

ADVANCED PHOTOGRAPHY

STRATEGIES TO TAKE YOUR BEST PHOTOS EVER



**BY
PHIL EBNER**



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this book on advancing your photography. This guide will provide inspiration and practical steps to help you take better photos. First of all, thank you so much for joining us. We're excited to help you on your photography journey.

What is this book all about? Simply put, this book is here to help you take better photos. We have lots of students who have completed various courses teaching them how to use a camera, understand things like exposure, composition, and editing to capture good photos. However, many of our students reach a point where they can take good photos, but they're unsure how to take great ones. That's what this book aims to address.

This is a companion book to the [Advanced Photography with Phil Ebiner](#) online course. You can enroll in our course if you'd like to experience every trip & trick from this book taught by Phil via video lesson.

What should you expect from this book? This is not a guide on learning how to use your camera or understanding settings. You should already have a good understanding of those basics. Instead, this book is a deep dive into the theory and practical techniques used to capture better photos. Throughout the book, we'll examine photos from professional photographers, including the author's own work and that of historical greats. We'll analyze what makes these photos exceptional, providing you with tips and steps to achieve similar results yourself.

The book is structured in a series of chapters that you can use to improve your photography. We'll start with composition, then move on to lighting, storytelling, and editing. We'll also discuss how tools and technology can enhance your photos.

We hope this approach appeals to you. It's a slightly different style compared to traditional courses, but we believe it's the best way for you to truly understand what makes a great photo. With that, let's move on to the first chapter on composition. We'll see you there shortly.

LET'S START WITH COMPOSITION

In the following chapters,, we will focus on composition and how it can significantly improve your photography. You might be wondering why we aren't starting with lighting, as capturing light is essentially the core of photography. It's true that understanding and using light, whether natural or artificial, is perhaps the easiest way to quickly enhance your photography. When browsing through photos on Instagram or other photo apps, lighting is what makes a photo stand out.

However, for many people just starting out, lighting can be confusing, while composition offers more immediate control through the placement of your camera. Adjusting your perspective, zoom level, and the contents of your frame is generally easier to grasp than mastering lighting. That's why we're beginning with composition.

In the following sections, we will review some basic composition techniques and discuss why they work to make our photos better. For those of you who are already familiar with photography basics, this might be a bit repetitive. However, we believe it's worthwhile to go through these concepts as they serve as building blocks for more advanced composition techniques, which we will explore later in the book.

Steps to Improve Photos

- Composition
- Lighting
- Story
- Editing
- Tools

Photo by The Nigmatic



RULE OF THIRDS REFRESHER

In this first composition refresher, we're going to explore the rule of thirds, a foundational method for improving your photos that has been taught for years. Although modern trends in composition have shifted towards centering subjects, the rule of thirds remains an essential technique for any photographer.

The rule of thirds involves breaking your photo down into a grid, with two vertical lines and two horizontal lines. By placing your subject at the intersection of these lines, you create a more visually pleasing and balanced composition.

Composition Refresher

- Rule of Thirds



Photo by Racim Amr

Throughout this book, we will examine numerous examples of the rule of thirds in action. These examples will include photos taken by professional photographers, historical photographers, as well as some shots I have taken myself.

The rule of thirds is not the only way to create a visually pleasing image. As mentioned earlier, centering subjects has become a popular technique as well. The best approach depends on the specific photo and your personal preferences.



In the above example, we can see two photos of the Sphinx and Pyramid in Egypt. Both photos are visually pleasing, but they use different compositional techniques. One photo employs the rule of thirds, while the other centers the subject.

As you work through this book, remember that photography is an art, and personal preferences will influence your own compositions. The goal is to understand various techniques and learn how to apply them effectively in your own work.



In the camel example, the photo on the left is centered, while the one on the right utilizes the rule of thirds. When the centered photo is cropped to follow the rule of thirds, it appears more visually balanced.

Throughout this book, we will continue to examine different compositional techniques and discuss the various factors that contribute to an aesthetically pleasing photo. By studying these examples and practicing these techniques, you will quickly improve your photography skills.

CENTERING

In this chapter of our book on advanced photography, we're going to discuss the technique of centering. Sometimes, placing your subject at the center of the frame is the ideal choice.

Take, for example, a photo of headphones in a product shot

Composition Refresher

- Rule of Thirds
- Centering

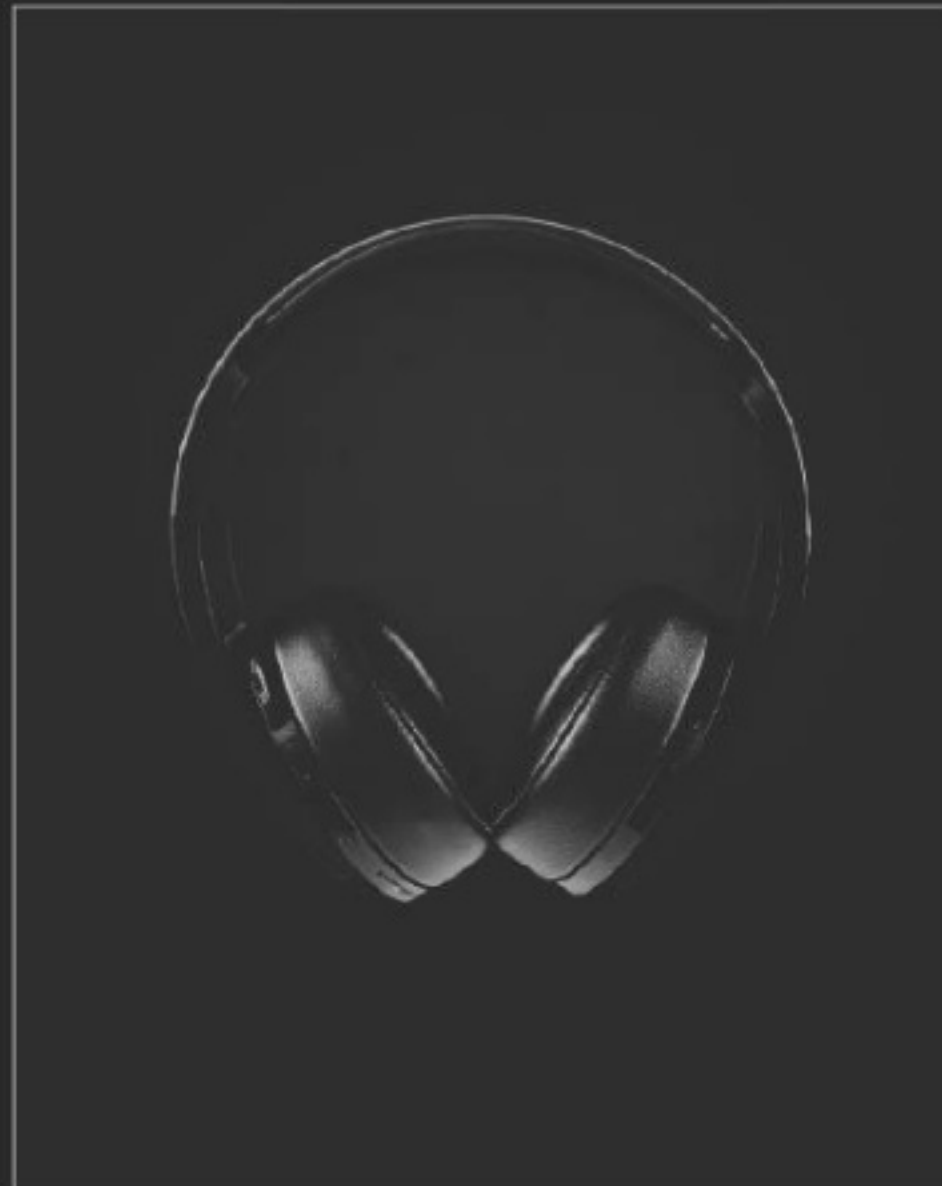
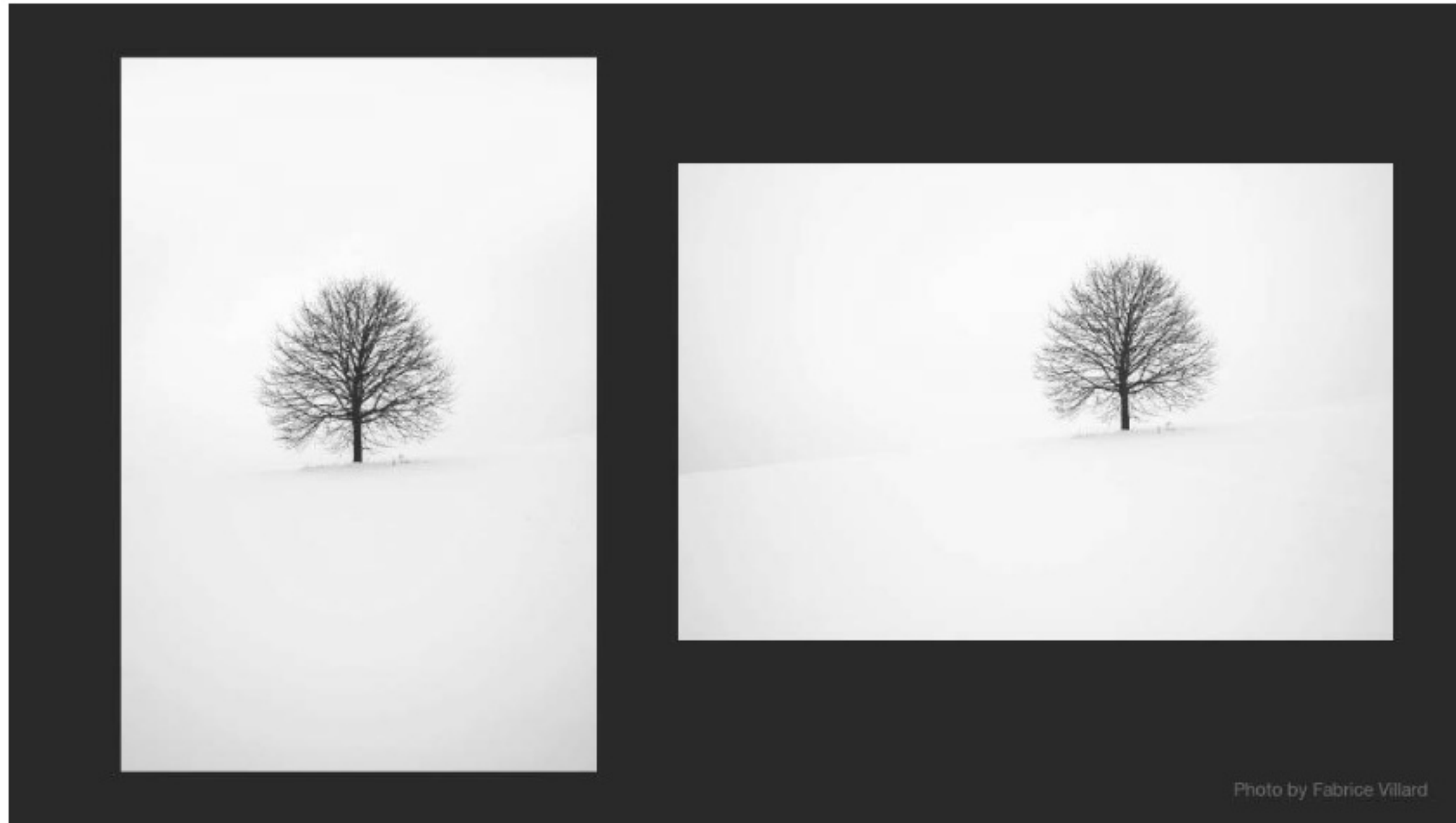


Photo by Sebastian Banasiewicz

If the headphones weren't centered, the image might not be as powerful. The subject deserves to be front and center in this case.

Another instance where centering works well is when using a lot of negative space around the subject. Consider a photograph of a tree, where the tree is the positive space, and everything else is negative space with no detail



Your eyes are naturally drawn to the subject, the positive space.

Comparing two versions of the same photo, one with the subject centered and the other following the rule of thirds, you may have different preferences depending on the context. The centered version might work better for posting on Instagram or social media, while the rule of thirds version might be more suitable for printing and framing.

A product shot of a watch provides another example



Photo by Paul Cuoco



Photo by Pixel Bee

one centered and one using the rule of thirds. In this case, the centered composition might work better. Of course, there are times when you might want to use the rule of thirds or place the subject in a corner for advertising purposes, but for a hero shot of a product, centering can be more effective.

Throughout this chapter, we'll explore various examples of centered compositions, such as a palm tree



Photo by Katherine Kromberg



Photo by Nikki van Toorn

the moon,



Photo by Saketh Garuda

a flower,



Photo by Elijah Pilchard



Photo by Vitali Adutskevich

a car

and even a person in a landscape.

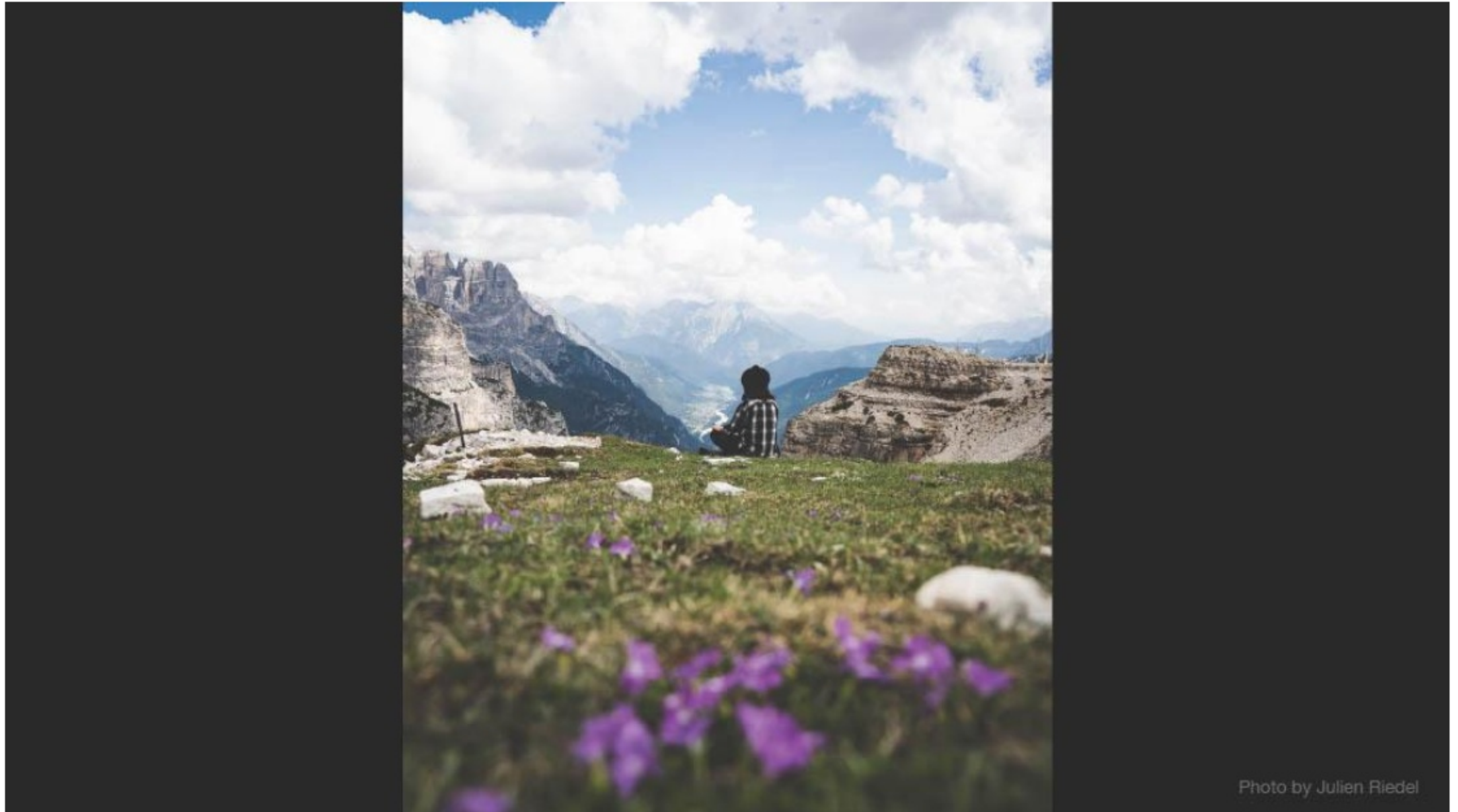


Photo by Julien Riedel

In many cases, centering can work well when the subject is a singular person, animal, or product.

However, not every subject benefits from a centered composition. In some cases, the rule of thirds or another composition technique might work better, as demonstrated by a photo of a chair



one centered and one using the rule of thirds. Ultimately, it's up to you, the photographer, to decide which composition method best suits your vision and desired outcome.

LEADING LINES

In this chapter, we're exploring the concept of leading lines in composition. Leading lines are naturally occurring lines in your photographs that often guide the viewer's eye to a subject or help direct the viewer's eyes to a specific spot.

Composition Refresher

- Rule of Thirds
- Centering
- Leading Lines

Photo by Clarisse Meyer



In the example above, the horizontal lines of the fence frame our subject, drawing our eyes towards it. As you become more advanced in your photography, you'll likely start to compose images using leading lines naturally because they create pleasing compositions.

When starting out, it's a good idea to actively think about these techniques. For example, you might set out with the goal of capturing photos using leading lines or seeking out leading lines in your photography. With practice, incorporating these techniques will become more intuitive.



Photo by Prateek Katyal



Photo by John T

In the photos above, we can see how the presence of leading lines can impact the composition. In the left photo, the prayer flags don't lead to anything, whereas in the right photo, the lines lead to the peak of the mountain and the subjects in the distance.



Photo by Malte Schmidt



Photo by Oliver Roos

A common way to use leading lines is in photos of streets or pathways, like the one above. The lines of the street lead the viewer's eyes towards the horizon, creating a pleasing composition.



In this example, we demonstrate how a photo can be improved by incorporating leading lines. In the original photo (left), there are no clear leading lines directing our vision to the subject. However, after editing (right), the lines of the ivy on the wall lead us to the spot on the bench where the subject is sitting.



Photo by Fabian Mardi

In this street scene, the leading lines created by the crosswalk guide our eyes towards the subject crossing the street. This creates a more interesting composition compared to the photo without the subject.



Photo from The New York Public Library

This classic photo exemplifies how leading lines can be used effectively. The lines created by the road and the buildings lead the viewer's eye to the bridge in the distance.



Photo from The New York Public Library

In this photo, there isn't a specific subject at the convergence of the leading lines. However, the lines still guide our eyes to the center of the frame, resulting in a balanced and visually pleasing composition.

As you practice incorporating leading lines into your photography, you'll find that your compositions become more engaging and interesting to viewers. The key is to be intentional with your technique and practice until it becomes second nature.

SYMMETRY & BALANCE

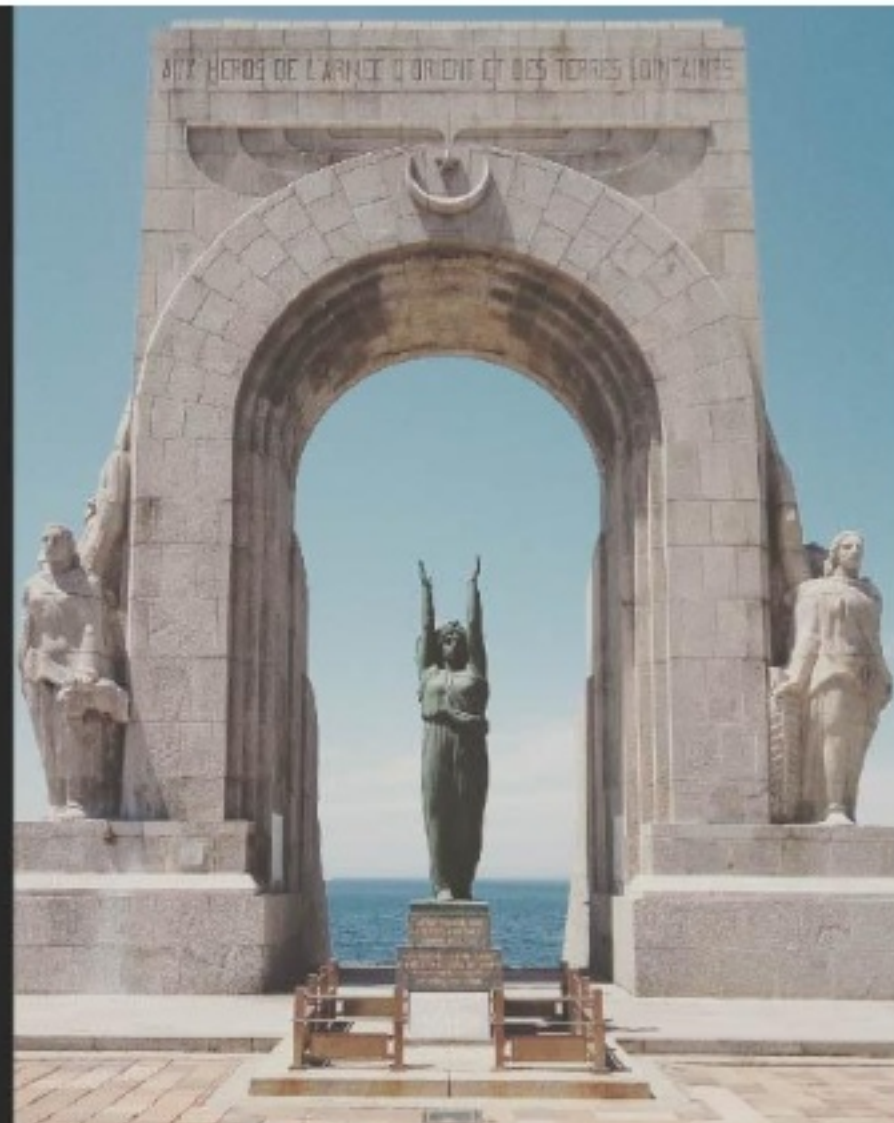
In the next chapter of our book on advanced photography techniques, we will discuss capturing symmetry in your images.

