



# THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY: COMPOSITION

WHAT IS COMPOSITION?

THE VISUAL COMPONENTS OF A  
PHOTOGRAPH (ELEMENTS) AND HOW THEY  
ARE ARRANGED WITHIN THE PICTURE  
FRAME (PRINCIPLES)

# THE ELEMENTS

THE ELEMENTS OF ART ARE THE INDIVIDUAL  
VISUAL PARTS OF A WORK OF ART. THERE  
ARE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF ART:

LINE

SHAPE

FORM

COLOR

VALUE

TEXTURE

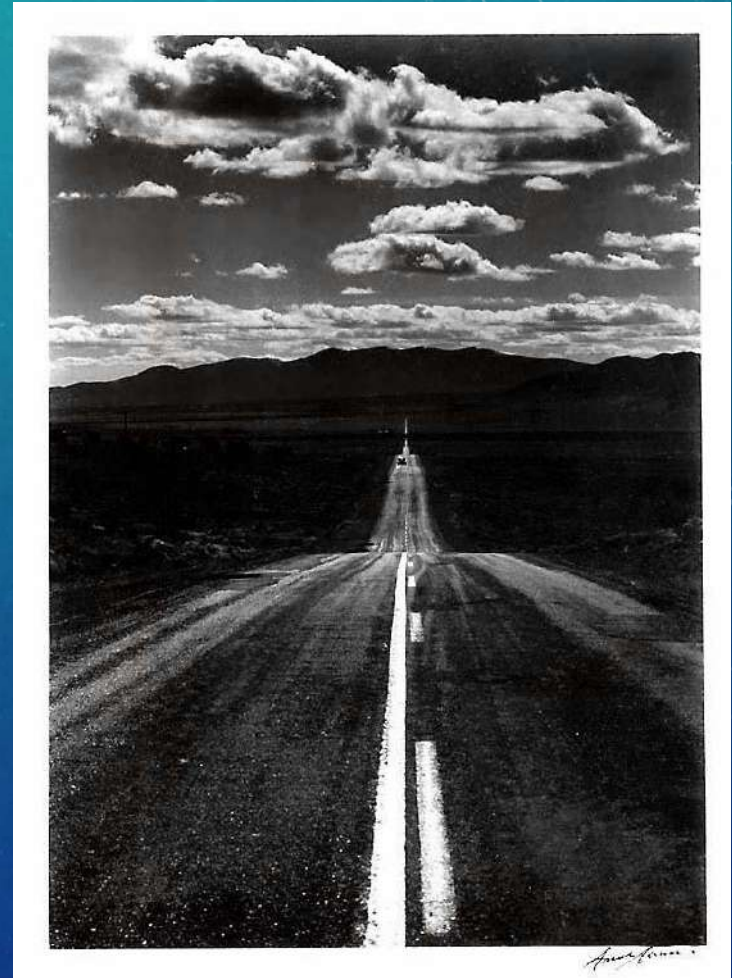
SPACE



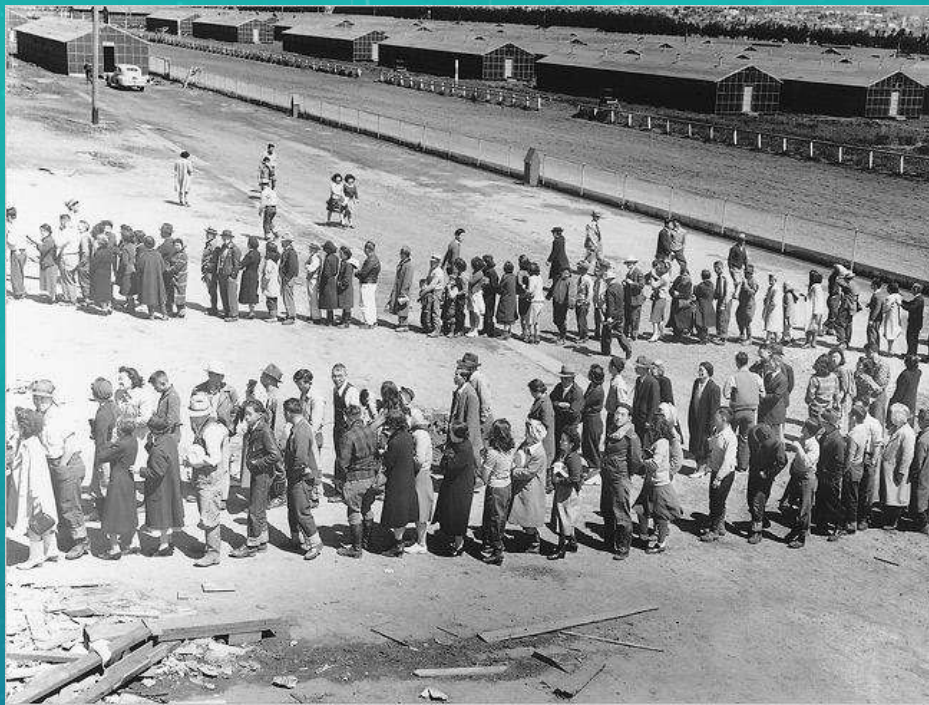
LINE: THE PATH OF A POINT MOVING IN SPACE.  
LINE CAN BE REAL OR IMPLIED.



