

PictureMaker – April 2024

# PictureMaker



Mashonaland Photographic Society

2024 Issue 4

April



## “Cobwebs”



“Incredible Construction”

By

Kerry Orphanides

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### Monthly meeting May:

**29th May 2024**

### Venue: Meditation Centre

**# 6 Borrowdale Lane,**

**Opposite Borrowdale Trauma Centre**

### June 2024:

### Midday Sun

Deadline: 3rd June 2024

No rules

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## Editor's Blurb:

**Bridget Henderson**

So who would have thought that the Aurora, both borealis (Northern Lights) and australis (Southern Lights) would be seen from way outside their normal bounds last week? Photos taken from all over the world showed bright-coloured skies lit up in hot pink, green and purple across Europe, in the United States and as far away as New Zealand.

Why did this happen?

The northern and southern lights appear in the sky when charged particles spew from the sun during solar storms, making colourful light displays when clouds of those particles collide with Earth's magnetic field and interact with the atoms and molecules in Earth's upper atmosphere.

Typically, the lights are only seen in very high and low latitudes, close to the poles, but during intense solar storms, as on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024, they can be seen farther south or north than expected. The storm reached an intensity of G5 on a 1-5 scale, making it the strongest storm to reach Earth's atmosphere since October 2003. Apparently magnetic solar storms are not that uncommon but intense ones like this recent experience are not too regular. The photos shown below are of Stonehenge and outside my daughter's halls of residence in Plymouth! Maybe those of us who have this on our bucket lists won't have to travel too far to witness this amazing phenomenon as scientists predict that solar activity is building and will peak in 2025.



In this edition of PictureMaker is the second part of guidelines to improve composition. There are numerous different "rules" in this topic and I have tried to concentrate on the most common, useful and fundamental guidelines. Our craft of photography is so vast and complex and it continues to evolve with advancing technology and fashionable artistic interpretation, that one is always learning.

A warm welcome to our newest member: Grimwood Cooke. Included in this edition is an introductory piece by Grim, telling us a bit about his photography persona, following the same format as we all did in our "Who's Who..." in PictureMaker January 2024.

Enjoy!

## From the President's Viewfinder - April 2024



My ZOL package is the Lite + Night Owl 40GB 15 + 15 Days Rollover (ZiG) (Previously much cheaper and 30 + 30 Days Rollover!) which I have ascertained is the most cost effective of all the available broadband packages. I opt for the Night Owl add-on for the simple reason that it permits me to do system upgrades and application downloads on all my computers and play around with big files whether they be photos or documents in the night-time hours without eating up too much of my daytime GBs. (It also keeps Sal happy for the same reason!) It also accounts for why you, the members, tend to receive competition summary results, E-mails, and WA messages at such ungodly hours of the night.

It was during one such late night session that I noticed this irritating little icon in the bottom right-hand corner of my screen and came to realize that I was sharing my machine with one such other, i.e., CoPilot. We've talked a lot about AI in recent weeks and I thought it was about time that I explored the topic further by asking CoPilot for some assistance. Its opening question is 'What can I help you with?' What should I task him/her to do? Got it! Can you produce an interesting article for a photography club? That should stump it or so I thought. Within seconds the answer came back.

'Certainly! Writing an engaging article for a photography club can be a delightful endeavour. Let's dive into some tips and ideas to create a captivating piece.' That's as far as it got as what happened next was that CoPilot proceeded to deliver a list all the things that you the author needed to do to produce such an article and ended with the following:

'Remember, enthusiasm and passion are contagious. Infuse your article with your love for photography and your fellow club members will appreciate your contribution. Happy writing!'

So, there you have it. I have a real love and passion for photography which I endeavour to pass on to (infuse) others so that they may benefit but as to whether my articles are that captivating, engaging and interesting? I'm not expecting any answers to that question.

