

Mobiography

FOR INSPIRING SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

GETTING IN THE MOOD

THE CAMERA APP THAT LETS YOU CREATE YOUR OWN LOOK

APPS:

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH:

SNAPSEED 3.0

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHERS:

**JOSÉ LUIS MORALES
& HO-YIN LUI**

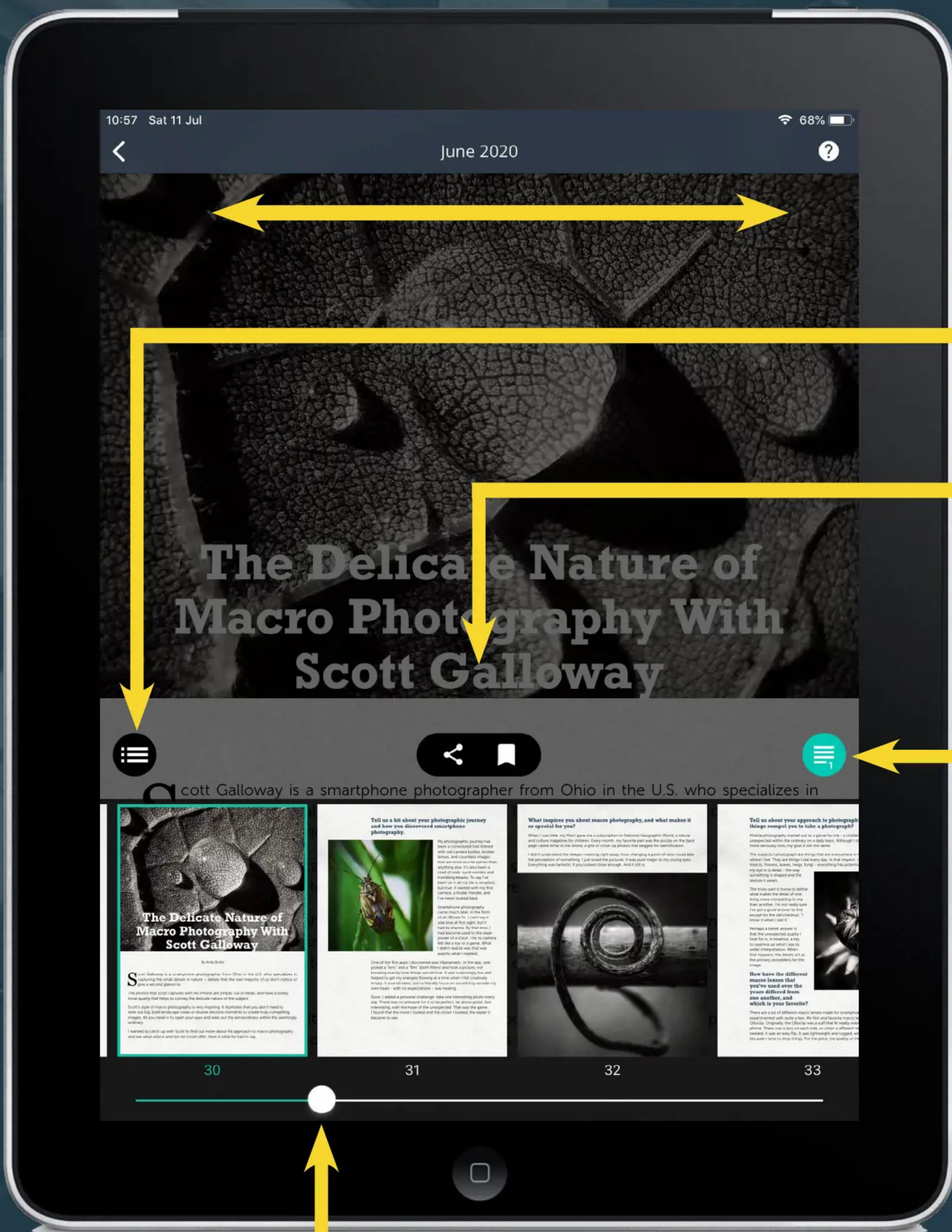
INSIGHTS:

**TAKING
BANGER
PHOTOS**

IN BORING PLACES

PLUS: 10 DIGITAL COLLAGE PROJECTS TO PUSH YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY FURTHER

How to use this app?



SWIPE LEFT & RIGHT TO VIEW NEXT PAGE

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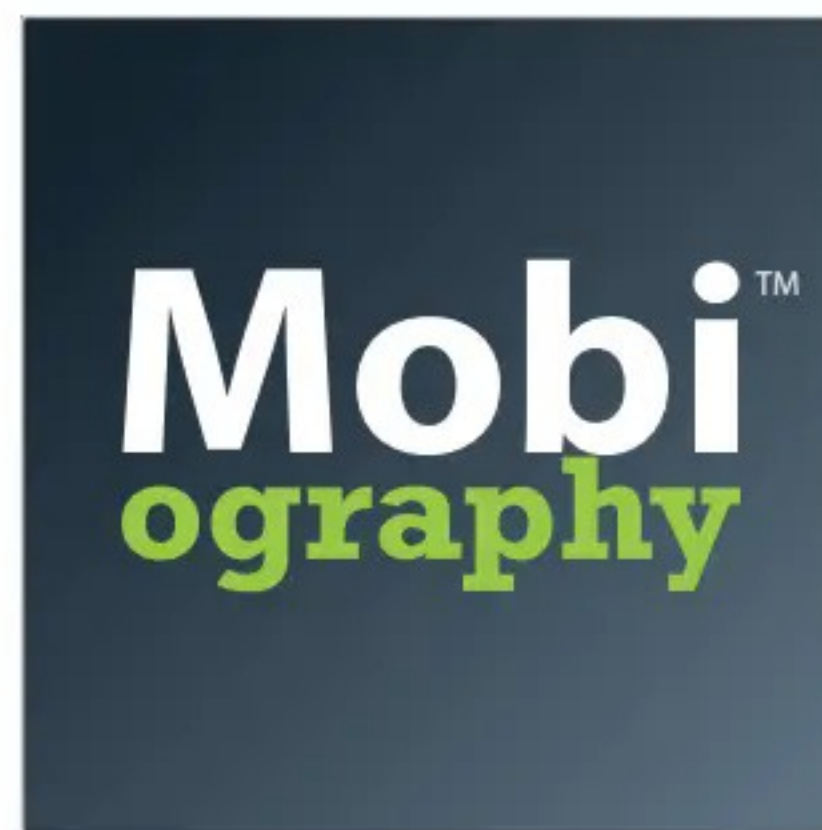
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'Untitled' by Jack Hollingsworth

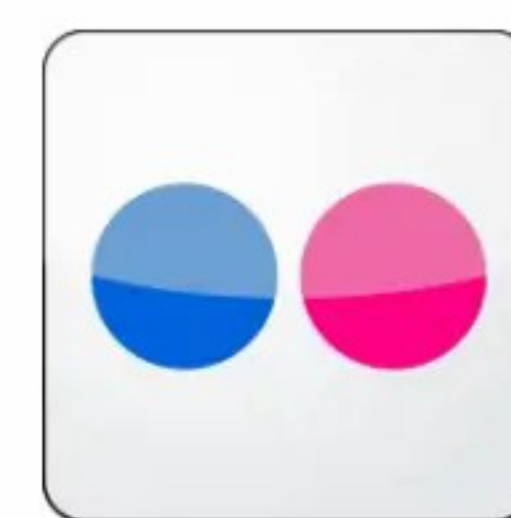
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A Philosophical Approach to Light,
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From The Editor...

Welcome to the 13th Anniversary issue of Mobiography Magazine, and another look at the art of smartphone photography with another collection of insightful interviews, guides, and creative inspiration.

Inside, I speak with two more talented photographers, Ho-Yin Lui and José Luis Morales.

Ho-Yin Lui is a photographer and philosophy teacher from Hong Kong who brings that same thoughtful approach to capturing the world around him through the photos that he takes. As you'd expect, his images have a sense of calm, often making you stop to take a closer look. Yin talks to us about his approach to photography, composition, and using light, as well as his thoughts on the concept of mindful shooting and how philosophy quietly influences everything he creates.

Meanwhile, José Luis Morales Martín is an architect and photographer from Madrid, whose background in architecture clearly plays an important role in his work. Clean lines, careful composition, and an awareness of scale are elements that run through his images. In my chat with José, he talks about how architecture has influenced his photography, why composition and light matter so much to him, and how he balances working with both a traditional camera and a smartphone.

Also inside, I take the Mood Camera app for a test drive and see how it applies film emulation filters to the images you take with it. I also take a look at the new version of Snapeed and give a walkthrough on using this popular app to convert a photo into a black-and-white masterpiece. Mark Myerson looks at how to take great photos in boring places and talks to two photographers who consistently manage to take amazing photos in ordinary-looking locations to find out how they do it.

Meanwhile, veteran photographer Jack Hollingsworth shares how his iPhone photography journey started, as well as fifteen things he's learnt from shooting one million frames with his phone.

Finally, Nicki Fitz-Gerald looks at ways to mix photography and art. She explores ten digital collage project ideas that will push your mobile photography further, from using layers and tears, to mixing repetition and patterns, or paper and glass textures. Nicki's latest guide is sure to help stir your creativity and get you thinking a bit differently.

As always, I hope you enjoy this latest issue of Mobiography. Don't forget to share your photos by using the hashtag [#mobiography](https://www.instagram.com/mobiography) on Instagram. And keep an eye out for our weekly challenges.

Happy Shooting,

Audy Butler



'Frostbound' by @mariko_klug



MOBIOGRAPHY GALLERY SHOWCASE





'My Way' by @ibarakaldo



'Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico' by @nei.cruz





'Untitled' by @nils_spiegler



'Bus Stop' by @reneetakespics





'Sunrise' by @xavier_rey



'Between the Lines' by @jnewphoto





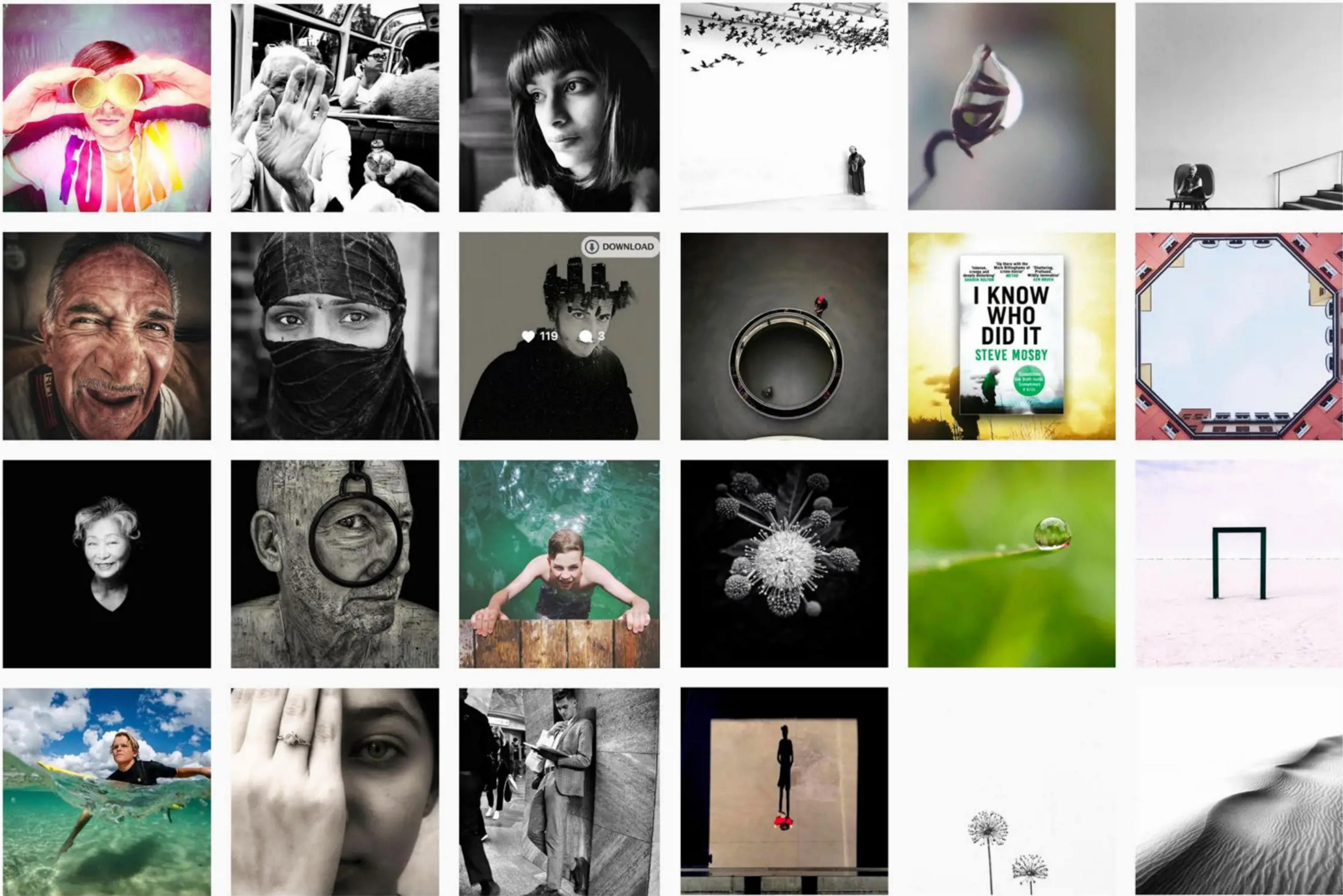
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'A small huntress observing everything' by @pbernardfoto_



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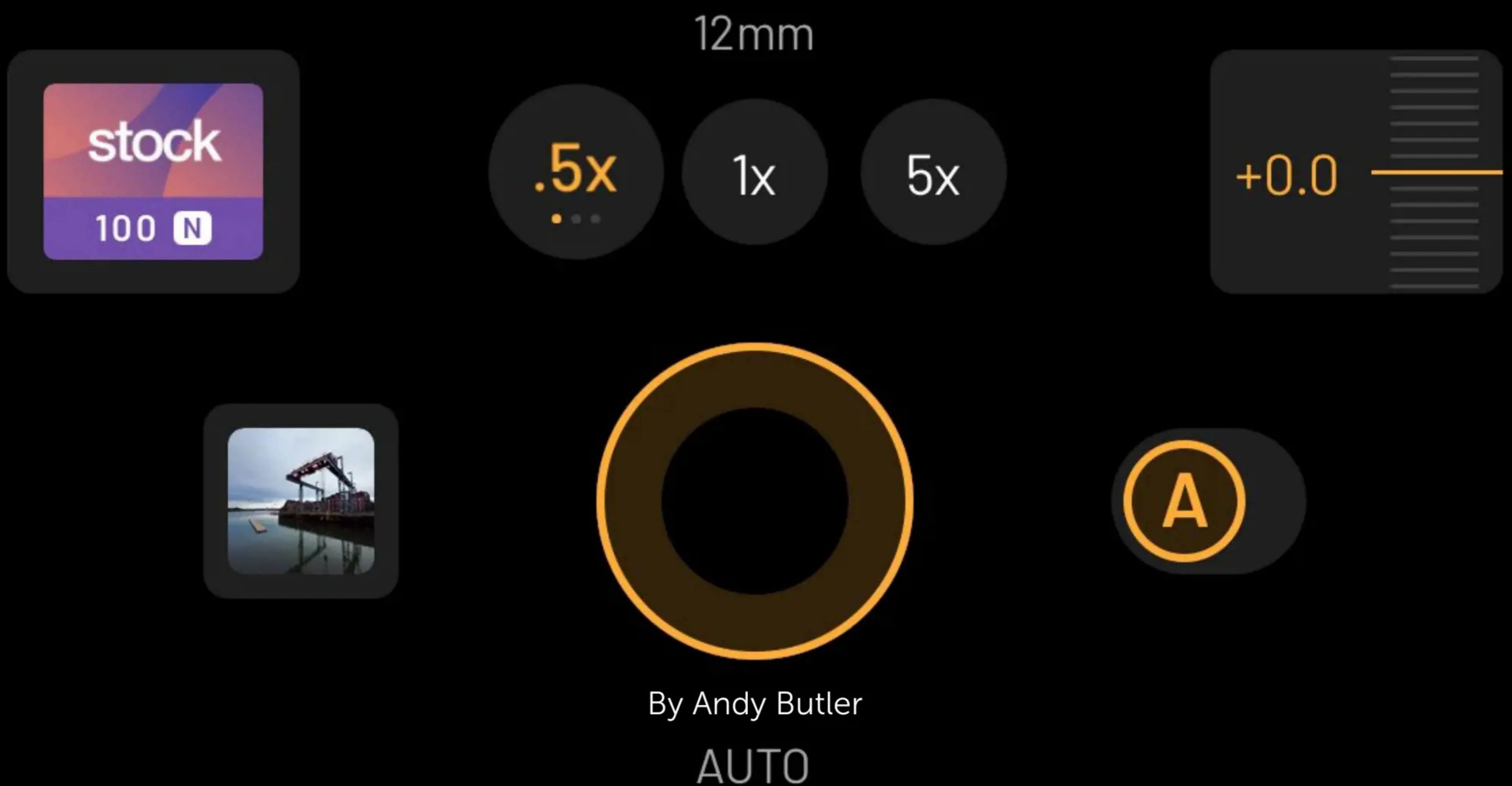
USE THE HASHTAG

#MOBIOGRAPHY

ALSO LOOK OUT FOR THE WEEKLY CHALLENGES



GETTING IN THE MOOD: THE CAMERA APP THAT LETS YOU CREATE YOUR OWN LOOK



For a while now, I've been testing out an app called Mood. Mood is an iOS camera app that was launched last year with the goal of giving iPhone photographers a film-inspired look without burying them in controls. Mood's aim is to provide users with an experience that feels closer to loading a roll of film rather than getting bogged down with editing tools and features. With Mood, you pick a film look, frame your shot, and trust in the process.

