viewer sit up and take notice.



Painted keyboard

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

What's the first thing your sight registers here? The colour(s) or the structure of the keyboard? Competing against each other? Or co-operating in order to confound and surprise?



Title: Mono multi-ripples

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Across a pattern of undulating horizontal lines, a single vertical spike effectively interrupts the unity of this image and creates a point of interest in an otherwise monotonous scene.

Creative artists understand that a single element disrupting the order of an image or work can be a very useful prompt.

Variety and unity

We've referred to 'a sense of unity' several times in this chapter and in looking at a range of design principles so far, the concepts of variety and unity are critical to an understanding of the way that design works within photography.

Variety comes from elements of different shapes, forms and textures grouped together. Unity comes from a sense of sameness or togetherness – a feeling that the elements presented within the image somehow belong together. This could result be achieved by either creating a pattern of similar repeating shapes, or by creating a design of different hues or strengths of the same colour.

Sameness and uniformity

Too much of the same thing can get a little dull and yet there's no denying the appeal of a pattern or a symmetrical design from which we enjoy a sense of harmony or order.

A repeating pattern can be reassuring. The sameness and unity of the elements within the image are ordered, certain and predictable. However, the use of this very sameness can also lead to a sense of repetitive tediousness.

Sameness often prevents a central motif or single subject from standing apart from its background or environment. By not allowing a single element to break out from a uniform arrangement, creative possibilities are limited to occasional use – we must remember that this is a creative strategy that could be effectively applied to images.

Difference

Variety or difference allows comparisons to be made between elements within an image. On the other hand, too much variety can lead to a chaotic image and your audience can become confused: Where am I supposed to look? What is the photographer's intention here? The use of variety must be well considered and balanced.

Variety can be employed as a much-needed balancing mechanism in an image too richly unified. Like the Taoist yin and yang symbol, sameness and difference are interlinked and inseparable. An image that is too unified requires an element of difference before it really comes to life. By the same token, an image that is chaotically complex can be calmed by the use of a unifying element.



Title: FLARE series

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

This series explores the subject of flare itself. By deliberately obscuring the distance with bright sunlight pouring into the camera, the images are intended to evoke the nature of low sunlight in the landscape and try to reflect to the viewer a universally recognizable phenomenon.



Title: Geoffrey

Source/photographer: Greg Funnell

This beautiful portrait evokes a kind of natural sincerity and emotional warmth resulting from the skilful blending of a number of key design ingredients: soft lighting, small depth of field, frame-filling composition and the sympathetic use of colour on the pale green shirt and the natural skin tone.

Rhythm

For an image to have rhythm, it must somehow have a pulse. In musical terms, rhythm is used as an underlying beat or structure upon which a melody is placed so that the piece proceeds at the same speed or intensity, ensuring that the sounds made are not chaotic or discordant.

Contrast

In photographic terms, that pulse can be generated in a variety of ways: a harmonious arrangement of objects equally spaced, a repeated motif suggesting a recognizable pattern, a familiarity throughout the image. Photographers who are skilled and design aware are always in touch with a range of design principles that foster this ability to create rhythm.

Patterns, repetition and the skilful manipulation of shape or form can all be applied to create a visual rhythm. Rhythm is most apparent when it consists of a sequence of peaks or stresses separated by pauses. While this is easier to see in musical terms as the notation on the page, a sense of rhythm can also be created visually through the principles of movement and flow.



Title: Cloud Pass (series)

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Referring to the landscape generally (as opposed to communicating something specifically about a particular place), this series shows a sequence where the passing of clouds over a wide landscape creates light play on its surfaces.

Flow

The flow of an image is very much like its movement or rhythm, but it allows the viewer to navigate a gentle journey through the image without interruption or dissonance.

Skilful placement of two or three image elements can help to achieve a feeling of flow. However, it can also be achieved through the use of leading or gently curving lines that are harmonious and balanced within the image.

Creating movement

Photographs are static objects, so how do we create movement? It's not so much about having a subject that moves. It's about how the eye is led and able to move around and

within an image, and how a sensation of movement can be present within an image.

Sometimes, creating movement could be as simple as using a deliberate camera shake, slow shutter speed or panning the camera to isolate a still cyclist against a blurred background.

Very powerful evocations of movement can be generated compositionally through the skilful placement of your subjects within the frame. For example, a golf ball lined up for the final putt can be placed at one side of the frame, with the destination hole at the other side of the frame. The green space between the two elements takes centre stage within the frame and the viewer rolls the ball into the hole using his or her imagination.



Alicante, 1933

Source/photographer: Henri Cartier-Bresson

This image has sometimes been criticized for being staged in a way that is quite at odds with Cartier-Bresson's usual method of straight reportage photography. Whether this is the case or not, the image's humour and visual appeal make it a very popular and memorable image – an image where the concept of flow can be seen clearly.



Title: Stripty clown

Source/photographer: Luka Kase

A fluid, circular rhythm takes the viewer inside this image where repeating elements of the black and white curved stripes motif provide a distorted sense of space.

In photographic terms, contrast is all about the difference between one thing and another. It is usually used when describing the difference between tones. In the broader sense of the term, contrast can be used to describe differences between colours and subjects within an image that feature differing properties or characteristics (see also Juxtaposition on page 184).

Colour contrast and temperature

The concept of contrast is simple to grasp when it relates to black and white photography – it is created by light reflectance and refers to the degrees of difference between dark and light tones. On the other hand, there are several ways to explore contrast in colour.

Colour saturation or intensity can be a powerful tool with which to make a bold

statement. Bright, clean yellows or reds, for example, can grab our attention and force us to look in a way that softer secondary colours or pastel hues cannot. However, this does not mean that you cannot combine the two. Striking contrasts can be created by placing a strong primary colour against a quieter colour, but care should be taken to get the balance right.

Complementary colours appear on opposite sides of the colour wheel (see colour wheel on page 76). These combinations often create the most immediately visible contrast even if they appear to be of equal colour intensity, for example, blue against yellow or orange. The human eye has great difficulty accepting and absorbing the light wavelength of each colour simultaneously and this sets up a tension as the eye tries to process and cope.

Opposing colour temperatures can create contrast between warm and cool tones. Warm tones can evoke an emotional response of a welcoming, positive nature, whereas cool tones can make a person feel slightly ill at ease and chilly. Warm colours are often referred to as 'active' due to their ability to draw attention. Cooler blues and greens are often said to be passive as they appear to withdraw or support stronger and more active colours.

Subtle colour contrast can be achieved by utilizing combinations of colours nearer to each other on the colour wheel. Quiet, restful images can be created by carefully selecting colour combinations that appear to have similar tonal brightness or somehow balance each other in terms of their intensity or saturation.



Title: Apples and pears

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

This image illustrates everyday subjects that blend and contrast well with each other.

Tone

Tonal contrast in photography relates to the difference between highlight and shadow – between dark and light.

A high-contrast image will have rich, dark blacks and punchy, clean whites, and although it may contain recognizable detail within the midtones, some detail will be missing, its tone sacrificed for a grittier, more ‘contrasty’ image.

A low-contrast image is one where greater emphasis is placed on the differences between midtone greys, sacrificing some of the rich dark blacks and clean whites in the process.

Most photographers strive for a balance between the two, aspiring to the punchy immediacy and primary impact of a high-contrast image, but wanting to retain the clarity and secondary appeal of an image within which every detail is visible.

Modern digital image-editing software can easily accommodate this requirement by allowing photographers to merge two or more exposures within one final image. However, there are times when an image can have more appeal if it remains one thing or the other, encouraging the brain to fill in the gaps in a process of imaginative expectation, rather than expecting the viewer to accept an image that is clearly too perfect.



Title: Apesanteur

Source/photographer: Pascal Renoux

Black and white subjects allow us the opportunity to study differences in tone and contrast without having to negotiate our first impressions of an image dictated by our responses to colour.



Title: Halesworth Cut Still Life

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

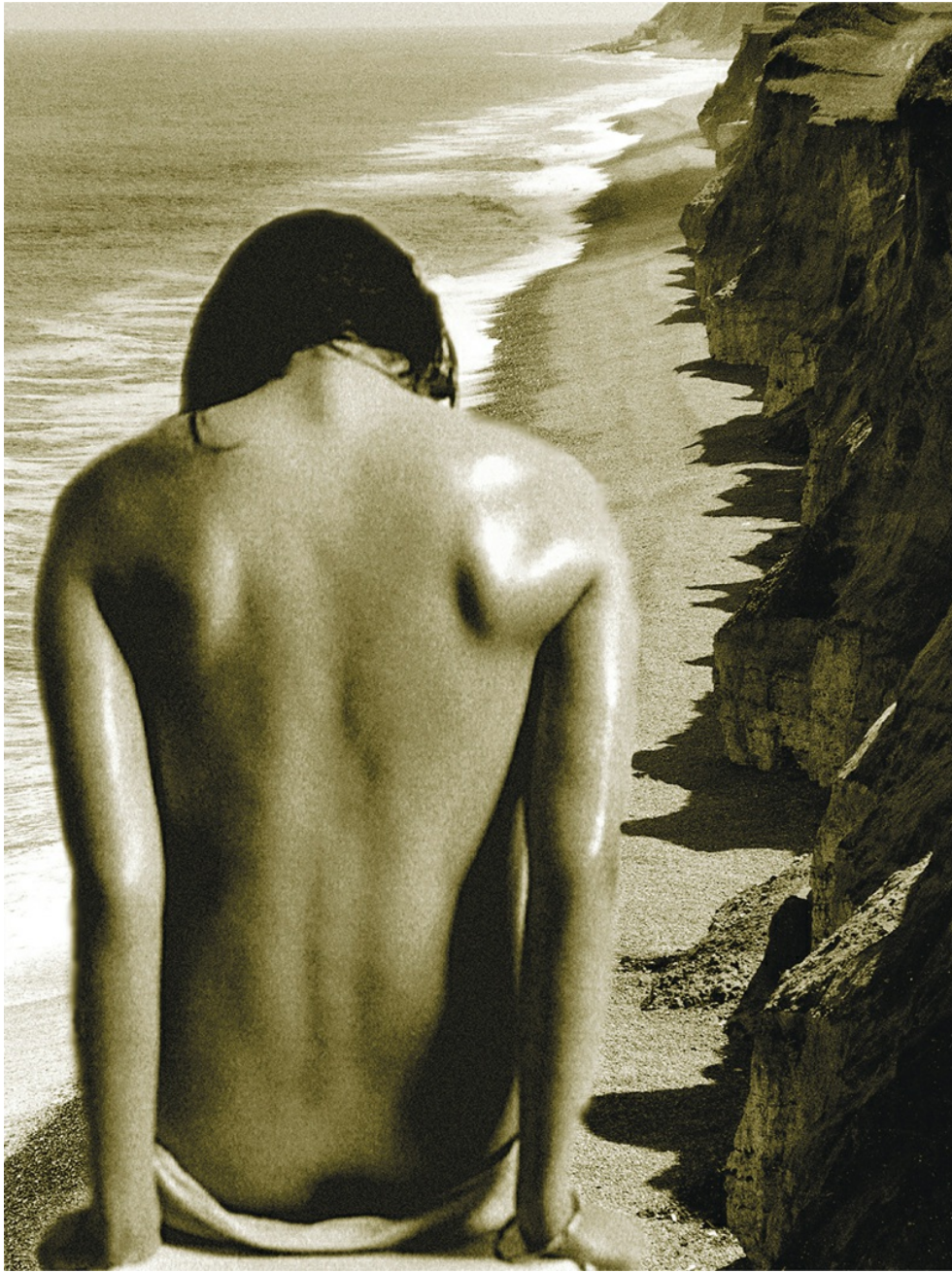
These simple still life experiments were created with found materials during a recent residency. Playing with minimalism, space, tone, contrast, composition and form, they're linked as a series by the predominance of white space and the corner surface upon which each set-up was staged.

Subject

Contrast between different subjects allows photographers the opportunity to play with our sense of world order. If one of photography's major achievements is to enable us to view the ordinary in extraordinary ways, then placing one subject with another (or against an unfamiliar background) to create contrast is simply a continuation of that noble ambition.

Take a small grapefruit, place it on a simple white dinner plate and shoot from above. Most of us can imagine this scene. Place the grapefruit on a square plate and you increase the contrast between the fruit and plate further – a right-angled shape supports a circular form. Increase the contrast even further by shooting the grapefruit

on a blue square dinner plate. How far can you push it?



Title: Cliff-top vertigo

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

This is a deliberately ambiguous image that contrasts the soft, rounded form of the body with the angular and pointed shapes created by cliff shadows cast on the shingle beach.

Exercise 3 Form and structure

Take a group of similarly shaped and similarly sized pens and pencils or a pile of a dozen books.

Using a range of design principles discussed so far, proceed to create a set of six images that respond to the themes set out below:

Pattern

Tessellation

Interruption

Movement

Symmetry

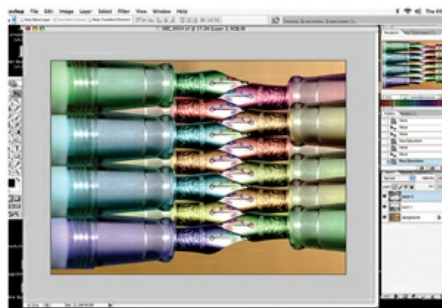
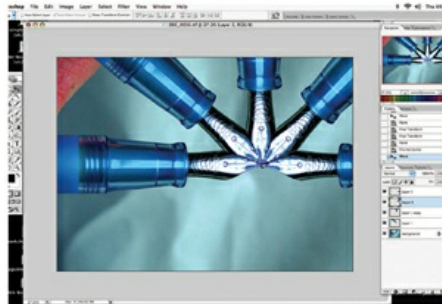
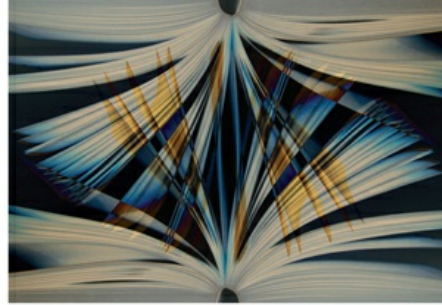
Asymmetry

Guidance

Think carefully about the wealth of design tools and techniques at your disposal: lighting, composition, colour, line, shadow, space and depth of field. Any or all of these (and more) can be employed to create a set of dynamic and artfully constructed images.

The subject matter itself may not set the world on fire, but this is simply a focused opportunity to play with basic design principles in order to develop awareness and design skills by having a good workout in the ‘creative gym’.

The images here are examples of ideas generated in the formulation of a photographic response to a book cover commission published by the Pen & Ink Press.



Title: Examples of tessellation

Source/photographer: Pen & Ink Press

Some of the design ideas generated here show initial ideas in response to the book title, Tessellate, which means to produce an image via 'the repeated use of a single shape, without gaps or overlapping'. The finished image of fountain pen nibs interlocking to create a background was darkened and softened in order to create good separation between the typography and the cover image.

Photographic genres Landscape photography

More than any other kind of photography, landscape photography continues to highlight the continual battle between Realism and Romanticism, the competing requirement to be authentic and to be appealing.

Commercial concerns obviously go some way towards designating the approach taken. Advertising and mass market publishing draw audiences through their use of rich, saturated colour and exaggerated forms and features, towards emotive responses, while documentary, conceptual and art photographers less concerned with a commercial imperative to 'please others', may take a more detached approach – without reliance upon the kind of pictorial exaggeration employed by the former.

For many, the most interesting landscape photography seems to reside in a precarious balance between the two – where a series of landscapes (as opposed to just one) provide information and location-specific interest about a particular place, but also the framing, composition and available light confer a degree of aesthetic pleasure also. Too much landscape photography from the art/documentary end of the spectrum appears to be too narrow in its reach, pleasing from an academic or informational point of view, but disappointing from those who seek a more visceral response to the landscape and the natural environment.

The challenge for landscape photographers is always the same – to communicate a sense of 'being there' that connects with others, to afford others the chance to enter that same space and feel what you felt, see the scene how you saw it,

understand its heritage or importance. When one is exposed to the wind, the sun, the smells, the breeze, the ozone and the sheer scale of a wilderness in front of you, it's a huge ask to reduce that sensory overload down into a 2D facsimile contained within four sides of a rectangular box. Sure, you can soup up the colour, burn in the sky, clone out the pylons, but you're crafting an illustration here of what you might want the scene to look like, rather than using the medium of photography to educate and inform others (in a world where the entire globe has been covered several times over) or throw new light on something we thought we already knew.

Today's landscape photographers may come from a fine art, conceptual or documentary background. But rather than celebrate the natural landscape and wilderness magically detached from human influences upon it, their focus is very much on the relationships between us and the landscape – encroachment, industry, pollution, tourism, globalization, exploitation, military uses, idealism, consumerism – all being questioned and examined by a range of photographers creating substantial bodies of work.



Title: Bahrain 1

Source/photographer: Andreas Gursky

Gursky's aerial photography emphasises the forms and patterns of both the natural and the manmade landscape that would be impossible to view at ground level.

Photographers to research

Edward Burtynsky
Fay Godwin
Carleton Watkins
Nadav Kander
Per Bak Jensen

Styles and movements Surrealism

Everywhere you look these days, you'll find creative and imaginative examples of photographic imagery where photographic 'truth' has been distorted, where the impossible has come to life, where disorientation and dreamlike states are produced with the help of Photoshop combined with a photographer's impulse to create an alternative reality. Today, its influence is everywhere, from DeviantArt, to Pinterest, sci-fi and fantasy art, mainstream advertising and magazine editorial.

This imagery no longer has the power to shock as it once did, because we have all become more visually literate and exposed to the overlap between photography and illustration and how clever 'special effects' can give life to these impossible realities. But when Surrealism was born a hundred years ago, the world was a very different place.

The early 1920s spawned a more playful and imaginative approach to photography that tried to pull itself away from the use of the medium to document reality and reason, or trying to provide descriptive evidence in the way it had been harnessed, to a struggle for decades to emerge in its own right, alongside the better-known painters and paintings of the era.