This past week has proved particularly interesting due mainly to my involvement with our two annual competitions, i.e., the 2023 Annual Best Picture and the 2024 President's Platter. Generally, the co-ordinating of both is very straight-forward and is simply a case of correlating the results and organizing same for presentation on the viewing evening. The Annual Best Picture always goes without a hitch as it's basically the judges critiquing what they see and scoring a picture based on its photographic merits. The President's Platter is always a challenge as in the past we have defined the picture description and applicable rules which would determine a particular picture's eligibility or consequent disqualification. This year not so and as you all know we took a group decision to scrap all descriptions and rules. The topic was set as 'Still life with movement' and whoever came up with that suggestion must have had in mind our wish for pictures to be less technical with more emphasis on the creative and impact aspects. It also made my job simpler in selecting this topic to be the President's Platter challenge being that the President's Platter is meant to be the most challenging of all the set subject topics throughout the year in question.

Numerous members (along with the judges) voiced the question to me as to what it meant to have movement in still life and my simple answer to all was to think out of the box and/or have a search through the Internet! It worked and the resulting submitted images are truly fascinating which also compliments what we always say that everyone sees things differently. Removing all the rules, definitions and restrictions also allows members to go out there and practice their photography to much greater effect and enjoyment.

The results evening will be on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May at our usual venue, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible supporting the Society and being there in person to view all the submitted entries and to witness the presentation of the trophies to our two category winners. Tea, coffee and refreshments will be an added attraction!

Meanwhile and in photography,

Nige

# Photography Composition Techniques to Improve Your Photos

## PART 2

Continuing on from the last issue of PictureMaker, here follows another compilation of tips and rules to consider when composing your images to maximise their potential.

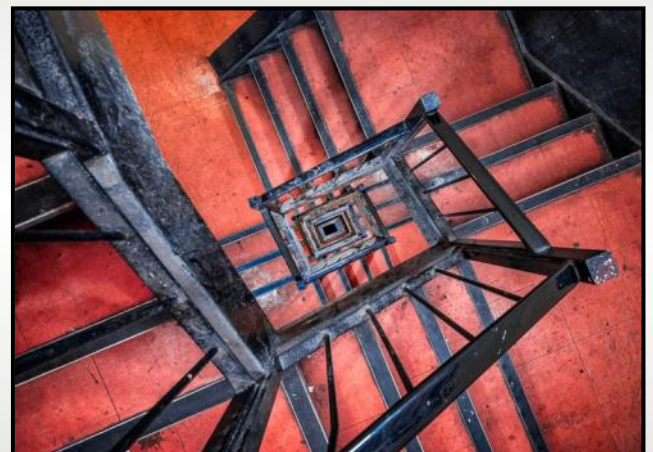
### 1. Diagonals and Triangles

It is often said that triangles and diagonals add ‘dynamic tension’ to a photo. What do we mean by ‘dynamic tension’ though? Consider that horizontal lines and vertical lines suggest stability. If you see a person standing on a level horizontal surface, he will appear to be stable (unless he’s stumbling out of a pub at 2 am!) but put this same man on a sloping surface and he’ll seem less stable. This creates a certain level of tension visually. Most of us are not used to diagonals in our everyday life and they subconsciously suggest instability. Incorporating triangles and diagonals into our photos can help create this sense of ‘dynamic tension’.

Triangles can be actual triangle-shaped objects or implied triangles. See image below left.



Try photographing lines on a strong diagonal rather than straight across the frame but make sure your diagonal is obvious, as a little tilt to a line looks like a mistake. Think about where lines intersect with each other. Converging lines draw the eye. Also, consider where lines enter or leave the frame: try to have a line enter or leave the frame in a corner or on a third.



In the image above, rather than straightening out the lines of this spiral staircase, they have been shifted to a diagonal to add tension and energy.

### 2. Break the Pattern

In last month’s edition of PictureMaker, rule 9 was about patterns and repetition. It was also stated that some “rules” are there to be broken. Sometimes breaking the pattern can really make your photograph pop. In this case, the single red candle really stands out among the vanilla-coloured ones. It’s also slightly taller than the others which is another way of breaking the pattern. Notice how the photograph still follows the rule of thirds.



### 3. Rule of Odds



This theory is that an image is more visually appealing if there are an odd number of subjects and that an even number of elements in a scene is distracting as the viewer is not sure which one to focus his or her attention on. An odd number of elements is seen as more natural and easier on the eye. Three is the magic number, but one, five and seven also work.

