Artistic Abstract Photographs

<u>3 Day Photo Assignment</u>

WATCH THIS VIDEO!



CREATING ARTISTIC ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS



By definition, abstract artwork is: art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, lines, colors, and textures.

KEY LESSON: To create abstract photography, you need to adjust your thinking. Don't look at the world around you in its physical form. Imagine that you see it through blurry eyeglasses. You want to only see shapes, colors, lines, forms, and textures. Now, you must compose a meaningful shot, from that blurry vision, that a viewer will recognize with some effort.

Skill Points:

- Creating composition that invokes thought
- Using simple elements to convey a message

convey a message

Willingness to break rules



EQUIPMENT Camera: Any DSLR, mirrorless, hybrid, compact or smartphone Lens + Lens hood: Any lens (manual focusing is a benefit)

ACTION ASSIGNMENT

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- Study the sample photographs.
 - A- By eliminating details, and framing something simple -the photo becomes abstractbut still recognizable
 - B- Look past the obvious, to 'see' details that tell a smaller story about a bigger picture.
 - C- Shoot design elements in-camera, and use post-production to add abstraction to the resulting photo.
 - D- Abstract photography often depicts a familiar subject in an unfamiliar way.
 - E- There is a difference between abstract and 'semi-abstract' artwork. This image borders on being more semi-abstract.
- 2- Self-assign two shots
 - #1 For the first shot- pick an object and set about creating an abstract photo of the object (think of the tree bark or the water examples).
 - **#2** For the second shot- go on a photo shoot and 'find' a subject that you will photograph in an abstract manner (think of the running track or the building examples).
- 3- Explore your chosen subjects carefully and from all angles.
- 4- Setup your camera: Due to the creative nature of abstract photography, there are no set rules on how to set up your camera.
- 5- The key to this Action Assignment is to change your visual perception of objects that you photograph.

What is Abstract Photography?

Photos that do not attempt to represent external reality, but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures. Abstract photography is difficult to define. In general, abstraction occurs when a photographer captures a portion of a specific scene, isolating it from its contextual environment. By focusing in on something, whether it be color, shape, form, or texture, the artist is able to create a unique perception of familiar objects. This method of expressing ideas deviates from photography's traditional realism and is intended to capture the viewer's imagination.



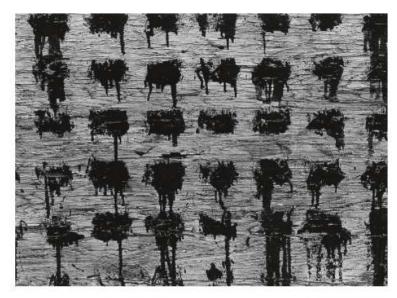


Alfred Stieglitzfirst abstract photographer

It wasn't until American photographer Alfred Stieglitz came onto the scene that the practice of photographic abstraction really started to gain traction. *Equivalents* is a series of at least 220 photographs of clouds taken by Alfred Stieglitz from 1925 to 1934. They are generally recognized as the first photographs intended to free the subject matter from literal interpretation, and, as such, are some of the first completely abstract photographic works of art.



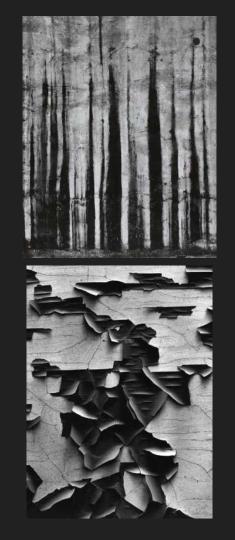




Aaron Siskind "<u>Chicago 42</u>," 1952. Sold for \$3,000 via <u>Swann Auction</u> <u>Galleries</u> (December 2013).

Aaron Siskind

Aaron Siskind is perhaps one of the best-known abstract photographers and pioneers of the movement. As a New York City native, Siskind began his career as a social documentary photographer but continued to emphasize modernist, abstract elements within his works from the 1940s on. He was one of the first photographers to combine "straight" photography (recording the real world as the lens "sees" it) with abstraction.





Edward Weston, "<u>Cabbage Leaf,</u>" 1931. Sold for \$4,250 via <u>Swann</u> <u>Auction Galleries</u> (December 2013).

Edward Weston

Born in Illinois in 1886, <u>Edward Weston</u> worked as an abstract photographer most notably throughout the early to mid 20th century. While he photographed many people and landscapes, he is best known for his still lifes where he turned fruit into erotic scenes. He used an 8×10 film camera to capture extreme detail and was insistent on manipulating the light and angles just right.





