

# WHAT CONTEST JUDGES LOOK FOR

*Suggestions For Better Outcomes  
in Club Competitions*

# WHY SHOULD YOU LISTEN TO ME?

- ❖ I've given this a lot of thought based on having:
  - ❖ *been judged for more than 40 years*
  - ❖ *judged for many different clubs*
  - ❖ *completed the PSA Image Analysis course*
  - ❖ *observed contest judges at work*



# TWO QUESTIONS?

1. WHO DO YOU TAKE PICTURES FOR?
2. WHY DO YOU TAKE PICTURES?



# WHY DO YOU TAKE PICTURES?

1. To document an occasion or event.
2. Record a special subject/object.
3. To save a memory or moment.
4. It's a reason to travel or explore.
5. To market something/get paid.
6. To connect with others/the world.
7. To tell stories/communicate.
8. Creative expression.
9. Enter contests/gain recognition.

# WHY COMPETE?

❖ Why I compete:

1. *It's fun!*
2. *I like the challenge*
3. *I need the push to go out and shoot*
4. *Provides a way for others to see my work*
5. *It's a good way to learn*



# WHY SHOULD YOU COMPETE?



# **SPEAKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT CONTESTS**

**WHAT QUESTION  
WOULD YOU MOST  
LIKE AN ANSWER TO?**

# **HOW DO I WIN A PHOTO CONTEST?**

**1. IDENTIFY A CONTEST AND UNDERSTAND WHAT IS EXPECTED.**

**2. MAKE A TECHNICALLY PERFECT PHOTOGRAPH OF AN INTERESTING SUBJECT IN GREAT LIGHT THAT MEETS THE CONTEST CRITERIA.**

**3. ENTER THE CONTEST.**

FAILURE



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# THE REAL REWARD



# CRITICISM vs CLUB JUDGING

## ■ CRITICISM

- *Criticism is all about asking questions, “Critical Thinking”.*
  - What do I see? What is it about? What do I think?
- *It follows then, that “criticism” is a way to better understand and appreciate photographs.*
- *Criticism “**slows down**” viewing time (like using a tripod slows photographing).*
- *While the results of the exercise may be negative (you don’t like the picture), it ultimately leads to informed and rational reactions to images.*

# CRITICISM vs CLUB JUDGING

## ■ JUDGING

- It's a **BIG JOB**.
- *There are often time constraints.*
- *The pool of judges is extremely heterogeneous.*
- *A given judge may not understand the specific context.*
- *A given judge may not be qualified for the specific task.*
- *Judges are required to **RANK ORDER** entries!*
- *A judge is merely providing an opinion.*

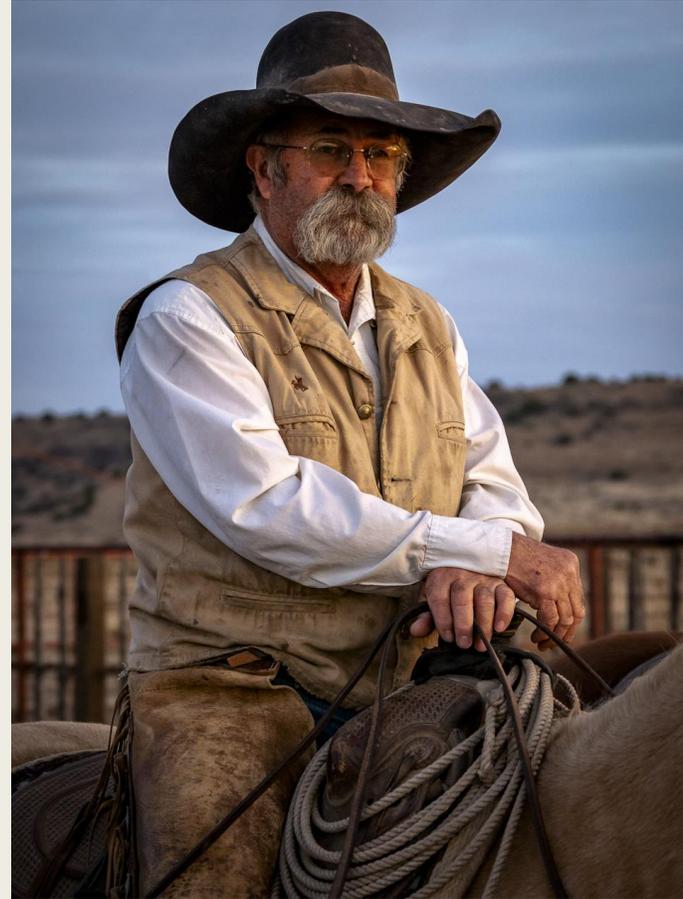
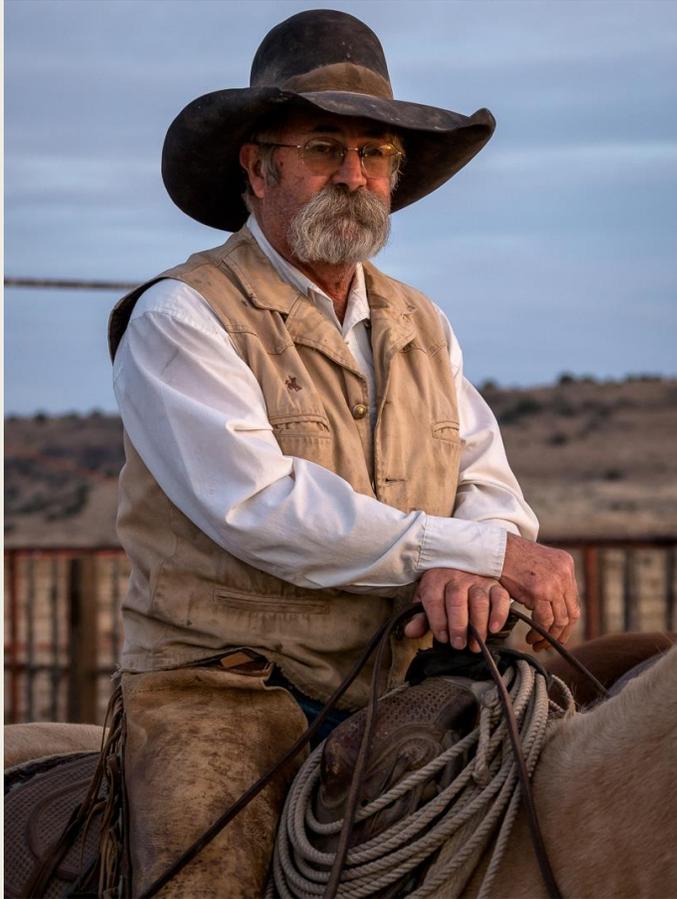
# THE FIRST SUGGESTION

