Creating Photos with Impact

Agenda

- What Creates Impact
- Storytelling
- Creativity
- Composition
- Technical Excellence

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Flagpole Photographers Camera Club

Chane's Viewpoint on Creating Great Photos

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

The photographer directs the eye of the beholder to the beauty they created.

Today we are going discuss how to help everyone see that beauty in your photos.

Chane's "Rules" for Photography

1

Crafting a great photo is unlike math or science

It's art, it's subjective, it's self-expression

2

All photos will benefit from some guidelines

No photo will benefit from every guideline

3

There are no required rules

There are lots of guidelines and an unbounded set of ideas

What Is Impact?

The sense one gets upon viewing a photo for the first time

Impactful photos evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense **emotion**.

This is the eye candy, the **wow** factor. It is the reason we love the photo. It moves us to look inwards.

Impact is what you get when many attributes are working **together** in concert.

Photos with impact don’t just happen. They are thoughtfully **created** and nurtured and cultivated through the careful attention to photographic principles.

What Creates Impact?

Inspired by Professional Photographer Association's 12 Elements of a Merit Photo.

Impact

Think of **Impact** as a stool supported by these four legs.

With 3 legs: Still very strong.
With 2 legs: Hard to stand up.
With 1 leg: Easily falls over.
With 0 legs: It's a snapshot.

Storytelling

Creativity

Composition

Technical Excellence

The Four Pillars Supporting Impact

Storytelling	The photo's ability to evoke imagination
Creativity	The fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message
Composition	Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose
Technical Excellence	The quality of the photo itself as it is presented for viewing

What It Looks like When the Stool Falls Over

~~Storytelling~~

~~Creativity~~

~~Composition~~

Technical Excellence ✓

Working to Stand up the Stool

Bake cookies. First photo.

80 photos later - new background, new lighting, added milk and I ate part of a cookie

