



Perspective In Photography

Size cues, weather, and overlapping subjects

Photo above: Cedar Creek
Grist Mill

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If one were to view any images throughout the photography community today, such as online resources, magazines, or art shows, one common element will be noticed among all of the images; the photographers responsible for the images have a very unique perspective that defines their style of photography.

So how does one individual, trying to improve his picture taking, develop a unique perspective? The answer lies within the individual and how one defines perspective within their own photography skills. Perspective in photography is defined as: *a style of shooting that is an extension of one's thoughts, feelings and emotions in terms of the subject being shot.* There are many perspectives in photography, and the majority of photographers shoot the same kinds. The result is repeated attempts at shooting the same subjects with familiar results. Therefore, it is necessary to look within oneself to find the creative side that brings out the best in each lensman. Photographers that stand out, first, look at what other cameramen are shooting and then find new ways to shoot familiar subjects; they achieve this in ways that image-makers before have not shown. These photographers

develop a sense of style to portray a vision that captures the viewers' attention. It is necessary to think of how others should see what is envisioned when one thinks about the subject. Hence, it is imperative to build personal beliefs on how to vitalize fresh perspectives to subjects that give a higher purpose to the topic. What this means is discarding any preconceived notions of the subject in past examples, and beginning your own study of what the matter means personally to you. Overall, it is important to develop a unique perspective in photography that defines who you are and how you want others to see what you are seeing.

The process begins with a pre-visualization of the subject and how it relates within the realm of its environment. Once this is achieved, the next step is to commence the process of finding a perspective that defines you. There are different ways to express the relation of the subject but the important thing is that it is meaningful to you. Some of the following concepts carry meaning to any style of photography but the following examples showcase specifically how to create new perspectives in landscape photography.

For a landscape photographer the most important

ingredient for success is the inclusion of implied depth in any image. The appearance of depth visually stimulates the viewer and injects the viewer into the image. The advantage to this is, that it allows the viewer to let the eyes wander within the image and the causality of this action keeps the viewer returning to the main subject. This is vital in simulating depth as cameras can only capture images that are two-dimensional. So, if photographers relied on the camera to do the work and never injected their own personal perspective, then images would end up very static and lack any substance. Therefore, creativity is necessary for the photographer in finding ways to include three-dimensional qualities in the image. This can be illustrated by the following methods that enhance the interest of the subject. Some of the following concepts have really been an important process of learning new ways to create perspectives within one's photography.

Firstly, to express perspective effectively there is a need to arrange the subjects in terms of spatial qualities. To do this, one needs to emphasize cues in the landscape that signify depth. As mentioned previously, a landscape photographer needs to be concerned about depth as much as the subject. One of the ways to achieve this is including size cues within the image. Size cues are used to give the viewer a sense of depth by placing objects within the image at certain positions that enhance depth. Subjects that are closer appear larger than those farther away, thus an exaggerated depth of field. Therefore, precise framing of the camera should show size cues arranged at intervals from largest



Trail to the peaks



Coming out of the sky

to smallest on a diagonal plane. The viewer is aware that the objects are the same size if on the same plane but positioned carefully, the size cues demonstrate a quality of depth within the image. So incorporate familiar objects in the image that people are aware of when it comes to relative sizes. Some examples of these well-known size cues are cumulus clouds, sand ripples, and ocean waves, which all appear smaller as they near the horizon. Other objects that are effective for this type are rivers, streams, fallen logs, wildflowers, trees, and even wildlife. By effectively using spatial cues in the images to portray depth one can create a sense of style that gives photography a different look.

Another concept that is important in the strength of perspectives is angles of view. When thinking about how to capture the subject, which lens will affect perception of the subject? Wide-angle lenses increase the perceived distance between elements and give the feeling of deep

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Forgotten

Photos © Kevin McNeal



Keith McNeal

space. Telephoto lenses do the opposite and compress the distance between elements in a scene. How one chooses to shoot the subject drastically changes how the viewer is going to see the subject. For example when shooting a forest scene in fall; one can choose to show the forest and all its vastness with a wide-angle lens; or the complete opposite perspective and shoot a tightly framed shot of the important elements of the scene without giving any clues as to what or where the subject is. Each perspective is important in its own right but goes to show that either can visually stimulate the viewer.

Another element that enhances perspective and increases depth in photography is weather conditions. For a landscape photographer, weather often produces situations such as hazy conditions that create mood and add mystery to the subject. This presents a situation where objects closer to the camera appear sharper and more detailed than those farther away. This is due to the atmospheric particles suspended in the air. For a photographer these elements can be seen in conditions like fog, mist, rain, snow, dust, and haze. Haze works magic on the



Sunset on Ruby Beach

images when trying to create unique perspectives. Evaluating the conditions and adjusting your position to the movement of the haze is critical to capturing what the mood felt like at the time. For example, fog along the horizon on the ocean when shooting a coastal image can be a great time to look for higher ground, such as a cliff or hill to get a new perspective from above the fog. Another situation to look for, is when fog occurs in lower elevations such as places like valleys; try to get above it by getting higher than the fog and creating something surreal. Often snow or dust drifts can add drama to a picture and create intended movement in the image that draws the viewer into the photograph. Another unique occurrence can be found in rural areas where early morning mist clings low to the repeating patterns of rolling hills and valleys. The detail in the foreground brings attention to the image and the mist gives the illusion of depth in the distant endless rolling hills. These are just some of the elements to look for when adapting new perspectives to enhance your photography.

A very important overlooked concept in achieving groundbreaking perspectives is overlapping subjects within the photo. Precise placement of subjects overlapping can enhance the image especially with landscape features. Subjects such as rocks and trees can be used effectively if placed compositionally in an overlapping perspective line; it is important though to have enough space between each other as subjects too close to each other look muddled and lose the viewers attention. Therefore, only overlap simple areas or areas of strong contrast. A good example of this concept is intersecting landscape planes like sand dunes or rolling hills in rural areas or



Sticking out

mountainous terrains. Try to match the most interesting lines and have them go in different directions. Follow the guidelines of carefully placing the composition so that everything has a purpose. When it comes time to show the pictures the message to the viewer will be much clearer.

Lastly, the most essential way to create perspective and depth in an image is sidelight volume. Landscapes illuminated from sidelight, highlight the subject's surfaces and shapes and

add interest in the subject as the viewer can now compare size cues and other spatial relationships. It is necessary to try to emphasize the surfaces when framing the image by setting the shadow portion against the highlighted set. The best time of day to achieve this perspective is early in the day or near sunset to maximize shadow and highlight coverage of the subject.

In conclusion, while it is important to note that all of these concepts contribute to winning photos, each has its importance to the goal one is trying to convey in the end. Not every concept will work in every situation, but evaluate what will work in terms of what defines your style of photography and gets your message across best to the viewers.

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Touching ground



Shi Shi Beach sunburst