- DO NOT GIVE A JUDGE SOMETHING TO DISLIKE!!!
  - *Know and follow ALL contest rules.*
    - Nature and Photojournalism are very strict! (see <http://www.gulfstatesccc.org/new-page-1>)
  - *Make a REAL effort to capture contest specific images.*
  - *Eliminate OBVIOUS flaws in your submissions.*
    - Noise, Dust Spots, Horizon, Background Distractions, Edges, Focus, Sharpness, Print Quality, Mats & Matting
  - *Ask someone knowledgeable for ADVICE before you submit an image.*
    - Both clubs have mechanisms for this.
  - *Keep your entries as SIMPLE as possible.*

# AN EXAMPLE



# ANOTHER EXAMPLE



# AN EXAMPLE



# ANOTHER

“Nice composition. I would have preferred eye contact.” (Judge’s comment)



# VERY RECENTLY



"I would like to see more background for a better environmental portrait. A very crisp image." Judge's comment.

# SUGGESTION NUMBER TWO

- THE MOST ORIGINAL AND IMPACTFUL IMAGES DO THE BEST.
  - *If you can't do it better, do it DIFFERENTLY.*
  - *Make it EASY on the judge.*
  - *Use the TOOLS available to you.*
  - *LEARN from your mistakes.*



# A PRETTY PICTURE IS NOT ENOUGH



# CREATING IMAGES WITH **IMPACT**

- What is **IMPACT**?
  - It is **SUBJECTIVE!**
  - *Emotion, Mood, Contrast, Color, Subject, Action, Humor, Exotic, Scale, Connection*
  - *Tells a Story*
- Why does it matter?
  - *Time*
  - *Numbers*



