



Class booklet

Composition

#1

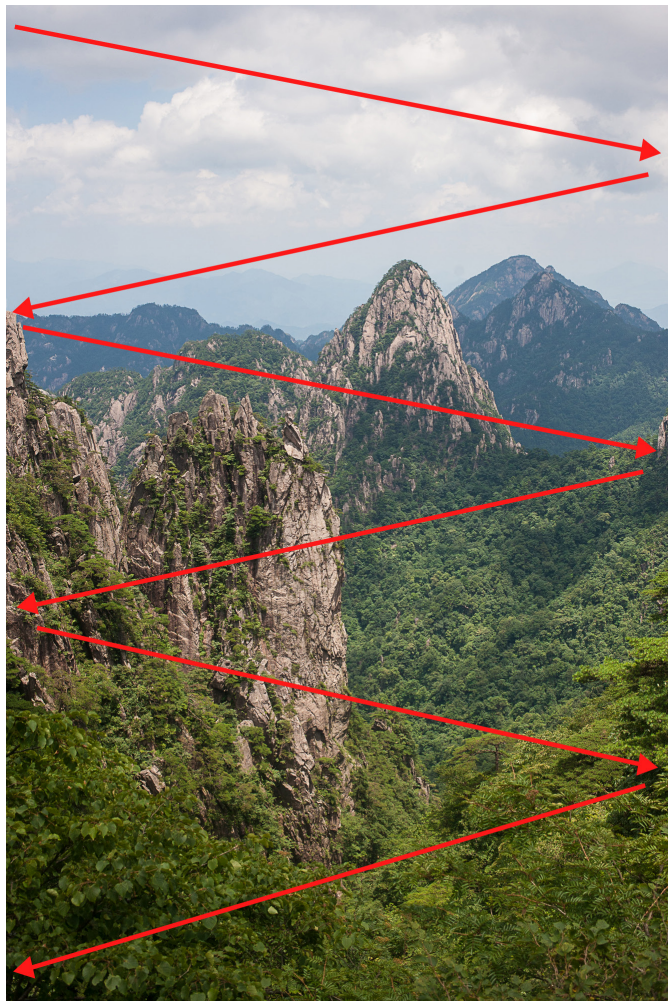
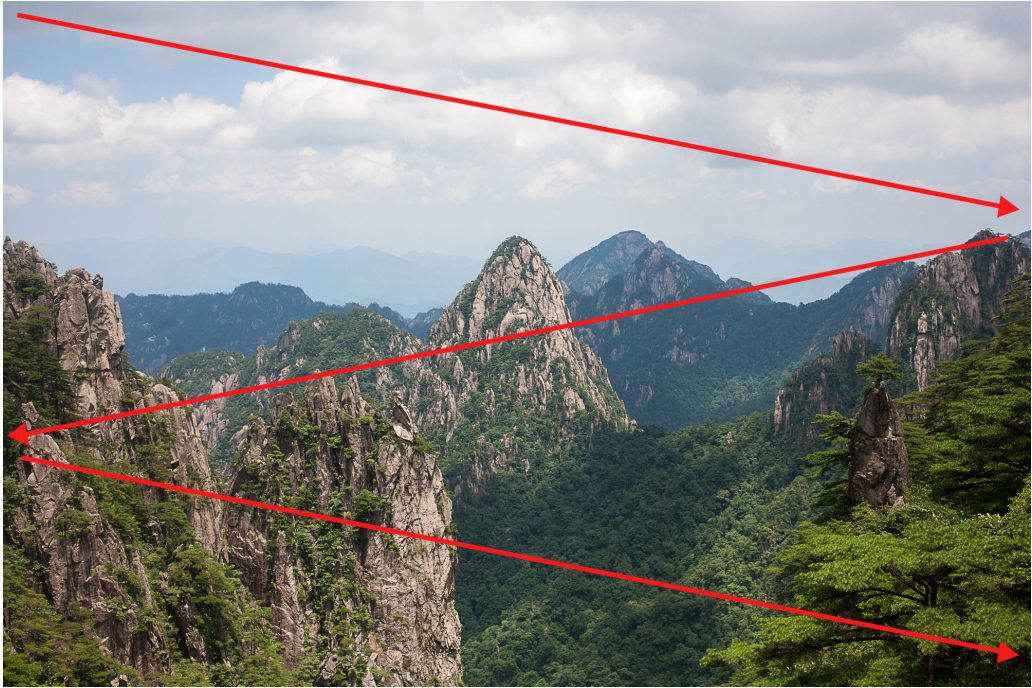
IMAGE FORMATS

The different formats of a photograph impose different reading rhythms, and this is explained by **the sense in which we read an image: it is done from left to right and from top to bottom**. This sense of reading is universal, and each human being will travel through a photograph in this way.