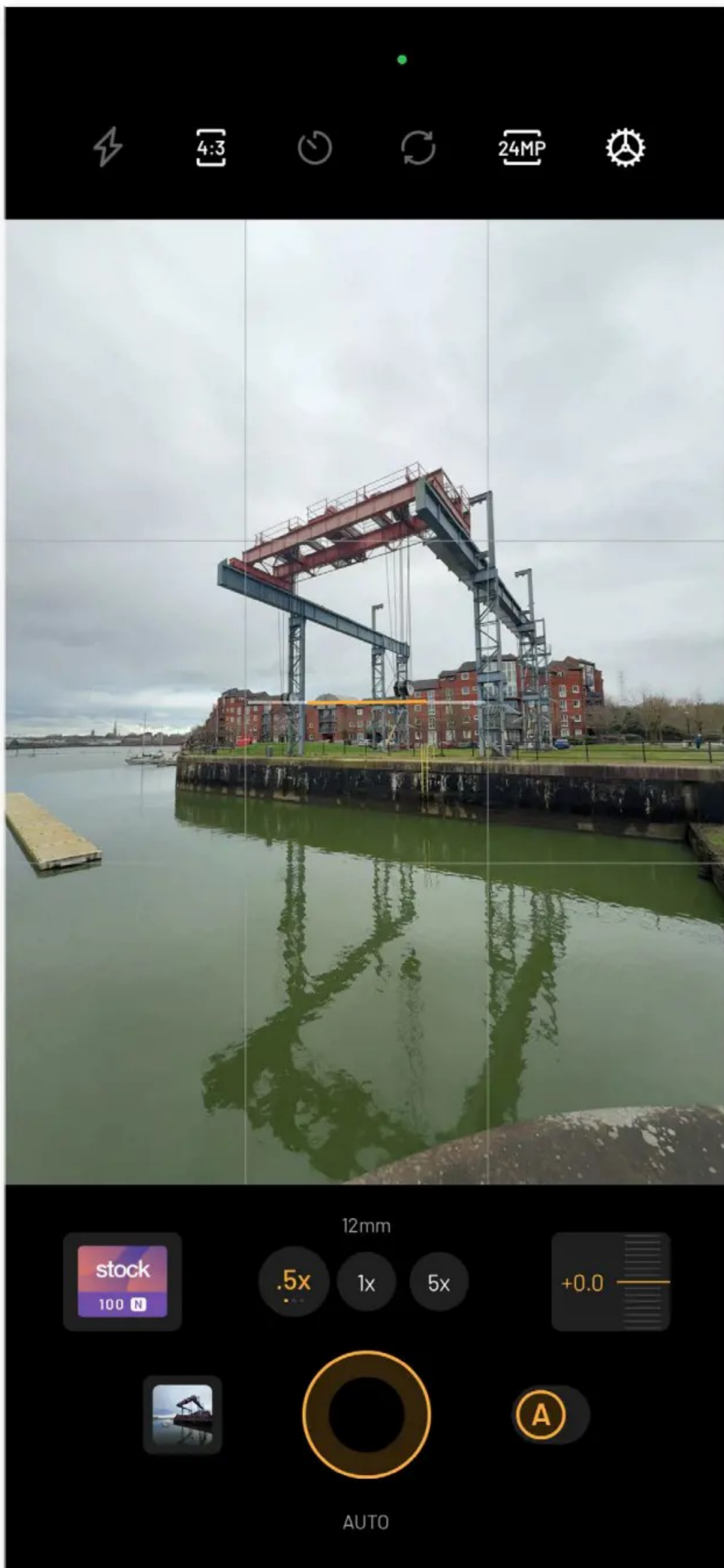
The app gives users full control over the look of the film emulations so they can adjust them exactly how they want. Instead of relying solely on the built-in presets, the photographer can now adjust the color, tone, grain, contrast, and overall strength to create a look that's more personal to their own taste.



You can start with an existing film emulation and refine it from there by reducing the saturation, adding a touch more grain, and a shift in tonal balance. Or you can start from scratch and create a brand-new look that gives an image a completely different character.

Additionally, Mood has been building a community with sharing being at the heart of its appeal. As well as sharing the images that they take, users can share the custom presets they use with each other. It feels less like applying filters and more like trading film recipes.

So, without further ado, let's take a closer look at Mood and see if the developers managed to achieve what they set out to do.

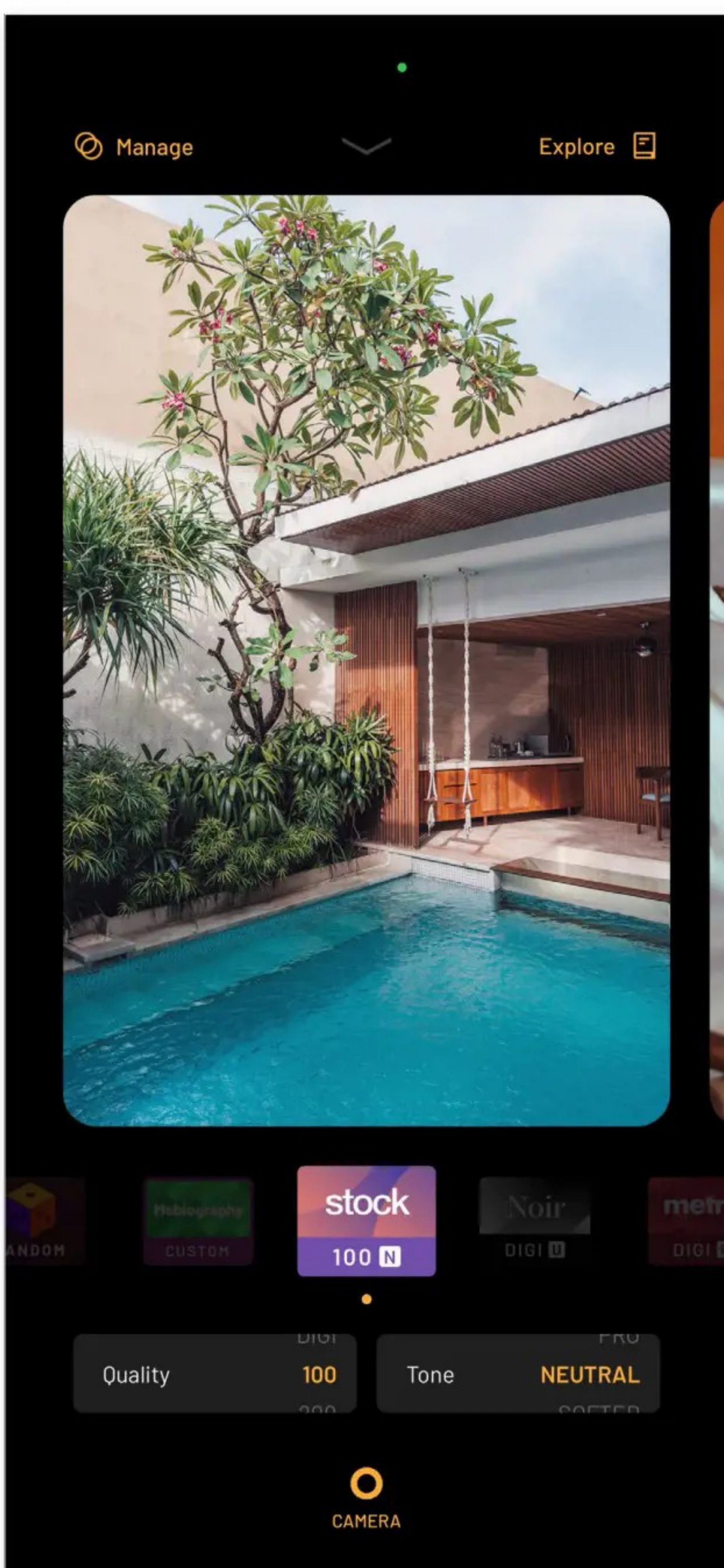


THE MOOD INTERFACE

The Mood interface has a simple layout with a lot of the customized controls located behind the scenes. At the top of the screen are control icons for things like the flash, format ratio, self-timer, the front-facing camera, and app settings.

On the main part of the screen is the viewfinder. Below this are the filter and lens options, as well as an exposure compensation dial. Below that, you'll find the gallery and shooting mode settings - that being Auto or Portrait. And in the center of the screen is a big shutter release button.

Going into the settings, you'll find that Mood allows you to pretty much customize all aspects of the app and how it behaves. The settings I chose to change were to select the "Modern" viewfinder option. This made the viewfinder full screen, which I found easier to use. I also enabled Grid guides, the horizon line. Then, in photo settings, I changed the photo resolution to 24MP and "Save Original" so that the app would save a copy of the images I take before any color and film effects are applied. This would give me a backup image of the original photo without any film emulation filtering applied.

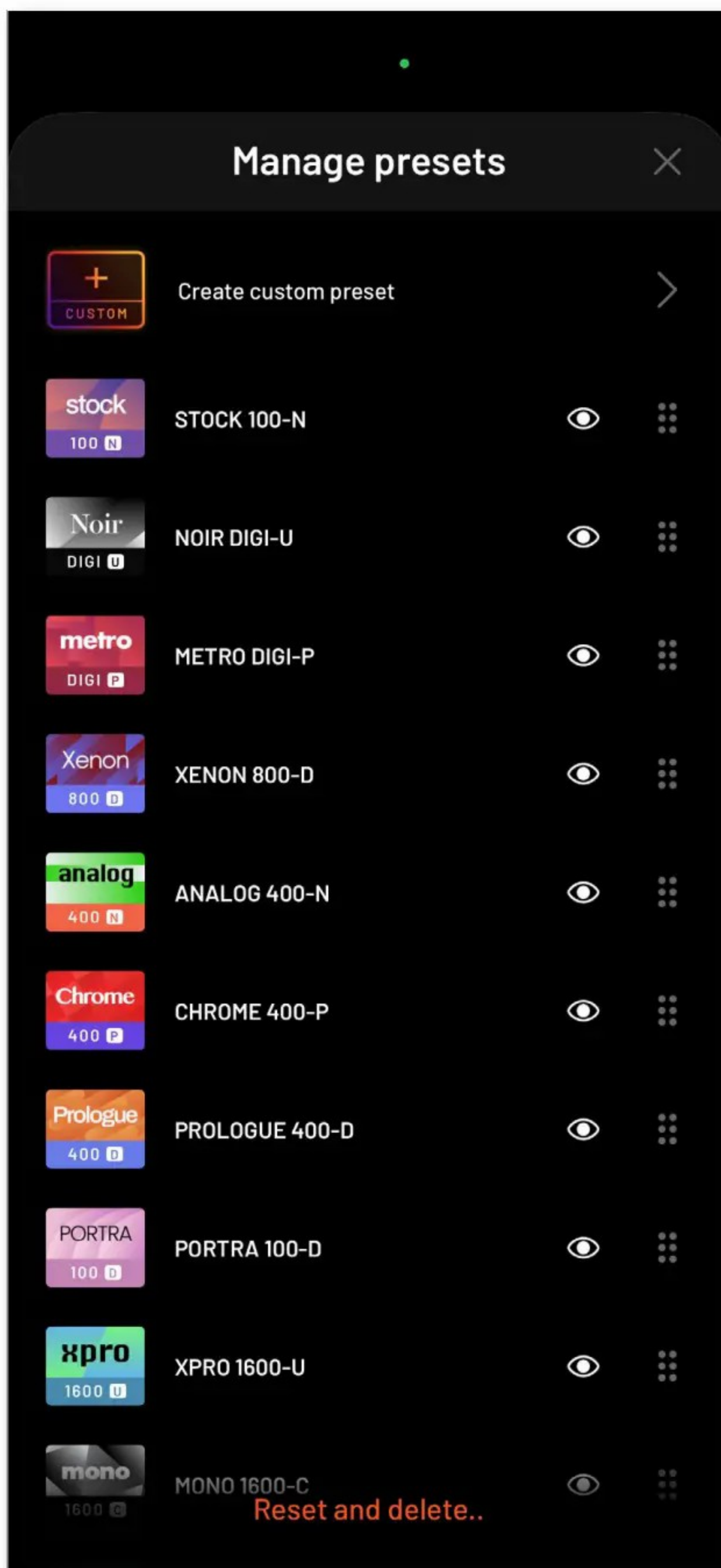


CUSTOMIZABLE PRESET FILTERS

Before taking a photo using Mood, you first need to select a film type to use. You do this by tapping the film filter button in the lower left corner of the screen.

Next, the main part of the screen is given over to a range of image styles showing landscapes to home settings, people portraits, food, street, urban, or beach scenes. You can swipe through these to select the type of image you're looking to capture.

Next, swipe through the various film emulation packs at the bottom of the screen. Each one will apply that film style to the image above to give you an idea of what the filter will look like. Mood gives you additional control over each film option by adjusting the Quality and Tone settings. Quality effectively applies film grain to the image, while the Tone setting lets you select from eight preset options. Each one applies different degrees of contrast, color, or fade.



For black-and-white photos, I tended to lean toward the Noir filter with the Tone set to Crush. This gave a very contrasty result. For color photos, I preferred CINE.

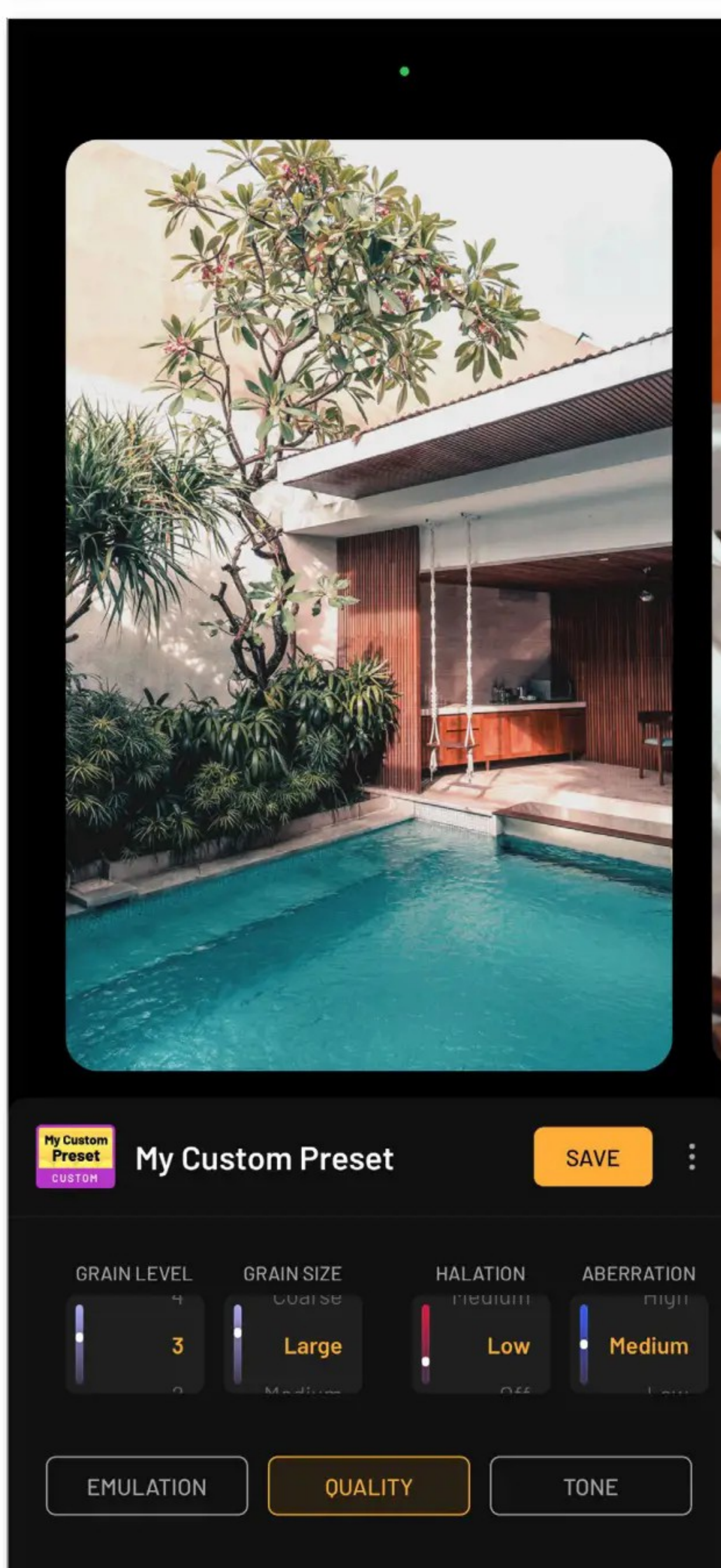
Mood doesn't stop at these preset options. Mood lets you create your very own Custom Preset styles. To do this, tap the Manage option in the top left corner. Next, tap Create Custom Preset at the top of the screen, and choose whether to start from an existing preset or from scratch. I chose to select an existing preset and then selected PORTRA. You can then tap the Edit option and adjust the filter strength, color saturation, temperature and tint. This means that if you like a filter but maybe not the strength of a color cast that it applies, then you can create your own version of the preset, but with a reduction on the level of color cast that's applied.

Tapping the Quality setting allows you to adjust the level of grain, the grain size, the Halation, the Aberration, and the Bloom.

Halation is a setting that recreates the glow you see on real film when very bright highlights bleed slightly into surrounding areas. In the app, increasing Halation adds that warm halo around clipped or near-clipped highlights like streetlights at night, reflections on metal, or backlit hair. Lower it and highlights stay cleaner and more digital. Raise it, and you get a softer, more cinematic glow.

Aberration simulates chromatic aberration, the slight color fringing that happens at the edges of a frame when a lens struggles to focus the light on the same wavelength. In practical terms, turning this up introduces subtle red, green, or blue shifts along high-contrast edges, especially toward the corners. It can make an image feel more vintage or imperfect, but for a cleaner, modern look, keep it low.