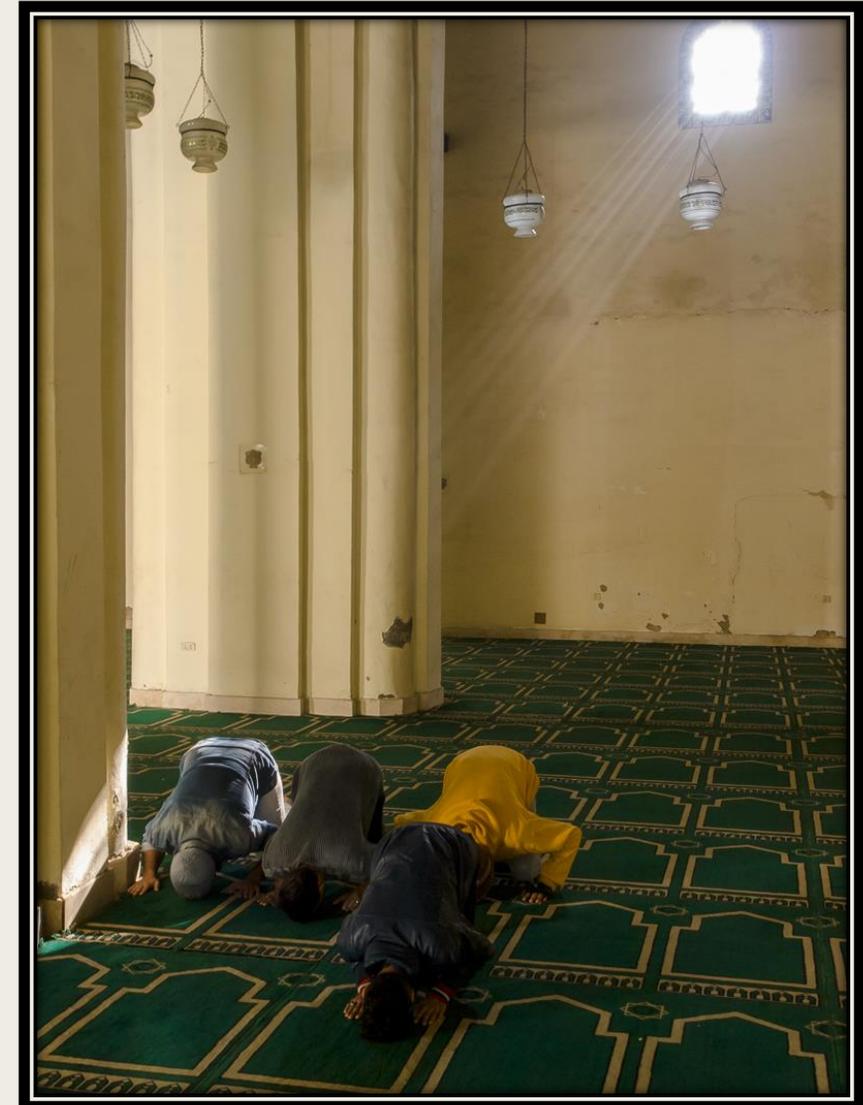
# **IMPACT**

## **EMOTION**



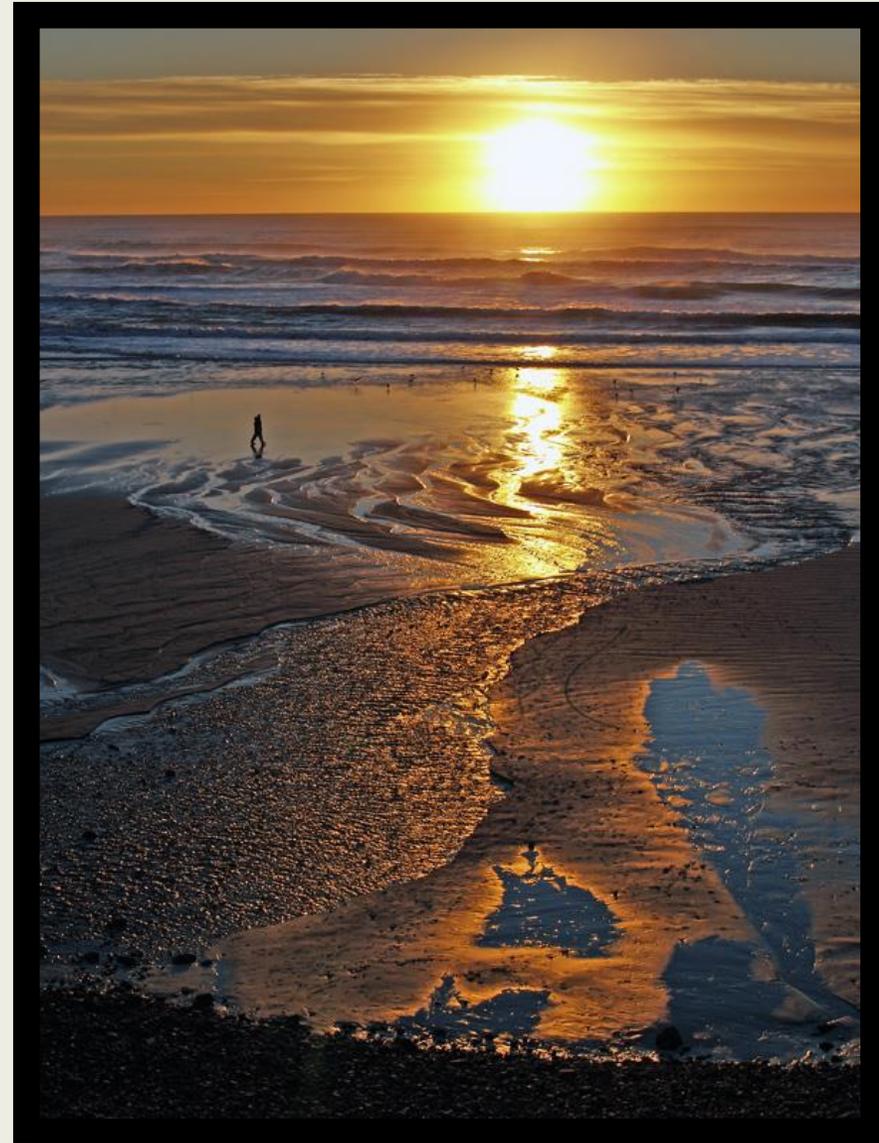
# IMPACT

## MOOD



# IMPACT

## CONTRAST



***IMPACT***

**COLOR**