Andre Breton published his Manifesto of Surrealism in 1924 that broke new ground for photography, and he and his contemporaries in Surrealism produced work that was completely fresh and detached itself from the preoccupation of 'truth' and reality and instead focussed on the world of the imagination, of distortions and of free and fluid expression. Theirs was an interior world of dreams, mystery and the unconscious.

The very nature of the photographic processes and techniques of the time allowed

artists like Man Ray to play creatively with the black and white darkroom. His photograms and double exposures allowed him to express compelling visions of sometimes shocking or disturbing glimpses of an inner world or a strange new visual language that always disrupted the rational and real.

As a leading artist of his time, Man Ray often enjoyed using the simple manipulation of light and form without using a camera, by exploring the physical nature of the mediums chemicals and papers to render new visions where light alone was the currency – the first deliberately camera-less photography. Other photographers and artists produced Surrealist imaginings by simply inverting their images, as did Dora Maar to create her image of an armadillo suspended in formaldehyde. No manipulation of chemicals, or light, or photographic paper here, but the simple act of presenting the subject in the way that she did produced a well-known example of the kind of disquieting, grotesque beauty that Surrealists were so often concerned with.

Photographers in later decades such as Angus McBean were often influenced by the floating heads found in Man Ray's work, and much of today's photographic 'alternative realities' are driven by a desire to reflect these scenes and imaginings of our inner lives by harnessing the power of visual collages and assemblages in order to make the fantastical real.



Title: La Violon

Source/photographer: Man Ray

A pioneering force within the Surrealist movement, Man Ray's compelling black and white prints embody design principles at the heart of his darkroom photograms and his studio work in fashion and portraiture.

Key concepts

Montage

Distortion of scale and proportion

Double exposure

Inversion

Subversion

Solarization
Juxtaposition

Five photographers to explore

Duane Michals (see 'Chance Meeting' and 'Angel')
Eadweard Muybridge
Luo Dan 'Simple Song' series
Abelardo Morell
August Sander

Further Resources

Suggested reading

Sequentially Yours by Elliott Erwitt (teNeues, 2011)

Photography Is Magic by Charlotte Cotton (Aperture)

Eye Mind Spirit: The Enduring Legacy of Minor White by Peter Bunnell (Howard Greenburg Gallery)

The Genius of Photography by Gerry Badger (Quadrille)

Why It Does Not Have to Be in Focus by Jackie Higgins (Thames & Hudson)

Discussion topic: Minimalism

When we talk of minimalism within photography, we immediately bring into play one of the most conspicuous applications of design principles possible. The minimalist aesthetic simply asks us to do more with less. Images are stripped of

anything extraneous and their power and appeal lie in being able to communicate something simple, an idea or subject expressed with only the barest means possible – the confluence of two simple lines, a single point of interest against an otherwise empty backdrop, the hint or suggestion of something by revealing only part of the entire form.

There's a natural overlap here with abstract photography, where the power to disorientate us lies in being able to summon up a landscape of the mind or a detail or texture that gives no rational clue to its size or scale but still evokes a very strong emotional reaction in the viewer.

More than that, a minimalist approach is pleasingly direct, but still attempts this appeal by being artful about it, by considering how the arrangement of the merest few elements within a frame should be organized. Sparseness is key.

Landscape photographers like Michael Kenna employ a minimalist approach, and Uta Barth's beautiful style allows her to capture moments of light and space in a minimalistic way. Hiroshi Sugimoto might not be considered as a minimalist photographer per se, and yet so many of his bodies of work employ just that approach to communicate his ideas with elegance and immense power.

Across all these genres, the use of photographic technique helps to achieve a minimalist approach. Depth of field allows the photographer to isolate a single point of interest against an otherwise blurred background that might show detail. An understanding of how light reveals or hides form and texture is critical, as is a willingness to develop an observational eye for subjects that allow the photographer to blend one or a few design principles into a meaningful frame. To a minimalist photographer, a simple apple placed on the edge of a table become a sphere and two lines to play with, a sky trail from an aeroplane crossing a mountain range becomes a single straight line and a triangle to explore – and how those two elements alone combine within the frame is critical to the success of the minimalist approach.

CDE: clarity, directness, and economy

One of my personal mantras when creating my own work is to apply the CDE

Factor. Broadly, this extends from a minimalist approach to image-making, but is not exclusively tied to it. The CDE factor can be usefully applied as a strategy to drive photographic image making in the following ways

Clarity

Be clear and unambiguous about what you're saying. Express your intent. What is it you are interested in? What are you wanting to show? Are you giving life and energy and interest to your subjects and ideas by cutting through, getting right to the heart, eliminating anything that muddies what you're trying to show?

Directness

Be direct. Fill the frame if that's what you need to do. Be honest about what you're photographing and be blunt if you need to be. Pack a punch, why light a small candle when you can launch a flare?

Economy

What are the least means needed to send your message? How can you say it simply and strip it down to the bare bones? Does it need one single image, or do three images nail it? Or do you need a dozen to do it justice? Do it with the least possible. Even if your photographic interests ask that you pose questions – be clear that that's what you're doing. If your subjects are tangibly or philosophically complex and detailed and uncertain, you can still communicate that forcefully with CDE.

4

Depth and scale



Title: Blob cloud and hat

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Sometimes the eye is constantly moving between two competing elements within the frame in order to determine the spatial relationship between them.

Without a doubt, one of the most frustrating aspects of photography is the inability of a photograph to break free from its own inherent flatness – its two-dimensionality.

To state the obvious, a two-dimensional print representing a small portion of the three-dimensional world is always going to disappoint if we don't accept and try to work within its limitations.

Our imaginations are very good at interpreting a sense of depth when we look at a photograph. Distances between objects and relative scale are all calculated by instinct

and judgement without us being truly aware of the process. Thus, we construct invisible layers of depth or markers that denote perceived space and distance in an attempt to circumvent the limits of two-dimensionality.

Skilled photographers, being finely tuned to this issue, have become adept at working within conventional design principles to manufacture depth. There are a number of skills and techniques that can be used by any photographer to increase the appearance of depth in their photography.

Overcoming limitations

Photographers today have a vast armoury of equipment at their fingertips, but the temptation to use it all (and to justify the expense incurred by its purchase) can lead a photographer down a distracting and diverting path into technique-led experimentation or the dilution of a photographer's vision.

A fisheye lens will take a great fisheye lens image, almost regardless of what you point your camera at. But it will remain 'a great fisheye lens image' rather than a great image of a subject that happens to have been taken with a fisheye lens.

But limiting yourself to a few key pieces of kit will focus your thinking and develop your vision in a way that's so often obscured by the delusion that More Kit = Better Photography. You simply cannot buy your way into becoming a better photographer, although there's no doubt that certain fields of commercial photography require crucial pieces of equipment in order to facilitate the imagery required by that particular demand. Sure, if you shoot cars commercially, you may need a studio with a vast amount of flash kit and coved walls and everything that goes with this kind of photography. Commercial aerial photography can't be carried out without the use of a drone. But if you shoot a particular theme or subject and impose limitations on yourself in terms of the amount of equipment you use, you can explore a creative freedom honed by limitation by simply being unburdened of the itch to reach for that lens that costs you a months pay.

Compositional skills are one of the primary techniques that can overcome a photograph's limitations. The ability to place and position major elements in your

frame, which lead or guide the eye through a scene, is preferable to merely dumping your viewer in front of a flat focal point. This does not give the imagination much to feed on and the viewer quickly loses interest.

There are other more immediate factors that lie in wait for photographers even before the viewfinder is raised to the eye, and these will be discussed in this section.

Using light to achieve depth

Photographers often talk about light in terms of the physical properties they reveal and their effect on a subject's appearance. 'Flat' light often results from a light source that may be quite strong, but is diffused and comes from a broad origin and from an angle close to the axis of the camera or the subject.

Overcast skies can produce this kind of light and may provide plenty of illumination; however, flat light does not provide much in the way of contrast. Contrast, which we looked at in the previous chapter, helps to define separation between different tones, increasing our appreciation of a subject's three-dimensionality.

Go to manual focus

Limitation by means of reducing your camera's functionality forces you to do things differently and this is good for breaking routine habits that often stifle creativity. Limit your use of autofocus, for example, which often sets a prescribed central area of the viewfinder that the lens focusses with. This often forces us to compose images with the primary subject placed centrally.

Of course, you can get around this on many cameras by locking focus and moving the camera to reframe, but manual focus gives you greater ability to compose your frame with more freedom, potentially adding depth and dimensionality to your images, especially so when used with good depth of field control.

Photographers can use flat lighting for a range of purposes. It's often used in fashion and beauty photography precisely because it is soft and does not reveal wrinkled textures in skin or materials. It lights evenly and creates minimal shadows. In a studio,

the effect is often created by the use of a soft box, which provides even, fairly shadowless light.

A low, raking light will provide just the opposite. This kind of lighting, in which a bright, single source of light is held low and to the side of the subject, will highlight every peak and leave long, deep shadows in any dips or troughs on a subject's surface. The effect highlights texture and amplifies our appreciation of the subject's surface or form. This kind of light might be used to highlight wrinkled or craggy skin in a character portrait and can be easily created in the studio using bright light sources such as spotlights or even slide projectors. In nature, it can be seen from the low light of a setting sun against the rough bark of a tree.



Title: Pipeline, 2005

Source/photographer: Michael Levin

The sense of space created by the breakwater structure extending away and into the

horizon creates a necessary degree of depth to this image. It helps to alleviate some of the limitations of the two-dimensional 'flat' image.

Content and context

A subject that stands apart from its background is said to show good foreground/background separation. This is a fundamental concept in design and photography and it's critical to our appreciation of the spatial separation between a subject and its setting.

In most cases, of course, the main subject of an image will always be in the foreground, and the setting or environment it exists within will be the background. But creative opportunities exist to overturn this dual relationship and reverse the conventional arrangement by shooting beyond a foreground subject (by using deliberate blur or de-focus), guiding the emphasis of your image towards the background as subject.

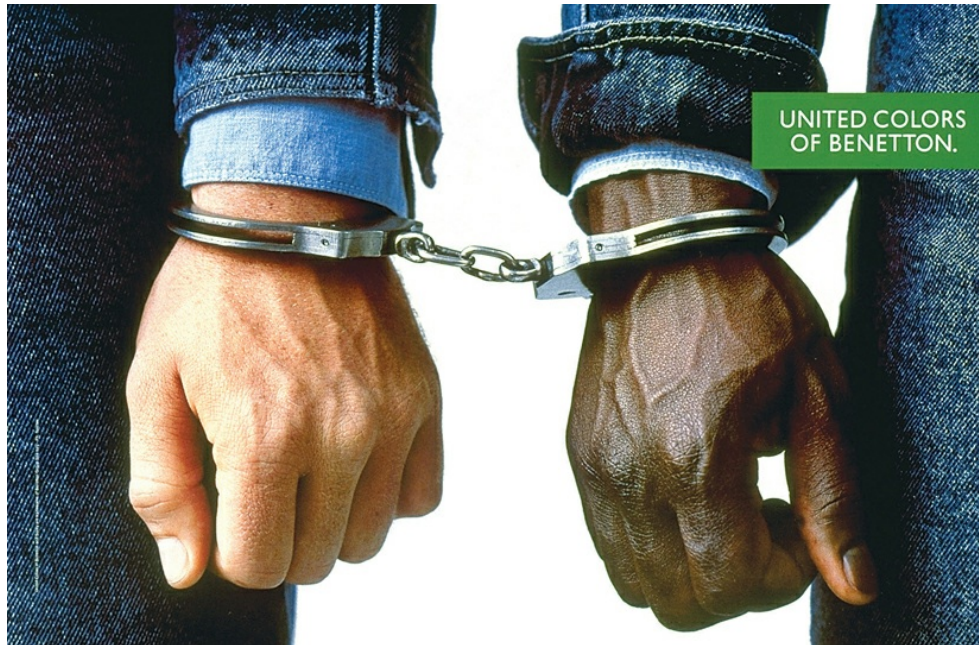


Title: Crashing wave, Scratby

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

For certain situations where fast movement and unpredictability occur, the autofocus function of many modern digital cameras will be useless. It is far better to pre-focus

manually where the action can be predicted to occur.



Title: Handcuffs

Source/photographer: Oliviero Toscani

The international success of Benetton's advertising campaign images is not solely down to shock value and controversy. By carefully stripping away everything that is superfluous and unnecessary, the image content is always direct and economical, allowing the visual message to carry its power without ambiguity.

The limitations of autofocus and autoexposure

These days, modern cameras are packed full of circuitry and fail-safe devices to ensure that a photograph can be captured with as much clarity as possible, at all costs. There are anti-shake modes and exposure modes pre-set by manufacturers for landscape, portrait, close-up and even sunny or cloudy weather photography. Of all these different 'helpers', the mass adoption of autofocus and autoexposure has been the most widely accepted – however, these tools could also be the most detrimental to creative photography.

Without a doubt, both modes will help get you out of a hole. And if you have to get that once-in-a-lifetime grab shot, why would you shoot in any other way? But more

often than not, we have far more time on our hands and have simply become lazy – we rely on autofocus and autoexposure to do all the work for us. This hardly encourages us to apply our own choices. Automation often reduces our power to influence some of the most basic techniques in photography. The simple user-controlled techniques often genuinely liberate our creativity and individuality. Sadly, we're often happier remaining enslaved to all things automatic.

Actual and illusory depth

Real depth can only be experienced. The initial sensation of being aware of our own position within an environment is quickly supplanted by the realization that distance extends outwards from our position in all directions.

Sometimes an image that does not engage us simply lacks a sense of depth. Its subject may be of interest to us, the arrangement of different elements within its composition may appeal, but something about the image makes us feel we're being offered a bland snack when what our imaginations crave is a feast.

Photographers have at their disposal the means to create that feast by adopting a viewpoint, distance and degree of coverage of that emphasizes depth. Since any photographic image is two-dimensional, the depth created is illusory, but this is not to say that it cannot convince the eye into believing that it is something greater. There are many ways to achieve this.

Foreground and background separation

As we've seen, this refers to the means by which the main subject of your image stands out from its environment or background. Photographers should be aware of the elements of design that strengthen the degree of separation between foreground and background, thus increasing the perceptual depth within the image. Many of the design elements we've looked at can boost foreground/background separation: contrast, complementary or competing colours and textural differences, to name a few.

Sometimes the lack of separation can also create an appealing image. A sense of

mystery or abandonment may draw us in where layers of depth are hard to perceive – a foggy scene of trees, for example, where individual elements may seem hard to locate in relation to others.



Title: Vivienne Westwood

Source/photographer: Mark Johnson

Foreground and background separation can be strengthened by using a longer lens (higher focal length) whereby depth of field effects can be better used to blur the background. This wonderful portrait of Vivienne Westwood also shows an interesting blending of colours: the more saturated, vivid colours of her hair and knitwear are in the foreground, while the more subtle colours of the urban browns and green are in the background.

Positioning of picture elements

Many successful photographers make use of our sophisticated sense of perspective and space by skilfully placing a series of elements or points of interest at varying distances throughout the frame: foreground, middle and far distance. These points of interest anchor our gaze temporarily and allow us to wander through the image in a route organized by the photographer. The careful positioning of elements is much easier to achieve and conceive where images are planned and prepared from the start. Still life is a good example – photographic image can be built from scratch instead of attempting to manipulate multiple elements and points of view ‘out in the field’ where this may be physically impossible or simply impractical.

Use of depth of field

Perhaps more than any other technique, photographers should be aware of the principles behind depth of field. Light, lens focal length and lens aperture (the size of the hole used by the lens to gather in the light required to create an accurate exposure) are critical to the amount of sharp focus within the image.

Small apertures of f16 or f22 will provide maximum depth of field (good focus from near foreground and extending into distance) whereas larger ‘holes’, such as f2 or f4, will provide a very narrow band of sharp focus – items in the near distance and far distance will be out of focus.

Wide-angle lenses will allow greater depth of field at large or wide apertures, but they can also distort our sense of perspective, scale and spatial relationships. Telephoto lenses are less tolerant of large or wide lens apertures and focusing becomes more critical – although narrow depth of field can easily be achieved.

Why is all this technical detail important? Depth of field assists our imaginations in perceiving depth within an image by conferring emphasis (sharp focus) on part or parts of an image we want to underline. This therefore gives less importance to elements that are in blurred or de-focussed areas.

The careful positioning of elements is much easier to achieve and conceive where images are planned and prepared from the start.



Title: Romania, 2005

Source/photographer: Tamas Dezso

Placing figures at either end of the frame and at different distances allows the eye to switch between the two elements and explore the background in between.

False attachment

This is a neat trick occasionally used by photographers who enjoy the opportunity to play with our knowledge of two-dimensional flatness and three-dimensional reality. It requires two planes of distance – near and far – and creates the illusion that near is as big as far, or that far is as near as big. In effect, it attempts an optical illusion by suggesting that both foreground and background actually share the same scale and distance to camera. Our brains, however, unpick this deception and quickly separate both planes of depth, and so we simply enjoy the joke.

Down the line images

Imagine a row of bottles on a windowsill. Do you shoot them head-on? Do you simply frame them all, equally sized, all lined up from the left-hand side of the frame to the right?

A slightly more creative response might be to go to one end of the line and shoot 'down the line', allowing some bottles to stay in focus whilst others drift out. This then creates the illusion that each bottle is a different size even though this is simply the result of similarly sized objects receding in apparent size due to the effects of perspective.

This kind of approach may seem obvious and simplistic, but there's a world of difference between the results of the two approaches. One appears flat and uniform, its ordered pattern is monotonous; the other approach is more likely to generate an image with a greater sense of depth.



Title: False attachment

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Simple optical illusions such as this combine near and far subject matter that seem to share the same distance to camera.



Title: Reflection of St Peter's

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Both the old and the new can be brought together in different layers by using reflections in the urban environment.

Layers, reflections and multiple exposures

Layers created by reflections allow photographers to project more than one meaning or interpretation to their image while at the same time inviting the viewer to perhaps switch between messages.

The degree to which different layers of meaning or intent become apparent can be harnessed by a skilful photographer to create a sense of depth. It is a delicate process and the photographer must ensure that the image does not become muddy or indistinct. Careful judgement is required in order to attain an image that is not too complex or unreadable.

