

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING DIGITAL PHOTO MAGAZINE

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Photography week



INSPIRATION | IDEAS | IN-DEPTH REVIEWS



**SIGMA 500MM
F/5.6 DG DN OS SPORTS**
WE TEST SIGMA'S COMPACT
AND LIGHTWEIGHT
SUPER-TELEPHOTO

CREATIVE COMPOSITIONS

PRO TIPS FOR FRAMING EYE-CATCHING
IMAGES THAT STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

W E L C O M E

Photography week



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Jeff Meyer, Editor

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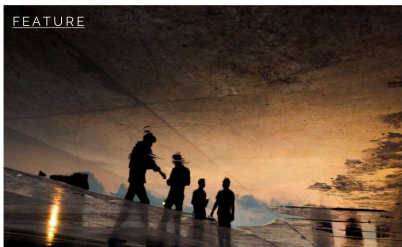
We're more than just a magazine – read on and discover the many ways you can interact with and enjoy *Photography Week*



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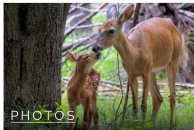
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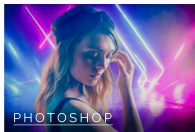
INSPIRATION



CRASH COURSE



PHOTOSHOP



REVIEW

SIGMA 500MM F/5.6 DG DN OS SPORTS

Need a lightweight and compact lens for shooting sports or wildlife? We test Sigma's super-tele Sports-series optic



Cover image © Getty

NEWS

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Film camera reboot will get a 35mm f/2.8 lens and autofocus

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WHAT'S HOT

THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

ROLLEI 35AF WILL GET A 35MM F/2.8 LENS AND AUTOFOCUS

Mint Camera confirms key specs for upcoming reboot of classic film model



© MINT CAMERA

Instant camera brand Mint Camera has announced more details about its upcoming new film camera, the Rollei 35AF, which is based on the classic Rollei 35 and is due to launch later this year.

Film fans will be pleased to learn that the camera, which was first announced in 2022, will sport a 35mm focal length and a fast maximum aperture of f/2.8. Rollei has also confirmed that the AF in the name stands for Auto Focus, which means modern tech is coming to this legend of an analog camera.

In an official announcement, Hong Kong-based Mint said: "We believe that classics are meant to be cherished, and our mission is to preserve the essence of this iconic camera while incorporating new features that enhance its capabilities without compromising its unique charm. With the added AF and other features, capturing stunning analog film pictures becomes effortless, quick, and incredibly precise."

In addition to autofocus, the new camera will have a built-in light meter and auto modes, making it easy for

anyone, from beginners wanting to try analog photography for the first time to seasoned experts, to shoot with it.

While, this is a totally new camera, in a full metal body, it looks just as stylish as the original, with the bonus of some modern tech, and going by the official photos and the image samples that Mint has shared, this is one retro comeback that we're really looking forward to trying out.

As mentioned, the Rollei 35AF is due to go on sale later this year, and is rumored to cost around \$800.

RIPPLE EFFECT

When it comes to composing the image in a creative way, there are no rules as long as the subject gets visually highlighted



CREATIVE COMPOSITIONS

Break the rules, and discover strategies for framing images that stand out

Words by Kim Buerermann. Images by Divyanshu Verma

Have you ever wondered why some photos stand out from the rest? Of course, there are plenty of aspects that may catch our eye, but it's most likely to have something to do with the composition.

With the rise of social media platforms, we've all seen countless photos that have been captured using common composition strategies; but, however impressive or technically correct they are, these shots tend to get lost in a sea of similar-looking images.

This is hardly surprising, as when we're first introduced to photography, the use of classic framing methods is high on the list of things we're taught. Straying

from this path of tried-and-tested rules is not considered an option, although, in reality, not every interesting scene can be captured at its fullest potential by applying these traditional approaches. Sometimes, to create unique and extraordinary frames, it's necessary to come up with an alternative way to consider the visual potential.

So, it's time to put the tried-and-tested strategies, such as the golden ratio or the rule of thirds, on hold, and learn from compositions of other mediums that can help us cut loose from the familiar. Exploring the diversity of framing in photography starts with analysing juxtapositions and new visual

possibilities that are waiting to be put into action. However, not every scene will benefit from creative compositions, so it's crucial to not always use them as framing tools and, instead, see them as a way of considering the possibilities when capturing the subject.

In this feature, we will look at the importance of captivating framing, and discuss why tried-and-tested techniques may work against us and restrict our creativity as image creators. Over the next few pages, you'll discover various creative ways to compose a frame. By doing so, you'll be able to surprise the viewer, force them to look closer and create a lasting impression.



FEATURE

BREAK THE RULES

Use traditional composition rules as a guide, adapting them in a way that benefits your subject

SHADOW LAYER

By including shadows of all kinds, the scene gains individuality and an extra layer of interest



FIND YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Using a tripod is a great way to slow down and refine the process of composition. Adjust the height of the camera to avoid the common eye-level perspective and change the ratio of the foreground and background. Experiment with different focal lengths, as these will affect the compression within a scene.

For example, using a longer focal length will bring elements of the scene closer together.

Following a different approach is a good way to break free from the traditional rules of photography and experiment with compositions that go a little further. The rule of thirds is one of these well-established compositional methods – it involves dividing the frame into two horizontal and vertical lines, creating four connection points where key elements should ideally be placed for a harmonic and balanced frame. As viewers are accustomed to classic compositions like this, intentionally breaking these patterns can be a smart move. By deviating from the norm, you create an unusual image balance and

dynamic. However, you should still activate the rule of thirds grid lines in your camera menu. This will help you cut loose from old patterns, as you can now identify where *not* to place the key features of the scene.

