

Design Principles for Photography

Jeremy Web

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Role of the viewfinder

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

Photography can never present the whole truth, But it can shape history... truth issue

Some images play to our prejudices by excluding items from the scene/frame.

This is the photographer's choice/power, to include or exclude. Benefit or detract from the image.

Inclusion of distracting details can mean message lost or cluttered image.

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Frame proportion and size.

Rectangle or square can affect the compositional 'build'

Bailey uses square format and often cuts off the hair at the top to make a more focused view.

Cf...Instagram and flickr

Panoramas, circular frames. The circle can be effective without the flat rigid vertical and horizontal lines of the frame.

“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.”p17

Space (negative space) is just as important as subject. It can throw the subject into high relief

Use space as a design tool to create a 3-D feel to the image

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Position: the distance between photographer and subject -can manipulate our feelings eg politician photo'd from above can appear diminished small. Lenses can affect the viewer's idea of how close subjects are e.g. telephoto

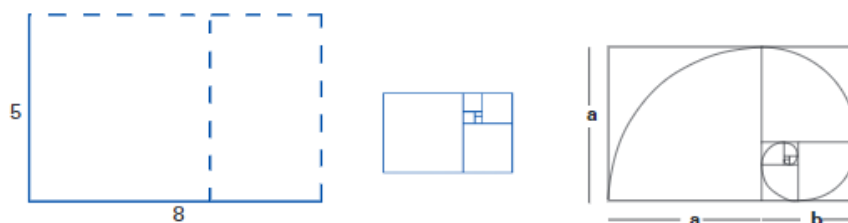
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Examine/photograph your subject from many viewpoints: below, above, sideways

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Rule of thirds...

“Where 2D photographic image formats are concerned, we find that frame proportions of roughly 8” x 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 x 24mm, 6cm x 4.5cm and 10” x 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. “



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Different Genres and people to research

Emerging from the beginning of 19th century photographers split into two genres...modernists-straight record photography and pictorialists – artistic and expressionists.

Page 84 – fine Art photographers.

2. Major Elements of Design

Line page 44

Lines are powerful design elements that re-enforce the three-dimensionality of the world. “

Horizontal lines often reflect concepts such as stability, continuity and restfulness. Think of table tops or the horizon line over the sea.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 good foreground and background separation

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.

Objects The photographer who carefully considers the shape or form of the subject will seek to give great emphasis to it. Using lighting, positioning, vantage point and distance, for example.

Space Page 56

Space may give power and impact.

Space on a print or space real and actual space at the scene. Can give the impression of 3 D space and depth. Often used to contrast the subject.

Negative space is the absence of volume or mass. It may lie behind the subject. Blank space.

Positive is more active in an image, in the sense that the photographer consciously manipulated the space to emphasize the subject.

Spatial relationships denote distance and positional relationships between one subject and another within an image. Where it is confusing the you may get ambiguous spatial relationships. Some photographers play with spatial relationships to purposely confuse the eye

“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 page60

Light and texture work together in a photo. without the light the quality of the texture cannot be appreciated. Its to do with the detail achieved by the camera.

Strong directional light rather than flat soft lighting (that’s why faces always look good in soft light but craggy wrinkled ones look better in strong sidelight.

Smooth surfaces can create a calm impression.

Light p62

“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. “

“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. “

Direction think shadows,

The direction of the light can have an emotional impact – heroic figures in full light, villains will often be lit from below giving a sense of wrongness and evil.

Strength of light intensity of light

Strong light requires fast shutter speeds that allows action to be frozen. However deep shadows caused by strong light can have a negative impact on the image.

“learn how to capitalize on textures through careful use of lighting, positioning and viewpoint. “

Shadows can be controlled by light being reflected into the area.

Backlighting p70 a silhouette is created – that is, if the three components of this arrangement (light, subject and camera) are all aligned along the same axis.

“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. “

Colour psychology and the way affects our mood and emotions and perceptions. Bold assertive primary colours often announce the intention to shock or surprise- where as a palette of soft and subtle colour invites a quieter more thoughtful association with an image – in a series of colour images a mono image can stand out

“But where a documentary approach requires authenticity and accuracy, colour is critical to the integrity of the image.” [Jeremy Webb.Design Principles for Photography]

Monochrome & Fine Art Page

Chapter 3 First Design Principles page 88

“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.”

“it is the blending, manipulation and combination of different design elements that create compelling imagery.” that makes a good image

Pattern p90

Repetition of a shape or form is comforting because it is recognizable, understandable?, confirming

“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. “

Random Patterns

E.g....squiggly line, tree branches

Infinite Patterns spirals & circles continue inwards towards infinity, two mirrors together appear as a pattern.

“Similarly formed elements repeating within an image but decreasing in size towards the center or away to a vanishing point or even repeating without end.”

Think fractal and Mandelbrot images, some Buddhist and Islamic images too

Repetition p94

E.g. the line of soldiers marching in step – look for different angles to the straight on approach. I liked the **Shape, Line**

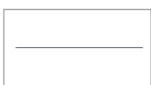


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

“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 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. **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. In **Figure 6**, the repeating diagonal lines retain the same sense of unity, but create a more forceful impact. “

Motif “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.” e.g. typographies that are an exploration of a single subject, or on a more grand scale “Fay Godwin produced work inspired by the mark of humankind on the British landscape”

Symbol “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. ... Great care must be taken when using symbolism because cultural specificity comes into play and not all symbolism is universally understood.

Interruption & 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. “ It can focus attention on the disruption element itself or ask about the context of the harmonious element that was disrupted. Tension caused by the distraction from harmony. Makes the viewer sit up and take notice.

Variety and Unity – Sameness and Uniformity Whilst sameness can be dulling of the senses and tedious it can promote harmony

Difference can lead to a chaotic image and confused.

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”

Flow movement and rhythm within the image It is about movement of the eye through the image and the way the photographer has ‘placed’ or ‘seen’ the elements to encourage it.



cartier bresson



Title: Stripsey clown
Source: photographer:
Lalla Kozzo

Contrast – tones, colours (saturation or intensity), dark & light,

Subject contrasts plays to our sense of ‘rightness’ and ‘order’ placing one subject against an uncommon background.

Genres- Landscapes p116

Styles and Movements: Surrealism p118

[Jeremy Webb.Design Principles for Photography] all double quote are direct copies from his book