Symmetry refers to a balanced photo, sometimes with similar visual elements on the left and right or the top and bottom, or simply having similar visual weight to the photo from left to right, top to bottom. Achieving balance in a composition can be visually pleasing.

Composition Refresher

- Rule of Thirds
- Centering
- Leading Lines
- Symmetry

Photo by Ewan Harvey



In this example, we have a statue with an arch over it, creating a symmetrical composition. It's not just that it's centered, but that we have similar visual weight on the left and right side of the frame that makes this a balanced photo.



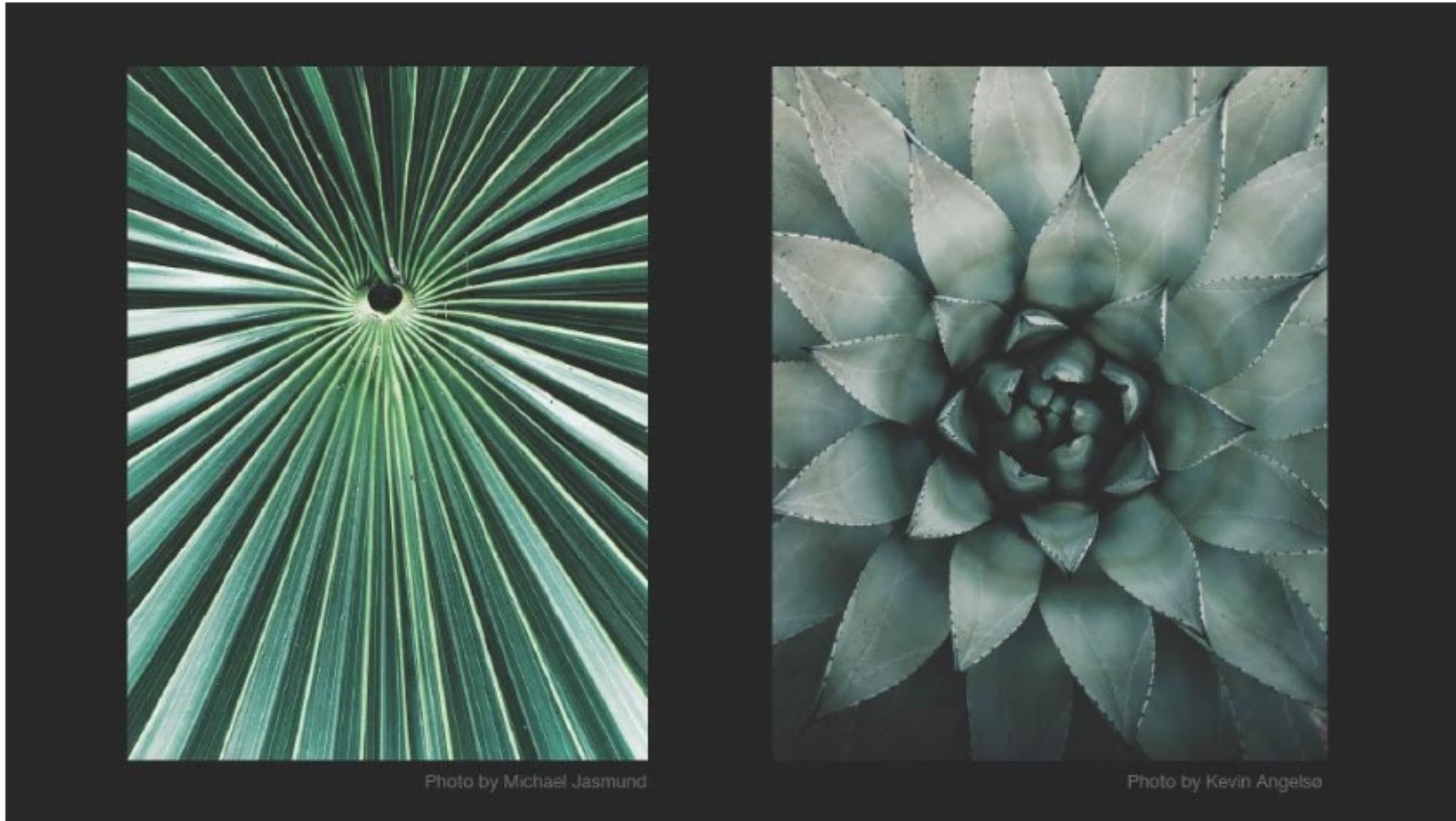
Photo by Erol Ahmed



Photo by Erol Ahmed

Here we have two photos for comparison. On the left, a symmetrical composition, and on the right, a non-symmetrical one. Both are great photos with different feelings. Oftentimes, a non-symmetrical photo will feel more jarring for the viewer, which can be a good thing depending on the intention of the photograph.

In some cases, subjects can be positioned symmetrically, or you can move your body to achieve a symmetrical



composition.

For example, in these two photos, both symmetrical, the one on the right is more balanced and symmetrical because it's exactly centered, while the one on the left is still symmetrical but composed in a way that is not centered and therefore doesn't feel as balanced.

Sometimes, symmetry can be achieved by using reflections, as seen in this example



Photo by Erol Ahmed

In this photo, the reflection creates a symmetrical balance between the top and bottom halves of the image.

Remember, when capturing symmetry in your images, sometimes there's naturally occurring symmetry, and other times you may have to position your subjects or yourself to create that balance in your composition.

NEGATIVE SPACE

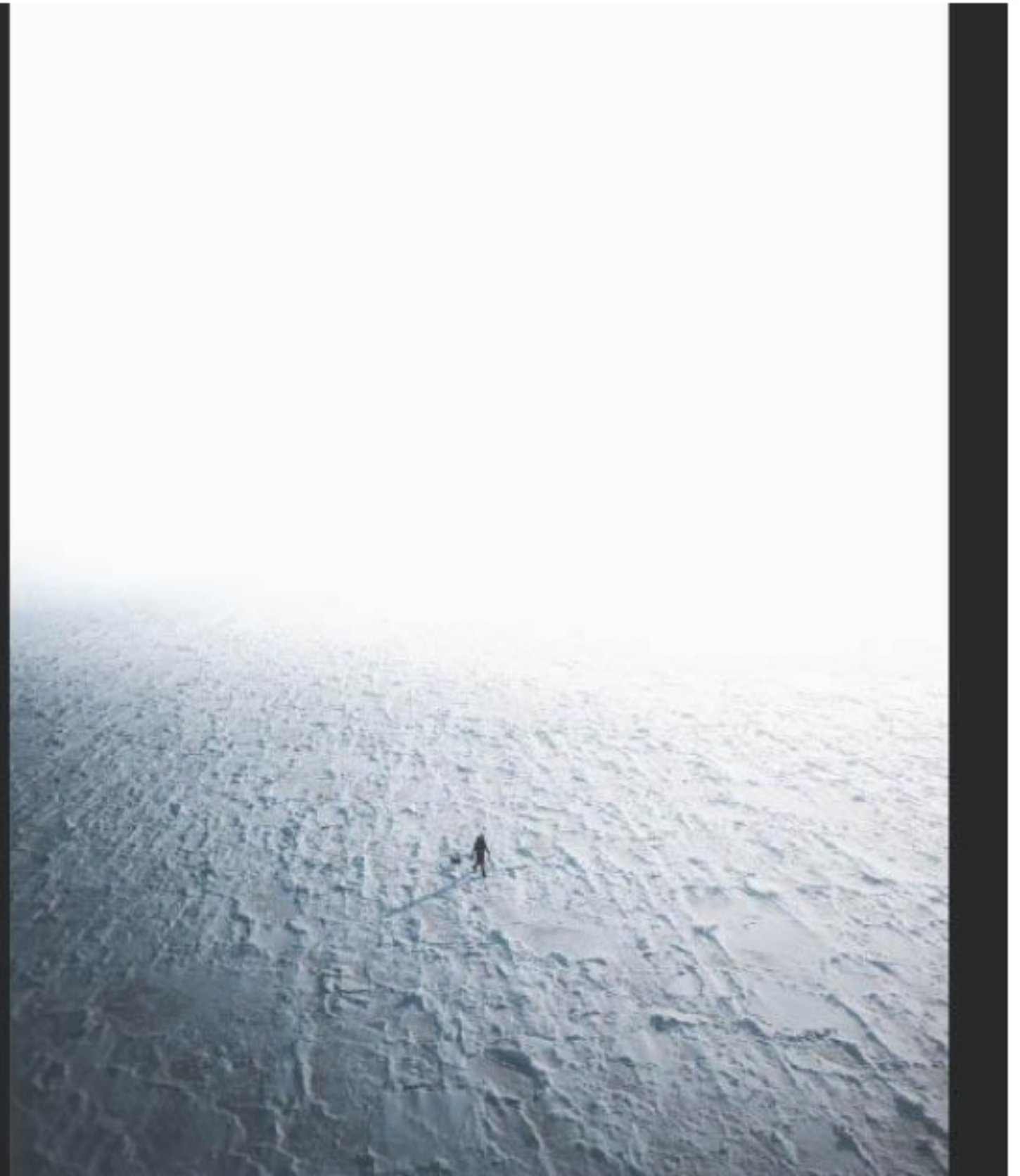
In this chapter, we will discuss the use of negative space as a compositional technique in advanced photography. Negative space is the abstract area surrounding your subject, which typically does not have much detail. A photo that effectively uses negative space will have significantly more negative space than positive space, which is the area occupied by your subject or visually detailed elements.

Negative space allows the viewer to focus on the subject of a photo without being distracted by other elements. It can evoke feelings of loneliness, emphasize the subject, or create an artistic balance between simplicity and detail. In some cases, you can even edit a photo to increase the negative space and decrease the positive space, drawing more attention to the subject.

Composition Refresher

- Rule of Thirds
- Centering
- Leading Lines
- Symmetry
- Negative Space

Photo by Taneli Lahtinen



In the example above, the viewer's eye is drawn to the subject because they are the only element in the frame with so much negative space around them. Similarly, in the following examples, negative space allows the viewer to focus on a singular subject.



Photo by Tomas Nozina



Photo by Averie Woodard



Photo by Henry Be



Photo by Paul Green



Photo by Sawyer Bengtson



Photo by Phil Ebner

When capturing photos, consider experimenting with negative space to achieve different effects. Sometimes, the simplicity of a negative space shot can make the subject stand out and add emotional depth to the photo.

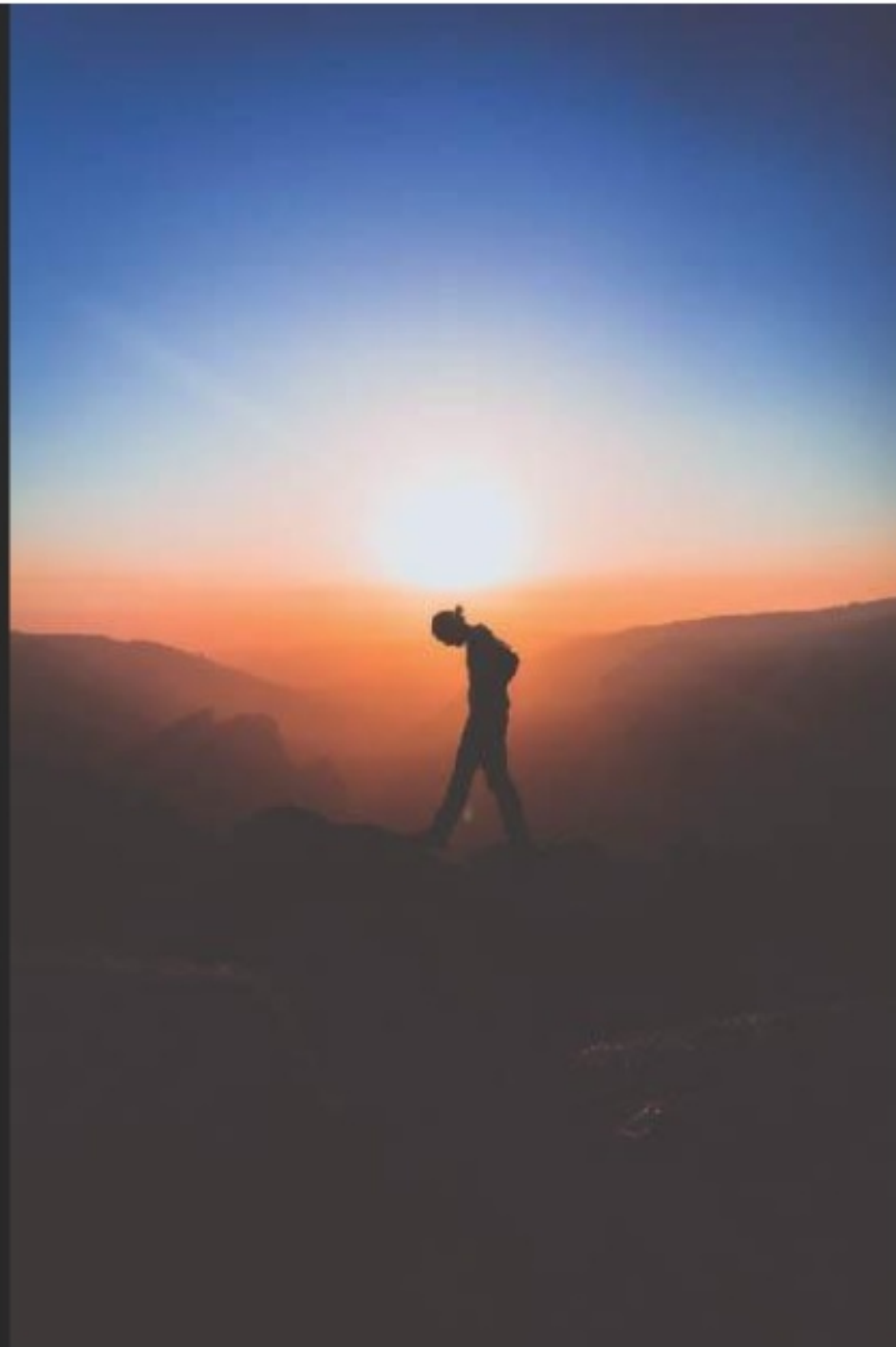


Photo by Karl Magnuson

In the next chapter, we will explore the concept of framing within a frame as another compositional technique.

FRAMING WITHIN A FRAME



Photo by Eric Dekker

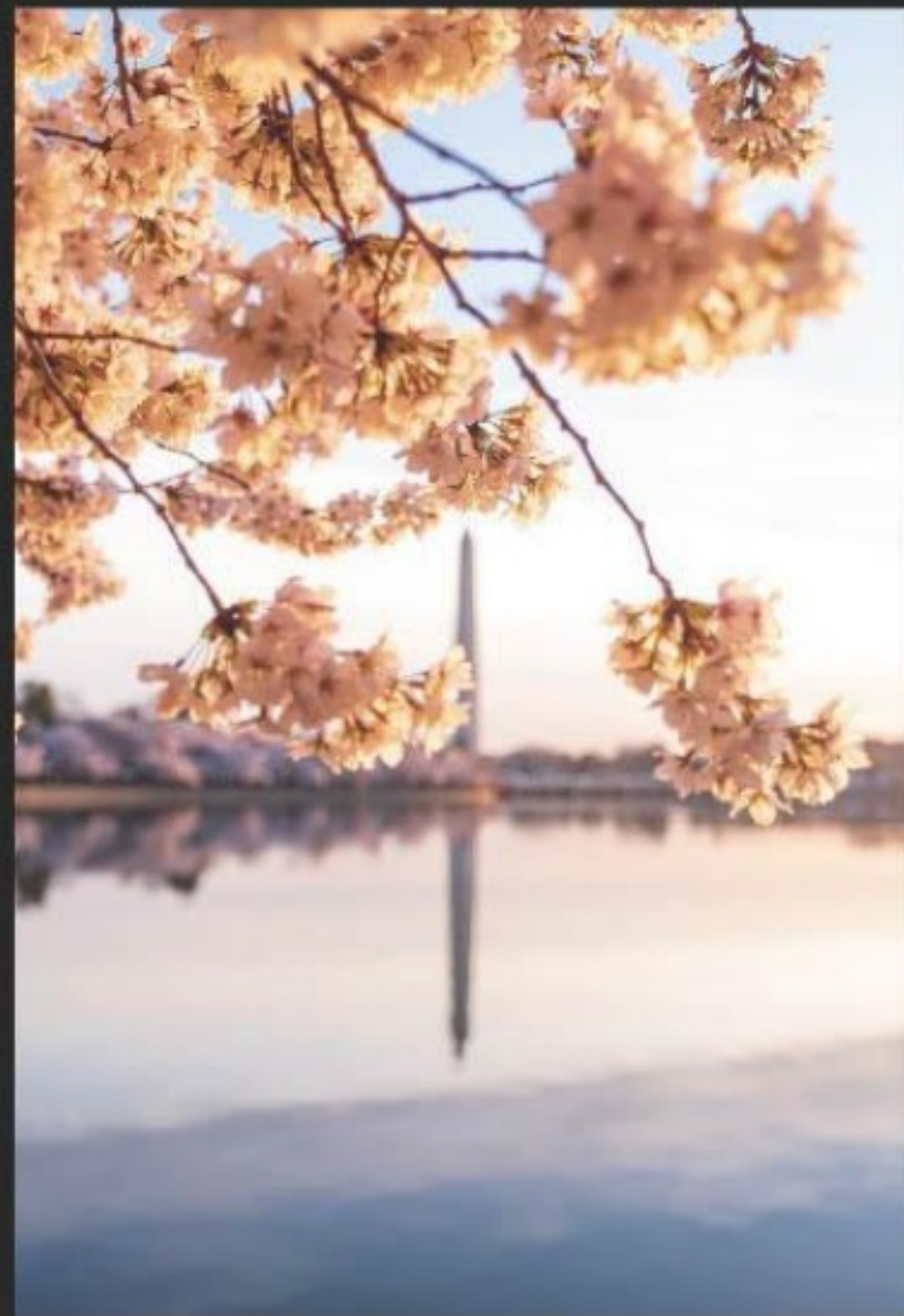


Photo by Jeffrey Clayton

In this chapter, we're exploring the concept of framing within a frame in composition. This refers to finding visual frames in your photo that surround the subject or frame something within the photo itself.

For instance, consider an example where trees and flowers create a frame around a person walking through a beautiful garden. The trees and the open space behind the subject create a natural, appealing frame.

Now let's examine two photos of the Washington Monument. One photo captures just the monument itself, while the other frames it with the columns of a nearby building. The framed version is more visually interesting and also benefits from better lighting.

Another example features cherry blossoms and the Washington Monument. In one photo, the monument is framed by the blossoms, while in the other, the blossoms are in focus and the monument is intentionally out of focus. This creates a unique visual effect that highlights the foreground while still giving a nod to the iconic structure in the background.



Photo by Sarah Medina



Photo by Max Ducourneau

When photographing landscapes, such as a lake reservoir near a house during sunset, using foreground elements like trees and grasses on a hillside can add depth and interest to the composition.

Framing can also be used in various other scenarios, like capturing historical photos, taking portraits, and even photographing objects like a steering wheel. In each case, framing adds an extra layer of visual interest and can draw attention to the subject.

Framing can be achieved using natural elements like trees, lighting, and buildings, or even man-made structures like fences, windows, or books on a shelf. Regardless of what is used for framing, it's important to ensure that there is a clear subject being framed to create a visually appealing photograph.

Remember to think about framing when you're out shooting, and experiment with different foreground elements to enhance your compositions.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRO COMPOSITION TIPS

Welcome to this new chapter on advanced composition tips in our book, 'Advanced Photography: Quickly Improve Your Photography Today'. By now, you may have learned a couple of techniques to start implementing in your photography practice.

In this chapter, we'll delve deeper into the creative side of composition to further enhance your photography skills. We'll explore various composition styles and provide numerous photo examples to give you a clear understanding of how to apply these techniques when you're out taking pictures.

Stay tuned as we guide you through each composition style and provide you with actionable advice to elevate your photography to the next level.

CLEAN UP YOUR FRAME

My first tip is to clean up your frame. As you browse through the most liked and popular photos on social media platforms like Instagram, you'll notice that many of them share a common characteristic: a simple, uncluttered framing. These photos tend to have a subject matter and background without distractions, making them visually pleasing and allowing viewers to focus on the subject without being diverted by other elements.



Photo by Luke Bender



Photo by Nathan Dumlao

A visually simple frame with good lighting and a silhouette can work wonders. In contrast, a cluttered frame, such as one with a Joshua tree surrounded by other trees, mountains, and rocks, can be distracting.

