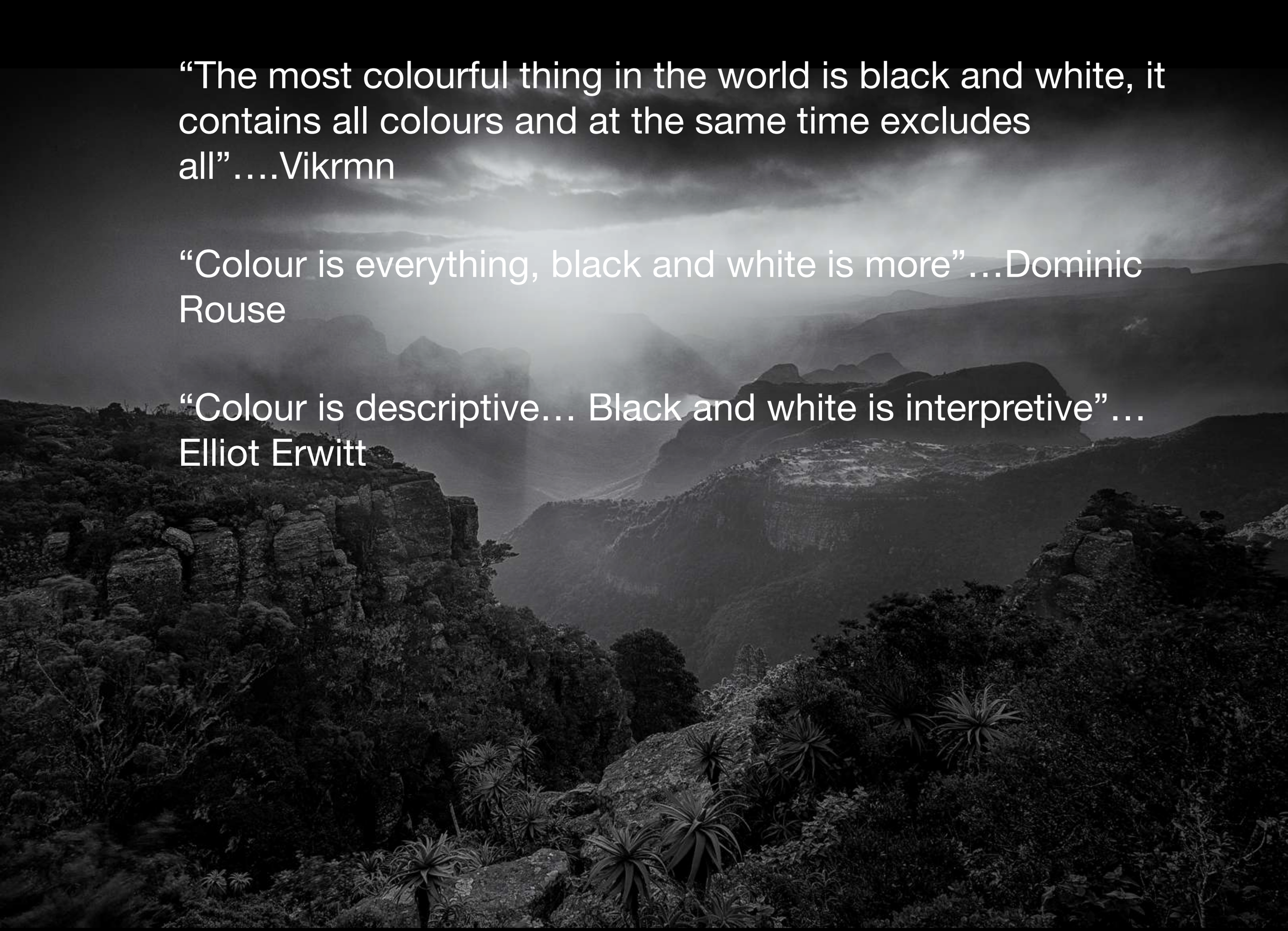
Evaluating Monochrome Photography

JAP Presentation by Kim Stevens

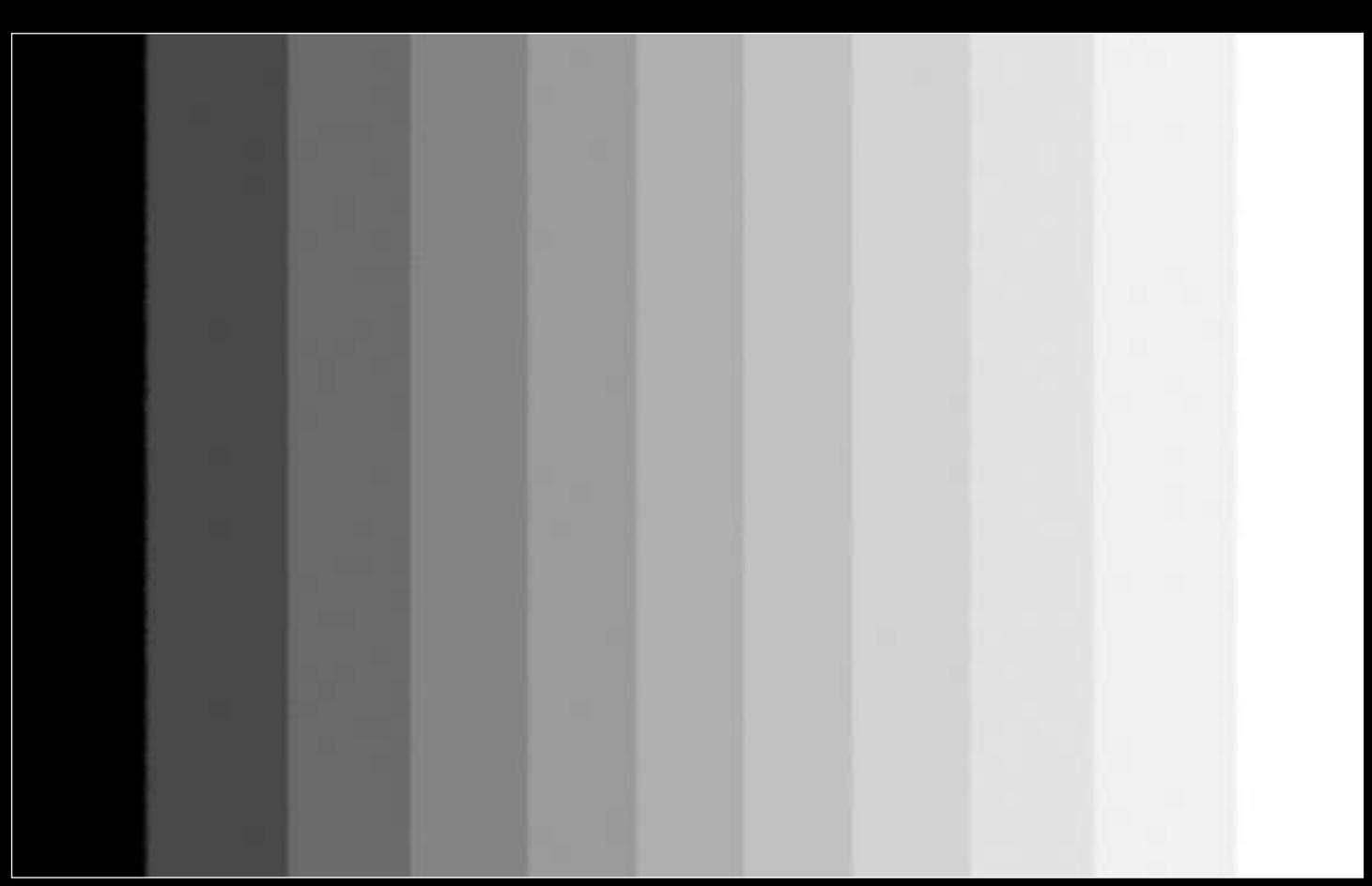


“The most colourful thing in the world is black and white, it contains all colours and at the same time excludes all”….Vikrmn

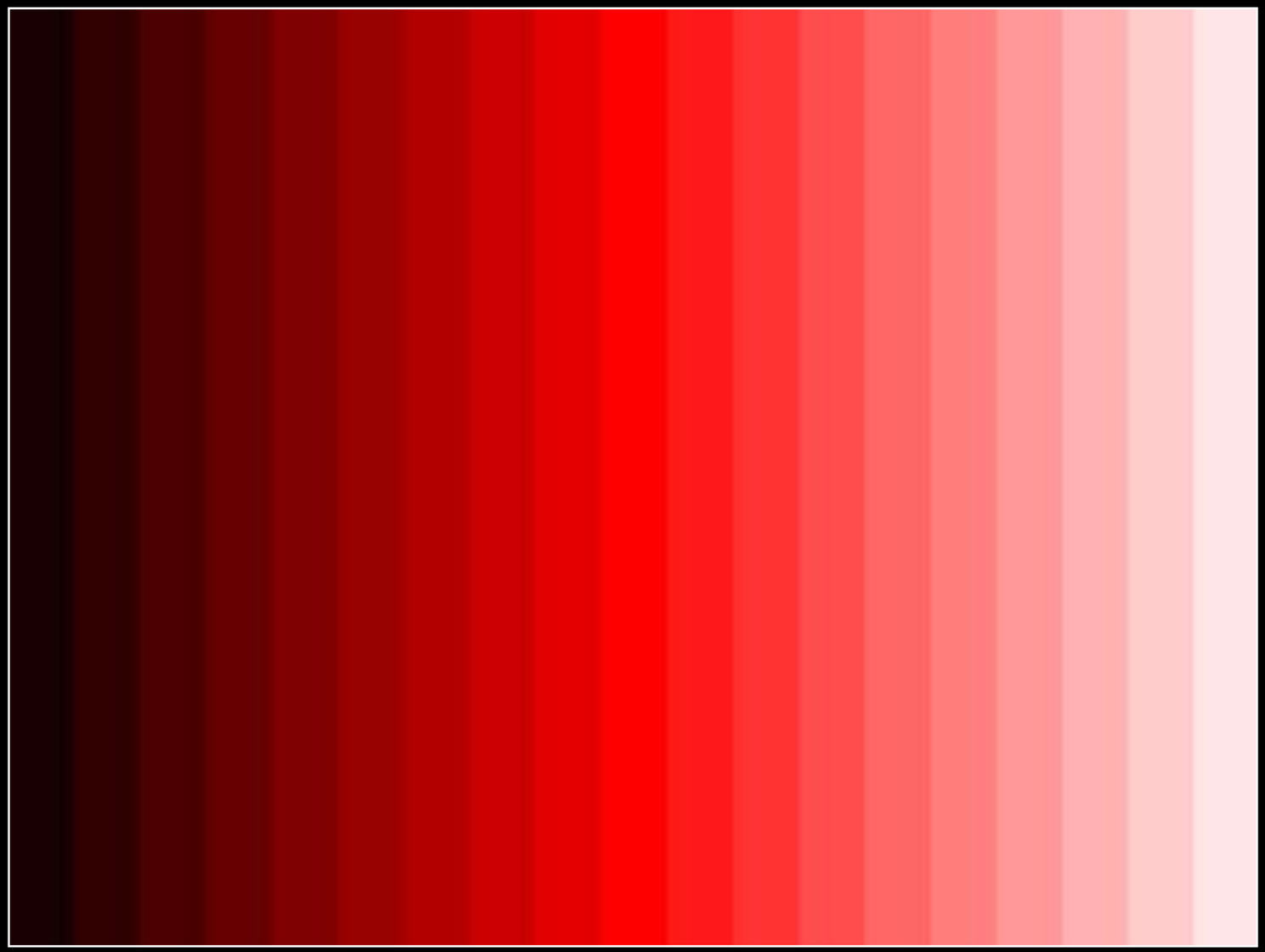
“Colour is everything, black and white is more”…Dominic Rouse

