

Creating Photos with Impact



Photos © Chane Cullens

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Whaling City Camera Club

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Agenda



What Creates Impact



Storytelling



Creativity



Composition



Technical



Using Impact to Evaluate Photos



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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

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 cultivated through careful attention to photographic principles.



The impact of a photo is subjective and can vary from person to person based on individual experiences, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds. There is no magic formula, but there are photographic principles we can all leverage.

The Four Legs of Impact

Impactful photos evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, or wonder.

Think of
IMPACT
as a stool supported by four legs



Photo Structural Integrity

- 4 legs Solid: Hard to knock over
- 3 legs Stable: Still very strong
- 2 legs Weak: Hard to stand up
- 1 leg Critical: Easily falls over
- 0 legs It's a snapshot

Storytelling

Evokes emotion

Creativity

Offers a fresh view

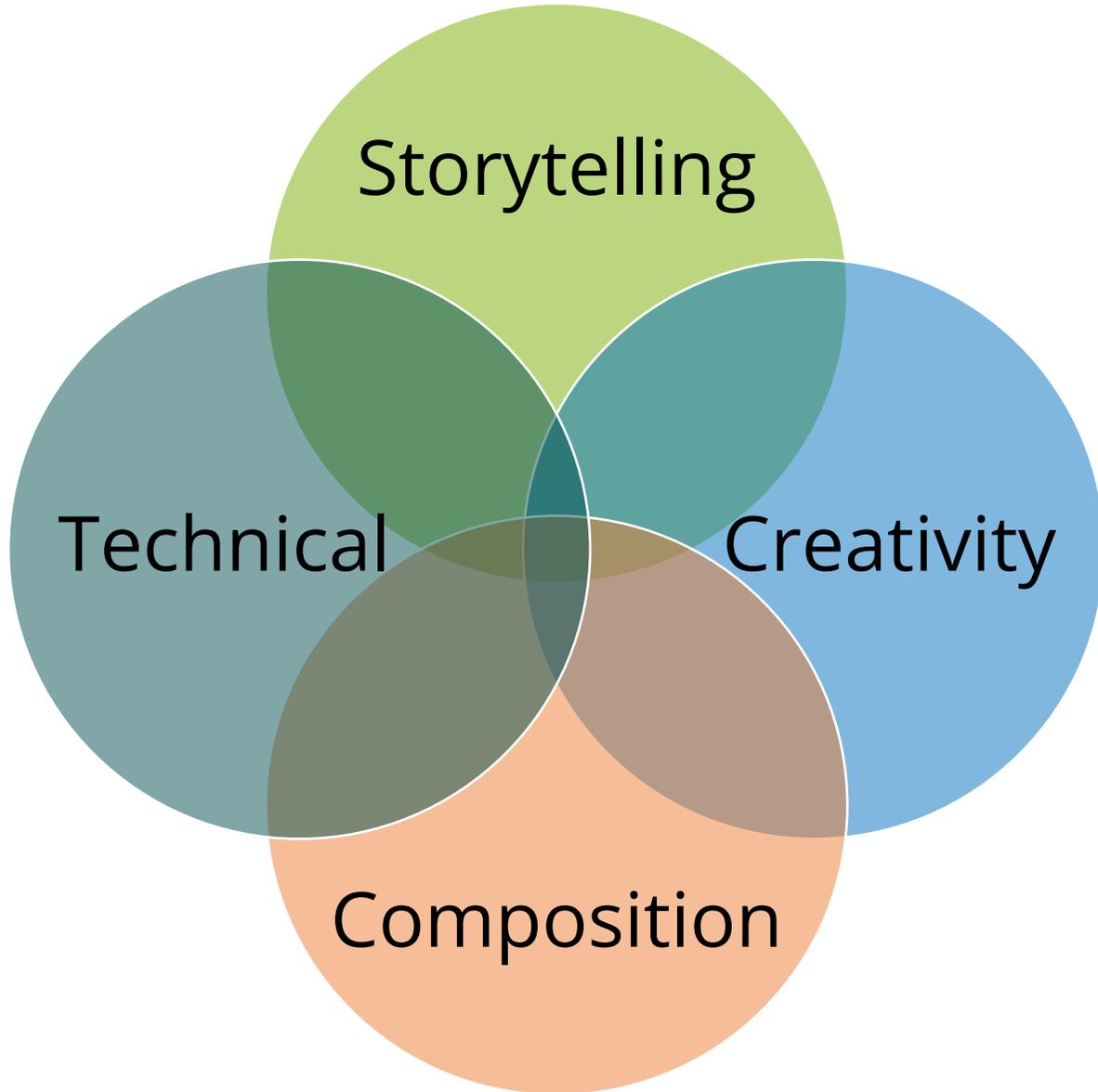
Composition

Guides the eye

Technical

Skillfully crafted

The Synergy of Impact



Strengthening one leg naturally helps the others.