Storytelling

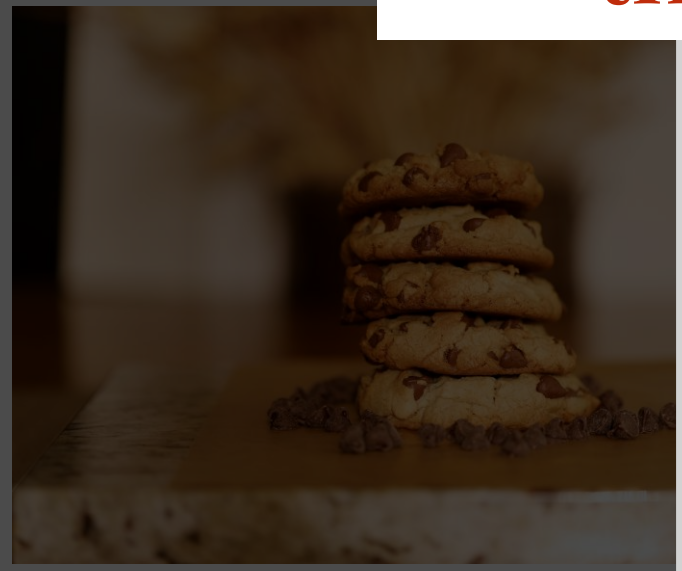
Creativity

Composition

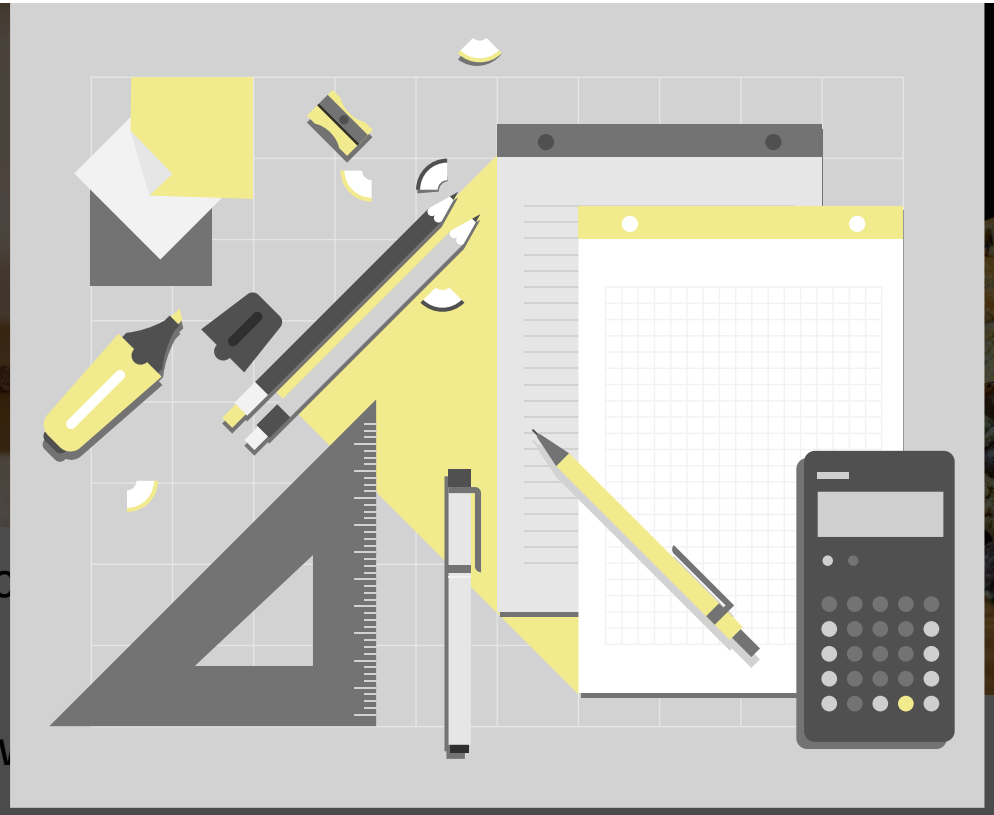
Technical Excellence

Working to Stand up the Stool

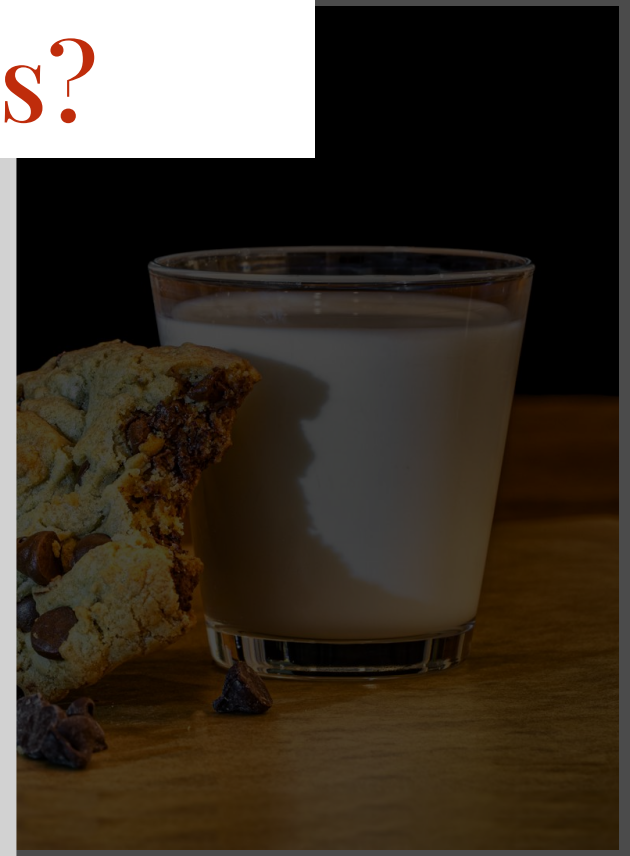
Maybe a Plan Would Be Better than Taking 80 Photos?



Bake cookies. First photo



80 photos later - nev



ate part of a cookie

Storytelling

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Ideas for Creating a Photo

Sometimes you're at the right place at the right time.
Even then, you need to decide how to "**create**" an impactful photo.
Here is a 3-step method that helps!

Vision

Prepare

Achieve

Vision → Prepare → Achieve

Define → Why → Verify

- “Wow, it’s beautiful” is not a vision.
- Strive for simple, but clear.
- Select a couple pillars to start creating impact.
  Storytelling, Creativity, Composition, Technical.

- Why subjects work or not?
- Why this main subject?
- Why this foreground?
- Why this background?
- What is the audience?

- Pretend you are explaining your photo to a stranger.
- Evaluate relative to your primary audience.
- Get feedback from another person.

A “Simple Things in Life” Starter Vision

Storytelling	• An enjoyable evening at home watching Netflix
Creativity	• ?
Composition	• Use feet as a leading line
Technical	• TV visible, yet the room dark & hidden

Any thoughts on what to change in this vision?

Vision → **Prepare** → Achieve

Figure out how to create it, in the camera and post-processing

Weather? Time of year? Subjects? Supplies? Equipment?

Cost? Time? Effort? Probability of success?

Knowledge – especially if post-processing is required

Honesty – consider reality to drive creativity

Vision → Prepare → **Achieve**

- Time is always a limiting factor
- Nature may be a limiting factor
- Check & recheck equipment list
- Plan alternatives

JUST DO IT.

Vision Prepare Achieve

What should I do differently next time?

Storytelling

Creativity

Composition

Technical Excellence

Agenda

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Storytelling

“One picture is worth a thousand words.”

The photo's ability to evoke imagination

Take a step back to see what kind of stories your photos can create

One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might create their own story

Look at the photo as if it is your first time, find the story and make it noticeable

Storytelling

Is it easy for you to tell a story about this scene?

Storytelling in Nature Photos

Based on Photographic Society of America Nature Judging Guidelines

The PSA Nature definition specifies that “the most important part of a nature image is the nature story it tells”.

The following guidelines suggest one way of evaluating the strength of nature stories when the subject of the photo is a living creature.

Level 1
- Descriptive stories (bird on a stick)

Level 2
- Behavior and life cycle stories (eating, singing ...)

Level 3
- Same species interactions

Level 4
- Different species interactions

Higher Score

Thoughts on Adding Storytelling

The Story

- Clearly define the main subject and key elements of your story.
- Our most cherished stories are often from everyday moments.
- Downplay your emotional attachment, the viewer may have other thoughts.
- Editing and revision is part of every story you read, the same is needed here.