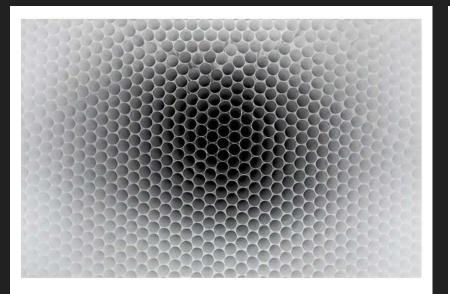
Tips & Techniques

Abstract Photography around the classroom

1. Start with everyday objects

Abstract photography involves a lot of looking at things in a different way. It can help if you start with things that you already have at home to practice. Once you get used to seeing mundane, everyday things beyond their usual framework, you'll be able to think and see things abstractly wherever you are.

Believe it or not, literally anything can be a subject in your abstract photos. Choose a random object or set of things, such as kitchenware or a single light bulb, and try to figure out how you can photograph it in a different yet appealing way.

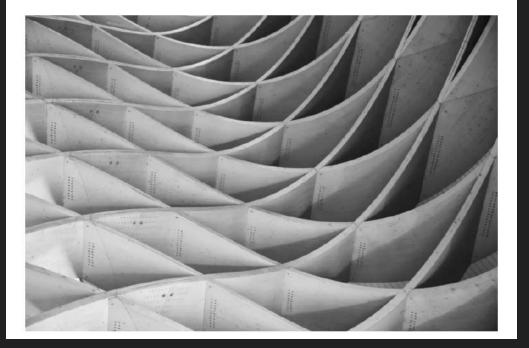




Bubble Tea Straws

2. Use elements of design to your advantage

The composition of different photographic elements—line, shape, form, texture, pattern, and color—can influence your viewers to appreciate and look at your photos in many different ways. Lines and curves, for example, add interest by leading your viewer's eyes across an image, perhaps towards the focal point in the shot. Patterns and textures are always interesting to look at. You can blow your viewers' minds if you include a zoomed out shot of what it really is and where it came from. Similarly, you can use colors to highlight the point of interest or just to add visual impact to your image. Seek out these elements around you and use them to create compelling abstract images.

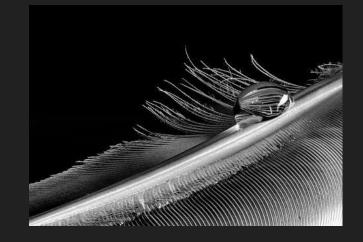




3. Go macro

One of the most common methods of capturing abstract photos is to move in closer. You can do this either by zooming in or going macro. While it's perfectly fine to use zoom lenses, they only make distant objects look closer up to a certain extent. To achieve a much closer focus that can magnify tiny objects or details and capture a life-sized (or even bigger) image, you'll need to use your camera's Macro mode or get a good macro lens.









4. Shoot through objects

Using a makeshift lens "filter" can help you achieve truly unique and abstract images. Colored filters and gels, for example, can save you from having to edit your photos just to give it an interesting color tinge. Shooting through translucent glass, water, or even a car window on a rainy day can result in distortions and light diffractions that will create unusual but visually interesting images. Don't hesitate to experiment with other kinds of things you can shoot through. You can then find out how they can affect your image.



5. Capture motion

Many photographers frown upon subject blurring—but not abstract photographers. By simply moving your camera at the moment of taking the shot, you end up with a mix of different colors, lines, and patterns. This looks similar to painting brushwork, depending on the direction of movement. Start with one direction, then left to right. Experiment with circular movements and wiggles. Understand how it affects your images and see what kind of patterns you end up with.

Remember to use a slower shutter speed of 1/10th of a second or slower to successfully capture motion blur. If your shot ends up overexposed, you can go on Shutter Priority mode or use a lower ISO level and/or a tighter aperture.





6. Practice the art of subtraction

To keep your images simple, you need to get used to literally removing or keeping elements out of the frame. You may need to experiment and think about which ones you will remove. But it's equally important that you remember why you're doing it. Sometimes, simply taking out a second object from the equation can make your viewers focus on and contemplate the remaining object. Thus, you're adding more mystery to your photo.





7. Customize your lighting

Changing the direction and adjusting the power of your light source can provide different effects that yield unique images. Focused lighting on your subject, for example, can emphasize and make it the focal point of your photo. Placing a strong light source on one side can create shadows that will accentuate textures. Even and diffused lighting lessens the drama but can make your viewers linger and really look at different parts of the image, as opposed to just one specific area. You can try backlighting and silhouetting, which partly involves placing the light source behind the subject.

These are just some of the many ways that you can manipulate your lighting to create shadows or highlights that add depth, mystery, and interest to your images.