Is the Impact Stool Standing Strong?



- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Focus
- ✓ Color

Technical

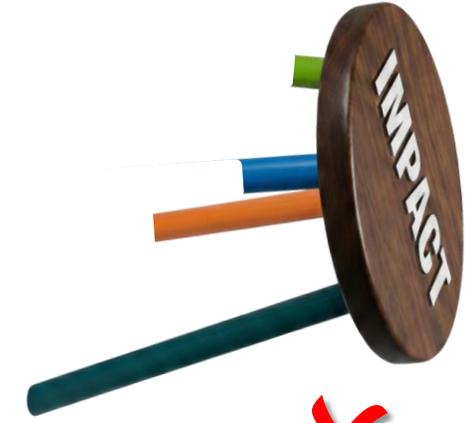
The quality of the photo itself as it is presented for viewing.

- ✓ Breathing space

Composition

Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose.

Putting too much weight on any one leg of the impact stool can lead you into the danger zone.



Storytelling

The photo's ability to evoke imagination.

Creativity

The fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message.

Agenda



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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos



Storytelling

"One picture is worth a thousand words."

The photo's ability to evoke imagination



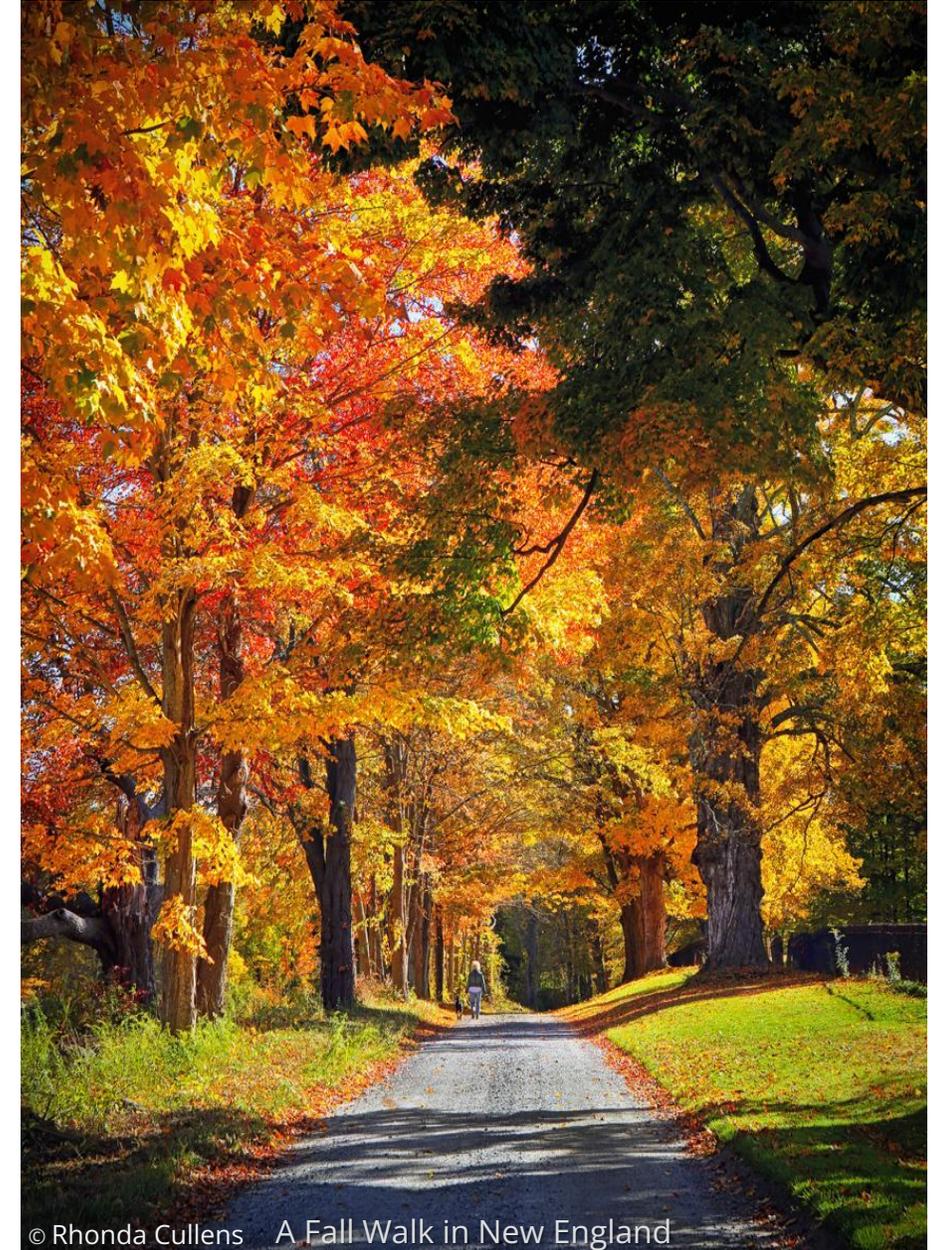
Take a **step back** to see what kind of stories you can create with your camera



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 elements and make them noticeable



© Rhonda Cullens A Fall Walk in New England

Subject – Keep it interesting and appropriate. Pretty doesn't mean it's right.
Title – Use to provide an emotional connection to the photo.

