

Composition

- **Session 1**
 - Definition
 - Framing and cropping
 - Balance
 - Some of the guidelines

- **Session 2**
 - Entry and Exit
 - Attractors
 - Sculpting with light
 - Leading the eye
 - Distractions

Review Homework Responses

- Received two thoughtful inputs from Carolyn Barlow and Scherry Johnson
- To become a good photographer, requires commitment. You will need to work at it - study, practice, feedback, self evaluation

Door



- Door is at sweet spot, red attracts the eye, brighter than surroundings, becomes center of focus – the subject
- Hanging flowers provide leading lines to door, as does the line created by planter.
- Flowers also form a triangle that also points into image.
- Repeating shape of hanging flower clusters with contrasting colors provide interest.
- Warm neutral wall has texture and tonal variation that holds composition together
- Darkened corners and edges frame the image

Waiting



- Photo seems compositionally weak, like a vacation shooter looking for a keeper.
 - Horizontal layout is passive and static. A series of unrelated rectangles
 - Tree and rug tend to divide image. It is not a cohesive scene.
-
- No connection among the people, except for 2 boys. Each is lost in their own world.
 - People are looking outside the photos for no apparent reason
 - No focal point.
 - The scene starts to tell a story. Everyone is just waiting - but for what?
 - As Dr. Seuss says "Oh the Places You Will Go", "...the waiting place - a most useless place!"

Composition

- How the elements of image are framed and arranged.
- For more than 500 years, artists have developed techniques (“rules”) to appeal to human perception.
- Augmented by modern research.
- “Rules” can provide a starting place to strengthen the structure of an image.
- Think of these not as “rules,” but as guidelines. Don’t become a slave to them.
- The best composition is the one that works.

Some Time Tested Guidelines ("Rules")

- Fill the frame
- Keep it simple
- Rule of thirds, golden mean, sweet spot, power point...
- Foreground, middle-ground, background
- Lines- horizon, leading, direction, straight, curved, implied
- Perspective – vanishing point
- Remove distractions and competing elements
- Blur the foreground or background to separate
- Watch the edges
- Odd numbers
- Repetition
- Textures and patterns
- Frame within a frame
- Space to move or look into
- Camera angle or vantage point
- Control perspective and distortion
- Negative space
- Burning background and edges

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Eye Movement

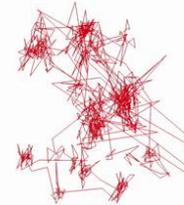
- Directing eye movement is major objective of composition
- Use composition to direct and hold the viewer's attention
 - Naturally enter frame
 - Draw to center of interest
 - Paths to explore the entire image
 - Hold eye within the frame
 - Return to the center of interest

Eye Movement

Canon printer ad
showing eye tracking
experiment

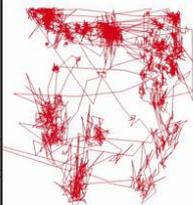


NON-PHOTOGRAPHER



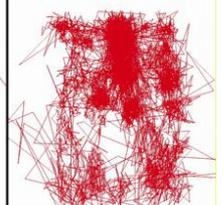
212
EYE MOVEMENTS

PHOTOGRAPHY STUDENT



445
EYE MOVEMENTS

PRO PHOTOGRAPHER



1,197
EYE MOVEMENTS

Leading the Eye

- The eye is drawn to attractors – good and bad
- Use attractors to lead viewer
- Sculpt with light to draw attention or deemphasize
- Deemphasize or remove distractions
- Pay special attention to the edges

Entry and Exit

- Provide path to enter frame
 - Naturally enter frame from lower left
- Block eye from leaving the frame