8. Experiment with different shooting styles

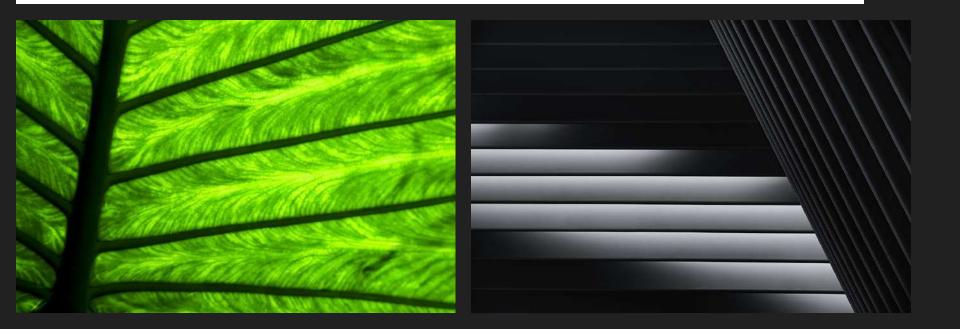
A prerequisite for this step is to first understand how your camera works. Once you've gotten a good idea about how different camera settings can affect your output, you can manipulate your results to your own liking. Be willing to shoot out of focus, play with your depth of field, or shoot from very weird angles. You can also rotate your photos, or even change the white balance of your images. Try out methods used in product, outdoor, and even sports photography to create abstract results. This is the part where "anything goes," and you're encouraged to exercise your artistic freedom.





9. Post-process your images

Aside from exercising your freedom to manipulate your results and create your very own abstract imagery, feel free to go crazy with the post-processing. When it comes to editing abstract photos, there's no such thing as "too much". Abstract photographers are encouraged to digitally improve their work later on. You can do this through recoloring, cropping, reshaping, distorting, or flipping images.



10. Keep it Simple!

At first glance, abstract photos may seem a little confusing and cluttered. However, once you understand what "abstraction" does, you'll realize that a lot of subtraction actually goes into the process. Distracting and useless elements that don't trigger emotions and may confuse viewers are eliminated from the image, especially since what is included in the image won't be easily recognizable, thus resulting in a cleaner abstract image that is visually lighter and easier to interpret.



11. Create an interesting Composition:

Composition can be defined as the arrangement of the elements & principles within the frame of the photograph. While many commonly observed photography rules don't apply, a good abstract photo always has a clear, structural design. A lot of thought goes into the order, placement, and balance between shapes, patterns, textures, and even colors within an abstract image. These factors greatly affect the visual weight of the photo, establish and complement the point of interest, and influence how viewers look at it. A well-composed photo uses these visual elements to achieve a common goal and output.



Abstract

12. Experiments with creative camera angles:

Angle of View (AKA Vantage Point or camera angle): the position of the camera in relation to the subject. Like composition, the angle of view determines how the subject will be represented in an abstract image. Choosing the right angle of view involves looking for the best vantage point that will complement your subject and keep distractions out of the frame. Aside from shooting at an unusual angle, some abstract images are even flipped or rotated during postprocessing to come up with different views and orientations.





13. Create a sense of mystery:

Abstract images trigger emotional responses and imaginations by including an element of mystery and intrigue. This is how abstract art gives viewers a sense of wonder. This, in turn engages and encourages them to appreciate even the most complex but inviting pieces of art.



14.Create a sense of harmony:

Photographic elements in an abstract image tend to be limited, but they usually work together by <u>creating visual balance and</u> <u>proportion</u>. When there are strong colors in an image, for example, they are usually balanced out by other muted colors. This way, they don't fight for visual attention or confuse viewers. They coexist harmoniously by relating to each other and complementing the focal point, thus creating a cohesive abstract photo.



Considerations:

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your shot have a pleasing composition? Do viewers need to contemplate what they are looking?
- Can a viewer ultimately discern what they are looking at?
- Does your shot generate visual excitement?
- Did you simplify to the basic elements of shapes, forms, lines, colors, and textures?

Tips & Techniques

Abstract Photography of PAPER with creative lighting

This video is long, student may choose to watch later...