Bloom is different from halation. While halation is tied to how film reacts to intense highlights, Bloom is more of a general soft glow effect. It spreads bright areas outward and softens their edges, reducing contrast in those regions. Used sparingly, it can give highlights a gentle roll-off. Push it too far, and the image starts to look hazy or dreamlike.





Finally, selecting the Tone option lets you adjust Exposure, Contrast, Curve settings, Fade, and Mute levels.

Fade affects the black point. Increasing Fade lifts the shadows so that true blacks become dark grey. This reduces contrast and creates that washed, matte film look often associated with older prints or faded negatives. Lower the level of Fade and you get deeper, richer blacks.

Mute controls color intensity more selectively than simple saturation. Rather than boosting or reducing all colors evenly, it softens the overall color response, making tones feel

more restrained and less punchy. Increasing Mute gives a subdued, understated palette. Reducing it allows colors to feel stronger and more vivid.

Together, these controls let you decide how your preset looks and whether it feels crisp and modern, nostalgic and soft, or somewhere in between.

Once you have your film presets locked in, give it a name and save it to the library. Next, tap the small circular Camera icon at the bottom of the screen to return to the main viewfinder.

TAKING PHOTOS WITH MOOD

Taking a photo with Mood is easy. Tapping the screen sets the focus point; however, it doesn't seem possible to lock it. To adjust the image exposure, tap and slide the exposure compensation dial in the lower right corner. Personally, I'd prefer it if this was controlled by sliding your finger up and down on the main part of the viewfinder as I found the small dial fiddly to control.

Regarding lens selection, in Auto mode, you have the option of choosing 0.5x, 1x, or 5x lenses. In Portrait mode, the two options are 1x and 5x lenses.

Once you have your film and lens selected, your focus set and exposure adjusted, all you need to do is tap the shutter button. The resulting photo will take a few seconds to process before becoming available in the gallery (accessed by tapping the gallery icon in the lower left corner).

Unfortunately, it isn't possible to edit your images in Mood after they've been taken. The app was designed to be a camera app rather than an editing app. Personally, I found it frustrating that you can't change the choice of film and the Quality or Tone options after capture. I think this is a feature that should be included in future updates as it would allow users to play with the images they've taken and find the best combination of film and settings to suit the image.

This is one of my main criticisms of Mood as I found doing this in the field to be a process of trial and error until you find a look that suits your vision. Also, in a lot of cases, I wasn't a fan of some of the color casts that some of the film options applied to my photos. It's also not possible to import images from your camera roll into Mood.





FINAL THOUGHTS

Overall, I found Mood to be an interesting app to use and found it fun to play with, although as I've mentioned, there are a few features I feel are missing. The first being the ability to lock the focus and adjust the exposure by sliding your finger up or down on the screen as I found the exposure compensation dial fiddly. I also found it frustrating that I couldn't alter the film settings later in post-production.

That said, I think being able to create your own preset filters from scratch is a superb feature. Once you're acquainted with the app, this feature gives you the opportunity to develop a consistent look and feel that isn't reliant on post-production editing skills – which I guess was the aim for the developers in the first place. This approach allows you to focus more on the image capture process.

By dialing in your preferred look before you even take a shot, you can focus more on the image capture process and composition, knowing your images will already reflect your vision straight out of the camera.

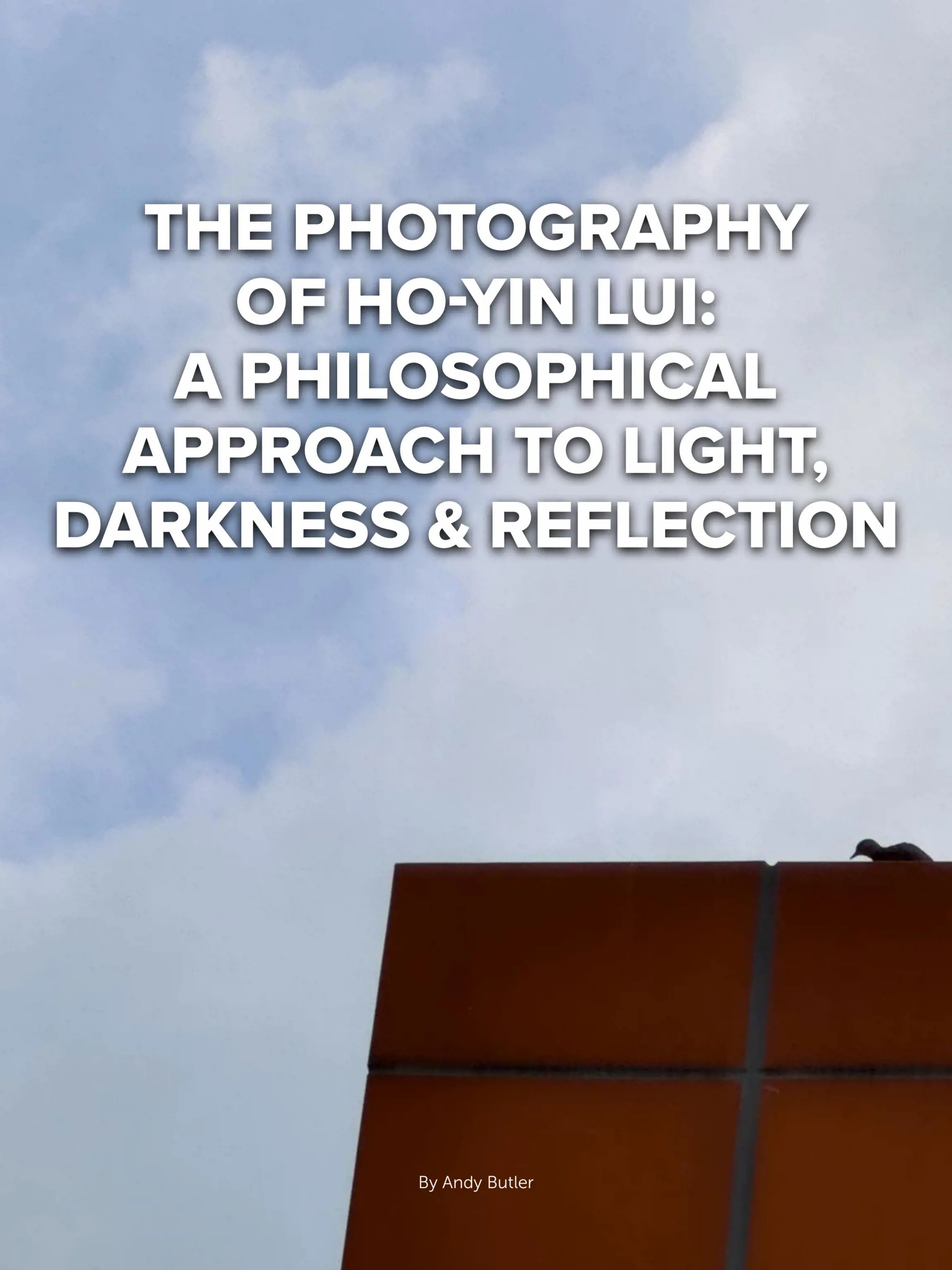
I also think the community aspect of Mood is an added bonus as it allows photographers to see how others are using the app, including the film options and settings that they're using which help to inspire your own efforts.

Mood is available in the App Store, but not on Android, and has a free 7-day trial. After the trial period, you can choose between a monthly subscription plan of \$1.99 or lifetime access for \$14.99 which I think is pretty good value for money.

Why not give it a go and share your photos with us using the [#mobiography](#) hashtag.



Download on the
App Store

The background of the cover is a photograph of a blue sky with soft, white clouds. In the lower right corner, a dark silhouette of a bird is perched on the edge of a brown, rectangular structure that appears to be part of a building or a wall. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

**THE PHOTOGRAPHY
OF HO-YIN LUI:
A PHILOSOPHICAL
APPROACH TO LIGHT,
DARKNESS & REFLECTION**

By Andy Butler

Ho-Yin Lui, known as Yin, is a photographer from Hong Kong whose images have a quiet, reflective quality about them. As a philosophy teacher, he brings that same thoughtful approach to capturing the world. What started as a simple way to document daily life has become a personal practice based on attention, feeling, and self-reflection.

Yin's work shifts between black-and-white and color, yet the mood remains consistent across the two styles. His black-and-white photos are dark and moody, with strong contrasts where light breaks through the shadows and lone figures appear in silhouette. These images convey a sense

of space and stillness. In contrast, his color work is lighter but just as intentional. Vibrant sunsets, soft dawn skies, deep blues, and calm reflections on water are treated with a gentle touch, letting tone and atmosphere, rather than heavy editing, convey emotion.

I've long been a fan of Yin's work, particularly his black-and-white images, which often make you stop and take a closer look. I managed to catch up with Yin as I wanted to find out more about his approach to photography, composition, and using light, as well as his thoughts on the concept of mindful shooting, and how philosophy quietly influences everything he creates.



TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY AND HOW YOU DISCOVERED SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY.

Absolutely! My name is Ho-Yin Lui, but you can call me Yin. I was born and raised in Hong Kong, where I still live and work as a philosophy teacher at a community college. Although I'm not a professional photographer or artist, I see photography as aligning with my philosophical interests.

I started using a mobile phone to take photos when I went abroad studying for a Master's degree in the Netherlands in 2015. At that time, I enjoyed taking landscape photographs with my mobile phone, but I didn't consider myself a photographer or an art creator. Photography was simply a way to record life during my studies.

It wasn't until the last few years that I began to see mobile photography as a form of artistic expression. I've found photography to be a great way to capture and express my emotions and to explore myself introspectively.

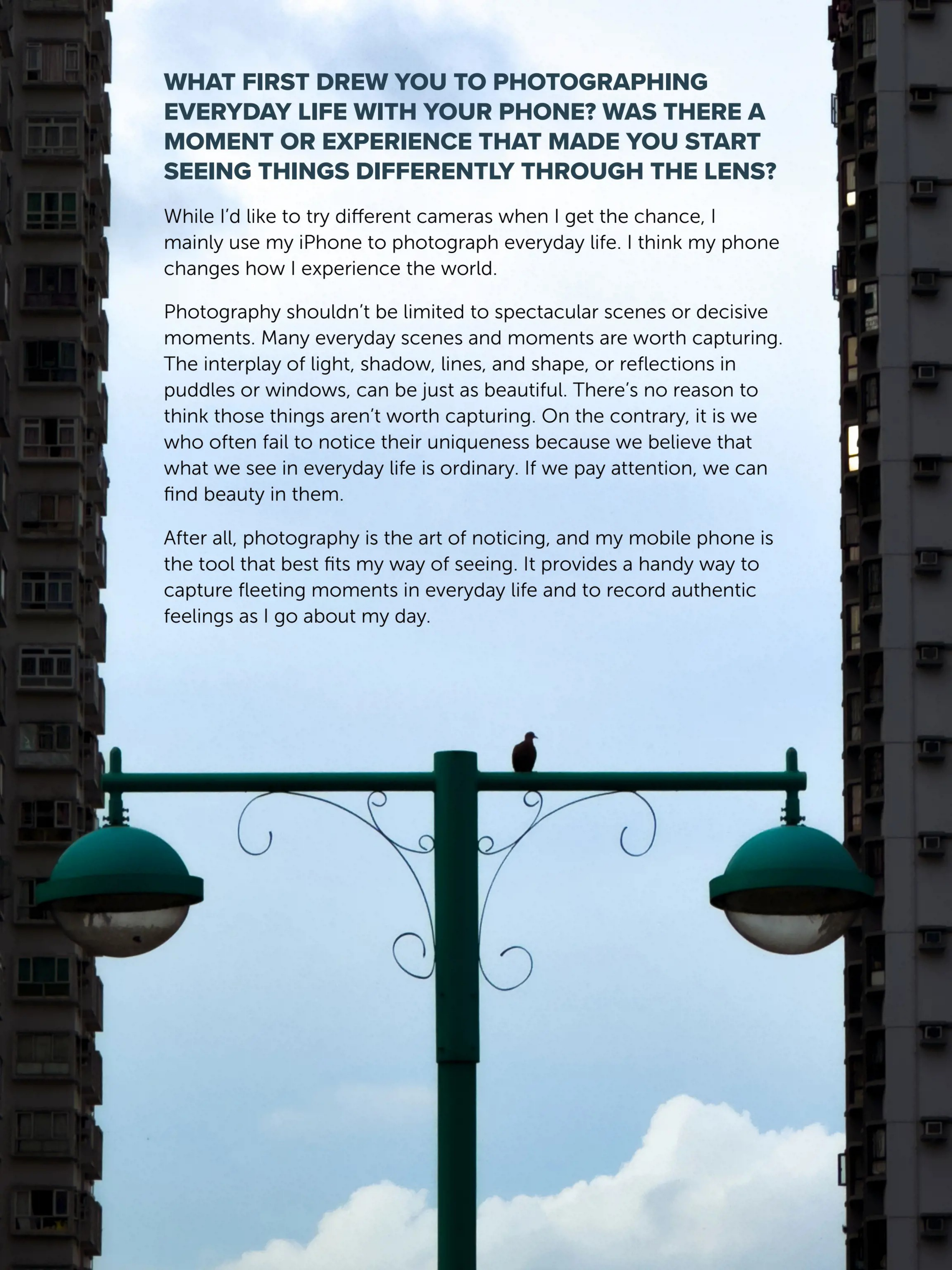


WHAT FIRST DREW YOU TO PHOTOGRAPHING EVERYDAY LIFE WITH YOUR PHONE? WAS THERE A MOMENT OR EXPERIENCE THAT MADE YOU START SEEING THINGS DIFFERENTLY THROUGH THE LENS?

While I'd like to try different cameras when I get the chance, I mainly use my iPhone to photograph everyday life. I think my phone changes how I experience the world.

Photography shouldn't be limited to spectacular scenes or decisive moments. Many everyday scenes and moments are worth capturing. The interplay of light, shadow, lines, and shape, or reflections in puddles or windows, can be just as beautiful. There's no reason to think those things aren't worth capturing. On the contrary, it is we who often fail to notice their uniqueness because we believe that what we see in everyday life is ordinary. If we pay attention, we can find beauty in them.

After all, photography is the art of noticing, and my mobile phone is the tool that best fits my way of seeing. It provides a handy way to capture fleeting moments in everyday life and to record authentic feelings as I go about my day.



WHEN YOU HEAD OUT WITH YOUR PHONE, ARE YOU ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO PHOTOGRAPH, OR DO YOU LET THE SCENES “FIND YOU?” HOW DOES THIS MINDFUL APPROACH SHAPE YOUR WORK?

At the moment, I'm experimenting with what you may call mindful photography. When I go out, instead of having a preconceived idea of what I want to shoot, I pay attention to my feelings and my perceptions in the moment. Often, it feels as if the scenes come to find me. This approach allows me to discover that beauty is everywhere.

Many great photographers emphasize the significance of being fully present in the moment. So, they are, more or less, adopting a mindful approach.

However, this mindful approach is more than a photographic technique. I think we often misplace the focus of photography on impressing others. By emphasizing the significance of being in the moment, the mindful approach focuses on capturing what we feel. This allows me to use photography to discover myself without the pressure of impressing others.





TELL US ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO COMPOSITION. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHERS TO HELP THEM USE BETTER COMPOSITION IN THEIR PHOTOGRAPHY?

I like to use simple things and stay mindful of what I include in the composition. This involves being selective about what to leave out of the composition and retaining only what truly captures my feelings. I find simplicity and minimalism are powerful forms of expression. Removing unnecessary elements helps create clarity and focus.

I think the first rule about composition is: "We do not talk about composition." We must be aware of our feelings before deciding how to compose. Sometimes it's easy to forget our feelings and focus only on what we see when we shoot. However, photography isn't merely about what we see. It's also a way to capture what we feel. So, we shouldn't limit our attention to the visible - feel it! Pay attention to our feelings in the moment. Not only what we see, but what we feel in general, including sounds, bodily sensations, and passing thoughts.

That being said, I don't oppose studying and practicing composition techniques. It's good to know when to use a vertical frame or a horizontal frame. Trying different levels or angles can also be interesting. Guidelines such as the rule of thirds, framing, and leading lines also offer us other compositional options.

However, as we keep practicing, we'll reach a point where we must let go of the rules. The trained eye will eventually see beauty beyond rigid rules.

"...I think the first rule about composition is: "We do not talk about composition...."



LIGHT AND SHADOW PLAY SUCH A DEFINING ROLE IN YOUR WORK. HOW DO YOU SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIGHT, DARKNESS, AND EMOTION IN YOUR PHOTOS?

Light and shadow are not just compositional elements in photography. They're the languages that convey emotion and meaning.

I've always loved shooting sunrises and sunsets. But lately, I've been taking a lot of photos using minimal lighting. I think this shift was deeply influenced by Junichiro Tanizaki's "In Praise of Shadows." He writes, "If light is scarce, then light is scarce; we will immerse ourselves in the darkness, and there discover its own particular beauty."

For me, darkness and light are metaphors. This year, I've lived through dark moments myself, and "In Praise of Shadows" taught me not to resist, but to embrace darkness and shadows. By listening to darkness, I find my photography has become simpler and cleaner.

Tanizaki also points out that we find beauty not in the object alone, but in the dance between light and shadow. It's the darkness that allows a glowing jewel to shine; in bright daylight, a glowing jewel loses its magic. My photography with minimal lighting gives me a sense of peace like a candle in the dark. In the darkness, we're more aware that the light of a candle does not come from elsewhere – it comes from within.



YOU OFTEN SHOOT LONE FIGURES IN SILHOUETTE. WHAT DRAWS YOU TO THIS THEME? AND WHAT DO THESE ANONYMOUS FIGURES REPRESENT FOR YOU?

I like to see figures in silhouette because they convey a universal message that speaks to everyone.