Multiple exposures have always fascinated photographers of a more haptic nature and have been used from the earliest beginnings of photography. Used successfully, multiple exposures can create an impression of depth as the eye switches between the

exposures. However, one must bear in mind that if the result of such conglomerations are too random or unsuited, confusion and frustration can often result.

Scale and proportion

Scale allows us to view the size of something compared to a 'normal' or 'average' model. Most photography represents the scenes and subjects we witness on a daily basis as they are, but photographers have an opportunity to use scale as a design tool in order to force us to view a subject in a completely new light.

The importance of scale to perception

The willingness with which we can accept exaggerations of scale (both normal to small, and normal to large) depends on many factors, not the least of which is being able to judge the intent of the photographer or image-maker.

If it's felt that the photographer is simply trying to deceive us with image trickery (by digital image editing, for example) we may not buy into the vision and reject the image, deeming it too absurd or ridiculous. But if we enter into a kind of contract with the image creator through a shared sense of fun, we can accept the deceit and take part in its obvious manipulation.

Proportion

Proportion, like scale, is often measured against a scale of 'normal' values. It describes the size of something in relation to this fixed idea of normality. In photographic terms, it not only describes the disproportionate relationships between shapes or forms having extreme differences, but also describes subjects whose distance to the camera (and therefore whose size within the photographic frame) may be termed disproportionate.

Such techniques, whether manipulated or accidental, can create wonderfully intriguing imagery as the brain attempts to make sense of the differences between the apparent

size of something against what is expected.

Photography has always enjoyed a tenuous relationship with truth. Subverting expectations and assumptions by manipulating size or shape proportions is another means of exploring the medium creatively.



Title: Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1957

Source/photographer: Garry Winogrand

Winogrand intuitively captured moments of ambiguity or uncertainty in his work. In this image a small child is emerging from a vast dark interior into a sunlit world where there appears to be no boundary between the safety of home and the great wilderness on the doorstep. The child's size and proportion in relation to everything else within the image is what gives this photograph its power.



Title: Tunnel #2, 2003

Source/photographer: James Casebere

Casebere exploits to the full our willingness to accept the photographic 'truth' of his meticulously crafted and beautifully lit interiors. As real and as life-sized as they appear to be, they are in fact created on a much smaller scale within a studio. The photographer's use of lighting, the creation of depth, the absence of any superfluity or detail and his colour palette all combine together to create these emotionally charged interior scenes, which evoke some powerful and perhaps unexpected emotional responses in the viewer.

Image size and purpose

Within a variety of commercial and art contexts, photography has to be sized and presented in a way that is fit for purpose. If you are trying to attract the attention of a potential customer browsing through a website, it is simply good design sense to produce thumbnails that entice the viewer to click, be it through impact, colour, form, composition, contrast – all these design components should entice the viewer to click to see a bigger image.

The traditional 'white cube' gallery and fondness for large scale images is borne out of the requirement to allow their audiences to immerse themselves completely in the works – no distractions or extraneous furniture – the visitor is simply there to literally enter the image. The scale of the wall-sized prints demands attention and allows the image to communicate its detail and specificity in a way that can only be communicated by its size.

Photographers like Wolfgang Tillmans have recently ignored the much-loved requirement for few, large images and instead have presented their work as smaller prints in series and sequences or groups, allowing discreet projects or ideas to be presented together, impossible to achieve within the confines of the white cube space for large prints.





Title: Backlit toned Scottish landscapes

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

This series developed from a wish to give the images a warmer, softer feel and involved photographing black and white prints on a lightbox, with the light coming through the image from behind – in effect treating prints the same way one might re-photograph backlit transparencies.

[The absence of scale](#)

Playing with scale allows the photographer to mask or obscure the obvious. In practice,

many subjects can be photographed from a range of distances. This allows us to take good, clear images that show the subject within its environment. These images can be taken at a sensible distance to render the subject at a proportionate size within the frame.

On the other hand, we can do without proportionality altogether, and through the use of lenses, viewpoint, shooting angle or distance, completely obliterate any sense of scale.

Disorientation

Abstract photography can be so compelling because it provides no sense of scale or proportion. This leaves us floundering. However, the brain is determined and programmed to make sense of the most bewildering of circumstances. Being able to let go of rationality and an analytical deconstructive approach to abstract images is easier for some than it is for others. We still live in a world where everything has to be explained.

The ability to let go allows us to view and appreciate a scene that doesn't make sense at all. It is possible to find great beauty in unanswered questions or the unexplained – being lost is sometimes a great place to be.



Title: Jet ski trails and jet skier turning

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The first image without the jet skier makes an interesting image of their absence, leaving only the trails in the water and little sense of distance or scale. The second image shows the jet skier's real size and we are now able to understand the photographer's height, distance and shooting position in relation to the subject.



Title: Wood, Winterton

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The absence of any recognizable scale can act powerfully on our reading of an image.

Reference points

Like anchors in a storm, reference points give us a clue or a sign that help us to make sense of a disorientating image. Once these points are found, the eye and the brain start to understand what it sees.

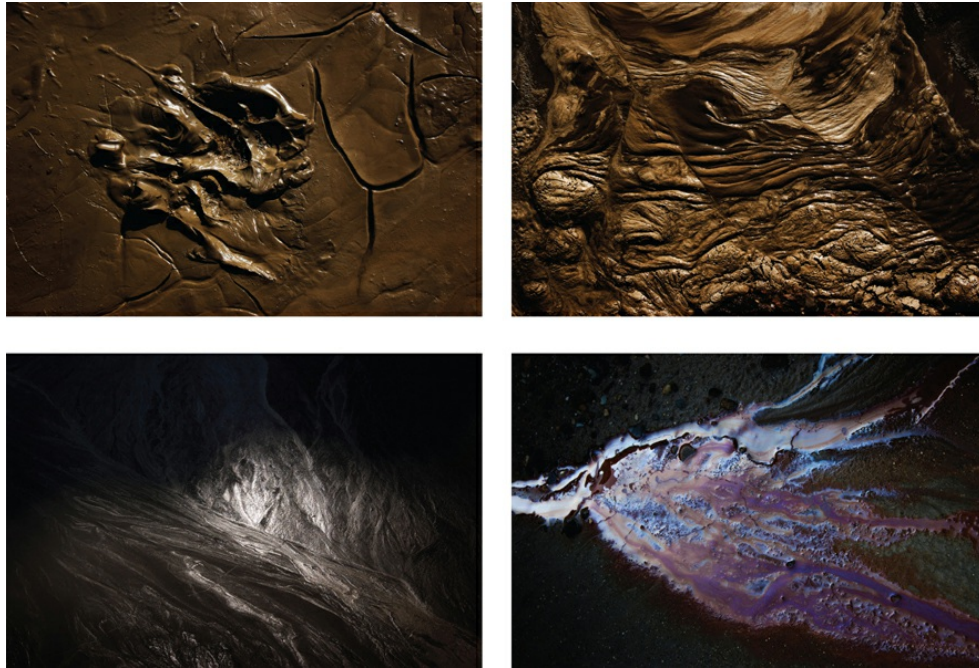
An image of bare golden desert at sunset could be taken from an aeroplane above to create an interesting pattern of light and shadow, dips and rounded bumps and a beautiful golden texture. And yet, place this image in front of someone who is unaware of the subject or the circumstances and they might think it is an image of a square foot of sand right next to the photographer's feet. Only a reference point, such as the long shadow of a desert camel or a small oasis, would break up the unity of this particular image, providing an instant marker with which to assess scale and

proportion.

Abstraction

Abstract photography comes from an expressionist approach to the medium, and its relationship to scale deserves a closer look. It may be most visible in the fine-art world, but commercial photography has often used abstraction as an artistic way to express bigger concepts. In car advertising, for example, where the camera pulls away from a single droplet running down a beautifully waxed bonnet to reveal the car in all its glory.





Title: Cliff abstracts, Trimingham, Norfolk

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Abstraction of the landscape allows you to play with the formal qualities of light, texture, pattern and form by simply getting closer and disorientating the viewer as to the size and scale of what's being photographed.

By proximity with subject

In [Chapter 1](#), we looked at how the edges of the frame can define objects in space and how a rational understanding of a particular scene can be reached by the way we organize the various elements in our images.

If we show an object without its edges, it becomes unfamiliar to us and we become lost. This forces us to observe the object's substance rather than its shape or form. Abstract images provide us with an opportunity to take pleasure from the observance of resulting design elements such as line, colour and texture. Abstracts are a wonderful way of keeping photographically fit – we are forced to exercise our creative muscles by creating meaningful imagery from the most unpromising of subjects.

Telephoto lenses can take us artificially closer to a subject due to their ability to condense and reduce a scene and fill the frame with many identical shapes, which

result from a foreshortening of perspective. Subjects or elements that might appear more widely dispersed with wide-angle lenses are still possible to capture provided that the edges of the scene or subject are excluded.



Title: Glass light

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Abstracts often achieve an impact when scale and proportion are absent, forcing the viewer to focus on how the design elements work together.



Title: Crouch

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Getting closer to any subject allows you to create an abstract view that may have far more visual appeal than a more conventional shot from a greater distance.

By viewpoint

Altering your viewpoint is an easy way of creating abstract images – try adjusting your position in relation to your chosen subject.

Adopting a shooting position whereby a conventional framing of your image is deliberately obscured by competing elements will hide clues as to the real shape or form of your subject simply because its full mass cannot be seen.

Alternatively, use a low viewpoint in order to frame. For example, capture the bark of a tree against a bland white backdrop of sky – this is one way of avoiding all references to scale or recognizable matter, which may enhance a good abstract image.

By de-focussing

Allowing areas of your image to become unfocused can abstract a scene or subject forcefully or with great subtlety. Many photographers create intriguing abstracts by fully de-focussing the whole image, thereby putting conventional practice into reverse and deliberately reducing sharp detail to indistinguishable areas of blurred colour and form.

This process allows us to drop the intellectual and reductive approach to an image and simply enjoy the abstract arrangement of design elements, which have now come to the fore through de-focussing.

Through the careful use of depth of field, it is possible to control the amount of de-focussing in your image. You don't have to blur the entire picture for an interesting abstract to result – just taking the time and care to create intrigue and mystery can result from overturning the conventional methods – de-focus your foreground, focus your background. Rules are always there for breaking, provided you can justify your outcomes sufficiently.

Rules are always there for breaking, provided you can justify your outcomes sufficiently.



Title: Green III from the series Winterstille

Source/photographer: Christiane Zschommler

Intriguing abstracts can be created by deliberately using de-focussing to disorientate the viewer. Used with strong colour, the effect is even more powerful, allowing the image to assert its design elements with confidence and integrity.



Title: Hammer head

Source/photographer: Duncan Loughrey

Lighting and viewpoint combine powerfully in this image. The handle of the tool is not necessary to include in the image once the simple form of the hammerhead itself is understood – the imagination does the rest.

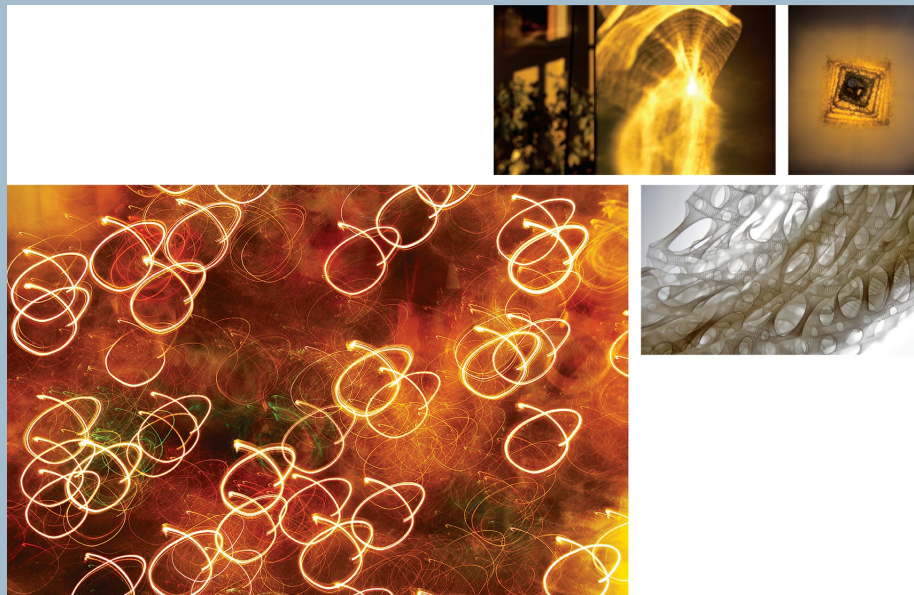
Exercise 4 Abstract images

Abstract images, perhaps more than any other type of image, force us to

examine the design principles that lie at the heart of their construction because a recognizable and specific subject is absent. What remains allows us to enjoy the more visible effects of design elements in all their glory.

From the interior and exterior environments around you (or from the list below), shoot a series of six abstract images that focus on a particular aspect of design:

1. An abstract image created by the play of sunlight upon a textured surface.
2. An abstract image created by an unusual or unorthodox viewpoint.
3. An abstract created by blurred or unfocused colour.
4. An abstract in monochrome, showing good contrast and detail.
5. An abstract image that shows a repeating pattern.
6. An abstract image that shows a sense of depth – existing (real), implied or constructed.



Title: Abstract images

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

You don't have to travel too far before abstract images start to reveal themselves. All of the above images were created within a variety of domestic environments and were the result of observing how light, exposure time, viewpoint and proximity can all combine to produce stunning imagery.

Photographic genres Stock photography

Photographers who shoot for stock produce images for an image library or stock agency that serves the needs of the picture buying industries. A stock agency or image library therefore acts as the broker between the photographer and the buyer and so takes a fee for any sale made.

Traditionally this has often been a 50/50 split between photographer and agency, but there may be more variation these days and a whole range of different rights and clauses that affect the split fee. The buyer wouldn't be looking to purchase the image outright, but to pay a reasonable fee based on the use of a particular image for a particular purpose, so the photographer will agree to terms with the stock library as to the type of rights model the images can be sold under.

The digital age has spawned a huge growth in the business of selling image rights and in many ways the stock photography field is dominated by a couple of key players, while other small, more specialist agencies get a smaller cut of the cake. Traditional rights and fees models have also been overturned in recent years with the rise of stock libraries allowing free use of their images under Creative Commons license (<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>).

Many photographers look at producing work for stock agencies as easy remuneration – after all, you just have to take the shots and leave the selling to someone else. But in the last few decades the world has become awash with images and there are already millions of images of the Eiffel Tower in existence, so why would the world need another? And why would any business spend time and money paying a photographer to go abroad to shoot wild horses in the Camargue when the images can be found for a reasonable one-time usage fee from an online stock library? Photographers should ask themselves just how easy it would be for potential buyers to find their way through literally millions of images to get to theirs.

Rather than duplicating what's already out there, what many photographers do is to specialize and become an expert in a particular subject and find a stock library that specializes in that subject. But photographers today are much smaller fish in a much deeper pond now that thousands more are all competing for sales. You can be successful in this field so long as you keep supplying what the stock

agencies ask for. Commercially, they are the ones in the know, because they are the ones continually trying to meet the image needs of their clients.

Many photographers and designers complain that the dearth of creative photography available from stock libraries means that what they are offered is the photographic equivalent of clipart – simplistic and visually unexciting solutions. If a large bank or law firm wanted to find images for its annual report to shareholders, it would obviously want to promote a positive message – ‘We are great at what we do, and we look after your money’ or a similarly positive message, something that encapsulates that positivity and success. And so it would find an image to represent that. A stock search online



Title: Untitled

Source/photographer: Tim Foster/Unsplash

The rapid adoption of digital media and the fast dissemination of images has led to a number of free online stock photography agencies.

would throw up endless images of suited businessmen shaking hands, of happy teams of impossibly attractive models huddled round a laptop laughing or all manner of clichéd concepts. But these images serve a purpose that makes them successful. They provide a shorthand, easily understood stereotype that represents ‘success’, no matter how ‘cheesy’ and formulaic that image may be. This is commerce, and selling an idea is what counts. No room for art or the avant garde

here, in a fine art sense, although technical excellence is essential.

Increasingly, there are a number of smaller stock libraries that promote a much more contemporary feel to the imagery they represent and sell. But these only survive provided they can meet their market needs, and some expand their services to sell short films or documentary series. They let the Big Boys of the stock world deal with suited businessmen stock images and Big Theme solutions and instead focus on those businesses that look for imagery of a more appealing contemporary nature, design-wise. Online searches for imagery from stock libraries inevitably involves viewing webpages of thumbnails, so naturally any design features that grab attention – colour, impact, contrast, lighting and so on – will provide a greater incentive to click and enlarge, at the expense of other, less noticeable thumbnails.

Concepts are what lie behind all big-selling stock images, and the more concepts you can apply to an image, the greater the appeal of the image to the buyer. Images that successfully communicate emotive themes like happiness, security, togetherness, striving together, family strength – all modern themes we are exposed to through mass media on a daily basis – are the big earners in stock photography. Although plenty of photographers find a useful income stream from smaller agencies provided they can supply precisely what the agencies clients require, and can do so on a regular basis.

[Further resources](#)

Five photographers to explore

James Casebere
Paul Strand
Gabriel Orozco
Karl Blossfeldt
Richard Misrach

Suggested reading

Photography Visionaries by Mary Warner Marien

Read This If You Want to Take Great Photographs by Henry Carroll

Photo Box: The Essential Collection, 250 Images You Need to See by Roberto Koch (Thames & Hudson)

Larry Fink by Laurie Dahlberg (Phaidon)

Ori Gersht, History Repeating by Al Miner (Lund Humphries)

What Is a Photograph? by Carol Squires (Prestel)

Anything by Robert Hirsh

Discussion topic: Impact and emergence

Some images we encounter score an immediate ‘hit’ with a very instant reaction to the purpose, meaning and/or intent of an image – the ‘I get it’ moment of understanding, the punch in the gut of recognition.

