

Class booklet

Black & White

#1

THE ADVANTAGES OF MONOCHROME

Monochrome brings us back to the essentials. A colour photograph is often difficult to compose, as there are so many tones to tune, or to bring out.

Black & white is more synthetic; as the play of colours is absent, only light and shapes are left to compose.

Monochrome brings a homogeneous shape. Switching black and white images to black and white brings out the coalescence through chromatic suppression. The differences between dominant colours are relatively blurred by conversion to monochrome.

Monochrome dramatizes. Because of its duller character and its greater tonality (the colour is no longer there to nuance), black and white can bring a certain tragic force to the stage.

The photographer will have to take into account this effect which can truncate the reality, make it more murky.



#2

ESSENTIAL SETTINGS FOR BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY

Choose the Jpeg format. In order to be able to record a monochrome image directly at shooting, choosing the Jpeg format is mandatory. A Raw image, on the other hand, will not be converted to black & white.

Select the “monochrome” mode in the menu “image style” (Canon) or “picture control” (Nikon). It is, however, a very basic method, and unsatisfactory for converting an image into black and white; with this conversion mode, a blue and a red of the same luminous tonality will be transcribed in the same gray scale.

Enhance and customize the “monochrome” mode. Some customization tools allow to accentuate the contrast, sharpness, but above all to play on the tonal response. This last option will darken or lighten the grey associated with either colour:

- The red filter lightens red, darkens green and blue.
- The green filter lightens the green, darkens the red filter
- Yellow and orange filters darken a little blue and green, lighten a little the red.



Menu of Canon

#3

THINK IN BLACK & WHITE

Repeat the high-contrast seams. In order to make the image more explosive and naked, use subjects with strong contrasts of light (sunlight-shade, white-black, direct sunlight, etc.).

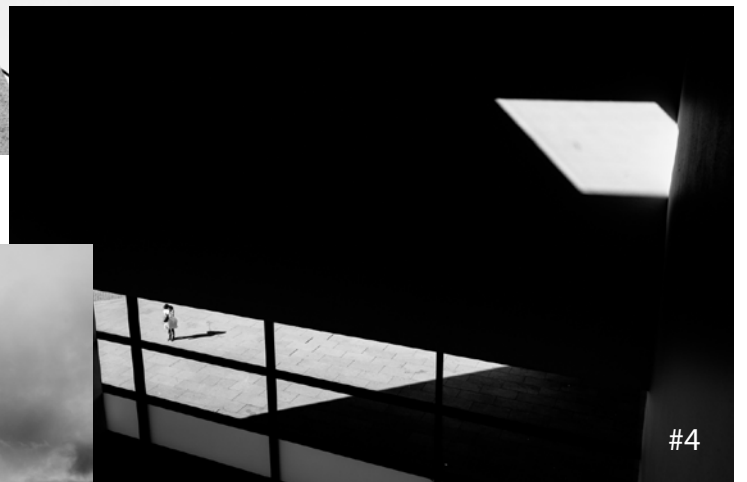
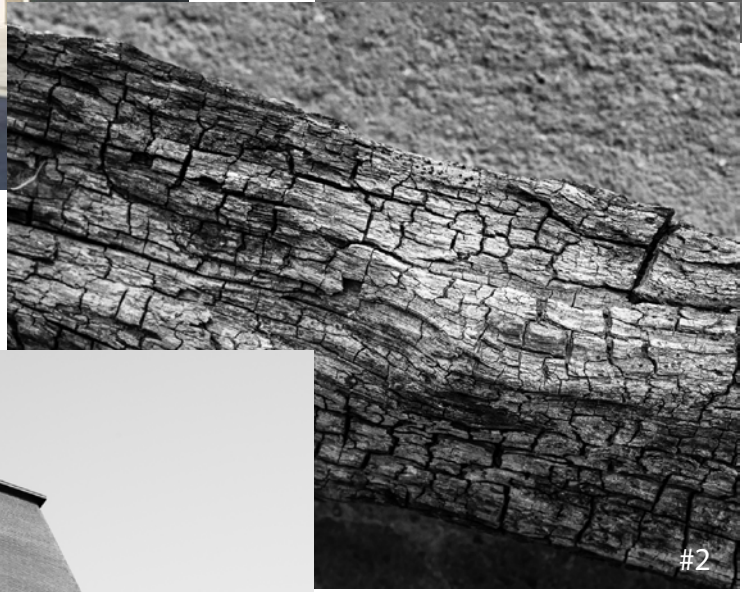
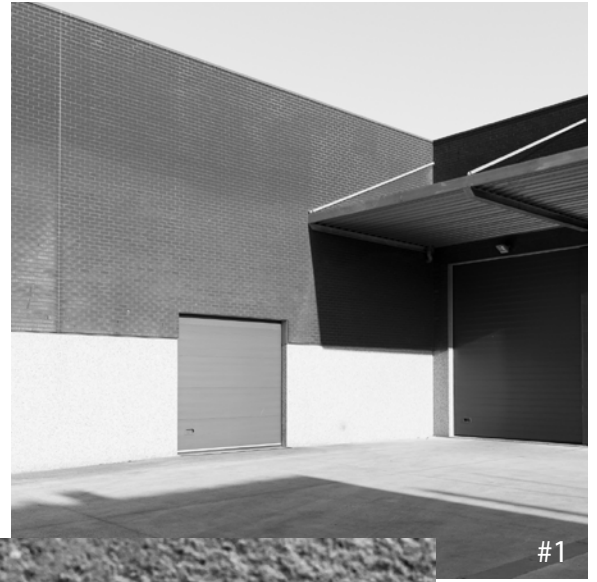
Keep an eye also on subjects with contrasting colours (magenta-green, yellow-blue, etc.), which will make it possible to distinguish the shades of grey associated with these colours (tone response). (see #1)