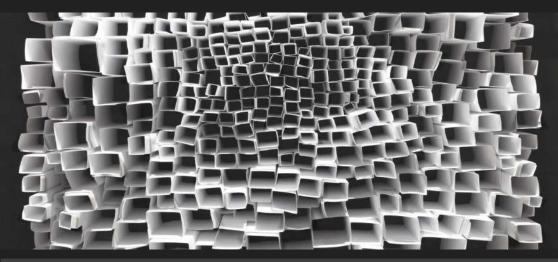
Experiment with

Texture Manipulation:

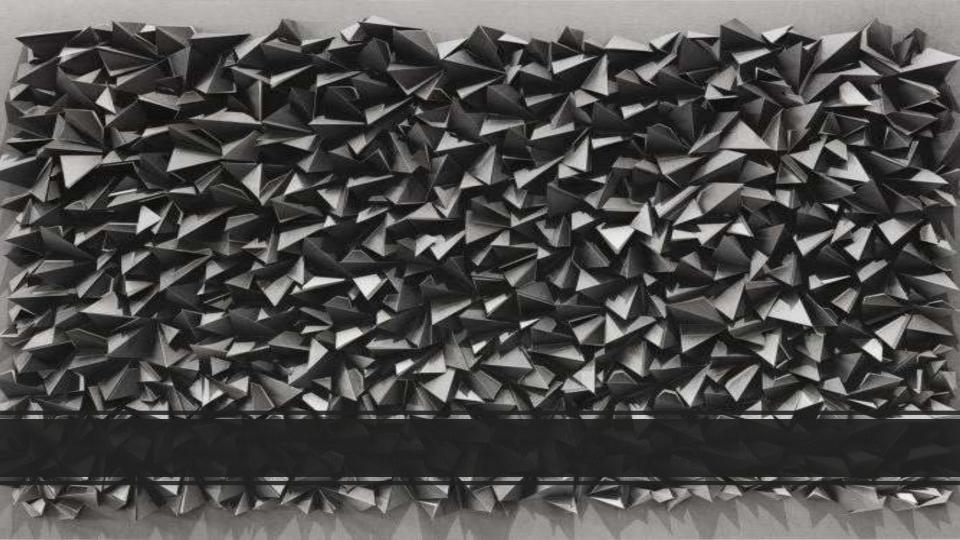
Explore the tactile qualities of the paper by ripping, folding, bending, or crumpling it. These textural manipulations can add depth and dimension to your compositions, creating visually intriguing abstract images. You can also experiment with creating paper sculptures or incorporating other materials to further enhance the tactile experience and creative expression in your photographs.



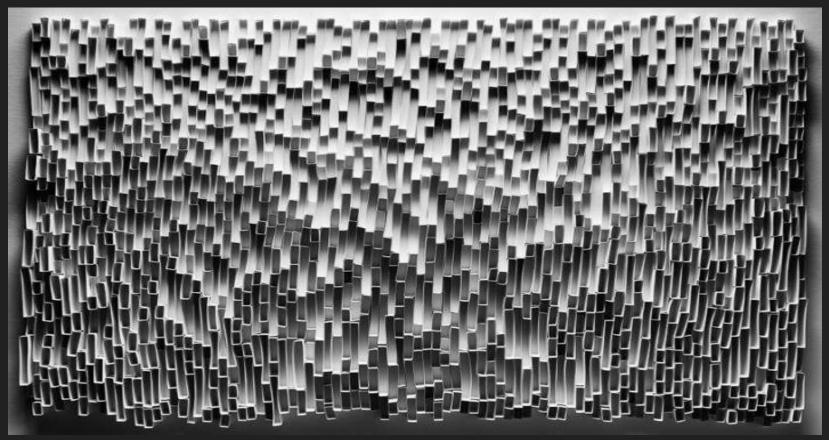




Christiane Feser



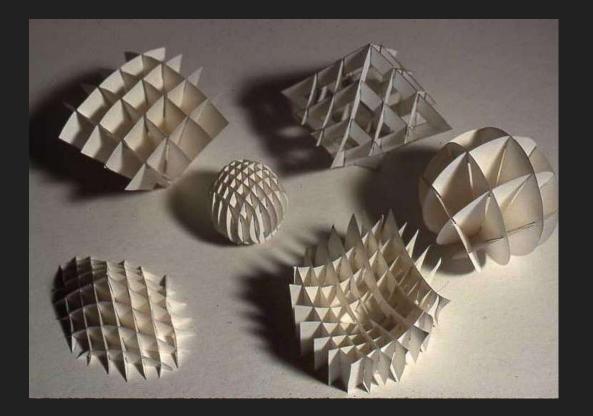
Feser was born in Würzburg, Germany in 1977. She studied photography at the Offenbach University of Art and Design in Germany. She lives and works in Germany.