Others are slow burners; the meaning and reading of the frame content are perceived and understood slowly, like layers of meaning slowly peeling away, the brain actively decoding and interpreting the relationships between different elements of the image. We may eventually connect, provided we’re engaged enough to embark and complete that journey, but if we don’t, the journey can be just as enjoyable. As the saying goes, ‘not all who wander are lost’. These images often ask questions of us, rather than provide easy answers.

Photographers work may quite naturally span both ends of this rather simplistic spectrum. At one end, a powerful and immediate impact. At the other, a gradual emergence. Most of a photographer’s output will strike a healthy balance between the two for much of the time, and the division between Impact and Emergence may be a subtle one, if perceived at all.

High-impact images could be considered to be the sprinters of the photography canon – the wide end of the cone representing the ‘Big Hit’ of recognition and the time taken shows its diminishing life in the mind. Images that emerge are marathon runners, able to last the distance by pacing their energy and burning into the imagination of the viewer by offering a delayed ‘reading’ of the image.

From a page design or publication point of view, the problem for photographers comes when both kinds of images are mixed up, when sprinters mix in with the marathon runners – a conspicuously Impact image can appear oddly out of sorts in a submission of otherwise Emerging images. Equally, a slow burner can frustrate the flow or pace of our reading of a set or series from the perspective of an outsider.

In practise, the easy division between the two is rarely as simplistic as that, but Flow is a key factor in publishing photography, and photographers who are able to develop the kind of detached objectivity required to identify the various roadblocks to Flow from within their own series or portfolios are able to achieve a level of self-awareness and consistency which is a hidden key to what so many art directors and publishers look for.

5

Movement and flow



Title: Uncertainty

Source/photographer: Ansen Seale

The photographer's imaginative use of slitscan photography allows strange collisions of movement and time to take place in a process where unmoving objects are blurred and moving bodies are rendered clearly. This image has resulted in an unusual repetition of a single figure, with each of the four elements or stages being marginally different from the next.

Behind many great compositions lies a solid structure of design that acts like an invisible blueprint upon which all the visible matter of the photographic content appears to rest. Much of what often passes for compositional 'genius' in the art world may in fact be simply the result of a genuine gift of artistic instinct, perhaps developed unknowingly through an immersion or interest in visual art initiated at an early age.

We are all, however, able to draw on the power of composition and design skills, and this is necessary in order to support the creation of original and engaging photography. Visual artists of all kinds continually make use of many of the design tools and techniques that provide the means by which the very static nature of the single image can be offset, or at least partly overcome, by directing the gaze of the viewer within the image and conveying a sensation of movement or flow.

Directional forces

The use of directional forces allows the photographer to steer the eye of the viewer towards particular elements in an image – maybe in a particular order or simply to guide the viewer around the image in a journey that will make the most sense to him or her.

This process is simply not achievable when faced with a fast-moving subject matter or in situations where time and subject motion are beyond our control. However, it's possible to maintain peak interest in an image by carefully observing line (both real and imagined) and direction within the frame. Being able to produce compositions that are capable of directing the eyes' movement in this way is a valuable skill for any photographer.

Lines

The use of a line quite naturally demands that our eye follows it. We're simply conditioned that way. Exploiting this knowledge allows photographers to place elements at particular points towards the beginning and end of those lines. Thus, the eye is encouraged to travel from one end to the other and explore points or areas of interest in between.

When we talk about lines in photography, there are two types to consider: real lines and optical lines. Real lines are distinct design elements within the image, while optical lines are not actually visible – they are lines of eye movement that connect and link different elements within the same frame.

Diagonal (optical) lines can work in several ways. They create dynamic and powerful 'lines of force' if created from bottom left to top right. However, they have less of an impact when they run from top left to bottom right. It's also worth remembering that diagonal lines that run from right to left often run counter to the brain's conditioning for left-right movement.

Curves

From a design point of view, a curved line is at its most powerful when set against straight lines. It acts as a contrast to the more mundane and uniform straight line by introducing an element of change, softness or unpredictability that can be very powerful if placed appropriately and sensitively within the composition.

More generally, curves are traditionally associated with the feminine form and features; they are found in natural forms such as rolling landscapes or rounded pebbles. The appearance of a curve or curves can signify associations with water, nature, spirituality and a certain calmness, which offsets the more rigid and inflexible straight line.



Title: Richardson's, Hemsby

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A collision of straight and curved lines in space lies behind the appeal of this scene for me. There's a sweeping curve running through the middle of the image from left to right, and the curvy forms of the signage in the sky and the billowing hazard tape seem to emulate each other in a harmonious relationship within the frame.



Title: Drama school, 2006

Source/photographer: Hannah Starkey

Making deliberate use of the diagonal lines that zigzag across the scene, the left-to-right horizontal movement in the image is disrupted by human figures interrupting the linear patterns created.



Title: Grey pavement

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Interesting compositions can be observed and created from almost anything – even the pavement beneath your feet. A strong curved form sweeps through the linear grid of paving stones, and further pattern is revealed in post-capture image editing to bring out the pattern and texture of the pavement slabs.

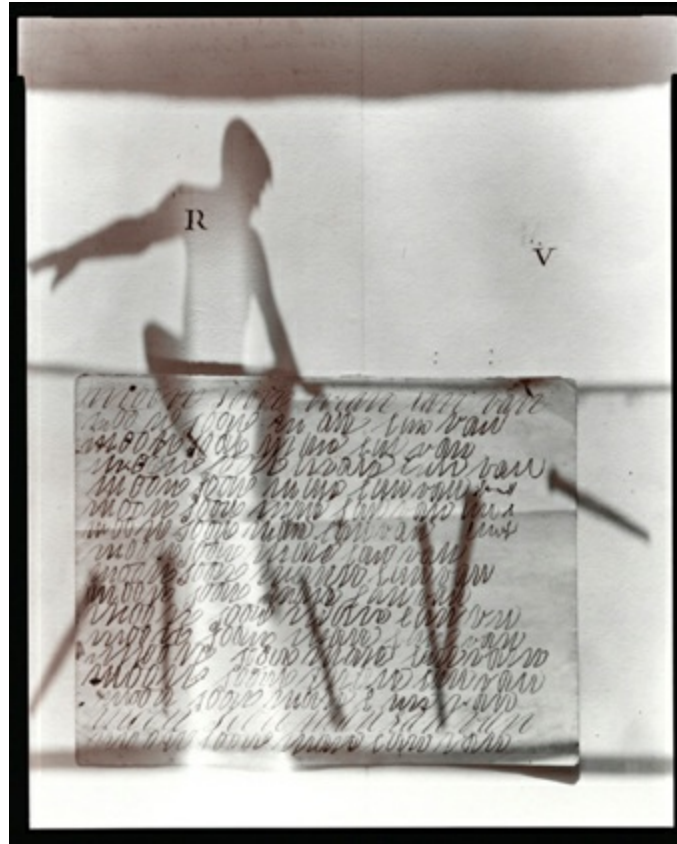
Containment

Photographic images not only allow us to wander and explore freely within our images, but they also keep the audience contained and engaged with the experience. Photographers want the viewer to be engaged long enough so that their message is completely appreciated and understood.

The trouble is, once we become proficient at leading our viewers through our skilful use of optical lines and beautiful sweeping curves, those same lines can take our curious visitor right out of the picture and on to something else. Suddenly, the interest is no longer held and the viewer becomes aware of the space outside the image.

This is often the result of an optical or real line leading us right out of the picture. If this is the case, the scene and its component elements need to be contained.

Sometimes, this is possible by placing detail or an interrupting element at the end of the errant line; the line then ceases to become an exit route for our eye. Skilful and sensitive observation of areas of light or shadow can also be used to obscure a line that seems to be heading out of the frame. There are also other means of attaining containment.



Title: On the wall, 1983

Source/photographer: Olivia Parker

The very edges of a piece of sheet film have created an instant border for this image that neatly contains the image content and prevents the whites and the lighter tones from bleeding and merging onto a white page.



Title: 'Big' Joe Thomas – offensive tackle, Cleveland Browns

Source/photographer: Peter Read Miller

The border created by the sheet film edges creates the simple means by which the size and 'larger-than-life' presence of the subject can be held inside the image border. The subject fills the frame and space, and leaves nothing in the way of background to distract the viewer.

Use of borders

Borders are a contentious issue among many photographers. A few purists still argue against the essentially manufactured construction of a border. They prefer a less mediated treatment of the image, allowing the picture to breathe in its own space

without restrictive or artificially introduced graphic treatments.

All photographs have a border – the inevitable boundary or the edge between image and non-image. It's how we treat this edge that is of most importance to the design-conscious photographer.

For instance, thick borders can be too clumsy. Too thick and the border starts to intrude on the image; it could dominate and overwhelm. Thick borders can be too clumsy. Many photographers prefer to use a thin key line that denotes, in a much more subtle way, the edge of the image. Key lines contain the image elements, but never allow the discreet border to dominate or reduce the power of the image.

The use of borders is certainly something that photographers should consider in the presentation of their own work. For many occasions such decisions in the commercial world may be taken out of their hands by picture editors and designers, who have aesthetic decisions to make concerning layouts and whole page designs.

Some photographers who exhibit their work at exhibitions prefer to block mount their images by adhering their images to flat surfaces. The thickness of these surfaces allows the image to extend outwards and away from the gallery wall, appearing to have no border or boundary as such, except for the image edge that is now defined by the space and thickness of the presentation surface rather than line.

Frames within frames

If one frame can be said to contain an image, would two frames emphasize the subject further? Framing exists to select and isolate a fragment of the world and keep it held within an enclosed space. Every image, in a sense, is framed simply because there is a definite and tangible edge to the space that contains the image content. Putting a frame within a frame allows the photographer to create another picture within a wider picture.

The frame shape is obviously determined by the subject; it need not be rectangular – it could be circular, or a series of shapes (for example, portholes on the side of a cruise liner, or a landscape divided into smaller views by several windows on the side of a train carriage).

As a compositional device, framing allows the photographer to potentially tell several stories at once; it can offer separate but related views of the same subject or multiple points of view. It can also be very effective in providing a sense of depth to a scene, especially if the framing occurs in the foreground and divides the background into smaller portions.

Used with care and judgement, frames within frames increase our understanding and appreciation of a subject, but applied with little thought or care given to the overall composition, the use of a poorly chosen framing device can make imagery appear contrived and self-consciously constructed.

Framing devices

Framing devices can be as simple or as complex as you like

A single rectangular frame – ordered in a neat fashion, with bottom and top frame edges of the inner frame creating a parallel distance between those of the outer frame.

Disordered – allows a less static arrangement without parallels, making a more dynamic composition with diagonal lines, though still structured around straight lines.

Concerned with several different shapes – could be a circular frame within a traditional rectangular outer frame.

Intersecting or overlapping – contains one or more inner frame shapes, hence creating further geometry.

Fashion photography

One doesn't necessarily have to be a fashion follower or aspiring model to enjoy and appreciate the photographic creativity behind so much great fashion photography today. Highly charged with the application of design principles at its heart, it expands and innovates continuously and often exhibits a range of fascinating overlaps between fashion photography and portraiture, fine art,

documentary and many other genre collisions. This creates a very lively and creative climate where change is constant and nothing stays new for long.

Fashion websites

trendhunter.com

lonewolfmag.com

weirdo-mag.com

showstudio.com



Title: Glove 2 duo

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The use of a discarded picture frame allowed the staging of a series of still life studies where ordinary gardening gloves were presented and linked by the use of this frame within a frame.

Fashion styles

The following represent some recent areas of very niche interest:

- Dystopian suburb fashion
- Retro Pop Art 70s
- Cyborg
- Nomadic beauty
- Nostalgic street style
- Galactic warrior
- Road trip/roadside traveller
- Plastic surgery/body modification
- Glittery youth (influence of Ryan McGinley)
- Glam grunge

Flow direction

The skilful use of leading lines and directional forces within an image are fundamental to the degree by which we feel engaged by that image. Without doubt, adherence to this principle is practically impossible when faced with photographic situations where simply getting the shot is the aim and the aesthetics can be dealt with later.

Being mindful of the power of these optical and real lines to direct our gaze makes it easier to feed the design instinct. This can lead us to create powerful and imaginative compositions in the most difficult and unexpected circumstances.

Flow direction allows our gaze to be steered in a particular fashion through the skilful use of line and curve; it enables us to piece together the various design elements provided by the content of the image.

Human eye preference for left-to-right motion

As we've already seen, this is related to the recognized and established patterns of eye movement. However, the theory falls apart somewhat when applied universally. For example, the decoding of language, signs and symbols in some cultures happens with the eye being trained to travel in the opposite direction.

However, even when faced with an empty rectangle in landscape format, the eye tends to anchor immediately to the top left corner, then zigzag downwards in a left-to-right motion in a seemingly futile attempt to read what isn't there.

This knowledge is not much use in and of itself, but for photographers it has very real implications as this has an impact on composition. Elements arranged within the usual pattern of left-to-right eye movement will meet with little visual discomfort or obstruction. Compositions arranged in the opposite direction can sometimes appear odd, and yet we're not quite sure why.

Flow direction allows our gaze to be steered in a particular fashion through the skilful use of line and curve.



Title: Beyond, 2006

Source/photographer: Mona Kuhn

Mona Kuhn's beautiful images convey a softness and intrigue achieved in part by her use of exposure and depth of field, and also by the skill with which she composes her images. Here, she guides the gaze from the top left of the frame to the furthest point at bottom right in this beautifully constructed image.

Horizontal

The use of horizontal lines to influence flow direction can be forcefully employed when using the landscape format, because it has the potential to travel the distance between the widest points within the frame.

In such a way, a horizon line becomes a dominant design element that resonates with

our primeval urge to scan the horizon line for a predator threat or the returning tribe. We explore the points adjacent to the horizon and will tend to begin our journey to the left and finish on the right, unless interrupting elements or dominant features are placed towards the right-hand side of the centre, which encourage us to start here and work towards the left.

Horizontal lines used within a portrait format image can be used quite effectively to disrupt the expectation that long, wide lines should be placed within the longer, wider proportions of the landscape format.

Wide-angle lenses often distort a straight line so that long empty horizons photographed at an angle show a large degree of barrel distortion. For some photographers, the ability of these lenses to distort the arrow-straight lines of architecture, for example, hold a creative appeal. But for others (particularly those in commercial photography), the effect is a professional nuisance and must be controlled. This can be done by using either a monorail camera or post-capture digital image processing.



Title: Dave Grohl

Source/photographer: Neil Gavin

Bright overhead sunlight has created subtle shadows on the subject's face, which appear to drop vertically from the fringe, echoing the stronger vertical lines in the background.

Taking the portrait from below the subject increases the vertical strength of the image, and the use of the colour blue throughout further strengthens its appeal.

Vertical

The use of vertical lines to direct the flow of movement and gaze is most often seen in portrait format images where their length and dynamic movement can be contained easily. But again, interesting subversions can be created by using the wider landscape

format viewfinder to capture vertical lines. This is often exploited by photographers who understand that interest can be generated by switching between different formats.

The photographer has the power to turn any line in any orientation. Photographers who are able to switch their mindset between observing the subject itself and viewing the subject as design elements of form and line have an advantage over those whose vision extends only towards observing the subject as subject only.

Diagonal

Images that contain no vertical or horizontal lines can appeal to the eye since comparisons are subconsciously made between the dominant elements of the design and an 'index' of order (provided by the right-angled vertical and horizontal lines of the frame) that contains them.

Diagonal lines, therefore, become dynamic and powerful forces that are able to create many interesting forms and intersecting patterns of line. Diamond and triangular shapes become strong design structures with which to build around when placed within the solid and reliably dependable rectangular frame. Do not go out and shoot endless diagonal lines in the mistaken belief that this will somehow make your photography instantly more appealing. The application of this aspect of design is most useful when 'reading' images generally; absorb the knowledge into your appreciation of the visual lexicon.



Title: Vertiginous exhilaration

Source/photographer: Rut Blees Luxemburg

The sense of urban danger and discomfort in this image is created in part by the daring viewpoint adopted, but strengthened further by the diagonal lines that provide more dynamic lines of force within a rectangular frame.

Exercise 5 Observation

Choose a building in your neighbourhood that you are familiar with. It may be something you pass by each day: a rundown, abandoned house, a church, a skyscraper or a corner shop – any place that holds your interest or engages your curiosity.

Spend around half an hour observing its qualities, its physical properties and how the light falls on its different areas. Don't take any photographs yet, just observe your subject with an open mind and with your senses tuned to its construction and appearance. Then ask yourself some questions: Does it contain textures, patterns or colours that intrigue you? How does it make you feel? What role does this building hold in the immediate environment or community? What purpose

does it or did it serve?

If it is a building or property that you can legally and safely enter inside, what do you find there? Bear in mind that you may have to gain permission if the building is in public use or on private land. Can you capture the spirit of the place by focussing on a detail that tells a bigger story? How can you best use the light available to you?

When you feel you are ready, determine an approach towards photographing your subject. Try to incorporate some of the design elements we've explored so far. In particular, pay attention to line, colour, curves, frames within frames, points of interest, abstracts and depth of field. Take 20 shots only and edit your series down to six images that create a unified and engaging set of images.



Title: Exercise in observation

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Unlike film photography, digital capture means we can take endless images of a subject without having to worry about cost or using up a limited number of frames. Because of this, many creative digital photographers have had to become very skilful at editing their own work rigorously, which often means limiting the number of images you shoot or having to take some very tough decisions later on.

Photographic genres Constructed or staged photography

Constructed or staged photography has seen a resurgence of interest in the last few years. Photographers have always staged their images – whether it be family photographs or tabletop still life. Since its earliest days, images simply had to be staged because the long exposures required by cameras in their infancy meant that a subject to be still because any motion or movement would render it blurred.

As soon as the technical capabilities of the camera developed further and shutter speeds became shorter, the requirement for motionless subjects diminished and the creation of much more sophisticated and expressive staged imagery became possible. The Victorian Pictorialists staged famous death scenes and produced photographic allegories of the Gods handing the gift of flight to mankind. Big themes and dramatic historical events were re-enacted for the camera.

