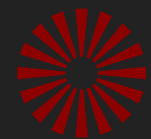


TEN ELEMENTS OF DESIGN THAT YOU CAN USE TO CREATE IMAGES:



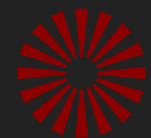
Rule of Thirds



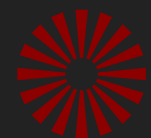
Centering



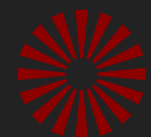
Focus



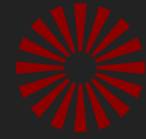
Color



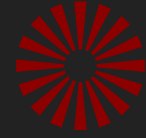
Perspective



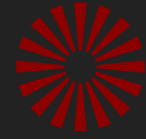
Relative Size and
Distance



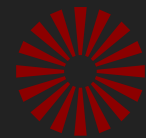
Brightness



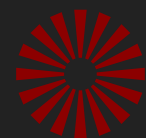
Contrast



Psychological
Closure



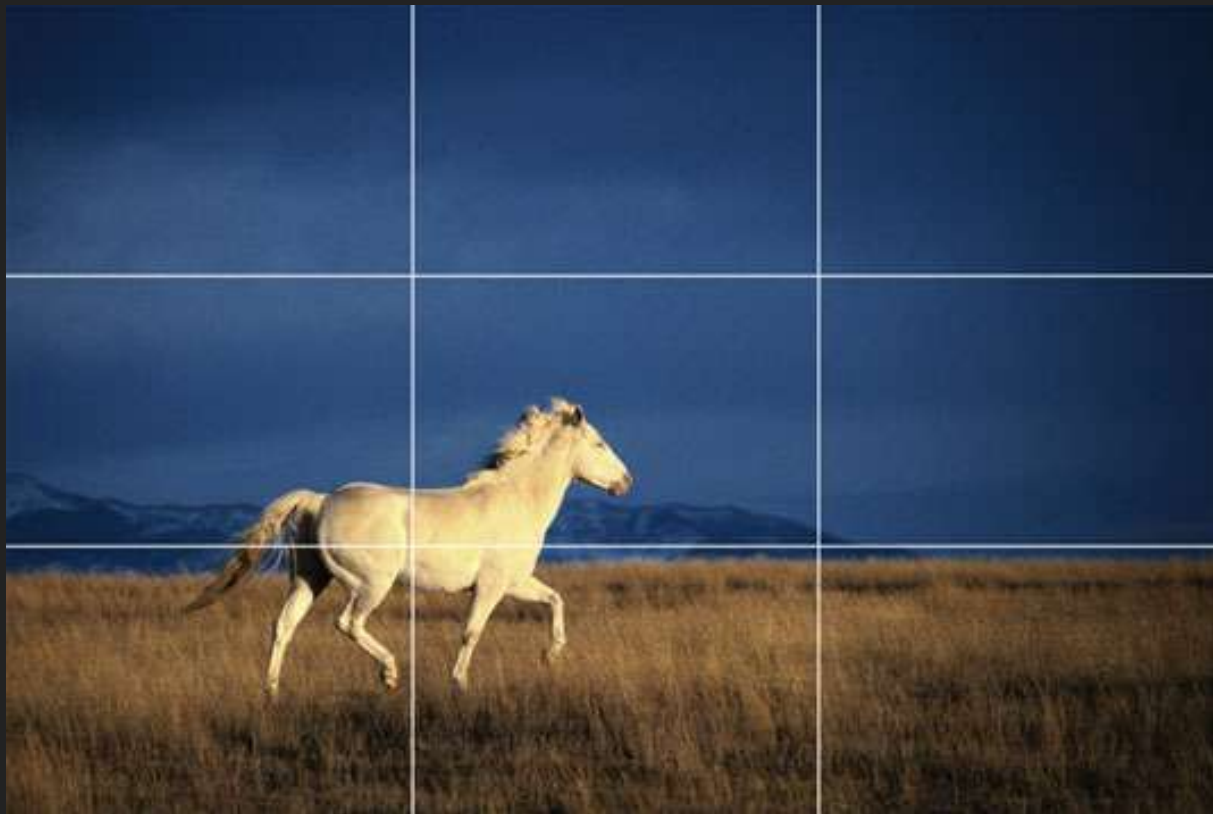
Positive and
Negative Space



Text

RULE OF THIRDS

Not so much a “rule” as something to think about when framing, images are more dynamic, especially in the rectangular frame, when the subject is off center. Divide your frame into thirds (a “tic-tac-toe” pattern) and put your subject where the lines cross. Or, divide your frame into thirds from top to bottom.