My work "Beyond" is where I fell in love with silhouette photography. The image expresses my exploration of what vitality means while delivering a universal truth: anyone can discover their own life force. In the image, the figure is raking beyond the sun, giving me a strong sense of life force. After some thought, I found that the core of this power lies not in

physical strength but in inner breakthrough. Raking mud requires rhythm and sustained effort. Through this process, I realized that true vitality is not about fleeting bursts; instead, it emerges from finding our own pace.

I also see the reflection in the image as more than a compositional element. It symbolizes our inner transcendence. By using the silhouette, I'm able to blur the figure's identity to deliver a universal message: each of us may follow different paths to transcend ourselves, but the key lies in finding and mastering a rhythm that fits the self.

This is how I discovered that silhouette photography can be more than an aesthetic style. It's deeply meaningful.



YOUR BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGES FEEL VERY DIFFERENT IN MOOD FROM YOUR COLOR WORK. WHAT MAKES YOU DECIDE WHETHER A PHOTO SHOULD BE IN BLACK AND WHITE OR COLOR?

I don't consciously think of rules for deciding whether a photo should be in black-and-white or color. However, upon reflection, I notice some key differences between my black-and-white photos and my color photos.



My color photos typically capture what I notice in the moment. They capture environmental elements such as sky, architecture, street, and water - the scenes where the light or atmosphere itself already carries the emotion. Color allows me to preserve the exact mood I felt at the time.

In contrast, my black-and-white photos feel quieter and introspective. They're driven by emotion and imagination. I turn to black-and-white when the meaning relies on pure shadow, contrast, form, and shape.

However, all my images, color or monochromatic, share the same core: simplicity, attention, and calmness.



YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR RECENT WORK HAS BECOME MORE MINIMALISTIC. WHAT LED YOU IN THAT DIRECTION? AND WHAT DO YOU FIND POWERFUL ABOUT SIMPLICITY?

When it comes to literature and writing, I like those writers whose style is simple and concise. I often think about how to implement this sort of style into my photography. This is what led me to discover minimalism.

However, minimalism is more than an aesthetic style. To be a minimalist, one needs to be in a state of mind that focuses on what truly matters. Personally, I find minimalism meaningful because it helps me cultivate a mindset that frees me from excess and redundant things. This noise obscures what's important. It also takes courage to focus on one subject; simplicity does not amount to being simple. And I am not merely talking about photography here.

Minimalism is also a form of expression. As I've said, photography is not merely about capturing what we see, but also what we feel. But how can we express what we feel by capturing what we see? Minimalists try to use minimal elements from what we see to achieve maximal expression of what cannot be seen. By focusing on the subject matter, the minimalist approach usually leaves the frame with a lot of empty space. That empty space in the frame is by no means nothingness. It is as significant as the subject matter. The subject matter, together with the empty space, is intended to invite viewers to complete what is missing in the picture.

By taking the minimalist approach, I hope my photography will make viewers pause and think. In order to sense what is hidden in my works, viewers have to slow down and actively experience subtle feelings and layers of meaning in the frame.



YOU WON AN HONOURABLE MENTION IN THE MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS. WHAT DID THIS MEAN TO YOU AND YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY?

I'm always grateful to those who encourage me and appreciate my work. And winning an honourable mention in a well-renowned global mobile photography competition was definitely a huge encouragement for me.

As I mentioned, I went through some tough moments last year. So, this recognition felt like someone was genuinely seeing my effort. That means even more because the work that won in the Mobile Photography Awards is "Beyond," which, as I've mentioned, means so much to me.

On the other hand, I take this honor as a message to me to believe in myself. It gives me the confidence to experiment freely without needing to impress.



WHICH APPS DO YOU USE TO SHOOT AND EDIT YOUR PHOTOS? IS THERE A PROCESS OR METHODOLOGY THAT YOU APPLY TO YOUR POST-PRODUCTION EDITING?

I mainly use the Adobe Lightroom app for post-production editing. I think of the post-production process as consisting of two distinct steps.

The first step is correction. This involves fixing any compositional problems. After that, I adjust exposure, contrast, highlights, and shadows in the photo. At this point, I think it's necessary to be critical and identify imperfections that need to be corrected. Since it's easy to have biases toward my own work, it takes a lot of time to train a pair of critical eyes.

The second step is enhancement. This involves thinking about how to best express emotion while keeping the picture natural. For color photography, this involves making adjustments to color temperature, split toning, and selective colour editing (HSL) to evoke emotions. This part can be tricky, and I try to avoid overediting by being observant and making subtle changes.

For both color and black-and-white photography, I apply local adjustments to fine-tune the image, making it look more natural or emphasizing a specific part, since adjustments applied to the whole image can easily lead to overediting.

FOLLOW HO-YIN LUI

Instagram: [@yin_my_view](https://www.instagram.com/yin_my_view)



THE STORY BEHIND MY FAVORITE PHOTOS...



HIDDEN PEAKS

This photo perfectly captures what I mean by a scene finding me when I tune into my feelings and surroundings.

I was walking around a clothing store. When I looked at the shadows cast by hanging clothes on the floor, I noticed they formed a mountain-like silhouette. That unexpected beauty led me to capture this photo.

This is an ambiguous image. One can see it as a textured, light-colored surface with shadows. One can also see it as a distant mountain range at sunrise or sunset. Viewers are invited to use their imagination to shift between different perspectives. For me, this photo gives me a sense of mystery.



INNER DIALOGUE

This photo was taken in the Tsz Shan Monastery Buddhist Art Museum in Hong Kong.

I was attracted to the Arhat's seemingly angry expression and prominent posture. I chose a side angle to emphasize the posture's shape, and I used the surrounding blackness to draw attention to it within the frame.

Only in post-processing did I notice a faint reflection in the darkness. By enhancing it, I created a scene as though the Arhat were having an inner dialogue, arguing with himself. This work shows that discovery can emerge in post-processing.



ARC OF AFFECTION

I think my last photo shows how inner peace can be found within the darkness.

One way I shoot street photography is by starting with architectural elements, patterns, or lighting that draw me in. Afterwards, I wait for things to happen. For this photo, I was first attracted to the curve of the staircase and the darkness that surrounds it. Not only did I see the darkness, but I could also feel it. So, I chose to use the darkness to help focus on the staircase and wait for things to happen.

When I saw a child and an adult holding hands as they walked down the staircase, I felt a sense of connection and calm. This was how I captured this photo.

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15 THINGS I'VE LEARN'T FROM SHOOTING ONE MILLION FRAMES

By Jack Hollingsworth

It was 18th February, 2011, at 7am in the morning. I was at The Crane Beach Resort in Barbados at sunrise, and my professional camera gear was missing. Three Canon 1D bodies, lenses, the works. None of it had made the flight.

I was there on assignment with my reputation on the line and the client nearby, with nothing but a brand-new Canon 5D, which I had barely touched before that trip. It felt slow, awkward, and foreign to me. Every adjustment required thought. Every movement

felt mechanical. Instead of working in my usual flow, I was fumbling. Anyone who has shot professionally knows that sickening mismatch when your confidence and equipment aren't aligned.

During a short break, I took a walk and ended up behind the cliff and out of sight. The morning Caribbean light was shining over the Atlantic, and the temperature was rising. The moment was quiet and calm and almost instinctively, I pulled out my iPhone. No pressure, no client, no gear anxiety. I framed the sunrise and tapped the shutter.

That was the first of what would eventually become more than one million iPhone photographs. Not because the phone was technically superior, but because it felt free.



I didn't sell my big cameras that morning, and I didn't walk back around the cliff reborn. For a couple of years, I straddled both worlds - DSLRs in one hand, iPhone in the other. I compared, I tested, I argued with myself. Part of me still believed serious photography required serious gear. But something kept nagging me. I was shooting more with the iPhone, carrying it everywhere I went and using it more and more. The friction was gone.

Eventually, the bags, the lenses, the weight, and the endless decisions started to feel unnecessary. So I sold the big cameras - not dramatically, but deliberately, and I haven't looked back.

Fifteen years later, I've taken over one million photographs on fourteen different iPhones in more than sixty countries. Here's what that journey has taught me.

1. FRICTION KILLS CREATIVITY

That morning in Barbados wasn't really about megapixels. It was about friction. Heavy gear, missing bodies, a camera I didn't know, and a client watching. Then I took that walk behind a nearby cliff and everything relaxed. No bag, no lens swaps, no technical gymnastics. Just light, framing, and a tap. Creativity flows when friction disappears, so if your camera feels like a burden, you'll hesitate. If it feels natural, you'll shoot more, and shoot more consistently on a daily basis. This changes everything.



2. SEEING COMES BEFORE SHOOTING

When I stopped wrestling with equipment, something unexpected happened: I started to notice things. The light shining on a hotel wall. The color contrasts at a gas station at dusk. The geometry of shadows in a cruise ship corridor. The camera didn't make that happen, but attention did. Before you press the shutter, ask yourself where the light is coming from. What color dominates the frame, and what the composition is doing inside it. If you train your eye to see light, color, and composition, your photography will improve without touching a single setting. Being able to see is the skill, and shooting is the byproduct of that skill.

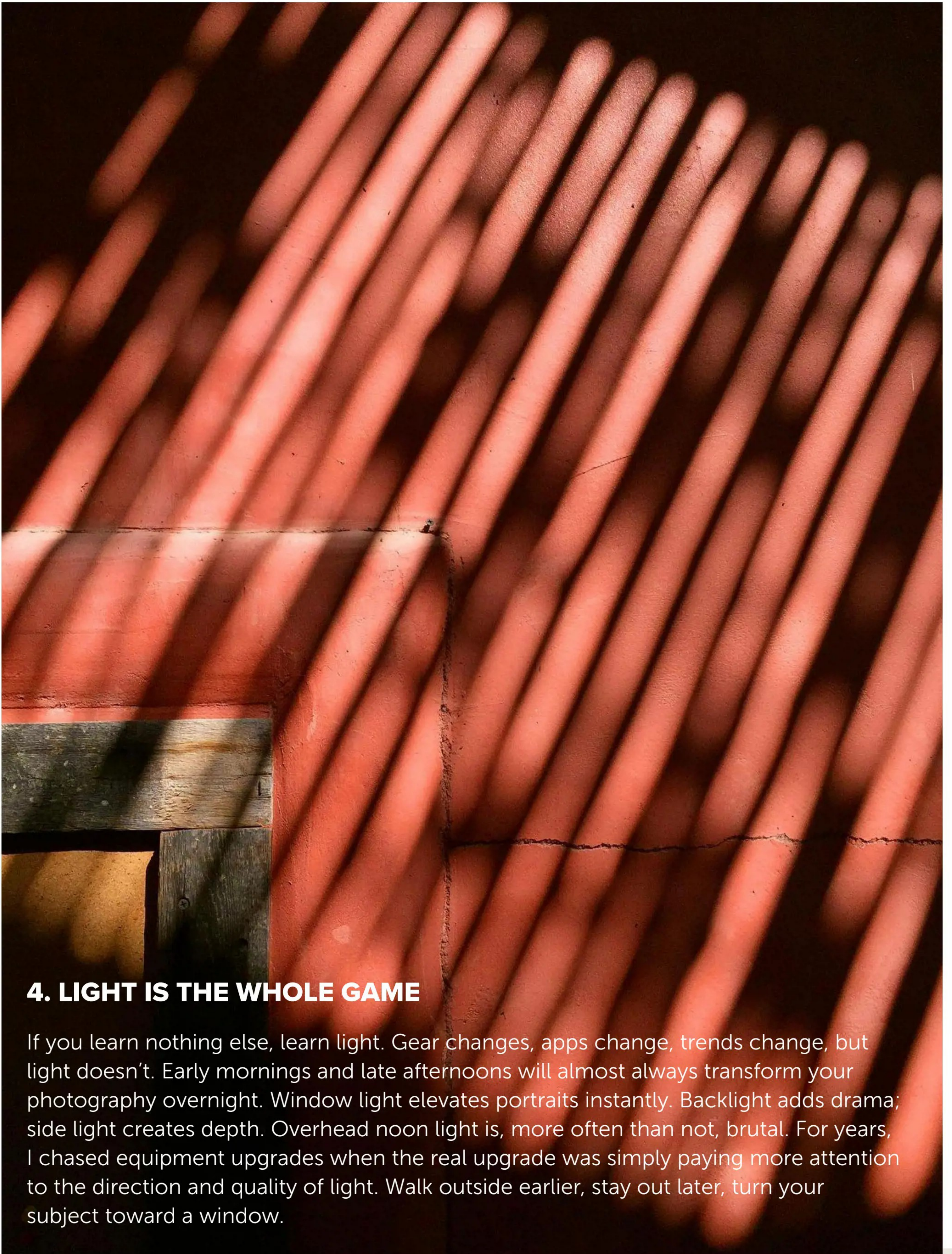


3. CASUAL PHOTOGRAPHY HAS A CEILING

I love casual photography - birthdays, airport gates, coffee cups, life as it unfolds. But if you wait for great photographs to happen accidentally, you eventually run out of them. You see, casual photography has a ceiling; intentional photography doesn't. When I started going out specifically to chase light by taking a walk before sunrise, revisiting locations, or positioning myself instead of just reacting, my work deepened. You don't need exotic travel. You need deliberate effort. Go to the photograph; don't wait for it to come to you.

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4. LIGHT IS THE WHOLE GAME

If you learn nothing else, learn light. Gear changes, apps change, trends change, but light doesn't. Early mornings and late afternoons will almost always transform your photography overnight. Window light elevates portraits instantly. Backlight adds drama; side light creates depth. Overhead noon light is, more often than not, brutal. For years, I chased equipment upgrades when the real upgrade was simply paying more attention to the direction and quality of light. Walk outside earlier, stay out later, turn your subject toward a window.

5. COLOR IS EMOTION

Warm Caribbean mornings feel different than cool Northern European evenings, and that difference is almost entirely due to color. A red door against a white wall carries tension. Muted tones in fog feel reflective. Color sets the mood in a way that composition alone can't. When you start composing consciously with color by asking whether the dominant tone is harmonious or clashing, your photographs stop feeling accidental and start feeling intentional.

6. DESIGN SEPARATES SNAPSHOTS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

Light draws you in. Color sets the mood. Design holds it all together. And design isn't complicated - it's mostly subtraction. Clean edges, balanced weight, intentional negative space, strong lines that lead somewhere. Turn on the grid. Use it. Watch your corners. Most weak photographs aren't technical failures; they're just cluttered. Move your feet, simplify the frame, and the improvement is immediate.



7. STOP LETTING THE PHONE GUESS

The iPhone is smart, but it doesn't know what matters to you. Choose your lens with intention. Tap to focus, every single time. When you tap the exact spot you want sharp and properly exposed, you're making a decision. You're telling the camera what the photograph is actually about. Next, slide the exposure up or down. These are small adjustments, but they're the difference between consuming a moment and creating one.



8. UPGRADE AWARENESS BEFORE HARDWARE

I upgrade my iPhone every year, and I'd be lying if I said the incremental improvements don't matter. Apple updates the camera annually, and the tools genuinely do improve. But a new phone won't fix bad light. It won't fix a cluttered frame. It won't compensate for not showing up. The biggest upgrade I ever made wasn't a device; it was awareness. Learn to see well, and almost any iPhone becomes a powerful camera.

9. SHOOT VIDEO LIKE A PHOTOGRAPHER

Video is not a different universe. Light still matters, composition still matters, and stability matters even more. Most bad video

comes down to impatience: the camera moves too fast, the shot changes before the scene has a chance to breathe. Slow down. Hold the phone with two hands. Plant your feet and let the scene run longer than feels comfortable. If you approach video in the same way as a photographer approaches a still - with restraint - the results will surprise you.



10. YOUR CAMERA ROLL IS YOUR LIFE

At some point, I stopped shooting for approval and started photographing my life. Hotel rooms at dawn, rental cars, empty streets, my daughters, the in-between moments nobody else sees. Your camera roll is a diary, and over time, the ordinary becomes historical. The texture of a regular Tuesday, years from now, will matter more than most of the spectacular images you chased.

11. INTIMACY BEATS SPECTACLE

For many years, I chased the big view, the overlook, the horizon, the epic panorama. But the photographs that stay with me are rarely the grand ones. They're the close ones. A cracked window. A shadow across a wall. Worn shoes by a hotel bed. Moving closer is almost always the right thing to do. You don't need grandeur. You just need proximity.





12. DISCIPLINE BEATS INSPIRATION

Inevitably, some days will feel flat. Despite this, I shoot anyway. I walk anyway, look anyway, practice anyway. Inspiration is unreliable; discipline isn't. Taking one million frames wasn't built on magic mornings. They were built on repetition. Show up, and the spark tends to follow the habit.

13. MASTER THE TOOL, THEN GET IT OUT OF THE WAY

Settings matter, resolution matters, file formats matter, but the goal isn't obsession with any of them. The goal is fluency and eventual disappearance. When you understand your tool well enough that you stop fumbling, stop hesitating, stop blaming the gear, the mechanics fade into the background, and meaning takes over. Technical mastery isn't the finish line. It's just the runway.



14. IGNORE THE NOISE

In fifteen years, I've watched trends come and go: HDR crazes, filter fads, gear wars, app arguments, and AI panic. There's always noise. Most of it won't make you better, and the loudest voices are rarely the most experienced. The experienced ones are usually out shooting. You see, work outlasts hype; it always has.

15. PHOTOGRAPHY IS ATTENTION

After fifteen years and more than a million iPhone photographs, the biggest change wasn't my camera - it was me. I move more slowly. I notice light without trying. I see color relationships that most people walk straight past. Photography trained my attention in ways I didn't anticipate. You don't need sixty countries or fourteen devices or a million images. You just need intention. The world's most popular camera is already in your pocket, so use it to pay attention, and everything else will follow.





FINAL THOUGHTS...

I didn't set out to become "an iPhone photographer." I set out to keep photographing. And the iPhone made that possible - daily, consistently, and without friction. Over time, the device mattered less, and the discipline mattered more. The settings mattered less, and the seeing mattered more.