Here are some more examples to illustrate the concept of cleaning up and simplifying your frame:



Photo by Ameen Fahmy



Photo by Biel Morro

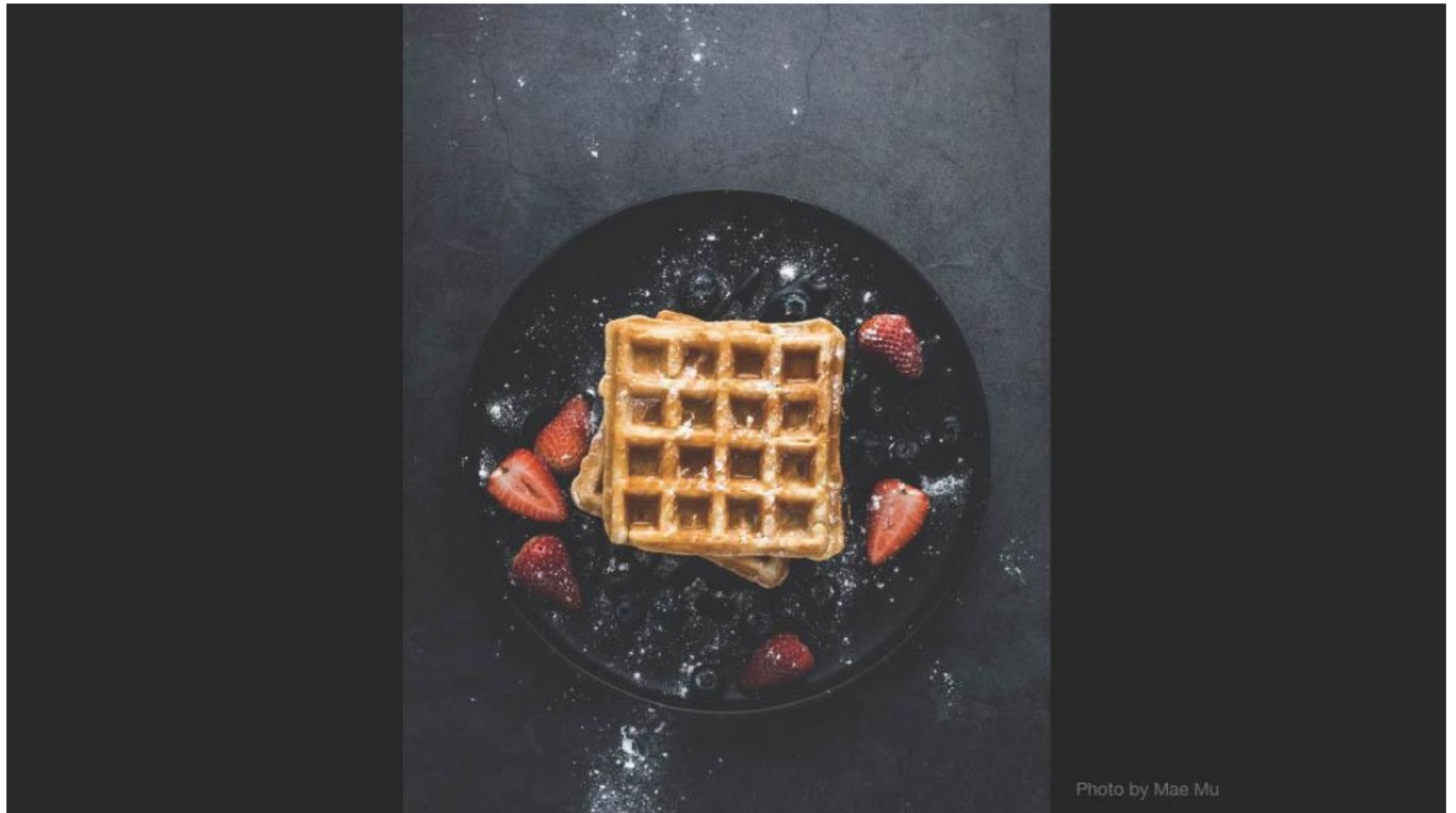


Photo by Mae Mu

To achieve a clean and simple frame, you may need to change your angle, find a different subject, or even edit your photo to desaturate distracting background elements. This approach applies to various subjects, from plants and flowers to food photography.

As demonstrated by these examples, simplifying and cleaning up your frame can result in a more attractive and attention-grabbing photo. This doesn't mean that you should only use negative space or remove all elements surrounding your subject. Instead, consider how you can position your subject and adjust your camera to eliminate competing elements that detract from your main subject.

In summary, cleaning up your frame can greatly improve your photography by allowing the viewer to focus on the subject without distractions.

ADD LAYERS

In this chapter, we will explore an advanced composition technique that can significantly improve your photography: layering. By incorporating layers into your images, you can add depth, interest, and context to your shots, making them more visually appealing and engaging.

Pro Composition Tips

- Clean up your frame
- Add layers



Photo by Martin Marek

Let's examine a photo of a building set against majestic mountains. The photographer chose to include an additional layer in the foreground by capturing pink flowers. They could have opted for a higher perspective and excluded the flowers, but the addition of this layer creates a harmonious balance in the composition, with each third of the photo featuring a distinct element.



Photo by Tanaphong Toochinda



Photo by Anto Meneghini

Layering can also be applied in food photography. For example, compare two yogurt parfaits – one with fewer layers and another with more layers, including berries in the foreground and background, another parfait, and a bowl of berries. The addition of layers in the second image creates a sense of depth and makes the photo more visually interesting.



Photo by Ming Jun Tan

In portrait photography, layering can contribute to the storytelling and overall impact of the image. Consider a photo where a subject is framed by plants in the foreground. This technique not only adds a layer of visual interest but also frames the subject's face in a unique and captivating manner.



Photo by Mark Harpur

Landscape photography can also benefit from layering. In a landscape photo featuring flowers in the foreground, a lake in the middle, and mountains in the background the inclusion of clean, distinct layers adds depth and dimension to the image.



Photo by Jordan Brierley



Photo by Tom Parsons

Layering can even help to provide context and enhance the story of a photo. Compare two photos of seabirds: one with a shallow focus and an indistinguishable background, and another with an out-of-focus Big Ben in the background. The recognizable backdrop in the second image immediately tells the viewer that the photo was taken in London, adding an element of storytelling to the image.

To incorporate layering into your photography, experiment with adding foreground elements or changing the background to create more visually interesting compositions. Keep in mind that the additional layers should enhance the photo's story and not distract from the main subject. By employing layering thoughtfully, you can take your photography to new heights and create images that are both captivating and memorable.

CAPTURE PATTERNS

In this chapter, we will explore a powerful composition tip to elevate your photography: focusing on textures and patterns. This approach can help you find interesting subjects and improve the way you capture your photos.

Pro Composition Tips

- Clean up your frame
- Add layers
- Capture textures & patterns

Photo by Dejan Zakic



For example, consider a photo of a plant with textured leaves arranged in a pattern. The texture and pattern of the leaves add visual interest to the image.



Photo by Robert Laursoo

Another example is a stack of tires, where the arrangement creates a repeating texture and pattern. Such images are more engaging because of the deliberate focus on patterns and textures.

In architectural photography, you can enhance your images by capturing patterns and textures in buildings or parts of a building.



Similarly, in street photography, look for repeating patterns, such as a lineup of parked bikes.



Photo by Berto Macario

Nature also offers abundant opportunities to capture patterns and textures. A field of flowers can present a combination of textures with green leaves and colorful petals.



Photo by Ksenia Kazak

Another example is the bark of a tree, which provides a simple yet visually appealing texture.



Photo by Jude Infantini

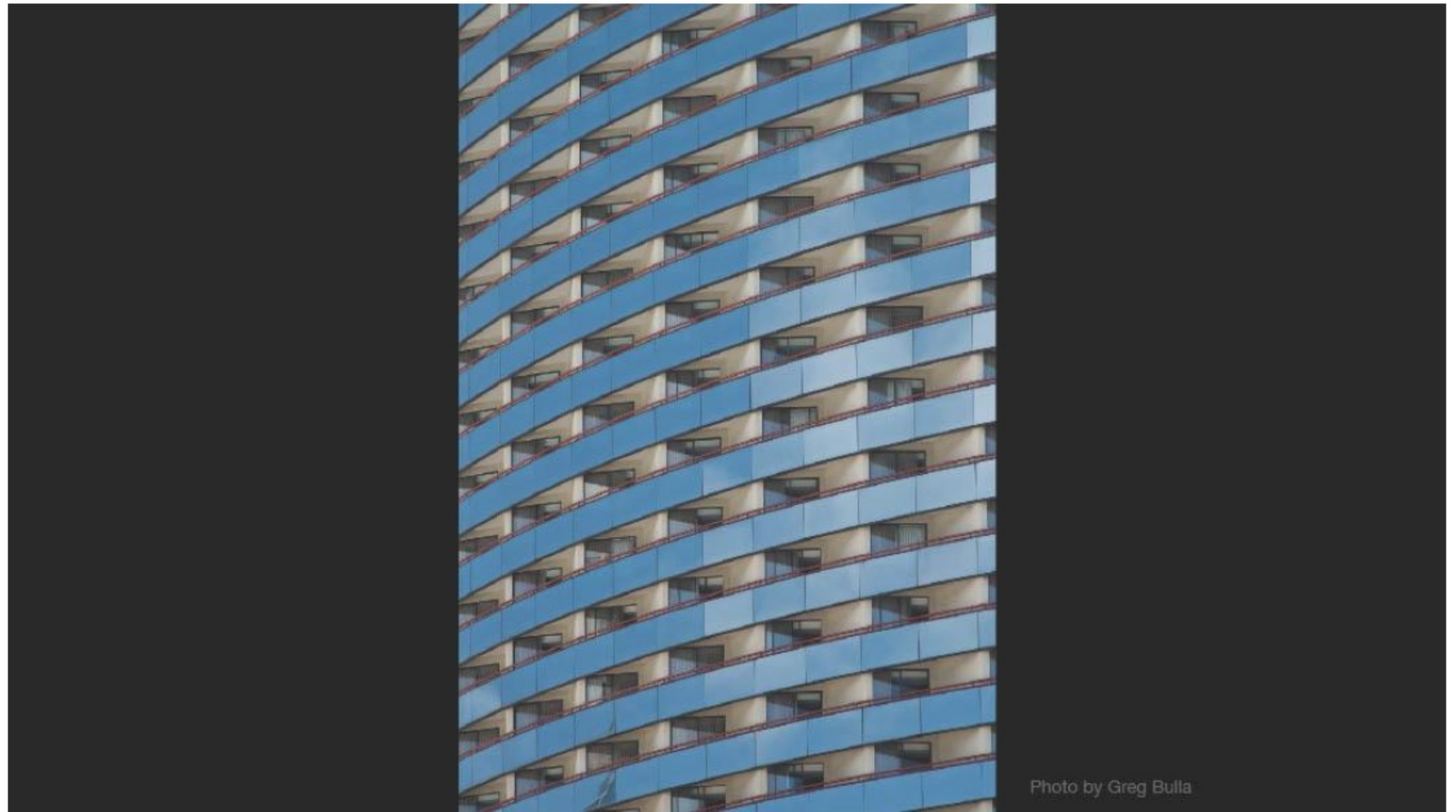


Photo by Greg Bulla

Repeating patterns can also make a mundane subject more engaging. A building with balconies, when zoomed in or cropped to focus on the repeating lines and patterns, becomes more interesting In landscape photography.



The pattern and texture of waves lapping on a shoreline can be enhanced through editing and contrast. When you feel uninspired, focusing on capturing patterns and textures can reinvigorate your creativity. Revisit familiar places and

look for interesting patterns and textures that you might not have noticed before. This exercise can help you discover new subjects in places you've photographed countless times.

In summary, capturing textures and patterns can significantly improve your photography, enabling you to create visually captivating images even in familiar surroundings. Embrace this technique to find interesting subjects and elevate your compositions.

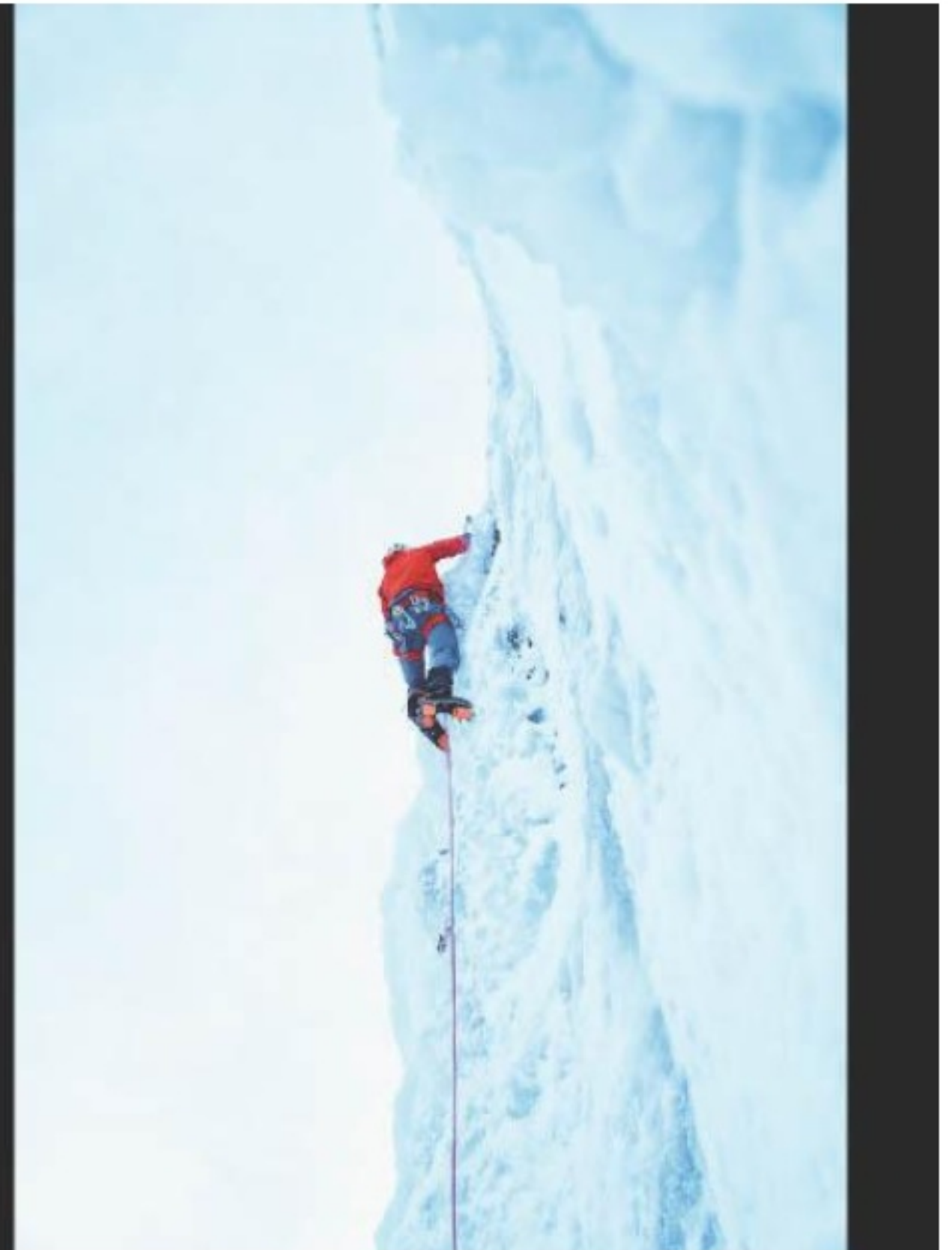
LOOK FOR SPOT COLOR

In this chapter, we'll explore the technique of utilizing spot color to improve your photography composition. Spot color refers to a composition where a single color stands out from the background, often due to its contrasting nature.

Pro Composition Tips

- Clean up your frame
- Add layers
- Capture textures & patterns
- Look for spot color

Photo by Greg Rakozy



Consider the example of an ice climber wearing a bright orange-red jacket against the light blue background of ice and sky. The contrast between the colors makes the subject stand out and creates a more engaging photograph. Comparatively, if the subject was wearing a similar white or light blue jacket, the effect wouldn't be as striking.



Photo by Mihail Macri

Another example showcases a person wearing a brown jacket on the left and a yellow jacket on the right. The yellow jacket stands out more and makes for a more interesting photograph.

In the next example, we have two photographs of apple trees.



Photo by Marek Studzinski



Photo by Ember Sitton

The photo on the left features a mix of red and green apples, while the photo on the right focuses on a single red apple against a green background. The latter is more visually appealing as the singular apple stands out from its surroundings.



Photo by Jack Finnigan

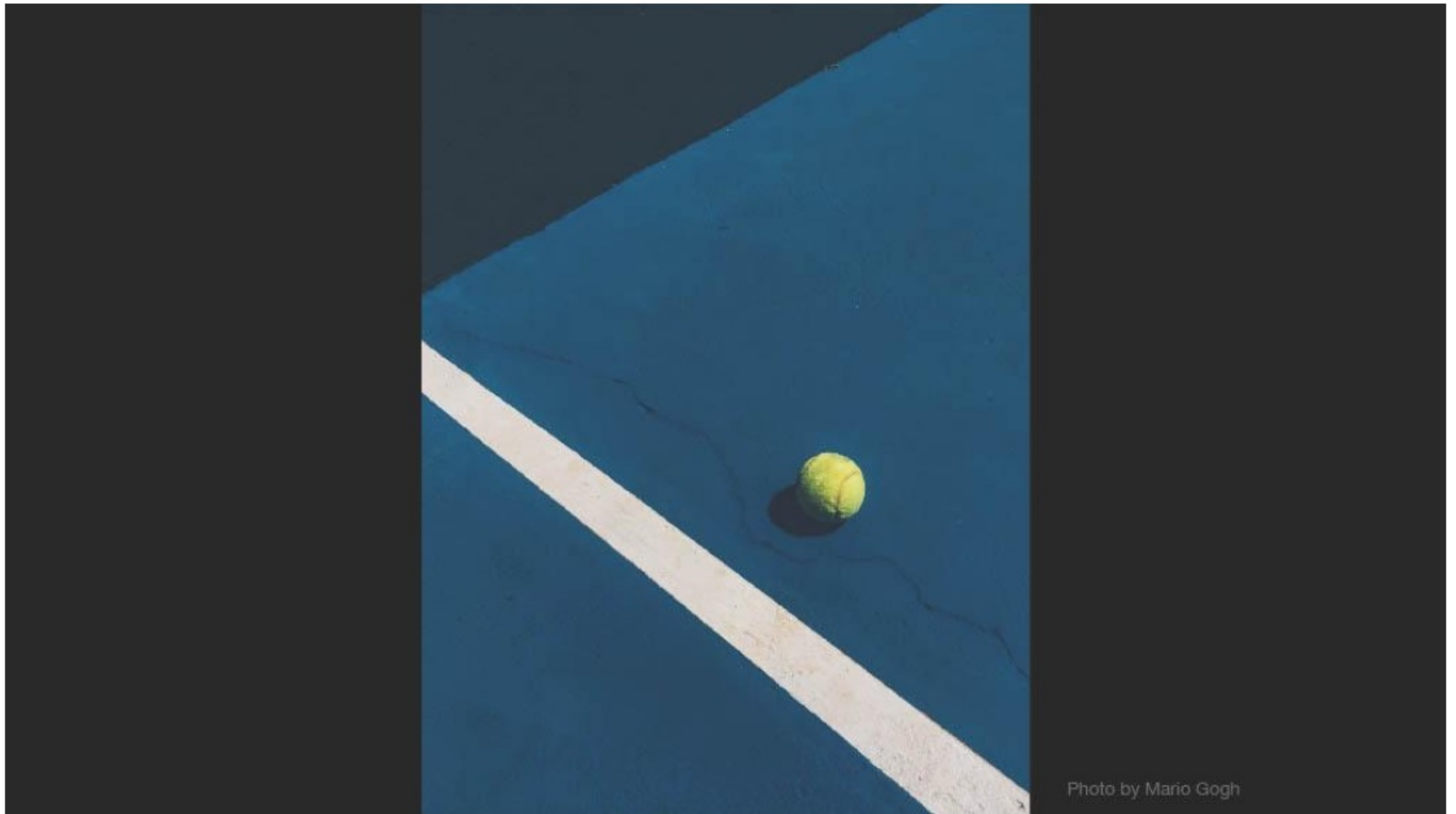


Photo by Mario Gogh

Spot color can be used in a variety of settings. For instance, the classic red telephone booths in the UK stand out against the gray background and a neon yellow tennis ball pops against a blue tennis court

This technique can be employed both naturally and intentionally. When taking portraits, for example, consider dressing your subjects in contrasting colors to make them stand out against the background. This is an element you have control over and can greatly enhance your photographs.

By focusing on spot color, you can create captivating and visually appealing images that draw the viewer's attention. As you practice this technique, you'll discover new ways to incorporate spot color into your compositions and elevate your photography skills.

JUXTAPOSE ELEMENTS

Juxtaposition can manifest in various forms, as demonstrated by the examples provided below.

Pro Composition Tips

- Clean up your frame
- Add layers
- Capture textures & patterns
- Look for spot color
- Juxtapose elements



Photo from the Museums Victoria

Juxtaposition can refer to the contrast of storytelling elements in a photograph. For instance, consider a photo taken during a war, where soldiers who are alive stand next to the grave of someone who likely fought alongside them. This image presents a literal representation of life versus death.

Juxtaposition can also involve contrasting the weight of elements in your photos, or the manner in which you contrast light and color, old and new. Let's examine some examples to further understand this concept.