Real line







Implied line

SHAPE: CREATED WHEN A LINE MEETS ITSELF.  
SHAPES CAN BE REAL OR IMPLIED; THEY CAN BE  
GEOMETRIC OR ORGANIC/FREEFORM.



Organic shape created by shooting a subject  
against a bright background







Naturally occurring organic shape

Geometric shape





FORM: THE ILLUSION OF THREE DIMENSIONS IN A 2-DIMENSIONAL PHOTO; WHERE SUBJECTS LOOK LIKE THEY HAVE DEPTH.

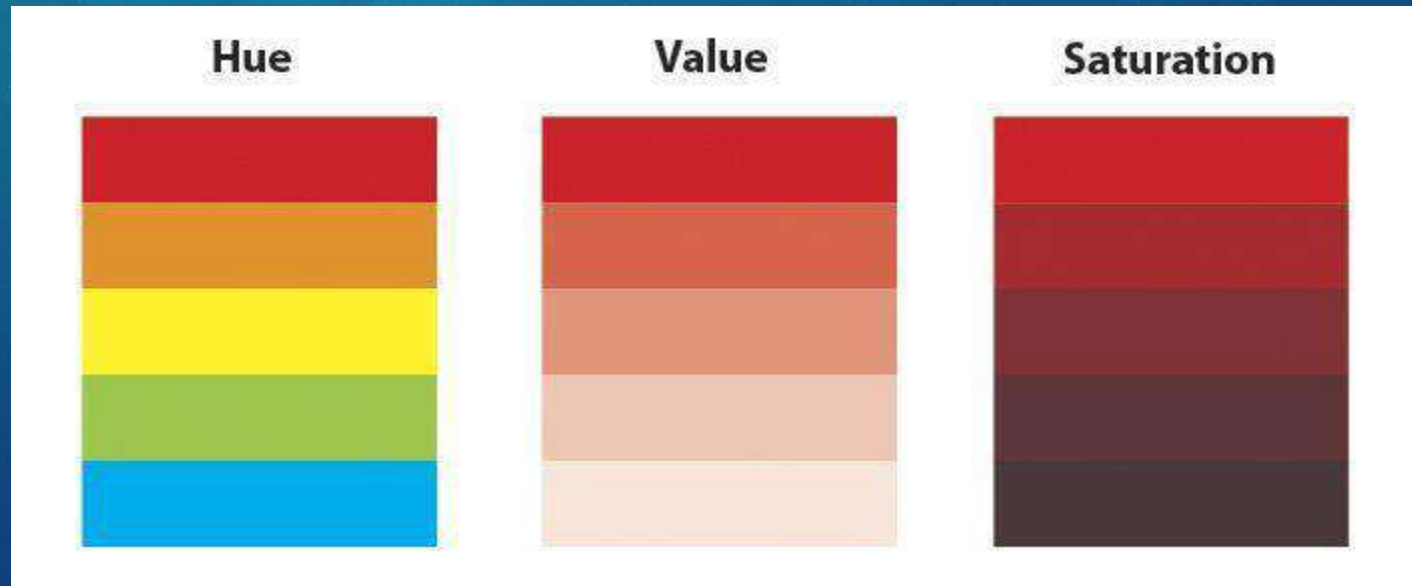
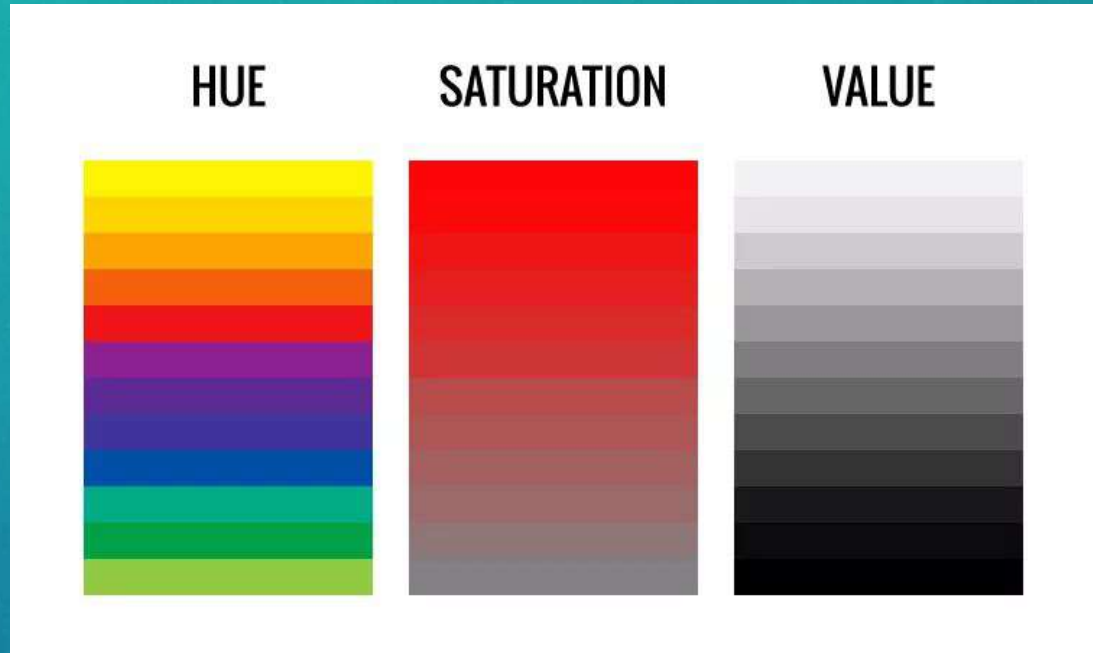