Entry and Exit



Blocked entry with easy exit



Path to enter with exit blocked

Entry and Exit



Easy Exit



Easy entry

Entry and Exit



Entry and Exit



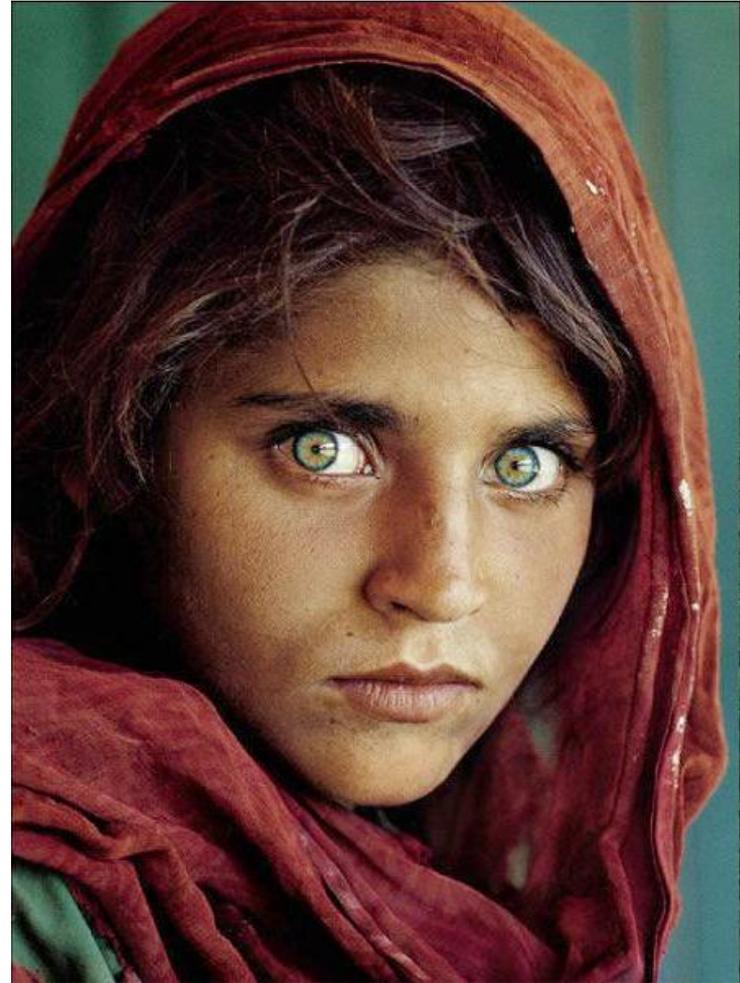
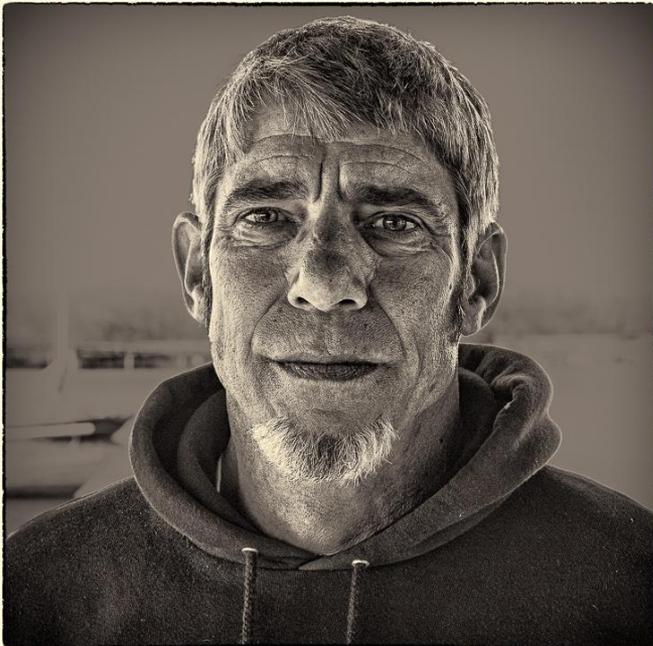
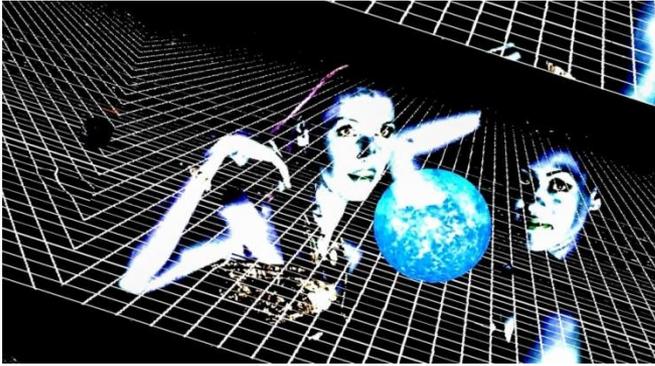
Drawing Attention