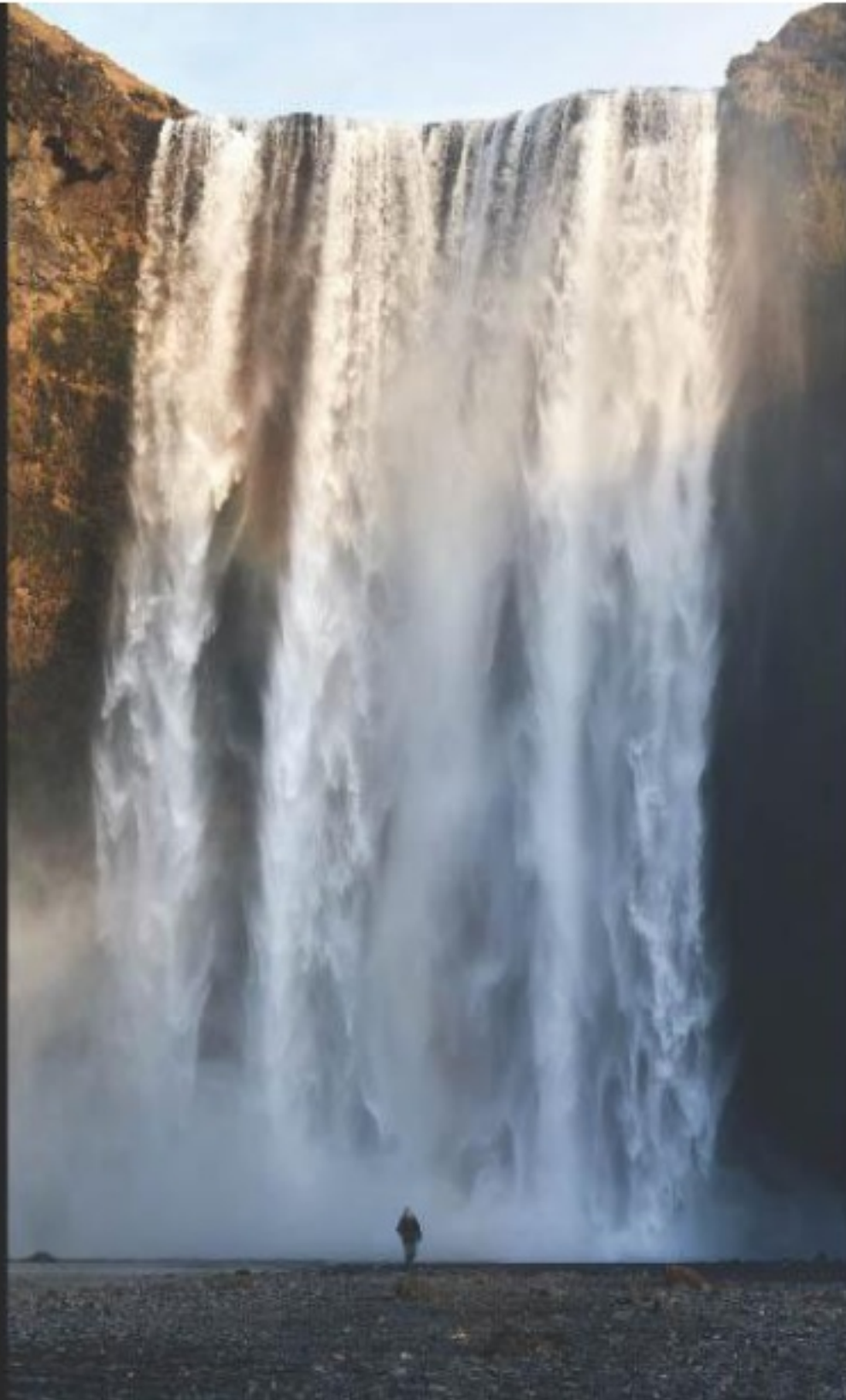


Photo by Valdemaras D.

One example is a photograph of a colossal waterfall with a person standing underneath it. The presence of the person accentuates the scale and power of the waterfall, emphasizing the juxtaposition of size and strength.



Photo by Alex Wing

Another example is a photo of old leaves dying, with one leaf still green and gradually fading into brown. This image showcases the juxtaposition of old versus new.



Photo by Phil Ebner



Photo by Rod Long

Similarly, photographs that display the contrast between old and new buildings or a baby's hand alongside an elderly person's hand provide fascinating instances of juxtaposition.



Photo by Gordon Plant

An intriguing photograph that contrasts a small lifeboat against the massive freighter ship behind it demonstrates the juxtaposition of visual weight.



Photo by Prometheus Design

The same principle applies to a photo of new buildings juxtaposed against an old construction site, where old buildings are being demolished and replaced with modern structures. The framing of this photo tells a story of transformation and progress.



Photo by Noah Buscher

Juxtaposition can also involve theoretical concepts, such as a solitary human looking up at the vast expanse of the galaxy, with thousands of stars in the background. This composition prompts the viewer to ponder deeper questions about humanity and our place in the universe.



Photo by Zac Ong

Lastly, juxtaposition can also be humorous, as demonstrated by a photo of a bird perched on a man's head. This light-hearted moment is an unexpected and amusing contrast.

In summary, juxtaposition can be a powerful tool in photography for capturing contrasts, both visually and in terms of storytelling. Keep this concept in mind during your next photography adventure to create more compelling and thought-provoking images.

SHOOT DIAGONAL LINES

Welcome to the next chapter on composition techniques in our Advanced Photography book. In this chapter, we will focus on finding and using diagonal lines to improve your photography.

Pro Composition Tips

- Clean up your frame
- Add layers
- Capture textures & patterns
- Look for spot color
- Juxtapose elements
- Find diagonal lines



Photo by Boston Public Library

Diagonal lines can make a photo feel more powerful and interesting to look at. Let's consider an example of a classic photo from the Boston Public Library featuring a beach scene with cars lined up diagonally across the frame. This composition creates a bit less balance compared to a photo with cars perfectly parallel to the edge of the frame, but it makes the photo more intriguing.



Photo by Filip Filkovic Philatz

Diagonal lines often draw the viewer's eye across the frame, encouraging them to spend more time examining the photo.



Photo by Filip Filkovic Philatz



Photo by Ryan Searle

For instance, compare a parking lot photo with vertical lines of cars to one with diagonal lines. The latter is likely to be more engaging due to the dynamic lines.

To further illustrate this point, let's examine two similar shots of parking lots

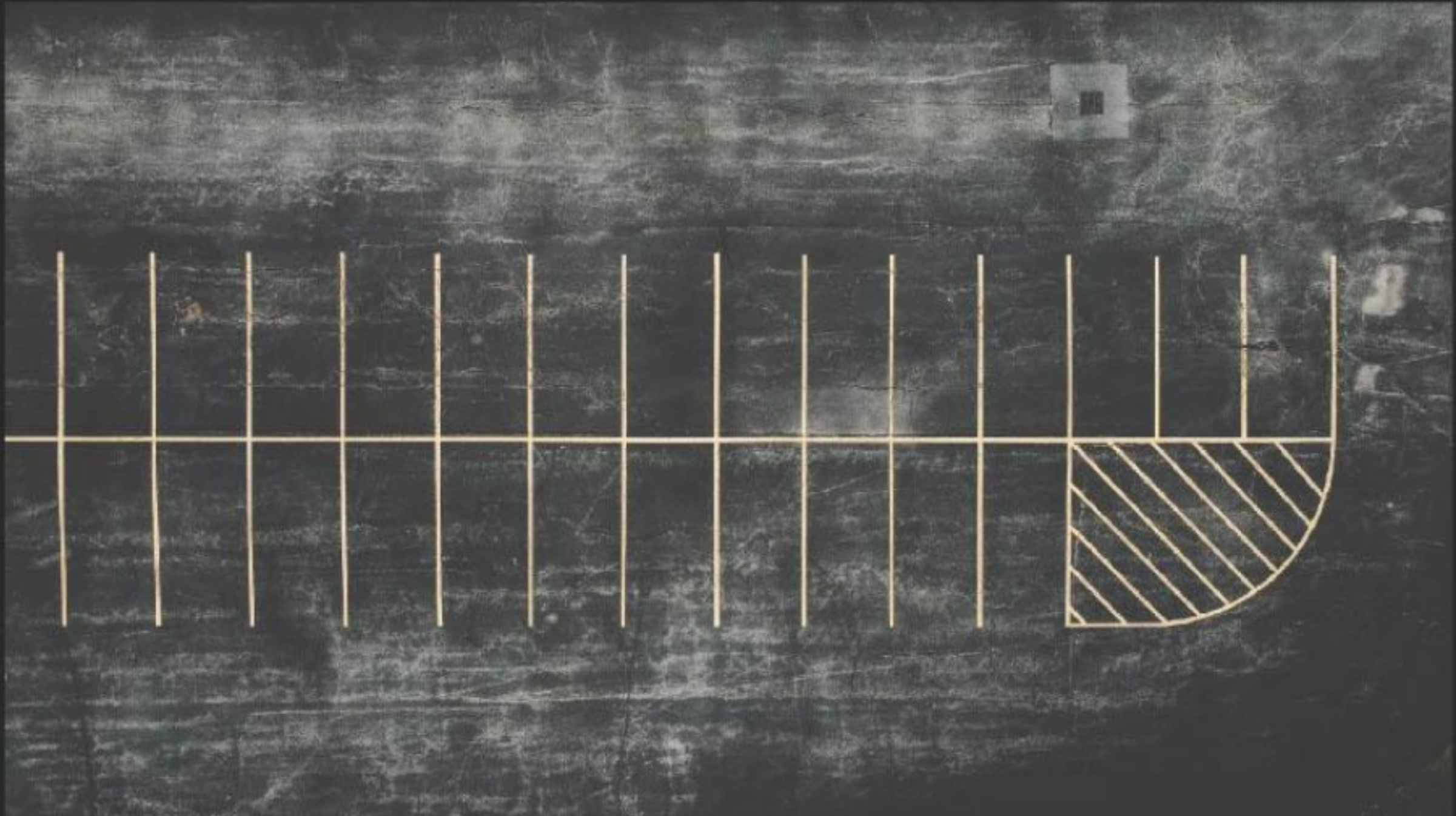


Photo by Yassine Khalfalli



Photo by Yassine Khalfalli

The photo with diagonal lines and a yellow car as the subject is more dynamic and captivating.

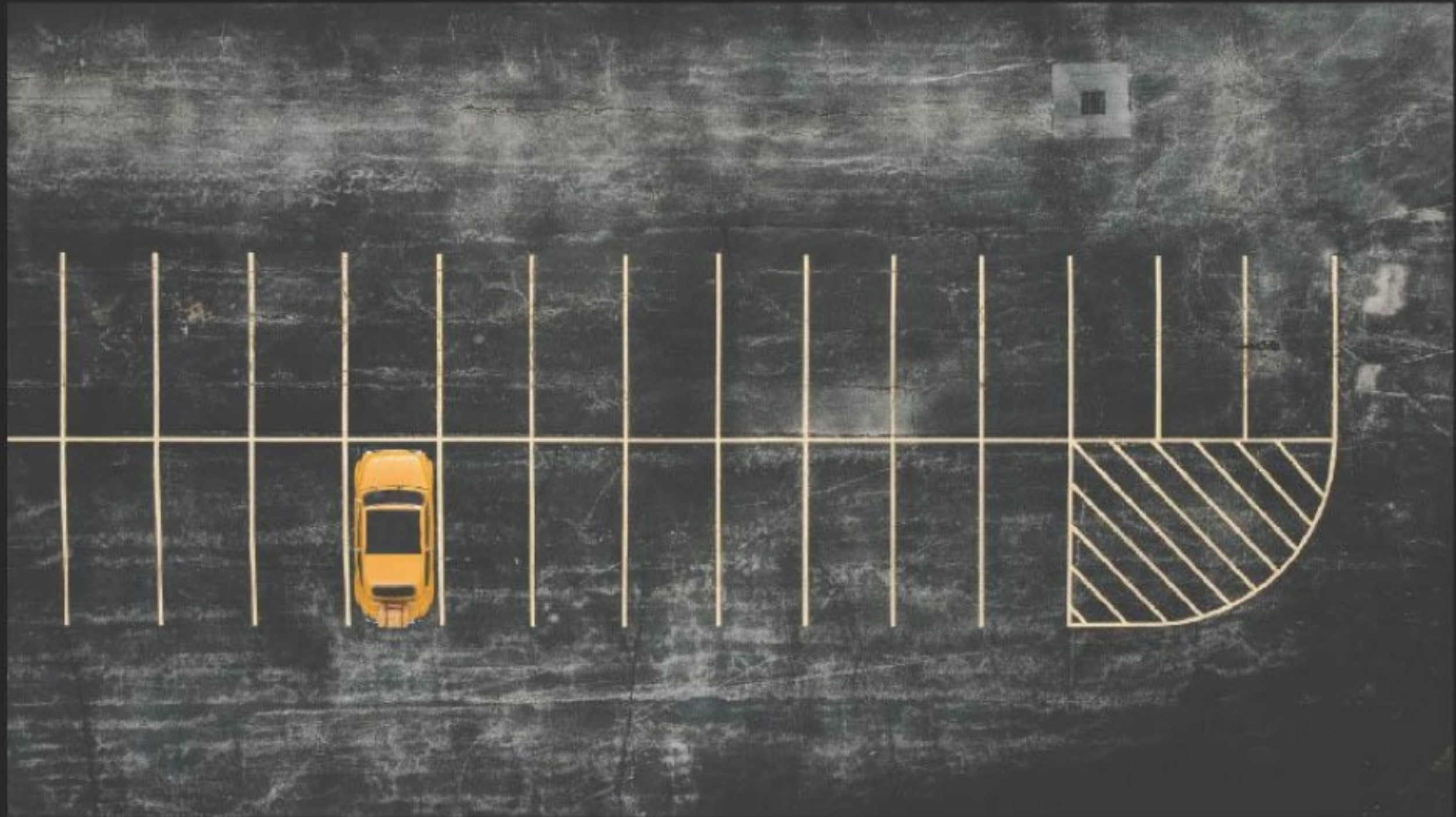


Photo by Yassine Khalfalli

Adding a subject can also increase a photo's interest. In the example of a parking lot with vertical and horizontal lines



Photo by Yassine Khalfalli

we can add a car with Photoshop Making the car's position diagonal in the frame makes it even more interesting.

Here are a few more examples of how diagonal lines can enhance a photo:

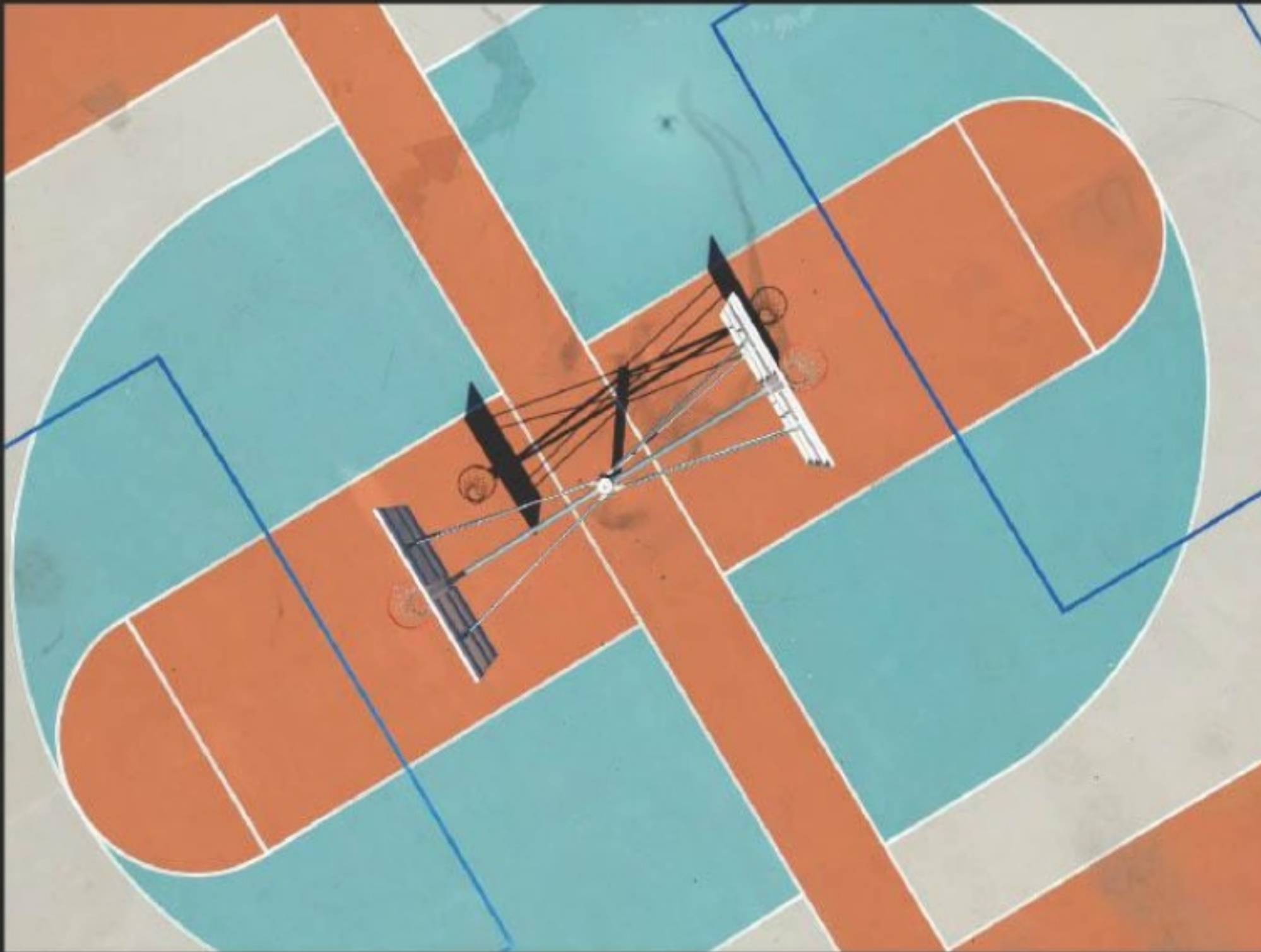


Photo by Zetong Li

- A basketball court from above



Photo by Marios Gkortsilas

- A tractor in a farm

Keep an eye out for opportunities to incorporate diagonal lines when composing your shots. Think about how you can change the framing to introduce diagonal lines through your frame. We're excited to see how you apply this technique to your photography! Share your diagonal photos with us by tagging our social media accounts or using the relevant course hashtag.

We hope this chapter on finding and utilizing diagonal lines has been helpful, and we can't wait to see the incredible photos you capture. Happy shooting!

FIND A UNIQUE VANTAGE POINT

In the next chapter of our book on advanced photography techniques, we will focus on the importance of shooting from unique vantage points. Most photographers tend to take photos from a standing perspective, capturing images at a height of 5 to 6 feet. However, by exploring different angles and perspectives, you can make your photos much more interesting.

Pro Composition Tips

- Shoot from a unique vantage point



Photo by Dorothea Lange

Let's take a look at some examples of how changing the vantage point can enhance your photographs. The aerial view of this scene adds an extra layer of interest, compared to what an eye-level shot would have offered.



Photo by Jan Kopřiva



Photo by Nikolay Loubet

Similarly, consider two photos of skateboarders: one taken from a standard angle, and another taken from above with a fisheye lens. The aerial perspective, which includes photographers around the edge of the bowl, makes the second image more engaging and dynamic.



Photo by Alina Fedorchenko

When photographing architecture, including a person in the shot can add an interesting element. This image would not have the same impact without the human element.



Photo by Leslie Cross



Photo by Jake Blucker

By simply changing the angle or perspective, you can create unique and captivating images. For example, compare a photo taken at eye level of a highway to one taken closer to the ground. The latter image, with its unusual vantage point, is more intriguing.



Photo by Andreas Kruck



Photo by Andre Benz

The same principle applies to photographs taken in popular tourist destinations like Times Square in New York. The second photo, taken from an unusual angle, is far more captivating than the standard shot.

In summary, experimenting with different perspectives and vantage points can significantly enhance your photographs. By stepping out of your comfort zone and trying new angles, you can capture more interesting and dynamic images that stand out from the rest. So, the next time you're out with your camera, don't be afraid to explore unique viewpoints and elevate your photography to new heights.

LEAVE SPACE FOR MOTION

In this chapter, we will discuss an essential pro composition tip to elevate your photography - leaving space for motion. When capturing a moving subject, it is more natural and visually appealing to leave more space in front of the subject rather than behind. While it might sometimes be interesting to compose with more space behind the subject, generally, leaving space in front of the subject results in a more balanced and natural image.



Photo by Valentyn Chernetskyi



In some cases, you can create this space during post-processing by cropping the image if you initially captured a wide enough shot. For instance, let's consider a photo of a cyclist taken with a slightly longer shutter speed to create a background blur. In order to achieve this effect, you need to set your shutter speed to something a bit longer than usual,

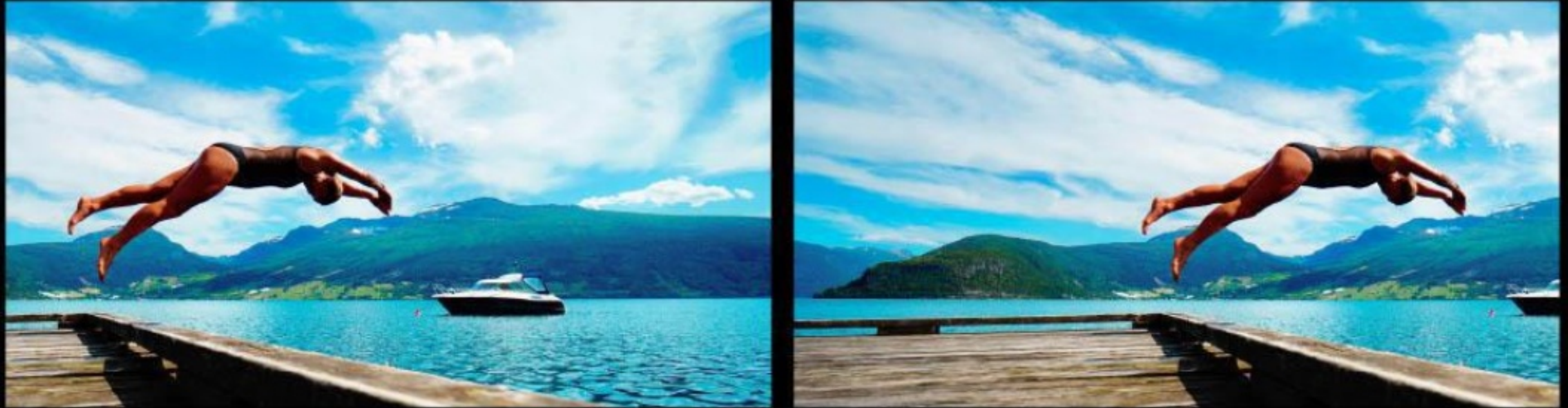
such as 1/15 or 1/10 of a second, and pan your camera along with the moving subject. This will keep the subject in focus while blurring the background.