“Colour is descriptive… Black and white is interpretive”… Elliot Erwitt

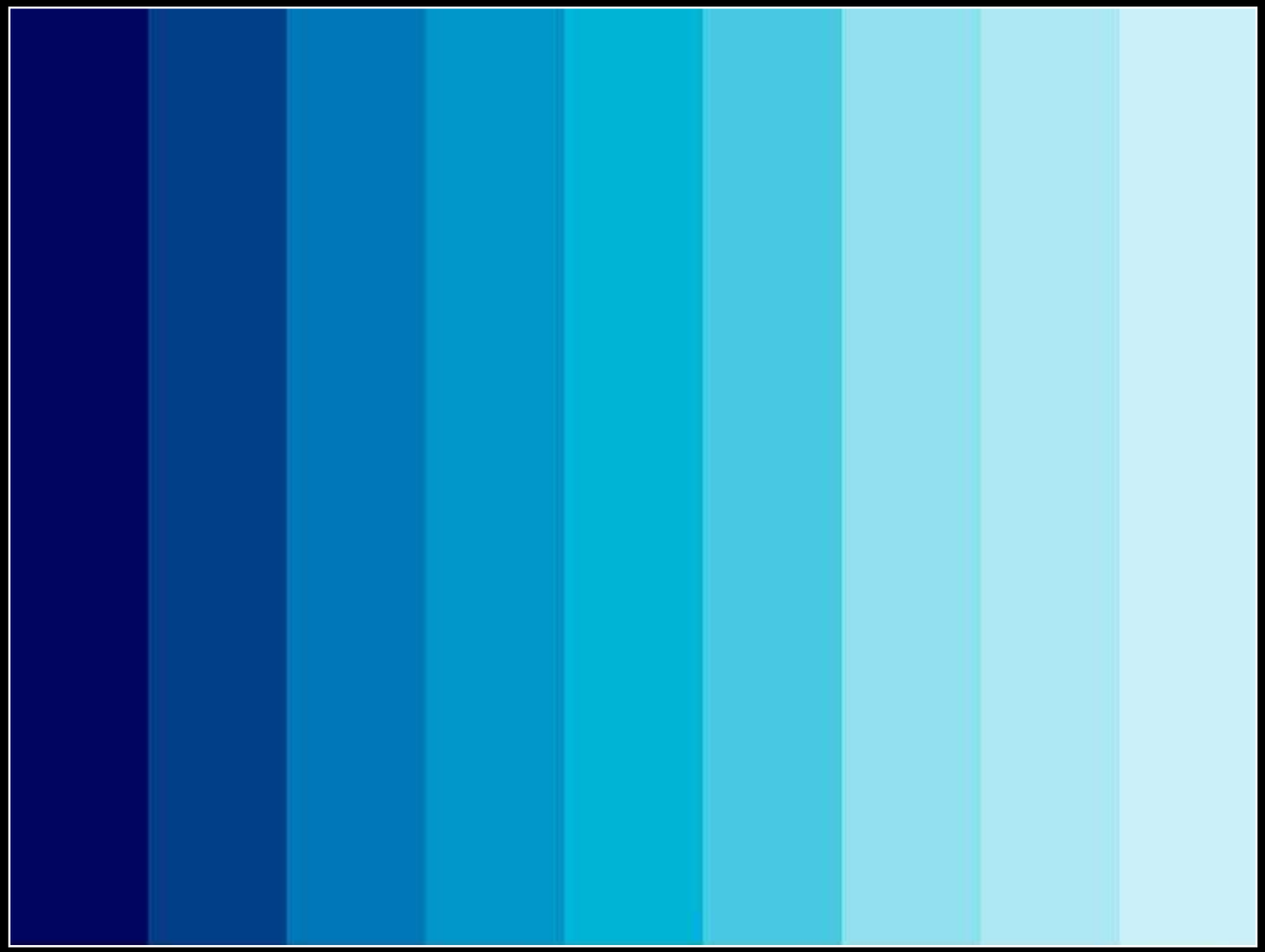
Monochrome photography records the the different amounts of light intensity (luminance) in an image and not the different hues.
Black and white photos contains tones of grey from black to white.
Monochrome images by definition contain different tones of a single colour but not necessarily grey.



Monochromatic tones of red

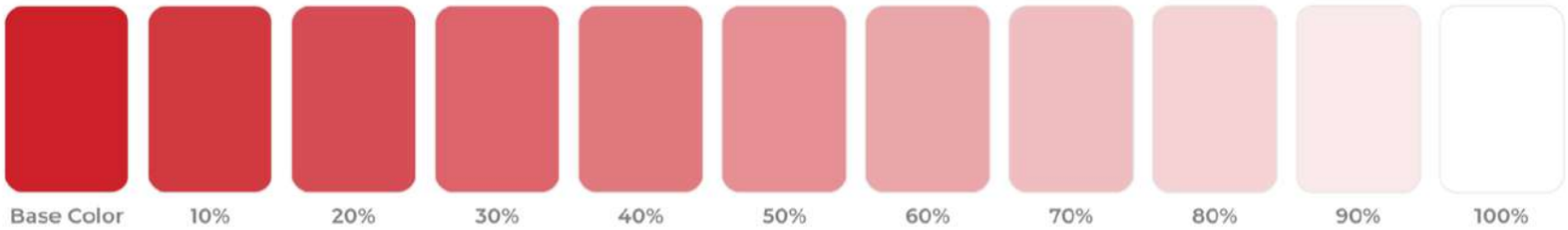


Monochromatic tones of blue

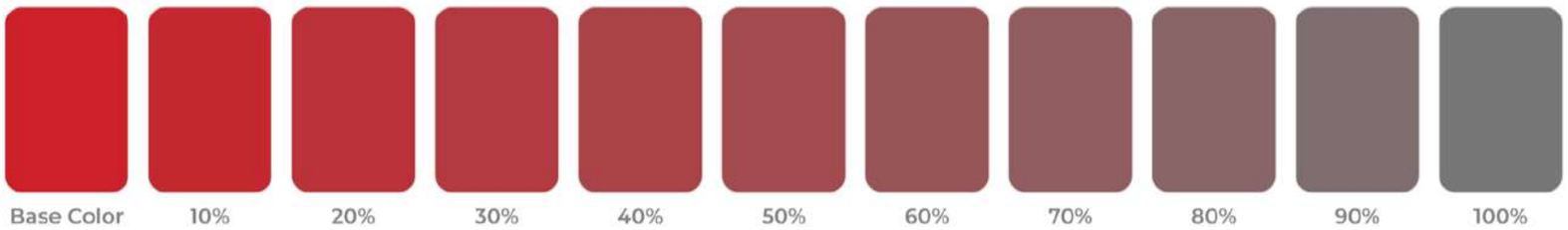


HUE (Pure Color)

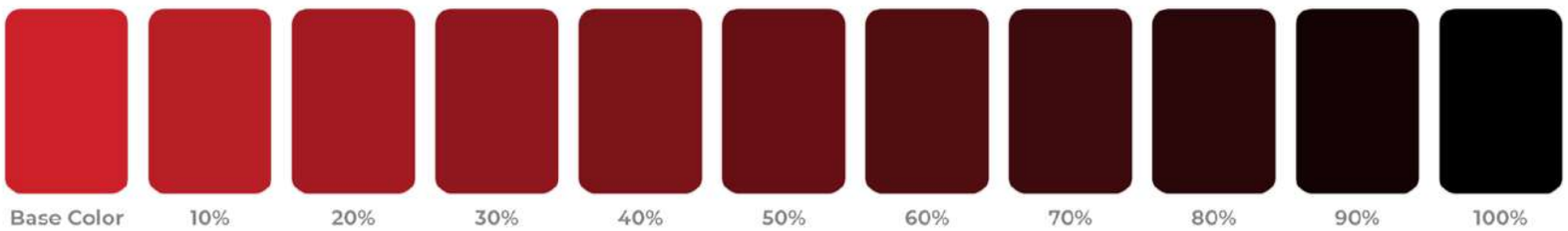
TINTS (Hue + White)



TONES (Hue + Gray)



SHADES (Hue + Black)

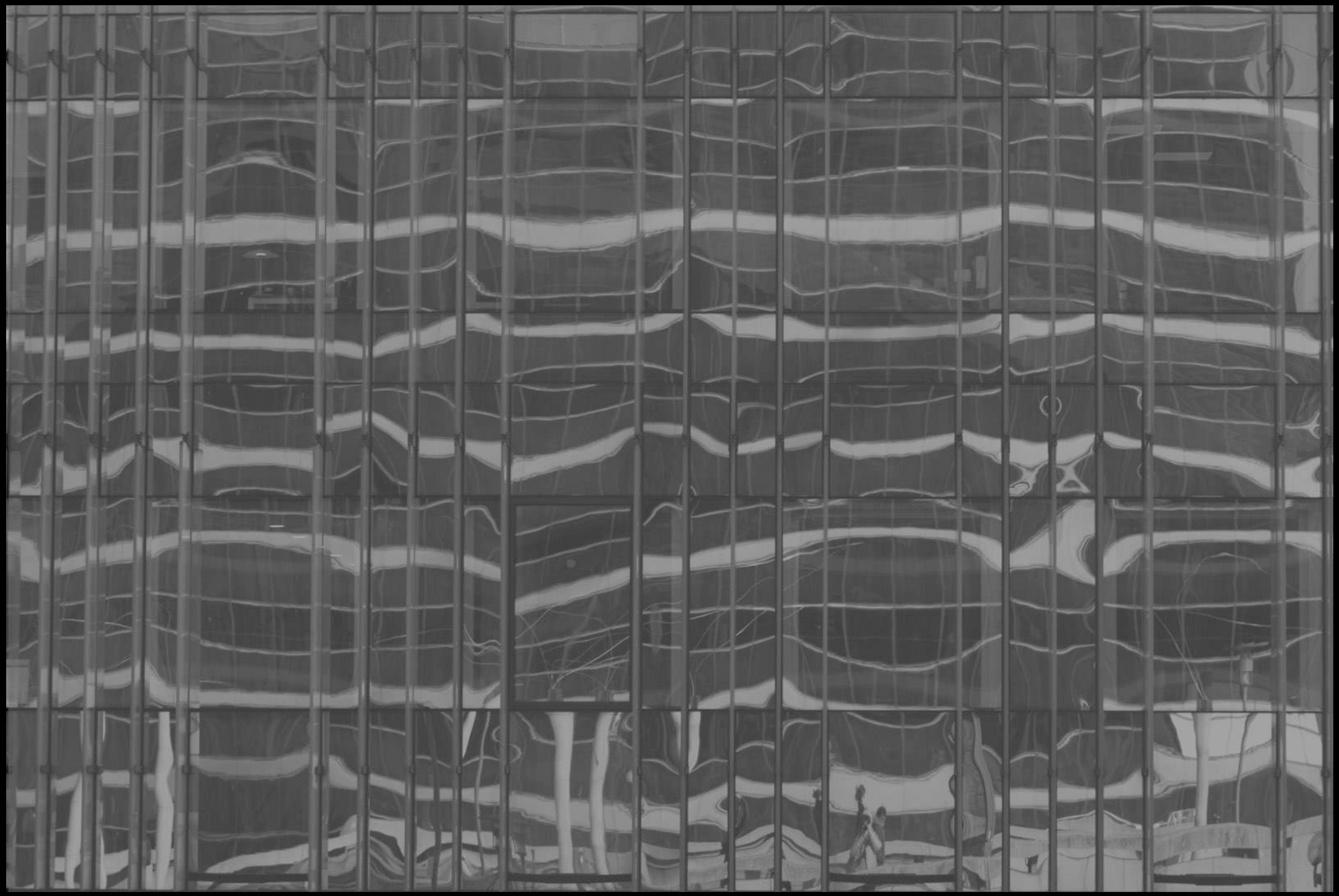


Psychology of the absence of colour

- Black

- White

- Grey



It is important to attain a balance between pure whites, pure blacks and the range of grey tones to achieve the desired outcome

