

Sand, Sea and Surf

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Introduction

- The genesis of Sand, Sea and Surf
- Photo locations – ‘local is lekker’
- Coastal photography – multiple genres
- Presentation road map
 - Illustrated practical guide
 - Audio visual
 - Q&A



Photo opportunities

- There is so much happening in and around the ocean
- It's constantly changing, wave by wave
- Its allure is best described in the poem *Sea Fever*

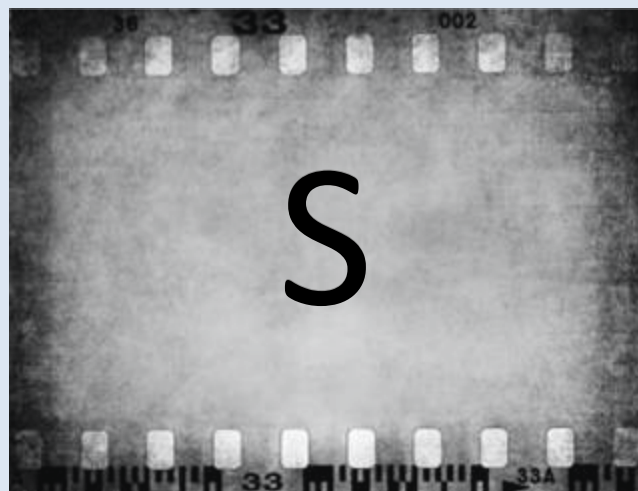
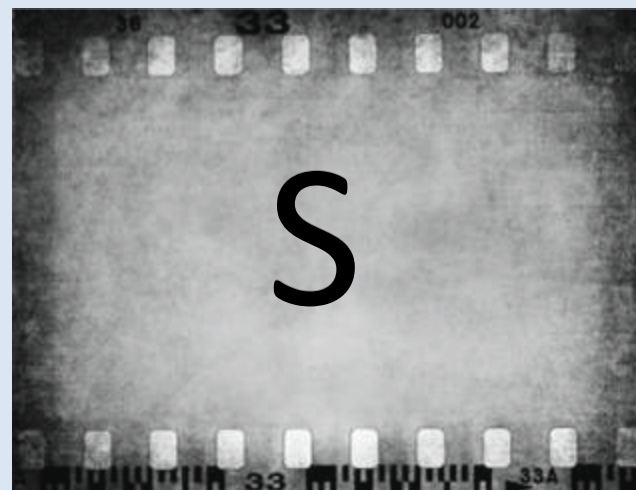
*"I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide,
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying."*

— John Masefield

Challenges and approach

- The ocean is a multisensory, 3D experience
- How to capture on a 2D sensor?
- Fools errand or not?
- Striving to create compelling images
- Many aspects, some controllable, some not
- Darrell Gulin's 4S Framework





Subject

- No subject – no image
- Plethora of coastal subjects
 - Waves, sand and rocks
 - Fauna and flora
 - Man-made structures
 - Sporting and leisure activities
- Two basic challenges
 - Are all subjects worthy
 - Framing – what to include or exclude?
- Example – are rocks a worthy subject?



Subject



Subject



Subject



Subject

- What do I mean by subject – multiple elements
- Arrangement of elements = composition
- Composition influences how visually compelling
- Scouting for images – subjects and composition
- Basic composition guidelines



Subject | Composition | Fore, middle and backgrounds

- Creates perception of depth
- Uninteresting foreground
- No background
- Complementary colours and sky helps
- Image looks 2D
- Not very compelling



Subject | Composition | Fore, middle and backgrounds

- Reframe the image
- Textured foreground, lead-ins, curves and shapes
- Lagoon less dominant
- Dunes are a strong background
- Distant mountains add depth
- Far more compelling



Subject | Composition | Fore, middle and backgrounds



Subject | Composition | Rule of thirds

- Rule of thirds or odd numbers
- Key elements on intersection of thirds (or fifths)
- Images more memorable and engaging
- Psychological evidence and stood test of time
- Horizon cuts image in half
- Eyes move between sky and foreground
- Not particularly compelling image!



Subject | Composition | Rule of thirds

- Horizon line now on a third
- Key focal point also on a third
- More interesting foreground
- Eyes rest more comfortably
- Greater perception of depth
- A much improved image!