Photo by Chander R



Photo by Chander R



Leaving more space in front of a moving subject often results in a more balanced and visually pleasing photo. For example, a photo of a runner with space in front appears more natural compared to a tightly cropped image where the

runner is in the middle of the frame. Similarly, a photo of a diver diving out of the frame can be interesting, but a more balanced and natural composition would have more space in front of the diver.

When capturing motion, it's essential to experiment with different compositions and find what works best for your subject. Leaving space in front of your subject is an excellent starting point. However, don't hesitate to explore creative and unconventional compositions that might produce a more jarring or unsettling image.

In conclusion, when photographing moving subjects such as people, athletes, vehicles, or any object in motion, start by leaving space in front of the subject for a more balanced and visually appealing photo. Additionally, you can experiment with creative compositions and different amounts of space in front of the subject to create unique and captivating images.

In the next chapter, we will continue exploring more advanced photography techniques to help you further improve your skills.

SPOT REFLECTIONS

Earlier, we covered symmetry, and now we will focus on finding and utilizing reflections to improve your photography.

Head out to places with water, glass, or windows where you can find great reflections. For example, take a look at this image of people standing in front of a window.

Pro Composition Tips

- Shoot from a unique vantage point
- Leave space for motion
- Spot reflections



Photo by Shen Pan

The photo would not be as interesting without the reflection on the polished floor below.



Photo by Jason Leung

Another example is a photo of a bird flying over water. The water is slightly choppy, so the reflection is less prominent, but the image remains captivating.



Photo by Ray Hennessy



Photo by Ray Hennessy

In some cases, the absence of reflection can make a photo less interesting. For instance, this image of a bird without a reflection is still a good photo but pales in comparison to the version with the reflection. The reflection adds a layer of depth and visual interest.



Photo from The New York Public Library

Reflections can also be used to tell a story, as seen in this classic historical photo from the New York Public Library featuring a bakery. The reflection of people looking into the window adds an intriguing narrative element to the image.



Photo by OPPO

Another example of reflection is this photo of a person looking out of a window. The image becomes more compelling due to the reflection, even though it's not symmetrical or balanced.



Photo by Casey Horner

Keep an eye out for reflections in your surroundings, such as trees reflected in a puddle. You might not notice this at first glance, but finding a unique vantage point and considering the time of day and light source can reveal the perfect reflection.



Photo by Valentyn Chernetskyi

Another impressive example is a photo of a building framed by other buildings and its reflection in a puddle after rain. In this case, the photographer used the water to create a visually captivating image.



Photo by Randy Fath

Reflections can also create a sense of balance and symmetry, like in this photo of a cabin and its reflection in the water. Photos with reflections are inherently interesting to look at, and they can enhance the overall appeal of your images.



Photo by Phil Ebiner

For instance, take a look at this reflection captured at a train depot in my hometown. In one image, the focus is on the leaf in the foreground, while the location and building in the background provide context.



Photo by Valentyn Chernetskyi

In the other image, the building is the subject of the photo. To capture the reflection just right, you might need to play around with the camera's height and angle.

In conclusion, reflections can enhance your photography by adding depth, visual interest, and even storytelling elements. Don't be discouraged by a rainy day; instead, seize the opportunity to capture unique reflections when the sky clears up.

BREAK THE PATTERN

In the next chapter of our book on Advanced Photography, we will discuss the importance of capturing broken patterns. As we mentioned earlier, capturing patterns and textures can provide excellent photographic opportunities. Just like spot color, where a contrasting color creates a dynamic image, a broken pattern can also create a visually striking photograph.

Pro Composition Tips

- Shoot from a unique vantage point
- Leave space for motion
- Spot reflections
- Break the pattern

Photo by Laura Summers



One example of a broken pattern is a sandy beach with a single shell disrupting the pattern. If you were to capture just the sand, it would still provide a nice texture. However, the inclusion of the shell breaking the pattern creates a more engaging background and foreground.



Photo by Phil Ebner

Another interesting example is a shadow created by a chain-link fence with a leaf in the middle of the frame. The leaf breaks the pattern of the shadow and adds depth to an otherwise mundane subject. Editing the image in black and white enhances the textures and contrast of the shadow, making it more visually appealing.





Photo by Eugene Golovesov



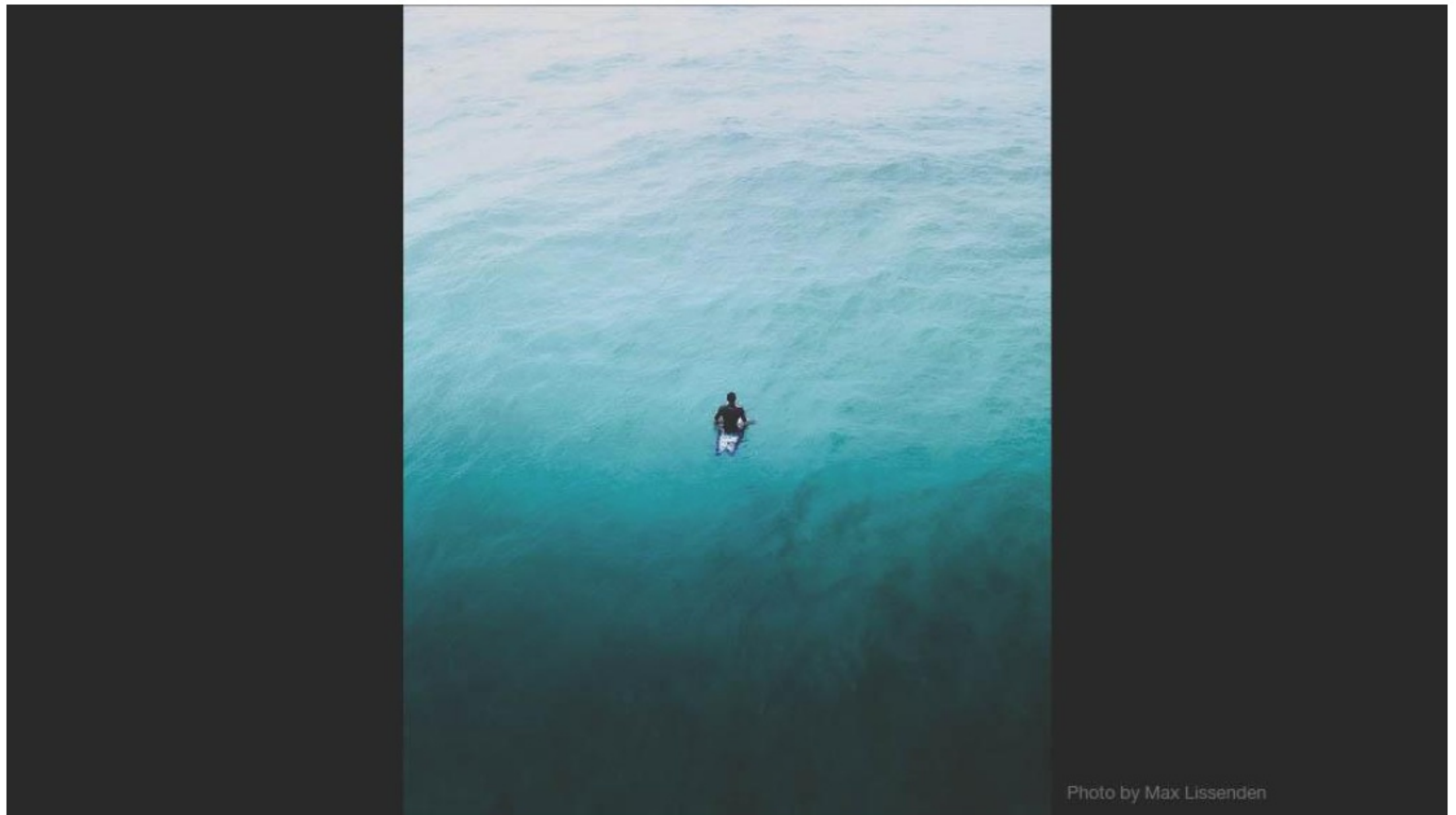
Photo by Road Ahead

In another instance, a textured yellow wall is broken up by flowers at the bottom. Without the flowers, the wall might not be as interesting to look at. Similarly, an image of leaves can be made more engaging by the addition of pink flowers, which not only break the pattern but also provide spot color.



Photo by Rodion Kutsaev

Capturing clean patterns that fill the frame and are broken up by a single subject can create striking compositions. One example of this is a patterned building facade with a person passing by. The subject breaks the clean pattern, making for an interesting and well-composed photograph.



Another example is a water texture broken up by a lone surfer, also utilizing negative space effectively. As you continue to improve your photography, be on the lookout for patterns and consider how incorporating a subject to break those patterns can elevate your images.

THE RULE OF ODDS

In this chapter, we will explore the Rule of Odds, a composition tip that some photographers believe enhances the impact of a photo. The Rule of Odds suggests that having an odd number of subjects in a scene creates a more dynamic and visually appealing image than an even number of subjects.

Pro Composition Tips

- Shoot from a unique vantage point
- Leave space for motion
- Spot reflections
- Break the pattern
- Rule of odds



Photo by Wasa Crispbread

Consider the example of a photo featuring three people tasting food, as opposed to a photo with just two people. The Rule of Odds suggests that the photo with three people has a more powerful visual impact. While the theory may not always hold true, it's worth exploring the potential effect of odd numbers on your images.



Photo by Bernice Kopple



In another example, compare two photos of people wearing gas masks and The photo with three people may seem more dynamic due to the triangular formation, which is considered to be a strong and stable shape.



Photo by Hert Niks



Photo by Dave Hoefler

The Rule of Odds can also apply to inanimate objects, such as three palm trees versus two and The photo with three palm trees appears more visually engaging. Similarly, a stack of three doughnuts may be more appealing than just two



Photo by Patrick Fore



Photo by Elena Koycheva



Photo by Ola Mishchenko



Photo by Kobby Mendez

However, the Rule of Odds is not an absolute law, and there may be situations where an even number of subjects creates a more balanced and calming effect.



Photo by Hu Chen



Photo by David Heiling

Consider the case of two elephants versus three. While the photo with three elephants tells a different story, both images offer their unique appeal.

When you have control over the number of subjects in your photos, such as in product photography, experiment with odd and even numbers to see how they affect the overall composition. For example, try taking a photo with one, two, or



Photo by Phil Ebner

three people.



Photo by Phil Ebner



Photo by Phil Ebner

Observe how the balance and storytelling change with each variation.

In conclusion, the Rule of Odds is an interesting concept to explore in your photography journey. By experimenting with odd and even numbers of subjects, you can discover how this principle affects your images and apply it to enhance the visual appeal of your work.

FILL THE FRAME

In this chapter, we will discuss an important composition technique that can help you improve your photography quickly: filling the frame.

When we photograph a subject, we often place it within an environment so that the background or surrounding area provides context or allows us to see the entire subject. However, you can experiment with zooming in or stepping closer to your subject, so that it, or a part of it, fills the entire frame.

Pro Composition Tips

- Fill the frame

Photo by Alexander Krivitskiy



Let's consider a portrait example where the photographer has gone in extremely tight. When photographing people like this, it's more natural to see the chin and below it without cutting off the bottom of the chin, as opposed to cutting off the forehead. Be mindful of this when framing your shot. Filling the frame allows you to capture the subject's expression and helps the viewer feel what they are feeling.



Photo by Alexander Krivitskiy

In some cases, a profile shot of a person can be very appealing. This type of photograph showcases the shape of a person's face, their nose, lips, and chin.

However, be cautious about getting too close, as it may result in an overly tight crop that could detract from the image.



Similarly, when photographing animals, such as an elephant, filling the frame with details works well compared to a photo in an awkward middle ground.



Photo by Eric Heininger



Filling the frame doesn't always mean focusing on a single subject. It can also involve filling the frame with multiple elements or focusing on an area where there is a lot going on.



Photo by Frank Hurley

This type of composition encourages the viewer to spend more time with the photograph, examining each element and feeling like they are within the space.



Photo by Toa Heftiba

Another example is a photo taken in an antique shop, where the subject is surrounded by various items. Every element in the frame adds to the story of the photo and doesn't detract from the subject.

In summary, filling the frame can involve getting close and tight on a subject to show details or capturing a wider scene filled with multiple elements. This composition technique can help you create more vibrant, dynamic, and engaging photographs that quickly improve your photography skills.

LEFT TO RIGHT THEORY

In this chapter of our book on advanced photography techniques, we will discuss a theoretical concept that you can experiment with to see if it works for you. This is known as the left to right theory.

The left to right theory posits that in many cultures where people read from left to right, our eyes naturally gravitate to the left side of an image. As a result, placing the subject on the left side of the frame can create a more dynamic photograph. While not everyone agrees with this theory, it is worth trying out to see if it works for you.

To put this theory to the test, take a photo of the same subject and place them on the left and right sides of the frame. Later, show these photos to friends or family members one at a time, without telling them about the theory, and see which one they prefer.



Throughout this chapter, we will provide several examples to illustrate the left to right theory. Experiment with flipping the photos you take and showing them to others to see which version they prefer.



Photo from the Museums Victoria



Photo by Craig Stevenson



Photo by Barthelemy de Mazonod



It is worth noting that the left to right theory may not apply to every photograph or situation. For instance, in some cases, you might prefer a centered subject or one placed on the right side of the frame. The key is to experiment with different compositions and determine what works best for your unique style.



Photo by Giuseppe Argenziano

In conclusion, the left to right theory is an interesting concept to explore in your photography journey. Test it out in your own work, and let us know your thoughts. Do you find that placing the subject on the left side of the frame produces more visually appealing images? We would love to hear your insights.

SOLO COLOR

In the next chapter, we will discuss the concept of solo color in photography. This technique goes beyond composition, and it involves framing your shots in such a way that there is a single color or a similar color palette within your photo. This differs from spot colors, which are used to create a subject that stands out from the background. Instead, the idea is to create an artistic photo with a consistent color range.

Pro Composition Tips

- Fill the frame
- Left to right theory
- Solo color

Photo by Malik Skydsgaard



For example, in the image above, we have yellow gummi bears on a yellow background, creating a specific and unified look. This effect can also occur naturally, as shown in the image of a bear in an environment where the background has the same color tones as the bear itself.



Photo from Andy Holmes

This photo evokes a sense of sadness, possibly because of the bear's facial expression and the blurred lines in the background, which suggest the bear is in an enclosure. The muted colors and dark exposure also contribute to the overall mood of the image.



Photo from Jake Fagan

Similarly, the image of a Toyota truck moving across a landscape with a consistent color palette demonstrates the power of solo color composition. Although there are hints of green and blue, the overall color range is cohesive.



Photo from Rafael Hoyos Weht

Using solo color composition can sometimes result in a more abstract photo that resembles a painting or other types of art. In the examples above, you can see various images that showcase the concept of solo color, from cool colors to warm tones.



Photo from Catarina Carvalho



Photo from Edgar Moran

When comparing a photo with solo color composition to one with spot color, we can see how they create different effects. The image on the left with cool colors is more balanced and soothing, while the one on the right with contrasting spot colors is bolder and more dynamic.

As you explore the world of photography, keep an eye out for opportunities to use solo color composition, or create your own by incorporating elements with similar color ranges. We hope you've enjoyed this chapter, and we look forward to guiding you through more advanced photography techniques, such as lighting, storytelling, and finding inspiration.

WAIT FOR THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Welcome to this next pro tip: wait for the decisive moment. This is a tip that's not strictly limited to how you frame a subject or a scene, but really waiting for something to happen in your frame, in your scene, to truly capture that moment.

In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of capturing the decisive moment in photography, illustrated by examples that showcase this concept in action.

Pro Composition Tips

- Fill the frame
- Left to right theory
- Solo color
- Wait for the 'decisive moment'



Photo from the Boston Public Library

Here's a great example of the decisive moment: a bride on her wedding day, throwing her bouquet, a tradition that we have, and the ladies down below trying to catch this bouquet. This is a perfect moment captured, a perfect example of the decisive moment. You see the expressions on the bride's face, the ladies below, and the children in the background, all bursting with joy and curiosity at this momentous occasion.

This idea of the decisive moment was popularized by Henri Cartier-Bresson, a French photographer who was a master of candid photography and really became a master of street photography as well, popularizing the idea of just going out and capturing everyday life. Cartier-Bresson once said, "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition in a fraction of a second of the significance of an event, as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression."

Take a moment to take that in. This quote is a great definition of what photography is and should be. Cartier-Bresson also advised photographers to avoid "snapping away, shooting quickly and without thought, overloading ourselves with unnecessary images that clutter our memory and diminish the clarity of the whole."



Photo by Alex Alvarez

Here's a great example of capturing the decisive moment: a person surrounded by bubbles, with a perfect expression on her face and the number of bubbles and the position of the bubbles just right. This photo wouldn't be the same if one of these bubbles was right in her face, obstructing her expression.

As you go out, especially when you're doing street photography or candid photography, try to pay attention to the moment. This is going to look different than if you are doing still life photography, landscape photography, or architectural photography. With those types of photography, you may be waiting for a moment where the lighting or the sun is in the perfect position to create great color in the sky.



Photo by Alexander Dummer

Another example of the decisive moment can be seen in this photo of a child popping a bubble. The bubble is formed around their arm, not completely broken, and caught in the middle of being popped.

There are many more examples throughout this chapter, illustrating the importance of waiting for the right moment to capture a scene, whether it's in nature, sports, or everyday life. As you continue to develop your photography skills, remember the importance of the decisive moment and strive to capture those magical, fleeting moments that make your photos truly memorable.

INTRODUCTION TO HOW TO IMPROVE PHOTOGRAPHY WITH BETTER LIGHTING

In this chapter, we will delve into the world of lighting and how it can significantly enhance your photography skills. As mentioned earlier, lighting can easily transform a regular photo into a stunning one, simply by altering the time of day or the way the light falls on your subject.

Understanding different types of lights and their effects on your images might seem challenging, but this chapter aims to demystify the subject. We will explore the various ways lighting can improve your photos and how you can apply these techniques in your own work.

Why Lighting Improves Your Photos

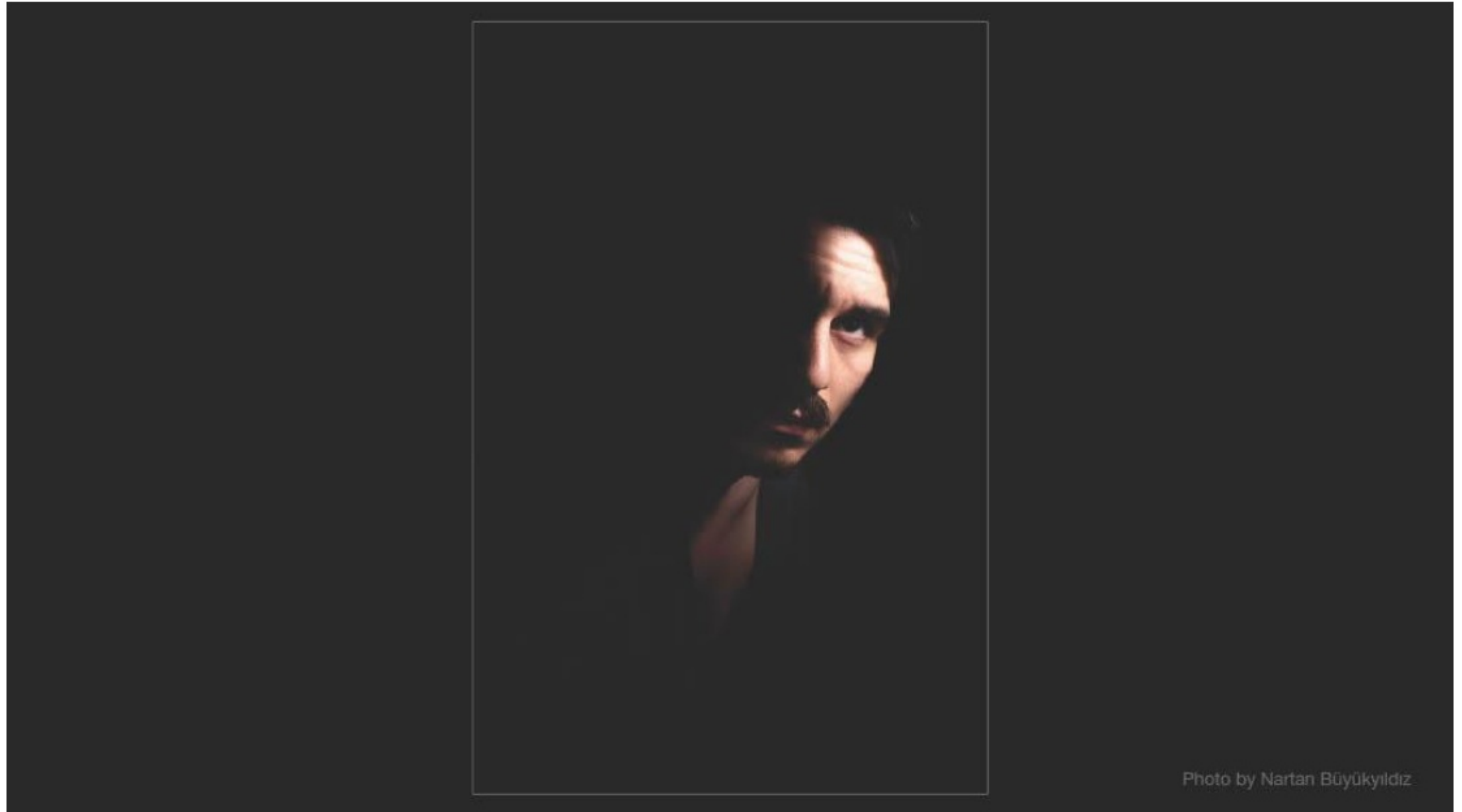
- Draws attention to subject(s)
- Adds / subtracts color, vibrance, emotions
- Enhances features

Photo by Mariano Baraldi



Lighting is essential because it directs the viewer's attention to the subject of the photograph. For instance, consider an image where a dog and a line of clothes are illuminated in a literal spot of light, surrounded by darkness. Our attention is naturally drawn to the well-exposed, brighter part of the photo. In general, it is good practice to ensure that the subject or the most important element of the photo is the brightest part.