Storytelling

"One picture is worth a thousand words."

The photo's ability to evoke imagination



Take a **step back** from the stories you can create



One beautiful thing that the viewer might create



Look at the photo as if it's your **first time**, find the story elements and make them noticeable

Photographer Tip

Downplay your emotional attachment to the story to sense what the audience sees.



© Rhonda Cullens A Fall Walk in New England

Subject – Keep it interesting and appropriate. Pretty doesn't mean it's right.
Title – Use to provide an emotional connection to the photo.

How to Find the Storytelling

1 Ask yourself

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

If you find it hard, the storytelling can use improvement.

Yes, taking a stroll on a beautiful fall day.



2 Is the main subject clearly defined?

How is the subject helping to launch the story?

Yes, a fall scene, with a gravel road to walk along.



3 Is there interaction or activity helping the story?
Runner standing vs Runner passing vs Runner finishing

Not much, but she is walking and on the left side to remind us cars use the road.



© Rhonda Cullens A Fall Walk in New England

1 Storytelling Only – You Decide #1

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

If you find it hard, the storytelling can use improvement.

A little. More if you know the category is “Thrill of Victory or Agony of Defeat.” Expression is sad or “defeated”.

2

Is the main subject clearly defined?

How is the subject helping to launch the story?

Maybe. See the expression on her face. Bright, easy to find.

3

Is there interaction or activity helping the story?

Runner standing vs Runner passing vs Runner finishing

Nice that the horse is looking down and defeated as well.



I'm Disappointed, As Is My Horse

1 Storytelling Only – You Decide #2

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

Not really, simply a lighthouse on a good weather day.

If you find it hard, the storytelling can use improvement.



2 Is the main subject clearly defined?

Is the subject the living quarters, the lighthouse or the rocks?

How is the subject helping to launch the story?



3 Is there interaction or activity helping the story?

No people, no activity, no storm.