Notice that the horse and the child are running in the direction of the “negative space.” It’s natural for us to want to *fill* that empty space visually!

CENTERING

We tend to look at the center of the frame first. Sometimes, framing your subject dead-center adds impact. But, a dynamic frame can be created by decentering the image (placing the subject off-center).



The Last Time Emmett Modeled by Sally Mann, 1987

CENTERING

Here are some more examples. When precisely in the center, this is sometimes called a “Bullseye Composition.”



These images work well with strong central framing of the subject, which takes advantage of their shapes. The viewer approaches these subjects directly.

FOCUS

In a photograph, we tend to look at the part of the frame that is in focus.

Boston Photographer Eugene Richards used angles and focus to tell difficult stories about the victims of drug addiction.



from *Cocaine True, Cocaine Blue* by Eugene Richards

COLOR

Bright or more saturated color tends to draw our attention (especially in monochromatic scene).



Kayaking the Narrows by Gail Rowen

PERSPECTIVE

Lines lead our eye into the space of the photograph. Repeating shapes (getting smaller or larger into the distance) also indicate perspective. Placement of the subject along these “leading lines” will draw our eye to it.



Railroads, France (from “Workers”)
by Sabastiao Salgado



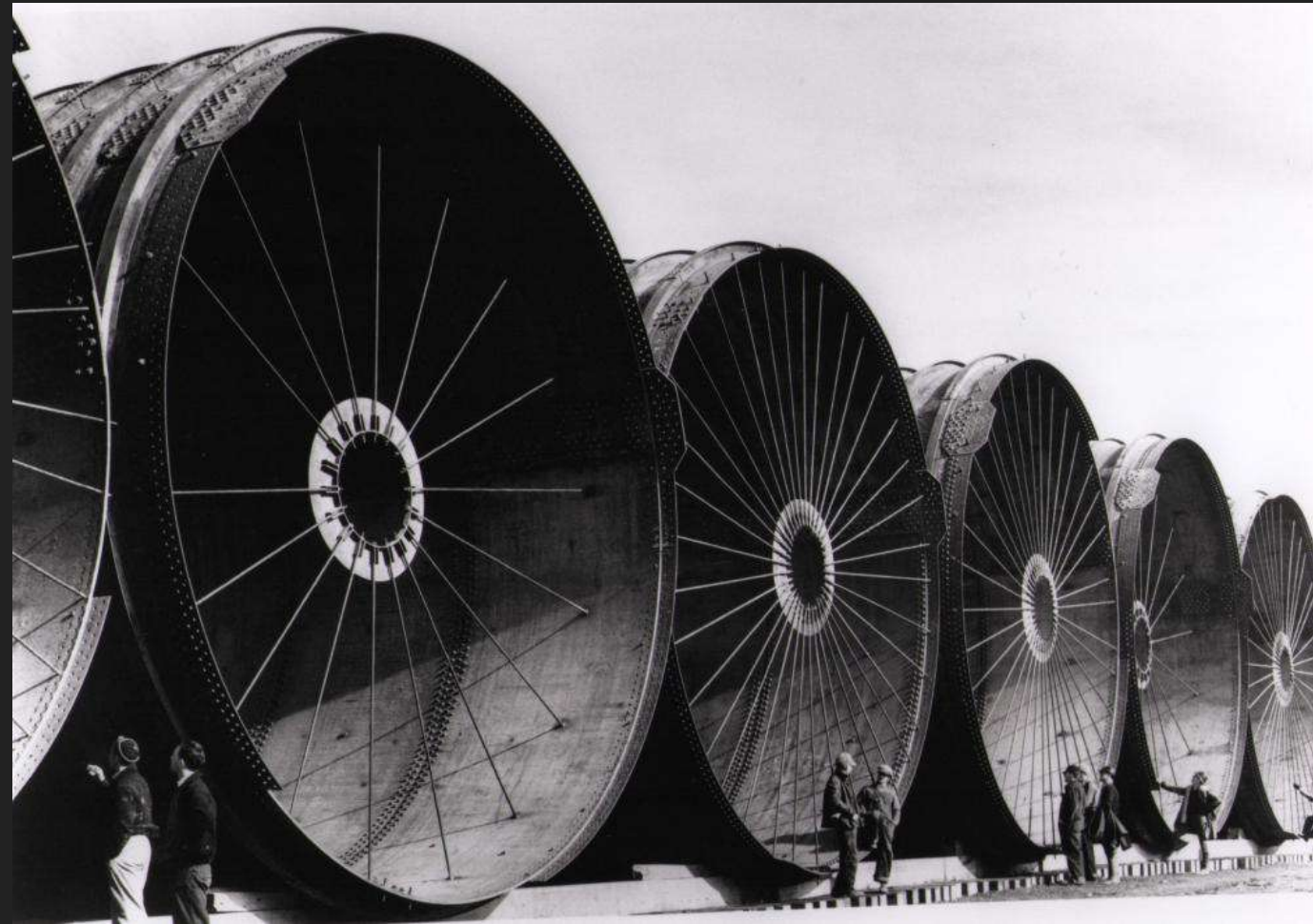
Girl Worker in Carolina Cotton Mill
by Lewis Hine, 1908