That's the real takeaway from fifteen years and a million images. Not that the iPhone is magical, but that photography, when practised with intention, sharpens how you move through the world.

You already own the camera. You already have the light, the color, the subjects. The only question is whether you'll use it deliberately.

Start today. Shoot with intention. Pay attention. Repeat.

Fifteen years from now, you won't just have better photos.

About the Author

Jack Hollingsworth is a photographer, educator, and author with more than 40 years behind the camera and over 14 years specializing in iPhone photography.

Known globally as "iPhoneJack," he has taught thousands through his books, workshops, and online platforms, helping everyday creators make more intentional, more beautiful, and more meaningful images with the camera they carry every day.

His teaching blends practical technique with real-world wisdom, demystifying the iPhone's technology and empowering people to see the world with fresh eyes.



MOOD.CAMERA REVIEW: AUTHENTIC FILM EMULATION FOR THE IPHONE

Video Placeholder
Internet Connection Required

In this video, David Addison takes a closer look at Mood Camera, a film emulation app for iPhone built around four guiding principles: characterful photos, joyful experience, simplicity, and resetting the digital mindset.

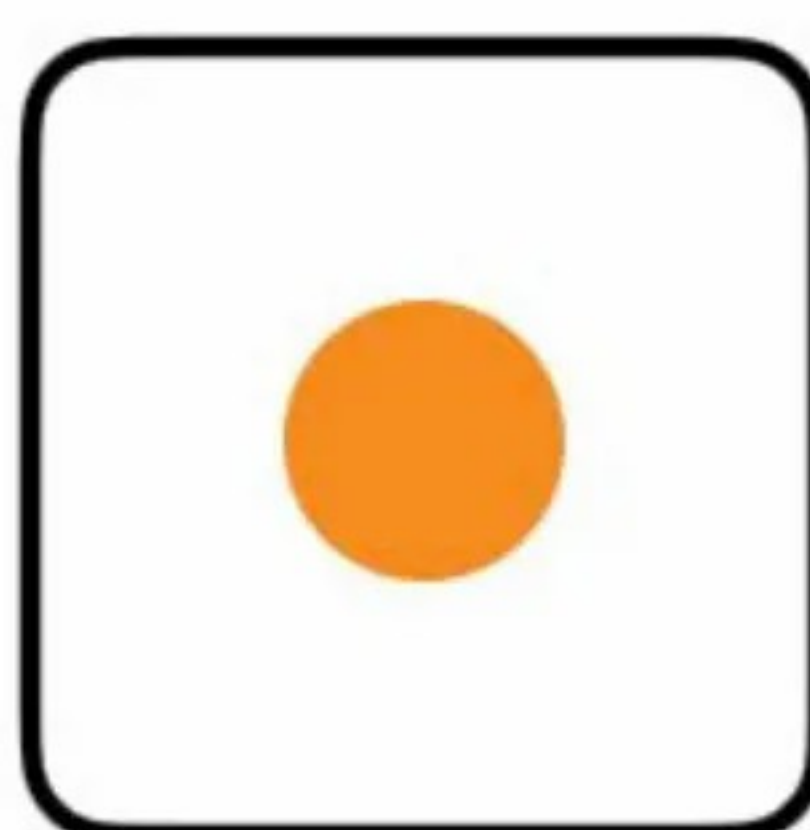
David shares how Mood helped him rediscover the pleasure of photography after years of shooting purely for content. The video covers the film emulations, settings, the absence of live previews, and the custom preset system, and David explains how creating his own presets transformed his experience. If you're interested in how Mood can transform and inspire your own photography, then check this video out to find out more.



GETTING TO GRIPS WITH SNAPSEED 3.0: TURNING A PHOTO TO A BLACK-AND-WHITE MASTERPIECE

By Andy Butler

Brightness 0



Neutral

Red

Orange

Yellow

Green

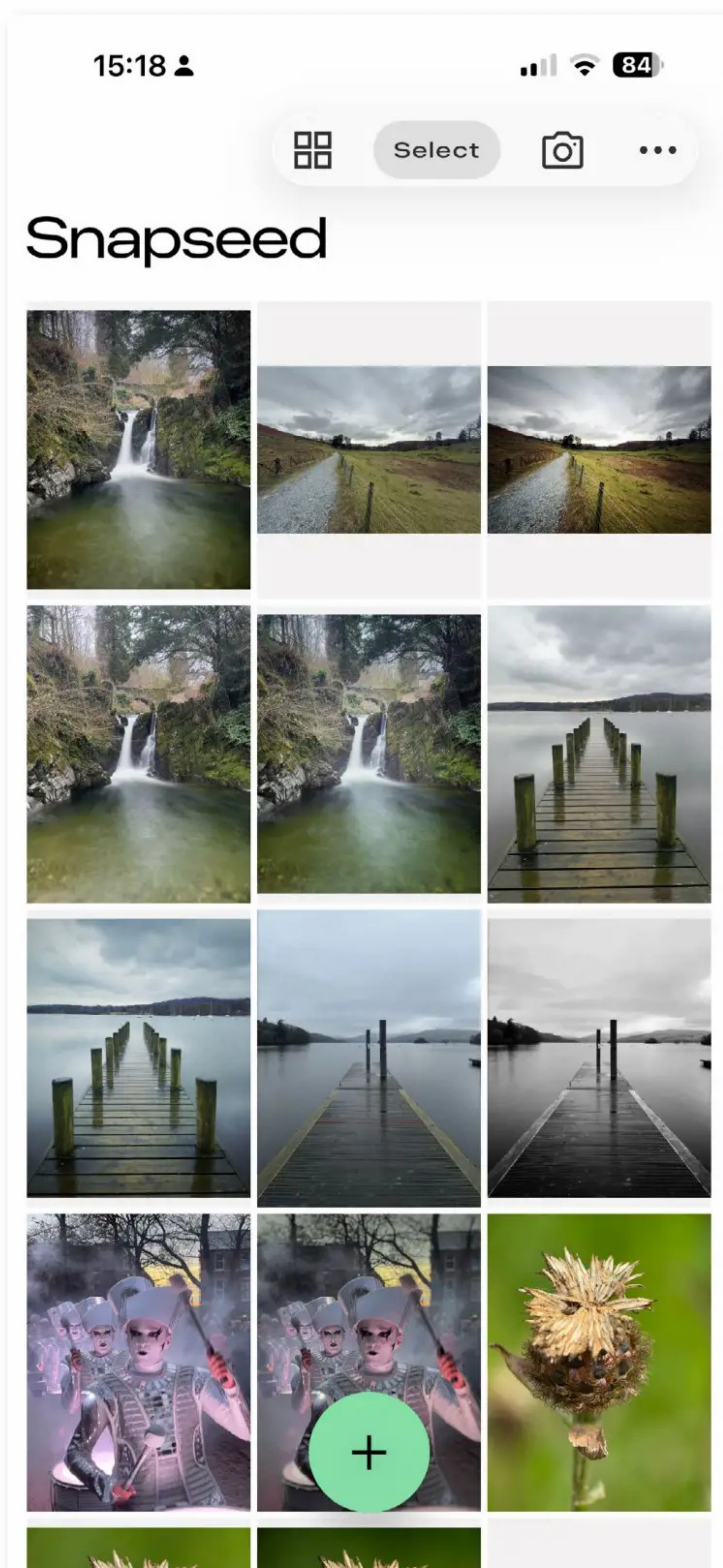
Blue

Snapsseed is one of the most popular and versatile photo editing apps available in the app stores at the moment. Originally developed by Nik Software back in 2012 and later acquired by Google, it's probably one of the original photo editing apps out there.

For far too long, Snpaseed hasn't seen much activity in terms of upgrades and development. Sure, over the years, there's been the occasional new tool added to its tool library, but nothing major to speak of. That was until June last year, when a completely new, redesigned version of Snpaseed was released.

The update got mixed reviews. Some praised the new, modernized interface design and features, while others expressed frustration with it. I suspect many of those who were frustrated are long-time users accustomed to the original design and had a deep affinity with it.

Either way, the new look Snpaseed is here, so I thought it was worth diving in to see how this redesign has affected how we use it.

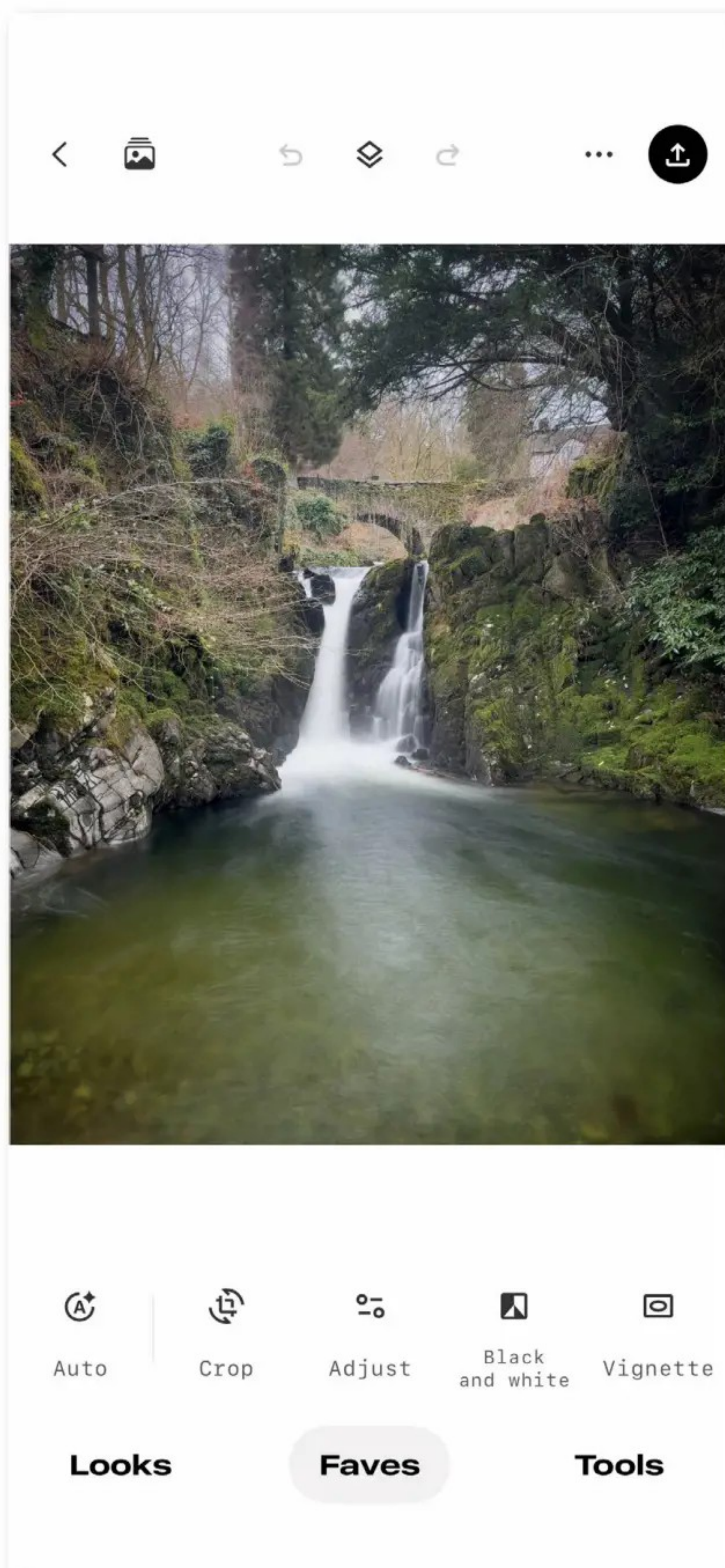


GETTING STARTED

On opening the app, you're presented with a gallery of photos that have previously received the Snapseed treatment. From this screen, you can either select the image from the camera roll you want to work with or access the newly released Snapseed Camera feature by tapping the camera icon in the top right corner.

I plan to explore the camera at a later date, once I've had a chance to properly road-test it. But for today, let's stick with the photo editing side of things.

To import a new image, simply tap the big green button at the bottom of the screen, select the image you want to work with, then tap the blue checkmark in the top right.



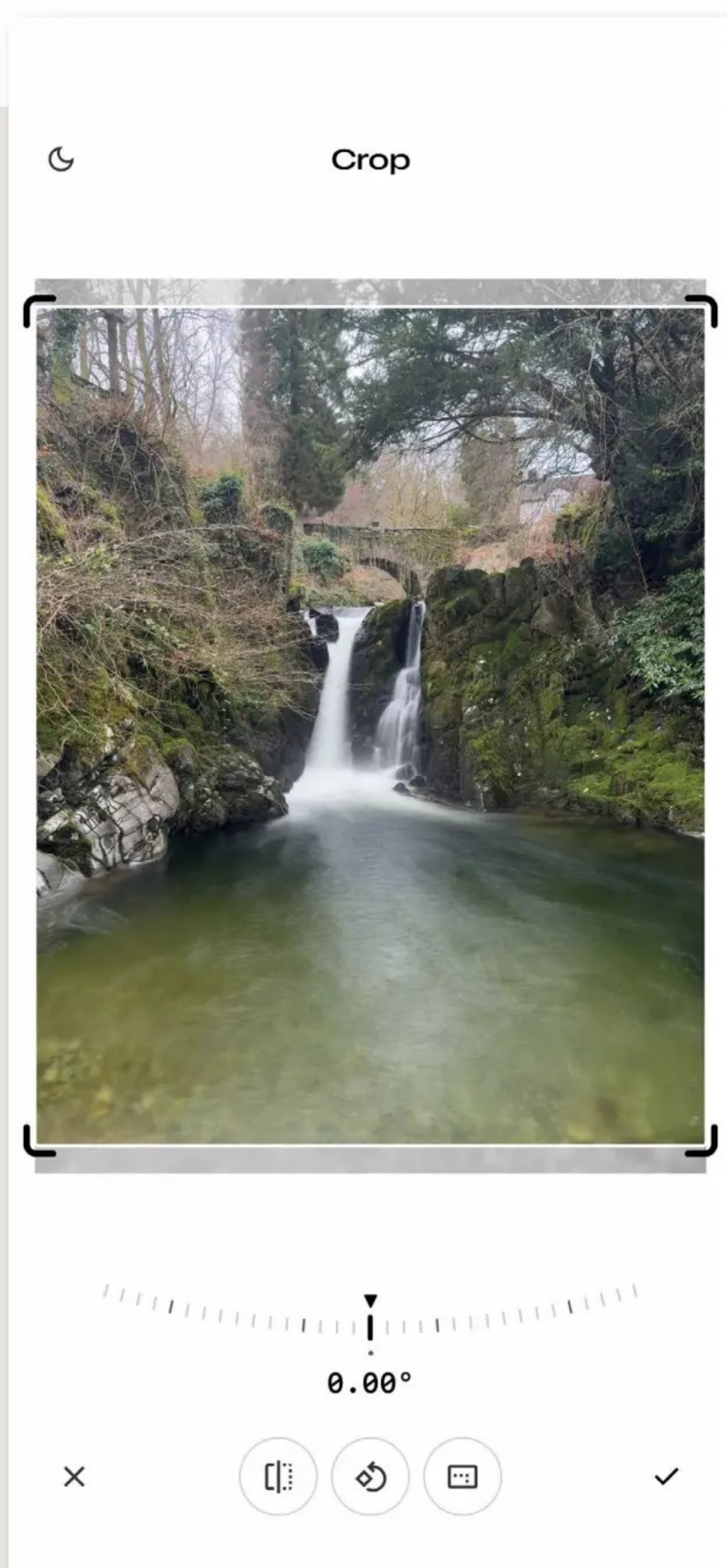
One of the first changes you'll notice, apart from the change in font usage and styling, is the presence of five icons beneath the main image area, followed by the options: Looks, Faves, and Tools. This five-icon view is the Fave menu option. These icons are customizable, so you can change them to the ones you use most often, making the editing process more user-friendly.

Next to Faves, you'll find the Looks menu which is where you'll find the old presets feature. These presets let you apply a predefined look with one tap. If you have an editing

style that you commonly apply to your images, you can save it so it can be applied to future photos with a single tap of a button.

Next, the Tools menu provides a full-screen list of all available Snapseed tools. These tools are grouped into themes such as Adjust and Correct, Retouch and Transform, and Style and Creative.

For the purposes of this walkthrough, I'm not going to go into every tool, but will cover some of my favourites as I turn a photo into a black-and-white masterpiece.