Constructed or staged photography should be seen in two parts – where the staging is obviously mediated by the photographer without any intent to cover up, and where the staging is intended to pass for truth.

Roger Fenton's image of a woman reaching over the edge of a boat to pick water lilies ('Gathering Water Lilies', 1886) is said to have been staged, despite its spontaneous appearance. During his time as a war photographer, Fenton's image of a cannonball-strewn ravine was also said to have been manufactured once another negative showing the same ravine with a complete absence of canon balls came to light. Henry Peach Robinson was a revered photographer of his time and staged a range of dramatic tableaux, often compiling different elements from different images in order to create a single scene – an early adopter of image manipulation if ever there was one.

Today, there are numerous overlaps between fashion and constructed photography, and some would point to the idea that any photography that doesn't arise from observation alone must be constructed to some degree. But this is an over-simplification. At its heart, constructed or staged photography often incorporates a theatricality or drama that plays with our perception of truth.



Title: Artistic action

Source/photographer: Yves Klein

Yves Klein was a French artist who was also a painter, performance artist and musician. He conceived this 'Artistic Action' in 1960 and hired photographers Harry Shunk and Jean Kender to record the leap and create a photomontage from two negatives in the darkroom – one showing an empty street, the other showing his leap with the aid of his friends ready for his safe landing.

Photographers to research

Jeff Wall
Gregory Crewdson
Erwin Olaf
Les Krims
Trish Morrissey
James Casebere
Robert Longo
Alison Jackson
Joel Peter Witkin
David LaChapelle
Thomas Demand (see Postmodernism)
Yao Lu
Boyd Webb
Philip Lorca diCorcia

Photographic genres Photojournalism and documentary photography

Photographers that seek to represent and expose aspects of the world as it is are driven by a personal and professional desire to reflect a truthful and honest account of the scenes and situations they record. Photojournalism is a form of news or current affairs journalism whereby the images, as opposed to the text, take centre stage to tell the story.

Photojournalists are often hired by news agencies or by print media organizations to bring back images from a particular place or situation where key events shape our knowledge of world affairs and provide us with some kind of visual evidence of the event. It very much relies on photographing how people react to events and situations around them and the photojournalists are there to act as eyewitnesses.

Documentary photography is generally accepted to be a more subjective practice in that it may reflect the deeper, personal interests and concerns of the photographer, or consist of a more in-depth body of work created over time rather than a few single images designed to meet the appetite for front-page impact. Many documentary photographers follow their stories for years and often use

crowdfunding platforms as a way of supporting their travel and production costs.

Both areas rely on a kind of collective acceptance that the camera should never lie, and what it records actually happened, although of course photography is always shaped and influenced to varying degrees by subjective influences – cropping, manipulation, the use of captions, even the selection of one image over another creates an intervention that mediates our view of a news story. But a framework of ethical rules and guidelines exist and these are continually updated and enacted in an attempt to ensure that honesty and truth are central to the practice of photojournalism as far as this is possible.

The origins of photojournalism date back to the mid-late nineteenth century when significant world events such as the Crimean War were featured in the Illustrated London News, but the technical advances achieved with the invention of flash powder and smaller cameras tied in with the advancement in printing technology at the turn of the century freed photographers from the restrictions of large plate cameras and long exposure times. By the 1930s and for many decades after, photojournalism flourished as world events were brought with great speed to newspaper audiences throughout the world.



Source/photographer: Sergey Fomichov

Title: Refugees arrive by a Turkish boat near the village of Skala, on the Greek island of Lesbos, *New York Times*, 16 November 2015

Photojournalism has always played a key role in documenting historical events. The Great Depression of the 1930s saw Dorothea Lange and other photojournalists of their time documenting the Dust Bowl era. Famously moving images such as Dorothea Lange's image 'Migrant Mother' seemed to capture the desperation of the time and the living or working conditions of many.

Elsewhere, photojournalists depicted less seismic aspects of social and cultural history, especially so in the UK, where a strong thread of photographing the class system, privilege, tradition and recreation came to the fore, captured by photographers like Jane Bown and Ian Berry. Photojournalism featured in magazines such as Life and Picture Post with large readerships, and in the 1970s became a staple of the 'Sunday Supplement' – The Observer, The Sunday Times, and many others.

Today, photojournalists are often hired by news agencies as opposed to being newspaper 'staffers' in order that work can be syndicated. Many media publishers no longer employ salaried photojournalists. The use of mobile phone technology has had a massive impact on the speed of news delivery and feedback to world events. This continues to re-shape the practice of news photography in an industry where personal qualities of toughness, resilience and resourcefulness on the part of the photographer are every bit as important as a knowledge of f stops and focal lengths.

Photographers to research

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Weegee

Susan Meiselas

Larry Burrows

Sebastião Salgado

James Nachtwey

Margaret Bourke-White

Styles and movements **Modernism**

Modernism is a term encompassing a wide range of artistic mediums and ideals, but is most useful in photography to describe the move away from the painterly, expressive work of the Pictorialists, to the use of photography where truth and accuracy are the driving forces and where 'straight' photography demands abandoning artistic manipulations or soft focus effects in favour of true depictions or unmediated views of modern life. Modernism enjoyed its golden age between the 1900s and the 1930s.

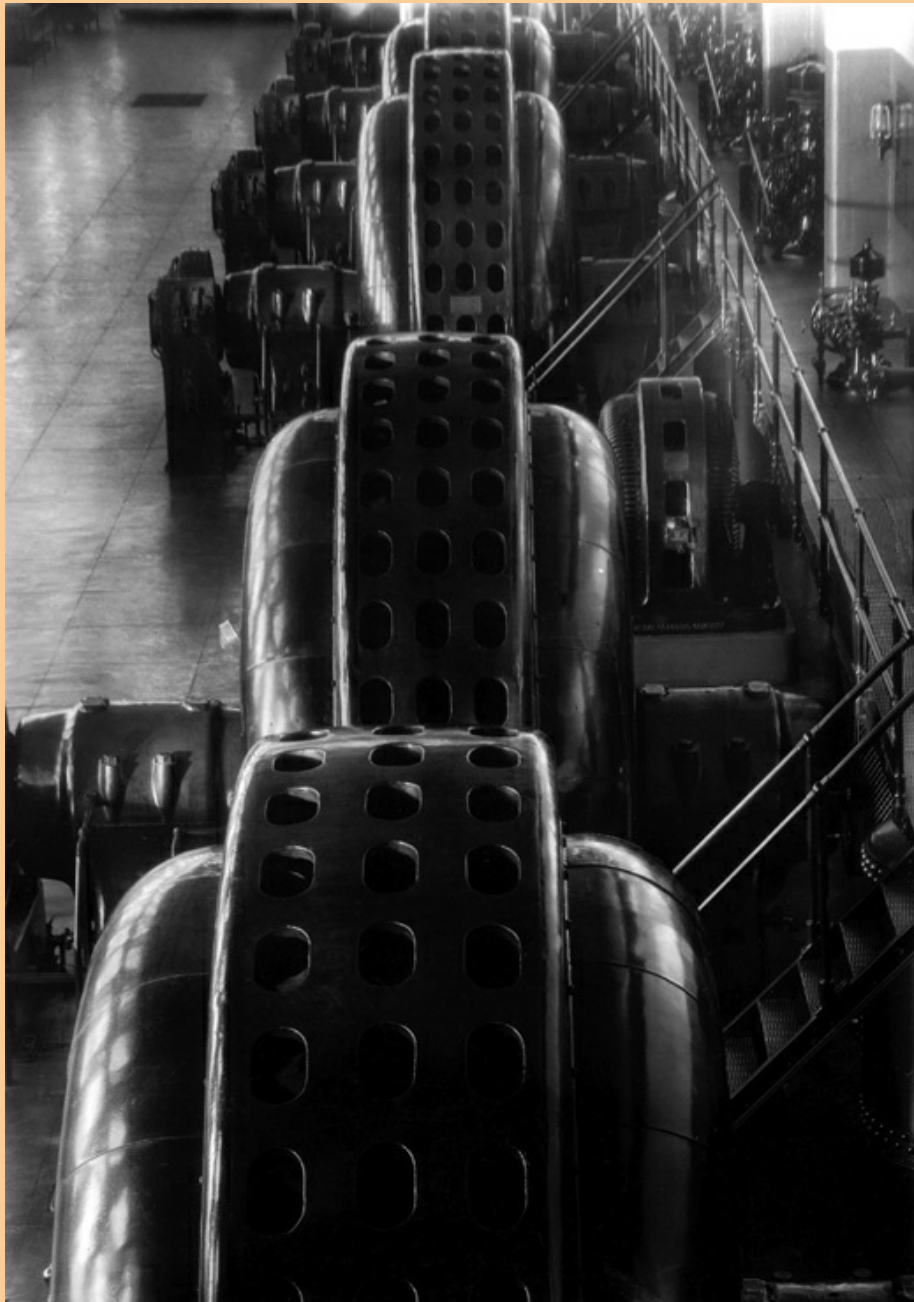
To the early modernist photographer, the very act of 'warming up' a landscape with the intention of making it more appealing to the viewer is the result of a Pictorialist approach. It smacks of mediation, manipulation and smoothing-over, and of not allowing the camera to record accurately and faithfully what is simply there.

A Modernist approach at the outset demanded clarity and deep depth of field. It does not like a subject obscured or the use of suggestion, it depends upon formal qualities of strong shape and line, bold close-ups and strong depictions of light and shade to create certainty. Modernist architecture reflected much of the same preoccupations with these principles and consequently the synergistic combination of modern architecture and modernist photographer became a powerful force. Sometimes it references photography itself and reflects back to us the flat nature of the photographic image and the reductive nature of photography in general. Its ethos has strongly influenced contemporary journalistic and documentary photography, as well as the 'deadpan' portrait and street photography.

Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Weston are both pioneers of this movement, and both made work that reacted strongly against the ideas of Pictorialism. Stieglitz argued strongly for honest and truthful depictions of modern life. Weston's work was characterized by closeup images of the female form and the lines and spatial divisions these created, of natural forms and details from the landscape.

Modernism has always enjoyed using new materials, new processes and the innovation that new technology drives forward. Today, the mass adoption of photography of the vernacular can be traced back to modernist-influenced photographers of the 1960s such as Stephen Shore and William Eggleston, and his use of Kodachrome slide film, to capture vivid and colourful frames from everyday life.

Thus the influence of modernism informs the use of camera phones or cheaply produced large canvas prints. But the Pictorialist approach still lives within the work of many contemporary photographers, and the means of production have increased alongside the mass democratization of photography. Today, a huge range of apps that instantly Instagram our coffee breaks and baby shots with swooshy filters and vintage effects are the birthright of those born into the digital age. There is no escaping this overlap of Pictorialism and Modernism in contemporary photography.



Title: Niagara Falls

Source/photographer: Margaret Bourke-White

Photographers of the Modernist era found dynamic and exciting ways to photograph the forms of nature, and new depictions of the industrial world. High contrast black and white, bold lines, patterns and shapes within the frame, and graphic structures permeated the public consciousness to reflect a more 'muscular' vision of progress and prosperity.

Key concepts

Clarity

Precision

Newness

Industry

Technology

Further resources

Five photographers to explore

Michael Kenna

Bill Brandt

Hélène Binet

Victoria Ling

Richard Avedon

Suggested reading

Here Far Away by Pentti Sammallahti (Dewi Lewis)

Family Photography Now by Sophie Howarth and Stephen McLaren (Thames and

Hudson)

The Instagram Book: Inside the Online Photography Revolution, edited by Steve Crist and Megan Shoemaker (Ammo)

Danny Lyon, Message to the Future by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in association with Yale (University Press, New Haven and London)

Discussion topic: Social media

The status of photography has been devalued for many, with the mass adoption of smartphones and their integral cameras that can now take images of a quality unimaginable even 25 years ago.

The increased use of smartphones and the ease and portability of their cameras is tied inextricably to the use of social media, as the primary means of instant communication with the dissemination of photographic images. The speed and ease with which high-quality images can be tagged, edited, filtered and shared with a potential audience of millions of people is still something we take for granted in the age of click-and-send instant gratification and feedback.

Do we need new photographs anymore? Haven't we all simply become photographers? What does a Magnum photojournalist have that a soldier on the front line of a major international conflict can't get on his iPhone or helmet-cam? Who needs professional photographers anymore? Every inch of the globe has been covered, stock libraries will have every subject imaginable stored as digital data somewhere, so why would any major magazine commission a photographer to shoot a unique series on something that can be found already in the digital vaults of a thousand picture libraries? How has the rise of social media impacted on our perception of what photographers do and whether they still have a status or value?

At least two trillion photos will be shared this year, and possibly three trillion or more. Spread across roughly two billion smartphone users, that's only 2-3 photos per day per person, which is not so extraordinary...

More photos will be taken this year than were taken on film in the entire history of the analogue camera business.

Both quotes: Benedict Evans, 27 August 2015, from <http://ben-evans.com/benedictevans/2015/8/19/how-many-pictures>

6

Emphasis and emotion



Title: Night stream 4

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Where tripods become impractical, the landscape often provides a solution. This image was taken by supporting the camera on a discarded wooden plank that allowed the camera to be lowered and positioned at a spot almost level with the steadily flowing stream. An exposure of eight seconds recorded both the deep blue cast of the evening sky and the motion of the water rendered smooth by the long time exposure.

Photography has the power to influence us on a deep level; it affects our emotional lives, attitudes and our behaviour in ways that often surprise. At its best, it's this aspect of the medium that persuades us to donate money to an appeal, buy products we don't really need, visit exotic locations on the other side of the world or pay a small fortune for a print to display proudly on the wall.

The careful and creative construction of an image plays a huge part in transporting the

vision of one photographer to a wider audience, but this is not learned by rote nor from a checklist of aesthetic dos and don'ts that magically guarantee success. More often than not, the nuts and bolts of good composition and the application of good technique are intuitive and deeply rooted in the photographer.

To give emphasis to a particular item in an image is to promote interest in a particular subject at the expense of something else. This generates powerful effects on our reading of an image and our ability to take from it the meaning that was intended by the photographer.

This section of the book looks at how we can push design principles a little bit further and how simple photographic techniques can alter these elements in order to maximize emphasis and create emotional impact in our images.

Point of interest

The point of interest (POI) anchors the viewer within the image. It is usually a principal shape or subject around which the rest of the image information is secondary – a recognizable face turning to look back in the crowd, for example, or a bare tree picked out easily along the flat horizon of a desolate landscape.

Many traditionalists find it hard to shake off rigid rules and received wisdom and consider the absence of a POI as a weakness. It is hard to argue against this, but it is still possible to create innovative and engaging photography without a POI in the traditional sense. Abstract imagery is one particular field where the image must still convey a persuasive intent and meaning even if it has no obvious POI. Many of the best abstract images simply draw us into a 'landscape of the mind' to deliberately disorientate us; our senses can wander freely without being directed and we are content being lost.

Photographers have a range of design principles at their fingertips, all of which were explored in the earlier chapters. These emphasize or subjugate elements of an image so that a POI can be clearly expressed through the structure of the work. Leading lines, areas of focus/de-focus, colour and so on, can all be manipulated so that a point of interest can emerge as the principal source of curiosity for an image.

Secondary points of interest

Too many POIs can dilute the ability of an image to communicate its primary theme or subject effectively. A secondary POI can, however, be useful in leading the eye to explore the frame in full. This forces the eye to switch between points and make sense of the configuration of elements and the space used.

Many photographers still work with the theory that primary and secondary POIs should always be applied with the rule of thirds in mind and placed at the intersections of the grid that divides the rectangular frame into nine sections.

The rule of thirds

Many photographers have quite rightly become very sceptical about the stifling and omnipresent rule of thirds. They claim that its overuse now creates images every bit as mundane and formulaic as the subject-centred images that the application of the rule of thirds tried to improve upon.

In practice, many of the so-called rules of photography are still best treated as part of a photographer's 'armoury of possibilities' rather than applied in every instance regardless of their suitability.



Title: Holkham rainstorm 22

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Changes in light and weather conditions can create landscapes that evoke a range of emotional responses. We're hardwired to link our moods with climate and weather changes.



Title: Yellow marker (1) Wells and yellow markers (2) Wells

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A single focal point can instantly pull in the viewer, especially when placed centrally or on a line running horizontally. It commands attention but once that attention is gained, where else is there to go? Place two focal points at either end of that horizontally running line and the eye is tempted to switch between them, instantly creating more movement and tension for the eye and brain to explore.

Placement of the point

Some photographers take a very playful approach to POIs almost as a way of challenging rules and the way they can stifle experimentation or innovation. Guy Bourdin is one such photographer who often created lopsided arrangements in his fashion images where the POI was pushed right up against one side of the picture without anything to balance the 'dead' space on the other side.

Many photographers and artists will tell you that POIs should be placed at the intersecting points of a rule of thirds grid. This, it is claimed, places POIs in harmonious positions within the frame and prevents subject matter ending up in dull central areas within the image.

Size of the point

The size of the POI can be of critical importance to the degree with which the image as a whole succeeds or fails. It's not so much the size of the subject we wish to emphasize, but more its size in relation to the rest of the subject matter in the image. A tiny pinprick of light in a dark landscape may be small in every respect, but it will have huge significance if its presence signifies 'rescue' or 'life'.

The change in size of a POI in relation to its surroundings can be affected by the lens chosen. Wide-angle lenses will exaggerate the difference between near and far distance; telephoto lenses will diminish the difference between them. In this way, photographers such as Bill Brandt created stunning wide-angle monochrome images of nudes and landscapes where ordinary perceptions of scale and proportion were stretched like never before.

The use of a single colour

Constructing an image with a single, dominant colour requires care and judgement in order for the right effect to be achieved. At a very simple level, a single tomato positioned over a monochromatic background, for example, will immediately stand out and appear to leap forward.

Single colours in the design of an image work best when their purpose and intention are clear. If colour is not the primary reason for the image, then it may be in competition with (and draw power from) the main subject or POI, which may also lead to confusion over the real intention or purpose of the image.

The visual effect of a single colour as a POI is often made more effective by its placement or positioning within an image. Proportion and a keen sense of composition are often the balancing factors that apply most strongly to creative decisions over the degree to which a single colour is used.



