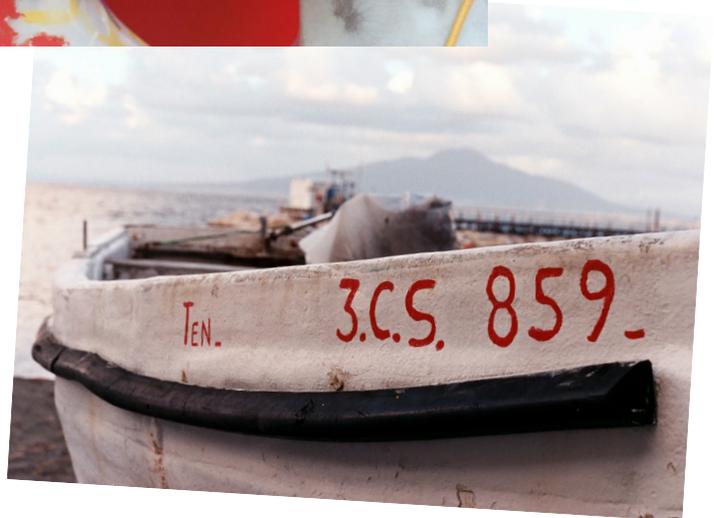


So, You Want to be a Better Photographer?

Design Elements, Principles, and Composition



So you want to be a better photographer? The best kind of camera is the one you always have on you. For most of us, that's our smartphone. This brief course is going to teach you how to take and edit better photographs with nothing but your phone or tablet! Let's jump right in and begin our first module talking about the design theories and technical considerations of making great photographs.

First, we're going to learn a few basics about design elements, principles, and composition. Think of design elements as the tools in your toolbox. Here are a few commonly used in photography:

Line: A line is simply a point moving through space. Lines can move in any direction, be any size or texture, and move through your picture plane in any direction. Using line as a design element can create a visually appealing composition.

Color: Color is a universal language and can help your photos emphasize a subject, evoke a feeling, or even hold symbolism. A lot of working with color becomes intuitive over time, but your color harmony, contrasting colors, and complimentary colors can communicate a loud message.

Shape: Shape is usually a recognizable object; in this case, it'll likely be your subject. (Shape is sometimes confused with form. A silhouette- which appears two dimensionally- gives an obvious outline and is considered "shape." Something with depth and shadow- like a close-up portrait of a face would be "form.")

Form: Form is concerned with the way a subject is rendered three dimensionally. How light interacts with your subject can enhance the appeal of any form (think of a compelling portrait).

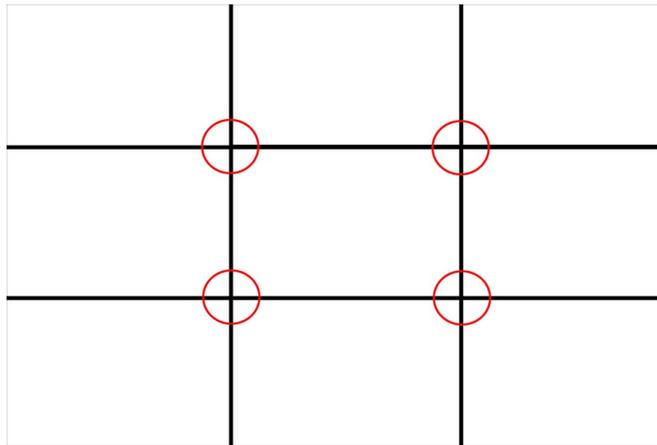
Texture: We are used to talking about texture in a tactile sense: a smooth stone, a fuzzy sweater, or rough tree bark. When talking in photographic terms, we're talking about a visual texture which is implied. Texture is often dependent on great lighting; textured images are all about the details.

Pattern: Pattern can be defined as repetition of any of the other elements or combination of elements. Repeated shapes, lines, or textures can present a pattern.

If these design elements are the tools in your toolbox, art principles are how you put them to work. You want your photographs to feel balanced, have movement to guide the viewer's eye through the image, and have all of these things working together to create unity.

When we talk about composition, there are many ways to compose an image. (Remember that the picture plane will include everything in front of your camera, so you must train your eye to see everything in the field of view, not just your subject.) A good rule of thumb when you are new to taking photographs is to follow the rule of thirds. This is a guideline that suggests imagining your image is divided into nine equal sections with two horizontal and two vertical lines. You may place a subject along one of these lines or at a point where they intersect;

images composed in thirds are often more visually interesting than images with a subject in the direct center of the frame.



Creating strong compositions is a skill that takes time, and you will build stronger compositions the more images you take. Shoot a LOT! Shoot multiples of every scene and shoot it from different perspectives. Get up on a chair and shoot. Lay flat on the ground and look up at your subject. Try moving both closer and farther away. Perspective can change the mood of a photograph or can emphasize strength in your subject.

Lighting is another extremely important technical consideration for a photographer. How a photo is lit can often make a good photograph a great photograph. Light can do more than guarantee a good exposure; it can change the entire mood of a scene, enhance a portrait, or become a subject itself. Golden hour is a term commonly used for the hour shortly after sunrise or just before sunset when daylight is softer and more golden than midday sun. This light makes for exceptionally warm, lovely portraits and red-orange landscapes with diffused sun. Understanding

your light source and the angle it interacts with your subject will help strengthen your images.

The best way to learn to make great images is to shoot a lot and shoot often. Snap images of anything you find visually interesting: flowers and botanicals, peeling paint, colorful graffiti, your loved ones, architectural details, or cars, for example. The more you shoot, you'll be able to identify themes in your work and a commonality in your images. But the best way is to just get started! Take a walk around the block with your camera ready and begin training your eyes to see! Happy shooting!