# COLOR: THE ELEMENT CREATED BY THE PRESENCE OF LIGHT

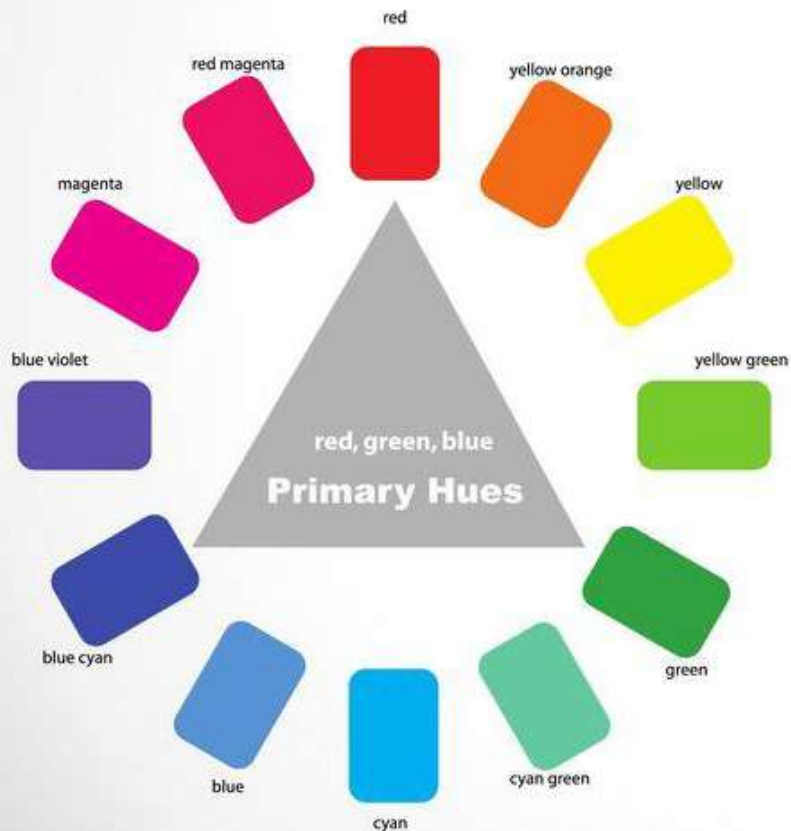




COLOR HAS THREE  
PROPERTIES:  
HUE, OR THE NAME OF  
A COLOR  
SATURATION, OR THE  
PURITY OF A COLOR  
VALUE, THE LIGHTNESS  
OR DARKNESS OF A  
COLOR.



# ADDITIVE COLOR WHEEL



PRIMARY COLORS: RED, GREEN  
AND BLUE

SECONDARY COLORS: MAGENTA,  
YELLOW, AND CYAN

WARM COLORS ARE ON THE TOP  
HALF OF THE WHEEL TO THE  
LEFT: REDS, GREENS, ORGANGES,  
YELLOWS

COOL COLORS ARE ON THE  
BOTTOM HALF OF THE WHEEL:  
GREENS, BLUES, VIOLETS

MIX ALL COLORS TOGETHER AND  
YOU GET WHITE (LIGHT)



USING COLORS THAT OPPOSE EACH OTHER  
(COOL/WARM, LIGHT/DARK, ETC.) CAN CREATE  
DRAMATIC CONTRAST



VALUE: REFERS TO THE LIGHTNESS OR DARKNESS OF A PHOTO, IN BOTH COLOR AND BLACK AND WHITE IMAGES.