- Attractors draw our attention to the *subject and to distractions*
- First attractors
 - Human faces
 - Animal faces
 - Text
- Secondary attractors
 - In focus
 - Bright
 - Colorful
 - High contrast
 - More detail
- Often used in combination

Faces



Eyes



Photos by
Steve Evens (upper left)
Steve McCurry (right)

Animals



Text



In Focus

DOF and ...



In Focus Motion Blur



Bright

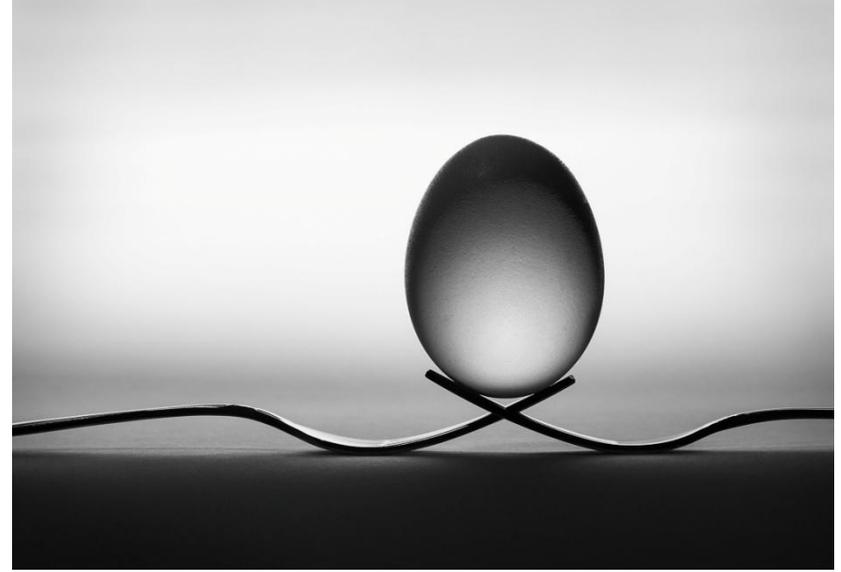
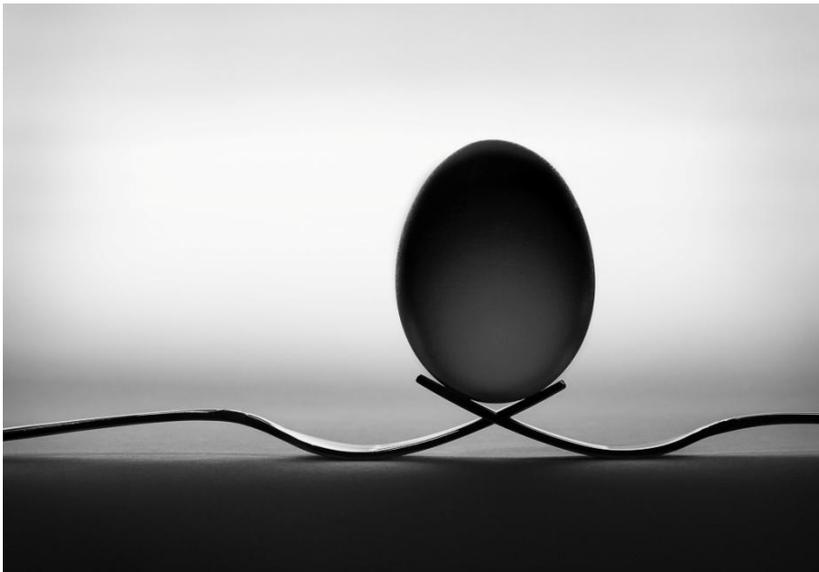


Bright spots tend to draw attention while we tend to ignore dark areas.