Find micro-contrast textures. Granular and striated surfaces such as wrinkled skin, stone, asphalt and cork are magnified in monochromium. (see #2)

Attention to the legibility of your image. Once again, monochrome interferes with the good distinguishability of the different components of the image, their colours are no longer there to nuance. In order to not produce a photo too imprecise, you should prefer graphic images with structuring lines, minimal compositions, or the use of a shallow depth of field to distinguish a small part of the image. (see #3)

Consider images with a "light-dark" effect - or "chiaroscuro". Bring the black and white theme to its climax, highlight the luminous element in its very dark text, or vice versa. (see #4)

Expose the "active" skies correctly. The cumulus on a blue sky background will have the most beautiful monochrome effect, and nothing prevents to dramatize them (darken them) with the help of a yellow or red filter. (see #5)



#4

Some remarkable authors

Edward Weston (1886-1958): His images of peppers, cabbages, mushrooms, and shells are graphic works in which the curved lines are underlined by sumptuous contrasts. The monochrome which rowing has the essential, shapes and light, has the power to stylize objects.

Brassaï (1899-1984): In his "Graffiti" series, he recasts inscriptions and drawings on the city walls. These graffiti constitute very beautiful "micro-contrast" textures, which the monochrome is able to sublimate.

Mario Giacomelli (1925-2000): This Italian photographer created majestic images of monastic life and the agrarian landscape. The contrast of his photographs is extreme; grays are almost non-existent, only black and white remain.

André Kertész (1894-1985): In the monochrome images of this Hungarian photographer, shadows and geometry are almost more important than characters or architectures.

Stephan Vanfleteren (1969): Belgian photographer, Vanfleteren pays close attention to micro-contrasted textures, such as wrinkled skin, concrete, cracked leather, stone. The use of monochrome sublimates these textures.

In some of his images, the black and white aesthetics is also used to add to the waging of the stage, for the drama.

Michael Ackerman (1967): He uses black and white to accentuate the dark side of his images, he dramatizes them. To do this, it produces images with exaggerated contrasts.

