

**Prompt to advance after
instruction or statements.**

ADVANCE 

A guideline for photo appreciation in modern photography



COMPILED BY HEIN WASCHEFORT FOR PSSA AND VISUAL SKILLS SCHOOL

ADVANCE →

The visual process in modern photo appreciation

1. Impact

2. Eye movement

3. Direction indicators

4. Composition

elements

objects

colours

chiaroscuro (fields of light and dark areas)

form

5. Technical

exposure

focus

colour balance

ADVANCE 

1. “Impact!!!”

A very dangerous phenomenon which often leave judges rescoring after scrutinising a picture properly on a second round of judging.

Pictures with high impact have an advantage over well thought of pictures with clever stories and composition when judging tempo is high (salon judging).

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We have now seen some high impact photos viewed at approximately one second intervals, a time used by many judges to make a decision.

Right they may be **but...**

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Impact is what makes this image, the hair caught suspended and a strong into-your-face look with warm colours demands attention.

But... Scrutinising the picture- the eye wants to move to the top left, not only because it is the only very light corner, it is also the only blue field in the picture.



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Impact established with demanding eye contact, complimentary colours used in good balance and an interesting graphic manipulation.

But... Because of so many filters available to create stunning results from less than adequate photos, judges should consider the value of the presented image. Is the photo more successful because of a clever use of filters or not?



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The highly emotional communication of this image demands an immediate response even if the environment, setting is ignored.



But... Does the judge have the reference to associate this image with “The Scream” of Munch. This is an obvious spin on “The Scream” and will only be appreciated fully if the viewer has an adequate art reference.

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A top
selling
photo of a
raggy
because
of its
impact.



But... Having cloned out scatter in the water (except for a portion on the shark, near the eye), this photo has to be entered in the pictorial section and might be disqualified.

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2. “Eye movement”

Once impact has been established one carefully starts exploring the picture further.

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The eye moves from left to right

The western eye (our audience) is taught to move from left to right when viewing a picture, we read and write moving our eye from left to right (as you might be doing right now).

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This common mistake allows for very positive criticism since the photographer only needs to flip the image to improve it.

But... Be careful of: text, the folding of a jacket, etc. which will be the wrong way around when the photo is flipped. It is always the better principal to **allow for eye movement when taking the photo.**

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3. “Direction indicators”

Subsequent to the movement of the eye, direction indicators will counter, enforce or change the eye movement.

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Direction indicators are

All images or objects that point in a direct or suggestive manner and can be: a bird flying, an eye looking towards something, an arrow or even a triangle of which the one point is longer moving the eye into that direction.