Runner standing vs Runner passing vs Runner finishing

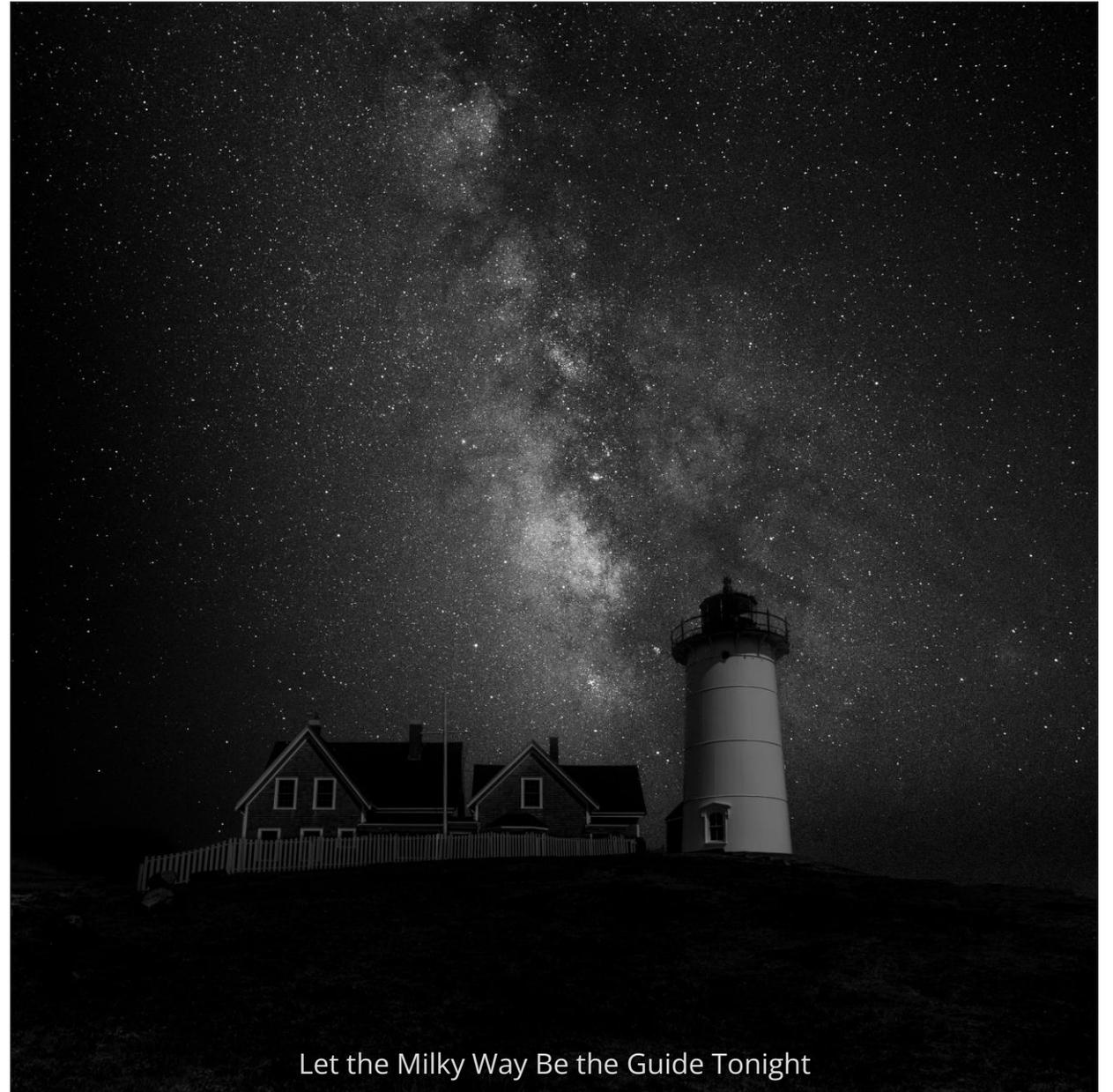


Living at the Lighthouse

As the Photographer, You Can Insert a Story



Living at the Lighthouse



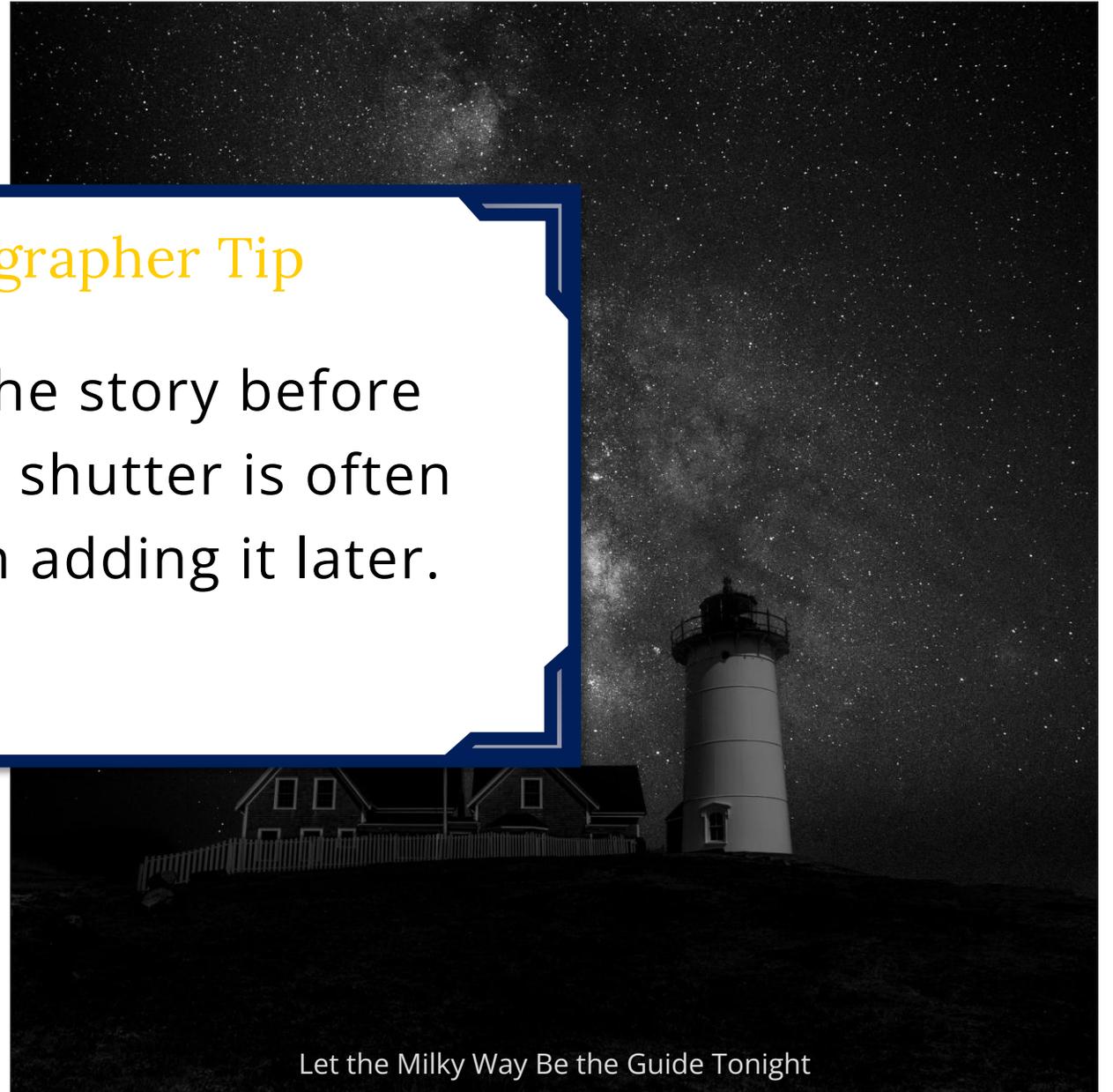
Let the Milky Way Be the Guide Tonight

As the Photographer, You Can Insert a Story



Photographer Tip

Creating the story before clicking the shutter is often easier than adding it later.



Living at the Lighthouse

Let the Milky Way Be the Guide Tonight

How to Inject Storytelling

Approach

Set the Stage

Is the context dramatic, serene, or familiar?

Magic in the Mundane

Great stories often hide in everyday moments.

The Stranger's Eye

Step back - don't let your emotion hide the reality.

Edit the Narrative

Like writing, a photo story needs revision.

Subject

Clarify the Hero

What is the story about?
Define it instantly.

Watch for Mergers

Keep secondary subjects distinct. Don't let them overlap.