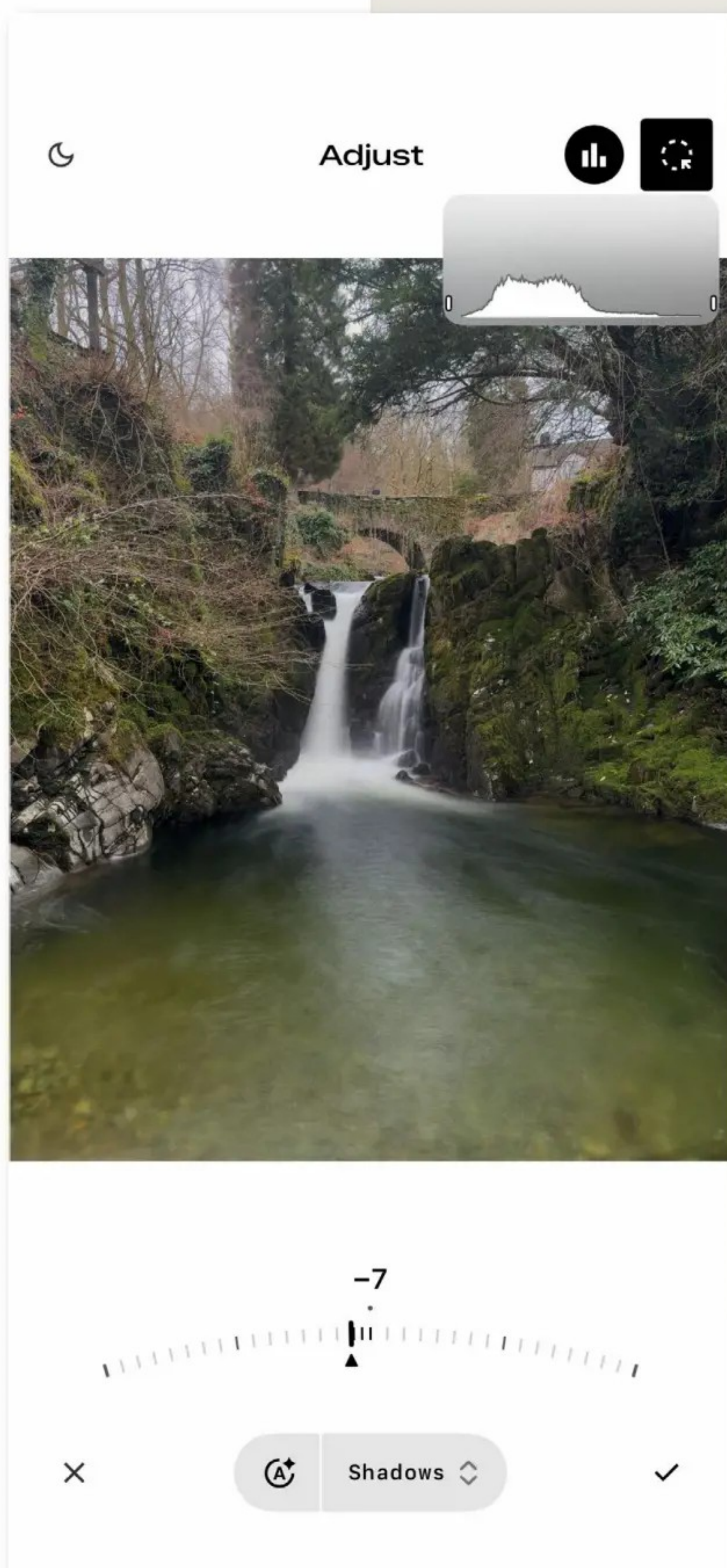


CROPPING THE IMAGE

Generally, my editing workflow starts by cropping the image. To do this in Snapseed, I select the Crop tool from the Retouch and Transform category.

At the bottom of the screen, you'll see three circular icons. The left icon flips the image, the central icon rotates the image by 90 degrees, and the right icon selects the crop ratio. I start by tapping this option, then I swipe through the list of crop ratios until I find the vertical 4:5 ratio.

Below the main image section is a dial. Moving this left or right allows you to fine-tune the rotation to level your horizon or vertical lines in the image. You can also adjust the crop frame position by swiping up or down on the screen or by dragging a corner anchor point. Once you're happy with the crop, tap the checkmark in the bottom right corner.

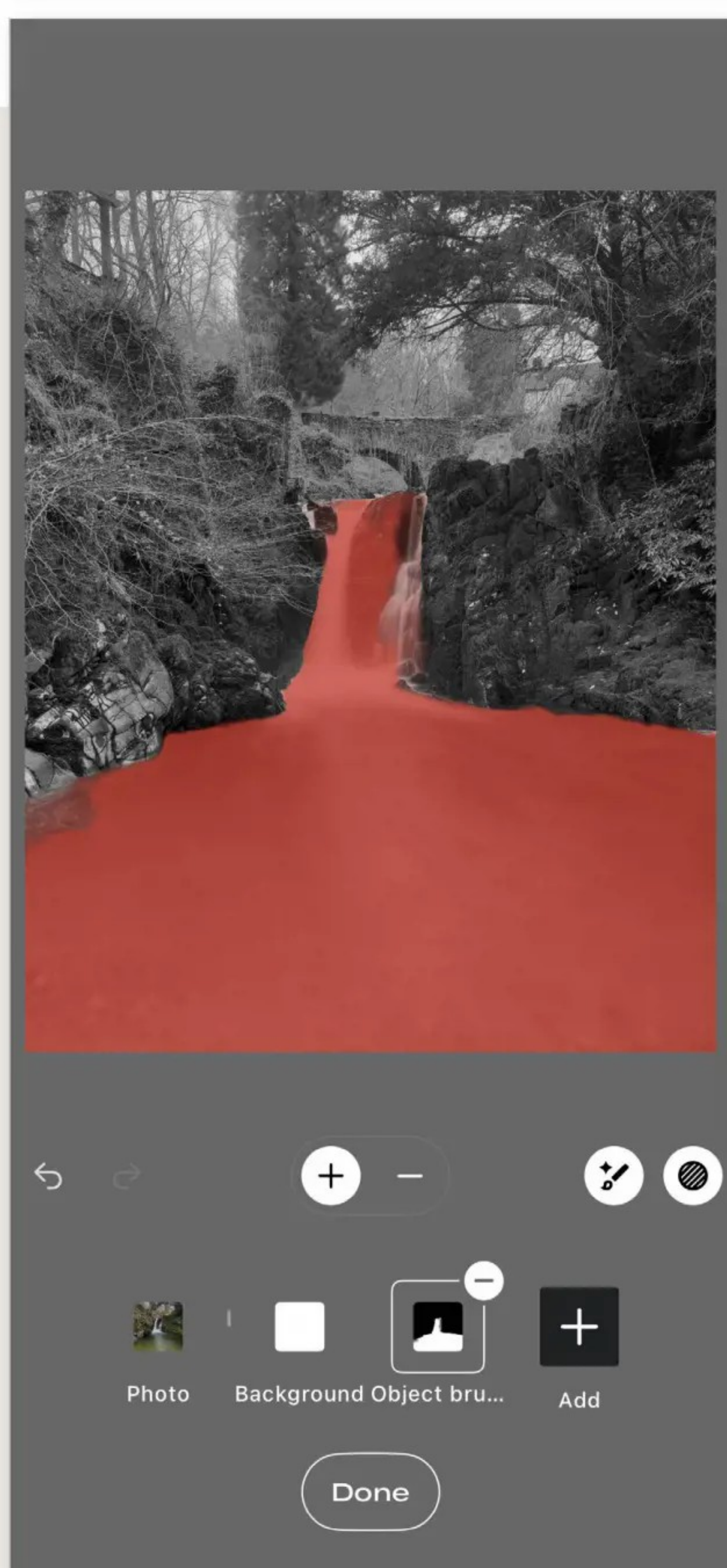


FINE-TUNING

Next, I select Adjust so I can fine-tune the lighting levels. As with the old version of Snapseed, you select the option that you'd like to adjust by sliding your finger up or down, then to make the adjustments, slide your finger left or right.

I always start by tapping the Auto adjustment option, then I make fine-tuning adjustments from this starting point. I often reduce the Shadows, tweak the Contrast a little, check the Highlights, and make sure the Brightness doesn't need adjusting. Sometimes it's also good to play around with the Warmth levels and Ambience, as even a slight adjustment from these two options can have a big impact on the image's clarity and feel.

When you're happy with your adjustments, tap the checkmark.



INTELLIGENT MASKING

At this point, it's worth drawing your attention to one of the cool features of this new version of Snapseed - intelligent masking. This feature is available in most tools in the Adjust and Correct category. Going back into the Adjust tool, you'll see a dotted circular icon with an arrow in the top right corner. Tapping this will display a pop-up menu with three options - Object Brush, Background, and Subject.

Tapping one of these options will then present you with a new screen where you can, with one tap, select an area to mask. If the image has a clearly defined subject, then it will select that subject straight away with no messing. Likewise, it will also select the background where one is clearly present. You can make adjustments to the selection by painting with your finger, and Snapseed will cleverly select other areas to be included in the mask.

This is a massive improvement over the previous version, which used a very manual and clunky process to achieve this.

With your mask selected, tap Done, then continue to make adjustments. These adjustments will then only be applied to the masked area.

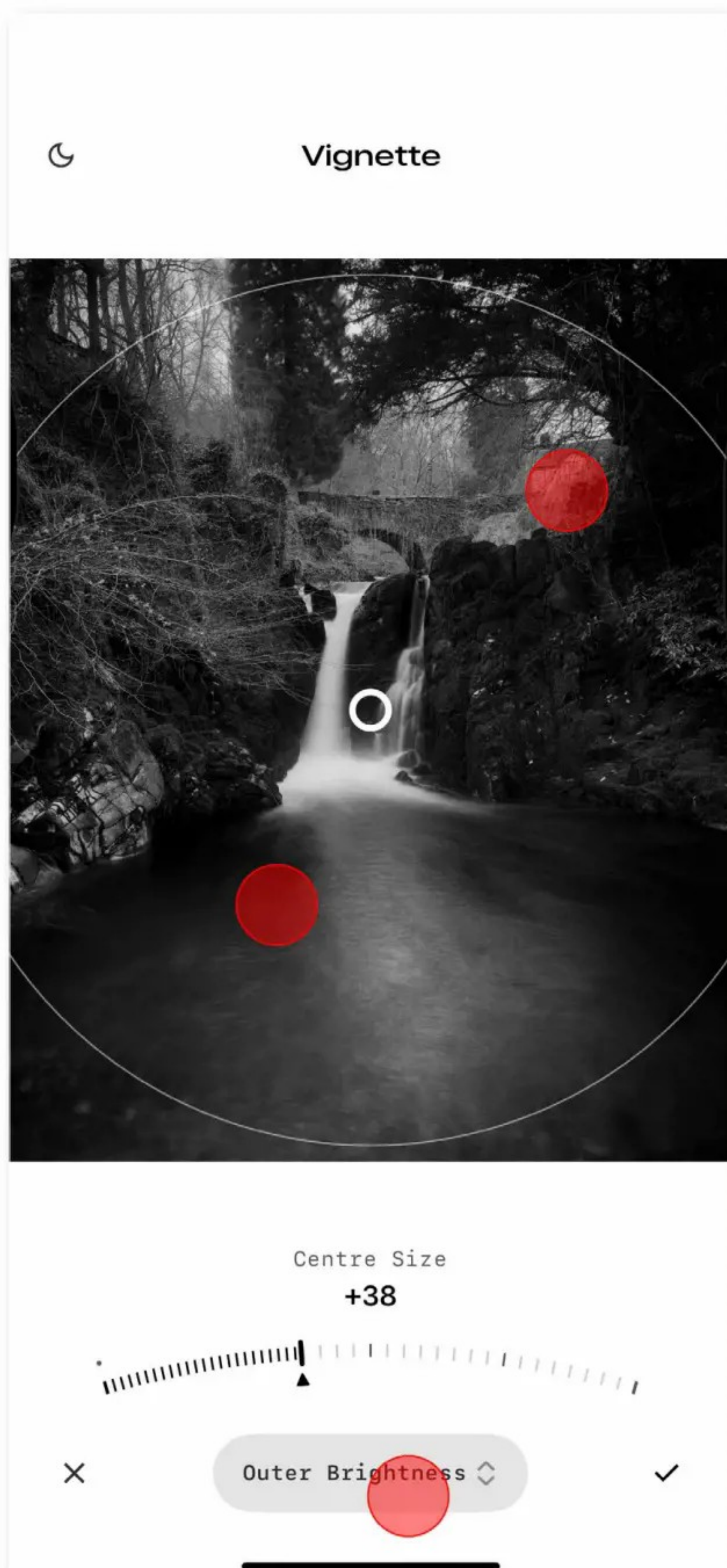
CONVERTING TO BLACK-AND-WHITE

There are two ways to convert the image to black-and-white. The first and most obvious way is to go into the Black and White tool in the Style category, which works in pretty much the same way as the previous version of Snapseed. Once in the tool, you'll see a selection of presets at the bottom of the screen. Each will apply a different look to the image.

With a preset selected, you can also slide your finger up or down on the screen to adjust brightness, contrast, and grain, and then fine-tune.



Additionally, by tapping the left icon from the group of three at the bottom of the screen, you can also apply a color filter to the image. These color filters simulate physical colored lens filters which alter how specific colors are translated into monochrome tones. The filters will lighten objects of their own color and darken opposite (complementary) colors, allowing you to increase the contrast, highlight subjects, and darken skies.



The second method, and the one I often prefer because it gives you much more control over the end result, involves going back into the Adjust tool.

Once in Adjust, select the Saturation setting and reduce it down to -100. This will remove all color from the photo.

Next, play around with the Ambience levels. Ambience acts as a hybrid of contrast, saturation, and exposure and is designed to alter the overall mood and light balance in a photo. It's designed to fix "flat" or dull photos by automatically bringing out details in shadows while simultaneously boosting the vibrancy of colors. However, in this case, it can improve the balance and clarity between the dark and light areas of the black-and-white image.

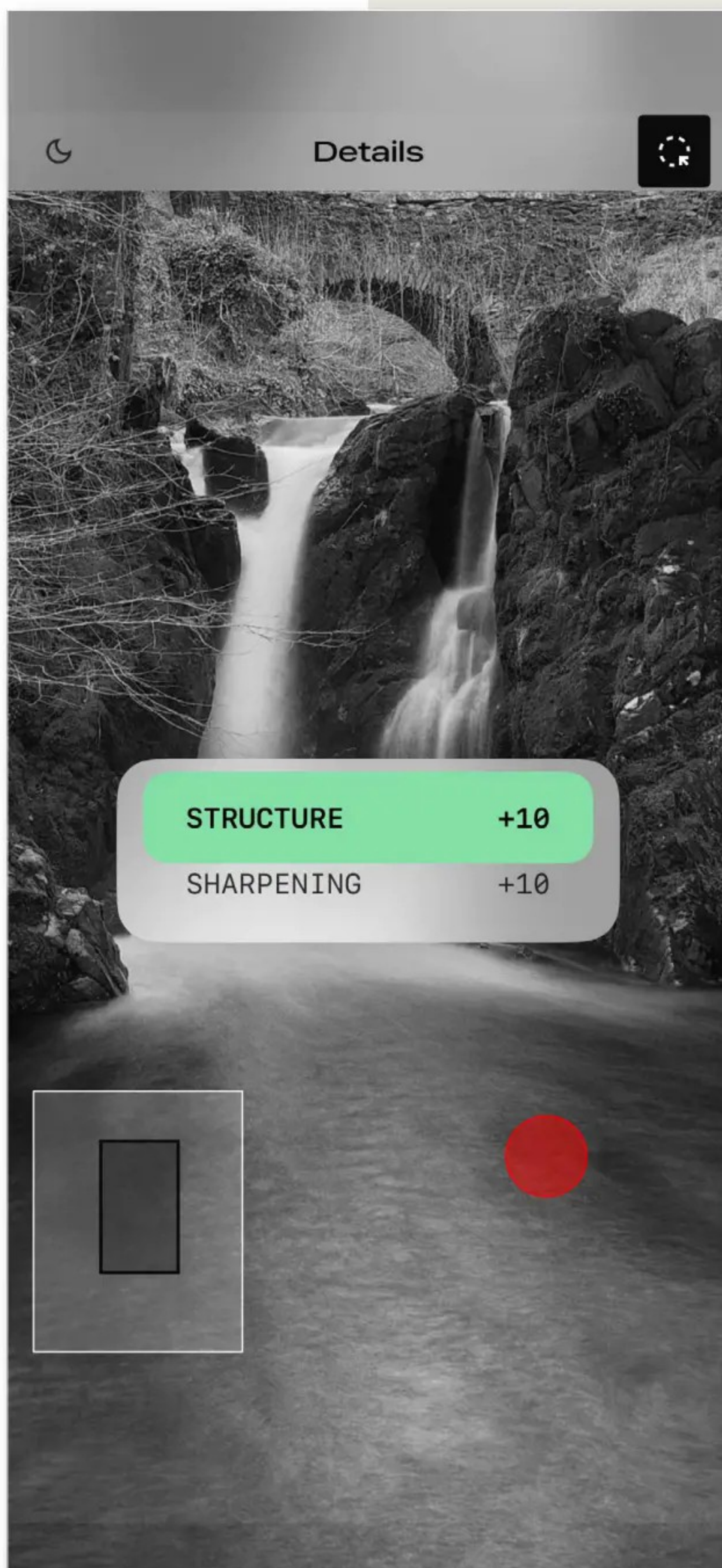
It's also worth making small adjustments to Contrast, Shadows, Brightness, and even Warmth to further fine-tune the image.

Happy with your black-and-white edit? Then tap the checkmark.

ADDING A VIGNETTE

Finally, I open the Vignette tool from the Adjust and Correct category, then use a two-finger pinch gesture to adjust the vignette circle's radius so it's closer to the edges of the frame.