Breaking this composition approach is particularly useful to emphasise the main subject when distracting elements or so-called 'dead' space is evident in the scene. The latter can be understood as 'empty' space which does not contribute to showcasing the subject. To create a more focused composition, adjust the subject's position up or down. For example, if the main subject is a dramatic

sky, shift the focus there to give it more space in the frame.

Additionally, you could experiment by including unexpected elements in your composition, such as a thin strip of land at the bottom of the frame. Another possible approach is to fill the entire frame with just one subject. This is especially effective when the subject is positioned in the foreground, and this way, colour, and structure will take on further importance, creating a bold and impactful composition.



TRY DIFFERENT FORMATS

Exploring different ratios is a game-changer when it comes to creating creative compositions

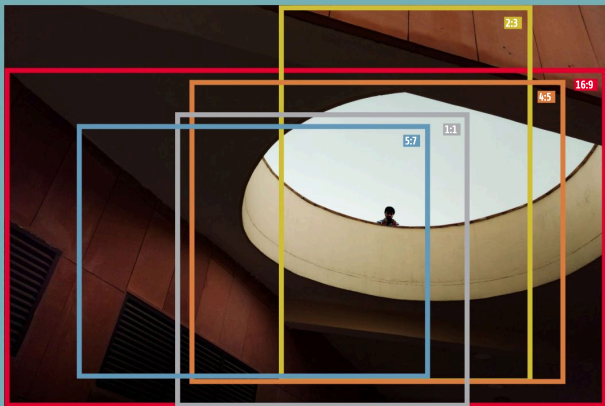
Switching the image orientation is a common technique that can give your scene a different look. For example, a portrait orientation shifts the focus onto the foreground details, while a landscape orientation is best suited to highlight frames with strong horizontal lines. On the other hand, aspect ratios are often overlooked, even though they can potentially play a significant role in image composition, and have an impact on the relationship between the different elements in the photo.

Social media platforms each have their

own favoured ratio for displaying images online, but when it comes to switching formats, there are no limits. Here, non-standard ratios offer the best base for eye-catching compositions. Many of us rely on cropping adjustments in post-processing, but something that isn't often taken into account is that most modern cameras can produce various ratios in-camera, instead. Nevertheless, it's best to decide on a specific ratio while shooting the scene, as it allows you to target and create a composition that favours your subject. Go to the camera's menu to see

what aspect ratios are available. After selecting one, a box with the chosen ratio will become visible on your camera screen, meaning that everything outside of the box will be cut off.

If you want to work with ratios that your camera doesn't offer, add a few strips of tape over the rear LCD screen protector to give you a view of your desired aspect ratio. Bear in mind that different aspect ratios have different effects on the frame and may be suited to certain applications or purposes. You can learn more about the benefits of different ratios below.



1:1
Simplifies images and accentuates minimalistic scenes. Evokes a sense of nostalgia, as the format is similar to that of classic Polaroid prints

2:3
The vast majority of images have this standard ratio, which is equivalent to the classic 4 x 6in photo, the default format of 35mm cameras.

4:5
Commonly used by micro four thirds cameras and social media platforms such as Instagram, which adopted this aspect ratio for vertical portraits

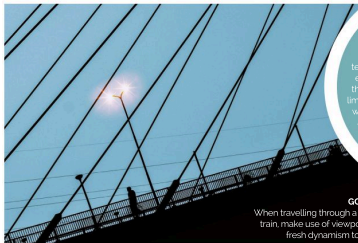
5:7
Provides a harmonious and visually pleasing ratio to the human eye. More elongated than 4:5, it offers better scope for wide landscapes.

16:9
This panoramic format, has become popular in film and cinematography since the introduction of 'widescreen' TVs and computer monitors.

FEATURE

SHOOT OFF-LEVEL

Create dynamic compositions using the Dutch angle



GOING DUTCH

When travelling through a city by car or train, make use of viewpoints that add fresh dynamism to your frames.

BE EXPERIMENTAL

When it comes to creating engaging compositions, the key is to let go of basic tried-and-tested strategies. By doing so, you will explore the full range of possibilities the scene offers. A good exercise is to limit yourself to one subject, and shoot it with different framing approaches. By analysing the images, you can train your compositional skills and gain experience for the next scene you capture.

This approach is especially powerful when you have a subject that's moving in front of your lens, and even better when the subject is interacting with you, and the Dutch angle is often seen in travel photography to convey the feeling of movement and adventure. When travelling, some scenes typically will only be available to photograph on the go, for example from a moving train or car, so to keep the subject sharp you need to take some camera settings into account. Nevertheless, these compositions do not have to be as clean as those you may be used to creating. Cut off elements, such as part of the streets or a lamppost, to add interest to the frame and convey the mood. Additionally, having those elements out of focus contributes to the travel character of the photograph.

Capturing the horizon line straight is a classic approach in photography of all genres. By doing this, the composition gains a sense of balance and harmony, which is beneficial for subjects such as the sea, but this can also result in a standard frame that lacks dynamism. In this case, the so-called 'Dutch

angle' is a clever approach to convey the mood of a scene further. To apply this technique, tilt the camera to one side (either left or right) so that the horizon or other leading lines aren't straight. The number one rule here is to make the tilt obvious, otherwise it can look like a mistake, and risk creating the impression of a low-quality image.