The rule of odds helps us select our subjects thoughtfully. The rule guides us on what to include and what to leave out. It also reminds us to isolate our subject in a busy scene because one is an odd number.

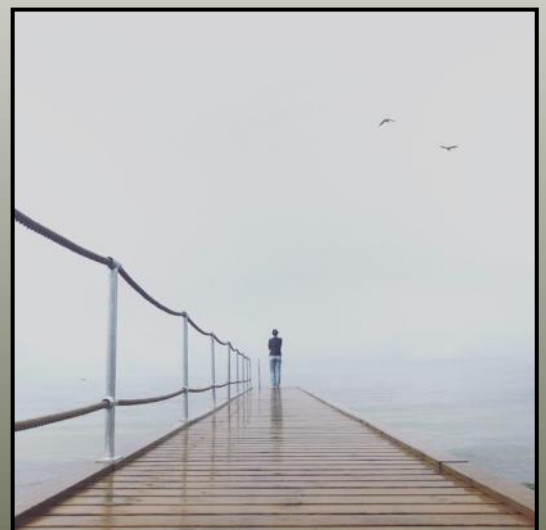
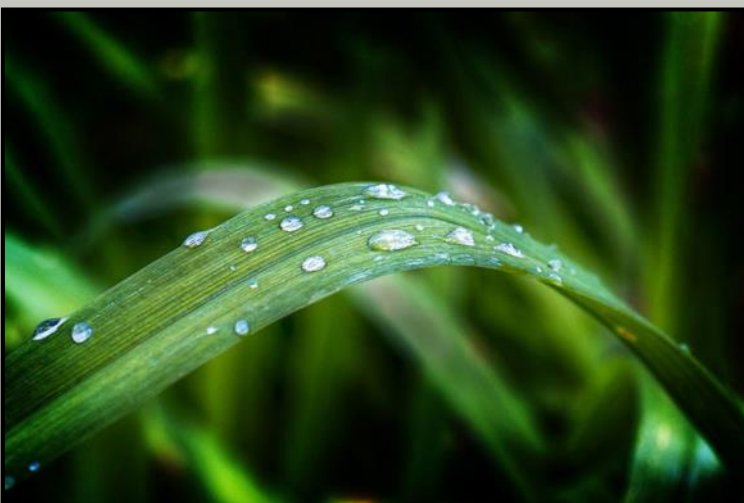


Sometimes the rule of odds should be purposefully ignored: for example, the image of two people on the left. Although your attention may shift back and forth between each person, this is exactly what a conversation between two people is like, back and forth. For this reason, the even number of subjects works in this case.

### 4. Simplicity and Minimalism

Simplicity itself can be a powerful compositional tool. It is often said that 'less is more'. Simplicity often means taking photos with uncomplicated backgrounds that don't distract from the main subject. You can also create a simple composition by zooming in on part of your subject and focusing on a particular detail. Simplifying the image means including only what you need to convey your message. When you include unnecessary elements in your image, it can be distracting. So it's best to remove everything you don't need.

Simplifying an image doesn't necessarily mean creating minimalist images. Simplicity is distilling the idea of a photograph into its purest form. Decide what your photo is about. Then take out everything that doesn't add to that idea.



## 5. Use Black and White

Converting a photograph to black and white can be a very effective method of simplifying your composition. In some ways, colour itself can be a distraction. Black and white photography often allows us to focus on the textures, light, shadows, and shapes in the frame.



The light in the colour version on the left above, actually isn't all that interesting. With the "distraction" of colour removed, this becomes a much stronger shot. That harsh light now helps to highlight the textures on the tree, in the grass, on the cliffs, and in the sky. The bold shape of the tree stands out against the sky and the scattered clouds in the sky look more dramatic.

## 6. Let the Background Give Context to the Subject



Contradictory to the point of having an unfussy background, there are times when this rule can be broken and a busy background actually works. In these cases the background is used to provide some context to the subject.

This photograph of a seagull in an urban setting is intentional as it shows the environment that these birds often inhabit as well as their natural habitat. Notice, how the background is still blurred but not so much that the seagull doesn't stand out. It's about getting a balance between not distracting from the subject and providing background context.