RELATIVE SIZE / DISTANCE

In an image, we tend to look at the larger object. By placing the subject closer to the lens -- in the *foreground* -- it will appear larger.



Manzanar by Ansel Adams, 1944



Diversion Tunnels, Hoover Dam
by Margaret Bourke White, 1936

BRIGHTNESS

We tend to look at the brightest part of the frame. Dark areas are perceived as “negative” or empty space, and draw our eye less.



Composer Philip Glass
by Annie Leibovitz



Aspens, Northern New Mexico
by Ansel Adams, 1958

CONTRAST

Our eye is drawn to areas of contrast--highlights next to shadows. A *silhouette* is an extreme example of *high contrast*.



Jacob's Ladders, Ranooch Moor, Scotland
by Ian Cameron



Walk to Paradise Garden
by W. Eugene Smith, 1946

CLOSURE

“Closed objects” have all or most of their outline visible. We perceive these shapes as “positive space” rather than “negative space,” and look at them first, especially if the other lines and shapes run out of the frame.

Photographer Mary Ellen Mark used closure often to bring attention to people in her often painful social documentary photography.



Laurie in the Ward 81 bathtub, Oregon State Hospital, Salem, Ore., 1976 by Mary Ellen Mark



Ram Prakash Singh with his elephant Shyama, Great Golden Circus, Ahmedabad, India, 1990 by Mary Ellen Mark

Leprosy patient with her nurse, National Hansen's Disease Center, Carville, La., 1990 by Mary Ellen Mark

FRAME WITHIN A FRAME

This is the ultimate example of “closed shape”-- framing a subject inside the shot. This is called “frame within a frame” because you already have one frame--the frame of the image.



Powerhouse Mechanic
by Lewis Hine, 1920



Mirror, Beach
by Ralph Gibson, 1977

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SPACE

Closed subjects and subjects in the foreground are perceived as positive space. The rest is perceived as negative space (important, but maybe not what you look at first)



Bastienne by Ralph Gibson,
1981



Shadow by Ralph Gibson,
1981

TEXT

We tend to look (and try to read) words and numbers anywhere in the frame. Like facial expressions, these are clues to meaning.



*Boy with a Straw Hat Waiting to March
in a Pro-War Parade by Diane Arbus, 1967*

A FINAL WORD ON IMAGE COMPOSITION --

Know the rules. Then break them. Compelling images are arresting, original, and sometimes pose more questions than answers. What the image is “about” is sometimes emotional, chaotic or elusive. Trust your intuition as you shoot; sometimes what’s “right” is unexpected!



Al Basra Governorate, Southern Iraq, April 12, 2003 by Antonin Kratochvil