CHANGE YOUR SETTINGS Use your camera's settings to help you get the best compositions



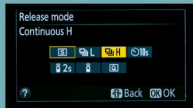
1 PRIORITISE SETTINGS

Shoot in M mode to control focus and blur. To improve the overall sharpness, work with apertures around f/8. This aperture is known to be the sharpest of most lenses. To reduce the risk that your subject gets affected by motion blur, choose a shutter speed of 1/500 second. This setting depends on how fast the vehicle in which you're sitting is going, and might need to be adapted to your situation. As we selected a fast shutter speed, the amount of light reaching the sensor is reduced. Compensate the exposure with higher ISO settings – here, modern cameras perform well to a greater extent without creating any distracting image noise.



2 ENSURE STABILITY AND SHARPNESS

When you're on the move, it's natural that the camera will shake from time to time, so it's important to activate settings that support your stability. Go into your camera's menu and enable the vibration reduction (VR) feature. Because of the movement, another challenge is to master the subject's focus. To do so, avoid manual focusing, as this will take too much time and won't deliver accurate results. Instead, select to shoot in continuous focus (CF mode). Now, the camera continuously tracks the subject through the frame and automatically adapts the focus. This focus mode is often used for sports or wildlife scenes.



3 SHOOT, SHOOT, SHOOT

For the best results, activate your camera's burst mode or continuous shooting mode. On this setting, your camera automatically records a series of pictures as long as you keep the shutter button pressed, and this way you'll have a wider selection to choose from later. Some practical tips for a drive-by shoot are to use the side windows of the car, and to clear your view by lowering the window, if possible, so that you can avoid including dirt or light reflections from the glass in your composition. Bear in mind that having the seatbelt on might limit your movement, but staying safe is more important than being able to move freely.



GO EXTREME

Leave the common eye-level perspective, and explore further composition possibilities

When photographing a subject, the most natural perspective is usually from a standing position, which gives a well-known and realistic view of the subject. However, this view may limit composition possibilities and the hidden qualities of the scene. To create a different kind of composition, vary the camera's level to avoid missing out on engaging perspectives. By lowering or raising the camera, you can provide a fresh view of well-known scenes and gain composition possibilities that the eye-level perspective simply can't offer.

When going down low or looking up, use your camera's tilted screen to make the process easier. By placing the camera on the ground, leading lines are created while structures of the elements gain importance, giving the frame more depth. For instance, when shooting from a low perspective in the city, road lines turn into leading lines, directing the viewer's gaze while adding dynamism to the composition.

Another technique is to involve foreground elements such as high grass in the composition to add layers and colour. Here, it's essential not to overload the frame, which can distract attention from the main subject. Instead, work with maximum open apertures (low f-stop numbers) and position the camera close to the foreground element to be able to shoot through it. This approach adds colour and depth to the composition, offering the viewer an atmospheric glimpse of the scene while still keeping the focus on the main subject. Lowering the camera also gives the foreground and background further significance within the composition, as the middle ground becomes less visible.

Pointing the camera 90 degrees up highlights the scene's structure and form. This is particularly effective when capturing architecture or indoor features, as the scene gains abstract characteristics. To create a balanced composition, keep an eye on how the lines come together. Positioning yourself directly under the main feature ensures that the symmetries are showcased best. For such shots it's helpful to activate in-camera grid lines, and correct any lens distortion in post-processing.



LOOK UP
Discover the potential of architectural features to create compositions with a unique character

SEARCH FOR SEQUENCES

Concentrate on integrating patterns to create powerful graphic compositions

LEADING LINES

Leading lines are a powerful tool to create engaging and visually appealing compositions, as they draw the viewer's attention to the subject. However, it's important to use them to your advantage, or you risk leading the viewer's gaze to uninteresting parts of the frame. When composing the photo, start by arranging the subject first, then adjust your compositions so that lines in the image either originate from or end at the subject's position.



ALL SQUARE Patterns can be easily overlooked, so it's important to take time to study the environment from different viewpoints

To create a striking composition, consider whether your scene contains elements that appear in the form of patterns. Such sequences are harmonic to the human eye, but are often overlooked in busy situations. There's a theory that including even numbers of elements can have the effect of distracting the viewer. On the other hand, odd numbers are thought to engage the viewer's attention, as these are visually appealing and look more natural to the human eye. Also, integrating objects in different colours or shapes breaks the composition's pattern and adds interest.

To create eye-catching graphical compositions, experiment with the angle

and framing. For example, photographing from an elevated viewpoint captures the scene in a so-called bird's-eye view to reveal patterns most people won't notice in their daily lives. Next, look for interaction between elements: do they create a repetitive pattern or do they supplement each other in size and colour? If the scene offers a pattern, for example in the form of tiles or windows, it's recommended to extend the sequence beyond the frame. If there is no obvious pattern evident, crop the frame tightly so that objects of similar colour or form align. To capture the pattern straight, dive into your camera menu and activate the grid lines. This

way, you can level the composition to perfection without the need to spend time on corrections in editing.

To underline the graphical effect, consider transforming the colour scheme into black and white in post-processing, with the absence of colour enhancing the detail in the patterns. When doing so, focus on enhancing the overall contrast, as with greater contrast the image elements gain new visual aspects and importance, letting the daily scene appear unnatural and generated. Instead of setting the image mode to grayscale, add a Black & White adjustment layer, as that way, you won't lose the control over tonal adjustments.



THROW SOME SHADE

Use the sun's power to create high-contrast compositions and partially hide your subject

SHADOW FACE

When taking a closer look, certain facial shapes are discernible. Due to the shadow placement the subject's identity is a mystery, and doesn't distract the viewer from the image

DEFINED SHADOW

The shape of the shadow is almost perfect, except for a slight loss of definition on the left side, indicating that it was present in the scene and not edited, making the frame real

FRAME DIVISION

The image was split diagonally into two parts by the hard shadow, adding a sense of dynamism and interest while drawing the viewer's eyes toward the centre of the frame



Facial impressions can contribute to the effect of a photograph, but often distract the viewer. To prevent this artistically, shoot around lunchtime to make use of hard shadows that can hide people in the composition. This can be achieved by placing the shadows at around the

height of the person's face.