Monochrome basics

Image

Form
Visual Aspects

Content
Meaning

Visual Aspects

- Line
- Shape
- Texture
- Colour

These are all dependant on light

- defines line
- defines shape
- defines texture
- determines colour

Line

Shape

Line and shape

Texture

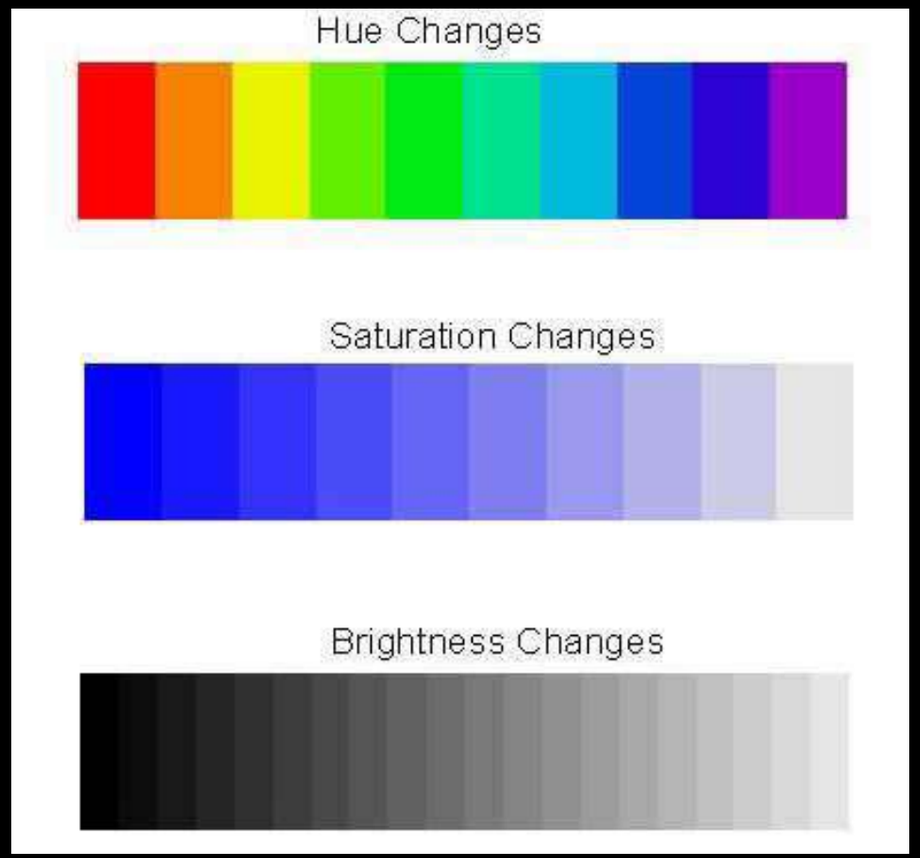
Colour is determined by the amount of light

Colour is a combination of hue, saturation and luminance (HSL)

Hue= name of colour

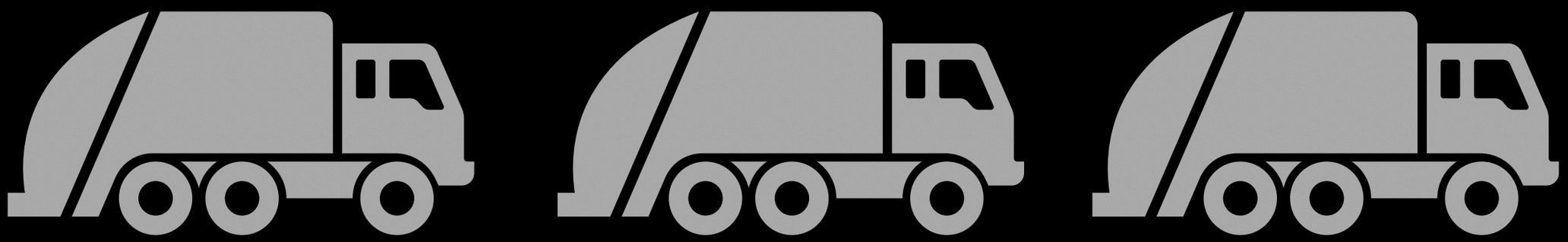
Saturation = intensity of colour

Luminance = brightness of light emitted or reflected off a surface.



HUE

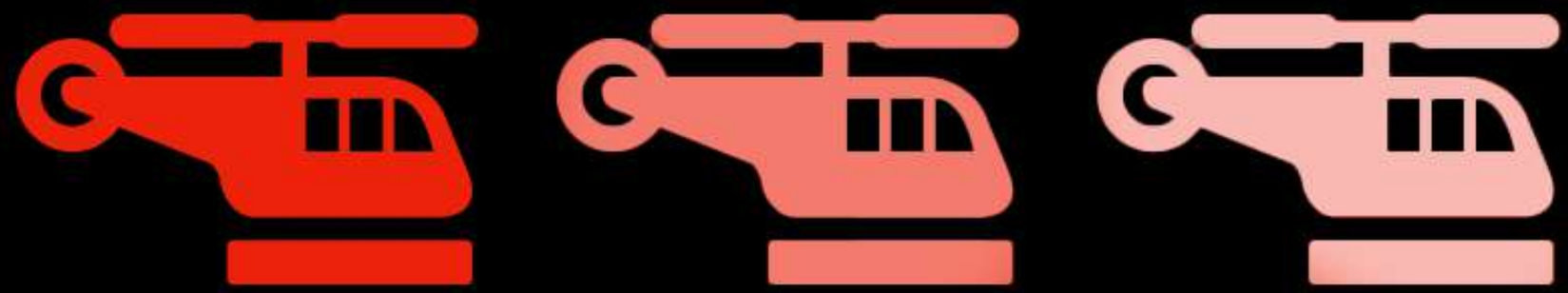
Desaturate colour



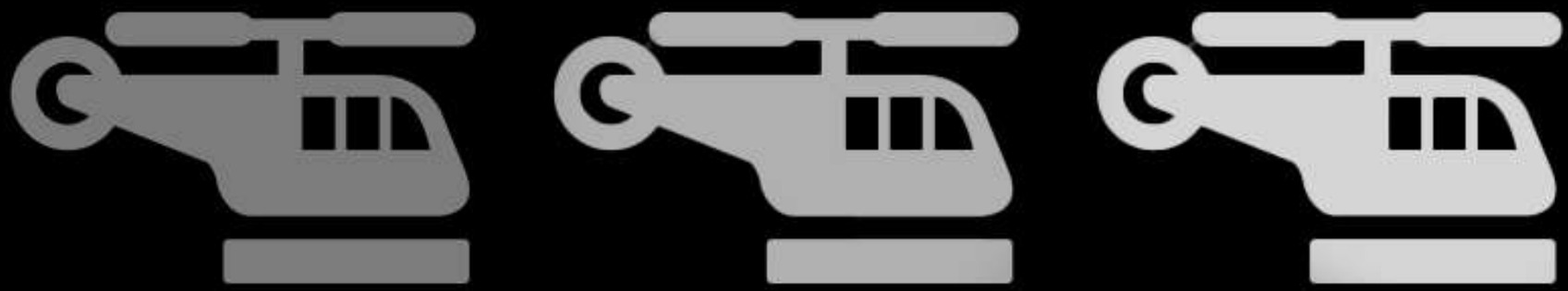
SATURATION

Desaturate

LUMINOSITY



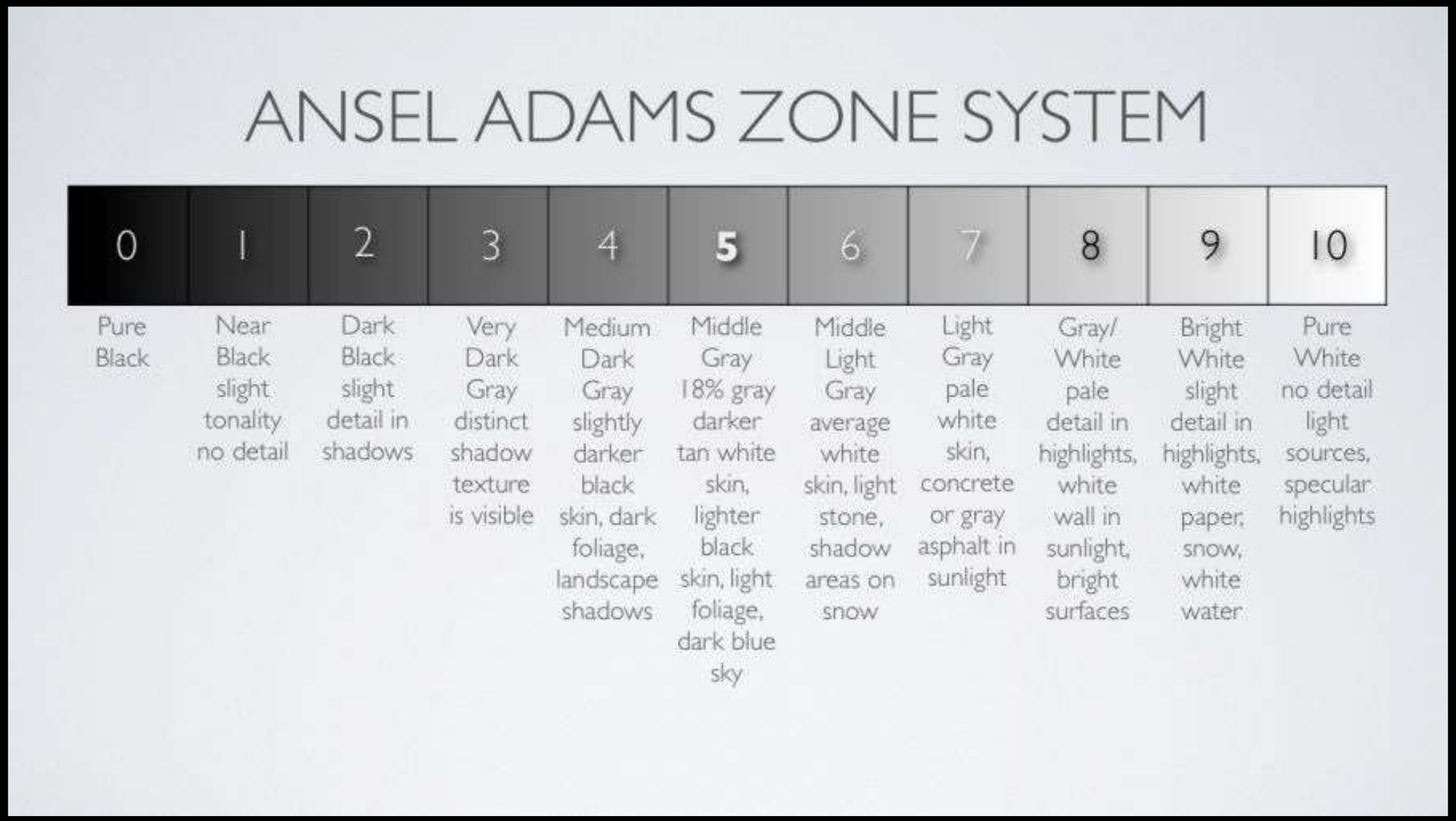
Desaturate luminosity



.....subtle gradations of grey tones

- A mono image is stripped of colour therefore the image relies on line, shape and texture for its visual strength.
- Hue and Saturation are irrelevant to the conversion to monochrome
- Only the luminance of a colour translates into the tones depicted in a monochrome image
- A variation and separation of these tones is key to a successful conversion

Understanding Tonal Range



- Utilising the entire tonal range

- Rich tonal range

- Mid tones

- Contrast

- Chiaroscuro effect created by the juxtaposition of a brightly lit areas and deep shadow. The transition takes place over a short distance.