## 7. Direct Attention Using Light

Our eyes naturally go to the brightest part of an image. Use this tip in composition to draw attention to the main subject, it should be the brightest part of the image.

Portrait photographers use a flash or reflectors to highlight the faces of their models, for example.

In post-processing, techniques like dodging and burning can help you direct the viewer's eye to the most important elements of the image. Dodging is selectively lightening certain areas and burning is selectively darkening certain parts of the image.



## 8. Change Your Perspective

Perspective is about where you are in relation to your subject. Changing perspective means getting down low or going up high. Everyone sees the world from about the same perspective: eye level. You can make images more interesting by using a different perspective. Photographing from a low angle makes the subject look more powerful. Using a low perspective is important when photographing subjects close to the ground. It's also important when photographing children. It's best to get down to their eye level.



It's also fun to change your perspective and go high. This is one reason drone photography is so interesting and popular at present: to get this bird's-eye view of our world.

## 9. Add Human Interest



Including some human interest in a scene can make a photograph far more engaging as well as adding a sense of scale. This can be set up if you are travelling with others but sometimes you have to wait for the decisive moment (next point) to make this happen.



## 10. Wait for the "Decisive Moment"

The idea of the "decisive moment" in photography is most associated with the great French street photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson. He quoted: *"Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera."*

In the case of Henri Cartier-Bresson, this meant clicking the camera, for example, at the exact moment a man leaped over a puddle behind Gare Saint Lazare (see PictureMaker August 2023, page 4)



The location for this photograph (above) was certainly interesting but it is the man crossing the bridge on his bicycle that makes this photograph special. Often one has to wait for the exact moment to capture the ideal image, be it a bicycle on a bridge, without the distraction of cars as above, or the lights to be on the Eiffel Tower (left). This image was taken just after sunset at the "decisive moment" when the Eiffel Tower sparkles as it does for one minute on the hour, every hour throughout the night. Sometimes capturing the "decisive moment" can just be a case of being in the right place at the right time.

## 11. Capture Movement from Left to Right



We look at images like we read text, from left to right. Movement in a photograph should also move left to right in the frame. This compositional rule is particularly important for wildlife and action photographers.

It's not always easy to capture motion from left to right in the real world. But you can flip your image horizontally in post-processing to create left-to-right movement.

Make sure to leave lead room in the frame for the subject to move into. This means leaving space to the right of the subject. Otherwise, it looks as if the subject is moving out of the frame.

## 12. Some post processing tips to better your composition:

In conclusion, sometimes we are not able to capture the best image that a situation presents so it may be necessary to "fix" things in post-processing to make the most of what was captured in camera at the time:

- **Use the Best Orientation for the Scene**

Orientation refers to whether you're holding the camera horizontally or vertically. Orientation and aspect ratio determine how much and what you capture in an image. Aspect ratio is the proportion of the height compared to the width. If your image has a lot of vertical elements or is very tall, use portrait orientation. This means you would hold your camera vertically. If there are a lot of horizontal elements or you have a wide image, use landscape orientation, i.e. hold your camera horizontally. You can also take panoramic shots if your scene is very wide (or very tall!). Crop your image in post-processing if the other aspect works better...

- **Straighten Lines for an Aesthetically Pleasing Image**

Not all lines in an image need to be straight, but there are some lines that are **expected** to be straight. And if we're used to seeing them straight in real life, you'll want to make them straight in your composition, for example the horizon or straight lines in architecture. It's easy to correct a tilted line in post-processing.



- **Remove distractions**

Watch for distractions in the background. In outdoor portraiture, for example, it's easy to overlook a tree branch that appears to be coming out of someone's head or a distracting rope (right). Ideally one should move into the best position when taking the shot to avoid overlap or edge distractions, but sometimes these can be removed in post-processing.



- **Don't cut people/objects off at the joints**

If you are not capturing the whole being in your frame, do not bisect joints as this gives the impression that the image is incomplete as opposed to a tighter crop portraying a targeted section of the person or object.



