

COMPOSITION

Kilkenny Photographic Society

11 November 2010

Fiona Power

Composition in Fine Art:

- ❑ Composition is one of the "formal" elements used in art, along with space, colour, form, tone, etc.
- ❑ It is an arrangement of shapes and colours on a flat surface, '2 dimensional' adding structure to a piece.
- ❑ The subject matter of the image adds importance to the arrangement.
- ❑ Many of the old fine art masters did preliminary compositional studies, were very structural in nature.
- ❑ Modern artists in the 20th century differed in that they started to leave the skeletal structure of the work more visible, allowing the compositional structure to itself to be the subject of painting.

"Whistler's Mother" was named
Arrangement in Black and Gray



Composition in Fine Art

- ▣ Artists learn to see objects in terms of their geometrical forms: cylinder, sphere or cone, and it is these forms and movements that the artist is arranging.
- ▣ Composition consists of the inter-relationships of these elements.
- ▣ The commercial artist is trying to sell a product, and the fine artist is attempting to express something more meaningful, without the primary purpose of commercial value. This difference of intent affects the creative choices artists make.
- ▣ Contemporary conceptual artists often base their work on an idea, rather than in a traditional sense, often there is little or no visual component to their work, no composition, no formal values, no drawing.

Reflection

- ▣ It is important to be receptive to all the ways composition affects us, to include non-verbal thought and feeling.
- ▣ Good Composition is a key element of good photography.
- ▣ 'Overhang'
- ▣ Sean McNulty



Rule of Thirds

- ❑ This rule states that for an image to be visually interesting, the main focus of the image needs to lie along one of the lines marked in thirds.
- ❑ A horizon should not be in the middle of a photo, but on the bottom third. A single tree in a field should be aligned with one of the two vertical lines.
- ❑ With the main subject placed in the centre, the viewer is less likely to explore the rest of the photograph, it is preferable to keep the viewer's eye moving.
- ❑ To create movement in your photographs use the rule-of-thirds for off-centre placement of the main subject to create a balanced composition.
- ❑ Other important elements of your composition should lie along the grid lines or at the points where the grid lines intersect. The rule of thirds provides a proportion of space around the main subject to prevent distraction between the focal point and the edge of the frame.

Rule of Thirds



Rule of Odd's

- ▣ The rule of odds states that images are more visually appealing when there is an odd number of subjects; 3 or 5 or 7, etc.
- ▣ When shooting real life compositional images (still life, family groups, flowers etc)
- ▣ Studies have shown that people are more at ease and comfort when viewing imagery with an odd number of subjects.

Rule of Odd's



Rule of Space

- ❑ The rule of space probably comes naturally to the photographer.
- ❑ The rule of space states that in order to portray movement, context and the idea that the photo is bigger than just the part that you're seeing, you need to leave clutter free 'white' spaces.
- ❑ For example if you're photographing a runner, give him a space to run into. Don't photograph him with all the space behind him because this doesn't help the viewer picture the forward motion and the space he has yet to run.
- ❑ When giving your subjects space, they will be placed in a third of the photo.

Rule of Space



Viewpoint

- ❑ Strong focal point or point of view is the most basic of composition rules.
- ❑ You are the viewer. Your camera is the eye. The point of view is what you are interested in.
- ❑ It is usually best to have one main subject as the focal point.
- ❑ The main subject can be one object or several, and you may decide to include a secondary subject.
- ❑ Make sure nothing detracts from the focal point.
- ❑ Lacking a strong centre of interest, forces the viewer to search for something to observe. Always give the focal point sufficient prominence in the composition so that all other elements are subordinate.

Viewpoint



Breaking the Rules

- ❑ It is important that we understand and successfully create imagery which follows the rule of thirds before we can successfully break it.
- ❑ Breaking the rule of odd's with only 2 subjects, make sure there is a visual point of interest to engage the viewer.

Breaking the Rules



Discuss Image



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ▣ Pattern
- ▣ There are patterns all around us if we only learn to see them.
- ▣ Emphasizing and highlighting these patterns can lead to striking shots.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ▣ Balance and Symmetry
- ▣ Depending upon the scene – symmetry can be something to go for or avoid.
- ▣ A symmetrical shot with strong composition and a good point of interest can lead to a striking image – but without the strong point of interest it can be a little predictable.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ▣ Texture
- ▣ Photographs are two dimensional yet with the clever use of 'texture' they can come alive and become almost three dimensional.
- ▣ Texture particularly comes into play when light hits objects at interesting angles.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ❑ Depth of Field
- ❑ The depth of field that you select when taking an image will drastically impact the composition of an image.
- ❑ It can isolate a subject from its background and foreground (when using a shallow depth of field) or it can put the same subject in context by revealing it's surrounds with a larger depth of field.
- ❑ Foreground objects add depth to the picture.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ▣ Lines
- ▣ Lines can be powerful elements in an image.
- ▣ They have the power to draw the eye to key focal points in a shot and to impact the ‘feel’ of an image greatly.
- ▣ All different lines, impact images differently and should be spotted while framing a shot and then utilized to strengthen it.

Elements of Composition in Photography

- ▣ Repeat
- ▣ Repetitive objects make great subjects.
- ▣ Repetition never fails to impress and create a unique frame.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ▣ Simplicity
- ▣ The more objects you remove from the photograph, the clearer and sharper your story and subject will be to the viewer.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ❑ Magnify and Focus
- ❑ Emphasise your main subject.
- ❑ Frame your subject making it larger, taller, or in sharper focus than other objects.



Elements of Composition in Photography

- ❑ Consider adding nature
- ❑ Consider portrait or landscape
- ❑ Consider telling a story in your image
- ❑ Consider cropping
- ❑ Consider trying again by shooting the same subject by using a different lens, changing angles or distance.



Conclusion

- ▣ These are just some of the elements of composition that are used in photography.
- ▣ These elements should reflect your own style, personality and subject matter in your photography.
- ▣ Thank you for listening.