# IMPACT

## SUBJECT



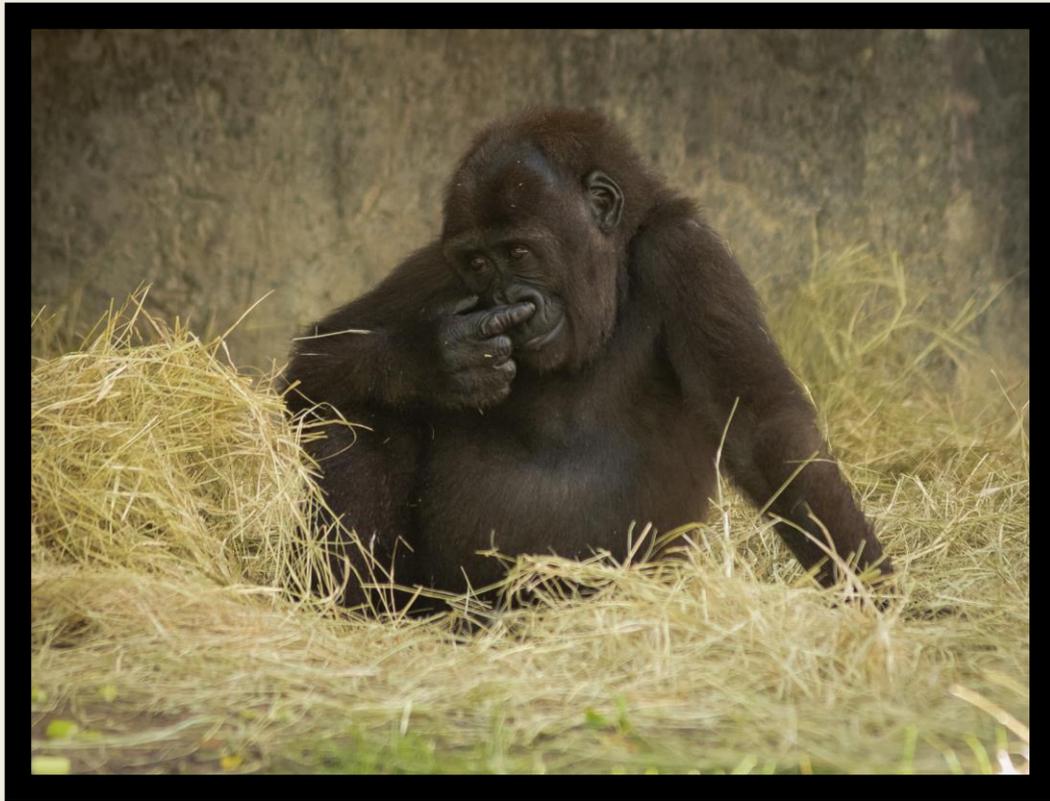


# IMPACT ACTION



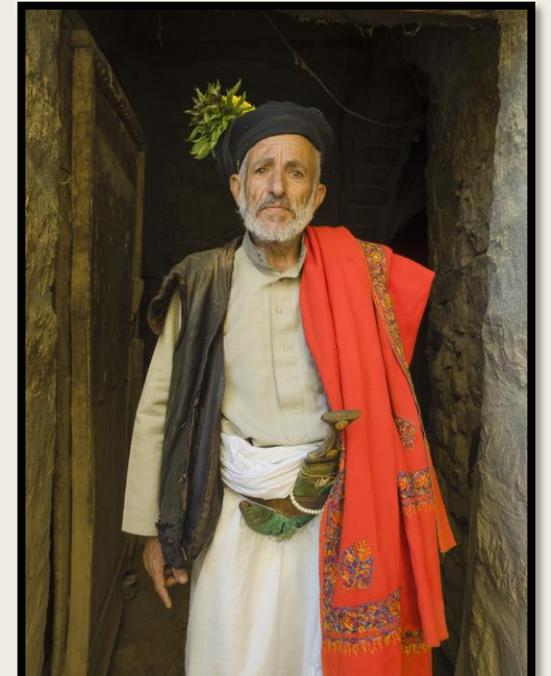
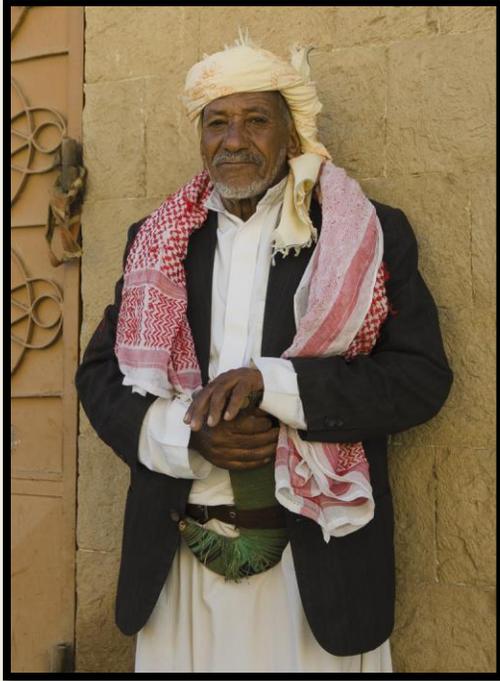
# IMPACT