As a result, on these different formats, our eyes glide in different ways:

- The “landscape” format reads more calmly, in length.
- The “portrait” format reads more agitated and tight, our eyes “ricochet”.
- The square format (or “square ratio”) is more monotonous, constant and soft in its reading.

This format is often given a certain preciousness.



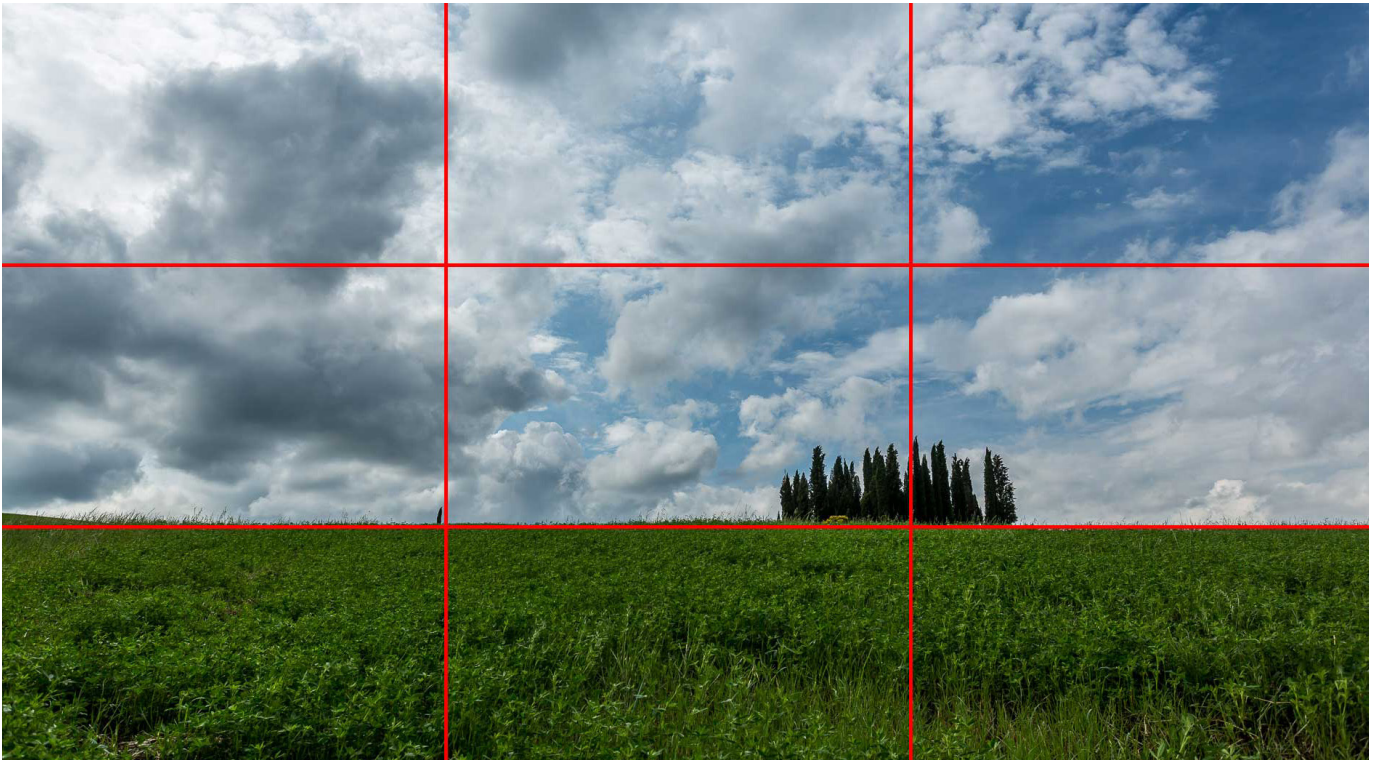
#2

THE RULE OF THIRDS

This method of composition consists in **placing the important elements of the image on the vertical and/or horizontal lines that cut the image into third parts**, or even at their intersections (the strong points of the image).

Unlike the central composition, **the third party rule offers a more harmonious and dynamic image structure.**

Note that many cameras can display a grid line, dividing the image into vertical and horizontal thirds, to help the photographer apply this rule.



