

Everybody's talkin' 'bout

## FACTORS IN PHOTO COMPOSITION



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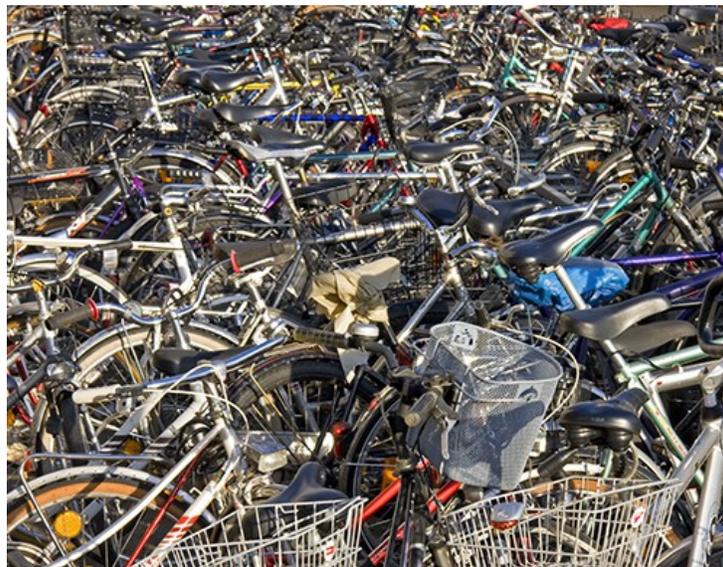
There are pretty images and there are interesting images. Then, there are “**winning**” images, i.e. those which are admitted into gallery shows or museums or which win competitions.

-Winners will be so by virtue of their **IMPACT**. They need to be “**WOW!**” images. They need to be **visually compelling**. “Pretty” is great for your wall or to sell at craft shows but not enough to be a “winner.”

-Following composition guidelines will help you make attractive images but not necessarily winners. “Good” composition is usually necessary but rarely sufficient.

-Not every interesting or “wow” image will exhibit commonly thought of guidelines but **the relationship between elements will be harmonious or comfortable or at least not distracting**. (Note: In photojournalism, composition is less of a factor; the story is the key.)

-And sometimes ignoring the rules can still lead to an interesting image.



## SOME FACTORS

### IMAGE CONSTRUCTION:

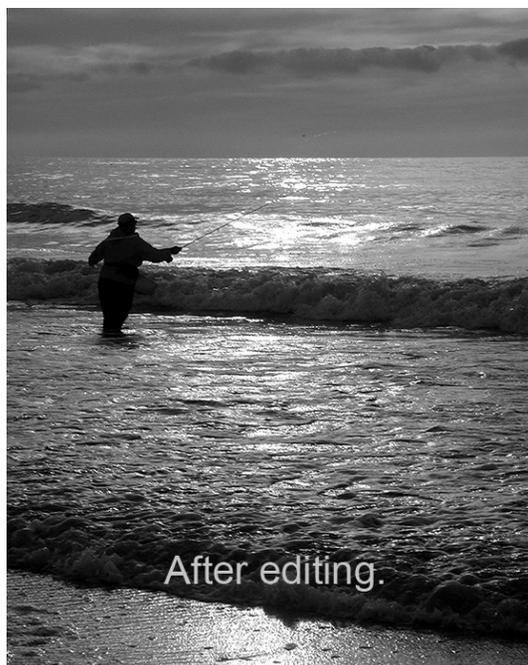
-For landscapes, compose for **near ground, middle ground, and far ground** elements. It's best to shoot separately focused images, one for each zone, and then blend them with software. One might even shoot multiple exposures for each focus set.



-In some cases a **foreground anchor** is sufficient and desirable. In the image below, the foreground grasses anchor the viewer.



-Insure that **verticals are vertical and horizontals are horizontal**. Live View helps with this as it does for composition in general.



-Be leery of **centered horizons**. Generally, they're not a good idea but the content of the image may make it suitable.