Subject | Composition | Rule of thirds



Subject | Composition | Rule of thirds

- Purposefully break the rule
- Central horizon exploits symmetry
- Reflections don't compete
- Does it work?



Subject | Composition | Rule of thirds

- Horizon on a third
- Foreground included
- Does it work better?



Subject | Composition | Rule of thirds



Subject | Composition | Lead-in lines and diagonals

- Hard lead-in lines, left to right
- Guides viewer through the image
- Diagonals create dynamic element and perception of depth
- Long exposure accentuates wave movement
- Horizon on a third
- Complementary colours
- Quite a compelling image?



Subject | Composition | Lead-in lines and diagonals

- Soft diagonal waves create dynamic quality
- Slow shutter implies movement
- Wave patterns mirrored in mountains
- Appealing complementary colours
- A compelling image?



Subject | Composition | S-bends and curves

- S-curve provides sense of depth and rhythm
- Leads viewer on visual journey
- Interplay of light and shadow accentuates sand textures and bubble patterns
- Warm tones and back-lighting key factor
- Simple but compelling?



Subject | Composition | S-bends and curves

- Wave creates Fibonacci spiral
- Draws viewer into the image
- Body boarder on a third
- Red advancing colour
- Elements frozen but strong sense of movement
- A strong sports image?



Subject | Composition | Balance

- Visual weight, not real estate
- Image positives
 - Horizon on a third
 - Lead in from left
 - Contrast between hard and soft elements
 - Beautiful pastel sky
 - Seated figure provides perspective
 - Spacing facilitates visual flow
- Cliffs dominate – not well balanced?



Subject | Composition | Balance

- Better visual balance?
- Soft and hard elements equally weighted
- Eyes rest more comfortably
- More compelling?



Subject | Composition | Balance



Subject | Composition | Negative space

- Tendency to crop too tight
- Subject dominates the frame
- Good qualities
 - Lead-in curve
 - Figure on a third
 - Looking into the image
 - Decisive moment – foot raised
 - Cool blue tones
- Lacks context – story telling?



Subject | Composition | Negative space

- Negative space = neutral, non-competing surround
- Reframe – more negative space
 - Improved storytelling
 - “Young boy fishing alone in expansive waters”
 - Longer lead-in
 - Main element on a third
- More compelling image?
- Looking out of the image?



Subject | Composition | Negative space



Subject | Composition | Textures and patterns

- Water's edge forms diagonal
- Repetition of pools creates intriguing patterns
- Back-lighting accentuates textures
- Transition from cool to warm hues
- A compelling image?



Subject | Composition | Textures and patterns

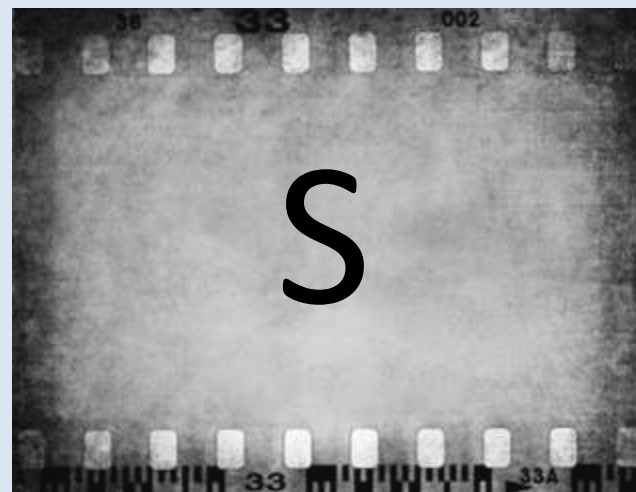
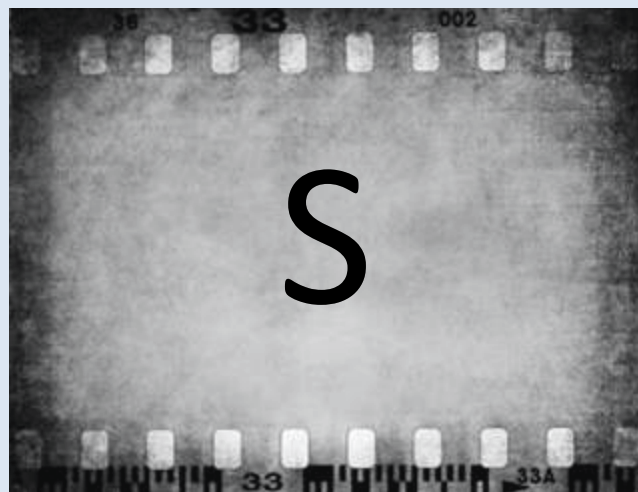
- Repetition creates S-curve
- Lichen patterns create points of interest
- Complementary orange and blue
- Textures create further interest
- Simple but compelling?