Of course, this principle may not hold true in situations where everything is bright, properly exposed, or overexposed due to an abundance of sunlight in the background.



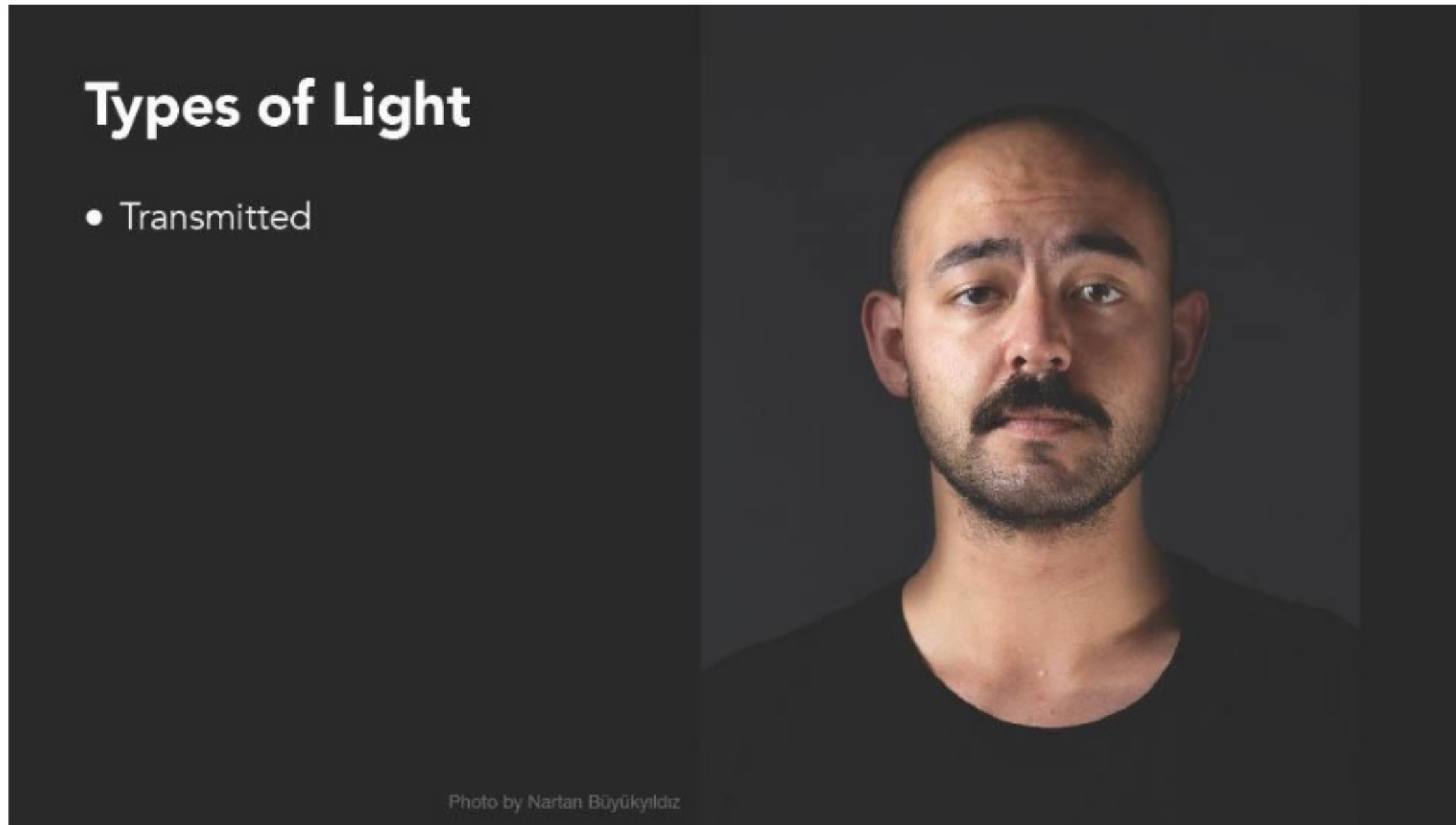
Different types of light can add or subtract color from a scene, introduce vibrancy, and evoke emotions in your photography. When using artificial lighting, you can enhance specific features of a subject, be it in product

photography or portraits. The way you utilize light can draw attention to particular aspects of a person's face, such as their nose, lips, cheeks, or chin.

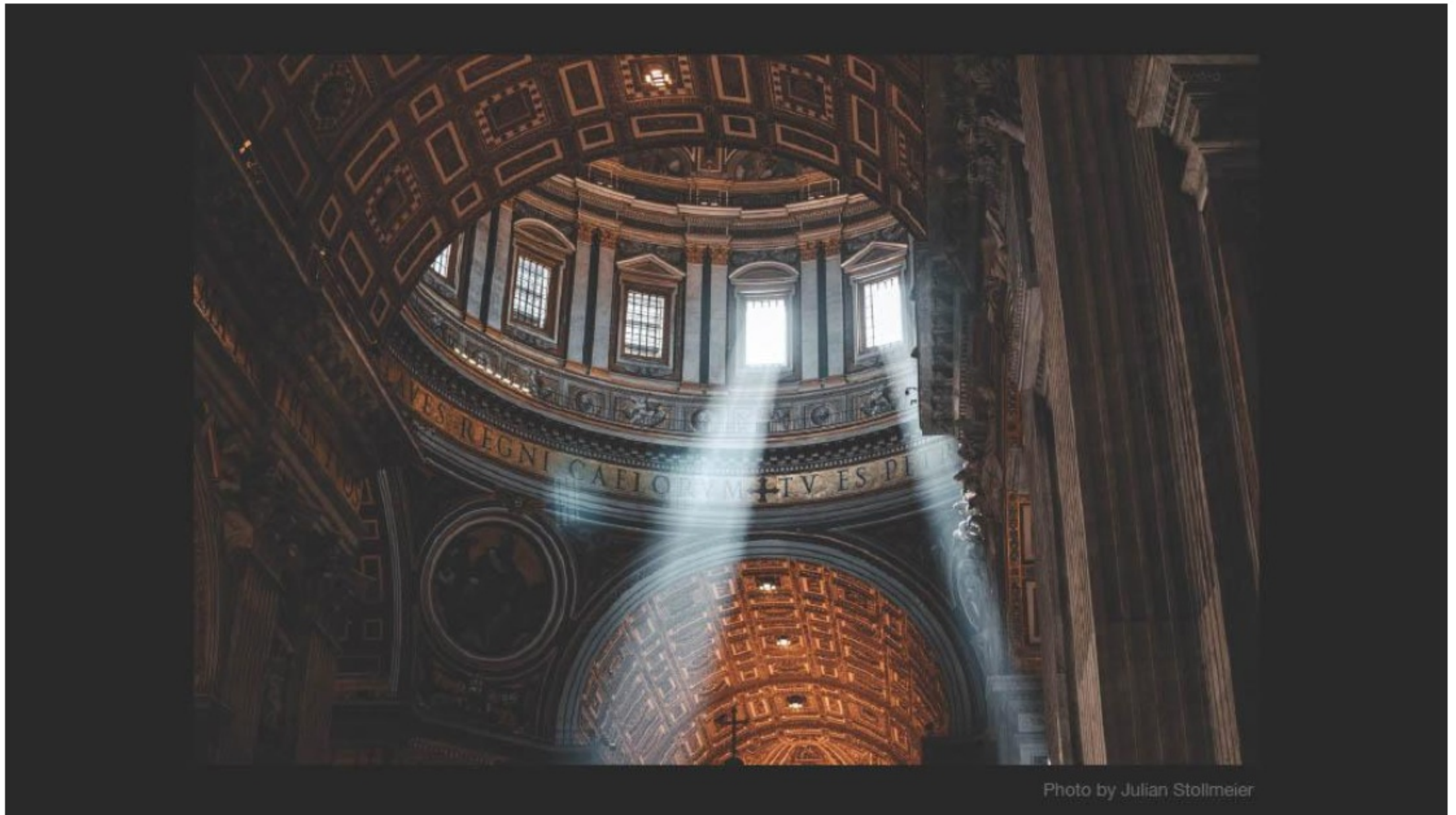
Now that you have a better understanding of the importance of lighting in photography, we will move on to the next section, where we will discuss various types of lights and how to use them effectively.

TYPES OF LIGHT IN PHOTOGRAPHY

In this chapter, we will explore various types of lights and their impact on your photography.



First, let's discuss transmitted light. Transmitted light comes directly from a light source, such as the sun or an artificial light like a light bulb, neon sign, or a camera flash. For example, consider an image where the sun's light shines directly onto a subject's face or a photograph taken using artificial light to illuminate the subject.



Reflected light is another type of light to understand. This occurs when light from a transmitted source bounces off a surface and illuminates the subject. An example of this is when sunlight reflects off buildings, sand, or water to light up a subject

Types of Light

- Transmitted
- Reflected

Photo by Lance Reis



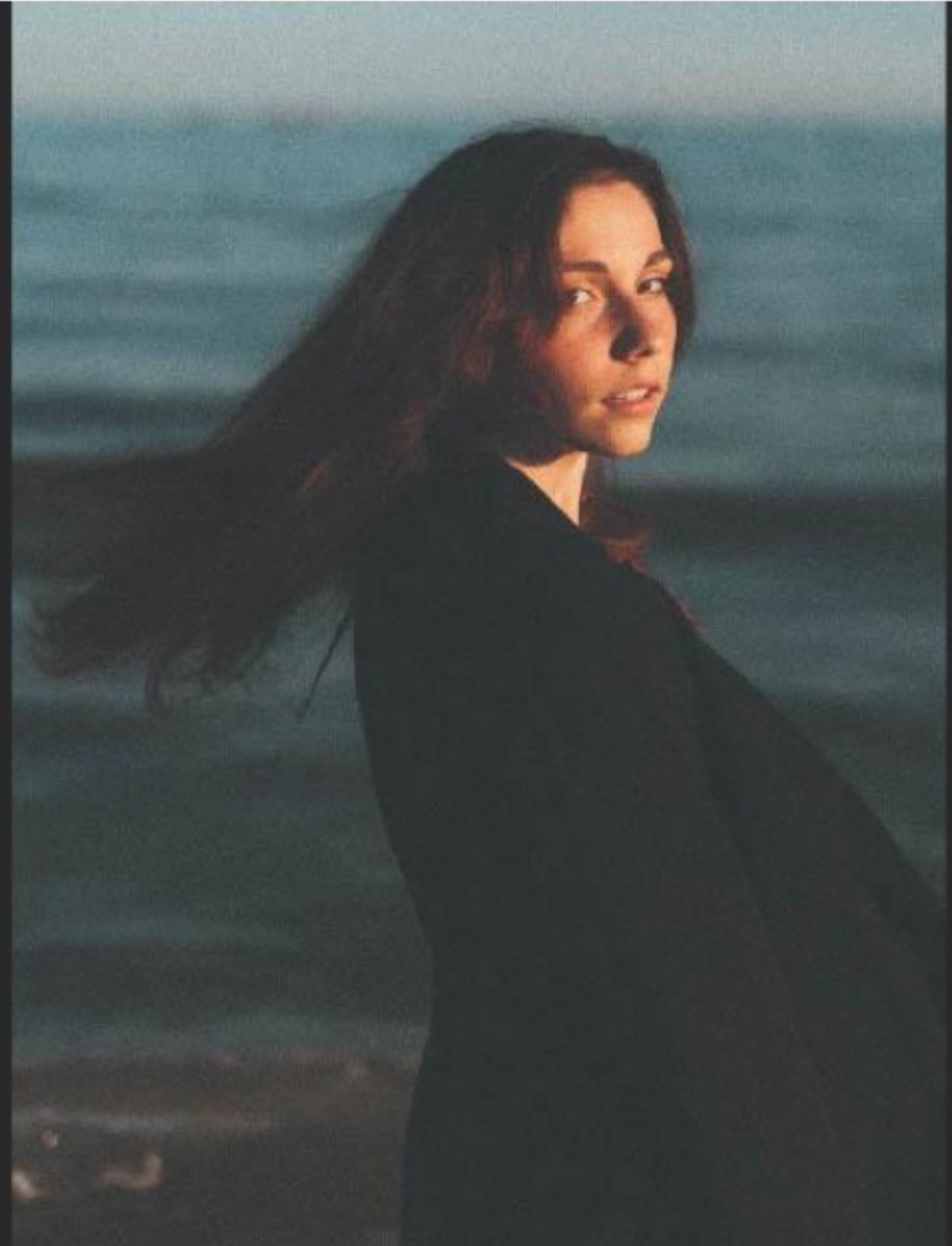
There are also differences in the quality of light, such as hard light and soft light. Hard light is direct, focused light that creates high contrast between the bright and shadowy areas of an image. This type of light often results in harsh shadows. For example, consider photographs taken under direct sunlight, where hard light creates strong shadows on a subject's face. On the other hand, soft light is diffused and less harsh, creating fewer shadows and a more even

exposure. Reflective light is generally softer than transmitted light, unless it comes from a highly reflective surface like a mirror. Soft light can be achieved through natural means, like shooting on a cloudy day or using window light, or artificial means, like using a diffused video light.

Types of Light

- Transmitted
- Reflected
- Hard

Photo by Toni Frost

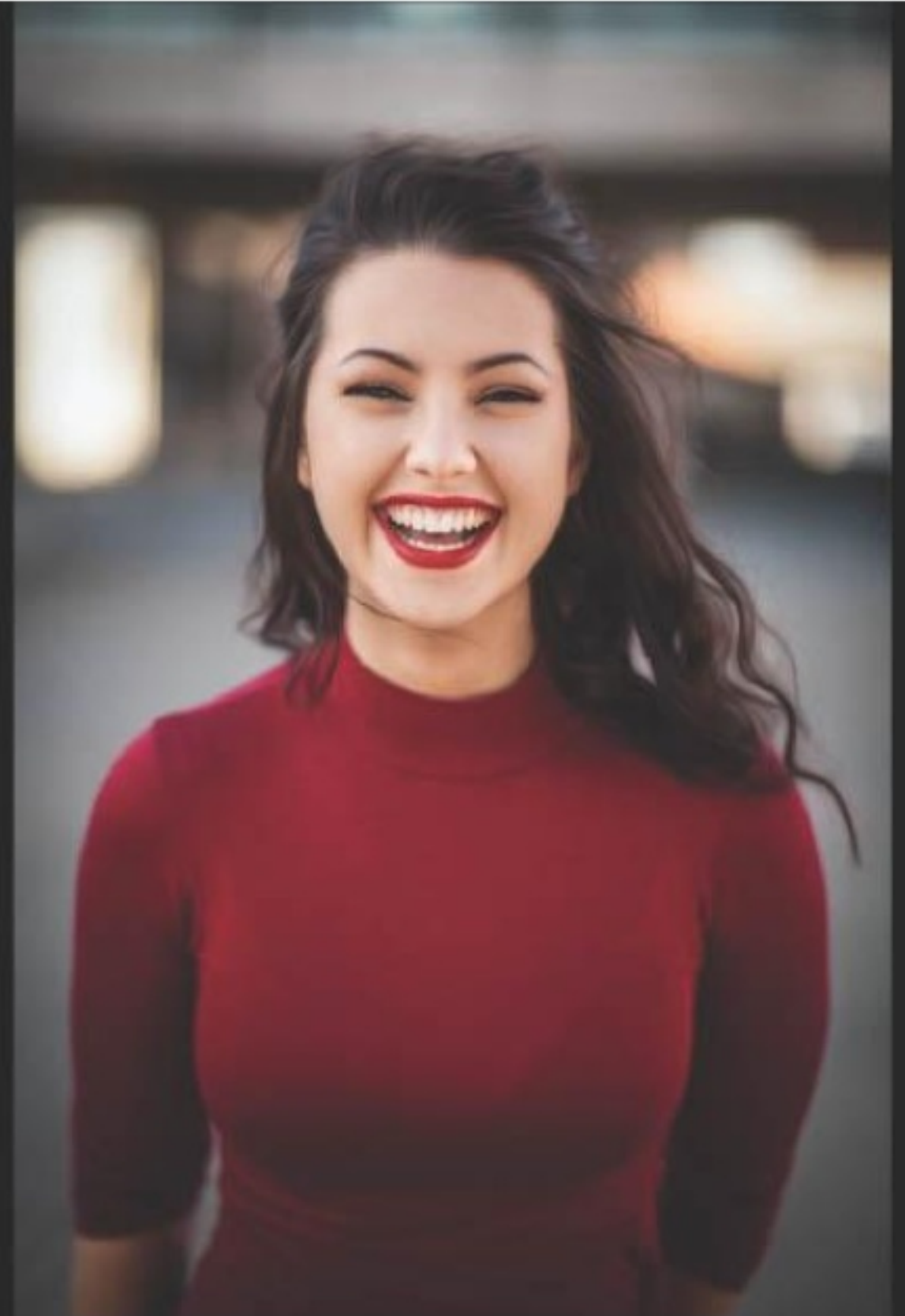


In summary, understanding different types of light and their effects on your photography is essential for creating the desired mood and feel in your images. In the following chapter, we will explore various ways to use light effectively to capture stunning photographs of your subjects.

Types of Light

- Transmitted
- Reflected
- Hard
- Soft

Photo by Michael Dam



LIGHT DIRECTION

In this chapter, we will explore several ways to use light effectively in your photography. By understanding and manipulating the direction of light, you can significantly change the appearance of your photographs.

Ways to Use Light

- Direction



Photo by Karsten Winegeart

1. Direction of Light

Changing the direction of light can have a considerable impact on the final image. This technique can be applied whether you are using artificial light sources like a flash or continuous light for portraits and headshots, or natural light when photographing outdoors.



Photo by David Hofmann



Photo by Olenka Kotyk



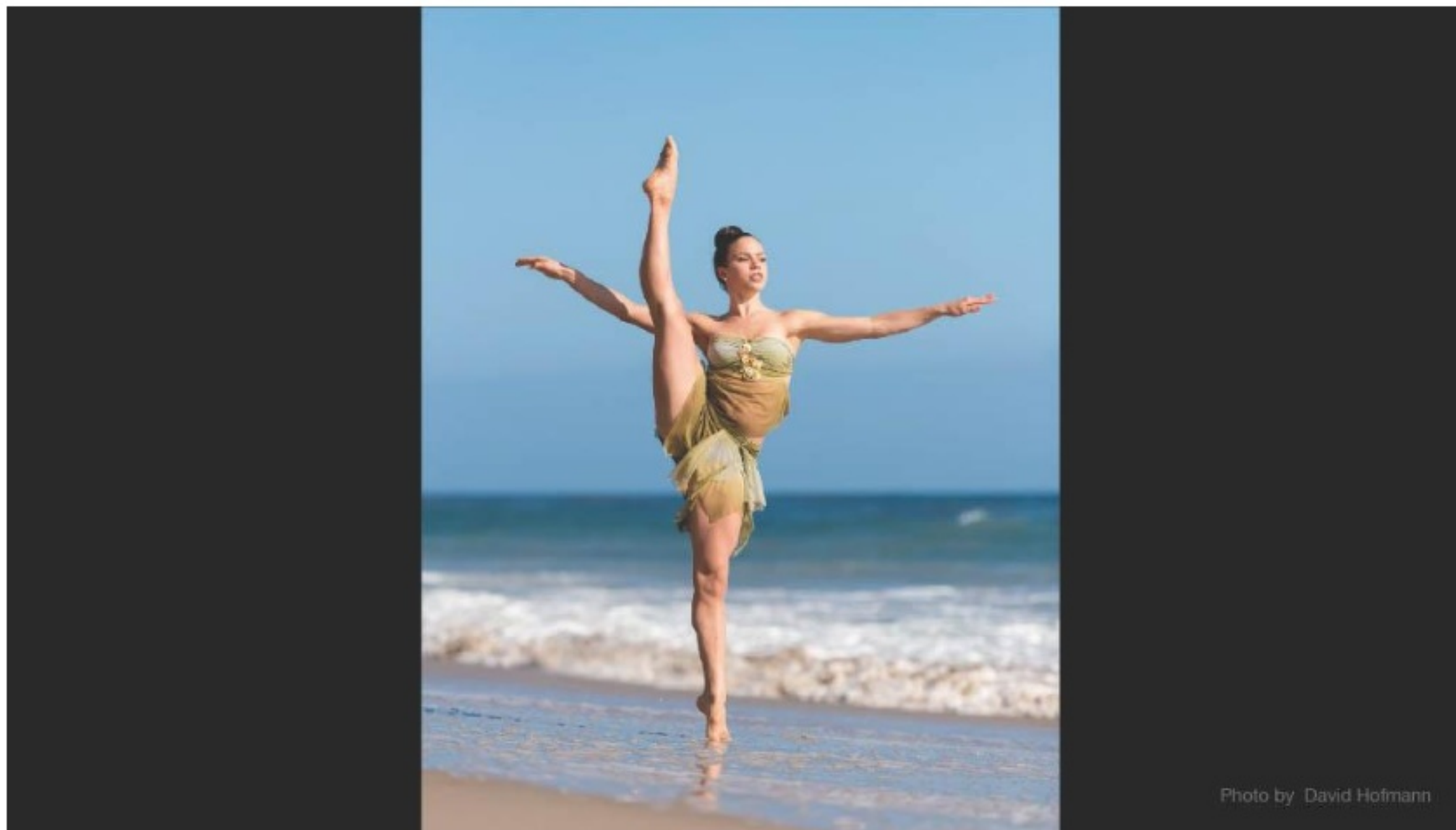
Photo by David Hofmann



Photo by David Hofmann



Photo by David Hofmann



In the example above, we can see how the direction of light dramatically changes the look of the photographs. From hard sunlight creating strong contrast and shadows, to softer light diffused by clouds, resulting in less contrast.