-Look for **the emotional center of scenes, the center of attention**. Place that with the rule of thirds.



-Consider and use **selective focus** if appropriate. Possibly fuzzi the background to emphasize the center of attention. Foreground fuzzi is disconcerting.



-Emphasize **leading lines** and/or **S-curves** if appropriate. Diagonally positioned, left to right, is preferable.



**LIGHTING:** Early AM or late PM are the golden hours because of warm light and long shadows

**Warm:** Mellow, pleasant, comfortable, dreamy. **Side:** Increases contrast; adds drama.



Sun rays or **star-bursts**: Can be “Wow-ish.”

**Back**: Adds drama.



**Specular**: Great visual impact.



**Fog:** Moody, somber, foreboding, mysterious. Sometimes, as with early sun, **serenity**.



**CROPPING:** Try to minimize negative space in a scene while you're shooting. **Fill the frame** when shooting, and **crop till you drop** in post-processing.

-In post-processing, **look for the picture in the picture.** (Credit: Marty Malgieri.)



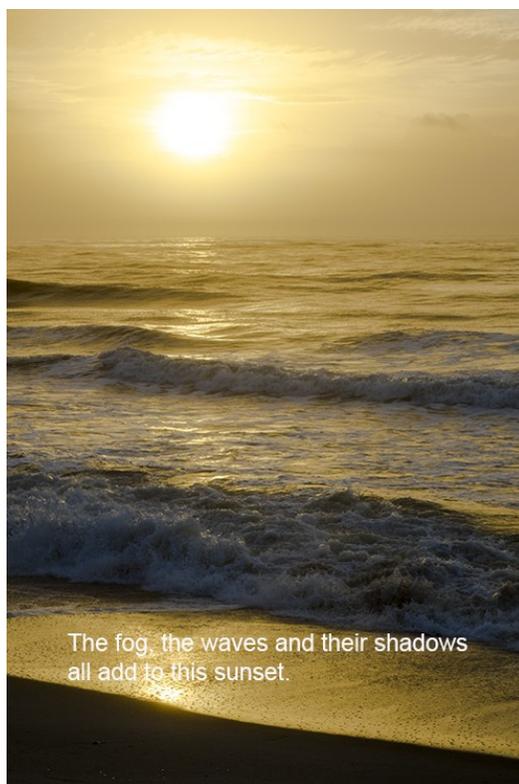
**SUNRISE AND SUNSETS:** We are easily seduced by the colors and the massiveness of the scene. But, excuse me, “Yawwnnn.” If it’s just another sunset or sunrise, it’s a waste of pixels.

Always ask the question, “**What can we do with this scene?**”

-The key is to find other elements to include in the scene to add interest.



The beach, the reeds, the wavelets, and the gull all add to this image of a sunset.



The fog, the waves and their shadows all add to this sunset.

Yet another way to deal with a sunset occurred to me as I was doing that on a beach on Sanibel Island. Exploit the reflection of the sunset or sunrise. We all know it's there and we get to enjoy it in a subtle way.



**Rescues:** In post-processing, work to restore the drama or interest that you thought the scene offered.

In this case I had included the pilings as foreground to position the viewer but I decided there was too much negative space and cropped the bottom of the image. Then, the spit of marsh on the left was intrusive so ... gone. Next, in RAW processing I enhanced the tones of the water and sky. Finally, I needed the mast to clear the top of the image which I had neglected when shooting. A little cloning of the sky and of the stays and we have it.



**Revisit the Scene:** Sorry, not every image should have been captured nor should it be saved no matter how many terabytes of storage you have.

Be **RUTHLESS** in discarding images that are just not good enough. Go back later and again review any that you couldn't bear to part with. Any doubts? Clean 'em out and go back and re-shoot.

I dutifully searched my 46,000 images to find a really bad example but couldn't because I've been faithful in culling.

(For the fine print, of course I found a few but who needs to see more bad images?)

**I hope all of this has been somewhat useful for  
you. Either way,  
Keep On Shooting!**