For a more abstract approach, integrate the person's shadow into the frame. This creates an interesting composition where the subject is not physically present in the shot. This technique isn't restricted to people, as shadows of other subjects also

add another layer to the composition. To have further control over the scene, work with your own shadow. This works best by facing the camera downwards with a non-cluttered ground. To add interest and depth, choose a surface of sand or stones to reveal extra texture.



FEATURE

FRAME THE FRAME

Look out for man-made or natural surroundings that border the scene

Including a sub-frame in the composition offers the viewer a window to explore the subject in a more targeted way. This technique adds a layer of storytelling and context, allowing the viewer to explore the subject more intimately. It's also effective for controlling compositions on wider aspect ratios, as it's ideal for filling unwanted space or obscure distracting elements. Any object that creates a second frame at the edges of the image can be used as a framing tool.

The more unique the shape of the sub-frame, the more visually striking the composition can be. Overhanging branches, arches, and tunnels can be used to direct the viewer's gaze toward the subject. Even nearby elements, such as fencing can act as a framing tool – when positioning yourself close to struts, integrate them into the left and/or right sides of the image.

When creating a frame-in-frame composition, it's important to consider the symmetries between the different elements of the image. If this is not taken into account, the composition will take attention away from the subject. To create a harmonious scene, pay attention to your

point of view. Position yourself parallel to the subject so that the scene's form and shapes are equally involved. It's worth experimenting with the camera height; for example, lowering the position adds depth and creates leading lines that guide the viewer towards the subject of interest.

A common challenge when using this composition strategy is getting the exposure right. If the sun is not directly behind you, the sub-frame may appear darker than the subject. One way to deal with these high-contrast scenes is to expose for the highlights or the midtones. This way, lighter image elements aren't overexposed and will display some

details, while the darker elements lose all the detail. By doing this, any people passing by in your frame will also appear as a dark element, close to a silhouette.

A second approach is to apply the HDR technique to blend multiple frames with different exposures, enhancing the dynamic range and allowing for both bright and dark elements to be captured with more detail. This technique will usually require using a tripod so that you can ensure a smooth blending process. However, if you can't use a tripod and have to capture those scenes on the go, your camera has a range of features that will help you.

THINK TWICE

Although there might be creative composition strategies you want to finally put into action, don't make the common mistake of applying these to a scene that will not benefit from it. A framing tool is not a subject, so following a subject-first approach is key to ensuring that frames have a purpose while highlighting the subject.

THINK MONOCHROME

When capturing high-contrast scenes, enable the black and white preview in your camera settings to visualise the scene without colours



FEATURE

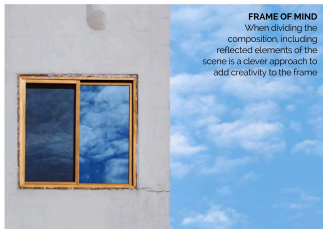
DIVIDE THE SHOT

Draw a line to break up your composition

Splitting the composition into parts is a simple yet clever way to create an eye-catching composition. The most straightforward approach to achieving this is to work with two sides of the scene. As this technique presents the scene in a more structured way and slows down the pace of the composition, the scene appears more appealing to the viewer.

To further enhance the visual impact of the composition and prevent it from appearing overloaded and cluttered, it's essential to integrate some negative space into the frame. This allows the separate parts to breathe, creating a more balanced look. To achieve the maximum effect, the single parts of the composition should work well on their own but also reinforce each other. To determine whether a scene offers potential for implementing this technique, analyse the subject's lines and change your viewpoint, allowing you to find the most advantageous angles and perspectives.

Dividing tools do not only have to be physical elements; shadows are also great features to integrate. Capturing well-defined and hard shadows adds further elements to the scene that can be used creatively to divide the composition.



FRAME OF MIND

When dividing the composition, including reflected elements of the scene is a clever approach to add creativity to the frame

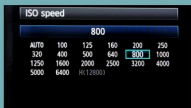
For instance, shooting the scene around midday when the sun is at its highest point helps capture these shadows to create a more interesting and dynamic division.

SHOOT HANDHELD Can't set up a tripod? Here are some tips for shooting handheld



1 SHOOT IN AV

To ensure the sharpness and depth of field aren't affected by auto changes in aperture values, set your camera to aperture priority (Av) mode. It's best to choose wider apertures such as f/8, so that a decent amount of light can reach the camera sensor.



2 INCREASE ISO

To reduce ghosting, increase the ISO values. This enables the camera to work with faster shutter speeds and supports a close series of handheld frames, resulting in fewer frame deviations for a smooth blending process in HDR software.



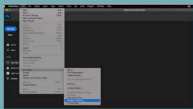
3 STAY STEADY

Enable image stabilisation in the camera menu and lens, and check whether the scene offers any extra support, for example, walls that you can lean against to help reduce camera shake. For greater stability, choose the viewfinder over the LCD.



4 ACTIVATE BRACKETING

Go into the camera menu and select the auto exposure bracketing feature, found in the Drive shooting menu. Now, select the number of frames and the exposure values. Selecting 2.0EV and three shots is suitable for most scenes.



5 MERGE HDR

Upload the images from your card to your editing device. Merging an HDR image is possible in most advanced editing programs. You can locate this function in Photoshop under File > Automate > Merge to HDR Pro.



6 FINE-TUNE HDR EXPOSURE

First, concentrate on Basic sliders. Adjust settings to your liking, and avoid increasing the Detail slider to achieve a natural result. Under the Advanced sliders, adapt Shadow, Highlight, Vibrance and Saturation settings.



