

COMPOSITION

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Composition is the way photographers express their ideas. The rules of composition are not always clear and straight forward, and sometimes breaking the rules makes for a better image.

Components of composition are:

Graphic Lines – Can control a viewers eye movement through an image.

Vertical - show strength & growth. Horizontal - show weakness, fallen, & at rest. Diagonal - show unbalanced (not strong not weak), dynamic (in transition) & action. Curved - show bending under tension, & graceful. Wavy “S” shape - show calm, gentle & peace.

Implied (Psychological) Lines – If two people in an image are look directly at one another, there exists an invisible line between their eyes that the viewer will follow back and forth. Similarly, if a person is looking at or towards something the viewer will look in the same direction.

Shape & Form – Shapes and forms are only made up of lines. Though objects in an image may be 3-D, in a photograph they are only 2-D. To make 3-D objects appear 3-D, they must be composed with such an angle to resemble the real thing. If a short piece (length same as width) of pipe is situated such that the view is straight on it will appear as a flat square. But change the angle of view and show it’s end and magically it now appears to look like a cylinder because of the round end of pipe in view.

Pattern & Repetition – Refers to shapes and or lines being repeated. Sometimes they are obvious and in neat order other times they are not. The human mind seeks to make sense of shapes and lines. It will then attempt to organize them into a repeating pattern. Patterns can be perfect without any faults, or near perfect with one isolated area which may be altered, imperfect or ceases to continue.

Weight – Images have “visual” weight. A small object or light tone images will appear light and delicate, were as a large object or dark image will portray heaviness and strength.

Depth – Because photographs are flat pieces of paper, they has no depth. But the appearance of depth none the less exists in many images. Arrangement of graphic lines and shapes can convey the sense of depth. Objects of the same size that recede and get smaller show depth. Layering and image with foreground subject(s) such as a log, a middle ground such as a lake and mountains, background such as a blue sky with clouds will trigger a memory in every viewer of a similar experience of theirs.

Balance – If the images center of interest is located in the center of the image it will have the feeling of balance and uninteresting. Move the center of interest off center and now the image becomes unbalance and dynamic. Here is where the “golden rule of thirds” was derived. Divide an image up in thirds both horizontally and vertically. At the point where the lines intersect is the point at which to place the subject of interest for the most effect.

The Horizon Line – What to do with the horizon line! First, make sure it is flat and horizontal. Second, do not always place it in the middle of the image. By doing so, you divide the photograph into two images. Nether half has importance over the other and creates a weak composition. Have the part of the image, which has more interest take up more space in the image. The rule of thirds again works well here. One third above the horizon and two thirds below, or visa versa.