## April 2024 MPS competition results

### “Cobwebs”

**1st place SET SUBJECT :**

“Incredible Construction”

Kerry Orphanides

Camera: Canon Powershot SX 70

Aperture: f/8

Shutter speed: 1/250 sec

ISO: 320



**2nd place SET SUBJECT**

“Into the Light”

Chris Sheppard

Camera: Canon EOS 7D Mk ii

Lens: Canon EF 70–200mm f/2.8L IS II USM

Aperture: f/5.6

Shutter speed: 1/320 sec

ISO: 100

Focal length: 200mm

Ev: -3.3



**3rd place SET SUBJECT**

“Just a Web”

Bridget Henderson

Camera: Canon EOS R5

Lens: Canon EF 70–200mm f/2.8L IS II USM

Aperture: f/5

Shutter speed: 1/250 sec

ISO: 100

Focal length: 200 mm



## March 2024 MPS competition results cont...



### 1st place OPEN CATEGORY

“Mischievous Trio”

Bridget Henderson

Camera: Canon EOS R5  
 Lens: Canon RF 70–200mm f/2.8L IS USM  
 Aperture: f/5.6  
 Shutter speed: 1/400 sec  
 ISO: 200  
 Focal length: 200mm



### 2nd place OPEN CATEGORY

“I’m Moulting”

Caroline Dean

Camera: Nikon D5100  
 Lens: Nikkor 55–200mm f/4–5.6G ED  
 Aperture: f/8  
 Shutter speed: 1/200 sec  
 ISO: 100  
 Focal length: 145mm  
 EV: +0.7



### 3rd place OPEN CATEGORY

“Brown-hooded Kingfisher”

Dave Dell

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mk iu  
 Lens: Canon EF 200–400mm f/4L IS USM Extender 1.4x  
 Aperture: f/7.1  
 Shutter speed: 1/400 sec  
 ISO: 200  
 Focal length: 560mm

## Grimwood Cooke

### “Exposing the Heart and Soul of Africa through the Lens”

An angler, by heart, turned lensman by sheer passion to capture those privileged moments we are blessed with by living in, walking, travelling, fishing, and exploring Southern Africa. Very much an amateur cameraman, there is a certain pride in my un-orthodox self-taught style. Not long a member of MPS and grateful to have become involved with the society, thank you.

As a youngster my late Father, always had his Bolex Paillard 8mm cine-camera close by, which was his pride and joy, as is my Sony A9II and Sony 200-600mm lens and prior to that, a Canon 6D Mkii (plus Canon 70-200mm & 35-70mm lenses). The Sony was obtained on a Black Friday sale in Aus, as the Canon got wet and started to play up. Certainly, a great step up from mirror to mirrorless while having the ability to go from 200 to 600mm for wildlife and birds is a real bonus and with that a joy to use.

My venture in photography started at school with the photographic club at Allan Wilson Technical High and a step-up in the early 80's with a fantastic 35mm Nikon and 200mm lens amongst other, which sadly got stolen and left myself playing around with compacts for the next 30 years.

The question of what makes a great image, a brain teaser for sure, yet in essence to have the viewer stop and want to take a closer look, is key. Obviously, composition amongst other factors is most important along with the eye/s in focus and sharp. The autumn colours of the African bush along with the blues and greens of the Zambezi are a delight.

In terms of influence: absolutely my father was an inspiration, and thereafter in admiring the work of others in the likes of Russel Maclaughlin, Solly Levi, Tami Walker, Roger MacDonald, Barry Launder, Chris Sheppard and others. David Yarrow's work is amazing along with his podcasts.

Bucket List, well-well, the list is long, yet certainly a return to Chitake, the Western Cape and thereafter the deserts in the likes of the Kalahari.

Post processing is limited to the basic Windows application and that on the phone.

Finally in terms of genre wildlife tops the list especially so elephant, lion, leopard, painted wild-dog, buffalo and birds in flight, while landscapes, flowers, butterflies and the like do capture the imagination and fascination.

Happy snappies to you all.



## Important MPS Dates and Set Subjects 2024

This year sees a change in format for our set subjects in that there will be no rules applied on a monthly basis i.e. It will be up to the author's own interpretation of a particular topic as to how he or she sees it and produces a picture. Every month pictures may be in colour or black and white, manipulation is allowed. Images are due by Noon on the deadline date.