...AND VALUE CAN BE AN ELEMENT IN COLOR IMAGES AS WELL



SPACE: CAN BE THE 2-DIMENSIONAL ARRANGMENT OF OBJECTS IN A PHOTO – POSITIVE SPACE (THE SUBJECT) AGAINST NEGATIVE SPACE (THE BACKGROUND) AS SEEN IN THE PHOTO BELOW. OR...



SPACE: CAN BE ILLUSION OF THREE DIMENSIONS IN A PHOTOGRAPH; AN EXPRESSION OF DEPTH AND SPACE, AS SEEN IN THE PHOTO ABOVE.



TEXTURE: A PHOTOGRAPH THAT GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF HOW THE SUBJECT WOULD IT FEEL IF THE VIEWER COULD TOUCH IT



# THE PRINCIPLES



# THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN: THE COMPOSITION'S ORGANIZING IDEAS. THERE ARE EIGHT PRINCIPLES:

PATTERN

BALANCE (SYMMETRICAL, ASYMMETRICAL, RADIAL)

UNITY

VARIETY

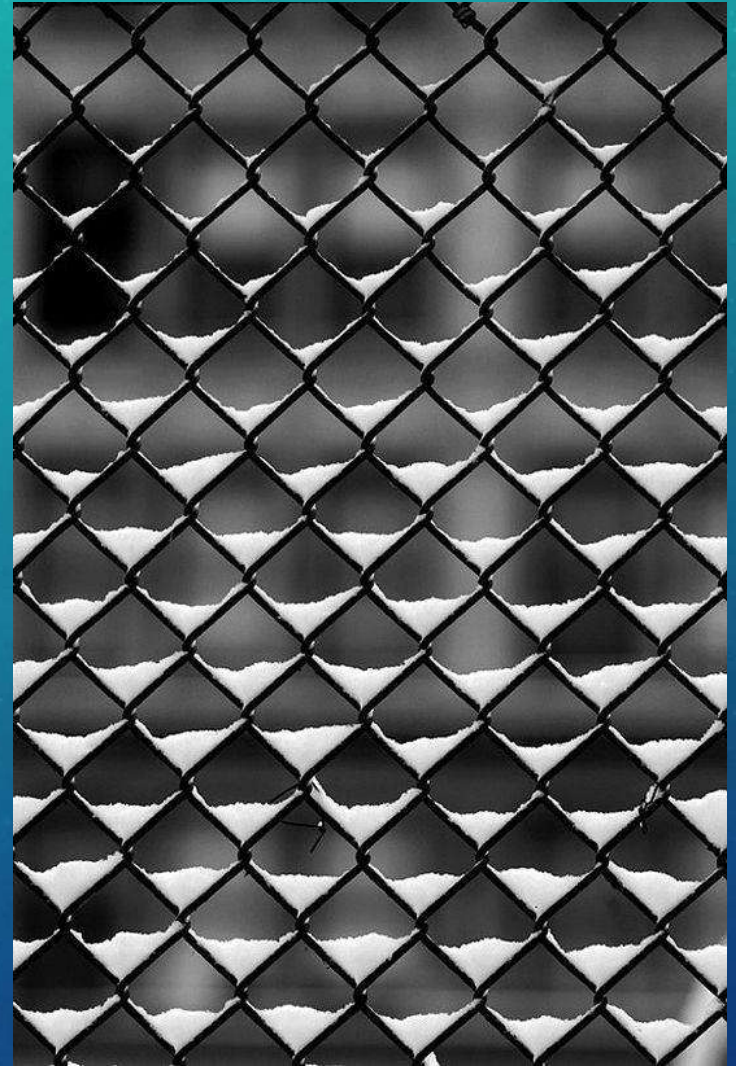
EMPHASIS

MOVEMENT

RHYTHM

PROPORTION

PATTERN: THE REPETITION OF  
ANY ELEMENT OF ART  
THROUGHOUT THE PHOTO







BALANCE: THE APPEARANCE OF EQUAL  
VISUAL WEIGHT IN A COMPOSITION.  
THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF BALANCE:

SYMMETRICAL  
ASYMMETRICAL  
RADIAL

SYMMETRICAL: A MIRROR-IMAGE COMPOSITION. SUBJECT IS CENTERED AND THE PHOTO IS EQUALLY BALANCED FROM TOP/BOTTOM OR LEFT/RIGHT.