## HUMOR



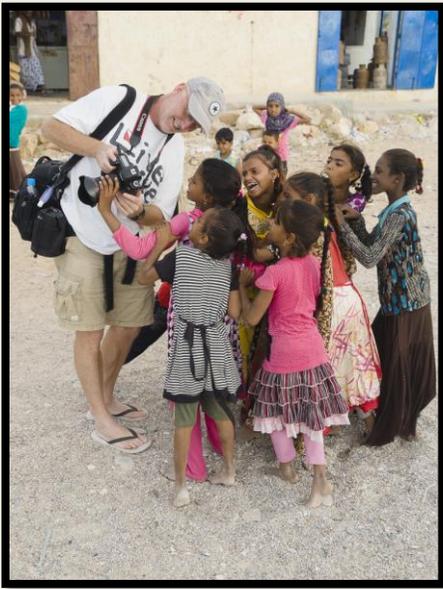
# IMPACT

## EXOTIC



# IMPACT SCALE





# IMPACT CONNECTION



# SUGGESTION NUMBER THREE

- IN ADDITION TO IMPACT, WINNING IMAGES HAVE:
- Technical Perfection (or as close as you can get).
- A composition that supports the photographer's intention.
  - *Composition is merely the arrangement of elements within the frame.*

# HOW JUDGES JUDGE

- Salon Style Judging
  - *Public*
  - *Generally Anonymous*
  - *Fast*
  - *No Feedback*

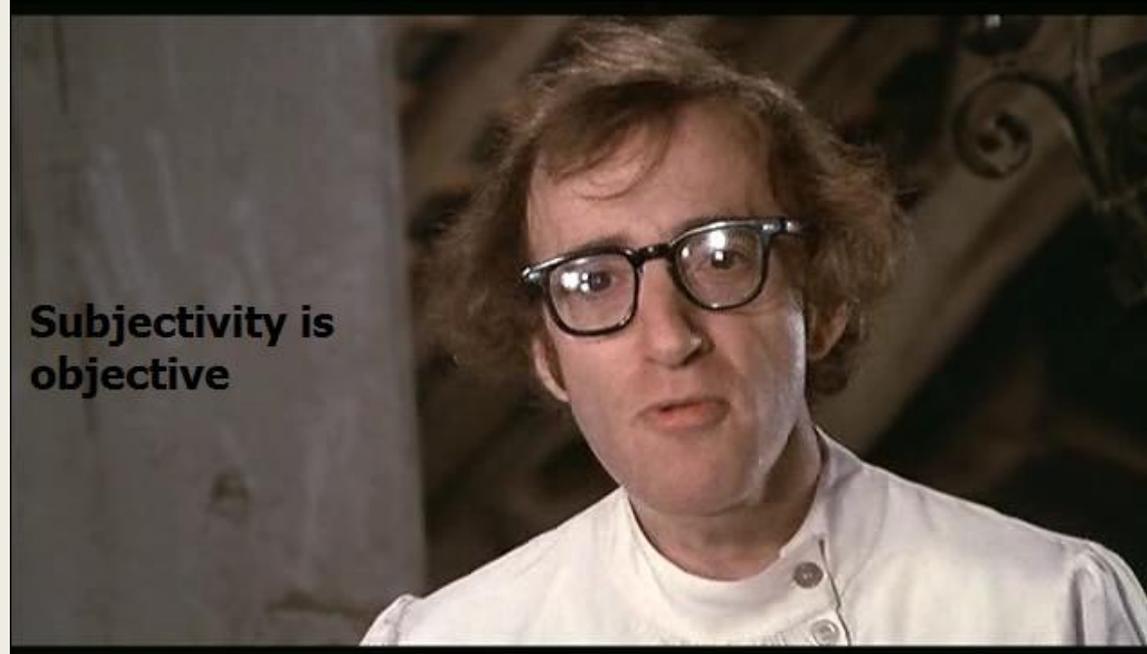


# HOW JUDGES JUDGE

- Club Contests
  - *Solo Judge*
  - *Public and Non-Public*
    - Public Judging is Structured and Generally Done Quickly
    - Private Judging May Allow for a More Studied Evaluation
  - *Projected, Prints, or Both*
  - *May Provide Feedback as Well as Placement of Entries*