Subject | Subject failure

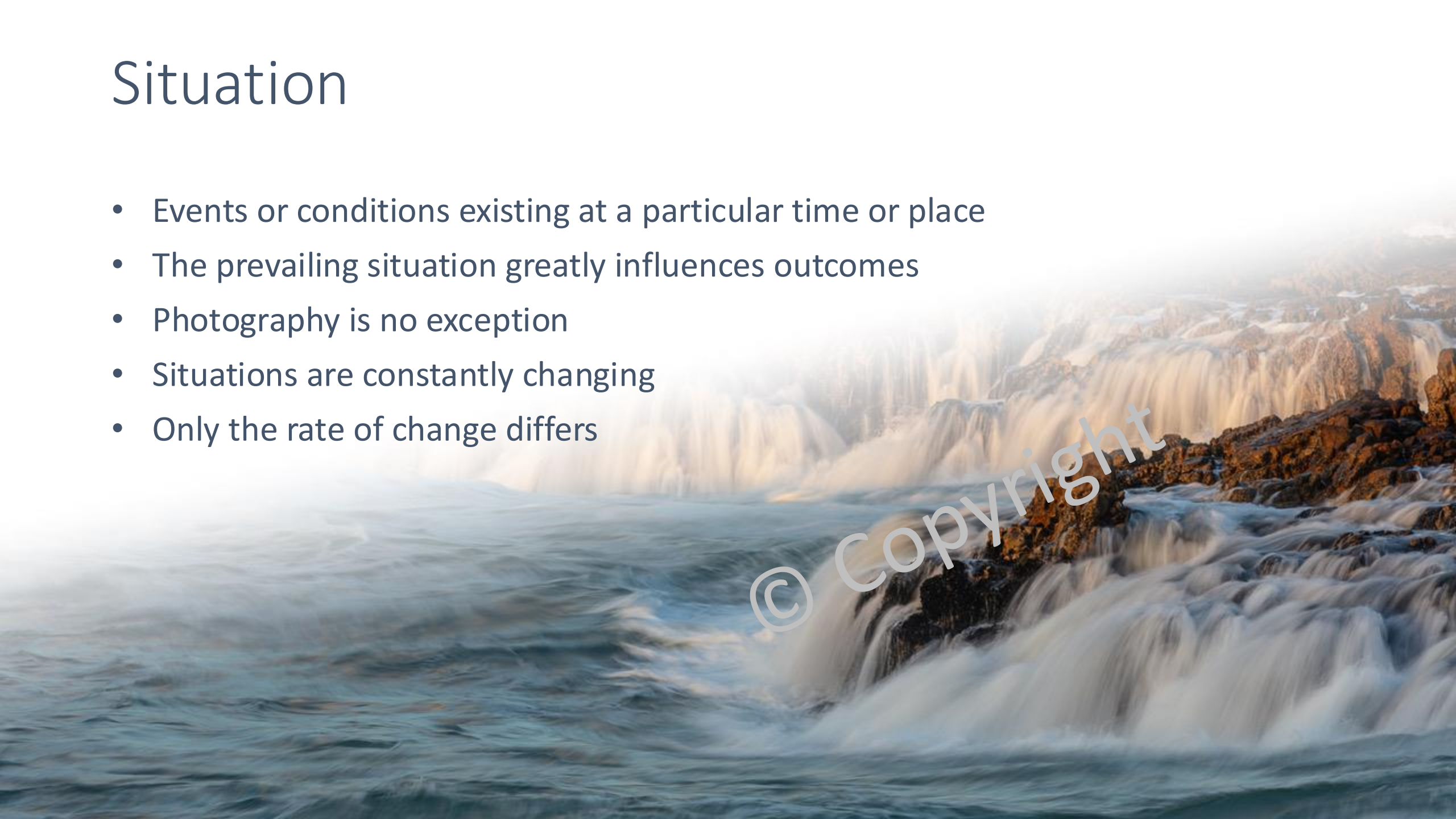
- Can't get a tune out of a subject
- Subject failure?
- Shortcomings in the remaining S's