Subject Matter

- How is the subject matter helping the story?
- Think about the context of the subject – dramatic, calm, familiar.
- Are the subjects clear and often visually separate (no mergers).
- Add interaction or more context – a runner vs finishing vs passing

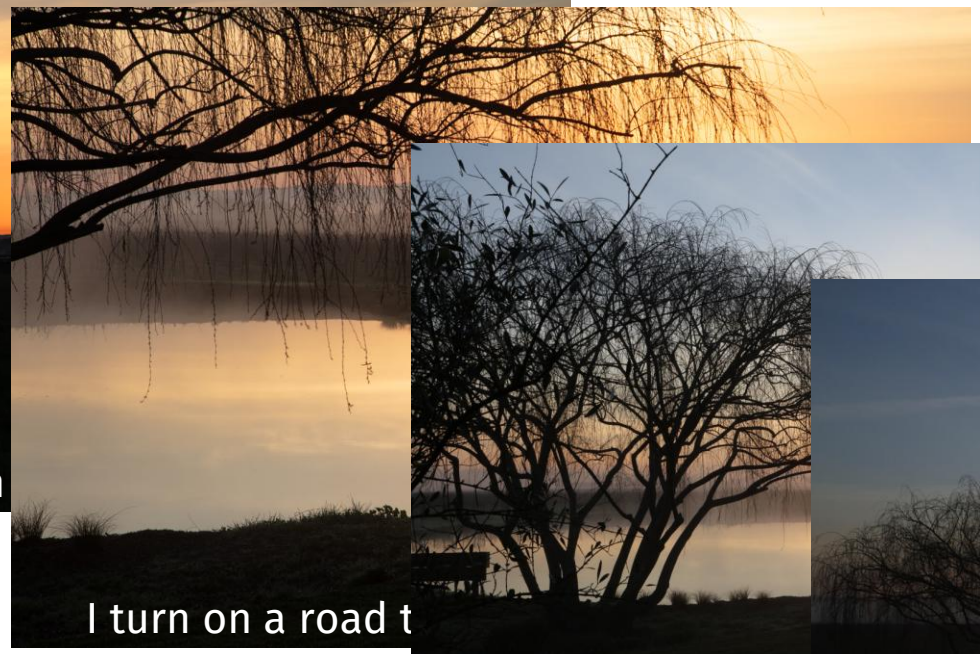
What Else?

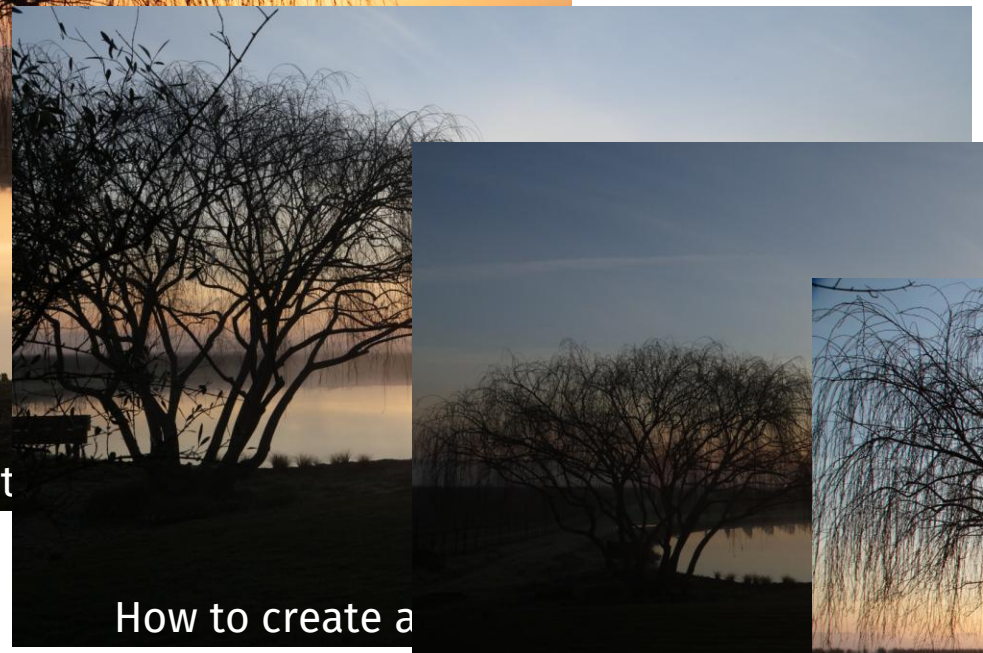
- What could be added or removed to enhance the story?
- How would capturing motion help tell the story?
- How does the foreground and background support your story?
- Don’t overlook using the Title to hint at your story!