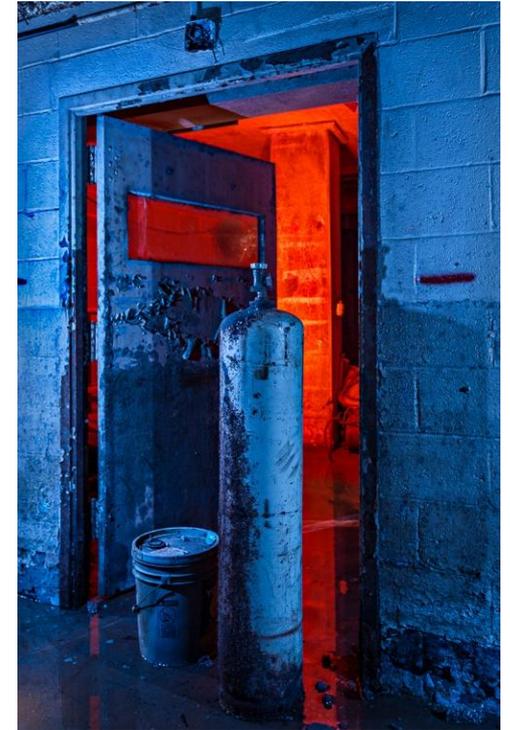
Highlights enhance images.



Bright



Colorful



Warm tones read like bright spots when placed against a cool background

High Contrast



Detail



Sculpting with Light

- Use light and dark to direct eye.
- Lighten element to draw attention and take viewer there.
- Main subject should generally be the brightest.
- Darken elements to deemphasize.
- Brain does not see gradients so can use soft edged brushes or gradients to adjust brightness.
- Subtly burn edges to keep eye within the image.