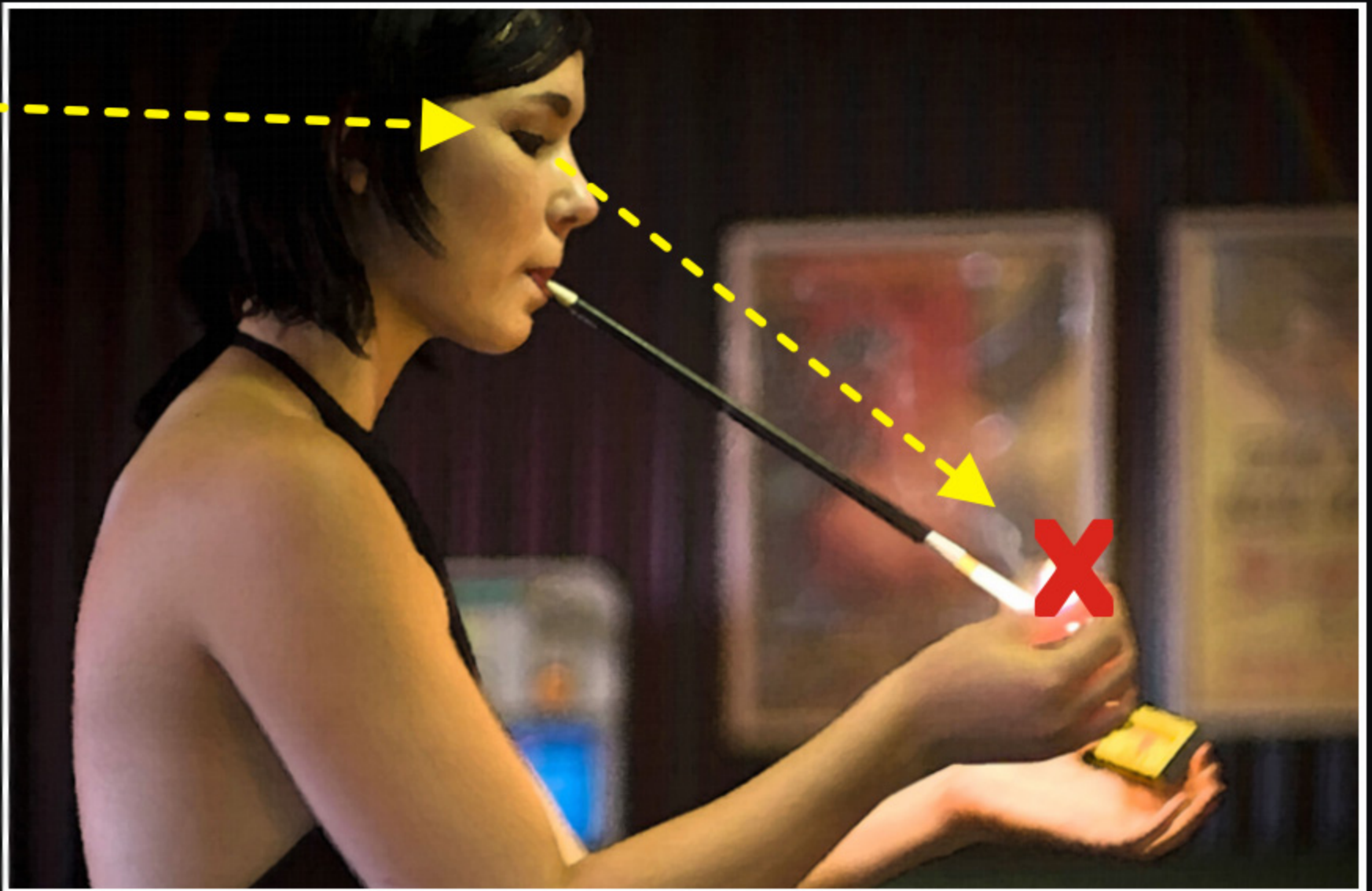
A seed can be a direction indicator:

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The eye moving from left to right is forced into an accelerated movement to the right and out of the photo, clearly discarding the picture area.

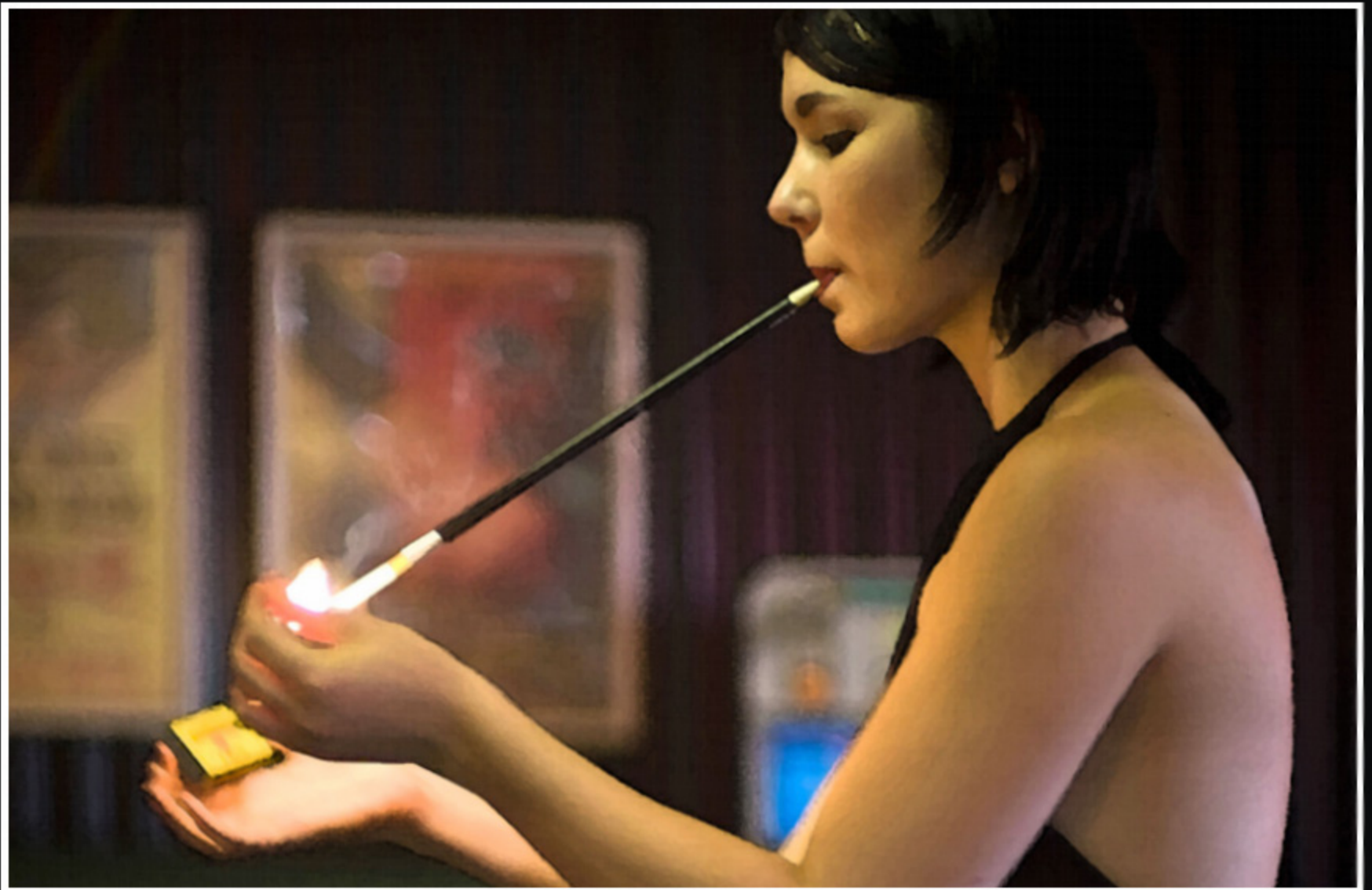
A photograph of a green frog sitting on a lily pad. A yellow dashed arrow points from the frog's head towards the right edge of the frame. At the bottom center, there is a black button with the word 'ADVANCE' in green and a yellow arrow pointing right.