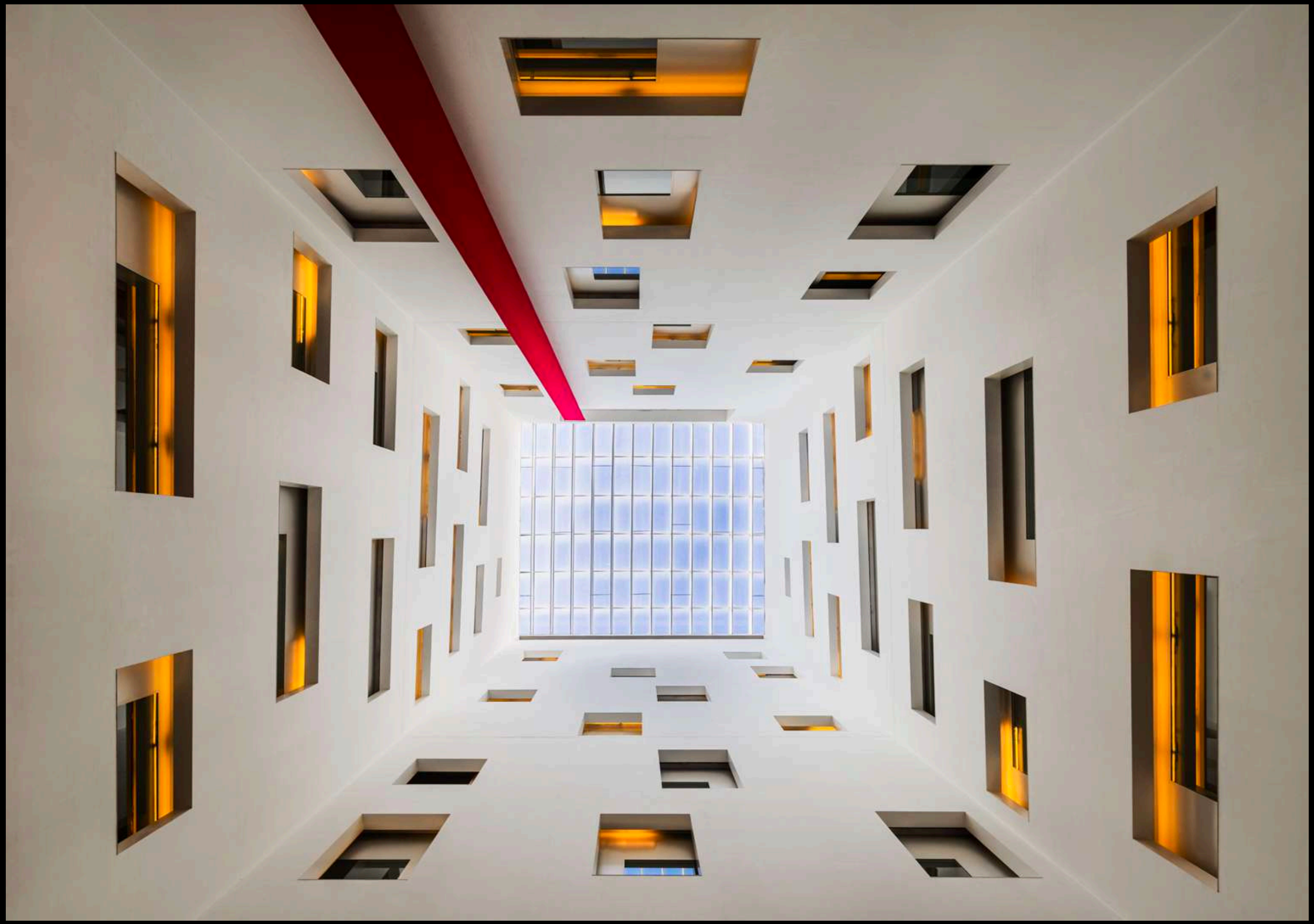
https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasleuthard/

- Shadows

- Figure to ground composition

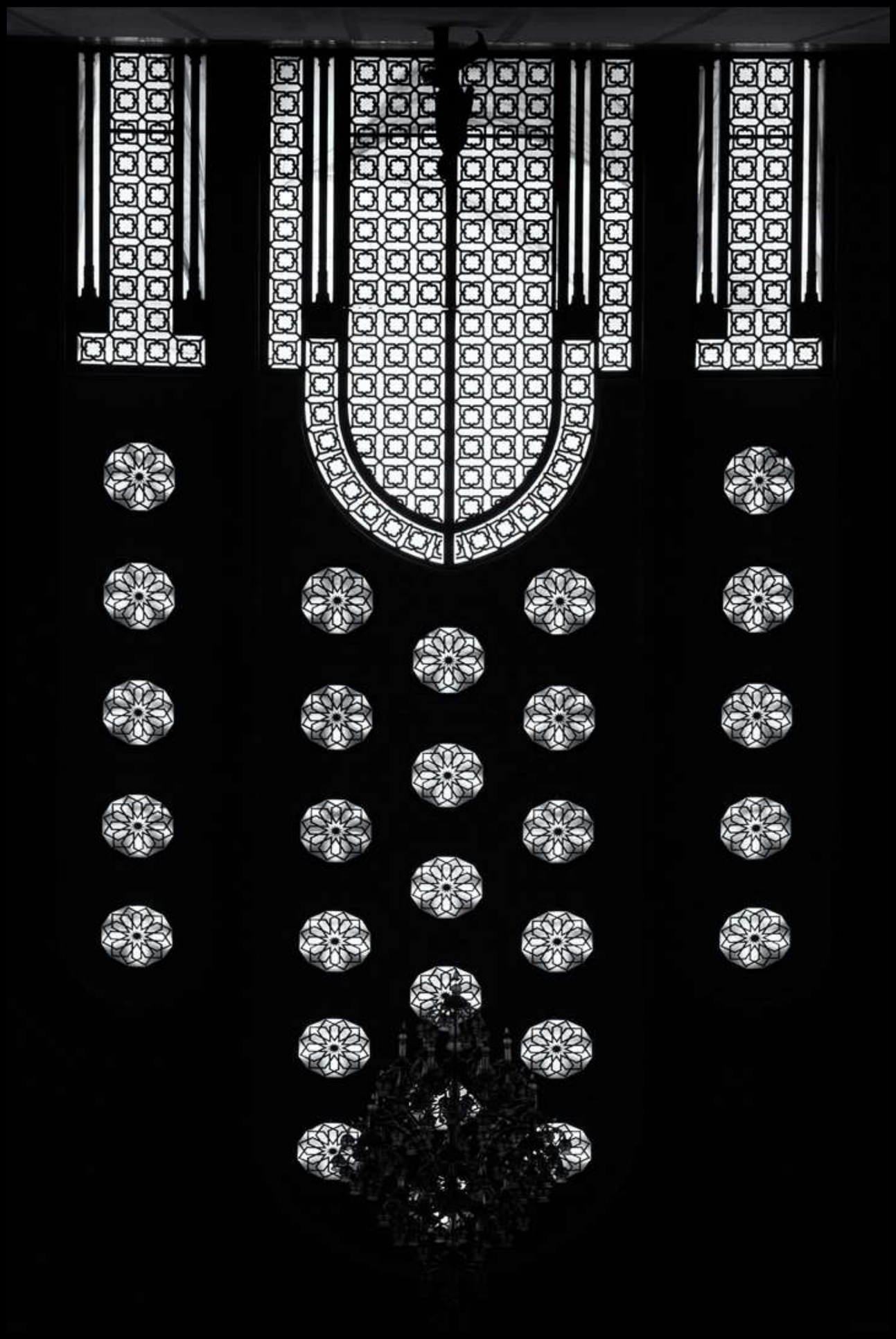
Consider why an author chose to convert to Mono ?

- Strips image to its essence
- suggests honesty and truth
- dignity
- timelessness
- elevates the mundane
- artistic
- elegant / classic
- romantic
- drama/mood/emotion



7 elements of successful monochrome images

- Shadows… become a major element of the composition…carry visual weight
- Contrast…needs to make sense for your subject. Can be stark or subtle.
- Tones…cornerstone of every B&W image .
- Shapes…they are interpretive and anchor and simplify the photo
- Texture…fills in the rest
- Composition…a sense of the underlying purpose
- Emotion