#3

THE SUBJECT PLACEMENT

In the photographic frame, the subject's positioning will determine its status in the image:

- **Putting the subject in the centre will give it great importance.**
- **Placing the subject in the third part of the image will give it a secondary and aesthetic role.**
- **To bring immediate attention to the subject, shoot a close-up.**

The environment, whether it is more or less saturated/complex, will help to blend or enhance the subject matter.



A wide and saturated view, without highlighting a subject.

A saturated view, with emphasis on the subject, is placed in the foreground of the image.



A dull picture, with a subject on the third of the frame. The composition is more focused on the aesthetic aspect of the image.

A wide and minimal view with a central position, highlighting a subject.



A close-up view; the subject is unique and focuses all the attention.

#4

LINES OF FORCE

In the first degree, the main lines of force are the internal geometry of an image, its structure. Implicitly, they generate different impressions to the image's reader.

A photograph in which:

- **The horizontal lines dominate, will inspire calm and stability.**
- **The oblique lines dominate, will inspire dynamism and instability**
- **The curved lines dominate, will inspire softness and appeasement.**

Also, **converging lines to a vanishing point will help create depth.** If these lines are punctuated with repeating elements, the sensation of depth will be even greater.

Frames present in the environment can help focus attention on a subject (the frame of a window, the interlocking of a door, etc.).

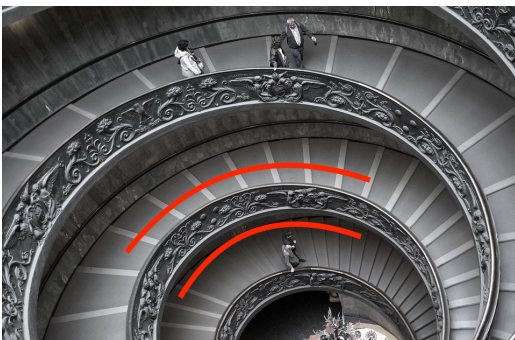
These lines can be suggested; the trajectory of an aircraft, or the confrontation of two glances, will implicitly draw these lines.



The lines of force are horizontal. Feeling of stability and calm.



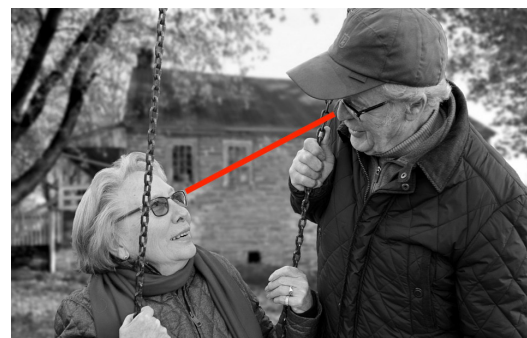
The force lines are oblique. Impression of instability and dynamism.



The force lines are curved. Feeling soft and voluptuous



The lines of force converge at a vanishing point. Impression of depth.



The oblique line of force is implicit; that of the trajectory or the gaze.

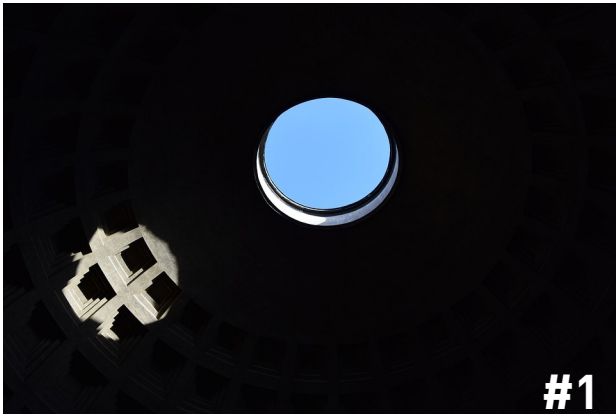
#5

LIGHT AND COLOUR

Colour, light and its various games will allow to highlight the subject or to sublimate the scenery.