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The eye moves from left to right, picks up the models eye, continues to the right and stops at the lit match, the point of interest.

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The eye now moves from left to right to the model's eye and then to the lit match, the eye then moves back to the model's face and repeats the movement. This action keeps the viewer active within the photograph.

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Converging lines also indicate
direction
and will focus the eye on their apparent
intersection .



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The intersection of these lines are outside the picture/page therefore the viewer's interest is lost.



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4. “Composition”

Is the arranging and placing of -
elements
objects
colours
chiaroscuro (fields of light and dark areas)
form

To create a balanced picture that contains the viewer
in a creative way allowing the viewer to spend time
exploring the picture.

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Crossing the horizontal line with a vertical line binds the back- and foreground, it also draws the eye to the intersection and creates an area of interest.

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But... The “rule of thirds” is not a holy cow.

In 1979 Meyerowitz worked on a project in the Cape Cod area near Boston, with the results published in book form in 1979 as “Cape Light”. In these works we see his ability to communicate a different mood and picture quality merely by photographing a similar subject at different times of the day. Note the horizon is dead centre. All the pictures were taken with his 8X10in Deardorft field view camera.



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Balance of volume

Very much like children on a see-saw, the heavier kid will sit closer to the pivot point to balance the see-saw. A heavier volume should be closer to the middle and a lighter volume on the opposite side of the photo should then be further away from the middle for good balance.





Shapes balance at a mean point from the center of a picture for good composition

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But... Eye movement can override balance.

When a strong form blocks the movement of the eye on the right it commands the eye to move left without needing a form or volume to counter the unbalanced form. This seems to be successful only if the left hand volume is visually interesting.



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Balance of colour

A very similar see-saw principal applies to colour as does to **balance of volume** in a photo.

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Colour scattered randomly (the Smarties or natural organisation principal) will have a keen colour balance.



Random rainbow colours almost form a symmetrical pattern.

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A selection of any single colour will have a random balance.



The magenta/purple (jacaranda colours) are informally balanced across the picture.

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Photo with good impact.



But... Strong magenta on the right force the eye towards the bottom right and out of picture area.

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The Smarties principal shows the unnatural colour placement



But... Taking the balance of the photo to a blue/magenta hue creating a harmonious colour solves the problem.

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ADVANCE →

But...

A symmetrical form can be very boring if it demands the eye so strongly that the other values of the picture get lost.

This is often the case with sunsets.