- Cut
- Rip
- Fold
- Pinch
- Scrunch
- Roll
- Curl
- Loop
- Spiral
- Tabs
- Fringe
- Curled Fringe
- Pleat
- Pleated Fringe
- Cone
- Rectangular Prism
- Triangular Prism
- Cut on Fold
- Slits and Slots
- Weave

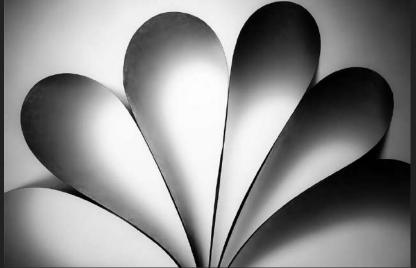






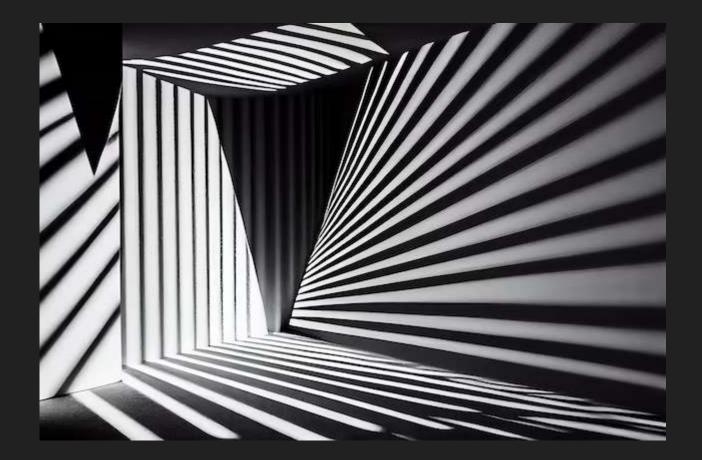
Experiment with Lighting Angles: Play around with different lighting angles to cast shadows and highlights on the paper. Try overhead lighting, side lighting, and backlighting to create depth and dimension in your compositions.







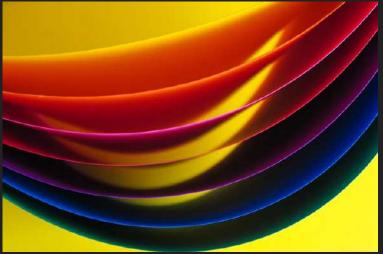


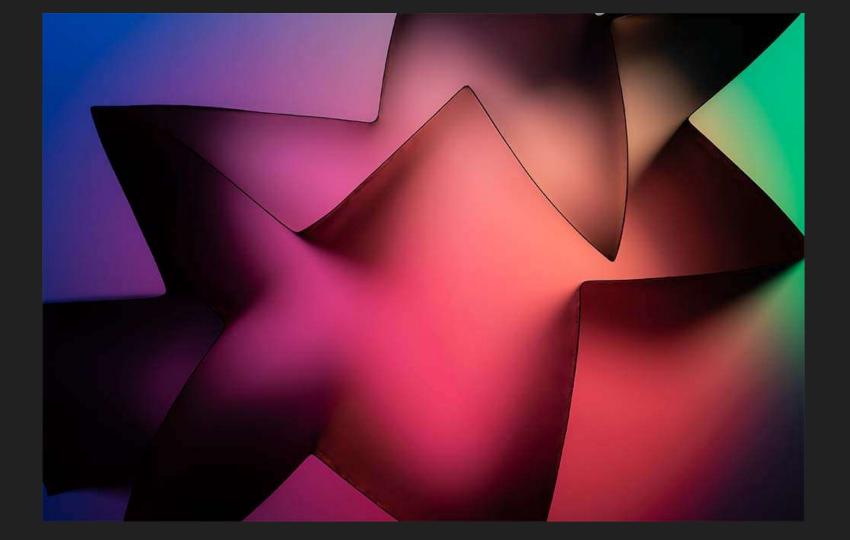


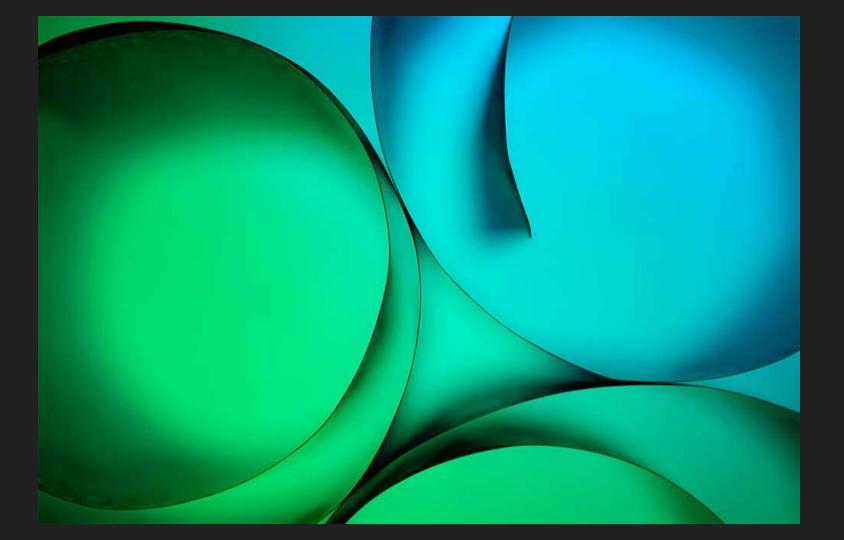
Use Color Gels:

Incorporate colored gels over your studio lights to add a dynamic and vibrant element to your photographs. Experiment with different gel combinations to evoke different moods and emotions in your images.