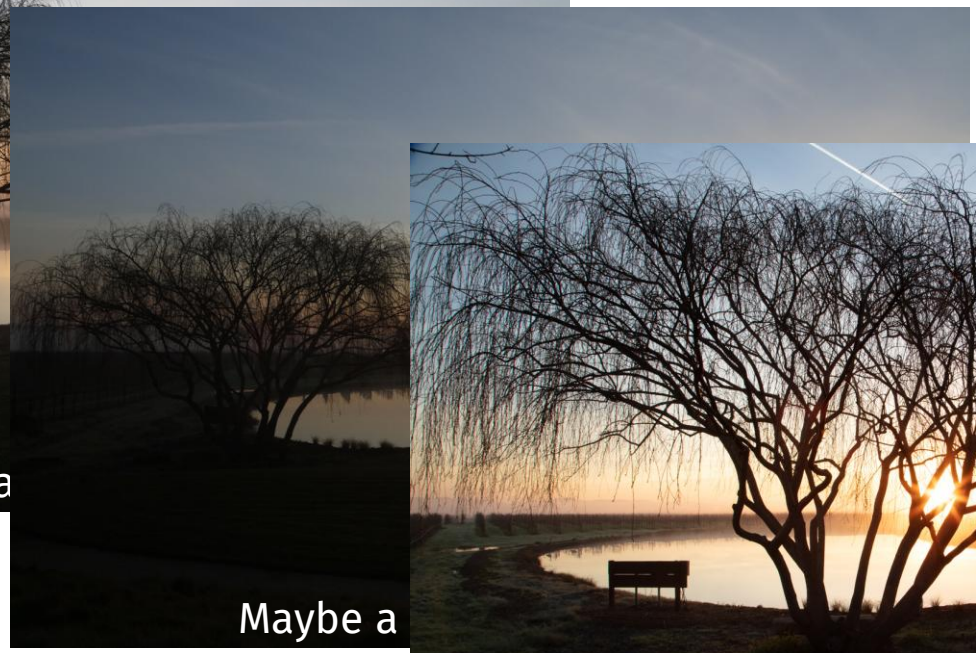
Is there a story?
How can the story be improved?

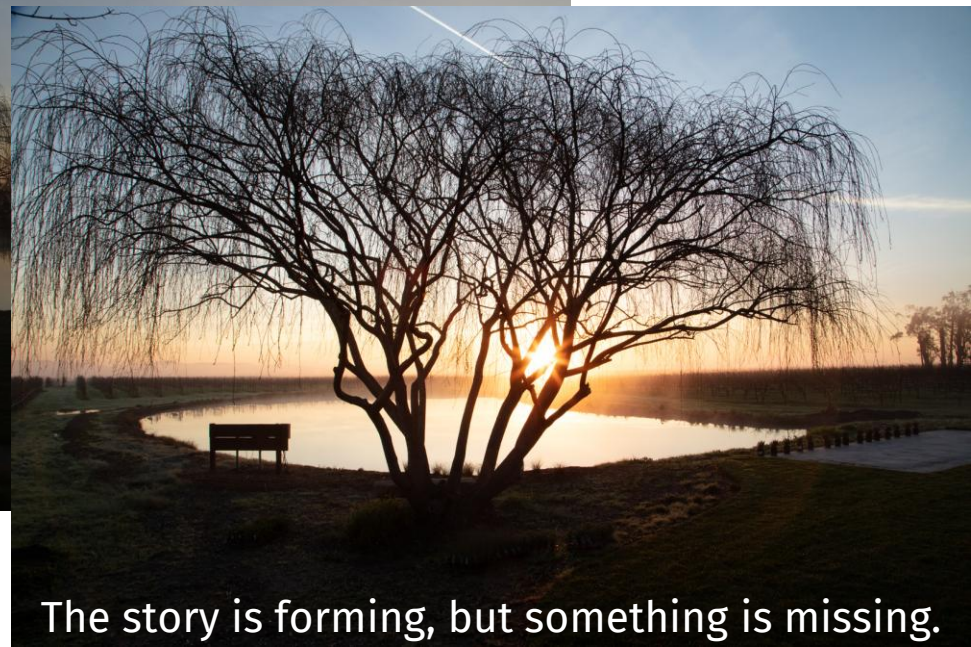
Work the Scene to Create a Story

Driving to the airport as dawn turns beautiful – there must be photo somewhere









I added a person, Rhonda, looking at the sunrise. A better story.
Hint at the story using the title ”Enjoying Sunrise”

Should I crop to make the story element even more visible?

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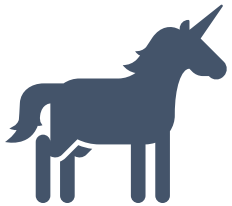
Creativity

“Creativity is a wild mind and a disciplined eye.”

The fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message



The ability to see beyond the physical reality in front of the camera and create something unique and interesting

Judges may give you bonus points for creativity

May use unconventional perspectives, experimenting with light and shadows or playing with composition.

Thoughts on Adding Creativity

The Scene

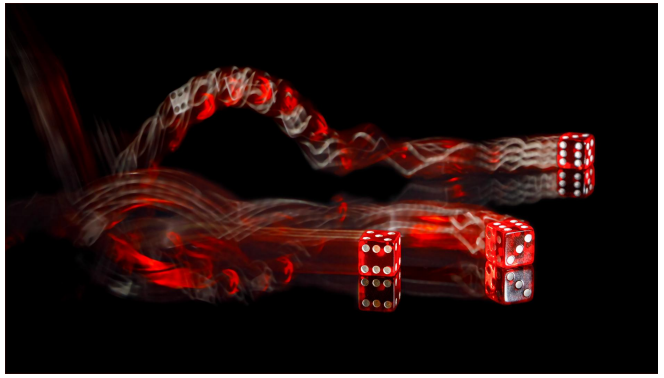
- See the potential in a scene and use creative techniques to capture it.
- Ask yourself how can I capture the scene in another way, then think of other ways.
- Review your capture and ask yourself, would others think it is boring?