Remember that you can use different types of light to create great photos, and you don't always have to rely on hard or soft light.

2. Artificial Lighting



Photo by David Hofmann

Using artificial light can create more contrasty shadows and interesting effects in your photographs. For example, by using hard artificial light from both sides, the subject stands out from the dark background, creating sharp lines and unique shadows.

3. Silhouettes



Photo by David Hofmann

When the light source is bright enough and coming directly from behind the subject, and the background is properly exposed, a silhouette is created.

The direction of light can create a dramatic difference in your photographs, as seen in the comparison between the silhouette and a photo with light coming from the front.

4. Street Photography and Reflective Light





Photo by Lerone Pieters



Photo by Joshua Rawson-Harris



Photo by Robinson Greig



Photo by Lerone Pieters



Photo by Lerone Pieters



Photo by Lerone Pieters

In street photography, the direction of light and reflective light can significantly change the outcome of the photograph. For example, when the subject is in the shadows while the rest of the scene is brightly lit, the photo might feel unbalanced.

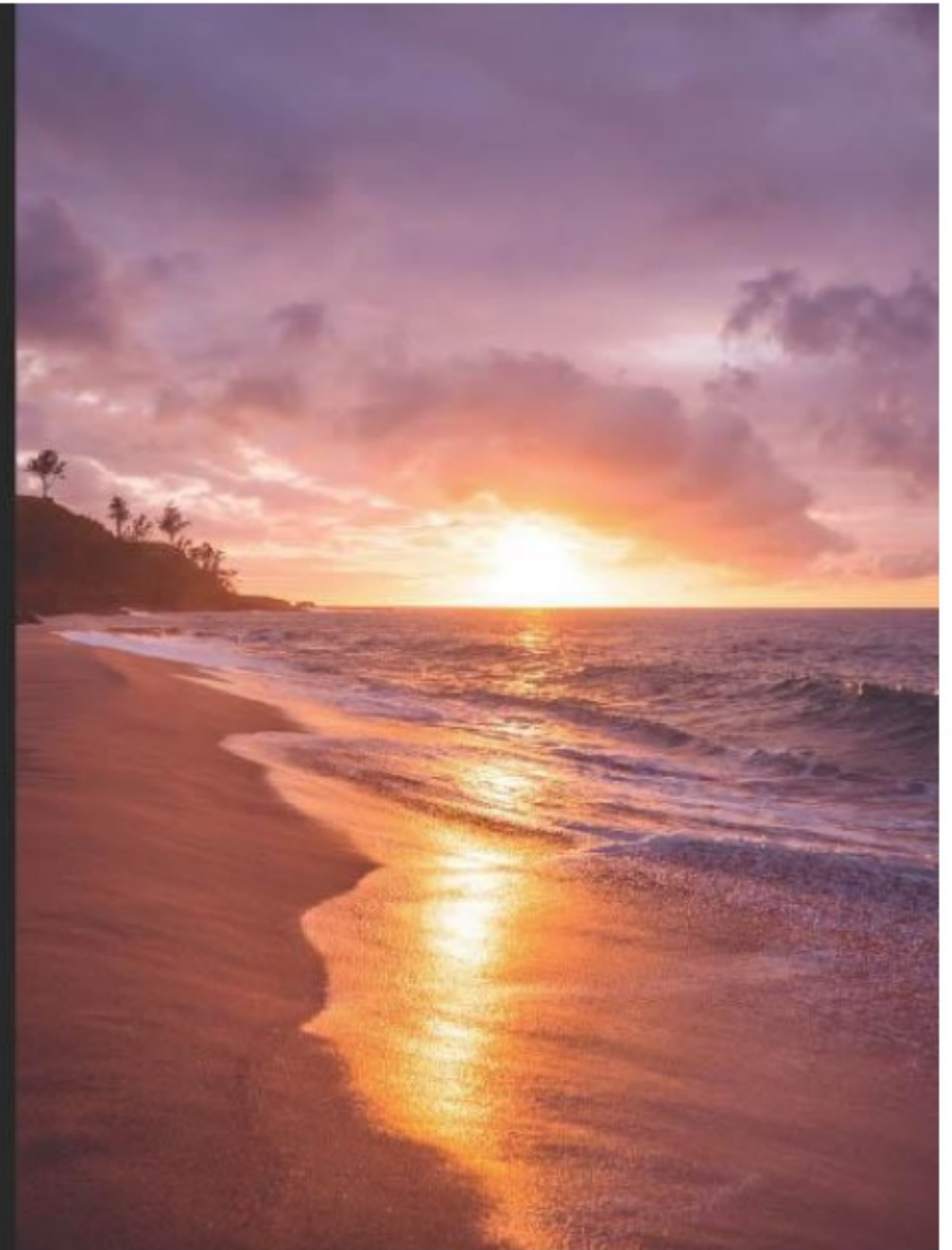
As seen in the examples above, the direction of light and the balance between foreground and background lighting play a significant role in the success of a photograph.

5. Light Temperature

Ways to Use Light

- Direction
- Hardness / Softness
- Temperature

Photo by Cristofer Maximilian



Another aspect to consider when working with light is its temperature. The warm glow from the sun during golden hour can create an entirely different atmosphere in your photographs.

In the next chapter, we will discuss the concept of golden hour and how to use it to your advantage.

By understanding and mastering the use of light in your photography, you can significantly improve your ability to capture stunning and visually striking images. Experiment with different light directions, sources, and temperatures to create photographs that stand out and showcase your unique artistic style.

HARD VS. SOFT LIGHT

In this chapter, we will discuss another way to use light in your photography: changing the hardness or softness of the light. We have already seen some examples and discussed hard and soft light, but let's explore this topic further with more examples.



Photo by Frederick Medina



Photo by Frederick Medina

In this photo, the hard light separates the couple from the background effectively. Without this lighting, there wouldn't be the glow or rim lighting around their heads, and it would be harder to separate the subjects from the background.

Now let's compare two examples of hard light versus soft light.



Photo by Jonathan Borba



Photo by Jonathan Borba

Hard light often comes from artificial lighting flashes that are not diffused. To achieve softer light with a flash, you can either turn your flash around to bounce it off the ceiling or cover it with a filter or diffusion material.

In the next set of examples, we have a photographer who has captured the same subject using both soft and hard lighting.



Photo by Ioana Ye



Photo by Kateryna Hliznitsova

While the term "harsh" is often used to describe hard light, it doesn't necessarily mean it is bad. Both photos can be visually striking, but they convey different vibes. Soft lighting often lends itself to a more natural and beautiful look, while hard light can create a more dramatic effect.

Hard and soft light can also be applied to various subjects, including product photography.



Photo by Jonathan Borba



Photo by Jonathan Borba

In product photography, the choice between hard and soft light can greatly impact the final result. Sometimes, a more contrasted and directional light might be preferred, while other times, a softer light with less harsh shadows can be more suitable.

In conclusion, hard and soft light are essential aspects to consider when taking your photos. This chapter should give you some ideas of how to use hard and soft light effectively in your photography. In the next chapter, we will discuss the final aspect of lighting: light temperature.

LIGHT TEMPERATURE

In the final section of this chapter on light, we'll explore how changing light temperature can impact your photography. If you're already familiar with this concept, consider this a refresher. All light has a temperature, which can be measured using the Kelvin scale. This scale ranges from warmer light to cooler light.

Warmer light sources, such as candles or fires, emit a reddish-orange glow, while cooler sources like LED light bulbs or daylight have a bluer hue. The coolest light is often found when sunlight is diffused through clouds, resulting in an even bluer appearance. To see the most dramatic differences in light temperature, compare the warm hues of a sunset to the cool colors of midday.



Photos by Frank McKenna

The period before sunrise and after sunset, often called the "magic hour" or "golden hour," is when the sky is at its most vibrant. To capture these warm colors, plan your shoots around these times.



Photo by Nsey Benajah

Light temperature can also convey emotions in your photography. Cool, gray light from clouds can create a serious or melancholic atmosphere, as seen in this artistic photo of a woman in the water.



Photo by [Allen Taylor](#)

In contrast, warm light enhances positive emotions, as demonstrated by this family photo taken during late afternoon.



Photo by [Claudia Wolff](#)

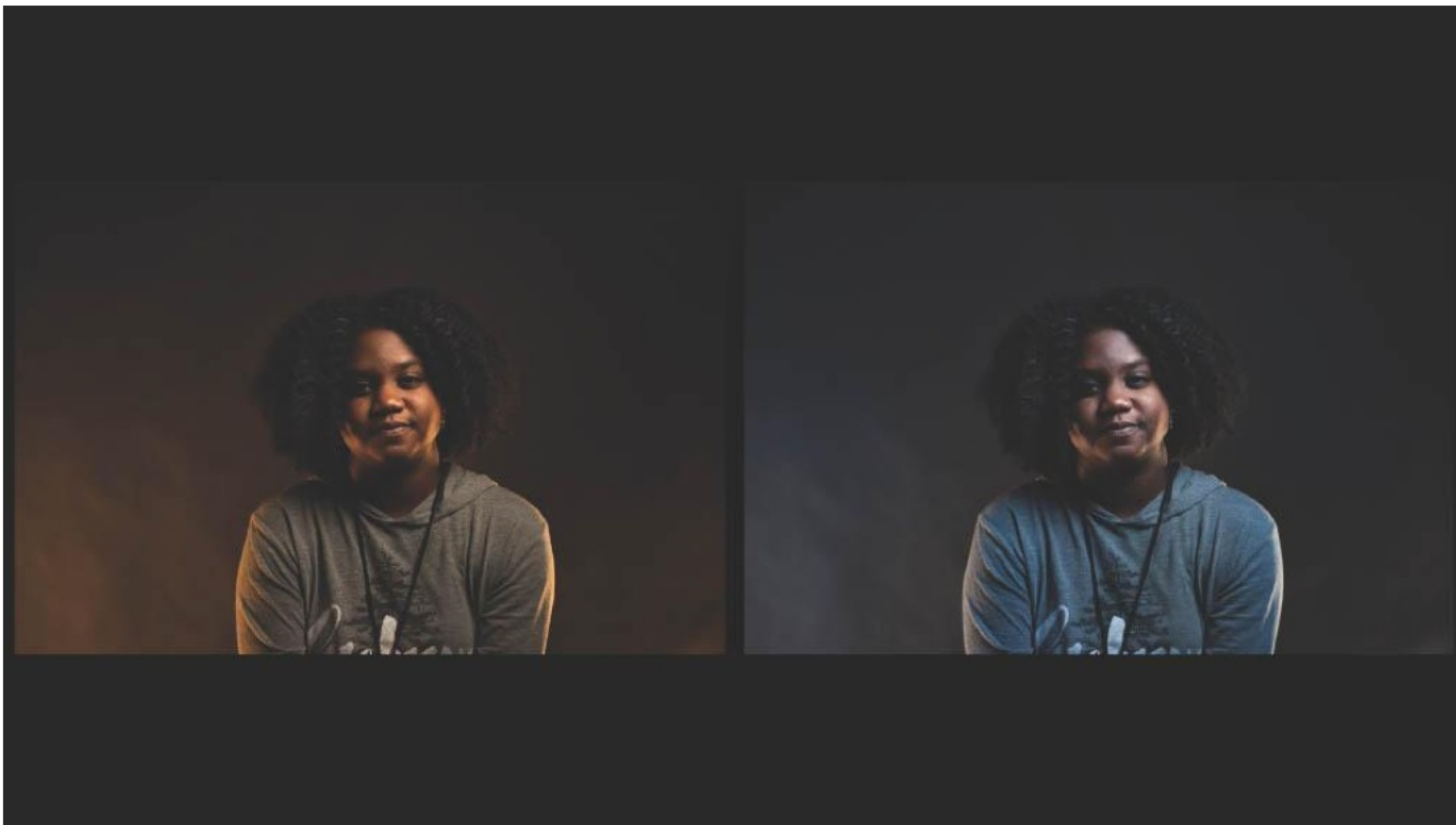


Photo by [Chad Madden](#)

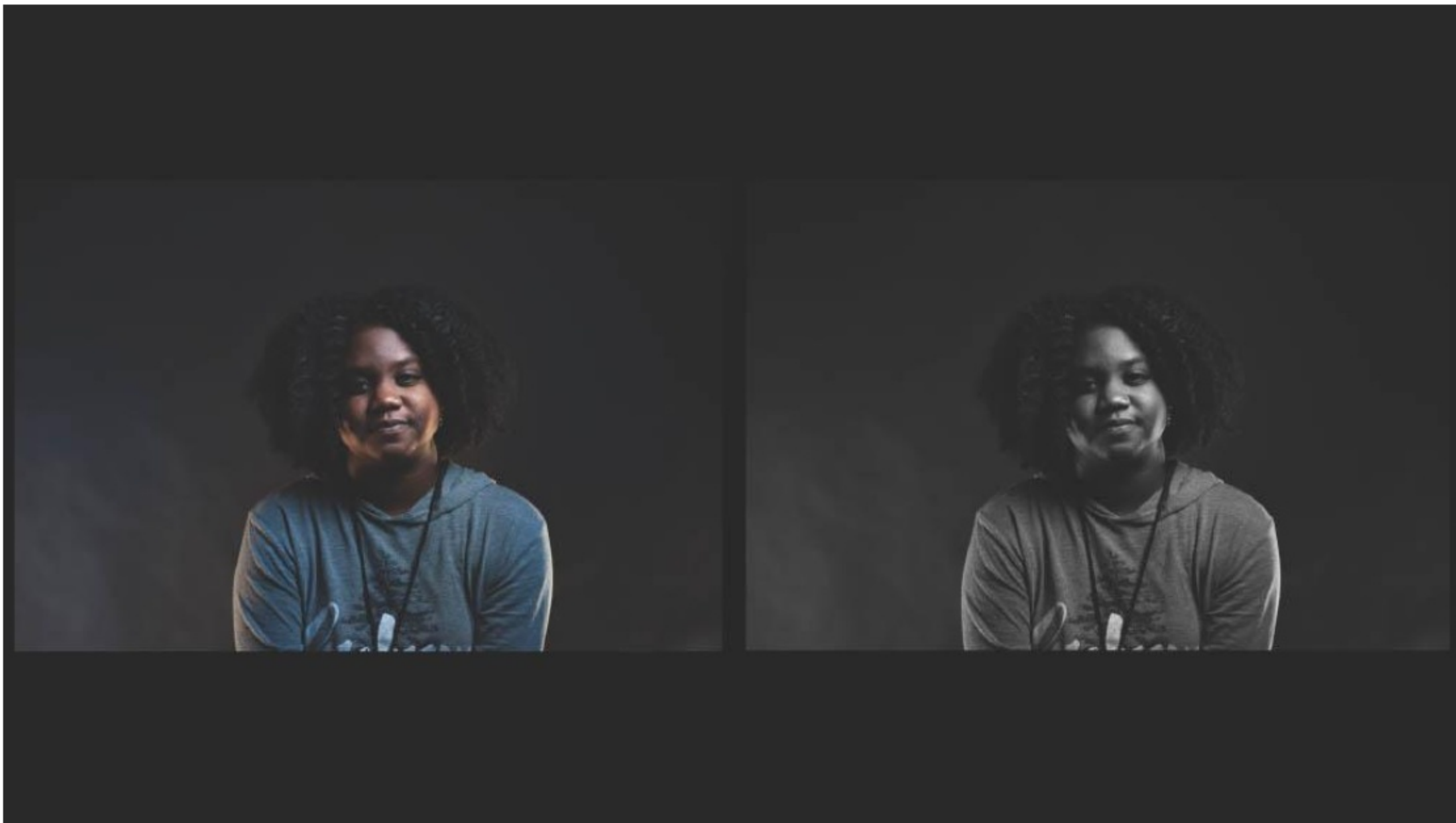


Photo by [Chad Madden](#)

The choice of light temperature can make a significant difference in the final result, whether you're taking portraits, family photos, or simply trying to evoke a specific emotion.



Experimenting with light temperature can help you find the right balance between the light and the emotion you want to convey. For example, adjusting the light temperature in a photo editing program can change the mood of an image dramatically.



Sometimes, removing color altogether can also enhance the emotional impact of a photograph. A black and white image can evoke a more serious or intense emotion compared to a warm, glowing light.

Being aware of light temperature and how it can affect the mood and story of your photography is essential for creating powerful images. By paying close attention to light temperature, you can truly transform the message your photos convey.

NATURAL LIGHT TIPS

In this chapter, we'll explore some quick tips to help you improve your natural lighting in photography.

Natural Lighting Improvements

- Sun placement & time

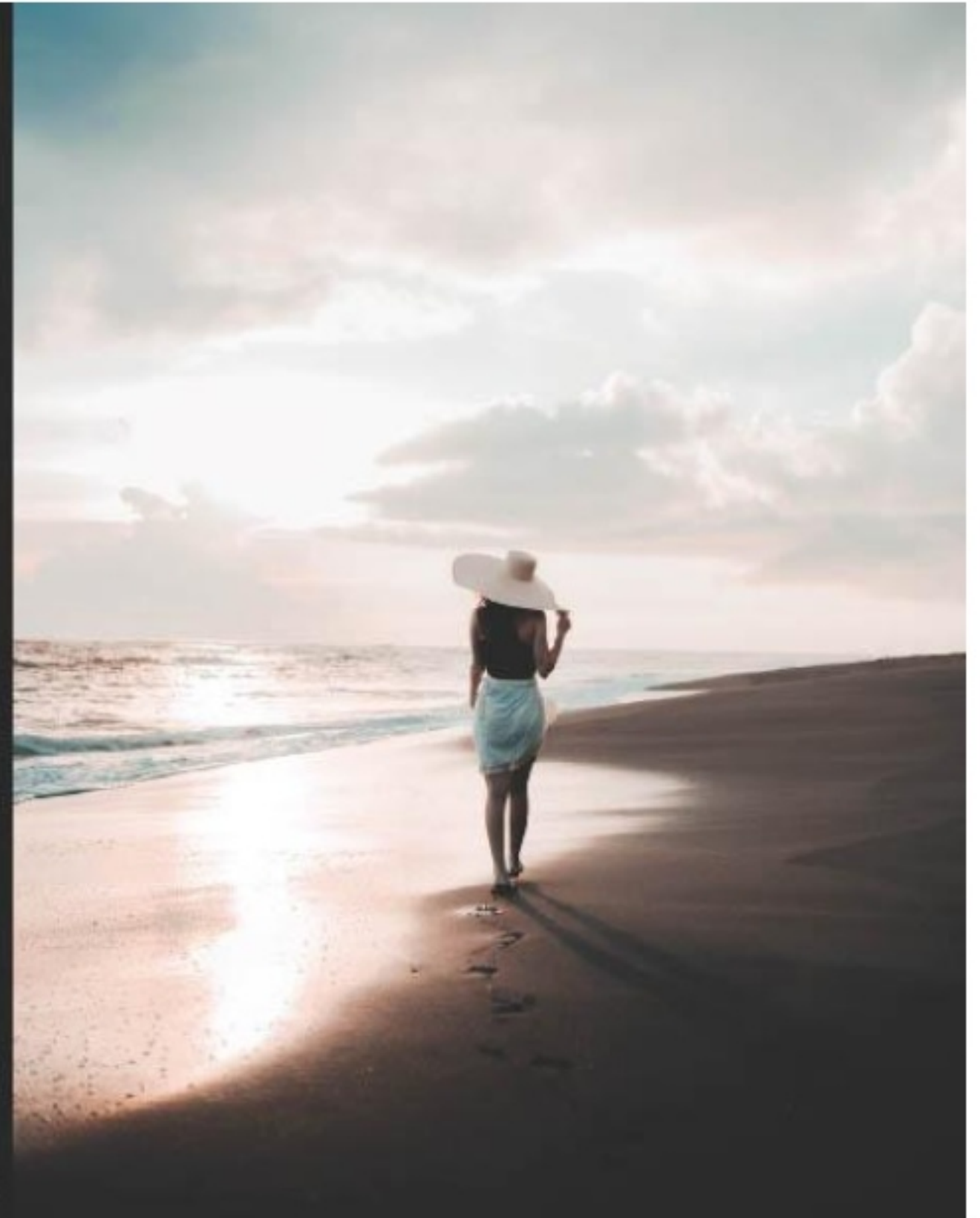


Photo by Zongnan Bao

1. Sun Placement and Time

Always pay attention to where the sun is when you're taking photos. The easiest way to take a better photo is to change the time of day. For example, if you're taking landscape photos at noon and they're not quite impressive, try getting up at sunrise or sunset to take the same photo and see how it transforms.

When taking portraits, make sure you're doing it at a time later in the day with golden hour lighting, as opposed to harsh sunlight during the middle of the day. Be cautious about having too much light shining directly on your subject's face. It's generally better to use the sun as a backlight and ensure there's enough reflected light so that your subject's face is exposed without the background being overexposed.

2. Cloudy Days for Soft Lighting

Natural Lighting Improvements

- Sun placement & time
- Careful with bright front light
- Use cloudy days for soft light

Photo by Martin Katler



If you want naturally soft lighting, go out on a cloudy day. Reflectors and Reflected Light

If you're stuck in the middle of the day with harsh light, bring a reflector or look for reflected light. Using a bounce card or photography reflector can help bounce light onto your subject, ensuring they're exposed better. Alternatively, move your subject to a location where light is bouncing off a building or another surface.

4. Shade and Background Exposure







Consider moving your subject into the shade to avoid harsh light. However, pay attention to the background exposure; ensure there's even exposure for both your subject and the background to create a better-looking photo.

In conclusion, the position of the sun and the time of day can dramatically change the look of your photos. Taking advantage of natural light can help you create more captivating and visually appealing images. Apply these tips in your photography, and you'll see a marked improvement in your work.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING TIPS

In the previous chapter, we discussed the importance of natural lighting. Now, let's dive into some tips and techniques for using artificial lighting, primarily in portrait and product photography.