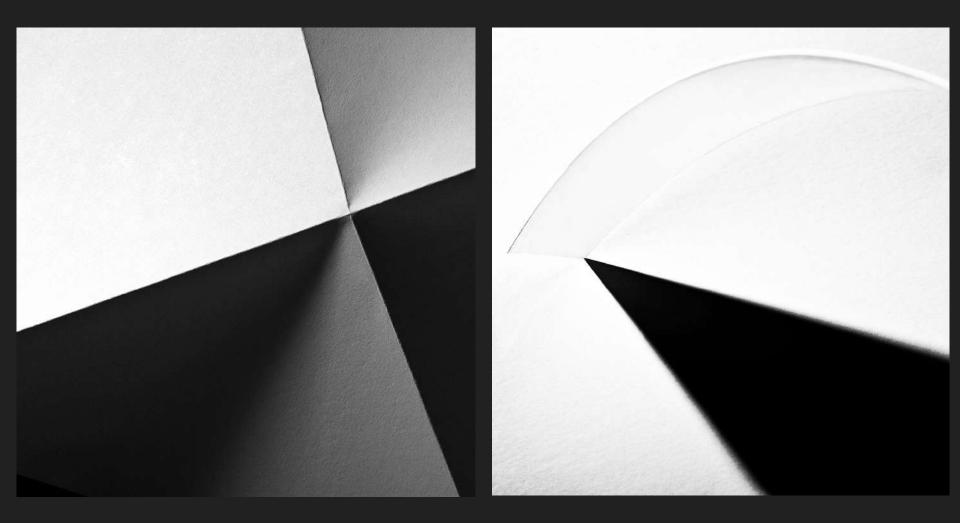


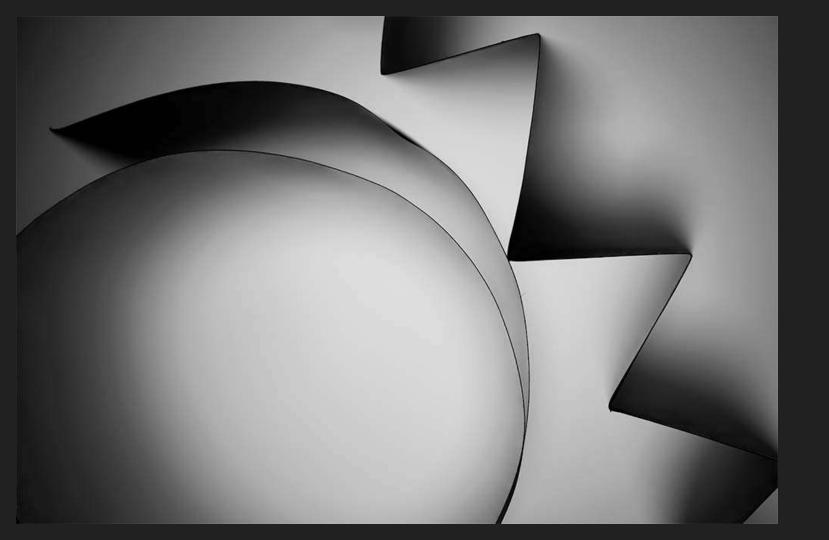


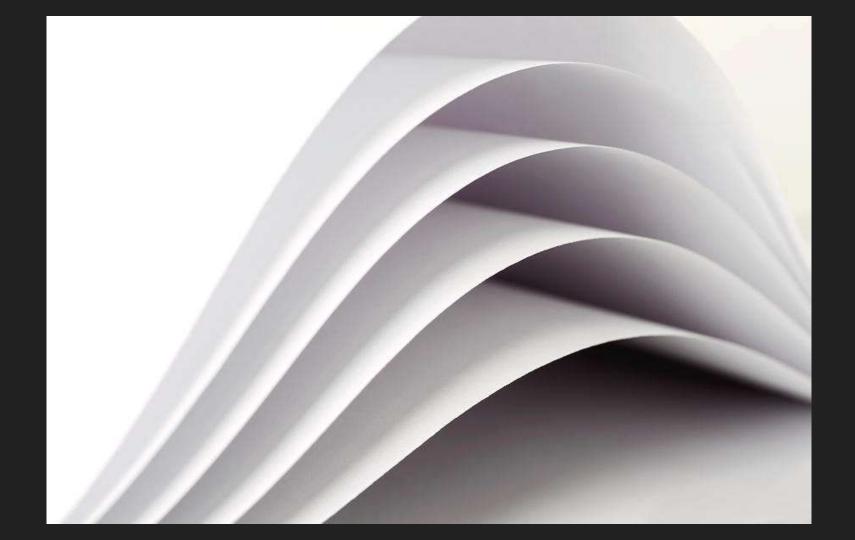


Explore Negative Space: Embrace negative space in your compositions to create a sense of balance and harmony. Experiment with minimalistic arrangements of paper against a blank background to draw focus to the shapes and forms.



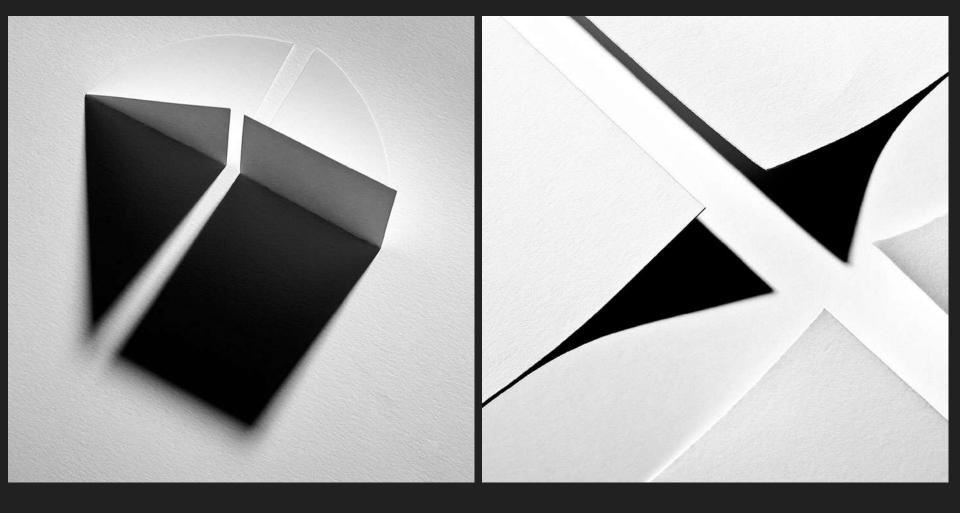