# HOW JUDGES JUDGE

**SUBJECTIVELY!!!**



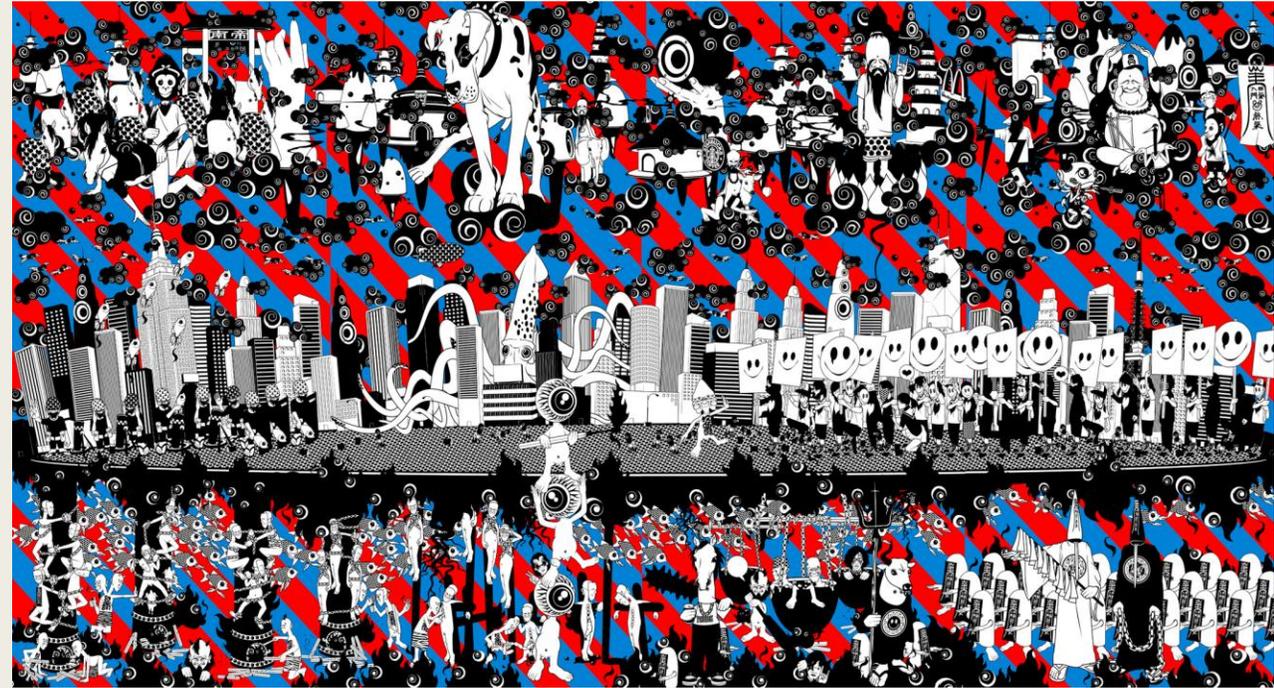
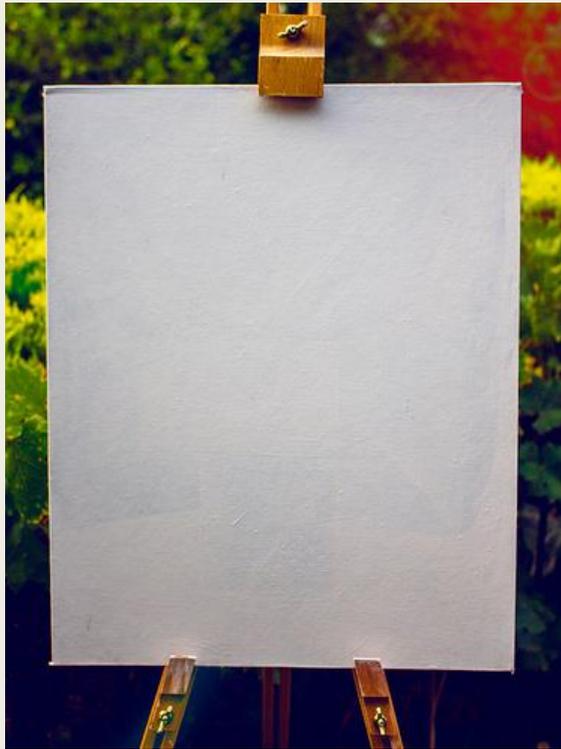


# SUGGESTION NUMBER FOUR

LEARN TO LET  
-GO. THAT IS-  
THE KEY TO  
HAPPINESS.

[WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM](http://WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM)