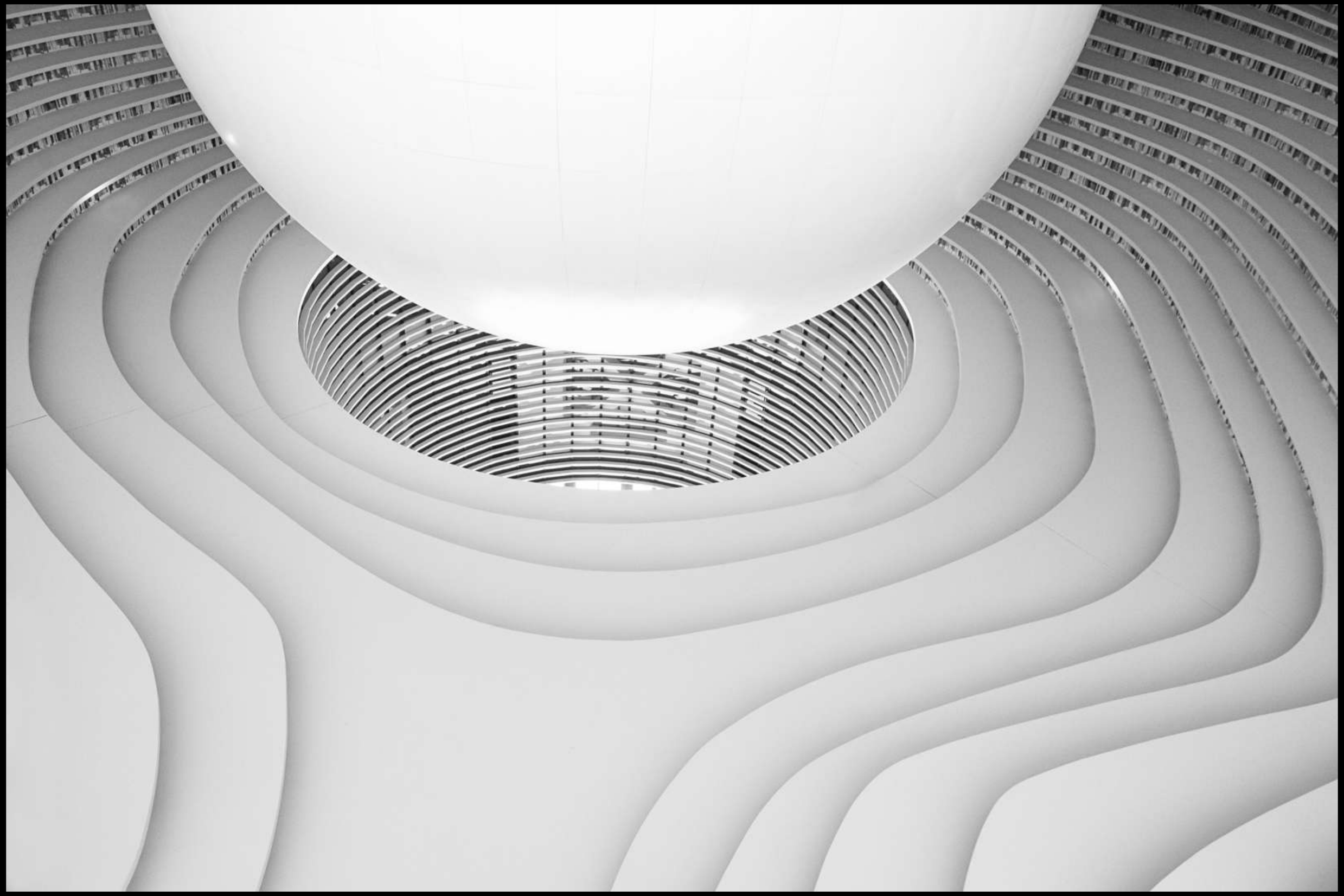


Let us consider other concepts associated with monochrome images one may be presented with ….