Play with Perspective: Experiment with different perspectives and viewpoints to capture unique compositions. Get up close to the paper to reveal intricate details, or step back to capture the paper in its entirety within the frame.

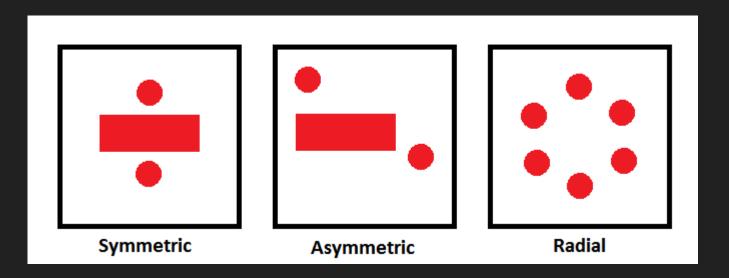




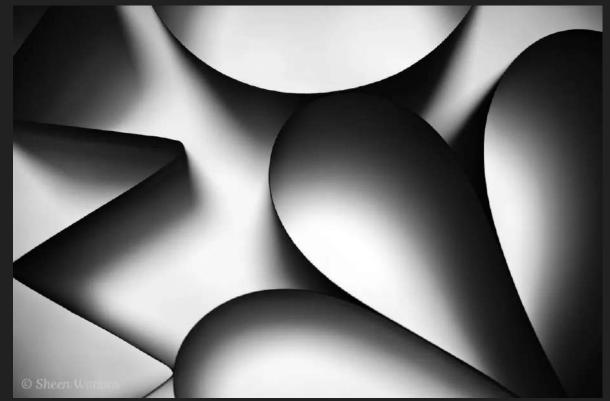
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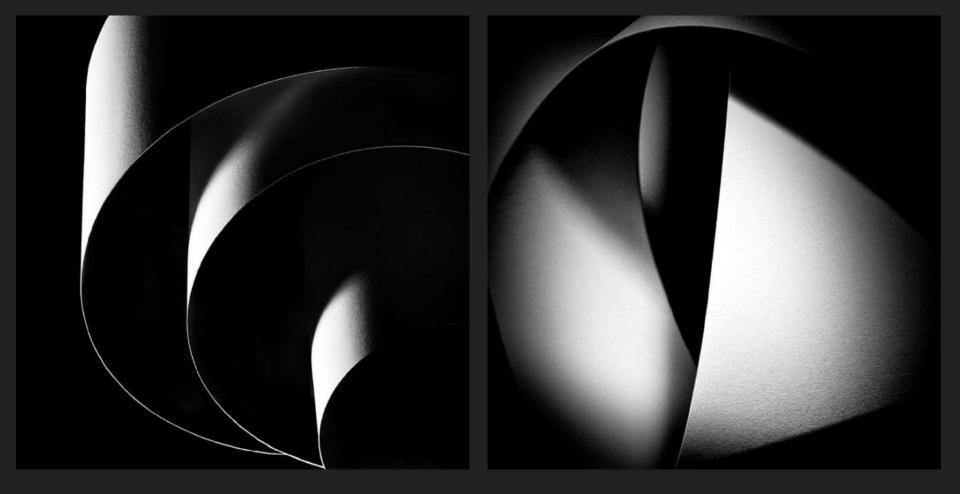