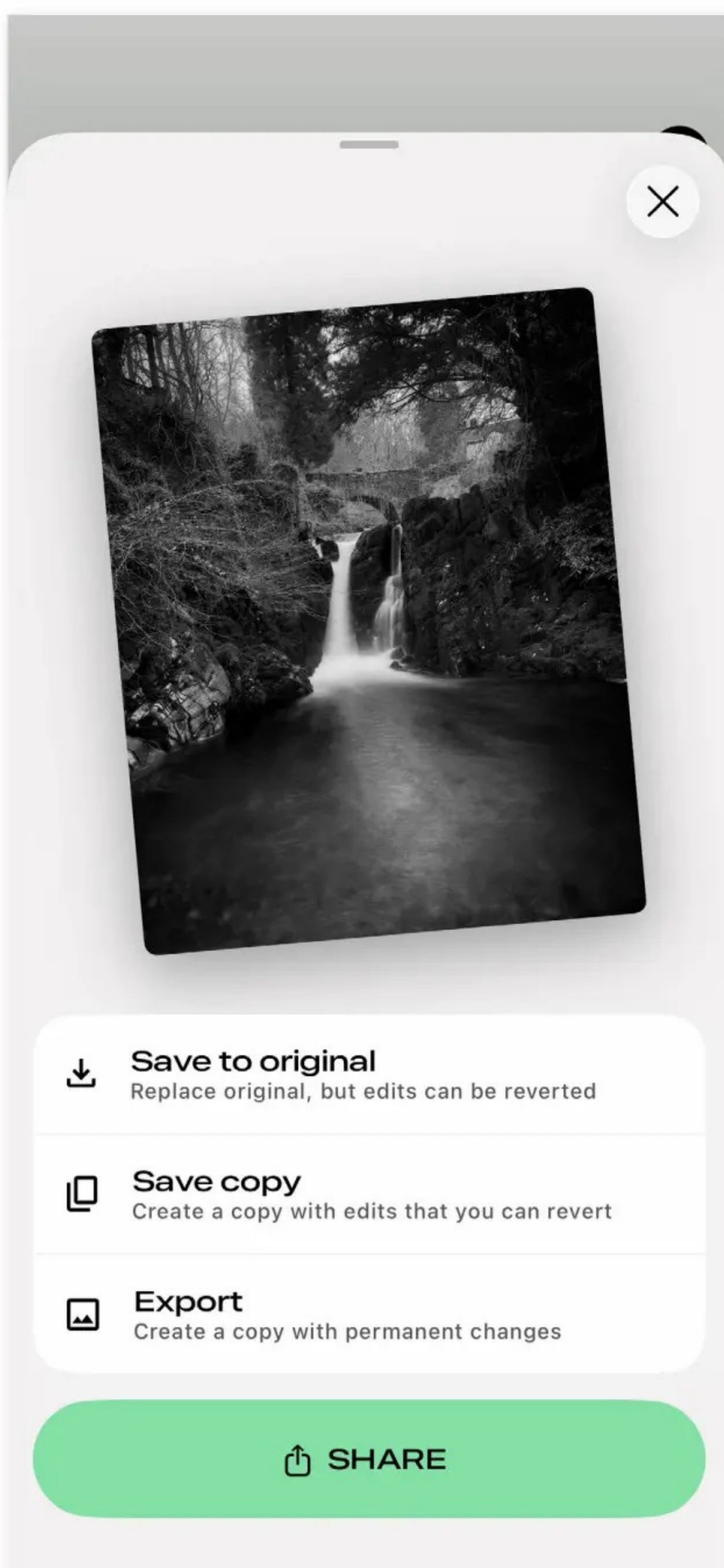
I then select the Outer Brightness and reduce it to darken the corners of the frame. If the image is now looking a bit dark and gloomy, I'll often select the Inner Brightness and increase it a touch.



STRUCTURE AND SHARPENING

At this stage, I'm happy with the image. But if you want to enhance the details a bit more, you could open the Details tool and adjust the Structure and Sharpening settings. Structure enhances the texture and local contrast to make the fine detail in an image pop without affecting edges. This sort of acts like a "clarity" adjustment. The Sharpening option increases definition by enhancing fine edges across the entire image. Structure works on mid-tones and textures, while Sharpening works on small, pixel-level details.

My biggest piece of advice when using the Details tool is to make only small adjustments as large ones can create a false, artificial effect that detracts from the image. Often, less is more, and that is certainly true in this case.



SAVE & EXPORT

Once you're happy with your final black-and-white edit, it's time to save your changes.

To do this, tap the Export icon in the top right corner of the main screen. This will let you save or export your Snapseed-edited photos. The "Save to Original" option will overwrite the current image in your camera roll with your newly updated edit, while "Save a copy" will save your image and its edits as a brand new photo in the camera roll. The "Export" option will create a copy of the image with your edits permanently applied.

Personally, once I've finished editing a photo, I would recommend saving the photo and then exporting the photo as well. The reason is that, in the past, Snapseed had a tendency to lose your edits over time. Using the export option means the final image is set in stone and always available. I'm not sure whether this bug has been addressed in the new version of Snapseed, but just to be safe, I prefer to save a hard copy of the edited image.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Overall, Snapseed's redesign brings fresh new features and creative possibilities with a shallow learning curve for long-time users. While some features may take some getting used to, I think the app still remains a powerful and flexible tool for mobile photo editing. With its intelligent masking, customizable interface, and flexible export options, Snapseed continues to stand out in a crowded field.

Whether you're a casual user or a dedicated photographer, I think the latest version is well worth exploring to see how it can enhance your editing workflow.



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PANNING FOR GOLD: HOW TO TAKE GREAT IMAGES IN BORING PLACES

By Mark Myerson

Photo by @miamicolortheory

A blank canvas. A blank page. A lump of clay. Threads of yarn. Unshaped metal. These are the raw materials that most creative people have to work with. But photography is different. There's no empty medium or shapeless material. No exposure is completely vacant. Regardless of where you point the lens, new ideas will enter the frame.

Yet, we don't always feel this abundance. Some locations seem so lifeless that your phone never escapes the dark confines of your pocket. How do you find compositions when there appears to be nothing worth shooting? To find out, I spoke with two respected mobile photographers.



Photo by @miamicolortheory

LIMITATIONS CAN BE FREEING

Self-imposed rules have long been used to spark artistic invention. Famed author Ernest Hemingway regularly set himself the challenge of writing a story in six words. Pablo Picasso followed a similar train of thought, forcing himself to paint using only one color family at a time.

Given the output of these great artists, it's clear that creative constraints can be a blessing - including those imposed by location.

Laura Paresky Gould is well aware of this. Known to her followers as [@miamicolortheory](#), she has made vivid minimalism her signature style, using her iPhone to distill Miami's architecture into bold studies of color and form. Named "Best Instagram" by Miami New Times, her work includes a digital photography video series for The Bass Museum, the book SEEING DIFFERENTLY: MIAMI COLOR THEORY, Apple commissions, and a large-scale immersive presentation at the Miami Beach Bandshell.

"Constraints force you to see," she tells me, drawing on her knowledge as a trained visual artist and motion designer. "As long as there's a light source, there's something interesting to notice."

Alon Goldsmith (@alon_goldsmith) shares a similar view. Now an award-winning street photographer, he spent many years documenting the people and urban views of Los Angeles. "Constraints are incredibly freeing," he tells me.

"My style grew out of limitation, curiosity, and a long-term obsession with people in public spaces," he explains. It's a style buzzing

with energy, often delivered through vibrant vignettes. You wouldn't easily guess that many of Goldsmith's images were taken in very mundane locations.

The work of both photographers is proof that "boring" locations don't always produce boring images. In fact, toiling in these environments has made them better artists.



Photo by @alon_goldsmith

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Working within boundary lines requires patience - a valuable skill to deploy wherever visual interest isn't immediately obvious.

"I slow down and treat the space almost like a blank canvas," says Alon Goldsmith. This gives his eyes time to explore. "I look for small disruptions... a long shadow, a cart left out of place, a person crossing

through a sea of asphalt, a graphic line painted on the ground."


"The breakthrough usually comes when I stop trying to make the place interesting, and instead let a simple human moment carry the image," he explains. This feels like an important insight; what is happening is often more interesting than where it is happening.

Waiting for things to happen can take time, of course. But Goldsmith believes it's worth investing in every site. "Most people scan a location for 30 seconds and

move on. If you give a space 10 or 15 minutes, patterns start to reveal themselves... how people move through it, where the light shifts, what visual rhythms repeat."



Photo by
@alon_goldsmith

An abstract geometric composition featuring large, overlapping shapes in bright yellow, blue, and orange. The shapes are defined by sharp, angular lines, creating a dynamic and colorful visual field. The background is a deep blue, which contrasts with the other colors.

Laura Paresky Gould later realized that many of her images reflect classic visual elements: "Symmetry, leading lines, negative space, repetition, and the rule of thirds." But like Goldsmith, she advocates focusing on individual sparks of interest within the wider environment.

"I try to eliminate everything extraneous and focus on the thing that stopped me in the first place," she tells me. "If I make a sound - an "ooh" or a gasp when I see something - I have to stop and shoot it." Perhaps that's a rule we should all adopt.

Photo by [@miamicolortheory](#)



Photo by @alon_goldsmith

Photo by @alon_goldsmith



TRAINING THE CURIOSITY MUSCLE

But what if the “ooh” moment doesn’t come? That’s where curiosity can save the day. When you take a genuine interest in your environment, it becomes much easier to see the gleaming details.

“I love going to unfamiliar areas and seeing what new buildings, walls, reflections, or murals I’ll encounter,” enthuses Gould. “It’s a conscious practice of noticing.”

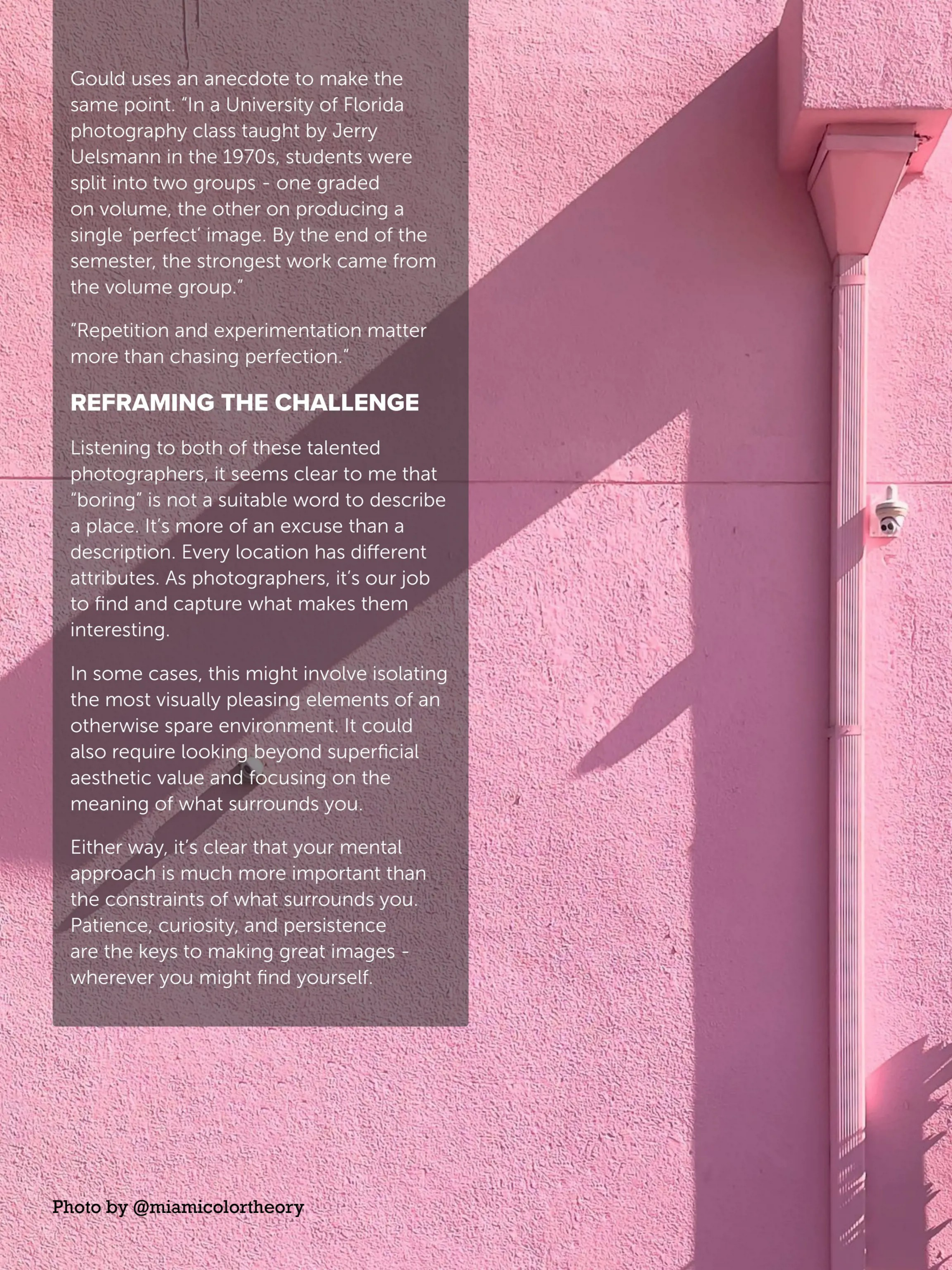
This technique extends far beyond architectural features. Like many photographers, Alon Goldsmith focuses on glimpses of the human condition. He recommends viewing mundane environments through the lens of a genuinely interested observer, rather than an opportunistic image-maker.

“Once you stop searching for spectacle, you start noticing subtle, human, and often more meaningful moments right where you are.” He offers an example that’s a recurring theme in his own work: “The tension between a vast, empty-feeling environment and a single figure can be incredibly powerful.”

PERSISTENCE OVER PERFECTIONISM

Goldsmith and Gould also point to sheer persistence as a key part of their success. Both photographers take thousands of pictures each year.

“Photographing every day removes the pressure to wait for ‘great’ locations,” Goldsmith explains. “You start working with whatever is in front of you: parking lots, sidewalks, bus stops, strip malls.”



Gould uses an anecdote to make the same point. "In a University of Florida photography class taught by Jerry Uelsmann in the 1970s, students were split into two groups - one graded on volume, the other on producing a single 'perfect' image. By the end of the semester, the strongest work came from the volume group."

"Repetition and experimentation matter more than chasing perfection."

REFRAMING THE CHALLENGE

Listening to both of these talented photographers, it seems clear to me that "boring" is not a suitable word to describe a place. It's more of an excuse than a description. Every location has different attributes. As photographers, it's our job to find and capture what makes them interesting.

In some cases, this might involve isolating the most visually pleasing elements of an otherwise spare environment. It could also require looking beyond superficial aesthetic value and focusing on the meaning of what surrounds you.

Either way, it's clear that your mental approach is much more important than the constraints of what surrounds you. Patience, curiosity, and persistence are the keys to making great images - wherever you might find yourself.

HOW TO TAKE BANGER PHOTOS IN BORING PLACES

Video Placeholder
Internet Connection Required

In this video, Hunter Scott shows how photographers can take great photos even in seemingly boring or unphotogenic locations. He shares three main ideas and explains how digging deeper can help you find meaningful subjects. Inspired by Impressionist painters and photographers like Alex Soth and Matt Stewart, Hunter proves that ordinary places can produce amazing images.

This video is a really great source of inspiration, and should encourage photographers to stop searching for the perfect shot and start finding creative opportunities wherever you may be.



**ARCHITECTURE, SHADOWS
AND THE STREET: TALKING
MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY
WITH JOSÉ LUIS MORALES**

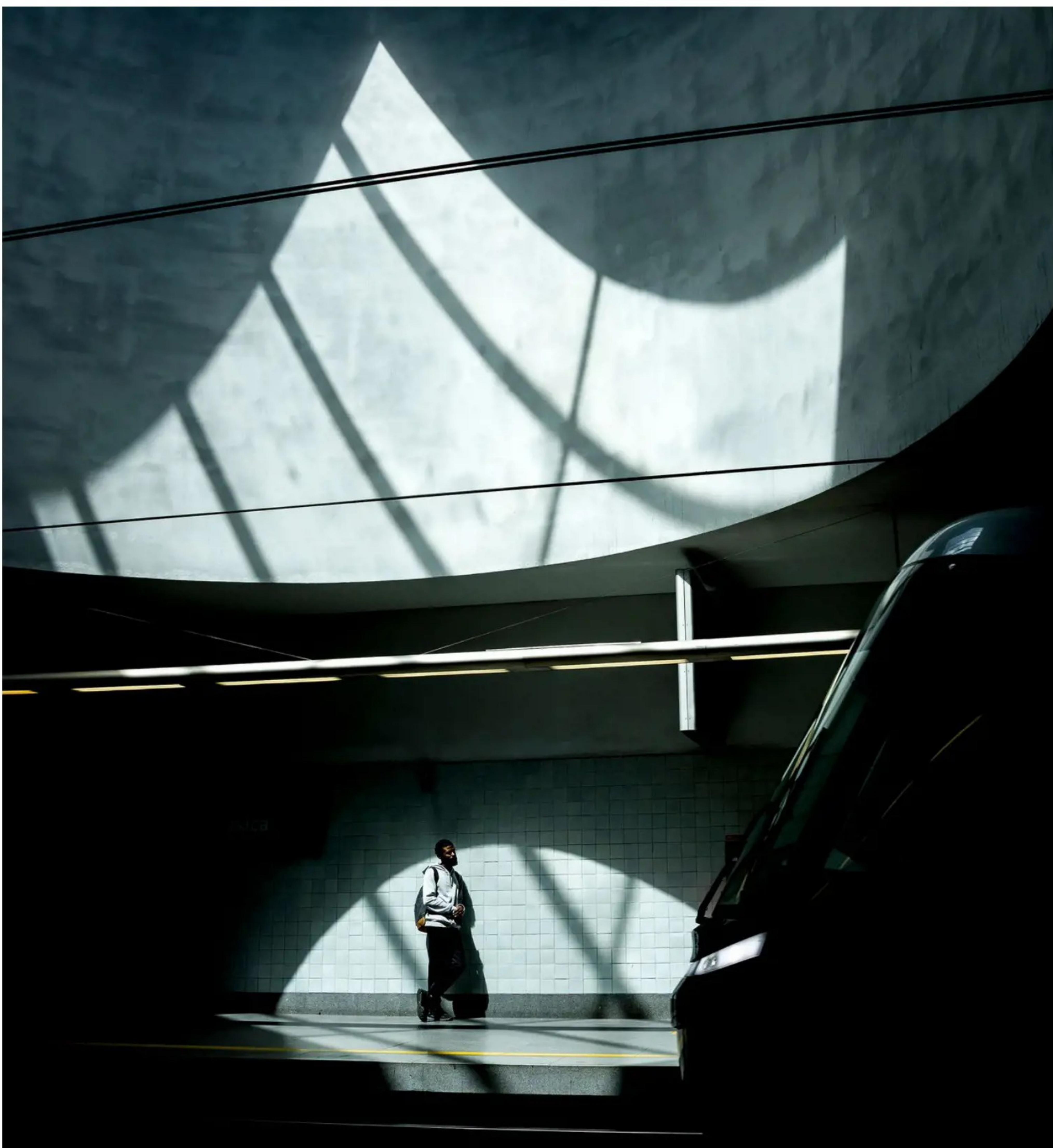
By Andy Butler

José Luis Morales Martín is an architect and photographer from Madrid, Spain. José first became interested in photography at a young age, when taking pictures with an old camera on family holidays. Later, while studying architecture in Madrid, his interest in photography grew stronger. But it wasn't until the arrival of digital cameras in the mid-2000s, and later the smartphone, that his photography became a more serious and lasting passion.

