

Tillicum Photography Club

Assignment #6 - Basic Composition

Motivation

In photography, it's not just what you shoot that counts – the way that you shoot it is crucial, too. Poor photo composition can make a fantastic subject dull, but a well-set scene can create a wonderful image from the most ordinary of situations. With that in mind, we've selected three composition techniques to work on this week - rule of thirds, simplify the scene and avoid the middle.

Rule of Thirds

The exact center of any composition is not a satisfying place for the viewer's eye to come to rest. With the main subject placed in the center, the viewer is less likely to explore the rest of the photograph. In fact, it is preferable to keep the viewer's eye moving. To create movement in your photographs and to avoid the static bull's-eye composition, use the rule-of-thirds guidelines for off-center placement of the main subject. It is the traditional way to create a well-balanced composition and has been used by artists for centuries. To apply the rule of thirds, imagine the scene in your viewfinder divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically, similar to a tic-tac-toe grid laid over the scene. Place the main subject and other important elements of your composition along the grid lines or at the points where the grid lines intersect. Employing the rule of thirds not only helps avoid symmetrical composition but also provides a pleasing proportion of space around the main subject to prevent distracting tension between the focal point and the edge of the frame.

Simplify the Scene

When you look at a scene with your naked eye, your brain quickly picks out subjects of interest. But the camera doesn't discriminate – it captures everything in front of it, which can lead to a cluttered, messy picture with no clear focal point.

What you need to do is choose your subject, then select a focal length or camera viewpoint that makes it the centre of attention in the frame. You can't always keep other objects out of the picture, so try to keep them in the background or make them part of the story.

Silhouettes, textures and patterns are all devices that work quite well in simple compositions.

Avoid the Middle

When you're just starting out, it's tempting to put whatever you're shooting right in the centre of the frame. However, this produces rather static, boring pictures. One of the ways to counteract this is to use the Rule of Thirds, where you split the image up into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, and try to place your subject on one of these imaginary lines or intersections. This is an overrated approach, though.

Instead, move your subject away from the centre and get a feel for how it can be balanced with everything else in the scene, including any areas of contrasting color or light. There are no hard and fast rules about achieving this kind of visual balance, but you'll quickly learn to rely on your instincts – trust that you'll know when something just looks right.

Instructions

Take some photos **that meet the requirements listed below**, and email them to the club's gmail address:

1. Subject line should be "**Assignment #6 - Composition**"
2. Add **comments** within the email explaining how you took the photo
3. Include any relevant **camera settings** you used and why
4. Mention any **image processing** done to the photograph afterwards

This Assignment - Show action with a burst

Take at least one photo that uses one, two, or all three of the composition techniques described above.