For example:

- **The chiaroscuro**, which consists of a strong contrast; most often, it is a luminous subject highlighted in a very dark environment (See #1).
- **Warm colours (red, yellow, magenta,...)** that pop out better than cold colours. (See #2)
- **Reflections** to abstract the image, or subtly add an element to the composition. (See #3)



#1



#2



#3



#3

#6

LAST TIPS AND TRICKS

- **Close the image** to focus attention on the subject. This trick can be achieved thanks to an imposing foreground that is very close to the photographer. (See #4)
- **A reduced depth of field on the subject** will make it possible to highlight it in relation to its environment. (See #5)
- **Capture the graphics in an image, reduce it to a set of shapes.** This trick will reduce the contextualization the subject and give it a “minimal” beauty. (See #6)



#4



#5



#6

#7

SOME INSPIRATION

- **Lee Friedlander (1934):** A great American photographer whose work focuses mainly on urban and street photography. The composition of his images is very audacious, and is at odds with “academic” composition.

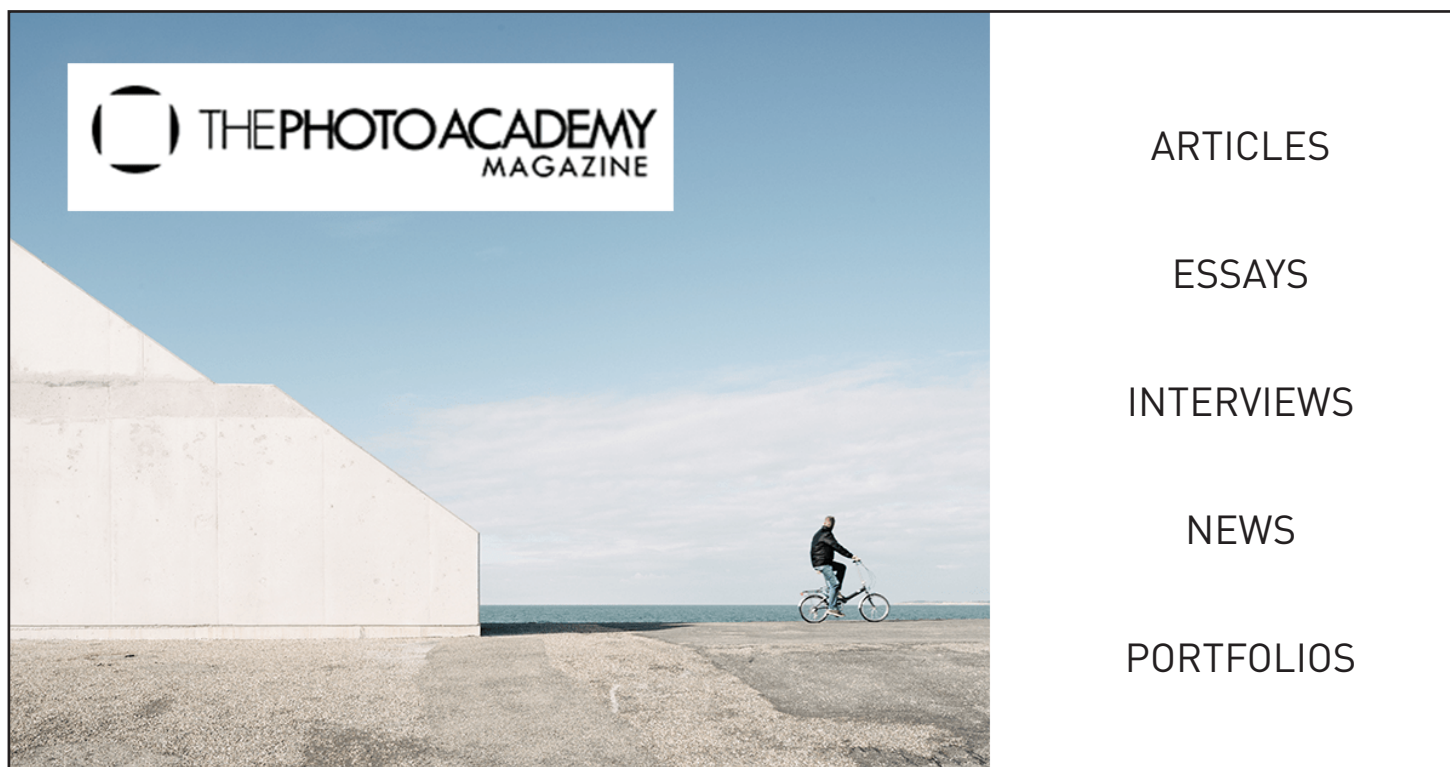
- **Edward Weston (1886 - 1958):** Great master of still life photography, he also photographed landscapes of Southwestern America. The chiaroscuro and curved lines are the two main aesthetic features of his photography.