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ADVANCE →

5. “Technical”

The three basic technical skills that are considered when evaluating an image are:

- 1.Exposure
- 2.Focus
- 3.Colour balance

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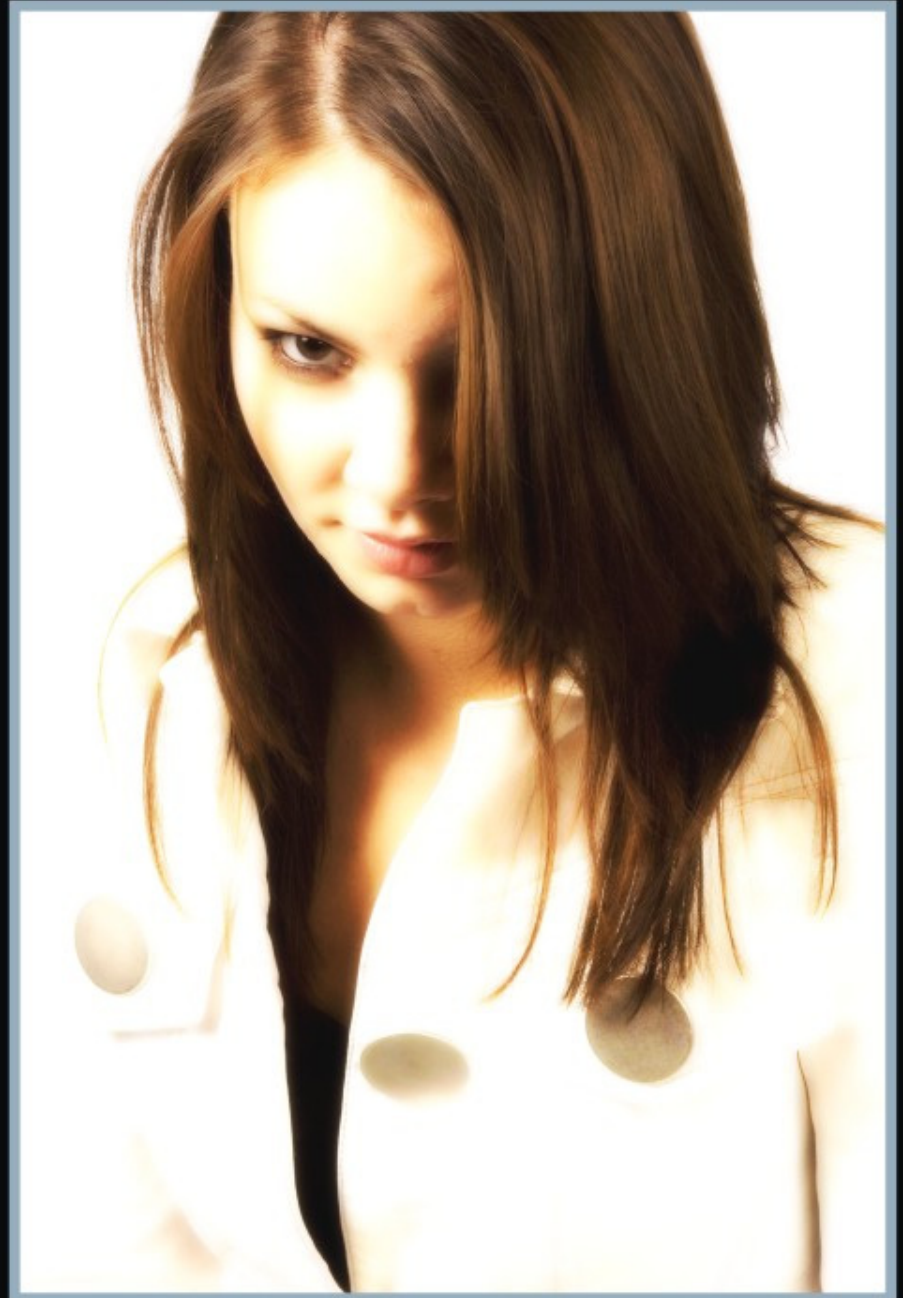
exposure

focus

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High-key photography is a purposely over exposed photo. **This is not a mistake** and creates creative expression. The lighter areas are washed out and blends into a flat white plain.