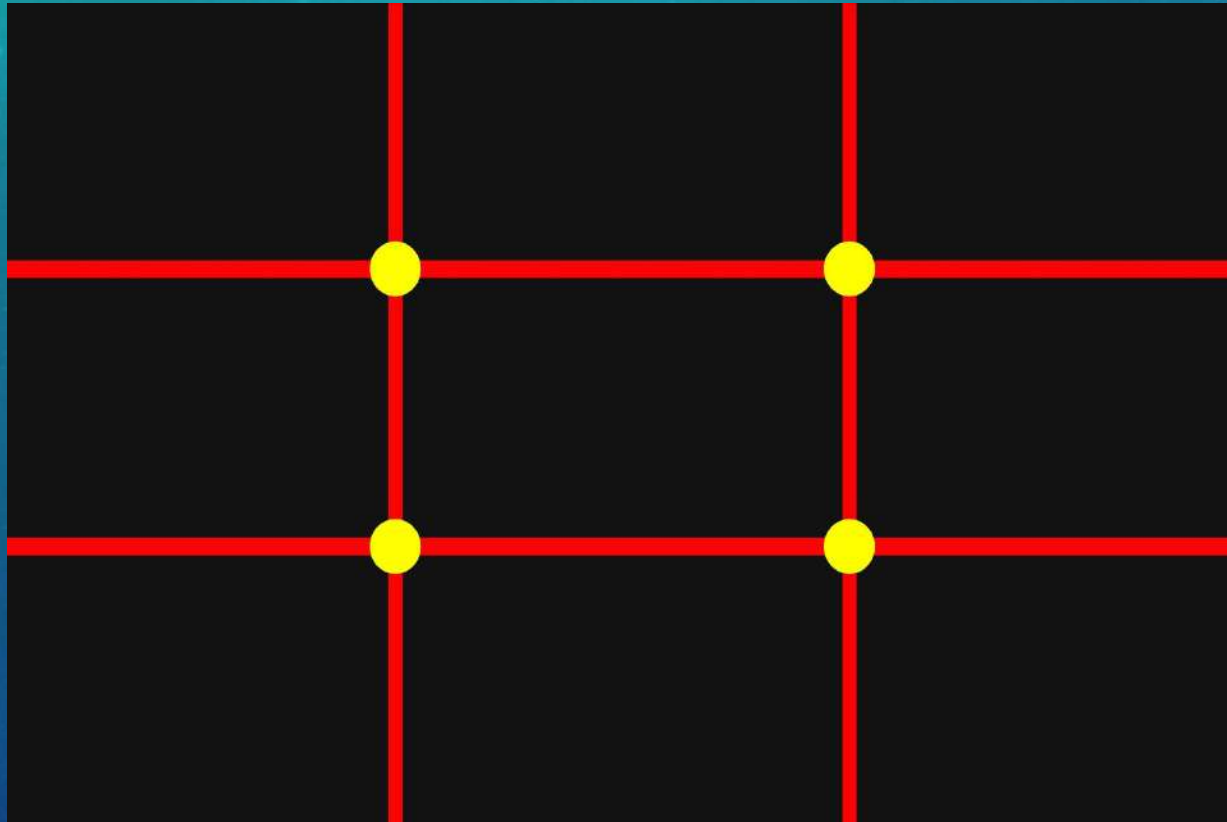




ASYMMETRICAL BALANCE: WHERE THE PHOTO IS STILL BALANCED BUT THE SUBJECT IS NOT CENTERED; RATHER, IT IS ALIGNED WITH ONE OF THE LINES OR INTERSECTING POINTS OF THE RULE OF THIRDS GRID.



RULE OF THIRDS GRID, USED TO COMPOSE A PHOTOGRAPH. MANY CAMERAS HAVE THEM BUILT-IN, CALLED “COMPOSITION GRIDS.”