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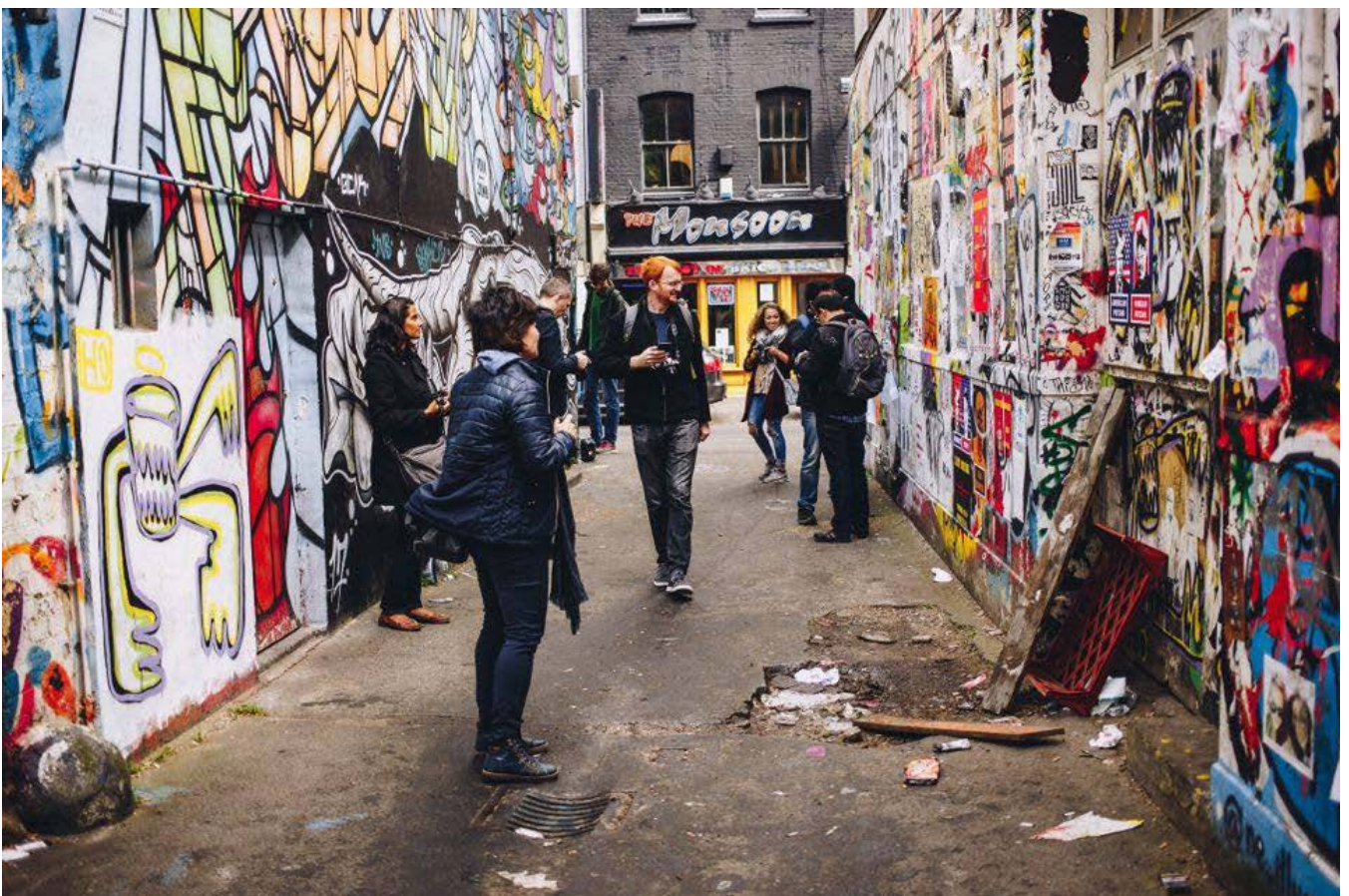
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