Situation

- Events or conditions existing at a particular time or place
- The prevailing situation greatly influences outcomes
- Photography is no exception
- Situations are constantly changing
- Only the rate of change differs



Situation | The decisive moment

- Airborne body boarder
- Situation includes good ambient light, interesting waves, no kelp!
- Composition – body boarder on a third, lead-in curve
- Fractionally later, no image!



Situation | Transient shapes and curves

- Wave forming a tube
- Situation includes
 - Northerly wind
 - Well-behaved waves
 - Perfect plumes
 - Good ambient light
- Diagonal aids composition
- Seconds later the moment passed



Situation | Golden hour

- Golden hour, two hours per day
- Characterised by warm rich hues, deep shadows
- Situation – foam patterns, gentle waves, complimentary colours
- Composition – meandering diagonal, gentle curves & textures
- 30 mins earlier, flat and uninteresting



Situation | Blue Hour

- Blue hour two hours per day
- Characterised by cool hues, indigo skies, subtle shadows, calm feeling
- Situation – beautiful clouds, ideal tide
- Composition – curves, diagonals, perception of depth
- But at midday, one for the delete bin!



Situation | Low tides and swells

- Low, medium or high what is best?
- Low tide four hours per day
- Access to otherwise flooded foregrounds
- Situation – subdued light & storm clouds
- Composition – horizon on a third, lead-in from right, placement of the rocks, visual depth



Situation | Midway tides and swells

- Midway tide four hours per day
- Ideal for rock table waterfalls
- Too low – tables are dry
- Too high – tables are swamped
- Situation – blue hour, cool tones, lack of specular highlights



Situation | High tides and swells

- High tide four hours per day
- Sea flooding dry channels
- Situation – blue hour, cool tones, interesting skies, soft shadows, subtle contrast
- Circular composition, high horizon line visual depth



Situation | Inclement Weather

- Constantly changing
- Bad weather = good photographs
- Storms add drama and mood
- Situation – good swell, breaking waves, subdued lighting, dark clouds

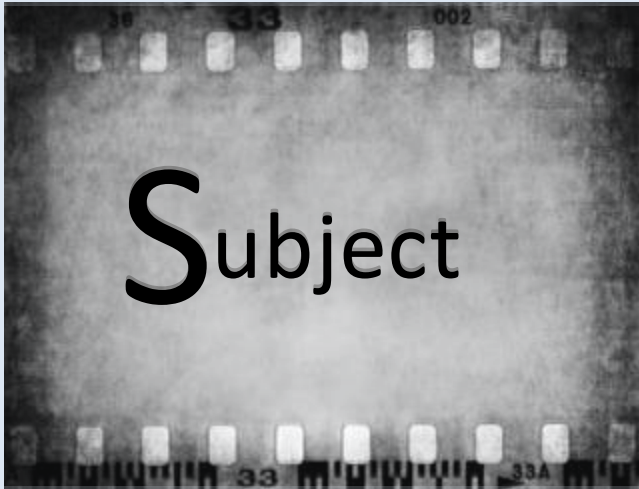


Subject and Situation


- Compelling image = strong subject + favourable situation
- Not under photographers' control
- Right place at the right time
- How to improve your chances?
- Know the environment
 - Go often, even in poor situations
 - Check weather and tide forecasts, sports calendars
- Remaining S's are entirely under your control!

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Subject



Situation



Seeing



S

Seeing

- Living in a beautiful place is a double-edged sword
- Risk – no incentive to look beyond the obvious
- Seeing or visualisation is the antithesis of this – the art of the possible
- Underpins the photographers' creative intent
- Visualisation – transforming an interesting scene into a compelling image
- Acquiring a photographers' eye

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The background of the slide is a blurred, artistic photograph of water, possibly a river or ocean, with a large diagonal watermark reading '© Copyright' in a light gray font.

