

## TACC DISCUSSION GROUP

3/9/19

### COMPOSITION AND INTENT

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Thanks as well for the many great comments and observations provided by other attendees!

There are many factors involved in making a great photograph, but perhaps the most important ones are composition and intent. Composition is often over-simplified into mechanical concepts like the arrangement of objects in the frame and the use of lines, colors and values to increase visual appeal and impact. Many artists (notably painters as well as photographers) believe that the artist's intent in the creation process of an image is an equally important factor. This discussion group explored the roles of both composition and intent in making images.

We started with perhaps the best know "rule" for photograph composition: "the rule of thirds". This concept is familiar to most photographers, but we looked at a nice, succinct presentation of the rule and some examples. We started with an article on the website called "Cambridge in Colour". This is a well respected site from the UK that has many good features on photographic topics. The link to the article we looked at is below:

<https://www.cambridgeincolour.com/tutorials/rule-of-thirds.htm>

If you google "rule of thirds examples" you will get more links than you could view in a lifetime. Here is one of the many sites with some good examples:

<https://gurushots.com/article/32-tantalizing-examples-of-why-the-rule-of-thirds-rules>

The next most common compositional topic is probably the use of elements in an image to guide the viewers eye through the image, often with the idea of leading them to the artist's intended subject or concept. Things like diagonal lines and S curves as well as high contrast areas and judicious use of color can be used to influence how a viewer navigates an image. The link below is a nice summary of this topic:

<https://digital-photography-school.com/composition-tips-drawing-viewers-eye-through-your-photographs/>

Composition and intent are very important in successful landscape photography. Creating a postcard-like snapshot of an interesting scene is relatively easy, but trying to capture and convey the emotion you felt as you experienced the scene involves more attention to composition and intent. We looked at an ebook created by a Marc Muench, a very well know landscape photographer and workshop leader. In the ebook, Marc talks about his process for pre-visualizing his photographs. This is his way of identifying the intent of his photographs and then working to make sure the composition and content of his image supports that vision.

You can download Marc's ebook at the link below. Note that you will have to provide your email address to get the download and you will get marketing emails about Marc's workshops but I think the images and concepts in his book make it worthwhile.

Marc Muench ebook "The Art of Seeing": <https://muenchworkshops.com/ebook>

On the topic of intent, Jay also talked about his experience with a once a month class on photography in New Jersey. The teacher was an accomplished fine art photographer and she taught her monthly class by giving her students an assignment to make 8-10 photographs that captured an assigned shape, style or emotion. Sample assignments over the three years that Jay attended her class included abstract, high contrast, extreme color, square crops, vertigo, motion, simplicity, and figure ground images. The assignments were all designed to make the students concentrate on the composition and intent of their photographs rather than just the subject. Occasionally the assignment was subject oriented, but even then, the goal was to capture more than the image of the subject. As an example, her assignment for "Barriers" required that the image not only contained an image of barrier (a gate, wall, etc.), but it also conveyed somehow what the barrier was protecting (maybe with a small, suggestive view of what was behind the barrier). Jay felt that these intent-base assignments were very effective learning tools. He noted that you don't have to be in a formal class to benefit from this approach; you just need to assign yourself a topic and then go out and make appropriate photographs. At the session, he showed examples of his photographs for several of these assignments. On the next pages are some samples from two of the assignments he talked about.

**JFP images for a High Contrast Assignment.**

**The first is from Central Park, NYC and the other two are from near the New Jersey shore.**





**JFP images for a Reflections Assignment: using reflections to add mystery to an image**

**These are three photographs along the boardwalk at Asbury Park, New Jersey.**