Title: Car park detail

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A single spot colour amidst a wealth of cool blues achieves a powerful POI in this empty car park.



Title: House door ajar

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Sometimes the expectation of some event or moment of significance holds more appeal than the event itself. This image represents the simple appeal of standing in front of a scene where both photographer and audience are on the threshold of opening the door into a

room bathed in golden sunlight.



Title: Newborn baby

Source/photographer: Oliviero Toscani

Simplicity is key to the successful transmission of ideas and concepts in photography, and this is no more so than in the field of advertising. Benetton made a series of very stark (and sometimes politically controversial) advertisements to strengthen brand awareness.

Simplicity and complexity

A single POI can be most clearly conveyed when used within a simple image. A background may need to be restful or quiet in order to allow the POI to stand out. A plain sky or uniform area of tone obviously offers little or no pattern, no competing shapes or forms, but it allows the POI to stand out by simply offering nothing to threaten its prominence.

On the other hand, complex images can also offer great visual value by allowing the imagination a more active role in reading an image with multiple points of interest. Such compositions encourage the audience to compare different areas of the image, to make links and connections or to simply enjoy the opportunity to wander freely around an image that may constantly throw up surprises.

There are two well-known photographic portraits that demonstrate the design differences between simplicity and complexity. Both portraits feature the same subject, Igor Stravinsky, in a black and white portrait. The first portrait is by Arnold Newman, taken in 1946. It's a stark, graphic, studio-shot image – incredibly bold and of its time, unique in terms of its composition and simplicity.

Compare this image with the more intimate and domestic portrait of Stravinsky taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1967. Stravinsky is now an old man reflecting on life at home. In this image, the great composer seems almost disengaged, allowing us to take a good long look around the bookshelves and busy background of his home. Here, we see the work of two photographers, two unique approaches and two very different outcomes.

Focus areas vs areas of de-focus

The use of focusing to separate a subject in sharp focus from a background that is unfocused is almost as old as photography itself. To begin with, areas of sharpness were simply a product of the early cameras themselves where depth of field and sharpness were dictated to the photographer by the rudimentary nature of the camera and lens.

Over time, focusing and depth of field became more controllable and photographers began to experiment with the means with which the appearance of depth could be achieved by the eye – comparing a subject in sharp focus against an area of unfocused background or foreground.

The use of focusing to direct our gaze becomes a very powerful way to give emphasis to a subject – it forces the eye to alight with certainty on something sharp and detailed. Photographers who make good creative use of focusing and depth of field are often able to skilfully direct the way we look at their images and allow us to glimpse their world as they saw it.

Use of lens aperture

Without a doubt, the most useful aspect of photographic technique to acquire is the relationship between lens aperture (or f number) and depth of field (the amount of sharp focus within an image).

Wide or large lens apertures of f2 or f3.5 behave like the pupil of the eye in a darkened room – they remain large to ‘drink in’ the light required. These lens apertures give the smallest depth of field and so are useful if you want focus to fall on a single subject, keeping the remaining foreground and/or background detail out of focus.

Small lens apertures of f16 or f22 behave like the pupil of the eye in bright sunlight, closing down to a small hole in order to cope with the brightness of the sun. These lens apertures give the most depth of field, so are most useful if you want good overall sharpness throughout your image, from near foreground right through to far background.

Aperture control, for any photographer, is one of the simplest and most effective methods of applying emphasis; it influences the gaze of the viewer or simply expresses your intention clearly.



Title: Fatale, 2006

Source/photographer: Mona Kuhn

The use of a wide aperture creates a very narrow depth of field (area of focus).

Use of focal length

Creative photographers rarely stick to just one lens. While many opt for the convenience of a single lens that ranges from wide angle through to standard, to short telephoto, some photographers prefer fixed focal length lenses due to their superior optical quality. Whatever your choice, the lens you use affects the degree of sharpness and depth of field available to you.

In general terms, depending on your lens choice and depth of field, what will be and won't be in focus will work (very roughly) along these lines: A standard lens will provide an average depth of field in much the same way as was described in the previous section. A wide-angle lens will provide a better than average depth of field: more will be in focus at the same lens aperture than is used on the standard lens. A telephoto lens will provide a less than average depth of field, so that the plane of focus will be small, again still using the same aperture, making good focusing critically important.

Of course, the minute you change your lens focal length the scale and proportions of the scene will change. If you switch to wide angle, for example, you may have to move nearer to the subject; if using a telephoto, you may have to move farther away from the scene or subject in order to capture what you require with your standard lens.

Digital techniques mimic the features of film and darkroom

Photoshop, as an image editing application, plays a huge part in the workflow of professional photographers. Many of its tools and techniques are the direct descendants of traditional film photography and have been rebuilt into digital tools and techniques that developers have appropriated and built into the software.

Tools such as 'dodging' for example (using the dodge tool) relate to the darkroom

technique of holding back light from the enlarger lens reaching the photographic emulsion. 'Burning', using the burn tool, applies the opposite result – allowing light from the enlarger to deliberately burn-in or further expose a selected area of the print to more light for longer than other areas of the print.

Many of the most powerful and useful techniques that Photoshop offers for 'straight' photographers are those that mimic film effects, so effects like film grain, high pass (fogging or solarization) and warming-up/cooling-down filters are useful digital filters to go to in order to maintain the photographic look and feel of your work, or without drifting into tools and techniques that 'cross the line' and turn your photographic images into digital art.

Juxtaposition

It's very rare that we are ever in a position to study just one thing on its own, devoid of all context or environment. Most of our visual experiences rely on being able to make comparisons and contrasts between one thing and another, deriving pleasure or displeasure from the inter-relationships between objects.

In photography, juxtaposition is the placement of unrelated elements or objects within a frame which then creates an unusual, humorous or thought-provoking effect on the viewer.

Subject and environment

Melting ice cream cone discovered on the red velvet bedspread of a luxurious hotel bedroom might usefully illustrate how juxtapositions work. The ordinary is presented in a completely alien environment, providing us with an unnatural but interesting scene, which may lead to numerous questions: How did the ice cream get there? Was it put there deliberately? If so, why? Does it belong to a child? Where is that child? How long has it been there? Is this a staged scenario? Was this scene manufactured for the purposes of the photograph?

The key to the torrent of questions arising from this scene is the contrast delivered by the unusual relationship between the primary elements of the juxtaposition. Shoot a melting ice cream on an urban grey pavement and the response is likely to be, 'Ah! What a shame, some poor child has dropped their ice cream' – and that may be the end of that. Juxtapositions enjoy a warm reception with audiences who appreciate the surreal, and who realize that one of the most powerful effects that art can have on all of us is the recognition that questions are far more interesting than answers.

Juxtaposition is a very potent form of creative approach that is well suited to the medium of photography.



Title: Connections #4

Source/photographer: Rune Guneriussen

Juxtapositions often allow us to explore an absurd idea for the sheer joy of creating something nonsensical and unreal while at the same time exploiting our sense of the photographic truth of a situation. We know it has been staged, but it still tempts our imaginations to accept it as somehow 'found' and unmediated.

'Forced' relationships

Images that force us to buy into their contrived relationships have a rich tradition in photography. The works of the Dadaists, Man Ray, German Expressionists and even the more recent album cover art of the 1970s from Hipgnosis and Storm Thorgerson all show juxtaposition at their heart. Juxtaposition is a very potent form of creative approach that is well suited to the medium of photography.

Juxtaposition

There are different types of juxtaposition:

- Colour juxtaposition – where clashing or jarring effects are created by the proximity of two clashing colours.
- Size juxtaposition – take, for example, the elephant and the mouse.
- Shape juxtaposition – where contrasting shapes are brought together, for example, a grapefruit on a square plate.

Incongruity

An image that shows incongruity is one that prompts the question: What on earth is that doing there? It generates genuine surprise by putting together the familiar with the unfamiliar in a way that seems absurd or impossible.

It has much in common with juxtaposition, but there is a distinct difference. While the incongruous can be incorporated as part of a juxtaposition, the incongruous is most usually seen as a single element at odds with its environment; it is not an unconventional relationship between two elements. It is something that sticks out like a sore thumb – unsuited to its environment and disharmonious with the space it occupies.

The incongruous may provoke surprise, laughter, shock or any number of reactions – this is what gives it power and influence.

Scale

Subjects that are larger or smaller than they should be are incongruous when placed or photographed within a normal setting.

This is one sure way of getting something noticed. The absurdity of the situation is what grabs the viewer's attention, and once hooked, they study the scene to assess whether the odd arrangement is real or fake. Advertising photography plays with scale or size incongruity continuously because its effect on perception is immediate and

Incongruous

An item is described as being incongruous if it is not in harmony or in keeping with its surroundings or environment.

powerful. A number of advertisements in film and print media have featured incongruities such as ordinary people in a landscape full of giant toilet rolls (or is it little people in a landscape full of ordinary toilet rolls?).

As creative concepts go, they may seem hackneyed and unoriginal, but they are certainly effective in their ability to grab our attention and effectiveness (measured by results) always overrides creativity in an industry fuelled by big bucks and big expectations.

Subject

A subject unsuited to its surroundings takes us a little closer to the idea of juxtaposition again. A penguin in the arctic is neither incongruous nor juxtaposed since it is seen within its natural environment – no surprise or absurdity arises. The same penguin might appear incongruous if it appears in a zoo enclosure or perhaps on Oxford Street in London. But a cute penguin with a flying helmet and goggles would be a juxtaposition, the non-flying bird having apparently appropriated the symbols of flight.

Subjects that provoke the question 'How did that get there?' or the statement 'That just

doesn't belong there' are questioning the relationship of unsuitability between a subject and its surroundings.

The incongruous may provoke surprise, laughter, shock or any number of reactions – this is what gives it power and influence.



Title: Cone 12 Holkham

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

The construction of a large cone for Robert Wilson's 'Walking' project at Holkham provided an opportunity to make the most of its surreal incongruity within the landscape.



Title: Box 02 Gt Yarmouth

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Incongruity comes in many shapes and sizes, and always asks questions of the viewer. What is it and what is it doing there? Most of our questioning comes from trying to determine the nature of the relationship between a subject and its environment.



Title: Nic Chagall 02

Source/photographer: Nikolaj Georgiew

The addition of incongruous elements can add an element of the unreal to your images.

Mood and emotion

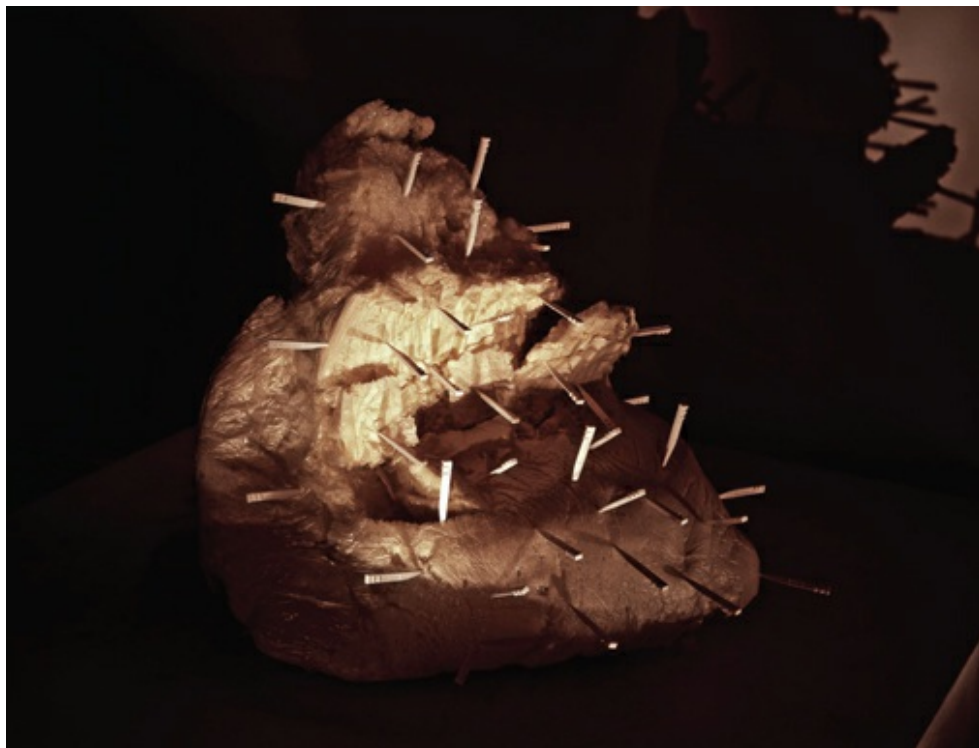
It's often said of news photography that a single frame can convey more emotional power than the same subject conveyed by moving film. All the iconic images of the last century – from the troops landing on D-Day, to the shooting of JFK, to the screams of a small naked Vietnamese girl burning with napalm – have been transported to our lives via the medium of still photography. Newsreel footage can elucidate, explain and add powerful interpretations of world events, but it could be argued that still photography of the very best kind distils to a single moment the significance and power of a particular situation or event.



Title: Cliff Jumpers 5

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Where photography attempts to capture a single subject as the primary focal point in the image frame, subject size can be less important than subject clarity. It is not necessary for the diving figure to be large within the frame here because the height of the frame is required to show the danger and distance involved and the diving figure is silhouetted and therefore picked out clearly against the bright sky behind.



Title: Mount Toothpick 05

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Dramatic light combined with the use of plastic and polystyrene were employed to communicate an emotional state. The scene was lightpainted using a simple pen torch to accentuate the shadows and convey a powerful mood.



Title: Tension

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

In a spirit of advertising simplicity, this image was created to depict the inevitable before it actually happens.

Photography has the power to validate us and confirm our humanity. It makes us recognize and reflect on what it is to be human. The components of design lie at the heart of photography's ability to affect our emotional lives deeply. Even on a superficial level, the calming effect of pastel colours or the delicate convergence of lines and shadows can transform our imaginations and allow our emotional lives the space within which to expand.

Tension and unease

Images can evoke tension and unease when the viewer is given certain knowledge that something unpleasant is about to happen. The image content is arranged or captured

so that the story is set up and the viewer fills the gaps with his or her imagination.

Sometimes, the use of tension to create an unnerving visual experience can unsettle us but there is still no good reason why we shouldn't be a little uncomfortable every now and then. The skill lies in taking your audience with you, not letting them turn away feeling disturbed or that you've crossed a line.



Title: Bathtime frown 2

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

What's the story here? The audience brings to the image their own interpretation. Anger?

Exertion? Rage? Heat?



Title: Gulls descending

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Although the original cloudscape image retained more cyan and blue, a black and white treatment gives the image a much more oppressive feel evocative of thunder or the threat of a heavy rainstorm.

How to create tension in your images

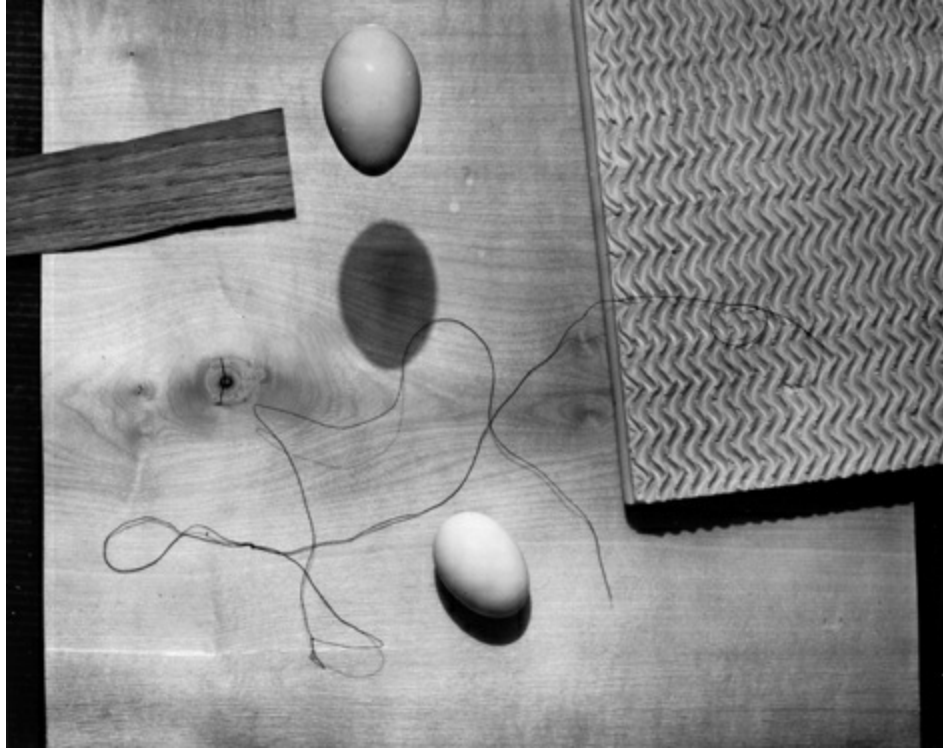
Use compositional imbalance to convey lack of control or a sense of unsteadiness.

Incorporate colour combinations that clash or jar to induce a sense of nausea.

Feature dark shadows with unseen detail lurking in the background.

Use unconventional cropping or framing to create a feeling of claustrophobia.

Take advantage of lighting to make subjects seem foreign or unfamiliar, adding a sense of menace or danger.



Title: Stilleben mit schwebendem Ei 1930 (ca)

Source/photographer: Walter Peterhans

Every element in this carefully balanced still life is in its place for a reason. The carefully designed structure behind this image shows the importance of balance between simplicity and complexity and between showing too little or too much.

Harmony and disharmony

For an image to be considered harmonious, it must contain design elements that complement each other and blend well together. This may be seen in the form of colours, a pattern created by the careful capture of light or the carefully crafted composition of lines and shapes used in a still life.

Disharmony is most often created by an imbalance present in the image – usually arrived at through inappropriate or poorly judged arrangement of design elements.

Balance and imbalance

Balance is likely to depend upon the positioning and distribution of tone within an image. An image may be considered imbalanced as it will appear top-heavy if dark tones appear as shapes, or large areas are dominant in one part of the image. It may even irritate the viewer due to the absence of a counterweight to even things up.