Seeing

- Sunrise in June – my favourite time
- Subtle sheen on the ocean
- Slight glow in the sky
- Well-behaved waves
- Uninspiring to the unseeing eye
- 5 minutes in post, Voila!



Seeing

- Casual glance westward – promising!
- Wave patterns and cumulus clouds
- But contrasty light and lens flare a challenge
- Exposed for highlights, lens shielded and reframed
- A few minutes in post – just as I visualised



Seeing

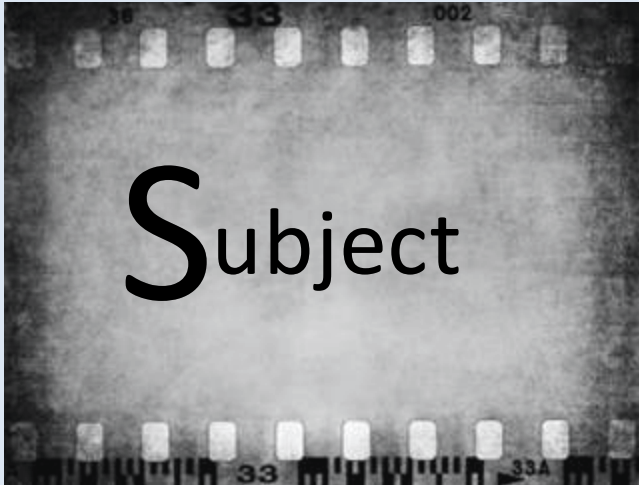
- A chilly winter's morning at the lagoon
- Kleinrivier broke through to Walker Bay
- Subject and situation promising but very flat
- I visualised the end result
- A far more compelling rendition!




Seeing | A Photographers' Eye

- Developing a photographers' eye is a process
- It doesn't have to take the magical 10,000 hours
- View other artists' work – what do you like, dislike and why?
- Consciously break normal patterns or approach
- Experiment and harvest what works
- Revisit photo locations
- Look and visualise without the camera
- Practice, practice, practice





Subject



Situation



Seeing



Skills

Skills

- Skills development – a continuous journey
- Know your camera
 - Read your manual
 - Attend courses
 - On-line help – YouTube, ChatGPT
 - Practice, practice, practice
- Key focal areas
 - Shoot RAW – lossless files
 - Avoid program mode
 - Exposure triangle and histogram
 - Hyperfocal distance
- Basic editing, start with a good image

“My favourite images are created when visualisation and skills meet the correct opportunity”

– Alister Benn

Skills in practice

Four basic set-ups – approach and camera settings

- Freeze frame waves
- Abstract waves
- Seascapes
- Sporting action



Skills | Freeze frame waves

- Camera hand-held
- Large zoom lens
- Shutter speed: 1/500 – 1/1000 sec
- Aperture: f/5.6 – f/8
- Mode: TV or manual auto ISO
- Continuous shooting
- Circular polariser



Skills | Abstract waves

- Hand-held camera
- Slow pan technique
- Large zoom lens
- Shutter speed: $1/5 - 1/2$ sec
- Aperture: $f/8 - f/16$
- Mode: TV or manual auto ISO
- Continuous shooting
- Circular polariser



Skills | Seascapes

- Tripod, cable release (windy?)
- Small zoom lens
- Shutter speed:
 - $1/5 - 1/2$ sec (shape and form)
 - ≥ 2 secs (misty)
- Aperture: $f/8 - f/12$
- Mode:
 - AV or manual auto ISO
 - Bulb for long exposures
 - One shot
- Auto focus, lock-on manual
- Circular polariser and ND filters



Skills | Sporting Action

- Camera on a monopod
- Panning with the surfer
- Large zoom or prime lens
- Shutter speed: 1/2000 – 1/2500 sec
- Aperture: f/4 - f/5.6
- Mode: TV or manual auto ISO
- Continuous shooting
- No filters





A Fifth S | Safety

- The most compelling image is not worth your life
- The ocean and the shoreline can be treacherous
- Heed the weather forecasts
- Never turn your back on the ocean, risk of rogue waves
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- Let someone know where you are going, when you expect to return
- Carry a mobile phone or a whistle
- Be cautious, take care and have fun!

Sand, Sea and Surf

Have fun out there!