PLAY WITH PROPORTIONS

Challenge the viewer by placing subjects in a targeted way

DOG DAYS

Incorporate multiple layers of interest to engage the viewer on a deeper level



LIMIT YOURSELF

Imposing limitations on yourself is a great way to push yourself and enhance your creative composition skills. One example of this is limiting your lens's focal length. If you don't have a prime lens, manually fix a specific focal length on your zoom lens with a piece of tape. This will encourage you to think outside the box, and explore different angles while discovering new possibilities.

When capturing large subjects, such as architecture, one commonly used technique is including a person in the frame to highlight the size and scale of the building. This person can also act as an indicator of reality, because when you're capturing architecture with long exposures or an overcast sky, the natural element of the horizon can come across as surreal and animated.

To extend this composition technique further, you can also integrate elements in such a way that they don't give any clues as to the actual scale of the scene. Using this approach, play with the subject's proportions, making subjects appear larger or smaller than they really

are. This strategy is popular in travel shots, with tourists creatively integrating themselves into shots of well-known landmark such as the Eiffel Tower or the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

To apply this composition, it's best to work with two subjects in the frame. One subject needs to be physically more distant from the lens, while the other one is positioned close to your optic. To bring creative ideas to life, it's helpful if you're able to move or direct at least one subject, as this will enable you to actively arrange the subject to match your vision. This approach also can add a layer of humour, when mismatched elements are brought together for instance. Subjects that at first glance don't have much

connection to each other can make a powerful combination that forces the viewer to think about the image.

As the distance between your two subjects will likely be significant, keeping both sharp will be a challenge. To widen the depth of field, work with narrower apertures of greater than $f/11$. If you're struggling to achieve uniform sharpness, adapt the differences between the subjects by changing focal length, or consider focus stacking.

F E A T U R E

ADD LAYERS

Create a story by combining fragments of scenes in one frame



FRAMING ELEMENTS

By integrating the branches in the upper part of the frame, the dead space was reduced and interest and colour added

MYSTERY SUBJECTS

Although only the reflection of the subjects is visible in the frame, their outlines hint at the appearance of these people without distracting from the image

STILL SURFACE

The surface of the water is mostly calm, although its movement is suggested at the bottom-right. Reflections from the sky add a smooth gradient throughout the frame

When it comes to telling a story in your image, the composition plays an essential part, and working with reflections is an effective way to add a layer to the frame, which contributes to enhancing the mood while providing the viewer with the context of the scene.

Mixing reality and reflection in the composition leaves the viewer with a lasting impression, and capturing reflections of the subject in water opens up possibilities to include other elements in the frame. When creating such images, keep an eye on the weather and speed of the water flow; calm surfaces work best to capture clear reflections of a subject.

Windows are another reflective surface that offer great possibilities. Here, shop or restaurant displays are good options, as those windows usually extend over a large area. This way, you can integrate the elements found behind the windows with contrasting scene elements like trees, shops, and passers-by. Car windows are also a great tool to bring this composition strategy to life.

To enhance the creative possibilities of windows, change the viewpoint and shoot through them. Raindrops on the surface, for example, will leave you with an interesting additional element, enhancing the frame's mood. To take this further,

experiment with shifting the focus. Go to your camera menu and select a flexible focus point, which you can either direct through touch or buttons to the specific element. To have the raindrops appear sharp while letting the background appear blurred, work with maximum aperture settings and longer focal lengths. When zooming into the raindrops, you'll notice a sharp reflection of background elements.

There are endless possibilities when it comes to using reflections in compositions, and being creative and experimental will open up new opportunities to enhance the visual storytelling experience.



FEATURE

PRO ADVICE

Divyanshu Verma on how he brings his compositions to life



MIST OPPORTUNITIES

Divyanshu captured his hometown of Prayagrah during the winter. "Due to the fog, the mood and the feeling was special that day," he says

DIVYANSHU VERMA



A self-taught photographer based in Uttar Pradesh, India, Divyanshu Verma has a passion for finding moments around him that help him see the world from a different perspective, and his work has been recognised by various platforms both nationally and internationally. With his positive attitude, Divyanshu strives to create his own style and identity in this competitive world. divyanshuverma.net
@astreet_lash

Divyanshu, what role does image composition play in your work?

As photographers, we all know that composition is vital. It plays an important role when it comes to creating an eye-pleasing frame. In my work, the most important role it has is to create simplicity and to balance the scene; because the simpler the scene is composed, the more pleasing it usually looks. I always aim to highlight the main subjects so that distracting objects seem to be negligible.

The most important aspect is the essence of the composition, like the arrangement of elements in the frame. Here the well-known 'rule of thirds' comes into play. It's one of my favourite techniques that I learned when starting my photography journey. This classic rule clearly highlights what to add to the frame to create simplicity and an attractive composition. Placing the subject at one of the intersecting points supports dividing the image both horizontally and vertically, and it also helps to create balanced detail.

How do you decide on your final composition?

When I choose the compositions for my images, I keep the 'rule of thirds' in mind. However, to create the perfect composition, I sometimes break this rule, depending on the message I want to convey. Next to this, perspective is vital in my work. It has the power to create a magic touch, so experimenting with different angles helps to create perfect compositions with a sense of depth. In some of my images, I use leading lines to lead the viewer's eyes directly towards the subject, and to add extra depth and interest. I include shapes and textures in the scene.

There are three key things I keep in mind when I compose an image. First, I decide how much background I want to integrate into my frame. This way, I can avoid creating distractions and exclude any unnecessary elements. Second, I always avoid my subject becoming merged with the background, and third, I try to change my angle to add an

artistic touch to my images; this also helps me to separate my subject from the background.