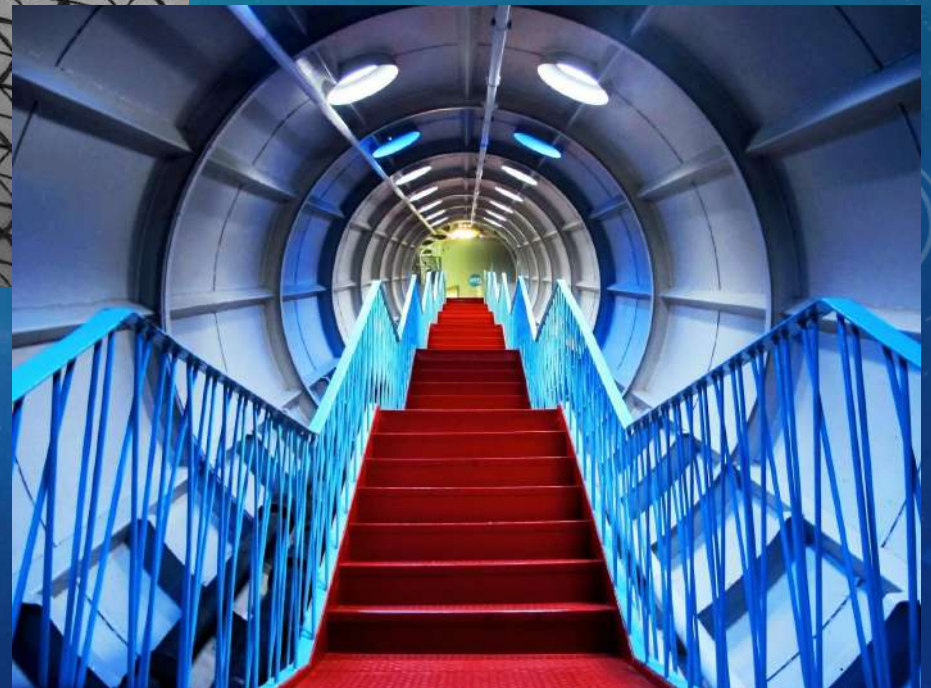
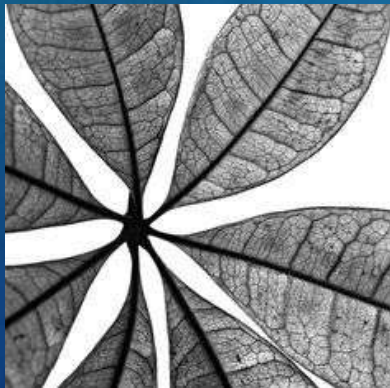
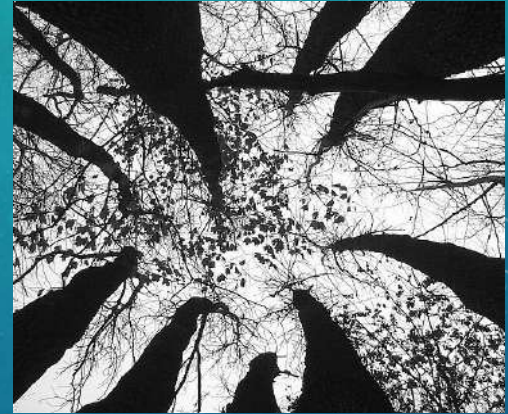


# MORE ASYMMETRICAL PHOTOS:





# RADIAL BALANCE: ELEMENTS IN THE PHOTO RADIATE OUTWARDS FROM A CENTER POINT





UNITY: WHEN ELEMENTS SUCH AS SHAPE, LINE, COLOR, ETC. ARE SIMILAR AND CREATE A SENSE OF HARMONY IN THE PHOTOGRAPH.



VARIETY: WHEN ELEMENTS SUCH AS SHAPE, LINE, COLOR, ETC. ARE DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER.





MOVEMENT: CAN BE REAL  
(ACTUAL) OR IMPLIED IN A  
COMPOSITION.

IMPLIED MOVEMENT IS CREATED  
BY STRONG ELEMENTS IN THE  
COMPOSITION LEADING YOUR  
EYE THROUGH IT, AS SEEN IN THE  
LINES AND CURVES IN THE  
PHOTO TO THE RIGHT



REAL MOVEMENT IS MOTION BY THE SUBJECT CAPTURED AS A BLUR IN THE PHOTO, SLOW SHUTTER SPEEDS, OR THE PANNING OF THE CAMERA BY THE PHOTOGRAPHER



MOVEMENT OF SUBJECT



MOVEMENT OF SUBJECT AND CAMERA



SLOW SHUTTER SPEED SEEN IN THE STREAK LINES OF THE STARS



RHYTHM: CREATED WHEN  
REPEATING ELEMENTS  
IN A COMPOSITION CREATE A  
SENSE OF MOVEMENT.



EMPHASIS: WHEN THE SUBJECT IS MADE TO BE MORE IMPORTANT (DOMINANT) AND OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPH ARE MADE TO BE LESS IMPORTANT (SUBORDINATE), YOU ARE CREATING EMPHASIS.





PROPORTION: USING A VARIETY OF SIZES OF ELEMENTS IN A PHOTO TO POINT OUT THOSE SIZE RELATIONSHIPS, OR TO EXAGGERATE THEM.