Seek Interaction

Engagement between subjects builds the plot.

Tools

Capture Motion

Blur or freeze action to imply a timeline.

Layer the Scene

Use foreground and background to add depth.

Title with Purpose

Don't just label it; give the viewer a story hint.

Agenda



What Creates Impact



Storytelling



Creativity



Composition



Technical

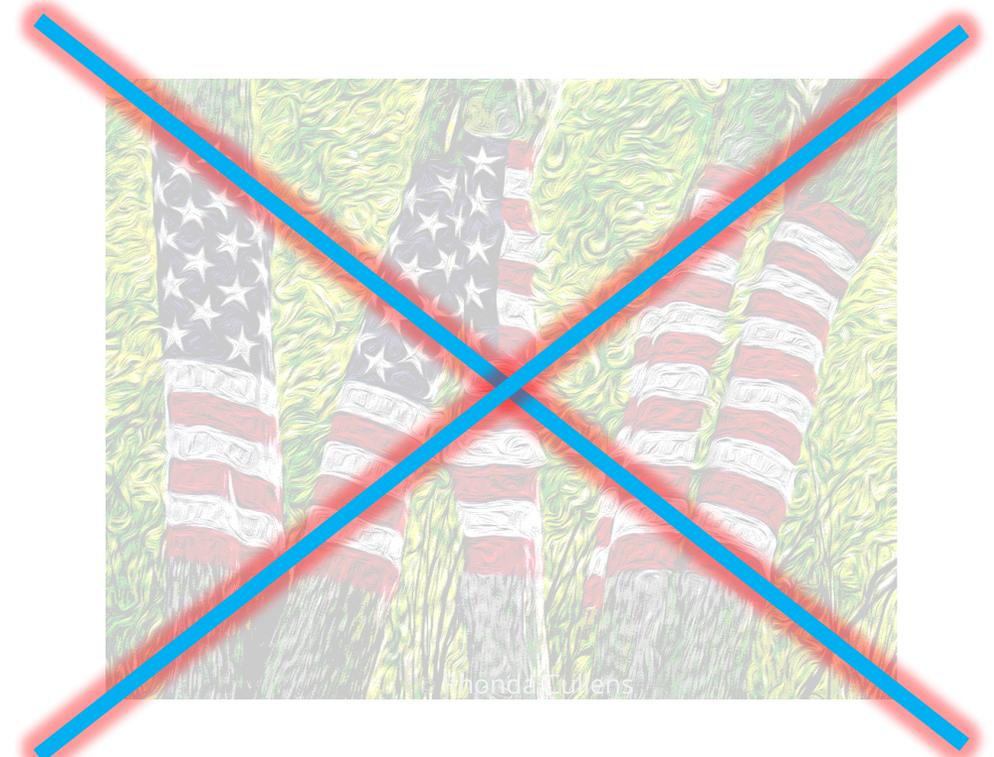


Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

The *Creativity Principle* is **different** than a Creative Category focused on *Altered Reality*



Creativity Principle

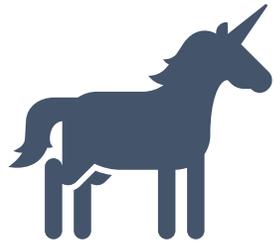


Not talking about Creative Altered Reality

Creativity

*"Creativity is a wild mind
and a disciplined eye."*

The fresh expression of a scene
conveying an idea or message



The ability to **perceive** more than just the physical reality before the camera, allowing you to create something unique and captivating.