- toning
- high key
- low key
- infrared
- minimalism

Toning

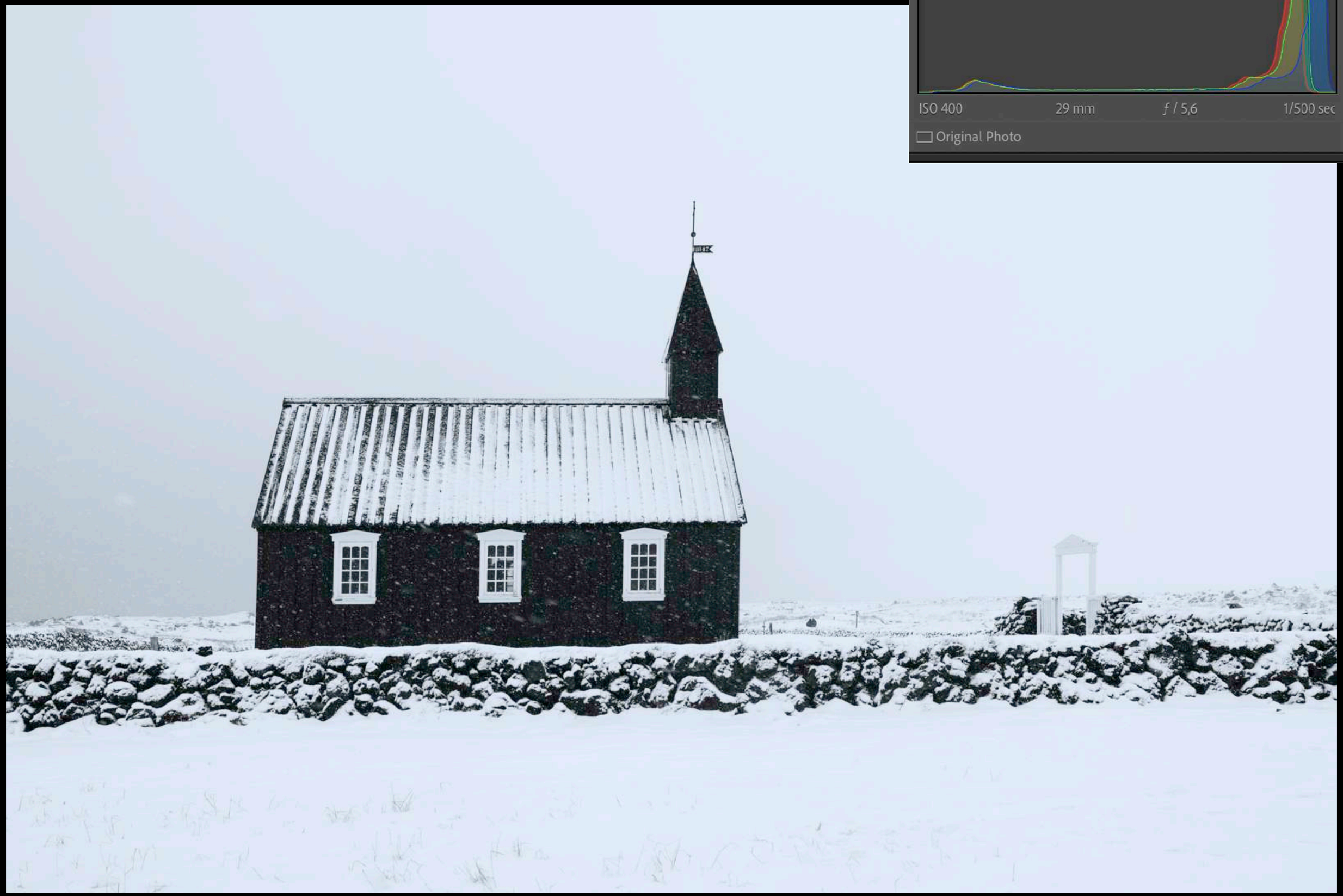
Hi key monochrome



Histogram

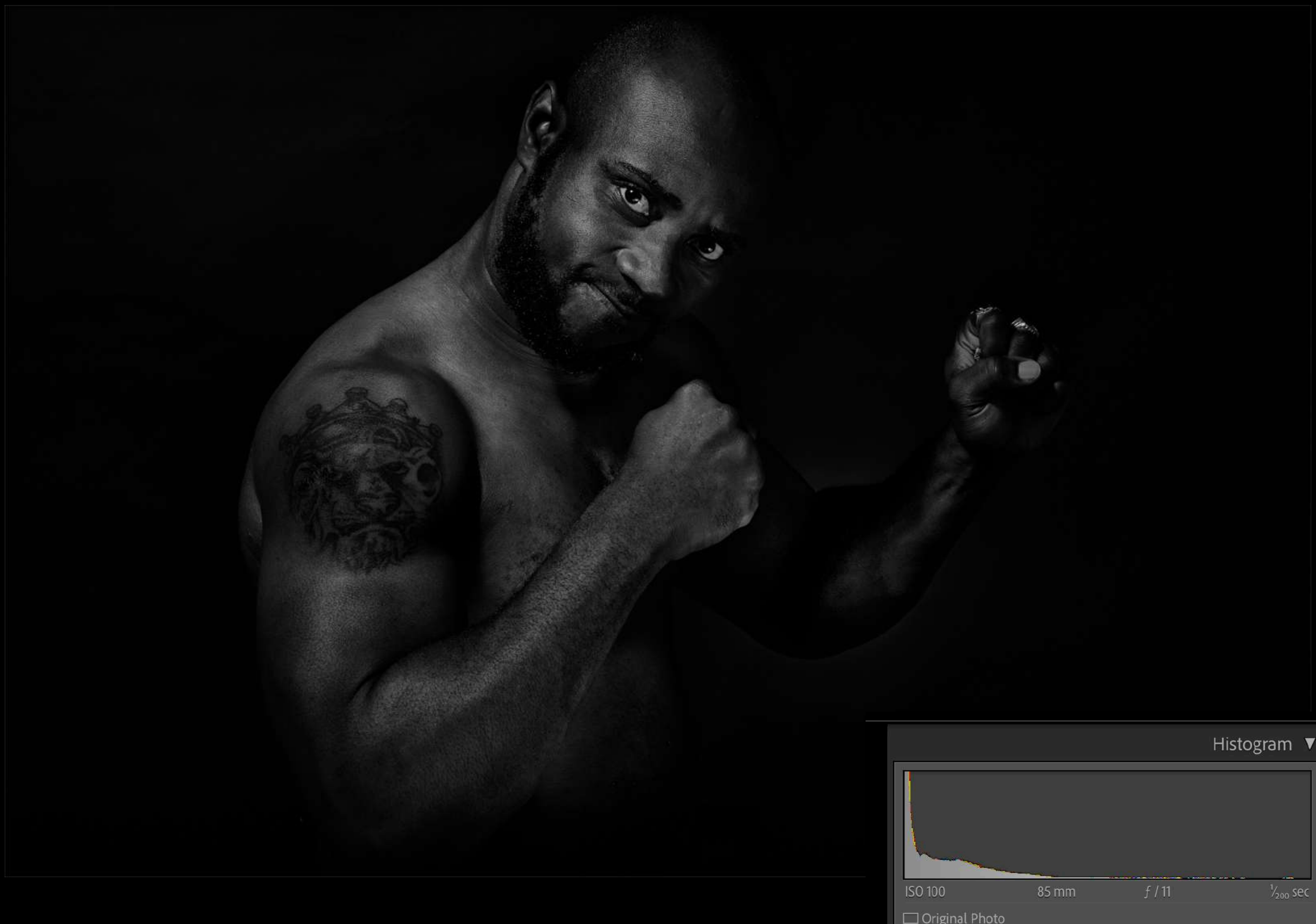
ISO 100 15 mm ƒ / 8,0 1/500 sec

Original Photo



Histogram
ISO 400
29 mm
f / 5,6
1/500 sec
Original Photo

Low Key Monochrome



Histogram

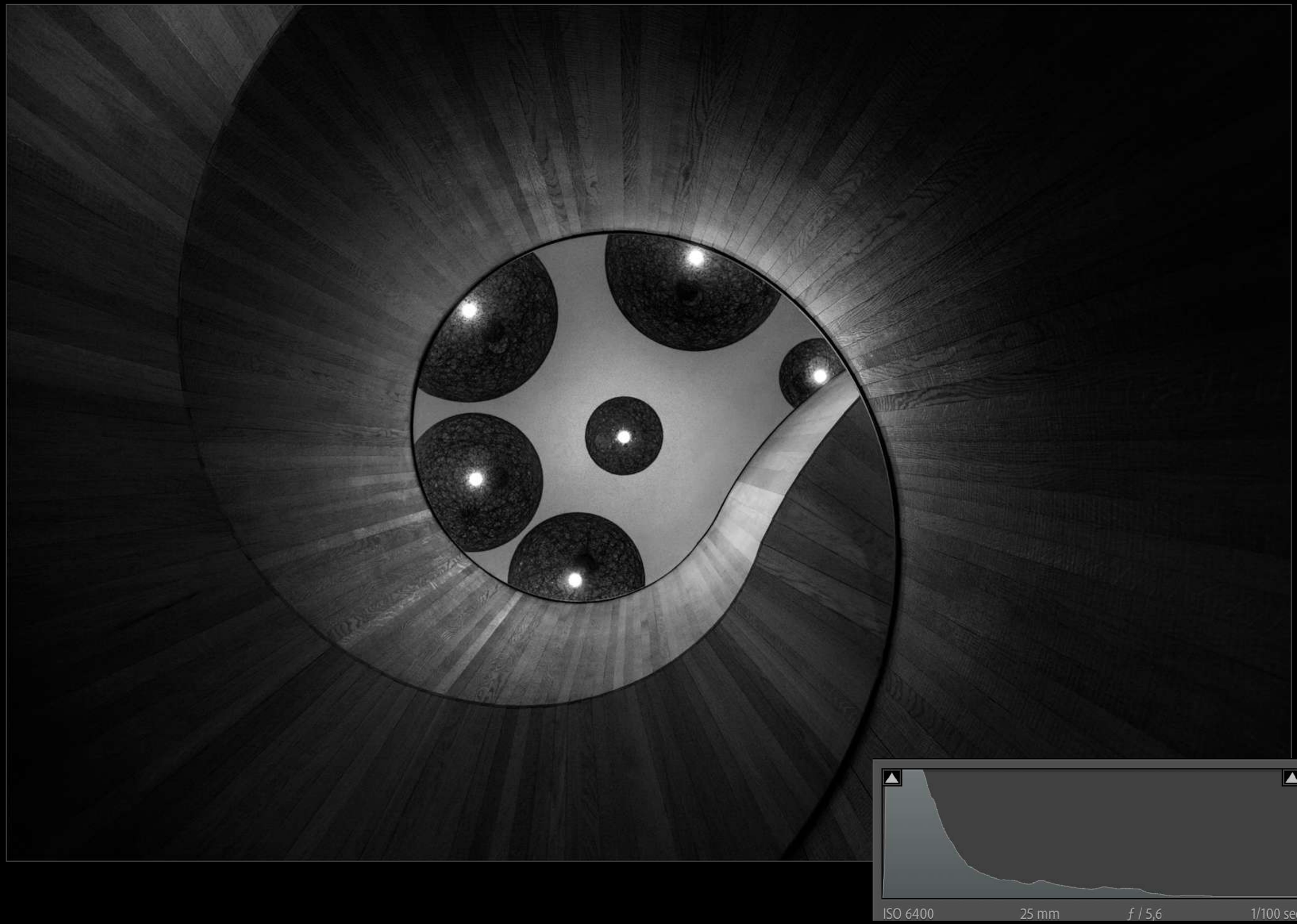
ISO 100 85 mm ƒ / 11 1/200 sec

Original Photo

Histogram

ISO 100 85 mm ƒ / 8,0 1/125 sec

Original Photo


ISO 6400
25 mm
f / 5,6
1/100 sec

Infra Red Monochrome

Minimalism

- Simplicity
- Negative space
- Composition
- Isolation
- Line and shape

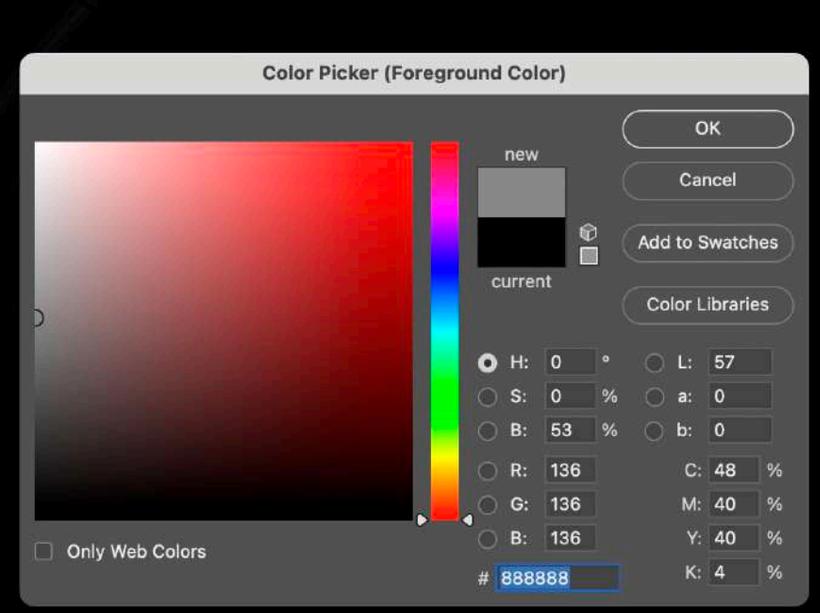
Evaluating mono images

- Impact
- Light
- Story
- Technical quality
- Composition
- Creativity
- Interest
- Style
- Presentation