Sculpting with Light



Sculpting with Light



Burning Edges

Focus Attention on Subject



Burning background and edges

Focus attention on subject



Burning background and edges

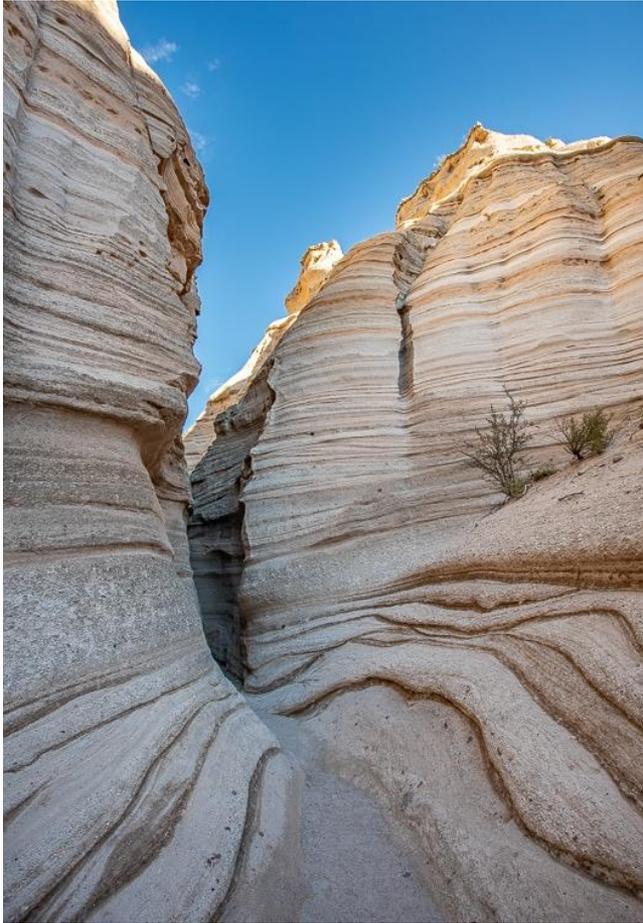
Focus attention on subject



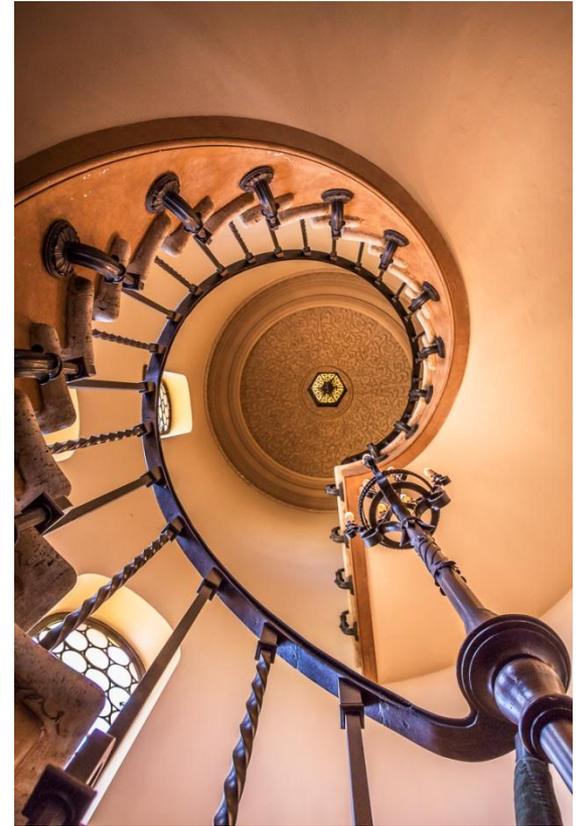
Leading Lines

- Direct the viewer's eye deeper into the composition.
- Encourage the viewer to explore the composition, creating a high level of visual engagement.
- Include straight lines, curves or a progression of objects from foreground to background.

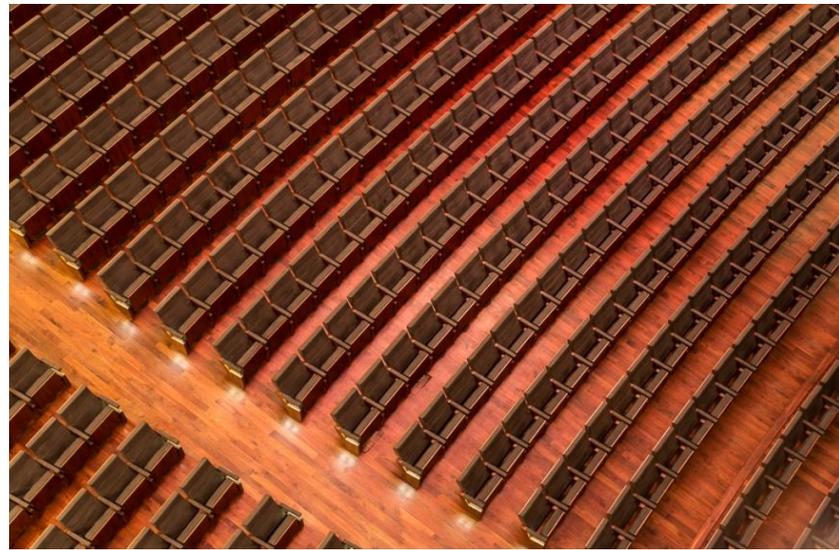
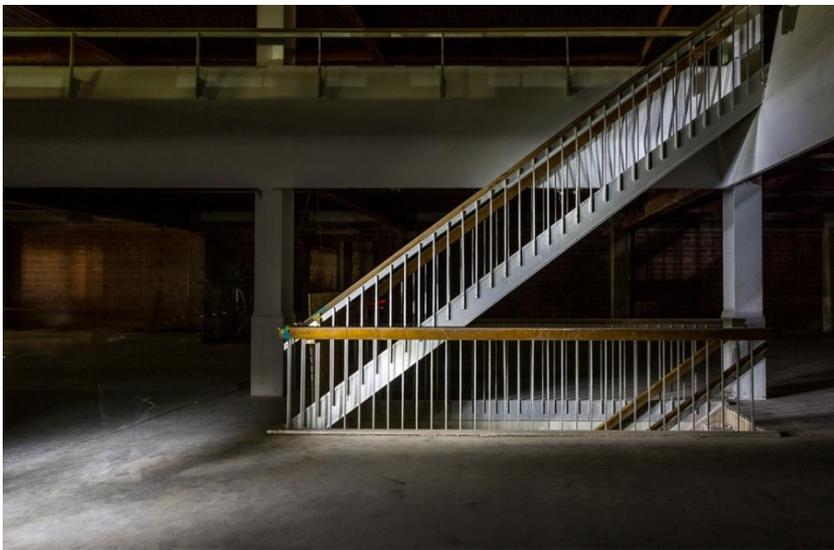
Leading Lines