Creativity emerges in your mind as a sense that something is distinctly **different** or unexpected. Often combining known things into a new reality.



It may involve using **unconventional** perspectives, experimenting with light and shadows, or creatively manipulating composition.



Chane Cullens - *Time for a Break*

How to Find the Creativity

1 Ask yourself

Why it is unique or interesting?

If you find it familiar or boring, creativity can use improvement

Exploding objects are rare.

2

What specifically is unique?

The perspective, the alignment of elements, the lighting style ...

The high shutter speed to freeze the motion dust.

3

Where is there creativity in secondary elements?

How do they show additional creativity?

The axe tells you how it happened. The pieces flying show impact strength. The dust makes it look real.



Creativity – You Decide #1

1

Why it is unique or interesting?

If you find it familiar or boring, creativity can use improvement

It is new to me.

2

What specifically is unique?

The perspective, the alignment of elements, the lighting style ...

Showing the path of the bouncing dice.

3

Where is there creativity in secondary elements?

How do they show additional creativity?

On the left, we see the dice falling. On the right, the dice are stationary which helps us understand more.



The Journey of Three Dice

Creativity – You Decide #2

1

Why it is unique or interesting?

If you find it familiar or boring, creativity can use improvement

Not unique, however interesting.



2

What specifically is unique?

The perspective, the alignment of elements, the lighting style ...

The “bite out of the cookie” shadow.
The lighting to see between the cookies.



3

Where is there creativity in secondary elements?

How do they show additional creativity?

Maybe the extra chocolate chips laying around?



Working to Stand up the Stool



First photo



Final Result

- New background
- New lighting
- Added milk
- I ate part of a cookie

Creativity Is Possible Even with Cookies



The Baker's Magic Hands

Creativity Is Possible Even with Cookies



Photographer Tip

Creativity is often just persistence disguised as talent.

Have Fun by Learning & Playing!



Checking drop zone



Flour



Brown Sugar



Chocolate Chips



Egg



Broken Egg



The Baker's Magic Hands

Find Creative Ideas from People & the Internet



Embrace Curiosity

- Ask questions
- Be observant
- Borrow ideas



Experiment and Play

- Try new things
- Embrace mistakes
- Play and have fun



Create the Right Conditions

- Make time
- Collaborate
- Connect

How to Inject Creativity

Vision

Challenge the Norm

Ask: "How can I capture this differently?"

Work the Scene

Don't settle for one angle.
Try three.

The Dullness Test

If it looks boring to you, it will bore them.

Details

Color & Light

Use shadows or unexpected hues to change the mood.

Depth of Focus

Isolate a tiny detail or reveal the whole world.

Patterns & Action

Find rhythm in static objects or freeze chaos.

Spirit

Play & Experiment

Treat it like a game. Invite a friend.

Embrace "Failure"

Mistakes are often just new discoveries.

Always Be Learning

Try a new technique every time you shoot.

Your Signature Style

Develop a consistent, recognizable voice.

If you fail, delete it. No one has to know. But if you succeed, you have magic.

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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Composition

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

Visual arrangement that reveals your intent.



Holds the viewer in the photo and prompts the viewer to **look** where the most important element is placed.



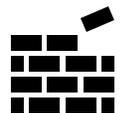
How items are **arranged**. The choices made on what to include or exclude.



There are a few dozen composition rules. However, you can **break** them to help succeed in your vision.



Tucked in for Comfort



Center of interest – The point or points where the viewer should stop as they view photo

How to Find the Composition

1 Ask yourself

Overall, does your mind understand the layout?

Is the scene pleasing to look at?

Yes, it feels good.

2

How did you find the center of interest?

Leading lines? Rule of Thirds? Focus? Lighting? Left to Right?

Most of the feathers are leading lines. The eye is on the rule of thirds intersection.

3

What distracts from the layout?

What has your eyes jumping somewhere they don't need to go?

The background is not distracting. I want to look at the feathers, but I always jump back to the eye.



Tucked in for Comfort

Composition – You Decide #1

1

Overall, does your mind understand the layout?

Is the scene pleasing to look at?

Mostly, I was expecting more water from a lighthouse seashore scene.

2

How did you find the center of interest?

Leading lines? Rule of Thirds? Focus? Lighting? Left to Right?

The white lighthouse stands out by brightness and rule of thirds.

3

What distracts from the layout?

What has your eyes jumping somewhere they don't need to go?

The bright sunset and bright rocks in the foreground distract from the lighthouse. Also, a tree is blocking part of the lighthouse.