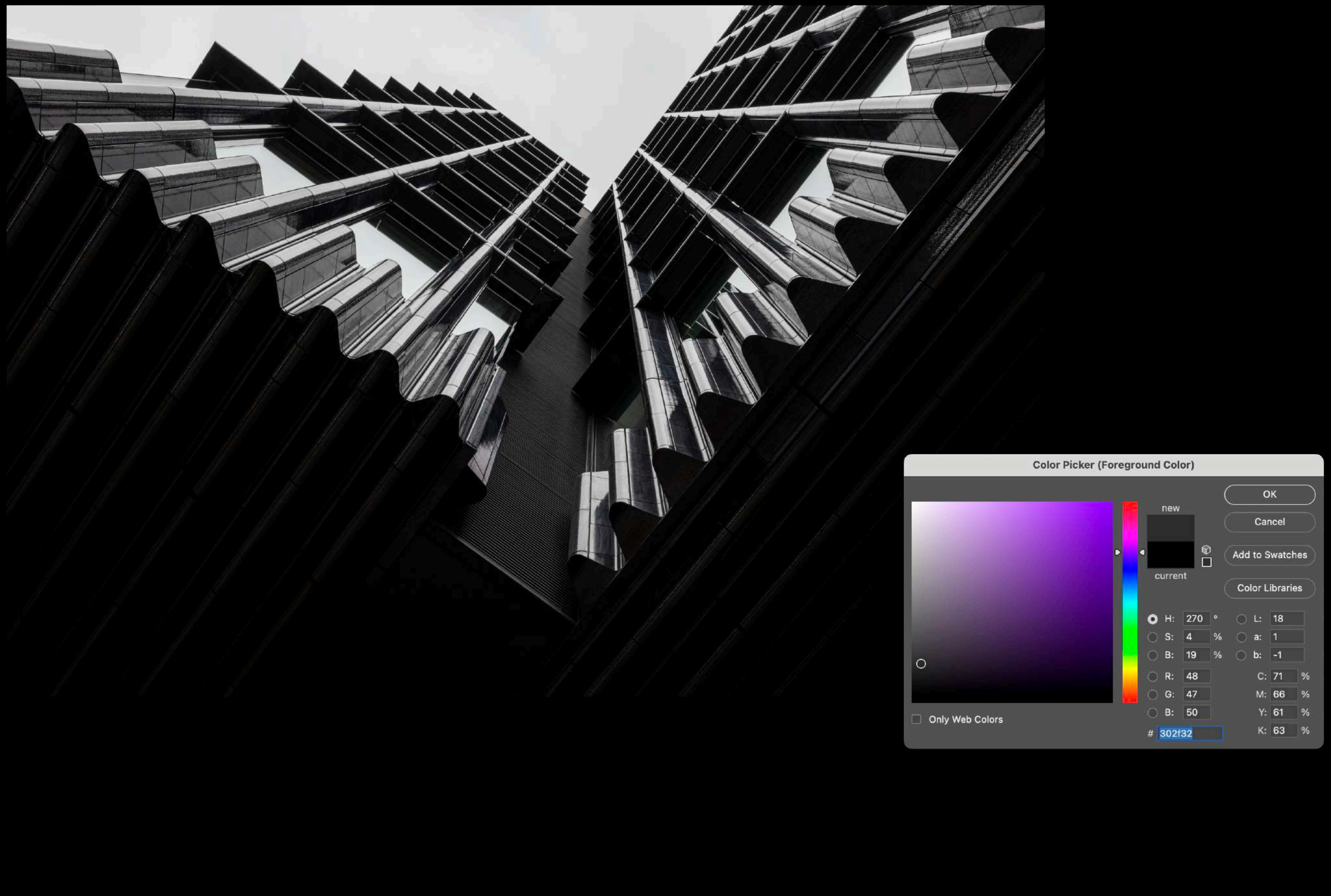
Split toning

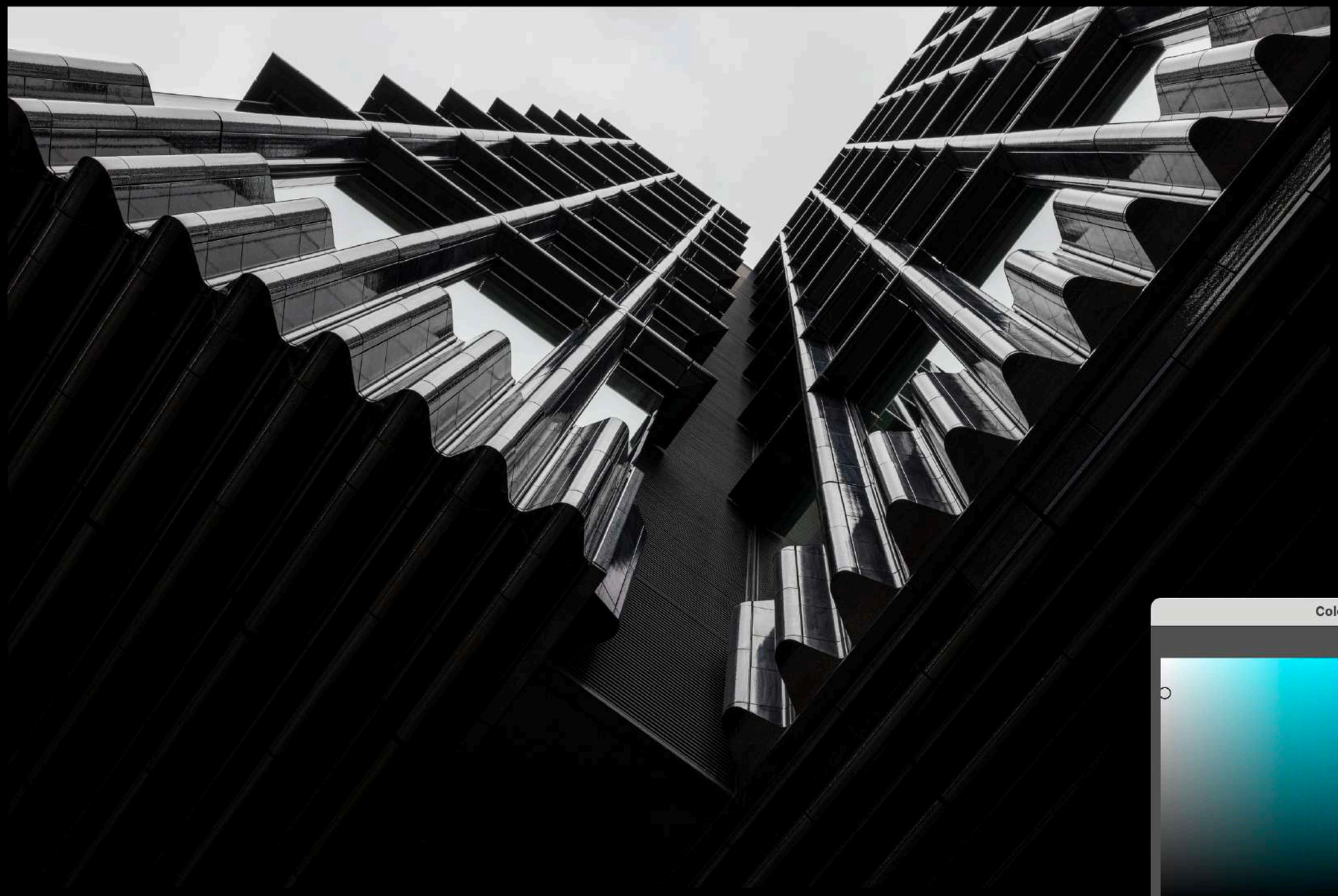
Chromatic aberration

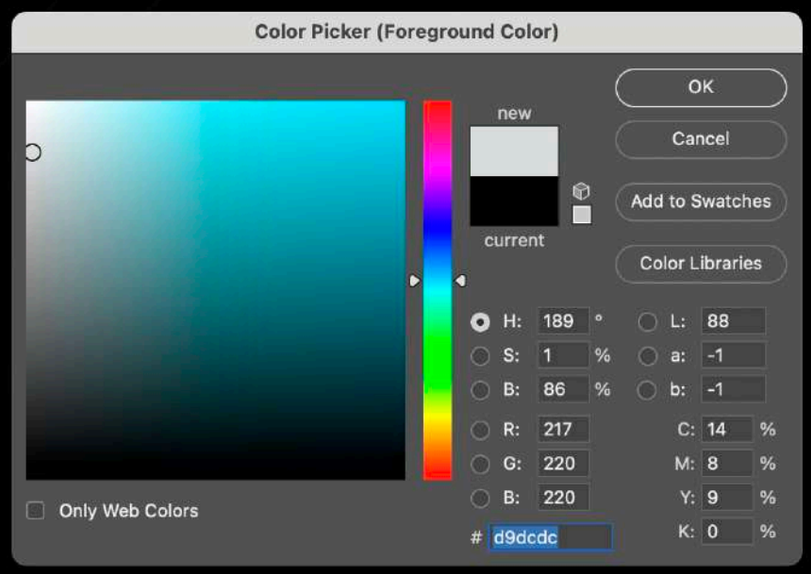
Pure Black and White



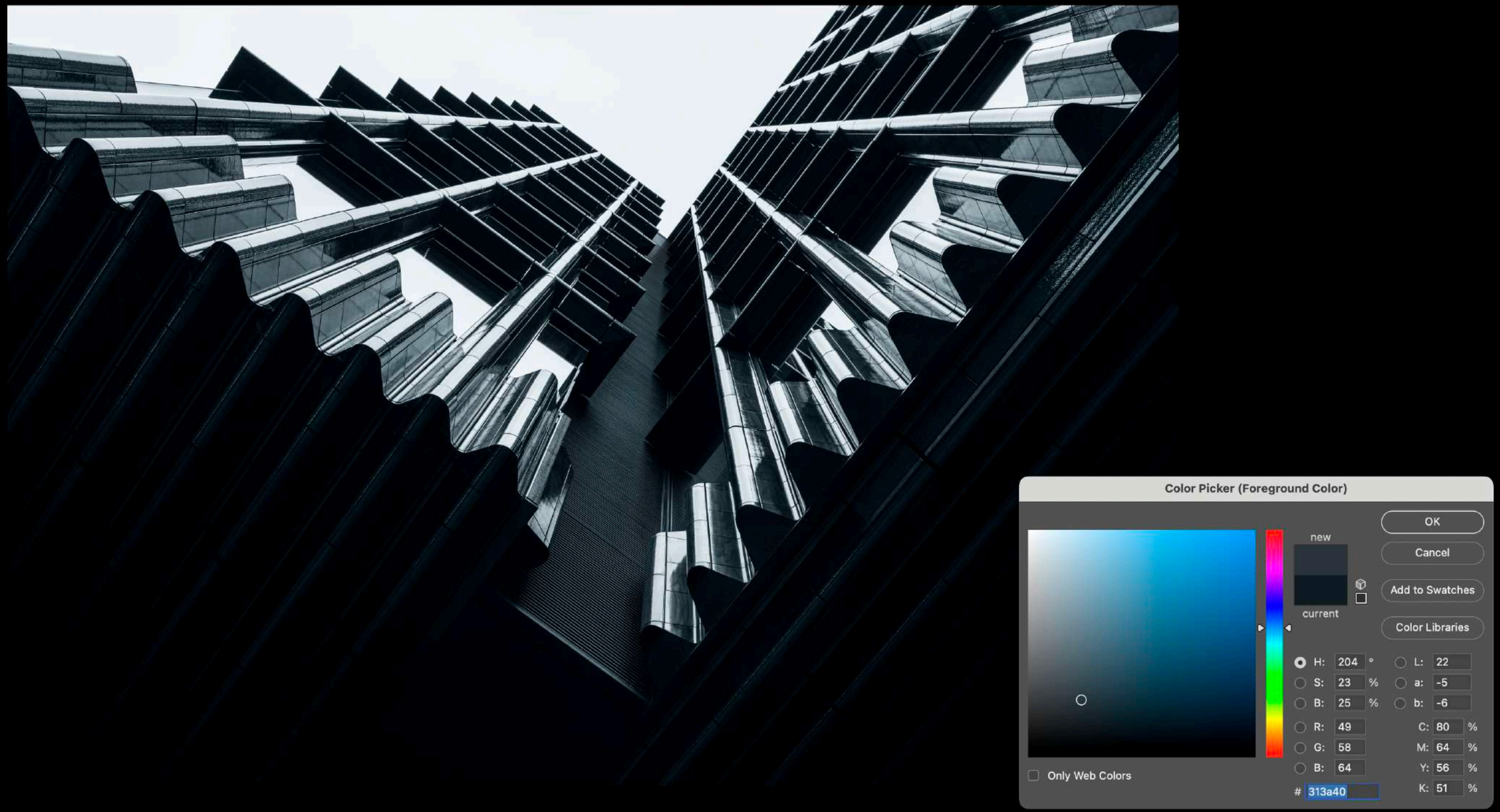
Retains colours as H value varies






Color Picker (Foreground Color)
OK
Cancel
Add to Swatches
Color Libraries
new
current
H: 189 °
S: 1 %
B: 86 %
R: 217
G: 220
B: 220
L: 88
a: -1
b: -1
C: 14 %
M: 8 %
Y: 9 %
K: 0 %
d9dcdc
Only Web Colors

Blue toning monochrome



1. Add a Hue/Saturation layer
   Layer → New Adjustment layer → Hue/Saturation
   Increase Saturation to 100%
   If you see any colour appearing then the image was not fully desaturated

2. Convert to Grayscale
   Go to image → Mode → Greyscale
   If PS asks to discard colour information, there was still colour in the image

3. Check with a Black and White Adjustment layer
   Move the sliders randomly
   If any part of the image changes, there was still underlying colour

4. Click on the colour box
   Use the eyedropper tool and move it around the image
   The H value should not vary much…maybe a few points

Photographic genres that translate well into Mono

- landscape photography
- portrait photography
- architectural photography
- street photography
- abstract photography
- wildlife
- macro and more!