Look for Ways to Add Interesting Details

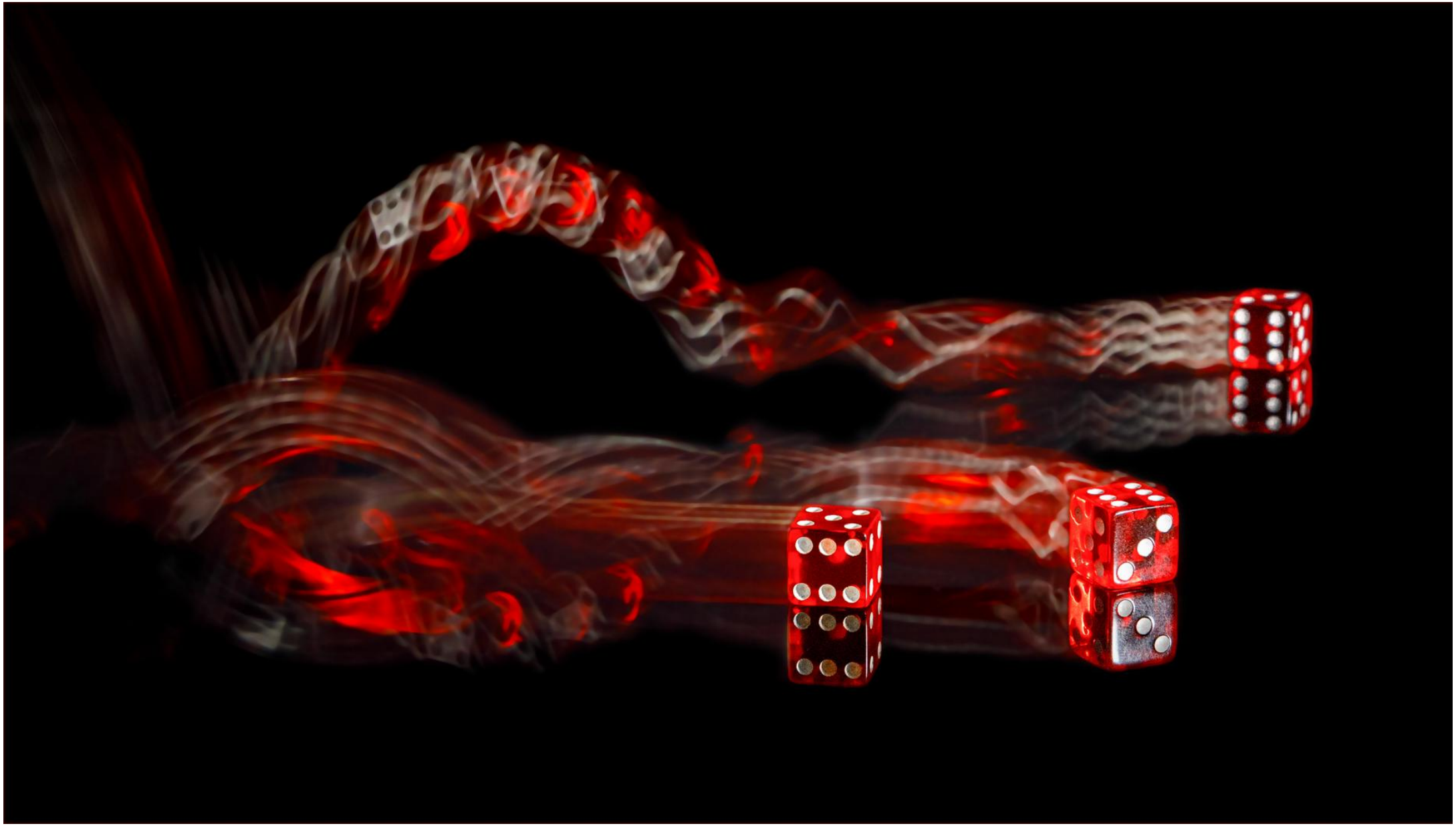
- Color?
- Focus depth?
- Patterns?
- Light?
- Action?

Have Fun!

- Imagination is key.
- Continuous change turns playing with failure into success.
- Learn new things.



How is this Creative?