Do you have any tips for aspiring photographers on how to create captivating compositions?

I've seen many beginners facing the problem of how to compose their subject within the frame. It also challenged me in the earlier days of my career, but I practised a lot, and that helped me to compose better photos over time. So my advice is to keep practising and experimenting. Secondly, always go for an interesting subject, or incorporate your subject in an interesting place. My third tip is to use different and creative perspectives to make the scene look interesting. Also, try to fill your frames to create extra depth, but avoid cutting off important image elements. Lastly, play with different lighting to create a powerful mood and feel to underline the composition.

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GALLERY

XPOSURE

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



COLOUR BENDER

RUBEN ALEXANDER

"This was one of my initial attempts at glassware photography. There's more to glassware photography than meets the eye, and it's a very challenging genre. I used the principle of refraction to create this image."

<https://bit.ly/4a0dqnc>

GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



MOMMY DEEREST

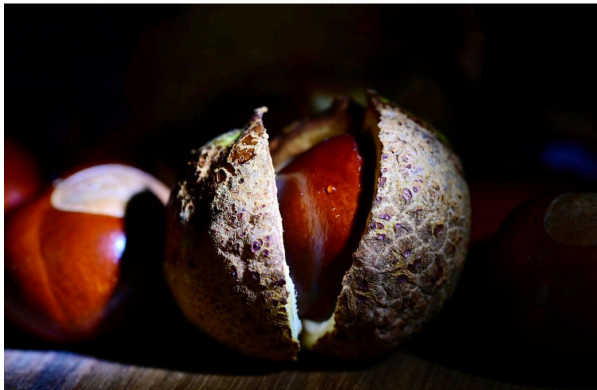
TOM MORTENSON

"A tender moment between a mother white-tailed deer and her young fawn. Taken in Portage County, Wisconsin, USA."

<https://bit.ly/3FykdwB>

GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



AFTER THE SUMMER

NICK STRONG

"I took this shot of some conkers in my home studio using LED lights."

<https://bit.ly/3tXh6G1>

GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



RAME HEAD SUNSET

HOWARD PRATT

"I captured this striking sunset over Rame Head in southeast Cornwall, UK. At one point I didn't think it was going to be very impressive."

<https://bit.ly/4agFY8E>



FACEBOOK

<http://bit.ly/39py9lc>



FLICKR

<http://bit.ly/2V1gs10>

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Taken a portrait you're particularly proud of? Shot a sensational sunset you'd like to show off? Then join the *Photography Week* Facebook community and share your best photos today! You'll get feedback from fellow readers and the *Photography Week* team, plus the chance to appear in Xposure, or even on our cover!



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I N S P I R A T I O N

IT'S COOL, THAT

THE BEST THING WE'VE SEEN THIS WEEK



Kathleen Orlinsky, Winner, Sustainability Prize



Thomas Meurot, Winner, Professional Competition, Sport



Jorge Monaco, Winner, Professional Competition, Portfolio



Liam Man, Winner, Open Photographer of the Year

SONY WORLD PHOTO AWARDS ANNOUNCES 2024 WINNERS

Prestigious contest celebrates outstanding photography from around the globe

The World Photography Organisation has revealed the overall winners of the 2024 Sony World Photography Awards, showcasing an outstanding collection of images from some of the world's leading photographers.

The awards are one of the world's biggest photography contests, with Professional, Open, Student, and Youth competitions, plus national, regional and specialist awards. Subject categories include Environment,

Portraiture, Wildlife & Nature, Still Life, and Landscape. The overall winners of the main competitions receive cash prizes plus Sony imaging equipment.

Juliette Pavy was awarded Photographer of the Year for her documentary series highlighting the forced sterilisation of women in Greenland. Click the link to see the winning and shortlisted images from all the categories at the awards website, and for details of exhibition dates and venues.



SEE MORE IMAGES

<https://bit.ly/3Wglvfk>

S K I L L S

CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY

A series of silhouetted figures contrast against the clouds to really stand out on the beach



A PLACE IN THE SUNSET

James Paterson shows you how to shoot and combine images to create striking silhouette composites

As any photographer worth their salty tripod legs knows, sunrise and sunset are good times to head to the beach with your camera. When the sun goes low and reflections tint the water, we can be treated to some of the most gorgeous sights of the great outdoors. But the best sunset photos capture more than just bold clouds and vibrant colours – what we need is a subject to frame against the sky. Because of the

stark contrast between the sky and foreground, it's often impossible to record detail in both; but instead, we have the opportunity to capture bold silhouettes.

You can have all kinds of fun crafting playful silhouetted portraits, and in this project we'll show you how to shoot for a striking stitch. This involves capturing our subjects in lots of different positions around the frame, shooting a variety of poses and bringing in different props.

By using a tripod to keep all the frames aligned, it's a simple task to then combine the best poses into an eye-catching array of silhouettes.

Whether you want to combine portraits or capture a single frame at sundown, you'll learn lots of tips and tricks. We'll look at the ideal camera settings, the best angles, and posing suggestions. You'll also find editing tips on how to bring a set of poses together, and a Photoshop guide in the video.