- **Bernd and Hilla Becher (born in the 1930s):** Becher’s photographic work focuses on industrial buildings. These buildings are photographed by the couple according to an extremely rigorous protocol (frontal view, centering of the subject, neutral light, etc...).

- **Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 - 2004):** An essential photographer for the precision and graphic design of his compositions, he is particularly famous in street photography. Bresson promoted composition based on the golden ratio (1,618), more harmonious according to him.

- **Saul Leiter (1923 - 2013):** One of the first colour photographers (in the 1950s). Leiter’s composition is characterized by the emphasis on warm colours (essentially red), the use of reflections, and the use of tight planes.

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INTERVIEWS

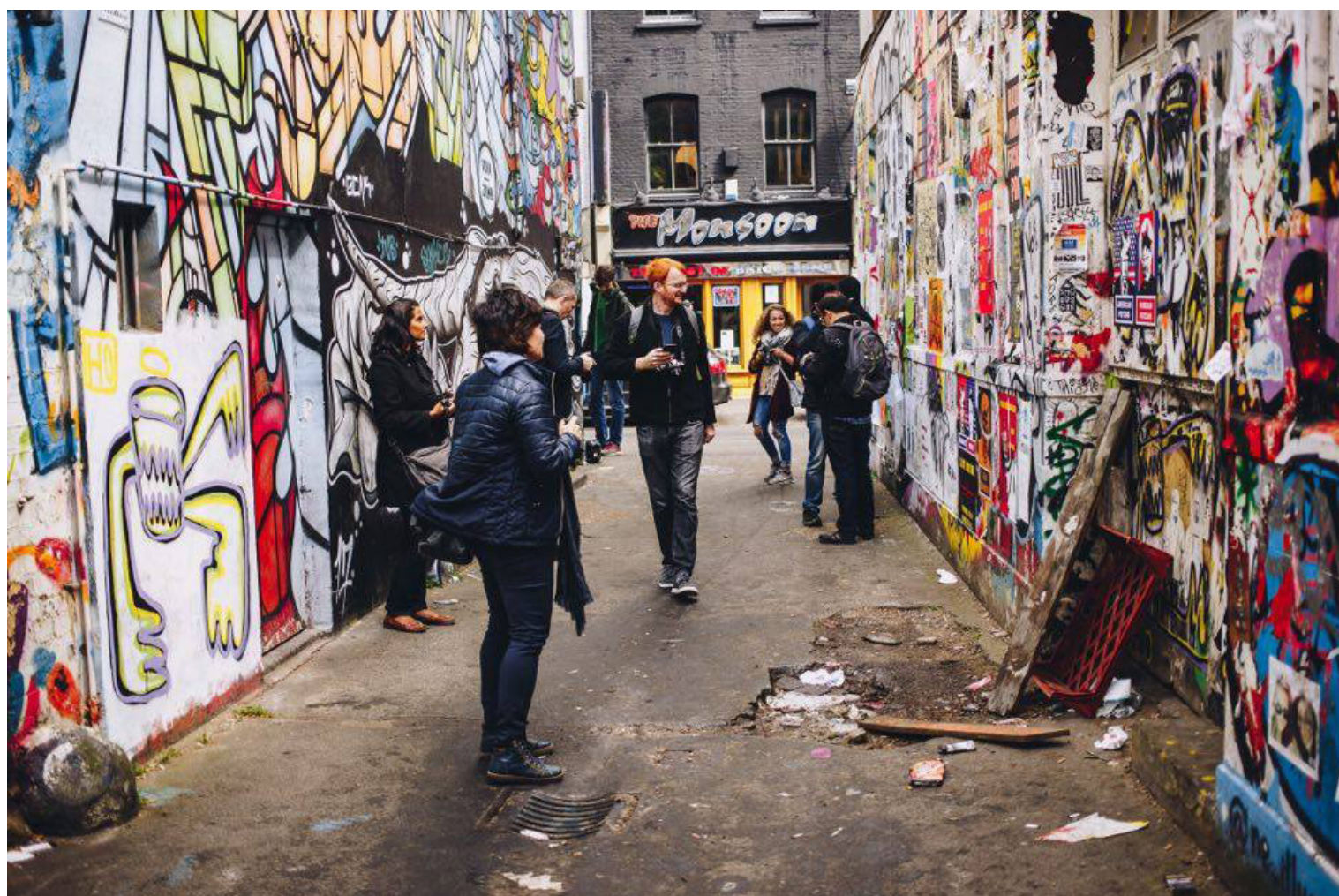
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