Composition – You Decide #2

1

Overall, does your mind understand the layout?

Is the scene pleasing to look at?

Not really, I just see a bunch of items. I'm not sure where to look.

2

How did you find the center of interest?

Leading lines? Rule of Thirds? Focus? Lighting? Left to Right?

I'm still looking for it. Maybe the bright sun, or sea stacks or the beach?

3

What distracts from the layout?

What has your eyes jumping somewhere they don't need to go?

Middle half of the photo is empty. My eyes are bouncing between the bright top right and lower left corners. The horizon is not level. Is that a person?



What a View!

How to Inject Composition

Anchor

Center of Interest

Establish one clear point where the eye stops.

The Art of Exclusion

If it doesn't help the story, crop it out.

The Simple Glance

Avoid clutter. Don't make the viewer hunt.

Path

Leading Lines

Use roads, fences, or shadows that point the way.

Shape & Flow

Curves or diagonals are more dynamic than straight lines.

Left to Right

Leverage the natural scanning direction.

Magnets

Brightest Object

The eye naturally goes to the light first.

Sharpest Item

Blur the rest to force attention here.

Vignette

A subtle dark edge keeps the eye inside the frame.

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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Technical

"There is nothing worse than a sharp photo of a fuzzy concept."

The visual presentation of the photograph.



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



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.



Presentation – finished look, crop, border or mat to enhance the look

Lighting – defines dimension, shape and roundness, also light impacts the color & tone

Technique – camera settings & perspective, focus, angle, pose, expression, skin tones, lens, texture, digital noise

Color – color choice, saturation, harmony and tones to enhance the emotional appeal and structure

How to Find the Technical Excellence

1 Ask yourself

Do the colors, focus and lighting match the scene?

Yes, this close-up photo needs sharp focus to see details. Bright scene with bright saturated colors.



Sharp and Ready for Action

The lighting creates depth with the shadows. The red and green colors *complement* each other, and green and blue are *similar* colors. Everything is in sharp focus.

What technically makes the scene stand out?

2 What specific technical aspect do you like best?

Are the important subjects easy to see and evaluate?

3 What technical details distract?

Dust, overly bright or dark areas, focus, contrast, colors ...

Shiny lines on pencil leads. Sharpening, contrast and saturation are on the edge of getting harsh.

Technical – You Decide #1

1

Do the colors, focus and lighting match the scene?

The tiger's orange color works well with the fall-colored background, where it needs focus, it has focus, lighting feels natural.

What technically makes the scene stand out?



2

What specific technical aspect do you like best?

Good focus and texture, even texture in the white areas on the face, crisp whiskers, eyes level, looking at camera.

Are the important subjects easy to see and evaluate?