HOW TO SHOOT SUNSET STITCHES

Learn how to shoot a set of silhouetted portraits at sunset

1 SHOOT INTO THE SUN

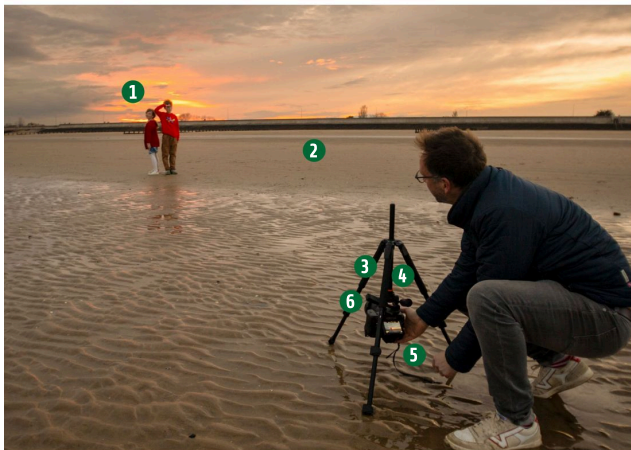
The best sunset colours usually appear around the direction of the setting sun. Here it meant turning away from the sea towards the land, but if you can get an angle with the sun setting over the sea, even better. Often the best sunsets occur after a storm or a rainy day, as the clouds will be lower and heavier.

2 AT THE BEACH

A wide flat beach is ideal for this, especially if there are pools and puddles of water to reflect the sunset sky. Look for a beach with an expanse of sand, like our shot here at Dymchurch, Kent. Time your visit so that the tide is out, as this way you'll achieve pristine sand and puddles for reflections.

3 GET LOW WITH A TRIPOD

If you want to stitch together a set of silhouetted portraits you'll need a tripod to keep all the frames in alignment. A low camera angle is ideal, as it gets the camera closer to the puddles for better reflections and frames the subjects against the vibrant sky.



4 EXPOSING FOR SILHOUETTES

Shooting in manual exposure mode is best for sunset portraits, especially if you want to combine several frames, as it keeps things consistent. Here we're at aperture $f/4$, shutter speed $1/400$ sec, ISO160 – a fairly fast shutter speed such as this will freeze the motion.

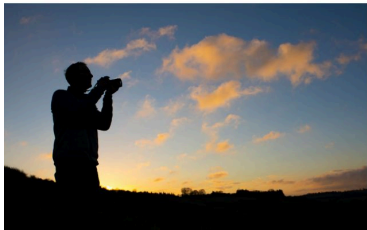
5 SET A HIGH DRIVE MODE

Time is short, as the sunset colours fade quickly and the clouds may move, which can cause a problem later on when combining photos. So a rapid fire approach is best. Engage continuous drive mode, and shoot more frames than you need, capturing the subjects in all parts of the image.

6 WIDE-ANGLE LENS

A wide-angle lens is ideal for a sunset stitch as it lets us frame low to the ground and exaggerate the perspective with reflections and foreground details. It also means we can frame fairly loosely, and concentrate on posing rather than having to keep an eye on where the subjects are in the frame.





1

LOOK FOR CLOUDS

A bit of cloud cover is usually best, as if the sky is too clear then the sunset can look dull. Scattered high clouds are ideal – if they're too low, they'll block the sun at the critical moment as it dips towards the horizon. There are lots of sunset apps to help you predict when a good one will appear.

2

UNDEREXPOSE THE SUBJECT

Underexpose the subjects so they come out dark and you get a bold, vibrant sky. A sunset can look better than it does to the naked eye when underexposed, so take test shots and keep things dark. Use the histogram to ensure that the highlights aren't clipped.



3

SHOOT LOTS OF POSES

We shot a set of photos here while the kids ran, jumped and skipped around the beach. When the sun sets you won't have much time, so plan a few poses in advance. If you have more than one person in the frame try to separate the poses so they are not overlapping, and shoot them side-on for strong shapes and profiles.



S K I L L S

TOP TIPS FOR STRIKING SILHOUETTES



4

USE PROPS

Use props for your silhouette portraits. Things like balls and sports kit are good for poses, as are bubbles and toys for kids – anything that makes an interesting shape or looks good in an action shot will work. Think about clothes too – you'll want bodies to be clearly defined, so avoid bulky or baggy outfits.

5

SHOOT THROUGH STRIKING SHAPES

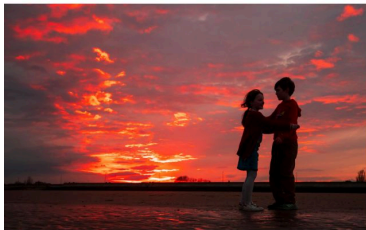
Try shooting through things like branches or fences to create strong silhouetted shapes. Here the camera is on the ground, and a wide-angle lens exaggerates the perspective of the fence. It can be hard to visualise how objects will look in black, so engage Live View and use the camera preview.



6

CAPTURE MOMENTS OF EMOTION

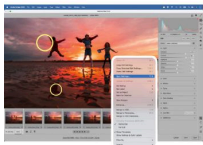
Silhouetted portraits are ideal for capturing moments of poignancy or emotion. Sunset colours evoke a dreamy mood, and unidentifiable silhouettes have a universal feel, as they could be anybody. Have subjects interact with one another, perhaps with a cuddle, holding hands, or dancing.



SKILLS

HOW TO BUILD A SUNSET STITCH

Combine your set of silhouetted portraits in Photoshop with simple layer-masking skills



1 BOOST THE COLOURS

Highlight the set of images in Bridge, right-click and select 'Open in Camera Raw'. Use the tonal sliders to fine-tune brightness, contrast and colours in one image, then hit Cmd/Ctrl+A to select the rest, right-click and sync your edits. Click OK, then go to Tools > Photoshop > Load Files into Photoshop Layers.



2 ALIGN AND MASK

In the Layers panel, hold shift and click the bottom layer to highlight them all. Go to Edit > Auto-Align Layers, tick Auto and click OK to correct any slight misalignment. Next, hold Alt and click the eye icon on the bottom layer to hide the others. Reveal the layer above, then Alt-click the Mask icon to add a full mask to it.