Creativity May Require Dynamic Revision

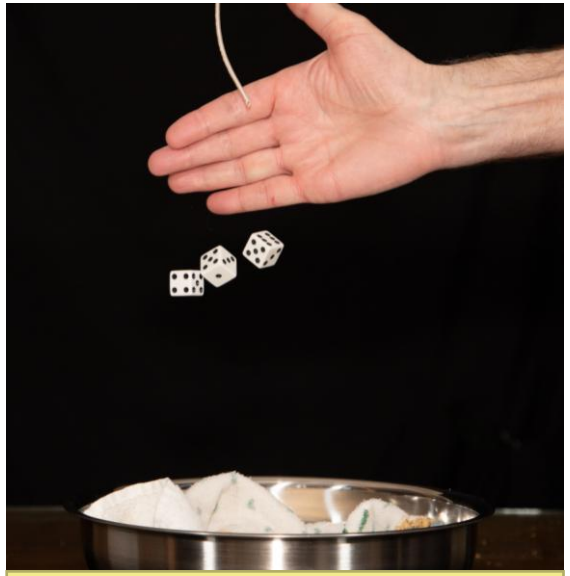
Take 152 photos – use 2

18 photos adjusting the light on my empty right hand

17 photos looking at what dry ingredients look like when dropping

22 photos of holding the cookie in my left hand

Having Fun by Learning & Playing!



Checking drop zone

Flour

Brown Sugar

Chocolate Chips

Egg

Broken Egg

Results of the Right-Hand Ingredients Drop

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Composition

“Seeing and composing the beauty is what separates the snapshot from the photograph.”

Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose of the photo.

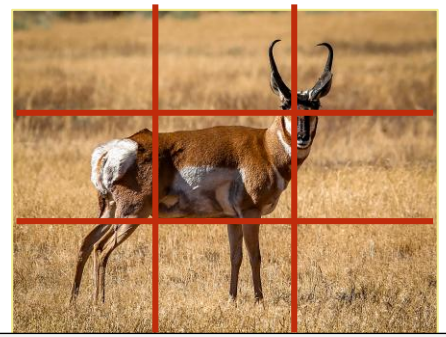
Holds the viewer in the photo and prompts the viewer to look where you placed the beauty.

You have incredible control of how items in your photo are arranged. Leverage that control to compose the scene.

Do you always follow the standard rules of composition? When do you break them to enhance the photo?

Composition Ideas

1. Balance
2. Centered & Symmetry
3. Color combinations
4. Depth
5. Distance
6. Fill the Frame
7. Framing
8. Isolate the Subject
9. Juxtaposition
10. Leading Lines
11. Left to Right
12. Patterns & Texture
13. Points
14. Rule of Odds
15. Rule of Thirds
16. Shapes – diagonals, triangles, golden ratio
17. Simplicity & Minimalism
18. Space – positive, negative, breathing
19. Tone
20. ...



Rule of Thirds
Place the most interesting item on the lines or intersection

Leading Lines
Use a line to lead the viewer to the most interesting item

Rule of Odds
For visual balance and harmony use 1, 3 or 5 items

Leaving Space
Breathing room and implied motion

Thoughts on Adding Composition

Center of Interest

- Is there a center of interest?
- Are there too many centers of interests?
- How can I help the viewer find the center of interest?
- What should I exclude? Even if it is beautiful.

Leading Lines

- May be straight, curved or a complex curve.
- It may be one or more objects, each more interesting.
- May be very noticeable or subtle.
- We are accustomed to looking left to right.

What Else?

- Our mind finds the most brightly lit item.
- Our mind finds the sharpest focused item.
- The rule of odds diminishes after 5 items.
- A slightly dark vignette keeps the viewer from leaving.

In this photo, what is good and bad about the composition?

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Technical Excellence

“There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept.”

The visual presentation of the photograph.

Lighting, focus, exposure, camera motion, color, post-processing, printing, mounting ...

While focusing on the nuts and bolts of photography use caution to avoid excessive post-processing.

It's what makes you look like a pro. Even a great scene falters without technical excellence.

Technical Excellence

Which aspects do you see?

- Lighting
- Focus
- Aperture
- Shutter speed
- Color

What would you add?

Four Flavors of Technical Excellence

Lighting

Defines dimension, shape and roundness in a photo

- Artificial, natural or post-processing
- Light impacts the color & tone

Technique

The camera settings & perspective used to create the photo

- Focus, angle, pose, expression, skin tones
- Lens, texture, digital noise, monochrome conversion style, sharpening

Color

Color tones working together to enhance the emotional appeal

- Use color, color harmony & saturation to evoke feelings
- Monochrome & other tonal conversions

Presentation

Affects a photo by giving it a finished look

- Crop, Border, Dust, Mat
- Awareness of fine details

Lighting

How did the choice of lighting help or hurt this photo?

Defines dimension, shape and roundness
Artificial, natural or post-processing
Light impacts the color & tone

Lighting the Cookie

This was not used

This was used

20 secs, F/14, ISO 100, 100 mm

Experiment with changing the lighting to create more opportunity for impact.