# PAINTING vs PHOTOGRAPHY



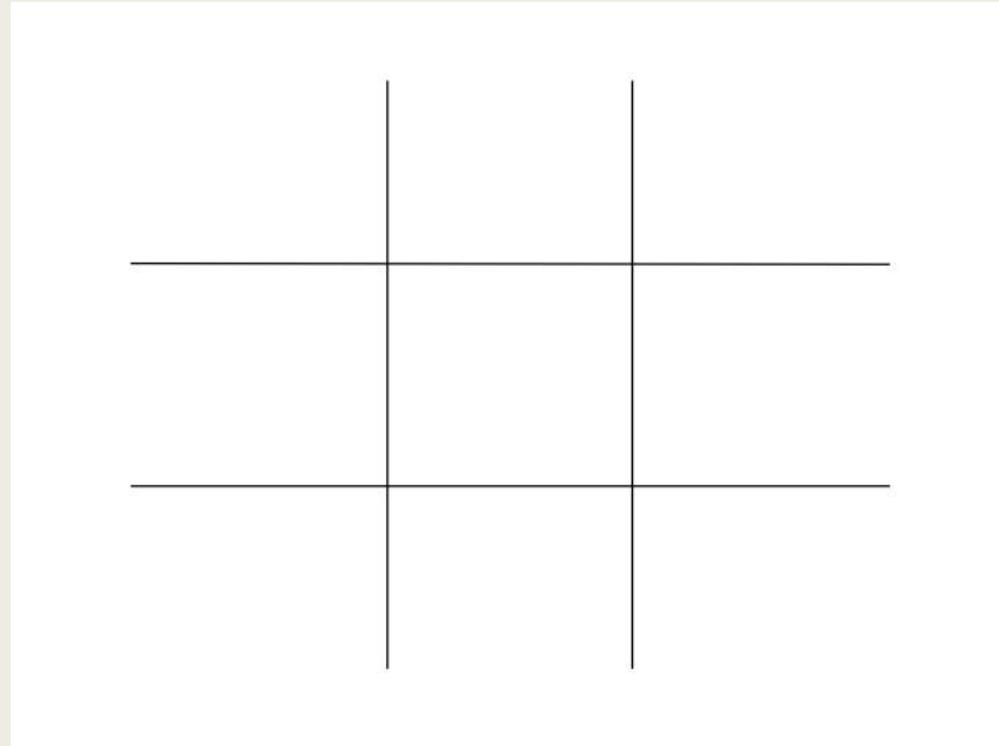
# TOOLS NOT RULES!

## (USE COMPOSITION TO YOUR ADVANTAGE)

- What are the so-called COMPOSITIONAL RULES of Photography?
  - *The Rule (**Tool**) of Thirds*
  - *Leading Lines*
  - *Fill the Frame*
  - *Read Left to Right*
  - *Use Odd Numbers of Things*
  - *Leave Space for Subject*
  - *Create Depth*
  - *Triangles and Diagonals*
  - *Frames*
  - *Differential Focus and Depth of Focus*

