

Hands On— Photography

PART 4b



by Sue Sykes

COMPOSITION

“Beauty can be seen in all things; seeing and composing the beauty is what separates the snapshot from the photograph.”
- Matt Hardy

As mentioned before, good composition can turn satisfactory images into extraordinary ones. In this issue, we'll address more guidelines to achieving good photography composition.

Symmetry and Patterns:

By using symmetry to enhance your subject, you can achieve some incredible results in your images. Symmetry in a photo is when both sides of an image, either vertically or horizontally, are of equal weight. Note that they don't have to contain a mirror image, such as a reflection of a sunrise in a lake; they merely have to be similar in composition. However, unless the subject is awe-inspiring or majestic, complete symmetry may look boring or static. Often, the composition of an image that shows a break in symmetry is also highly effective. Consider Figure 1 – the rigid symmetry is broken by the open window, providing a resting point for the eyes.

Patterns can be found everywhere; we just need to train ourselves to look for them. Repetition can be used effectively in photography in two ways. One method is to emphasize the pattern by capturing it in your scene. However, it can be just as effective



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Figure 1: Photo by Gary Sykes. Taken with Nikon D70 and 18-70mm lens at f/5.6, 1/125 sec., ISO 400

when the pattern is broken. In Figure 2, the rows of eggs form a pattern, with the missing egg placed at a point of interest. (See our Fall 2010 issue on “rule of thirds” for more information on points of interest.) This offers relief from the pattern and leads the viewer's eye through the image.

Leading Lines:

Making use of lines in photography is another technique that is used by many professional photographers. There are various types of lines that can be used effectively: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, or converging. Regardless of the type, the purpose of



Figure 2: Photo by Sue Sykes. Taken with Nikon D80 and 50mm lens at f/1.8, 1/50 sec., ISO 200



Figure 3: Photo by Sue Sykes. Taken with Nikon D80 and 18-135mm lens at f/13, 1/640 sec., ISO 400



Let's Get Technical

these lines—sometimes referred to as leading lines—is to draw the viewer's eye through your image, toward the point of interest (Figure 3).

Cropping:

Another technique for producing effective photos is to use cropping to eliminate distracting elements from behind your subject. This important principle will not only affect the image composition, but the effect on the viewer as well.

There are two ways of cropping: during shooting or in post-production. Ideally, it's preferable to crop your photos while composing your shot, by zooming in. It not only saves time in post-production, but it allows you to capture the desired image in the highest resolution possible. Notice the difference in Figures 4 and 5. By zooming in on Connor, I eliminated the distracting background of the other players and made him the focus of attention.

Of course, the best way to perfect these techniques is to play! Book some "me" time, grab your camera, and explore your city, your neighbourhood, or even your backyard! And then join me each month on the Hands On! Photography blog at www.canadianscrapbooker.ca/handson for monthly tutorials, photo assignments, and a chance to win some great prizes! Happy clicking!

Figure 4 (left): Photo by Sue Sykes. Taken with Nikon D60 and 18-55mm lens at f/7.1, 1/200 sec., ISO 100

Figure 5 (right): Photo by Sue Sykes. Taken with Nikon D60 and 18-55mm lens at f/6.3, 1/160 sec., ISO 100 