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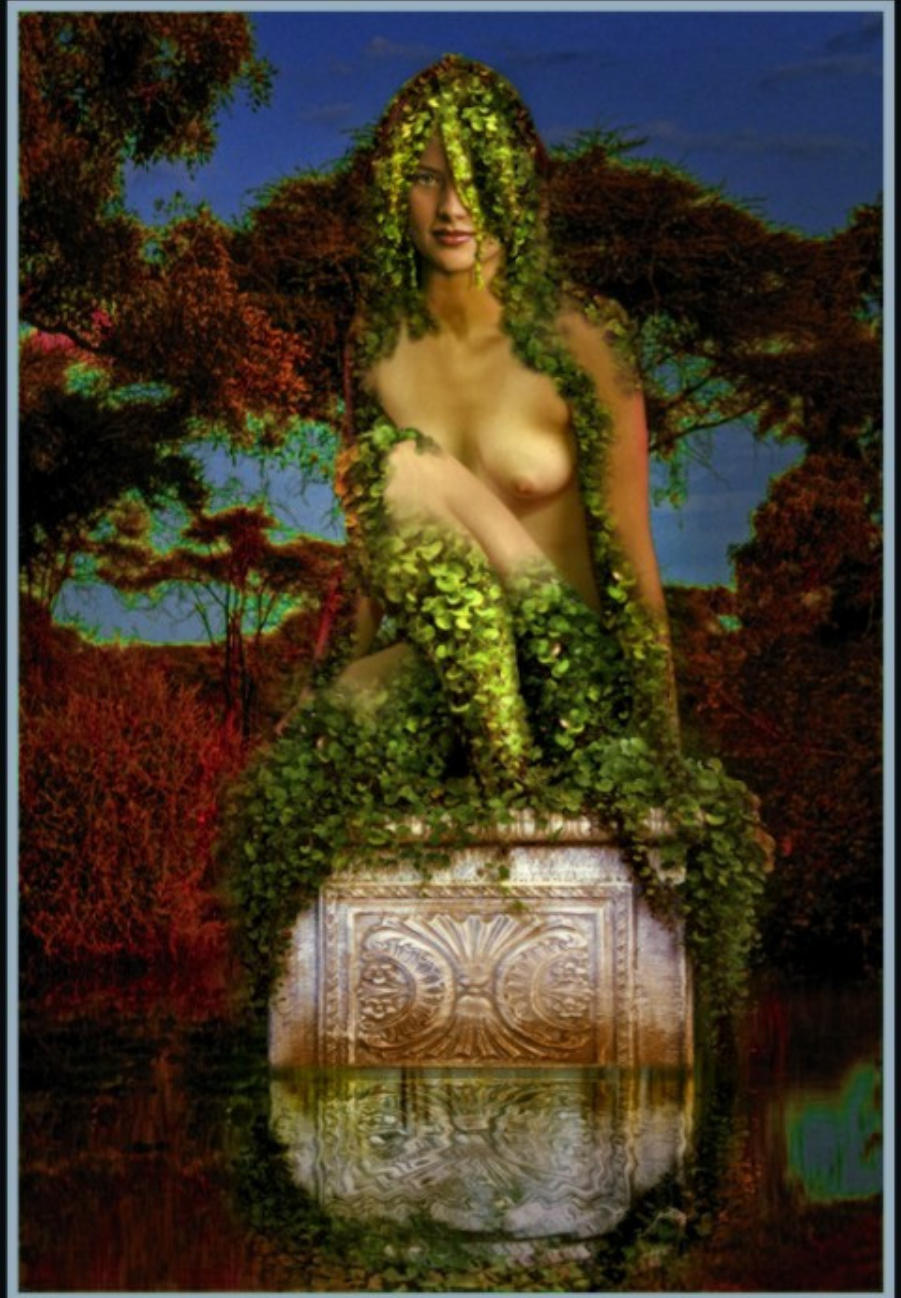
focus

colour balance

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White balance.

Used selectively can also force the eye onto the subject and perhaps emphasise a surrealistic feel.



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But... Colour temperature can influence visual concepts.

The same image in different hues/colour temperature can change the total nature and communication value of an image. This control can be successfully manipulated by the modern photographer to his desire.

See how this desert scene turns from a very warm to an ice cold visual.

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**Basic
mistakes
made with
editing,
compilations
and multi
image digital
productions.**

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Eye movement



the eye is blocked

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Eye movement



eye is not stopped

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Direction indicator

eye is countered

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Direction indicator



viewer investigates

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Composition



Horizon off-centre

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Composition

Object shadow of watch and boy to left

Object shadow of landscape to right



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Composition

Shadows are needed to compliment form and create a true three dimensional image.



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Technical

Colour reflection of watches are much colder than warm desert colours.



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Technical

Glass of watch
should have a
reflection



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the extra mile will
be the inclusion of
the viewers/authors
reflection



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This thought process pointed out a few basic mistakes and corrections.

But...

over saturation
too much gamma
over sharpening
too much noise
and other filters that might be seen as wrong can be used creatively in modern photography.



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**Once again this document
contains propositions and not
rules.**

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All photos except for 2 photos by Joel Meyerowitz (credit given) in the composition chapter were taken by Hein Waschefort.



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