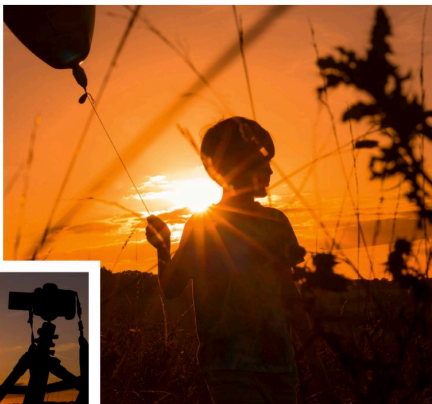
3 COMBINE SHOTS

Take the Brush tool, and paint white over the parts of the layer you want to reveal. Next highlight and reveal the next layer up, add a full mask again, and paint white to reveal the areas you want. Continue with this painting procedure until you've blended all the layers you want to use in your image.

SHOOT FOR A SUNSTAR

Use a narrow aperture to create a sunstar effect as an extra bonus

A setting or rising sun gives us the opportunity to shoot for a sunstar. Use a narrow aperture, like f/16 – you can sometimes create sunstars with wider apertures depending on the lens, but, in general, the narrower the aperture the stronger the star shape. That shape tells you something about the lens too. If it's a six-bladed aperture, you'll see six spikes on the sunstar. If the lens has an odd number of blades you'll see double the number of spikes, so a nine-bladed aperture will result in a star with 18 spikes. Typically you'll want to position the sun against a dark object like the edge of a person; a partially-obscured sun tends to work better, as it makes for a smaller point of bright light. The dark shape also gives you strong contrast with the bright sunstar.



E D I T I N G

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HOW TO...

GENERATE AI BACKDROPS

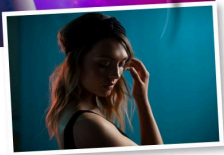
Meet the filter that creates entire backgrounds based on a few words – James Paterson shows you how

If you've been paying attention to photography news outlets, you can't have failed to notice the hype around AI image generation. Generators such as Stable Diffusion, Dall-E and Midjourney make it possible to create artwork from nothing more than a few words, and this has caused both excitement and apprehension among photographers, as the way these tools gather and reassemble the substance of existing photographs raises genuine concerns about intellectual property. But, whether you see AI as ground-breaking technology

or a threat to traditional creatives, there's no denying that we're entering a new era of image-making.

Users looking to experiment with text-to-image generation will find an intriguing tool within Photoshop's beta software (at the time of writing). As you'll discover in this video tutorial, the Backdrop Creator Neural filter lets you create a whole new backdrop based on a prompt of just a few words. Of course, anything in beta isn't the finished article, but it's worth experimenting with the latest Adobe tools. Backdrop Creator is designed to work with your

images, and, as such, it may offer a glimpse of how AI and photography can work together in the future.



EXPERT TIP

You need to make your cutout and backdrop look like they belong together. Solutions include adjusting colours and tones, adding a vignette or applying other filter effects. Another trick is to add a texture layer on top, using blend modes to combine it with the layers below. We've supplied 15 textures; drag them into your image and experiment with blend modes, opacity and masking.

LENS TEST

EXPERT OPINION ON THE LATEST KIT

SIGMA 500MM F/5.6 DG DN OS SPORTS

This relatively lightweight lens packs a load of upmarket features

sigma-global.com £2,779/\$2,999



This latest Sports-series lens aims to combine high-end handling and performance with a relatively manageable size and weight. The lens tips the scales at just 1,370g – less than many 70-200mm f/2.8 'trinity' zooms. It's reasonably compact as well, measuring 108 x 235mm, partly thanks to the f/5.6 rather than f/4 aperture rating, although it still has an oversized filter thread of 95mm. Even so, there's no need to resort to drop-in filters, as featured in many super-telephoto lenses.

S P E C S

MOUNT: LEICA L, SONY E (FE) **ELEMENTS/CONSTRUCTION:** 20 ELEMENTS IN 14 GROUPS **ANGLE OF VIEW (DIAGONAL):** 5° **MAX APERTURE:** F/5.6 **MIN APERTURE:** F/32 **MIN FOCUS DISTANCE:** 3.20M **FILTER SIZE:** 95MM **LENGTH:** 235 MM **DIAMETER:** 108MM **WEIGHT:** 1,370G

Performance

In keeping with the lens's 'Sports' aspirations, it features a rapid HLA (High-response Linear Actuator) autofocus system, ideal for tracking the action in sports and wildlife photography. I found that autofocus was quick to lock on to subjects, and highly effective at tracking moving objects. The 5-stop optical stabiliser also earned its keep. As for pictorial quality, my dull-day images had plenty of bite, with excellent sharpness, contrast and clarity, and I'm impressed that levels of sharpness are both satisfying and extremely consistent from the widest aperture of f/5.6 down to f/11. Both axial and lateral chromatic aberrations are minimal, the latter being barely noticeable even at the edges and corners. And, unlike many mirrorless optics, this Sigma is a virtually zero-distortion lens, requiring no automatic in-camera correction.

Matthew Richards



The optics are sharp and colour fidelity is excellent, providing punchy images. This quality is maintained right across the frame and through the aperture range



The 500mm focal length allows for tight framing of distant subjects and a nicely compressed perspective, although no Sigma teleconverters are available for this lens

VERDICT

It's a great buy at the price, offering quality and portability. It's just a shame that it's not available in a wider range of mount options.





mpb.com



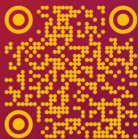
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A P P S

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