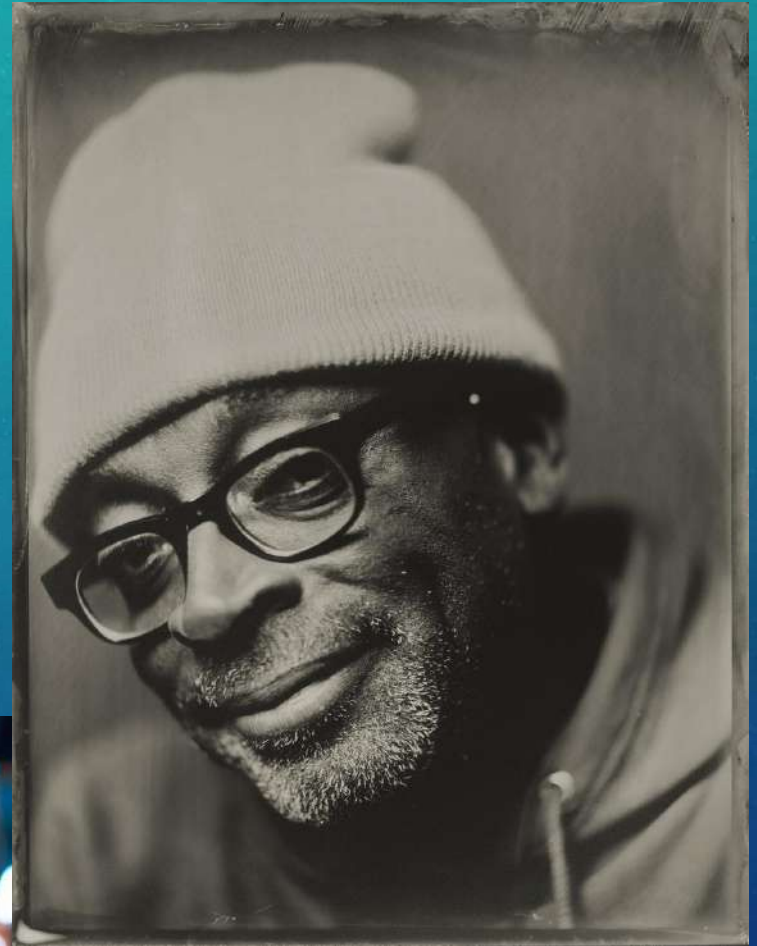


SUBJECT: THE PERSON (PORTRAIT), PLACE  
(LANDSCAPE/CITYSCAPE/INTERIOR), OR THING (STILL LIFE) YOU THAT IS THE  
MAIN PURPOSE OF YOUR PHOTO

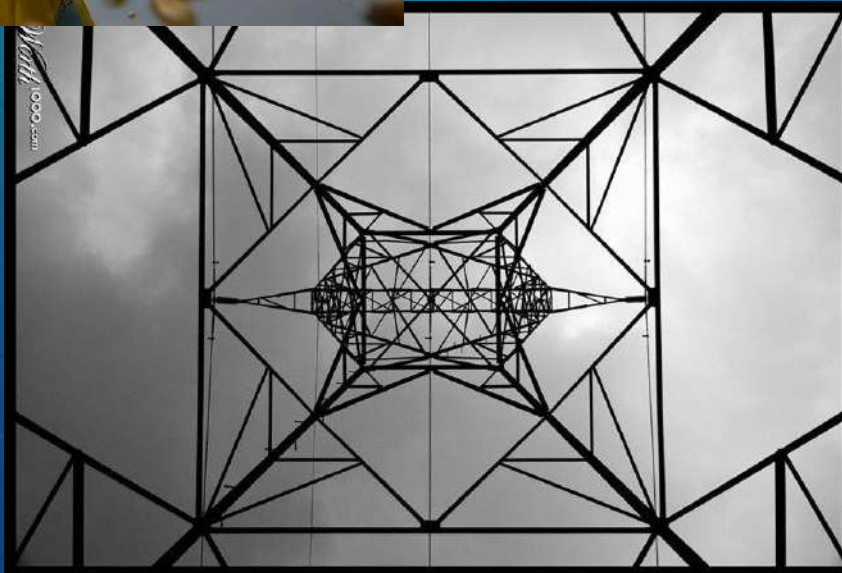




# SETTING: THE LOCATION/BACKGROUND OF YOUR SUBJECT WHEN SHOOTING A PHOTO



POINT OF VIEW OR VIEWPOINT: YOUR LOCATION IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUBJECT (EYE-LEVEL, HIGHER, LOWER, SIDE, BACK, ETC.)





TIMING: WHEN YOU CAPTURE A FLEETING MOMENT – THINK OF “RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME,” CAPTURING A FLEETING MOMENT; ALSO DECIDING ON THE ACTUAL LENGTH OF TIME OF AN EXPOSURE AND HOW THAT AFFECTS THE OUTCOMING IMAGE.



LIGHTING: NECESSARY TO CREATE AN IMAGE BUT THE TYPE OF LIGHTING HAS AN IMPORTANT AFFECT ON THE COMPOSITIONAL OUTCOME OF YOUR PHOTO.