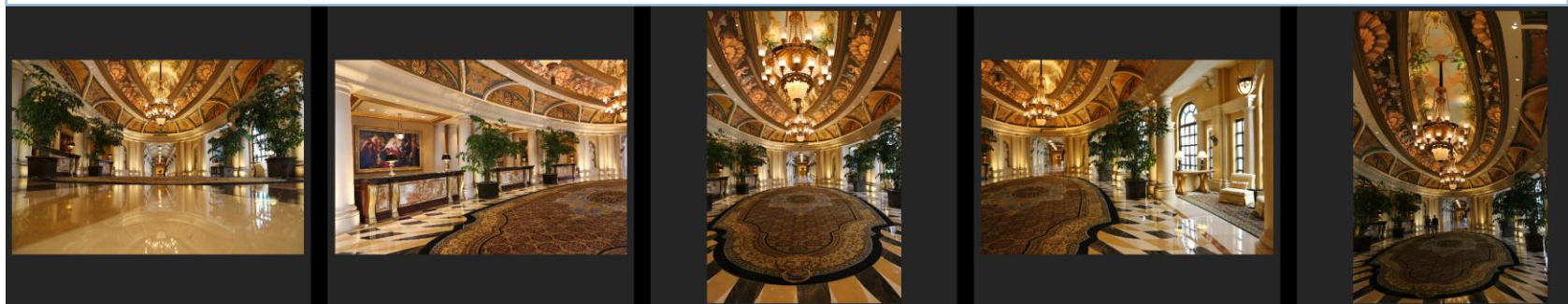
Technique

What techniques changed how you look at the photo?

The camera settings & perspective used
Focus, angle, pose, expression, skin tones
Lens, texture, digital noise, sharpening

Always look around for a better angle.
"Work the scene"

Backup *Left Side* *Portrait* *Right Side* *Look Up*



Color

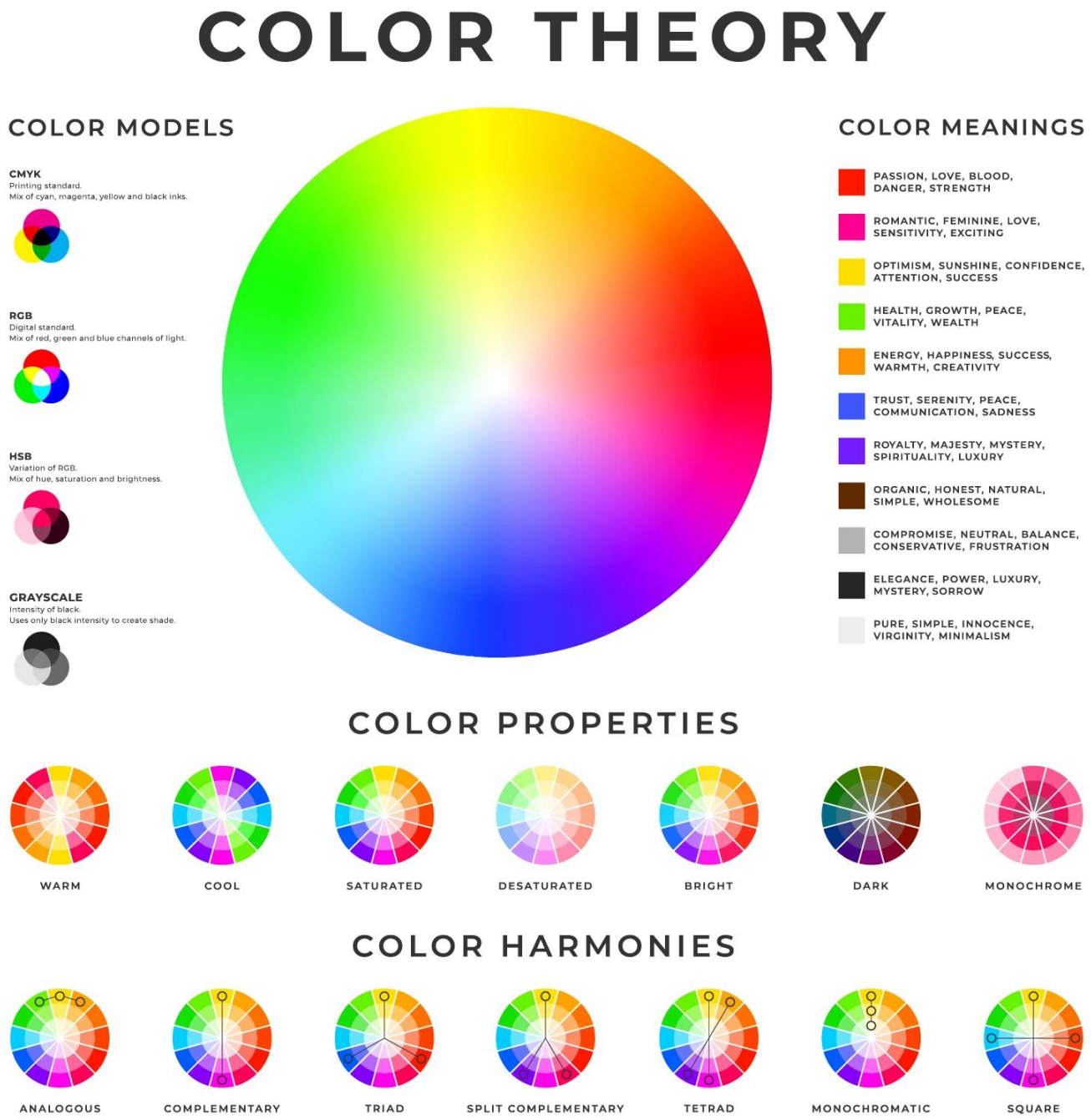
Why did blue and yellow work well in this photo?

