# Photographic Design Principles

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**Photographic design is the process and practice of choosing techniques and visual elements, as well as the arrangement of components within a photo in order to increase the impact of an image.**

## Composition

- The overall arrangement of visual elements chosen to be included in an image
- A strong understanding of photographic design principles is key to creating images with visually impactful compositions

## Cropping

- In camera while shooting or afterwards during Post Production

## Location of Focal Point

- Centered
  - Tends to be static
  - Formalizes the image
  - Can prevent viewer from visually exploring the image
  - Can sometimes make subject look powerful
- Uncentered
  - Less static, invites viewer to visually explore other areas of the image
  - can create tension and visual relationships throughout the image
- Methods of locating/arranging focal points and visual elements
  - Rule of Thirds
    - Image is divided into thirds (horizontal and vertical, 9 total)
    - Focal point/areas of interest located near intersection of these areas (imagine lines on the image dividing it into horizontal and vertical thirds)
    - This is the easiest principle to visualize
  - Golden Ratio (Fibonacci's Ratio)
    - Similar to rule of thirds, but created using the ratio of 1.618 to 1. So each rectangle in the middle is 61.8% smaller than the larger ones around it.
    - It describes proportions that people usually find especially pleasing.
  - Golden Spiral
    - Based upon the Golden Ratio
    - For every quarter turn the spiral makes, the line gets one golden ratio further away from its center point.
  - *Special Note: Don't stress about the technicalities of Rule of Thirds & Golden Ratio. Be aware of them, but ultimately simply do what seems to work best* ☺

## Lighting

- o Midday directional
- o Low angle directional
- o Window light
- o Reflected light
- o Soft flat light
- o Backlighting

## Shapes

- o Repeating shapes can unify the image and provide "landing spots" for the viewer
- o Can create contrast in the image
- o Shapes with angled lines can create tension and motion within an image
- o Edge of shapes (curved, straight, soft) can evoke emotion and movement
- o Negative spaces can also become shapes within an image

## Angle of View

- o Use of high or low camera angle can dramatically increase visual appeal of photo

## Depth of Field

- o Shallow DOF can emphasize certain areas of an image as well as reduce surrounding clutter
- o Shallow DOF can separate people from a crowd
- o Extensive DOF can relate parts of an image with the surrounding environment

## Visual Lines

- o Can lead the viewer through the image
- o Can enable motion, tension as well as mood

## Visual Emphasis

- o Can establish focal points
- o Can lead viewer through image
- o Can reinforce concept of an image

## Contrast

- o Visual
- o Color
- o Conceptual

## Symbolism

- o Purposely including symbolic elements can help convey the concept of an image
- o Ex: Dove for peace, chain link for abandonment, storm clouds for ominous mood
- o Particularly useful for editorial photograph