### ~~JANUARY~~

~~Emptiness~~

Completed

### ~~FEBRUARY~~

~~Back or side Lighting~~

Completed

### ~~MARCH~~

~~Triptych / Multi-frame~~

Completed

### ~~APRIL~~

~~Cobwebs~~

Completed

### ~~MAY: Two trophy events~~

~~President's Platter : Still Life with Movement~~

~~Deadline: 6th May~~

~~All paid-up MPS members may enter this Set Subject. No 'Open' in May.~~

~~Best Picture of 2023~~

~~Deadline: 6th May~~

~~For Members who entered from Jan-Nov inclusive in 2023, your best 3 entries. Indicate month entered for each entry.~~

~~Minor editing allowed to improve entries from 2023 in line with judges' comments.~~

~~Meeting date: 29th May~~



### JUNE

Midday Sun

Deadline: 3rd June

Meeting date: 26th June

### JULY

Creative Ice

Deadline: 1st July

Meeting date: 24th July

### AUGUST

Surrealism

Deadline: 5th August

Meeting date: 28th August

### SEPTEMBER

A Winding Road or Path

Deadline: 2nd September

Meeting date: 25th September

### OCTOBER

Vanishing Point

Deadline: 7th October

Meeting date: 30th October

### NOVEMBER

Sensational Summer

Deadline: 4th November

Meeting date: 27th November

## Midday Sun

Deadline: 3rd June 2024

Shooting in the midday sun is challenging for various reasons, primarily hard shadows, blown-out highlights, and uneven lighting. But while most photographers prefer the diffuse lighting around sunrise and sunset, being able to harness and adapt to harsh sunlight is an invaluable skill to have as a photographer. The most intentional objective of shooting at noon is to take advantage of the intense contrast resulting in bright light and dark shadows to create dramatic images.

Usually, the first tip you'll hear about shooting in harsh light is "don't do it." The problem is that sometimes you won't have a choice but to shoot at noon, so this set subject category will help you to get to grips with some options for making the most of the zenith, while contending with less-than-ideal lighting.

When shooting in very bright midday conditions you can choose to **MITIGATE** the effects of bright light and dark shadow by :

- Finding shade or using an umbrella to reduce hectic contrast
- Using a polarising filter: to keep skies blue
- Watch your highlights by using the histogram on your camera, make sure they don't blow out
- Using a lens hood to reduce flare
- Spot meter off your subject to retain subject detail against a bright background
- Using a neutral density filter



Alternatively, you can **EMBRACE** the full sun. This set subject is aimed at making the most of the midday sun. Use those strong shadows and saturated colours to enhance your composition, rather than detract from it.

Here are some suggestions :

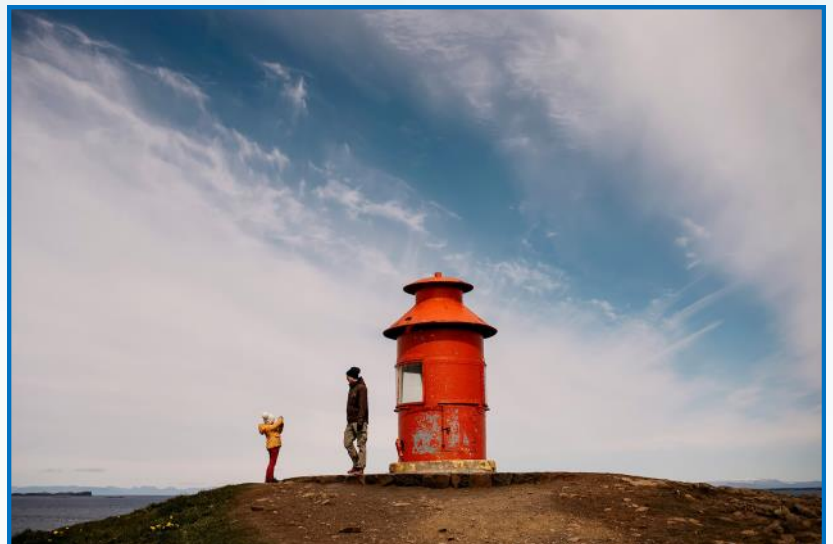
### 1. Learn The Sunny F16 Rule

The basic guideline is to close off the aperture when shooting in harsh sun, if you set your camera to ISO 100, f/16 and 1/100th sec shutter speed, you will get a reasonable exposure. No set rule like this is going to be applicable in every single situation. You will probably need to change one or two elements of that setup for your own situation, but it is a reasonable place to start. Just be sure to know your exposure triangle and how it affects the various outcomes in your photograph.