Photo by Matt Reiter

One common technique is single flash portraiture. It's quite simple, as you only need one flash, and you can still achieve great results. For example, consider a subject lit by one light source coming from the front, which creates an even illumination on both sides of the face.

By moving the flash around to different angles, you can create different types of portraits. Experiment with various positions and angles to see how the lighting affects the subject's appearance and the emotions conveyed in the photo. When the light comes from one side of the face, it creates more contrast and shadows



Photo by Toni Frost

To achieve more even lighting on both sides of the subject, consider using a reflector or a second light. In this example, we have a subject with the main light coming from one side, and a second light or reflector filling in the other side. This creates more even lighting, and also highlights the subject's hair.

Typically, it's not recommended to position the light directly in front of the subject's face, as it may create unnatural shadows. Instead, place the light to the side and use a reflector or a second light to reduce shadows on the other side of the face.



Photo by Toni Frost

In some cases, creative use of light sources with different color temperatures can add depth and interest to the photo.



Adding a backlight helps separate your subject from the background. Rim lighting along the edges of the face and hair can make the subject stand out from the backdrop.



Photo by Parker Johnson

Experiment with creative uses of light, such as bokeh, the out-of-focus areas created by light sources in the background. You can also use foreground elements or reflections to add interest to your photos



Photo by Kyle Goetsch



Photo by Clément Duguerre

As a photographer, your primary objective is to capture light. Be on the lookout for interesting light and shadow patterns, whether in architecture, portraits, or other subjects.

In summary, pay close attention to how light affects your subjects and scenes. Experiment with different lighting techniques and positions, and don't be afraid to get creative.

HOW STORY WILL IMPROVE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Welcome to this chapter of our book, where we will focus on story and how storytelling can elevate your photography skills.

Photography is Storytelling

- Entertainment
- Cultural preservation
- Moral value promotion



Photo by David Bransby

The element of storytelling is what sets a mediocre photographer apart from a great one. While composition and lighting are aspects you can control in most situations, storytelling is the secret sauce that requires practice and isn't always within your control.

A famous quote says, "A picture is worth a thousand words," and a good picture doesn't need any words to explain what's happening. Photography is storytelling; it can be entertainment, cultural preservation, or promoting moral values.

Why Story Matters

- Photographs stop time
- Make people think, react & feel



'Christmas Dinner' - Photo by Lee Russell

Why does story matter in photography? It's because photography has the power to stop time, making people think, react, and feel.

Here's an example of a photo I took at my sister's wedding. Although I wasn't the official photographer, I brought my camera and captured a perfect moment that encapsulates the vibe and feeling of the wedding.



This photo, taken in a beautiful room in Ireland, features my sister, her husband, and our families. Photography can be a personal journey, capturing the stories we cherish and want to remember.

Storytelling in photography can range from journalistic documentary-style photography to creative, narrative, abstract, or even a combination of these styles. The story is crucial, and we will explore ways to improve the storytelling aspect of your photos, focusing on how objects can enhance the story. This knowledge will enable you to elevate your photography by telling better stories.

PEOPLE & STORYTELLING

People can significantly improve the story of your photos, mainly because they are inherently interesting to look at.

People Can Improve a Photo's Story

- Inherently interesting to look at



Photo by Gordon Parks

For example, this photo featuring five generations of a family would not be as captivating without the people present. The more people in the photo, the more interesting it becomes.



Photo from Marion Post Wolcott

This photo, taken during segregation in the South, shows an entrance for black people at the back of a theater. The original photo without the person walking up the steps feels different and less impactful.



Photo from Marion Post Wolcott

People Can Improve a Photo's Story

- Inherently interesting to look at
- The character of your art



→ 30

→ 30 A

Photo by Marion S. Trikosko

People are the characters of your art, and beautiful faces can tell a story even without context. In this photo, a woman casts her vote with a look on her face that suggests it might be her first time voting or a moment of confidence in her choice.

As photographers, it can be challenging to include people in your photos, especially if you're an introvert. However, incorporating people can significantly enhance the storytelling aspect of your photography.



Photo by Carl Nenzen Love

For instance, this photo of my family on a road trip captures the emotions we experienced during our journey. Despite feeling tired and sick, the photo tells a story without words.



Photo by Warren K. Leffler

The number of people in a photo can also create emotion, as demonstrated by this photo from the March on Washington during the civil rights movement. The same location without the crowd tells a completely different story.



Photo by Ryan Stone

People change the story of a photo, turning a simple architectural image into a tale of a couple enjoying their morning coffee or a lonely person climbing a giant staircase.

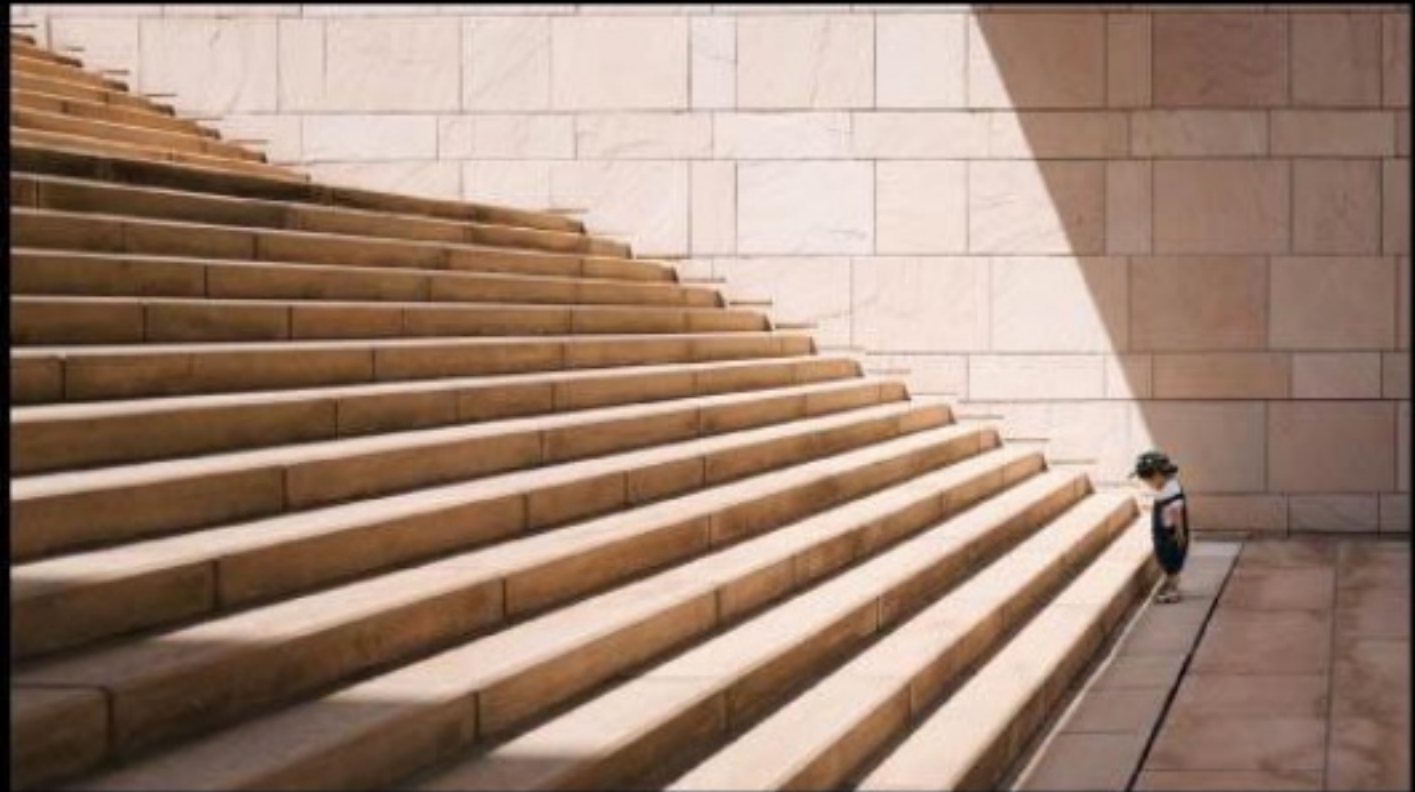




Photo by Vidar Nordli-Mathisen

As you can see, people play a crucial role in telling stories with our photography. They add depth, emotion, and intrigue to our images. However, it's not limited to people; objects can also enhance and tell our stories. In the following chapter, we'll explore how objects can contribute to the narrative of your photos.

OBJECTS & STORYTELLING

Storytelling with Objects

- Placement, juxtaposition



Photo by Yana Hurskaya

The placement and juxtaposition of objects can truly tell an interesting story in photography. For instance, consider sandbags covering the entrance to a building during the war in Ukraine. The placement of these sandbags tells a completely different story than if they were on the banks of a river.



Photo by Austrian National Library

In another example, examine the interior of a war-torn building. The broken objects scattered through the space and the debris on the floor tell the story of the war's impact.



Photo by ulises varela

Objects can also be juxtaposed to create intriguing compositions, like a bike and a car placed next to each other. The photographer may be capturing an interesting moment, or they may be trying to tell a story. Like all art, it's up to the viewer to decipher the intended message.

Objects can also have symbolism. For example, locks placed on a fence or at a particular location by couples are a tradition in many parts of the world.



Photo by Thomas Thompson

The symbolism of each lock can be different, sometimes representing separation, while others symbolize love and unity.



Capturing the details of an object can also tell a story. Consider a series of photos showing a barista creating intricate latte art. The detail of the artwork showcases the barista's skill and dedication to their craft.



Another example is a close-up of a delicious-looking coffee which might inspire the viewer to want a cup themselves.



Photo by Phil Ebner

Storytelling in photography can be deeply personal as well. One might capture a photo in their grandparents' home, featuring signs and objects that hold special meaning for their family. To an outsider, these objects might not hold the same significance, but they tell the story of a family's life and memories.



Photo by Phil Ebner

An example of this is a set of drawers in a hallway, adorned with stickers placed by family members over the years. These stickers serve as relics of the past, reminding us of our childhood and the stories that have shaped our lives.



Photo by Terry Matthews

Another example is a pair of old ice skates with snow in them. They've lived a long life, and one can only wonder about the stories they have to tell of children from decades past, gliding around a frozen lake.

To improve your photography, look around and consider how objects can tell stories in your photos. Be conscious of the object's role in your composition: does it have a story? Does it add to or detract from the story you're trying to tell? By being mindful of these elements, you can create more compelling and engaging photographs.

STORYTELLING WITH COLOR, PHOTO SERIES & MOMENTS

In this chapter, we'll explore a few more storytelling tips to keep in mind while capturing your images.

More Storytelling Tips

- How can colors tell your story



Photo by Gian Cescon

Firstly, let's consider how colors can contribute to your story. We discussed previously how light temperature can evoke different emotions, which is crucial for storytelling. For example, a cool light of a rainy day can create a distinct mood compared to the warm light of a sunset .



Photo by Amanda Kloska



Photo by Ajnabi Creation

Similarly, colors in a scene can convey different emotions. Next, removing colors from an image can also enhance the storytelling aspect. In some cases, converting a photo to black and white can draw more attention to the subject.



Experiment with color removal to determine which elements of the scene should be emphasized.



Another valuable tip for storytelling is capturing a series of photos. This approach is particularly important when the subject's actions or the sequence of events need to be presented to convey the complete story. By capturing multiple images, you provide context and offer a deeper understanding of the narrative.

Remember to be patient and wait for the decisive moment. This is not only applicable to lighting and composition but also to storytelling itself.



Photo by Pietro Rampazzo

The decisive moment might be a result of careful planning or a happy accident, but the key is to be ready and aware of the potential for such moments



Photo by Phil Ebner

In summary, paying attention to the storytelling elements in your photos, whether involving people or objects, can help you take better photos than ever before. By incorporating these tips into your photography practice, you'll be on your way to capturing compelling stories through your images.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE UNINSPIRED

Do you ever feel stuck as a photographer? Perhaps you're hesitant to take out your camera, or the photos you're capturing just aren't as good as you want them to be. Everyone needs a little bit of inspiration sometimes. In this chapter, we'll explore tips for finding inspiration and breaking through creative barriers to take better photos.

It's essential to understand that everyone goes through this, even the greatest artists. Everyone experiences periods of feeling uninspired, stuck, or doubting their abilities. Don't get discouraged by others' photography. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when scrolling through streams of beautiful photos and wondering what the point is. Sometimes, it's good to step away from that entirely.

Here are some strategies to help you find inspiration and improve your photography:

1. **Change your scenery:** If you feel like you've photographed everything in your current location, try changing the scenery. This could mean going to a different city, a nearby village, or exploring an unfamiliar neighborhood. A change of scenery can reignite your creative spark and inspire new photography.



Inspiration

How to find inspiration that improves your photography

2. **Get outside of your comfort zone:** If you're used to taking pictures of specific subjects, try experimenting with different types of photography. For example, if you usually take pictures of buildings, wildlife, or flowers, challenge yourself with street photography or portraits. Practice with friends or family members to build up your confidence and skills.

3. **Join a photography challenge:** Participate in local or online photography challenges or contests. This can help you develop new skills, try different styles of photography, and push you to explore new themes. Photography challenges can also connect you with a supportive community of fellow photographers.

Remember that the grass is always greener on the other side. Sometimes, there's green grass right outside your front door or just a few minutes down the road. Embrace the opportunities that surround you, and you might be surprised by the beauty you discover.

Ultimately, improving as a photographer involves more than just mastering technical skills. It requires a mental shift to break through creative barriers and find inspiration in new places. We hope these tips help you get inspired and take your photography to the next level.

In the next chapter, we'll return to more practical tips and explore how editing can enhance your photography.

HOW TO IMPROVE PHOTOGRAPHY WITH EDITING

In this chapter, we will discuss how editing can significantly improve your photography. Keep in mind that this is not a tutorial on photo editing techniques, but rather a discussion of how editing can be utilized to refine your images. For detailed editing tutorials, you can refer to other resources or courses that focus on specific editing applications.

Editing plays a crucial role in improving your photos, as it allows you to focus on a specific part of the image, remove distractions, and add style. Style can encompass various aspects, such as contrast levels, color tones, and temperature adjustments.

Consider the following example: a photo of a simple flower can be enhanced by applying a flat black matte look.



Photo by Bobbi Wu

Alternatively, the same flower can be depicted in a completely different manner with another editing style.



Photo by Bobbi Wu

A straightforward crop can help emphasize the subject and create a more compelling image.



Photo by Phil Ebner

In another example, by removing a distracting leash from a photo of a puppy, the image becomes more balanced. Adding style to a photo can also make a significant difference. For instance, cropping an image tighter, increasing the vibrance of the colors, and warming up the photo can make a picture of a lady carrying flowers more captivating.



At times, removing color through editing can add emotion to a photo, as seen in the comparison between a colored photo and its black and white counterpart.



Photo by Priscilla Du Preez

Black and white photography often evokes a nostalgic feeling, intensifying the emotions conveyed by the image.

Editing can also simply make a photo look better, depending on the specific image. For example, an edited version of a long exposure shot in Big Sur has more vibrant colors, brighter stars, and fewer distractions.

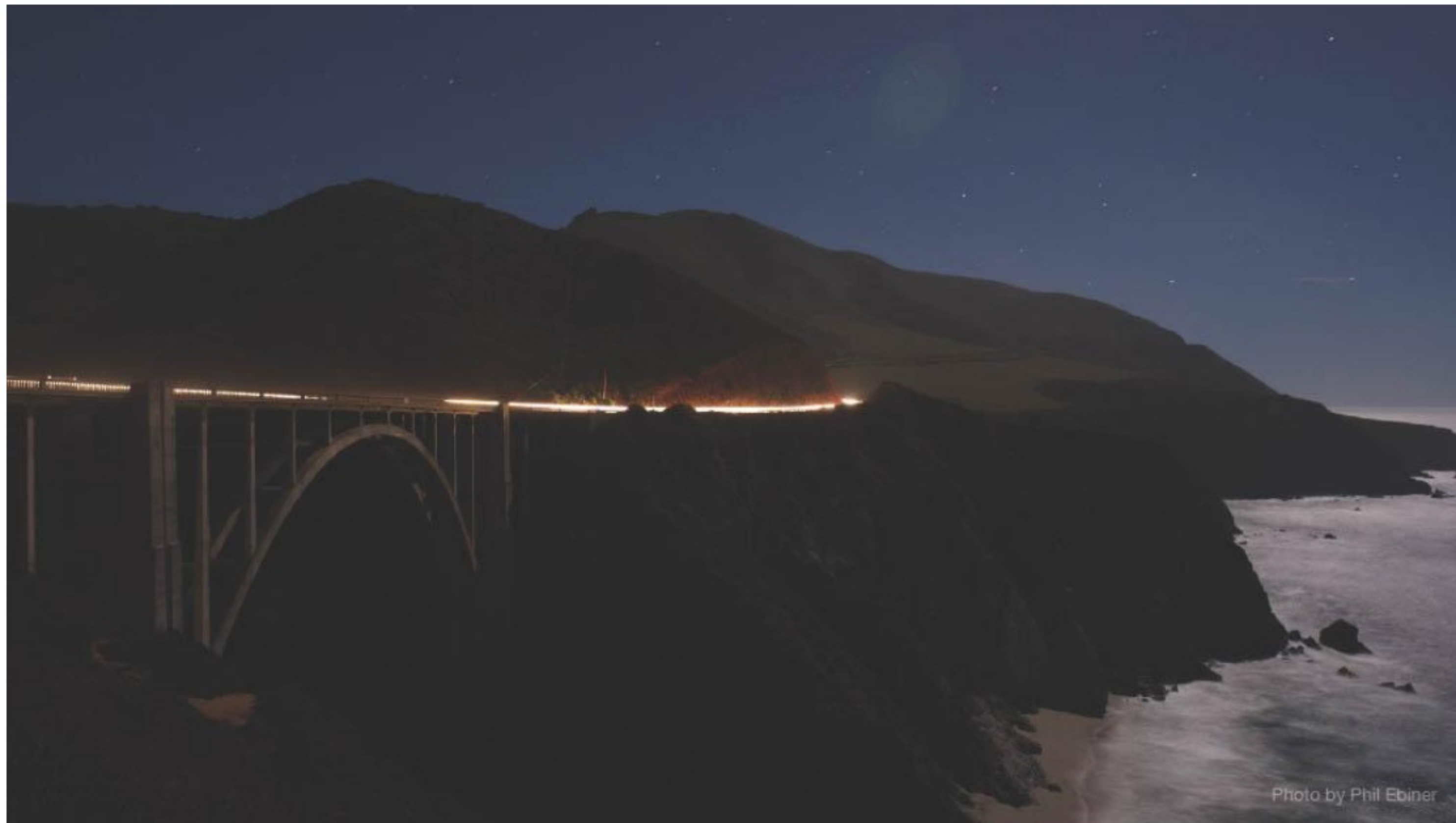


Photo by Phil Ebner



Another example is an image of a bird on a rock in a lake, where enhancing colors, adding warmth, and cropping the photo makes the bird stand out more.



Photo by Phil Ebner

Lastly, editing can help tell the story of a photo. A creative example of this is a day-to-night edit of a series of photos taken in the same location over the course of a day. By stitching the photos together, you can showcase the location's transformation from sunrise to nighttime.



In conclusion, being conscious of how editing can improve your photos is essential. Use your preferred editing tools to enhance your images and create more compelling and visually striking photographs.

HOW TO IMPROVE PHOTOGRAPHY WITH EQUIPMENT

In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of equipment and tools in photography. While it's true that you can take great photos with any camera, there are certain instances where specific technology can significantly improve a photo or the type of photo you can capture.

Sometimes, certain equipment is necessary to achieve a specific style of photography, such as daytime long exposures, macro photography, wildlife photography, low light photography, or super shallow depth of field. Let's examine some examples:

1. For daytime long exposures, you will need a neutral density filter to cut down on the light entering your camera. This enables you to capture scenes like moving water or clouds during the day.



Photo by Samuel Ferrara

2. Macro photography requires a specific lens or type of lens that allows you to get extremely close to your subject while maintaining focus.



Photo by Dejan Zakic

3. Wildlife photography necessitates zoom lenses or highly telephoto lenses to get close to animals without disturbing them, as well as a camera that can focus quickly and shoot in burst mode.



4. For low light photography, you'll need lenses with a wide aperture if you don't want to use artificial lighting. Alternatively, you'll need a camera with a sensor that can capture low light scenes without producing excessive digital noise.



5. Shallow depth of field photography requires a lens that can open up to a wide aperture or a telephoto lens to achieve a compressed background and very shallow depth of field.



Photo by Steven Diaz

In conclusion, while it is possible to take great photos with any camera, having the appropriate equipment can expand your creative horizons and enable you to capture certain styles of photography that may not be possible otherwise. As you progress in your photography journey, consider investing in specific tools to help you achieve your desired style.

CONCLUSION

Wow, we've reached the end of this advanced photography course! By now, you should have gained numerous practical insights on how to improve your photos, and we hope you feel more confident in your photography skills.

We want to express our gratitude for joining us on this journey. This course was designed to help you take your photos from good to great, focusing on what makes a truly outstanding photo. If there was anything you hoped to learn that wasn't covered, or if you would like more in-depth lessons on a particular topic, please let us know. We are dedicated to continuously updating and improving this course to ensure it meets your needs as a photographer seeking to advance your skills.

If you're interested in exploring other courses, check out our profile on the platform you're using to access this book, as we offer dozens of courses on photography, video design, business, marketing, and many other topics.

Thank you so much for being a part of this course. Now, it's time to put your newfound knowledge into practice. We would love to hear how this course has helped you improve your photos. Feel free to share your work with us, tag us on social media, or reach out in any way that suits you.

We wish you a wonderful day, and we look forward to seeing you in our next course. Goodbye!