Leading Lines



Leading Lines



Guide the Viewer



Implied Lines



Edges Are Special

- Our visual system is wired to see edges and objects with sharp contrast.
- We are drawn to features near edges and in corners.
 - Attractors
 - Mergers and near merges
 - Amputations
- Pay special attention to objects close to edges. These are emphasized, draw attention, create tension and imbalance.
- More apt to see edge problems in final image than in viewfinder – unless you look for them.

Mergers

Near Merge



Space to Breathe

Merger



Amputations



Amputation

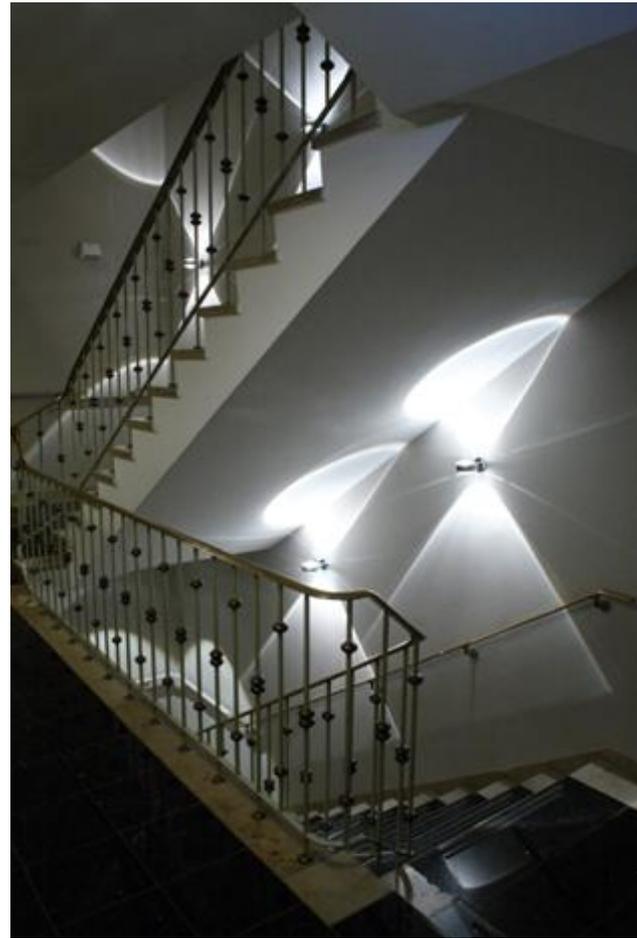


Better

Bright Spots



Bight Spots



Better

Where to Crop?



Merger



Space to Breathe



Purposeful Crop

Distractions

Unwanted Attractors!

- Attractors that pull the eye from the subject become distractions and cause visual confusion
- Remove or deemphasize distracting elements – bright spots, background, borders...
- Busy or competing elements – simplify, isolate, remove...

Busy with Competing Elements



Busy with Competing Elements



Distracting Elements Remove



Busy with Competing Elements



Change Palette and Crop

Bright Spots



Bright Spots



Better

Blur the Background to Separate Control DOF



Blur the Background to Separate Control DOF



Blur the Background to Separate Control DOF



Parting Thoughts

- The eye is drawn to attractors – good and bad
- Use attractors to lead viewer
- Sculpt light to draw attention or deemphasize
- Pay special attention to the edges
- Deemphasize or remove distractions

More Elements Impacting Composition That We Have Not Discussed

- Light and shadow
- Contrast and tonality
- Direction of light
- Direct or diffuse light
- Contrasting size and numbers
- Size and viewing distance
- Lens perspective
 - Wide angle – depth
 - Normal – as we see
 - Telephoto – compresses
- Focus
- Isolation
- Color
 - Warm vs cool
 - Contrast and quality
 - Harmonious, complementary
- Movement – blurred, stopped
- Eye lines
- Dynamic tension
- Alignment with frame
- And on and on...