<u>Utilize Symmetry and Asymmetry:</u> Explore the balance between symmetry and asymmetry in your compositions. Arrange the paper symmetrically for a harmonious feel, or intentionally offset the elements to create visual interest and tension.

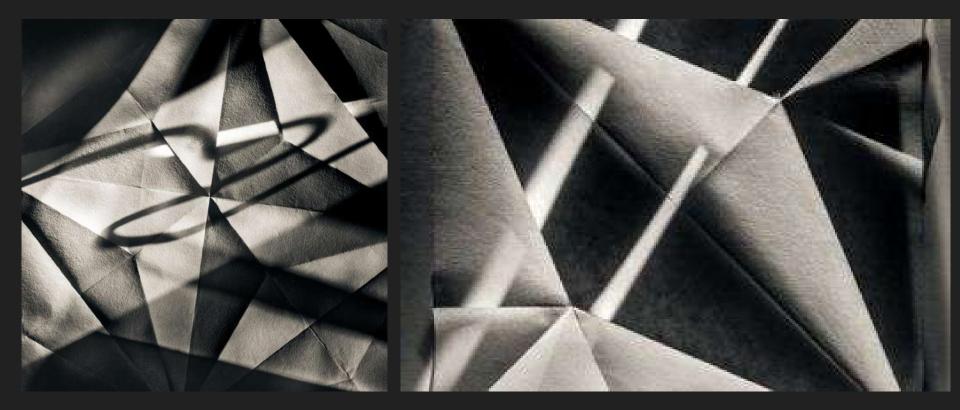


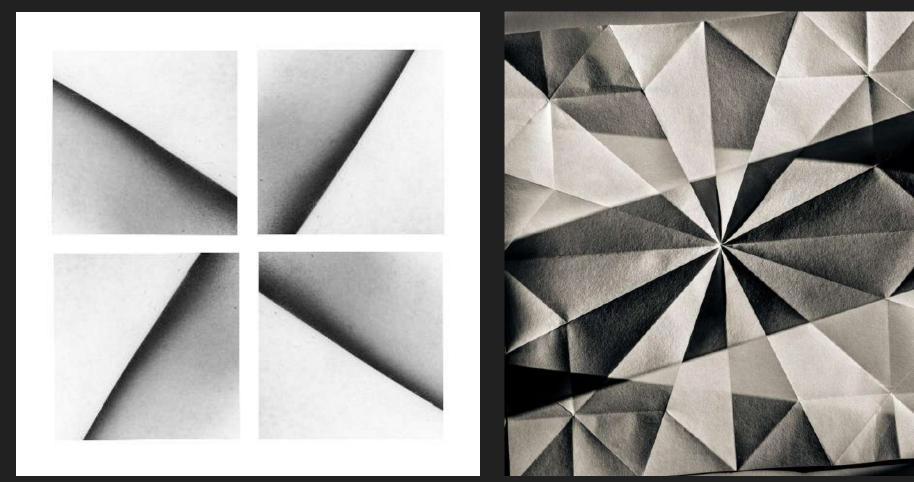
<u>Create Contrasts</u>: Contrast is key in abstract photography. Experiment with contrasting elements such as light and dark, smooth and textured, or sharp and blurred to create visual impact and intrigue.





<u>Focus on Shapes and Lines:</u> Pay attention to the shapes and lines formed by the paper in your compositions. Experiment with geometric shapes and abstract patterns to create visually compelling images that play with the viewer's perception.





Break the Rules: Don't be afraid to break traditional composition rules and experiment with unconventional techniques. Let your creativity guide you as you explore new ways to interpret and capture abstract images of paper using studio lighting.