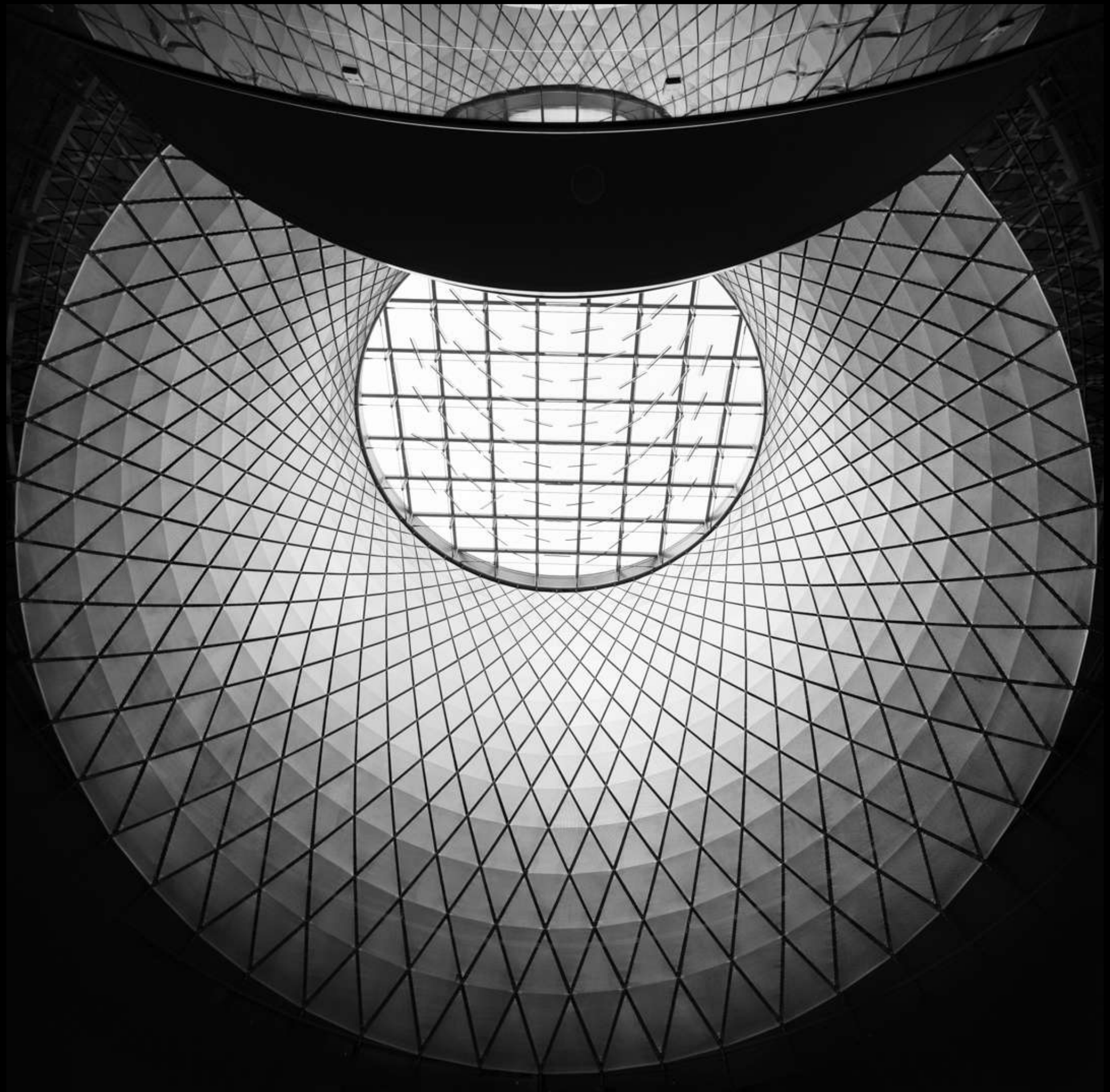
Landscape and long exposures

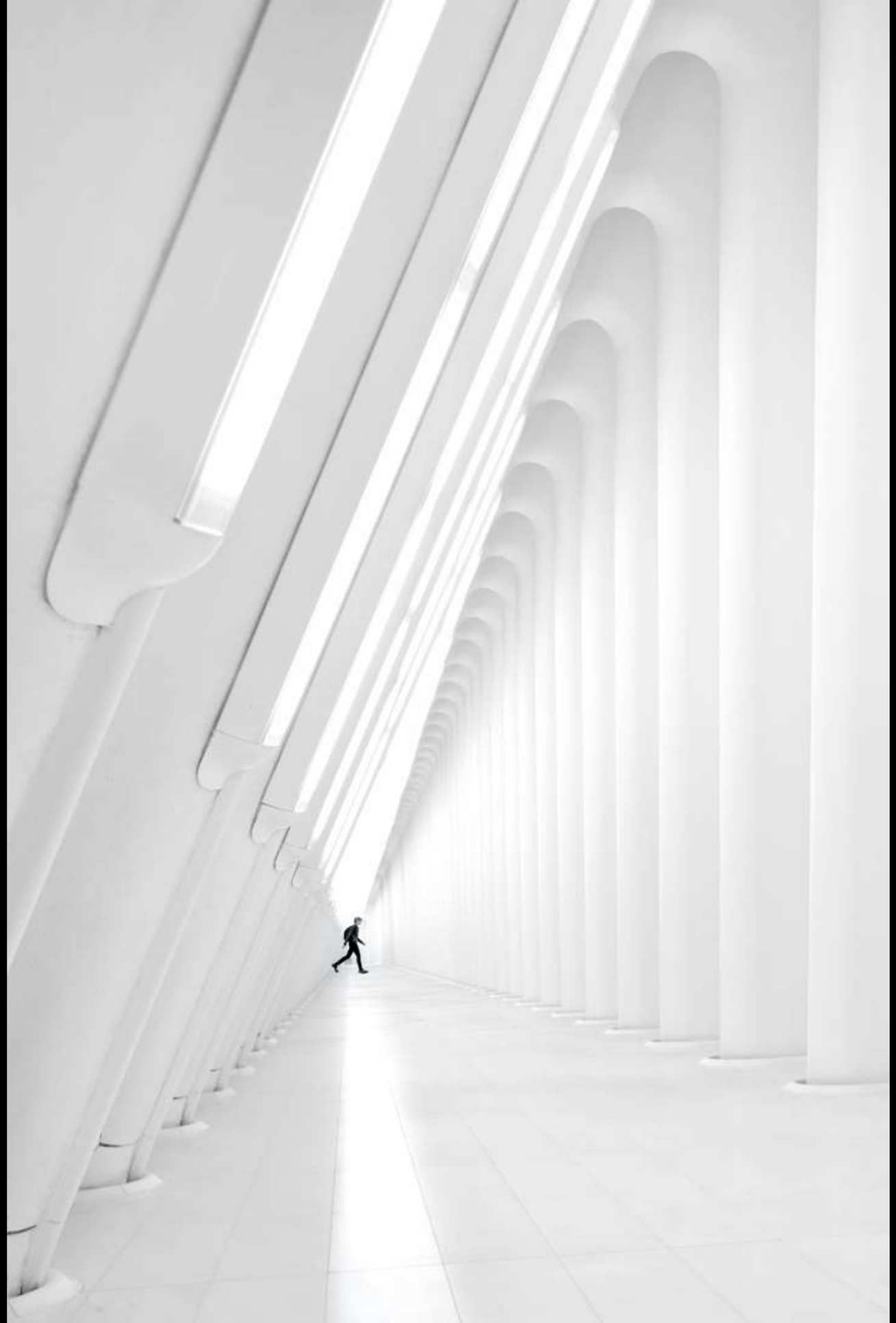
Portraits

Architectural images

Street photography

Abstract images



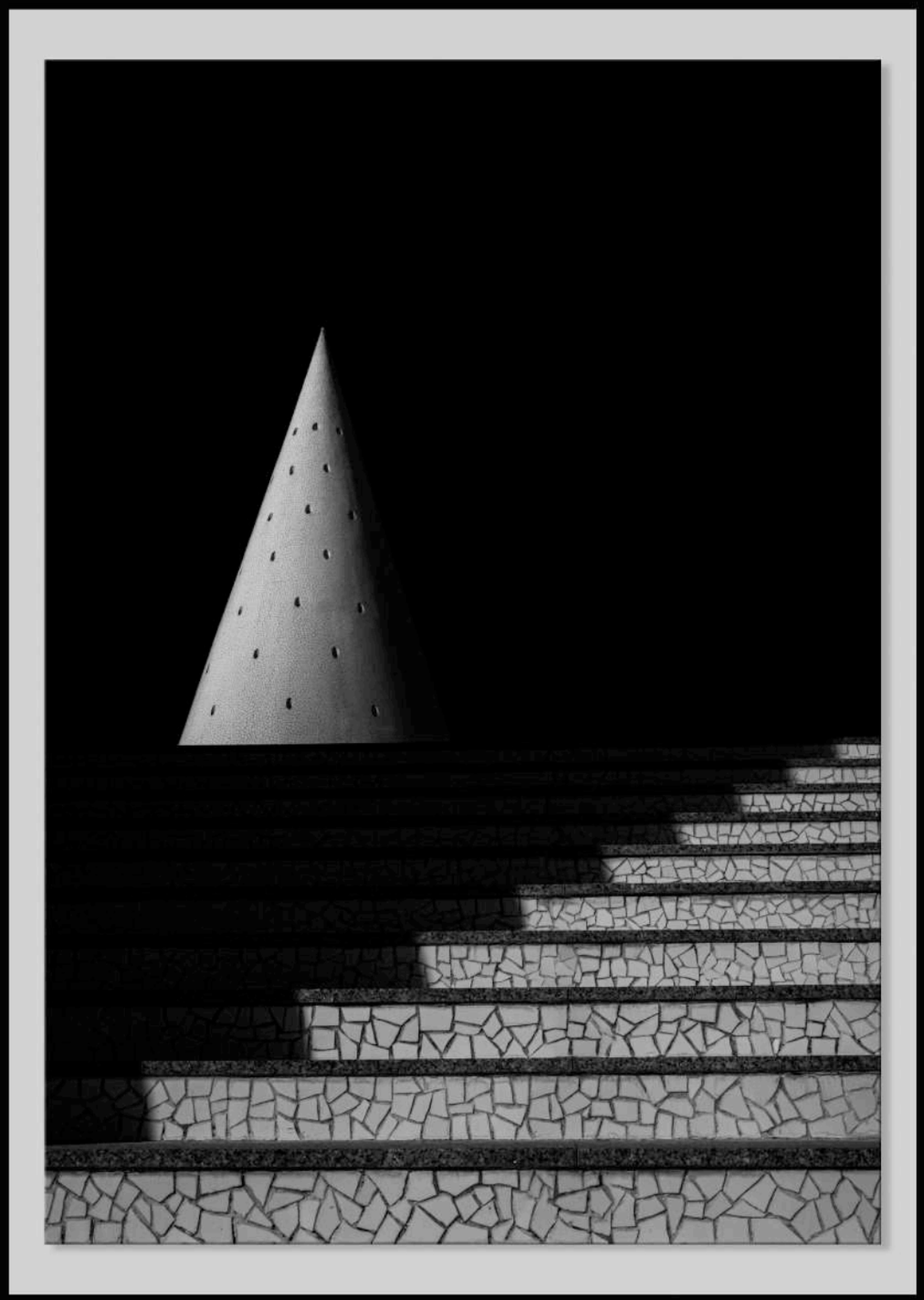


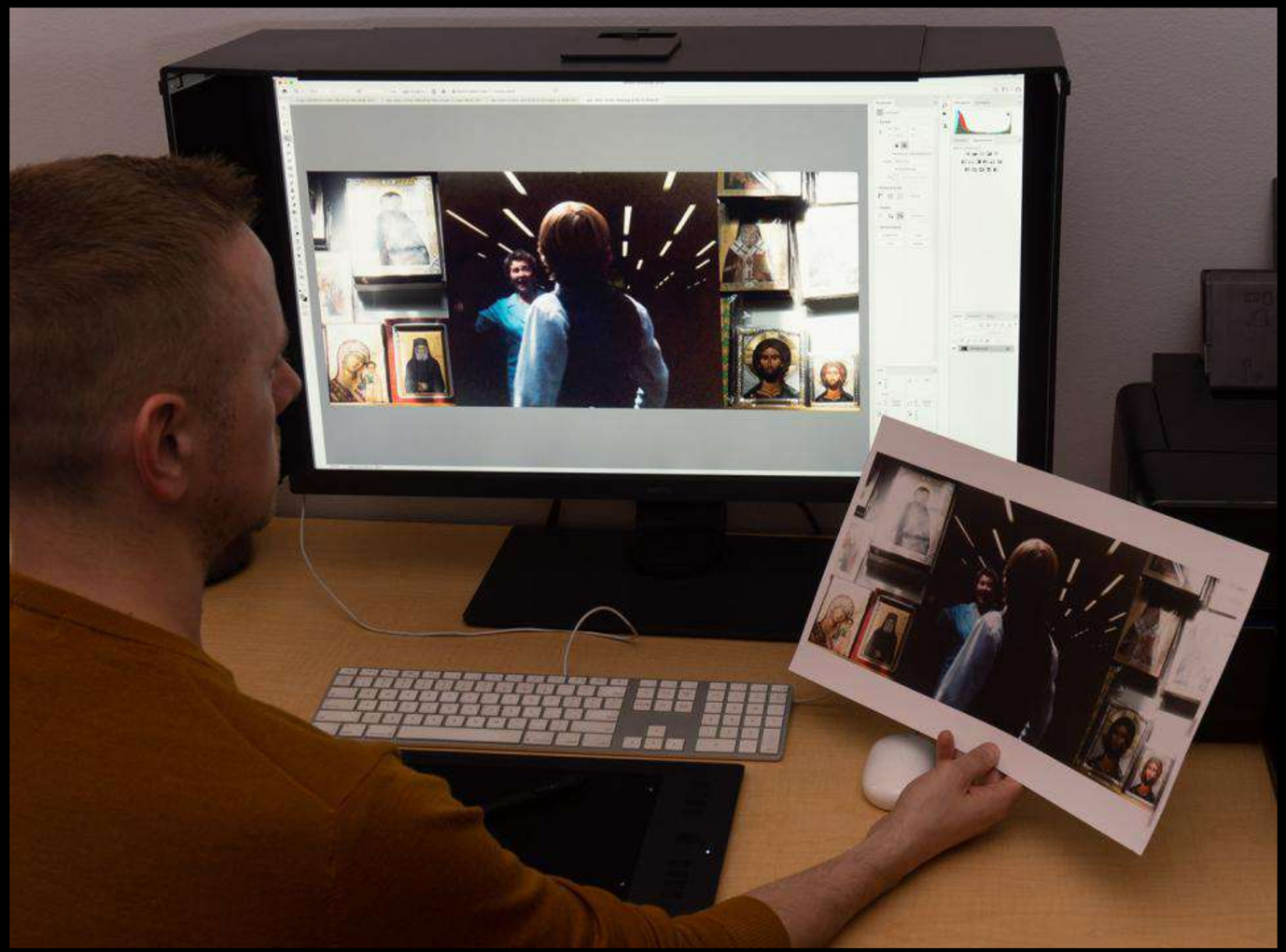
Wildlife

Post-processing and Presentation

- Many ways to convert from RAW to mono
- Dodging and burning critical
- Stroke or lack thereof
- Noise

- print
- papers
- presentation





graphiclite

- Questions?

- Stretch your legs