This is not to say, however, that every image must abide by the rules of balance in order to be effective. Many photographs are visually successful, in spite of an imbalance in the composition. Other factors such as the impact of the subject, use of colour and simplicity may compensate for the imbalance.

One of the best ways to assess an image for its balance is to view it in a mirror, a technique used by Leonardo da Vinci. This allows for a completely fresh view on the image, enabling the photographer to see how the composition works, where the spaces are and how the image design structure works as a whole – all from a slightly different point of view.

Alternatively, you can squint through half-closed eyes or turn the image upside down. All these techniques are extra design tools that allow you to reconfigure the image structure temporarily.



Title: Breakwater smash

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Sometimes, certain subjects demand a more impressionistic approach to powerfully convey the mood of the scene. It is not essential to reveal every tiny detail in a dramatic subject if

the full drama of the scene cannot be effectively conveyed in the process.

Movement and stillness

Photography grants us the dual pleasure of being able to record and capture a subject's movement over time; it also enables us to capture a single aspect of time. Many photographers have captured frozen moments with fast shutter speeds and bursts of flash or the fluid grace of subjects in motion for a more impressionistic image.

The notion of movement and stillness may refer to the way in which the eye can become transfixed by a single point of view, or whether it is free to travel between points bounded by the frame. If an image is constructed in such a way that the eye tends to rest upon a single element, the image may be considered as lacking movement (though not necessarily lacking appeal or impact).

If the image encourages the eye to swing left and right, or up and down, in search of meaning reading of the image content and message, the image may be said to contain movement.

Both types of imagery can have a significant effect on the emotional response of the viewer. Images that show minimal movement can sometimes touch us with a simplicity or purity that resonates deeply when applied with a sympathetic subject. On the other hand, images containing frantic directional lines or sweeping curves that take the eye from one corner of the image to the other can be used with more complex compositions, which may demand more work from the viewer. However, this could be equally rewarding in the end, when applied in the appropriate manner and to the right degree.

Exercise 6 Themes

Select a room in your house, or if you prefer, in the house of a friend or relative. Carefully choose your position, angle and viewpoint. Observe the subject matter and content of your environment. Plan and produce a series of four images that illustrate any four of the following themes:

- Incongruity

- Security
- Claustrophobia
- Tension
- Balance
- Imbalance
- Juxtaposition
- Movement
- Stillness
- The past
- The present
- The future
- Sharpness
- Blur
- Darkness
- Light

The key to this exercise is to take a sideways look at your environment. Rather than focusing your attention on the specific subjects you find, look instead at what they may symbolize or represent. Try to use framing, distance, depth of field and exposure in a creative way that will help you to explore your chosen themes in depth.

Once again, the outcome of an exercise like this will depend on how you observe light, create depth and position yourself and the camera. The key to an exercise such as this is to understand that creative and imaginative photography isn't necessarily reliant upon filling your viewfinder with a stunning subject. In other words, it's not what you photograph, but how you photograph something.



Title: Examples of themes

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Creative and imaginative photography isn't necessarily reliant upon filling your viewfinder with a stunning subject – it's not what you photograph, but how you photograph something.

Photographic genres Editorial photography

Fundamentally, editorial photography is photography commissioned by the publishers of books, magazines, newspapers and other print and online media to enhance their written features with photography to provide greater visual impact or appeal to a feature, publication or brand.

An editorial image or portfolio can take the form of any number of styles or genres – portraiture, fashion, still life, news or documentary – but it's important to recognize that it's the magazine or publisher that commissions and pays for the images. Advertising photography is commissioned and paid for by the manufacturers or the businesses themselves in order to place the images with print or online media publishers - for which they have to pay for the privilege. So it's important to recognize the difference between editorial and advertising photography.

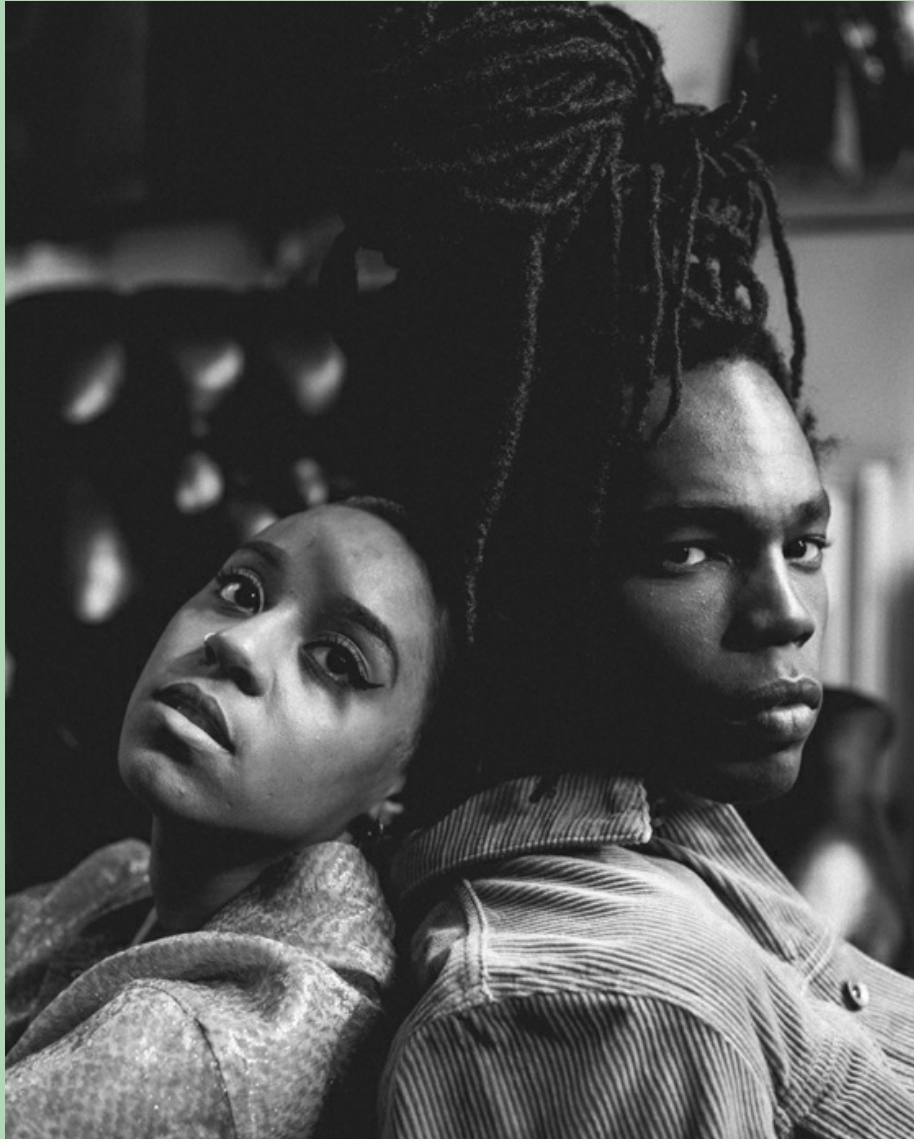
At its simplest, an editorial photographer whose work and style is admired by one of the editorial team is commissioned perhaps to shoot a series of portraits of a famous author. The portraits that result from this commission simply add visual value to a written feature or interview – no product or service is being 'sold', and the magazine or publisher funds the cost of the shoot in the full expectation that its readers will enjoy the synergy of words and pictures combined and continue to buy the publication.

Many of today's highest-paid editorial photographers serving the more creative apex of the publishing pyramid are happy to describe their work not just in terms of the photography they create, but also as 'photo illustrators' due to their skilful use of image manipulation in their creative portraiture. Within editorial portraiture and fashion, there exists a powerful potential for a creative collision between 'straight' photography and digital illustration and those who have the skills and the style required are able to combine these forcefully in a way that is accepted and found frequently within advertising and commercial photography.

Agents are often indispensable in gaining work for editorial photographers. The commission they earn is the result of the contacts and relationships they nurture with key clients, and a good agent will send out a photographer's portfolio, make appointments and visit commissioning editors and even help organize shoots and permissions. Agents work hard to ensure their photographer only has to focus on the photography.

Within editorial photography, the degree to which the photographer is allowed to express their creativity with a commission is very much driven by the needs and the style of the publication – it could be a tightly controlled photo shoot of a prominent politician who only has 20 minutes between flights, or a free reign opportunity to photograph a variety of carnival revellers at night for a colourful

and creative feature. Either way, the photographer is serving the needs of the publisher, and this is the fundamental requirement at the heart of commissioned editorial photography.



Title: Monochrome portrait

Source/photographer: Unsplash

The continuing use of black and white in quality editorial photography isn't so much a nostalgic throwback to the golden era of pre-digital monochrome, but more an illustration of the enduring power of black and white portraiture to produce memorable, high-impact imagery.

Photographers to research

Herb Ritts
Rankin
Annie Leibovitz
Albert Watson
Nick Knight

Further Resources

Five photographers to explore

Vivian Maier
Sally Mann
Erwin Blumenfeld
Tim Walker
Sarah Moon

Suggested reading

Karsh: Beyond the Camera by Yousuf Karsh

Minor White: Manifestations of the Spirit by Paul Martineau

Illuminance by Rinko Kawauchi

Nick Knight by Nick Knight

Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective by Jennifer Blessing

7

Putting it all together



Title: Doors, Gorleston-on-Sea

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Colour, shape, line and repetition all feature strongly as design elements behind this image of colourful bathing hut doors. The absence of human figures or reference points also adds another element of interest, allowing the subject to speak for itself with clarity and simplicity.

Any photographer must remember that while design principles can be applied effectively for many picture-taking instances, they are not an off-the-peg magic solution able to transform the mundane into the extraordinary.

Throughout this book, the emphasis has been on introducing a range of options, ideas or suggestions rather than straight rules to apply with the certainty that their application will inevitably bring success.

One has to keep in mind, though, that the real success that photographers enjoy comes when all that technique, all those theories and all those nuggets of wisdom are put away because they've been absorbed and internalized. The mystery behind the power of photography is distilled to a very simple approach in this quote by John Szarkowski in *The Photographer's Eye*: 'The central act of photography, the act of choosing and eliminating, forces a concentration on the picture edge – the line that separates in from out – and on the shapes that are created by it.'

This section looks at how other areas of your practice can benefit from design if fed carefully into your working methods.



Title: Weathered wood

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

This digital image was originally a black and white toned print, which was then re-photographed in front of a light box. The digital copy has captured some of the softness that this process produces and required very little post-capture image processing.

[Expressing views and visions](#)

What can we do to really get to grips with a subject and explore it to the full? If you feel passionately about a subject or theme, see if you can approach your subject from a different angle – one that really takes the blinkers off and allows you to experience the subject from different perspectives. Think around the edges of your subject to avoid retreating into the obvious. How have other photographers treated this subject? How does lighting affect your choices of angle, viewpoint and position? What physical features of your subject interest you the most? And how can you emphasize these features most successfully?

This preliminary round of hard questioning is important if you are to avoid falling into the trap of cliché. As photographers, we are all somehow and at some time exposed to the danger of taking the kind of photographs that other photographers take. This is not the route to follow if you want to create fresh, original and exciting photography.

Self portraiture

How else do photographers understand a sense of their place within the world? Their goals, hopes, fears? Such deeply experienced personal feelings can't be projected onto another simply because they're not felt or experienced by the other. So why wouldn't you use yourself as a subject to communicate your ideas on identity, family, age, social status?



Title: A(part)/together

Source/photographer: Katie Shapiro

By presenting a single idea across two separate but related images, Katie Shapiro has successfully conveyed the connection between both subjects and found a metaphor that

expresses the title of the series from which this portrait comes.

It's not all naval-gazing and po-faced introspection. The opportunity to self-deprecate or apply the medium in a range of humorous takes on a photographer's life can be a rich and fertile ground for experimentation, as Leta Sobierajski and Wade Jeffree showed in their series of domestic self portraits.

So much more than the endless parade of selfie poses on Instagram or Facebook, a body of work driven by self portraiture can become much like a diary, an evolving and developing series where a progression or journey of discovery takes place. The audience are invited to jump on-board and experience vicariously the life of the artist.

Design principles and presentation of work

Design doesn't start and finish with the production of the print. Many photographers are now finding innovative and exciting ways of presenting their work. This trend has accelerated over the last two decades and photographers such as Wolfgang Tillmans and many others have found different ways of showcasing their work.

For some, this involves presenting multiple images in small grid formations or mounting prints on recycled materials. Photographers have also absorbed some techniques from other art disciplines and use a range of glues, varnishes and other fine art techniques to deliver their visions to a wider audience.

At the other extreme, photographers also have a wealth of digital presentation methods at their disposal – large projection screens, slideshow software and the option to mix media with digital film, animation and video. No matter what method you choose, care and a great deal of thought must be given to your presentation. It must be appropriate and suited to the style and nature of your work, and how you intend to communicate your vision.

Symbolism as visual shorthand

As we've seen in previous chapters, symbols are signs that represent something.

Modern graphic advertising is full of symbols that are easy shortcuts to common concepts. A life belt, for example, can represent help or assistance; a simple graphic of a cup of coffee means 'refreshments available' to weary motorway drivers.

Photography is a versatile medium capable of harnessing the power of symbols to communicate sometimes difficult concepts through imagery shortcuts. However, great care should be taken when using signs and symbols because different, perhaps unintended, readings can occur based on the gender, religious or cultural beliefs and geographical background of the viewer.

The danger of cliché

The danger of cliché lurks around the corner for every creative photographer. Why are we prone to cliché and the endless repetition and recycling of ideas? Some may cling to the comfort of the familiar; others may simply not have the time or the energy to come up with anything original.

Photography sells cliché like no other art form, and no more so than in the commercial world. Stock libraries are full of images that sell concepts: businessmen shaking hands ('closing the deal'), dads cavorting with their beautiful children at the beach ('modern family man') or elegant ladies sipping white wine at a business lunch ('successful career women').

Recently, there has been a backlash against much of this easy social stereotyping. Many modern image libraries are always looking for fresh ways of meeting the same needs, but with much more dynamic imagery that gives a fresher, more contemporary twist to traditional themes. Successful photographers in this arena are those who are capable of delivering something different – an image that is unambiguous, strong on design and communicates with economy and confidence.

Photography has the power to take us out of the moment.



Title: Shell

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

A shell is symbolic of many things – nature, a home, protection, refuge and the sea.



Title: Two men up vines

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

In recent years, the mass adoption of Photoshop software within the photographic community has had a huge impact on visual culture and the working methods of photographers.

Impact of light

Alongside the development of critical skills of photographic practice such as exposure control and compositional skills, the ability to understand light is the most important skill to acquire. Explore light, every kind of set-up, every situation. How does light react with different subject matter? What kind of lighting emphasizes the form of your subjects? How does light create mood? Understand its qualities – harsh, soft, directional. Learn to recognize its characteristics and anticipate its effects. Learn how to manipulate it, control it, bounce it, how to use it in order to give life and energy and power to your subjects. Wynn Bullock (American photographer, born 1902) said ‘My thinking has been deeply affected by the belief that all things are some form of radiant energy. Light is perhaps the most profound truth in the universe.’

Gateway to other worlds

Photography has the power to take us out of the moment. Symbolism can speed up this process – it provides photographers with an opportunity to tap into a rich vein of visual clues and access points that link to larger and more complex processes.

Many photographers have attempted to feed symbolism into their work: tunnels and tubes are symbolic of journeys, travelling, birth and death; pyramids can represent hierarchy, aspiration, entombment or mysticism; and circles are symbolic of eternity, completeness and unity.

Some photographers use symbolism as a major driving force for the production of their work. Others simply respond to occasional circumstances when opportunities arise, recognizing on a conscious level the significance of the symbolism before them. There are also times when symbols may not be obvious to the photographer, but they are unlocked and made real by the viewer.

Creative strategies

How you convey your ideas and effectively communicate with your audience should largely be driven by your subject. Whether you shoot the subject in colour or black and white, whether you use single images or sets and series, whether you take a dispassionate forensic view at distance or foster a close personal relationship with your subject, your creative strategy should convey your creative concept with clarity.

Using design principles to overturn expectations

A well-known, two-page advertising campaign for Levi's jeans shot by Nick Knight shows what appears to be the rear view of a tall, long-legged, blonde-haired young woman standing in a confident pose with legs wide apart and a hand combing through her waist-length hair. It's a deliberately seductive image, typical of the style and technique that advertising and fashion photographers use. Turn the page and the truth is out. The subject is not the young model we all expected it to be, but is actually

silver-haired, 79-year-old model Josephine

Current trends

Photography today comes to us in a bewildering range of presentations and platforms – online, print media, exhibition, screen, via installation, projection and a thousand other channels. Within every age or era, an idea or style can take hold for a while and enjoy an intense level of interest that disseminates from the early adopters into the mainstream to become popular and more widespread. Recent years have seen a great deal of interest in, for example:

- HDR photography (high dynamic range) Pixel sorting
- Miksang (or ‘contemplative’ photography)
- Bokeh photography
- Glitch photography
- Double exposure black and white portraits
- Dual shot spreads (one small image on one page, one full page image on the opposite)
- Photobooks and the spread of small press publishers
- Drone and robot photography
- Theta camera and other 360-degree cameras
- Virtual reality

History often reveals unknown fads and fashions that often come from routine practices within their own time but become fascinating long after their lifetime. Recent interest in the ‘Hidden Mother’ studio portraits of Victorian children makes for an interesting example of this. In order to ensure that children sat as still as possible for the long time exposures required, the child would often sit on the mother’s lap, but the mother’s face and clothing would be completely covered by a sheet. Not only do they reference the technical difficulties of the development of photography at that time, they also have a compelling eeriness that both intrigues us and disturbs us simultaneously.

Mann. She smiles knowingly behind a Stetson hat, in the same defiant pose, having made us all feel a little embarrassed at our own daft assumptions.

The appeal of this two-page print advertisement lies in our delight at being conned. Our assumptions were tested and found wanting. The ad itself neatly highlights the kind of shallow judgements we're expected to make while powerfully aligning a product with the notion that unique and individualist people wear the jeans.