DIRECT: LIGHTING THAT HITS THE SUBJECT DIRECTLY AND CREATES DISTINCT SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS;  
GREAT FOR CREATING DEPTH AND TEXTURE

INDIRECT: LIGHTING THAT IS DIFFUSED (I.E. CLOUDS, LAMPSHADES) AND IS SOFT; MORE FLATTERING FOR PORTRAITS AND SUBJECTS WHERE EXTREME SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS ARE NOT DESIRED.





# COPYRIGHT AND PLAGIARISM FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

COPYRIGHT LAWS APPLY TO ARTWORKS FOR THE LIFE OF THE ARTIST WHO CREATED THEM, PLUS 70 YEARS. AFTER THAT PERIOD OF TIME, ARTWORKS BECOME PART OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, MEANING THE WORK IS PUBLICLY OWNED.

**COPYRIGHT** PROTECTS AN ARTIST'S WORK FROM BEING USED WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION.

**PLAGIARISM** IS USING ANOTHER PERSON'S WORK WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION AND TAKING CREDIT FOR THAT WORK.

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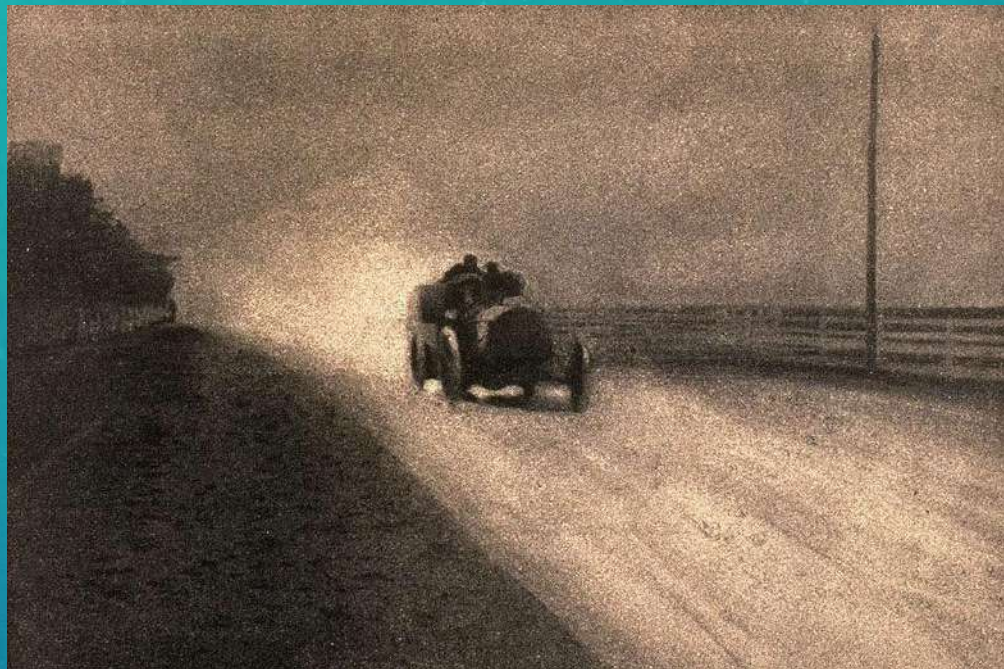
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**CREATIVECOMMONS** IS A WEBSITE THAT ARTISTS AND OTHER CREATORS CAN DEFINE IF AND HOW THEIR WORK CAN BE USED BY OTHERS.

# PHOTOGRAPHY AS ART: PICTORIALISM

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE 1800s WHO SAW THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL IN PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN ART FORM SHOT AND PRINTED THEIR PHOTOS TO HAVE THE LOOK OF DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS – THEY USED SUBJECTS THAT WERE COMMON IN POPULAR ART, USED SOFT-FOCUS LENSES, TONED THEIR PHOTOS AND PRINTED THEM ON TEXTURED PAPERS TO HAVE THE LOOK OF A DRAWN OR PAINTED IMAGE. THEIR BELIEF WAS IF THEY COULD MAKE THEIR PHOTOS RESEMBLE POPULAR ART, IT WOULD BE RECEIVED BY THE PUBLIC AS FINE ART.





## PHOTOGRAPHY AS ART: PURE PHOTOGRAPHY

IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHERS SUCH AS ANSEL ADAMS, IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM AND PAUL STRAND ARGUED THAT PHOTOS DID NOT HAVE TO LOOK LIKE OTHER TYPES OF ART IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FINE ART, SO THEY PRINTED THEIR PHOTOS STRAIGHT FROM THE NEGATIVE, WITH LITTLE EDITING. THEIR SUBJECTS WERE COMMON, EVERY DAY OBJECTS AND SCENES AND THEIR IMAGES WERE SHARP WITH A WIDE TONAL RANGE (VALUE RANGE)