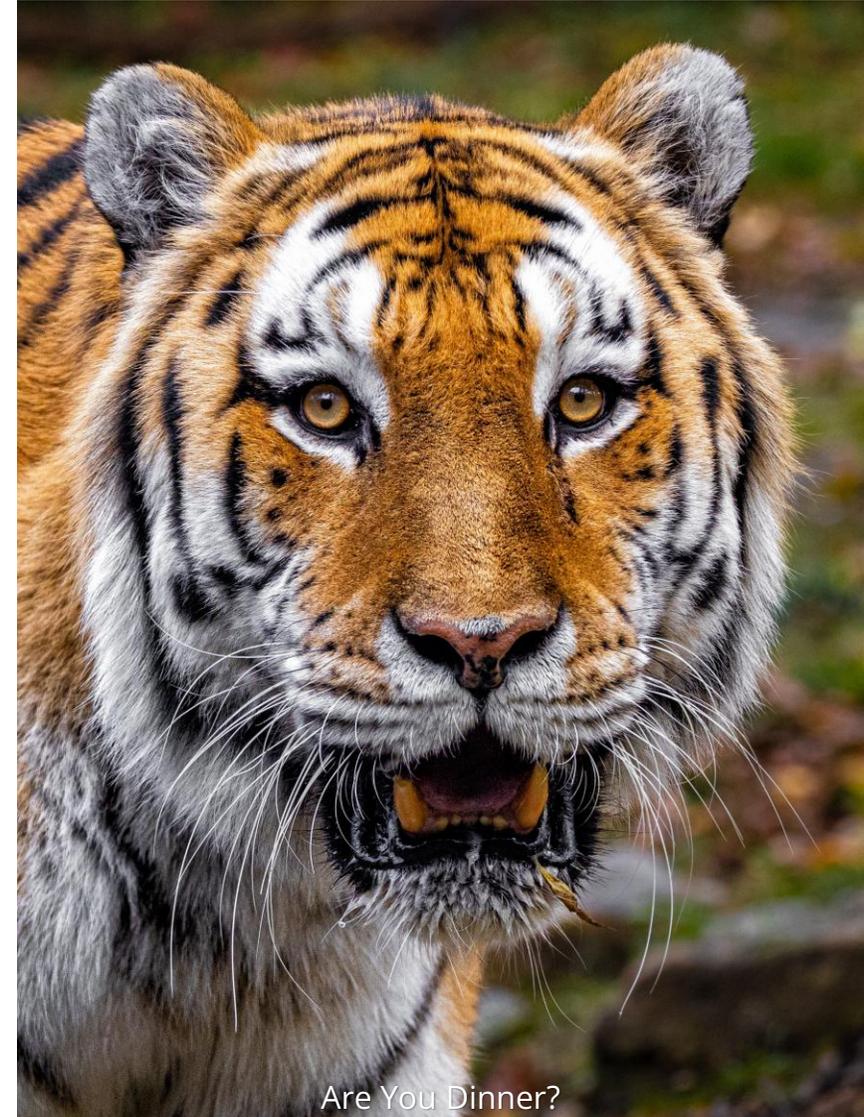


3

What technical details distract?

Bottom of face and under face could use more light. The lower right needs to be duller.

Dust, overly bright or dark areas, focus, contrast, colors ...



Are You Dinner?

Technical – You Decide #2

1

Do the colors, focus and lighting match the scene?

Colors are dull, focus is a little soft everywhere, sky overexposed.

What technically makes the scene stand out?



2

What specific technical aspect do you like best?

Nothing. It is a challenging situation with bright sky and the shade in the valley.

Are the important subjects easy to see and evaluate?



3

What technical details distract?

Sky is too bright and the sky reflections in the water might be too bright. Not sharp. No contrast. Dull colors.

Dust, overly bright or dark areas, focus, contrast, colors ...



Smith Rock State Park

How to Inject Technical Excellence

Light & Color

Direction & Quality

Is the light hard (for drama) or soft (for beauty)?

Exposure Check

Does the brightness match the mood?

Intentional Color

Boost intensity for pop, or go monochrome for structure.

Camera

Position & Angle

Get high, get low. Change your perspective.

The Exposure Triangle

ISO, Aperture, Shutter - are they balanced?

Critical Focus

Decide exactly what must be sharp.

Polish

Clean the Details

Remove dust spots and sensor dirt.

Border & Crop

Give the image room to breathe.

Final Review

Does the technique support the story?

How to Inject Technical Excellence

Light & Color

Direction & Quality

Is the light hard (for drama) or soft (for beauty)?

Exposure Check

Does the brightness match the mood?

Intentional Color

Boost intensity for pop, or go monochrome for structure.

Camera

Photographer Tip

Technique is the choice you made.

Technical Excellence is how successfully you delivered it.

Decide exactly what must be sharp.

Polish

Clean the Details

Remove dust spots and sensor dirt.

Border & Crop

Leave the image room to breathe.

Final Review

Does the technique support the story?

How to Inject Technical Excellence

Light & Color

Direction & Quality

Is the light hard (for drama) or soft (for beauty)?

Exposure Check

Does the brightness match the mood?

Intentional Color

Boost intensity for pop, or go monochrome for structure.

Camera

Photographer Tip

Even a great **story** and **composition** will falter if its **technically** poor.

Decide exactly what must be sharp.

Polish

Clean the Details

Remove dust spots and sensor dirt.

Border & Crop

Leave the image room to breathe.

Final Review

Does the technique support the story?

Agenda



What Creates Impact



Storytelling



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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Evaluate the Photo Leg by Leg

Asking, does this photo stand up or fall over?

Think of
IMPACT
as a stool supported by four legs



Photo Structural Integrity

- 4 legs Solid: Hard to knock over
- 3 legs Stable: Still very strong
- 2 legs Weak: Hard to stand up
- 1 leg Critical: Easily falls over
- 0 legs It's a snapshot

Storytelling

Evokes emotion

Creativity

Offers a fresh view

Composition

Guides the eye

Technical

Skillfully crafted

Judge the Photo, Not the Effort!



It is a slippery slope to include effort when evaluating a photo because assumptions must be made.

There is no way to know the actual effort

- Effort is highly dependent on person, technique & luck.
- Maybe it's a composite.
- Maybe it's a controlled environment (photo ops, zoo).

Effort also happens outside of photo capture

- Hiking all night uphill to capture the sunrise?
- Using Photoshop for 20 hours?
- Planning and learning for three weeks?



Was this a lot of effort? What is effort.

- Two weeks of wondering what is a great 'bricks' photo?
- Reading the camera manual to learn what is possible?
- Waiting for afternoon shade?

How did I capture this?

- Using video mode on my camera.
- One take, one brick destroyed, one video frame used.
- Effort was a lot less than you think!

The best choice is always evaluate on the photographic principles that you see.

Creating Photos with Impact



Questions?



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