Color tones working together to enhance the emotional appeal
Use color, color harmony & saturation evoke feelings
Monochrome & other tonal conversions

Color

aka
Color Balance
Color Harmony

Experiment at Adobe Color
https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel



Color - Monochrome

Monochrome is useful to remove harsh colors
Add structure by altering individual colors, is blue dark or light?
Impact emotion by changing histogram spectrum

Black White

Presentation

What Presentation aspects do you like or not like?

Affects a photo by giving it a finished look

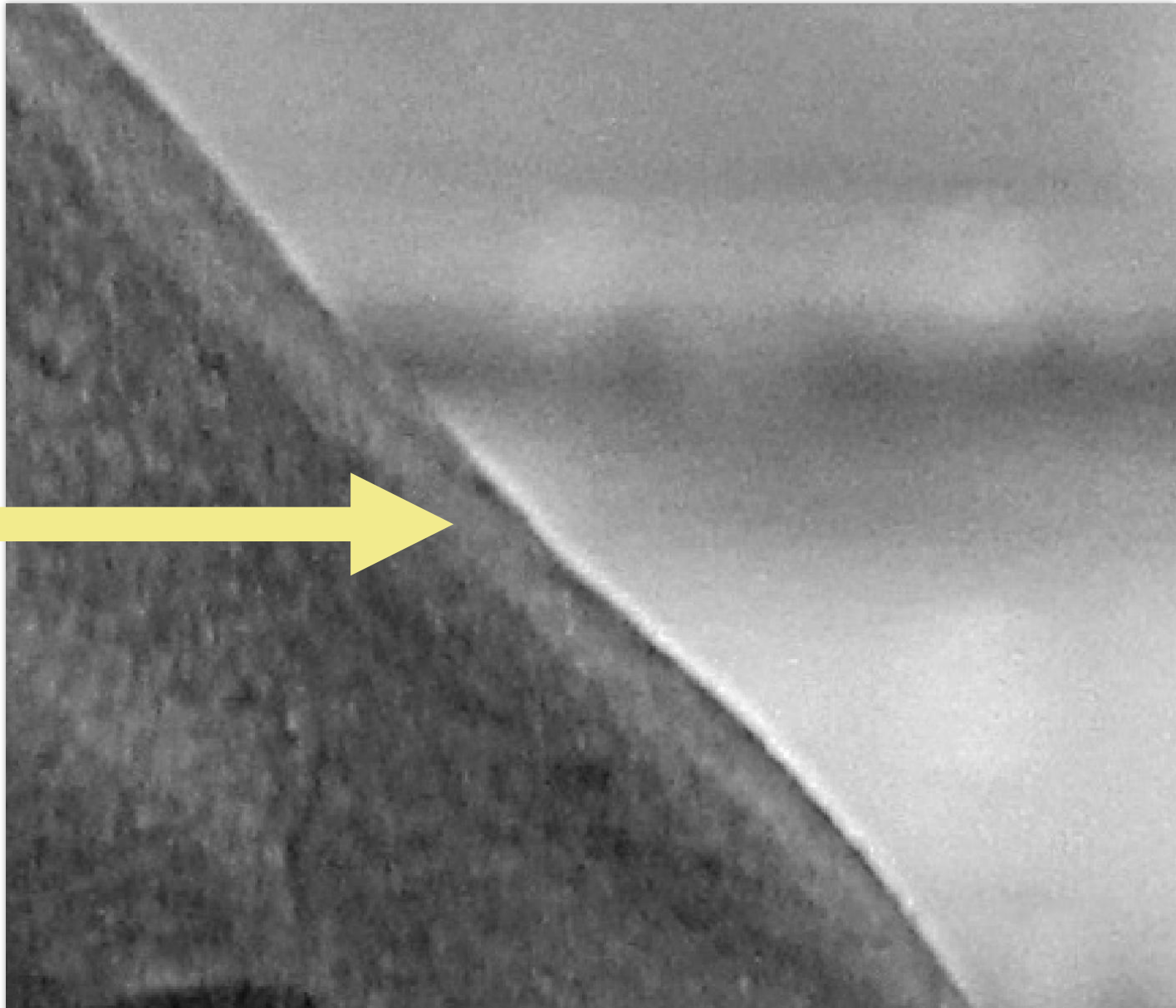
Crop, Border, Dust, Mat
Awareness of fine details

Presentation – Fine Details Matter

Awareness of fine details is critical.

The horse’s head and front has a small white outline.

Became ugly on 24”x30” print. Fixed before I printed at 30”x40”.



Thoughts on Adding Technical Excellence

Lighting

- How does changing the light direction and quality help the story?
- Is this the right exposure? Brighter? Darker?
- How can I use the lighting to add more depth?

Technique

- Is this the right camera location, height, angle … ?
- This this the right aperture, shutter speed, ISO … ?
- What should or should not be in focus?

Color

- How do the colors support the story?
- Should I change the color intensity?
- Is monochrome a better choice?

Presentation

- Did I look at the fine details?
- Clean the sensor and lens?
- Should I add a vignette or border or both?

Inspired by Professional Photographer Association's 12 Elements of a Merit Photo.

Using a Photo's Impact to Influence Commenting & Scoring

Impact

Think of **Impact** as a stool supported by these four legs.

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Click for more info

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Questions?

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