Photography used in this way allows us to challenge the way we perceive the world. Even the photographing of abstracts of indeterminate subject matter gives us the chance to view the ordinary in extraordinary ways. It's a compelling strategy to take if you can find the means with which to disrupt our view of the world, whether this be on an everyday mundane level or on a cosmic scale.

Your creative strategy should convey your creative concept with clarity.



Title: Coco

Source/photographer: Nikolaj Georgiew

The lightness of the woman's skin stands out against the dark blue background providing good foreground/background separation in this beautifully composed image.

Exercise 7 Concepts and ideas

Since this is the final exercise in the book, this assignment requires you to produce a variety of creative responses to a single concept or idea. It's designed to encourage lateral thinking, conceptual skills, observational skills, presentation skills and the creative freedom to incorporate a range of design principles in your work. Select a single word from the list below:

- Roll
- Sink
- Corner
- Bridge
- Bounce
- Disturbance

Once you've made your selection, proceed to produce the following:

- A conceptual image based on your chosen word.
- An image observed and captured from observation.
- An image that presents an unusual interpretation or alternative view.
- A single presentation of your concept created by a montage or series of six or more smaller images of the same subject.



Title: Summerhouse

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Blurred foreground detail can add a sense of depth to an image. In this case, it offers a 'frames within frames' layer of cooler blue to invite the viewer forward towards the warmer glow of the table lamp.



Title: Inflation/deflation series

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

This simple series emerged from a humorous attempt to produce a visual metaphor for the economic downturn. The collapsing airbed represents a similarly deflating economy against a backdrop of leaves that depict the passage of time.

Photographic genres Design and conceptual photography

While design principles can be discussed endlessly in terms of their application to many different forms or strands of photography – landscape, commercial and portrait, to name a few – there exists much confusion about the term ‘conceptual’. Conceptual photography begins with the idea – the concept. It can communicate a simple message, sometimes a political, social, historical or cultural comment, sometimes a personal joke or irony. The important thing that unites all conceptual photographs is that they have to start out as ideas which then require the use of a range of design principles in order to be delivered.

So what design elements are used in conceptual photography? Anything that allows for the clean and economical delivery of the message. Conceptual photography enjoys a healthy regard for symbolism (see [page 204](#)). These symbols are used by conceptual photographers to represent aspects or whole parts of the message contained within the image.

In order to achieve an unambiguous and clear reading of an image, conceptual photography makes use of design simplicity, minimalism and other design ingredients that convey ideas with directness. Some photographers allow or encourage subjective interpretations – enabling individuals to bring their own experiences and backgrounds to an image in order to find their own meanings. Others attempt to create images that supply one, and only one, message that appeals universally.

Conceptual photography is primarily concerned with The Idea, rather than The Subject/Object captured in a range of aesthetically pleasing ways. The Concept arises before any image is created.

Driven by a Concept, the rise of conceptual photography in the art world from the 1970s and 1980s helped to place photography at the heart of the modern art world and artists who may have previously been proficient in other mediums took to photography as a means of giving life to (and finding an audience for) a range of approaches that expressed a personal idea or belief, a political issue or ideas concerning the medium of photography and the means of representation.



Title: Toe-rag studio

Source/photographer: Angus Fraser

An astonishing range of pattern, colour and intricate detail is present within this wonderful image. The work remains well-balanced and every single element (down to the teapot and the small rectangle of the red 'recording' sign) seems to be rightfully in its place. And yet, because all the image detail is divided up into separate portions, and all the elements are given space to breathe, the image never appears to be too dense or complex.



Title: Leather armchair

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

Pop-up flashes on digital cameras are a poor substitute for a dedicated flashgun. On this occasion, however, its stark and indiscriminate light managed to render the leather on the chair perfectly. The flash fall-off meant that nothing of the background was illuminated enough to record on the sensor.

A loose typology of common conceptual photography influences might include:

The artists own sense of self in relation to their religion, ethnic heritage, gender, class or other

The politics of representation

Redressing biases in accepted historical 'truths'

Globalization

Poverty

Social commentary

Gender and identity

Education

Environmental issues

The art world

Appropriation

Media

Culture

Because conceptual photography is often overlooked by those who express their preference for photography that represents subjects and themes in a more pictorial, aesthetically pleasing way, contemporary conceptual photography is often the mainstay of the gallery scene and 'high art' publications. It often employs a very different set of design tools than those of the photographer of more subject-driven interests. These can include (but are by no means exclusive to conceptualists):

- The use of allegory or metaphor

- The use of other forms of visual material or information, i.e., maps, overlays, appropriated images

- Minimalism

- Symbolism

- Text, language, speech

- Shock/impact/starkness

- Series and sequences, triptych

- Innovative means of presentation, visual and/or oral/aural

- Collage and montage

Conceptual photography can pack a punch. It can be ugly, disquieting, humorous, even visually bland to the eye, but cerebrally exciting to the mind. Its meaning may take time to emerge and its lexicon may only be fully understood and appreciated by a narrow audience, without being fully appreciated by a wider audience. It's not a genre with any intention of seeking popularity or gaining mass appeal but its impact and influence within the spectrum of photographic practice make it impossible to ignore, particularly where it overlaps with other art forms – live art or performance, fashion and so on.



Title: Room 47, from the series 'The Hotel'

Source/photographer: Sophie Calle

Over the course of three weeks in 1981, Sophie Calle was employed as a temporary hotel chamber maid and created a series of diptych presentations of each of 12 rooms she was assigned to clean. The written description and grid of nine black and white prints from each room captured a detailed examination of the personal belongings of the occupants to each room during that time, and allowed her audience a glimpse of those lives lived through the artefacts and details exposed.

Photographers to research

Daisuke Takakura
John Hilliard
Barbara Kruger
Richard Prince
Idris Khan

Styles and movements Postmodernism: Predominantly 1960s to 1990s

Postmodernism is a movement that largely grew out of and away from Modernism in that it embodies a rejection of artistic and intellectual ideals in favour of newer truths and ideas forged from scepticism, deconstruction and a rejection of artistic hierarchy.

Precise and universally agreed definitions can be vague and ambiguous, but there are plenty of markers that differentiate Postmodernism from Modernism, best encapsulated by terms that help to identify some key forces and differences between the old order and the new.

Modernism

Clarity
Universality
Idealism
Reason
Authority
Beauty
'Straight' photography
Subject-orientated
Interpretive
Gathering/containing

Postmodernism

Complexity, contradiction
Cynicism
Individualism
Suspicion, scepticism
Anti-authority
Appropriation
Conceptual art
Process-orientated, theoretical
Recording
Unlearning/de-skilling

Citing a single, clearly understood example of what might constitute a

recognizably Postmodern piece of art is a tough ask, because the driving forces of this movement were so disparate and diverse that, unlike Pictorialism and Modernism (where recognizable artworks bear the hallmarks and references that index their place within that era), Postmodern art and photography are characterized by a wider range of approaches and styles and often reference the medium itself.

Many cite Andy Warhol and his dismantling of the boundaries between high art and popular culture in the 1960s as a key figure developing his artwork in a Postmodern era in the world of Pop Art. Where photography is concerned, Cindy Sherman's 'Film Stills' series for example, references powerful ideas about women and society's perception of their role and status within that society, framed by the visual language of casually taken film stills from low-budget cinema.



Untitled film still no. 3

Cindy Sherman produced her Untitled film stills series by using herself alone, as actress and photographer. They are not self portraits, but invitations to observe a glimpse into a life that is artificially created but somehow rendered "real" through the use of the medium and the fiction of photographic truth.

Cindy Sherman

Photography of the vernacular, repetition or repeated presentations, re-

photographing pre-existing imagery and many other approaches were all spawned by this Postmodern questioning of the established order and entrenched or assumed truths. Photography began to push sideways into Pop Art, minimalism, performance art and incorporate text and linguistic approaches overlapping semiotics with feminism and film or installation work.

Useful websites

<http://arthistoryunstuffed.com/postmodernism-in-photography/>

<http://www.theartstory.org/definition-postmodernism.htm>

<http://art134.blogspot.co.uk/2007/12/post-modern-photography-idea-before.html>

Conclusion



Title: Light painted still life

Photographers are often conditioned to treat colour as bold, primary, and vivid. The use of a subtle, more pastel colour palette can be equally as affecting.

Source/photographer: Jeremy Webb

There's no right way or wrong way to produce photographs – only a selection of choices to make along the way. Adopting a design-aware approach to photography does not limit you to a narrow portfolio of acceptable choices – it opens up a feast of possibility and gives power to both the photographer and the image.

Simplify, emphasize and isolate. Don't let the strength of your image-making be diluted by unnecessary or distracting detail.

Be sure of your intent. Don't allow your work to be driven by equipment or technique. Focus on what fascinates you about your subject. Always question why it is that you are photographing something.

Limit yourself – having the discipline to accept self-imposed restrictions can focus your intent and release creativity and insight.

Avoid following current fashions and trends; move away from the familiar in order to take a more objective view or find fresh inspiration.

Remember that the design structure of an image can communicate with intensity well before any reading of its meaning or intent takes place. This may well provide the basis for an 'unintended stay', which then allows meaning to unfold. Such an opportunity may not arise if the image is constructed with less attention given to its design, at which point the viewer moves on.

Recognize that the subject in front of your lens may not be the only subject in the image.

Accept your mistakes as part of your learning, but never be afraid to take risks. And finally...

Love what you do. Wear many different hats and free yourself from negativity. The process by which we become intuitive and fluid with design is a journey that should be enjoyed for its own sake. It will take time to feed into your work, but it soon takes on a life of its own within you.

Photographers often find that although they may continually test the limits and boundaries of their own design awareness, their commitment to the design process simply becomes internalized and fluid, and once you can approach your photography

with the confidence that comes from this knowledge, your work can breathe once again, allowing your photography to become liberated, spontaneous and highly creative.

Further Resources

Discussion topic

Photographers tend not to photograph what they can't see, which is the very reason one should try to attempt it. Otherwise we're going to go on forever just photographing more faces and more rooms and more places. Photography has to transcend description. It has to go beyond description to bring insight into the subject, or reveal the subject, not as it looks, but how it feels.

Duane Michals

Across a range of photographic genres and styles, how do design principles allow us to get closer to this ideal?

Glossary

Abstract – non-representational; dealing with a way of seeing that extracts value from producing images based around ideas and evocations rather than a descriptive showing of the thing itself.

Analogue – refers to the traditional film capture and process of photographic images.

Aperture – the opening in the lens that controls the amount of light reaching the film (used in conjunction with the shutter speed).

Barrel distortion – a defect of optical lenses in which straight, horizontal or vertical lines appear to be convex curves.

Bounced flash – achieves softer light from a flash gun or flash head by bouncing the flash off a nearby wall, ceiling or white reflector.

Bracketing – method of ensuring correct exposure by taking several additional pictures, usually +1 stop above the given exposure, and -1 stop below the given exposure.

Composite – A finished photograph or design created from more than one image.

Composition – The artistic arrangement of the subject matter within a photographic image.

Contact sheet – A print made on photographic paper by exposing the paper to light with the negatives in direct contact with the print. These same size ‘thumbnail’ images are used as a basis to establish which images to print, what cropping needs to take place and so on, although some larger format negatives, due to their size, can create their own contact prints without the necessity of an enlarger.

Containment – Keeping something held in or contained.

De-focused – Allowing some of the image area to remain out of focus.

Depth – The appearance or impression of near and far within a photographic image.

Depth of field – The amount of a picture that will appear sharp in front of and behind the point at which you focus the lens. Large depth of field refers to a large area of the picture being in sharp focus from near foreground to far distance, usually achieved with wide-angle lenses or small apertures of f16, f22 etc. Small depth of field indicates a very narrow band of focus often through the use of wide apertures such as f1.2 or f2.

Direct flash – Flash delivered from just above the camera lens directly toward the subject. On some cameras, called pop-up flash.

Directional forces – The organization of visual matter or elements that encourage the viewer to observe the image content following a particular line or direction.

DSLR – A digital single lens reflex camera.

Duotone – Popular Adobe Photoshop effect that gives the appearance of hand-toned photographs by using black and another colour ink when working in greyscale mode.

Emulsion – In film photography, emulsion is the light-receiving surface of the film which reveals the image once processed.

Exposure – Results in the combination of lens aperture and shutter speed, which is used to control the intensity of light reaching the film.

Expressionist – Artwork that generally responds to and reflects the inner world of emotion, often using distortion or other effects to reflect the idea of an inner reality.

F-stop – Indicates the size of the lens aperture. The smaller the number, the wider the aperture; the higher the number, the smaller the aperture.

Flattening – In Photoshop, the process of merging together all layers within the file to return the image again to one, single background image.

Focal length – The distance between the centre of a lens and its focus.

Format – The shape, size and proportions of the image area.

Gaussian blur – Used within Photoshop, this creates a softer, de-focused effect.

Grain – Composed of minute metallic silver particles in film that form the visible image when exposed and developed.

Greyscale – Print or transparency consisting of a series of grey tones of regular increasing depth from white to black.

History palette – Within Photoshop, every time you modify or edit your image, it is recorded as a history state within the history palette. This chronological recording of events can be used if you want to return to an earlier state within the current work session.

Incongruity – Something that is not in harmony with, or is poorly suited to, the environment within which it is placed.

ISO – Initials of the International Standards Organization – used to indicate the speed or light sensitivity of photographic materials.

JPEG – A type of digital image file that compresses files by up to 75 per cent although some image data can be lost. Usually produces smaller file sizes than PSDs or TIFFs, hence it is easier to send via email or as screen previews.

Juxtapose – To position or place in close proximity with something else producing contrast, surprise or other strong reaction.

Layers palette – An information palette within the Photoshop interface that provides information on the number and type of layers within a digital image. New layers are automatically created when using the type tool, and when any copy-and-paste work is undertaken.

Monochrome – Black and white.

Monotone – A single colour.

Multiple exposure – More than one exposure captured within the same frame or produced within the same image.

Overexposure – An image is said to be overexposed when too much light is received

through the lens onto the film plain or digital sensor, making the photograph look lighter than it should

Panning – The photographer follows the action in front of him or her by attempting to move the camera at a sympathetic speed to track the subject. The result often renders the subject as sharp or semi-sharp against a blurred background.

Panoramic – A wide ‘letterbox’ format, a panorama, whereby the image format is extended sideways.

Photogram – A photographic image created by placing objects on the surface of photographic paper and allowing light to expose the paper. This results in the emulsion of the paper remaining white where no light reaches its surface, and black where light reaches the emulsion or passes through the subject

Pixellation – The ‘blocky’ effect that occurs when an image is enlarged to a size where the pixels become obvious.

Pixels – Individual picture elements usually (though not exclusively) seen as square blocks that form the basis of all digital images. Most visible at high magnification if the image is said to be of high resolution. More easily visible in low resolution digital images such as those using the JPEG file type.

POI (point of interest) – A single focal point that can be identified as the primary subject within the photograph.

PSD – Stands for Photoshop document and is the native file format for Photoshop images; most often used for works in progress, layered images that require many work sessions or multiple openings and closings of the file.

Raking light – Bright light that illuminates across the surface of a subject highlighting its texture or detail.

Resolution – The picture detail, sharpness or quality of a digital image measured in pixels per inch. The higher the resolution, the higher the quality and detail and the bigger the file size.

Reticulation – Formation of minute cracks on the surface of an emulsion, usually caused by extreme temperatures during processing. Modern films are normally very

resistant to reticulation.

Safelight – Darkroom light of a particular wavelength to which the photographic paper is not sensitive. This allows you to see and handle materials in the darkroom. In the case of black and white printing, the appropriate safelight is usually an orange, red or deep green.

Saturation – The strength or intensity of colour.

Shutter speed – The amount of time (usually measured in fractions of a second) for which a camera shutter remains open, permitting light channelled through the lens to fall on the film.

Slow sync flash – A technique that combines a burst of flash with a slow shutter speed. The resulting image shows a subject rendered in sharp detail (the result of flash) as well as showing some degree of motion blur (the result of the slow shutter speed).

SLR – Single lens reflex camera.

Soft box – A large diffuser placed over a studio flash head to soften the light.

Symbolism – The use of symbolic images or visual metaphors to express ideas, emotions or states of mind.

Telephoto lens – A lens providing a longer focal length than a standard lens, giving a narrow field of view and enabling the photographer to get closer to the subject than a standard lens would allow.

TIFF – A type of high-quality digital image file; stands for tagged image file format and supports up to 24-bit colour per pixel.

TTL – ‘Through-the-lens’ metering, a method that uses light-sensitive exposure metering cells within the camera body to take readings of the reflected light falling on the subject, exactly as seen by the lens. In automatic cameras, these readings are translated directly into apertures and/or shutter speeds.

Underexposure – An image is said to be underexposed if too little light enters the camera, resulting in an image that looks darker than it should.

Vanishing point – The point where receding parallel lines viewed in perspective appear to converge at a point in the distance.

Viewfinder – The device used on camera that shows the field of view of the lens used.

Vignetting – The visual effect of the darkening of edges and corners. Can be deliberate or accidental.

Wide-angle lens – A lens that takes in a wide view.

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The Americans by Robert Frank (Scalo).
The Democratic Forest by William Eggleston (Doubleday).

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www.the-aop.org – The Association of Photographers
www.aperture.org – The Aperture Foundation, photography in all its forms.
www.aphotoeditor.com – An insider's guide to the business of photography.

www.apug.org/forum/home – Resources and forum for the analogue photographer.

www.artscouncil.org.uk – Access to grants and funding information.

www.art-support.com – US-based resources for photographers and some international contacts.

www.thebfp.com – The website of the Bureau of Freelance Photographers.

www.bjp-online.com – The website of the British Journal of Photography.

www.theblacksnapper.net/archive – International online photography magazine of mostly documentary and photojournalism.

www.thecolorawards.com – Inspiring photography from this well-established award for excellence.

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www.ephotozine.com – Online resource for news, reviews, articles and equipment.

www.equivalence.com – A site devoted to European contemporary photography.

www.festivaloflight.net – Information on photography festivals worldwide.

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