# EXAMPLES

## THE TOOL OF THIRDS



# EXAMPLES

## THE TOOL OF THIRDS



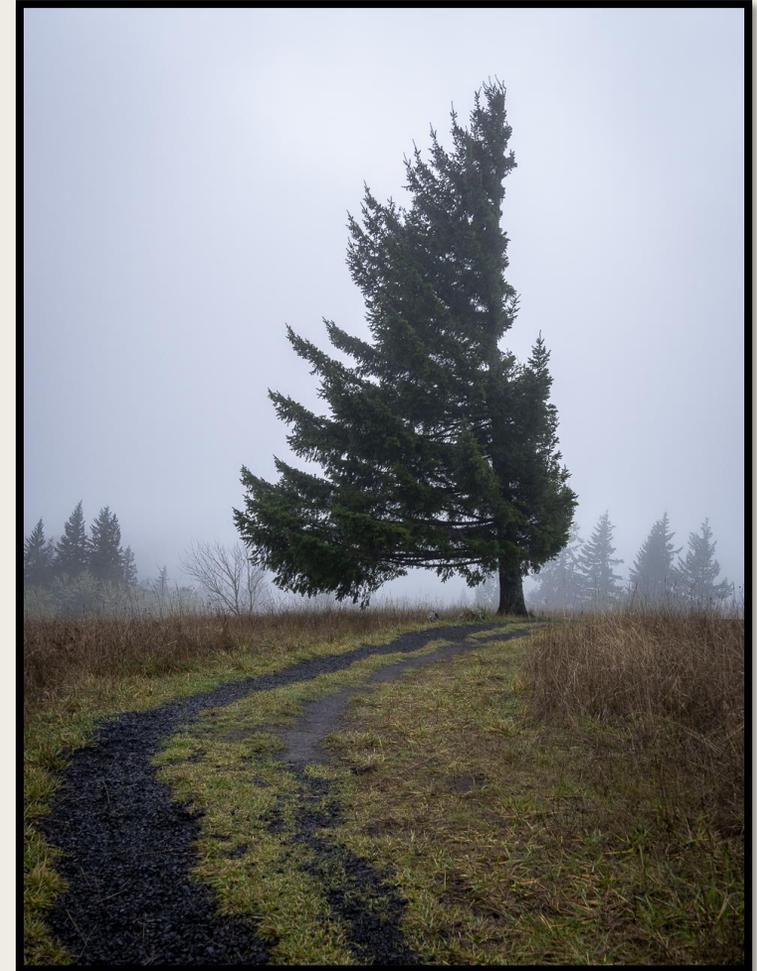
Background

Mid

Foreground

# EXAMPLES

## LEADING LINES



# EXAMPLES

## FILL THE FRAME



# EXAMPLES

READ RIGHT TO LEFT



# EXAMPLES

USE ODD NUMBERS OF THINGS



# EXAMPLES

LEAVE A SPACE FOR SUBJECT



# EXAMPLES

## CREATE DEPTH



# EXAMPLES

## TRIANGLES AND DIAGONALS



# EXAMPLES

## FRAMES



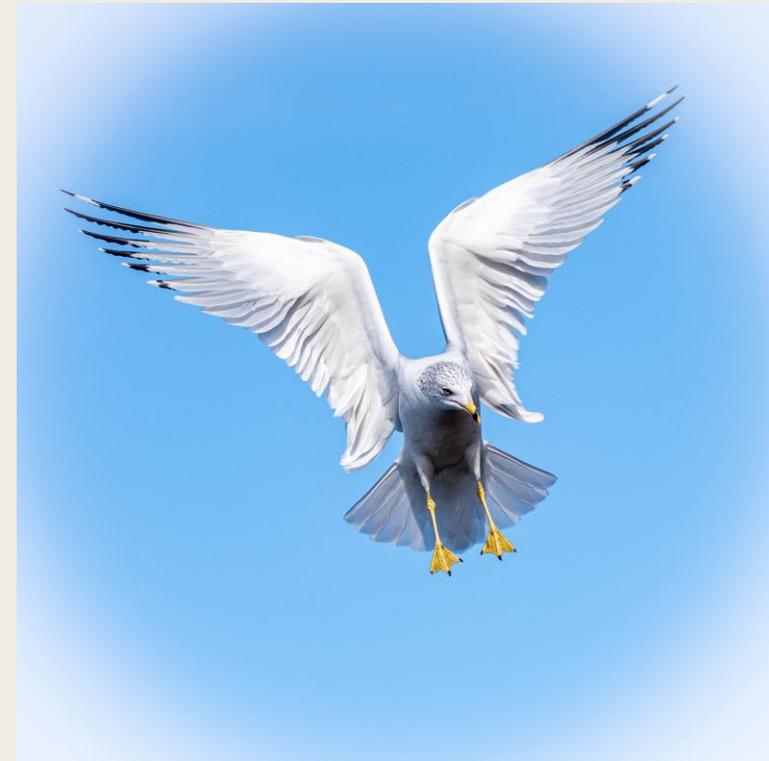
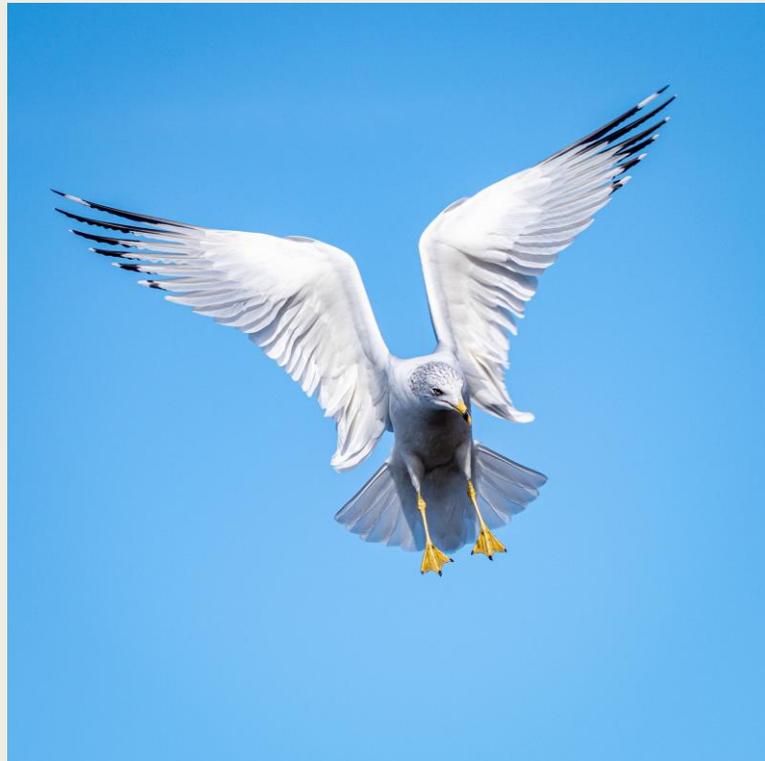
# EXAMPLES

## FOCUS



# EXAMPLES

## VIGNETTING



# EXAMPLES

## HORIZON

Gerry Winogrand



# FIVE TIPS

1. Make more photographs
2. Look for contest shots
3. Save your best to a contest folder
4. Study winning images
5. Seek out feedback

# THE TAKE HOME MESSAGE

*IF YOU WANT TO COMPETE MORE SUCCESSFULLY,  
I SUGGEST THAT YOU:*

1. Capture an Interesting Subject
2. Take Advantage of the Best Light for your Subject
3. Use Compositional Tools to Enhance your Subject
4. Avoid/Eliminate Distractions
5. Follow Contest Rules/Guidelines
- 6. *TURN IT IN AND LET IT GO!!!!!!***

# THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT OF THIS PRESENTATION IS...

THE OPINION OF A CONTEST JUDGE DOES NOT  
DEFINE WHO YOU ARE AS A

**PERSON, A PHOTOGRAPHER,  
OR AN ARTIST!!!**

***HAVE FUN!***