### 2. Go bold

Another benefit of all that bright light is that it enhances colours. There are no clouds diminishing vibrance and the colour of the sunlight is more neutral than the warm hazy light of golden hour. For this reason, environmental and landscape photography can be great in this kind of light. Blue skies and bold shadows often make the scene feel so much more three dimensional and dynamic.

Use shadows as leading lines or create striking contrast between those bright and dark areas. Midday photoshoots are tricky, and it's not the time for dreamy, soft images. But if you play it right, you can get some strong and graphic compositions that "pop" off the screen.



### 3. Know the light source and experiment with shadows



Midday sun is recognizable by its bright highlights and also by its harsh shadows. And where there are shadows, there can be photographic drama. See these intense shadows as opportunities.

To know how to use any kind of light, you need to know where the light is coming from. Knowing the direction of the light will let you understand where your shadows will fall and allow you to adjust your subject's position accordingly. Watch the shadows play on your subject and use them to your advantage. Find the shapes and lines created by various objects and employ them in your final images. Take a walk and look for interesting objects that could cast compelling shadows. Think leaves, building edges, and trellises. These ordinary objects can be your secret weapon in combating harsh light.

They cast unique shadows that can dramatically alter the mood and composition of your portraits.

The idea is to introduce a different element that breaks the monotony of the harsh light while also working within the overall composition.



### 4. Backlight your subjects

You can use backlight in the late morning and early afternoon. As long as the sun is slightly angled, then backlighting is possible, and it's a great way to keep your subjects looking good in harsh, bright light.

By backlighting your human subjects, you keep direct sun off their faces, and you also avoid those weird shadows that occur under the eyebrows, nose, and chin. Backlighting will also help keep your subjects from squinting, which is a big problem during midday sessions.



### 5. Convert to black and white

Black-and-white photography often works well in harsh lighting due to the high level of contrast. Converting your colour portraits to monochrome can be a game-changer as it can turn the unpleasant aspects of harsh light into something visually engaging. A black-and-white conversion can simplify an image. It reduces visual distractions and makes the portrait more about shapes, tones, and contrasts. Here, harsh lighting, often a hindrance, suddenly becomes an asset. It contributes to the dramatic contrast that black-and-white images thrive on.

### 6. Try going wide

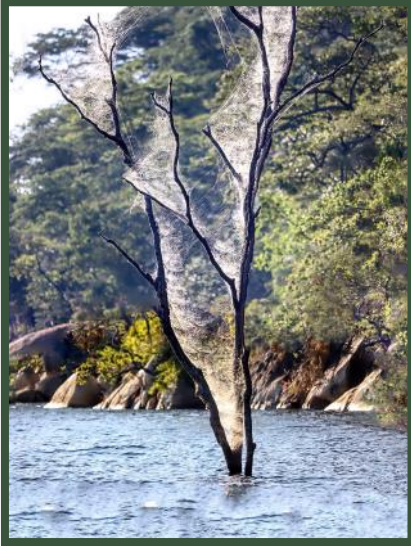
A common belief in portrait photography circles is that focal lengths of 50mm or greater are the best for capturing faces. True, these lenses can produce flattering facial features and provide a pleasing background blur. But a more expansive view can also work, especially in harsh lighting situations.

Consider using a wider lens or taking a step back – literally. What does this accomplish? This makes your subject a smaller element within the composition, thereby it diminishes the emphasis on any unflattering shadows that harsh light can cast on facial features. Instead, the viewer's attention is directed toward how your subject fits within the surrounding environment.



### 7. Find a Dynamic Scene

Midday sun images tend to work better if they can give an overall dynamic sense of light. Deep shadows and bright highlights will do this. Find a scene that represents all these tonal shifts and make your composition.



**April  
2024  
Cobwebs  
Montage**





## April 2024 Open Montage