Looking through his Instagram feed, you can see that his background in architecture clearly plays an important role in his photography. Clean lines, careful composition, and an awareness of scale run through his work. In his street and urban images, solitary figures often appear set against pattern-filled, architectural backdrops, giving a sense of both drama and balance. José often uses strong backlighting to create striking silhouettes or softer tones that

help bring out the shapes, textures, and details in his subjects.

José's work has always caught my eye, so I wanted to catch up with him to find out more about his approach to photography. In our chat, José talks about how architecture has influenced his photography, why composition and light matters so much to him, and how he balances working with both a traditional camera and a smartphone.



TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY AND HOW YOU DISCOVERED SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY.

My photographic journey began with photographs of family vacations at the beach, taken with low-quality analog cameras when I was a child. Then there was a second stage during my university studies in Madrid, when I bought an SLR camera and continued taking pictures of family and friends, as well as architectural

photographs, models, and university projects, though not very consistently.

It was in 2006, during a trip to China, that I started taking pictures with a digital camera, and my curiosity about photography was rekindled. From then on, I began taking photographs more regularly, and it became a passion, focusing initially on travel photography with SLR cameras and later on street and architectural photography. Although occasionally, I have also done sports, nature, macro, and creative photography.





The arrival of the smartphone in my photographic journey was also slow but sure. At first, the cameras on smartphones weren't bad, but I noticed they lacked optical quality and resolution. However, with the new models, this handicap was overcome, and it quickly became a different way of capturing reality, very much in line with what interests me today: urban photography. Both the flexibility and speed with which I can capture a fleeting moment have won me over, and now I combine both disciplines - SLR photography and smartphone photography - 50/50.

I'm currently a member of two photographic institutions: the Royal Photographic Society of Madrid ([@es_rsf](#)) and the Cámara en Mano Photographic Association of Las Rozas de Madrid ([@afcámaraenmano](#)), where I aim to consolidate and develop my passion for photography.



YOU'RE BOTH AN ARCHITECT AND A PHOTOGRAPHER. HOW DOES YOUR BACKGROUND IN ARCHITECTURE INFLUENCE THE WAY YOU SEE, COMPOSE, AND CAPTURE THE WORLD AROUND YOU?

As you say, I believe that my training and professional background as an architect are vital when analyzing my approach to both street photography and architectural photography. During my university education, I took many technical courses, as well as disciplines that taught us composition, form analysis, art history, and projects, in which I developed visual and critical skills, as well as a compositional and geometric universe almost involuntarily.

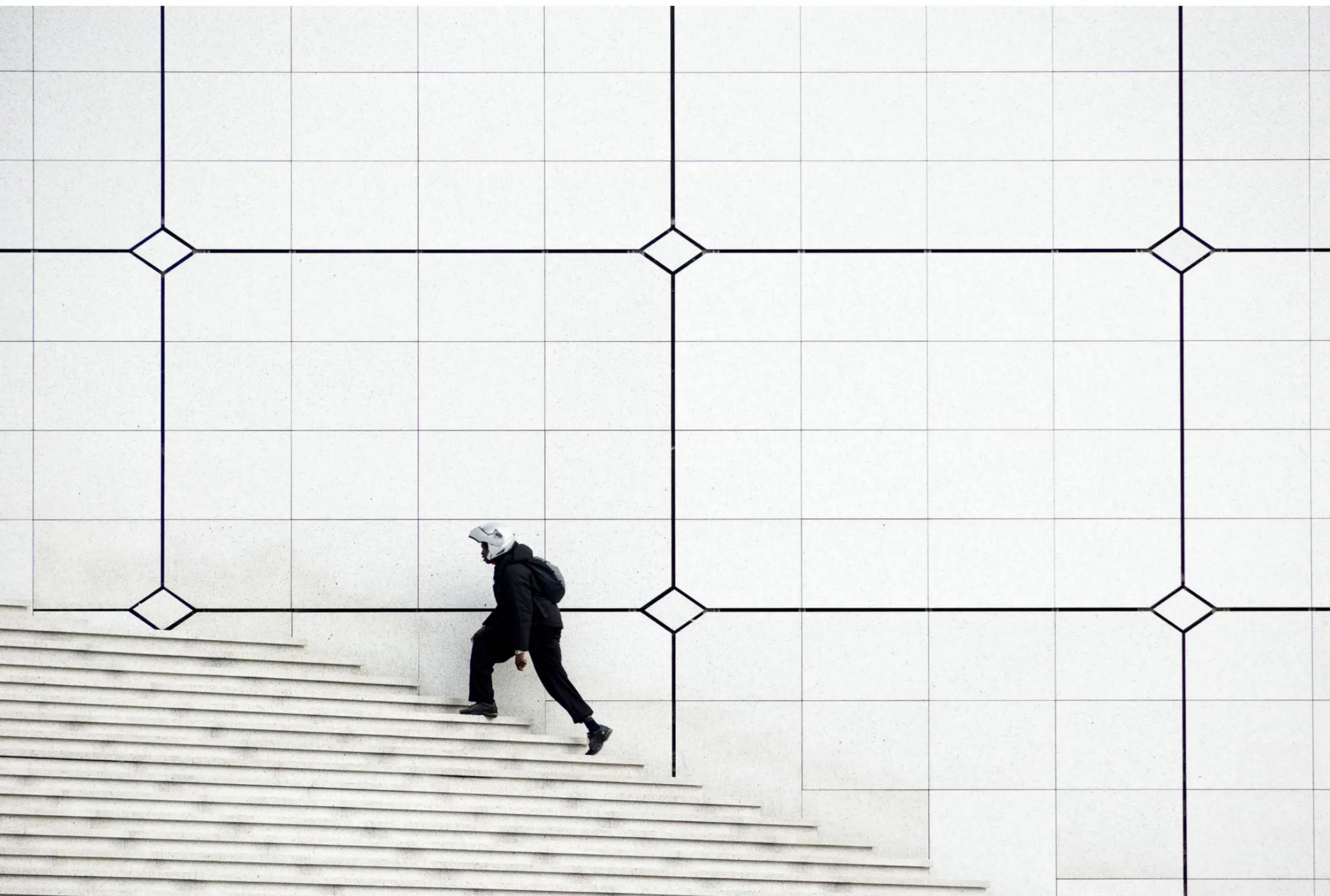
I believe that this has been fundamental in developing my way of seeing the world, both professionally as an architect and as a photographer.

IN YOUR WORK, HUMAN FIGURES OFTEN APPEAR AS SOLITARY ELEMENTS AGAINST VAST ARCHITECTURAL OR NATURAL BACKDROPS.

WHAT DRAWS YOU TO THIS KIND OF VISUAL STORYTELLING? AND WHAT EMOTIONS OR IDEAS ARE YOU HOPING TO CONVEY THROUGH THESE SCENES?

For me, the human figure is essential to give scale to the scenes I capture, as well as a powerful compositional element that can emphasize the ideas you want to convey. It can guide the viewer's gaze through the image or simply enhance the shot visually.

As for emotions, this is an area where I still feel I am a work in progress... In a few years, I would like to look back and see that I have made progress in this and other areas, telling more complex stories without neglecting composition, geometry, light, and color.



WHAT'S YOUR APPROACH TO THE COMPOSITION OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER PEOPLE SO THEY CAN USE BETTER COMPOSITION IN THEIR PHOTOGRAPHY?

Composition is fundamental when presenting an image. There are shots that sometimes don't work simply because the composition doesn't work. I almost always try to follow compositional rules such as the

rule of thirds, symmetry, empty space, etc. They give me order, peace, and control over what I capture.

But if I had to give one piece of advice, it would be that often you have to break those "rules that work," because that's how you're likely to get different, striking, surprising images. If you master both fields rationally, I think your photography will reach another level. Experimentation in this field is essential, and that's where I hope to make progress in the coming years.





LIGHT - ESPECIALLY SHADOW AND CONTRAST - PLAYS A DEFINING ROLE IN YOUR STREET SCENES. HOW DO YOU APPROACH LIGHT WHEN YOU'RE OUT SHOOTING? DO YOU WAIT FOR SPECIFIC CONDITIONS, OR DO YOU ADAPT TO WHAT YOU FIND?

I don't usually have much time for photography, so I adapt to what I find. Years ago, if it was cloudy or raining, my mind and my gaze weren't as alert to "see" where there was a photograph.

However, some time ago, I began to understand that any weather conditions are conducive to getting good shots.

It's true that if I'm out shooting and I see fog a few miles away, I'll get in the car and drive there, looking for special weather conditions that provide a different kind of light than we're used to in Spain.

However, I'm often in one place and suddenly special lighting conditions appear. I try to make the most of them when they occur, or I simply enjoy them and revel in them, even if I don't take any photos.

YOU DIVIDE YOUR WORK BETWEEN FULL-FRAME AND SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY. HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH TOOL TO USE FOR A PARTICULAR IMAGE OR PROJECT? WHAT ADVANTAGES OR CREATIVE FREEDOMS DOES THE SMARTPHONE GIVE YOU THAT A TRADITIONAL CAMERA DOESN'T?

Yes, indeed, I would say that I work with each one about 50% of the time. I don't think there's that much difference between the two to be honest. For me, the gap has narrowed so much that I even think that, at some point,

the term "smartphone photography," which years ago seemed like a second-class label, will eventually fade away.

Mobile photography gives me freedom, convenience, and speed in both capture and editing, as well as in sharing on social media. I would have no problem mixing photos taken with both devices in the same project.

My usual way of working is to carry an SLR camera with a couple of lenses and my smartphone in my pocket. If I like a shot and the moment remains, I capture the same scene with both devices, which is interesting because sometimes the results are very similar, and other times, you get pleasant surprises with the mobile shots.





YOUR MOBILE WORK OFTEN FEATURES SILHOUETTES AND STRONG BACKLIGHTING. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR PROCESS FOR ACHIEVING THOSE STRIKING CONTRASTS? DO YOU RELY ON IN-CAMERA EXPOSURE, EDITING, OR A MIX OF BOTH?

Yes, contrasts are my favorite because they eliminate areas of little interest in the shot, making it more minimalist and conveying a clearer message, both compositionally and narratively. I try to achieve this through the smartphone settings, but if you overdo it, it can be counterproductive, so I usually leave a final tweak for editing, mainly adjusting the blacks to make them darker, while keeping the highlights well exposed in the initial shot.

I must confess that I often take vertical photos that I've mentally composed horizontally. You lose resolution, but the distortions are minor.



WHICH APPS DO YOU USE TO SHOOT AND EDIT YOUR PHOTOS? IS THERE A PROCESS OR METHODOLOGY THAT YOU APPLY TO YOUR POST-PRODUCTION EDITING?

I have to say that I'm not a big fan of editing apps. My main tools are straightening, cropping, and perspective correction, both in street photography and architecture, as well as varying parameters like light and tone, though I'm by no means an expert.

The apps I use are the gallery app on my Huawei P30 and Snapseed, especially for perspective issues, straight lines in buildings, and that kind of thing.



TRAVEL ALSO SEEMS TO PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR WORK - FROM MADRID TO ISTANBUL, PORTO, AND HONG KONG. WHAT DRAWS YOU TO PHOTOGRAPHING DIFFERENT CITIES, AND HOW DO YOU ADAPT YOUR STYLE TO NEW ENVIRONMENTS?

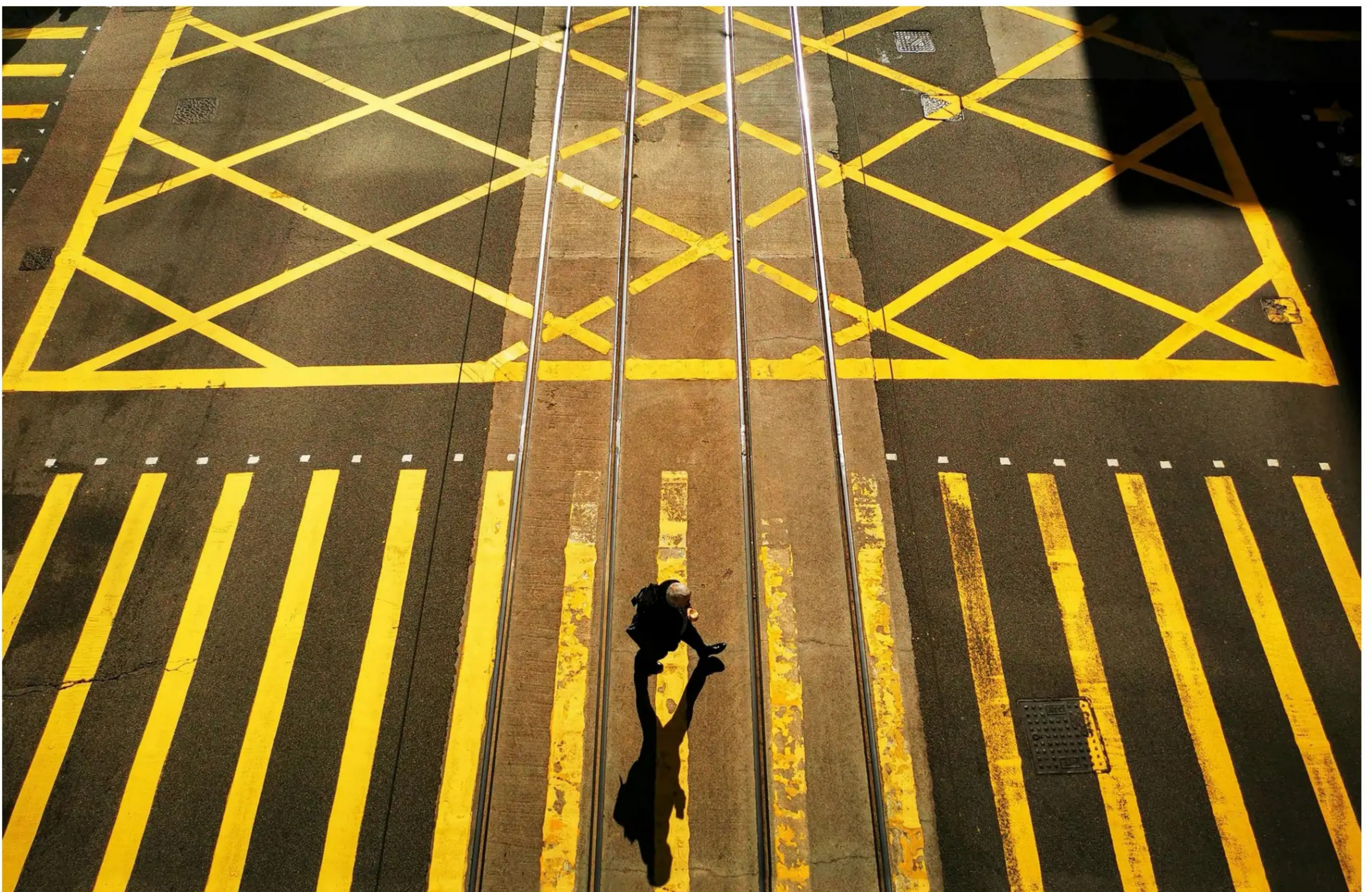
Traveling is a way of being, of discovering, of enjoying, of sharing, of learning... Thanks to my wife and her passion for traveling, I became interested in it years ago. A couple of times a year, as much as we can afford and have time for, we try to travel both in Spain and around the world.

Photography has made me appreciate the travel experience more, leaving me with many more details and memories than when

I traveled without that passion. Many of the most memorable moments of those trips I've experienced thanks to photography, since through it, my introverted and shy character becomes more open and approachable. I have met lovely, generous people, even making friends and sharing life experiences with other photographers.

I think I have a fairly similar way of photographing the cities I travel to, and I get the impression that this is due to the era of globalization we live in. Logically, you have to be as respectful as possible to the culture of the place that welcomes you, as well as to the people who appear in your shots.

In every city, there are dangerous or off-limits areas where it's more difficult to blend in and get good shots without putting yourself at risk. That takes time and dedication, which you don't always have.





YOU'VE HAD GREAT SUCCESS IN MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITIONS, FROM THE MIRA MOBILE PRIZE TO THE HUAWEI XMAGE AWARDS. WHAT DO THESE RECOGNITIONS MEAN TO YOU? AND HOW HAVE THEY INFLUENCED YOUR CREATIVE DIRECTION?

These recognitions mean a lot to me. They're a form of appreciation and positive reinforcement of your work, and they help me to keep going when I'm feeling stressed or down, whether because of my daily work or my personal life. That's when recognition like this helps the most.

Sometimes it seems magical to me that a person on the other side of the planet, with whom you could hardly communicate, chooses your photograph from among thousands. I repeat: magical connection or alignment of the planets.

These awards took me to Porto and Shenzhen, Hong Kong, where I met some exceptional people who left me with unforgettable life memories. As for the creative process, I don't think these awards affect the process itself too much, but they can indicate that you're going in the right direction, or at least not in the wrong one.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER PHOTOGRAPHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE COMING FROM A TECHNICAL BACKGROUND LIKE ARCHITECTURE, WHO WANT TO DEVELOP THEIR ARTISTIC VOICE IN PHOTOGRAPHY?

My best advice is to enjoy the photography you choose to do. Creative processes are not always easy, and sometimes you can't find your way or it's very difficult... In fact, I'm still constantly searching for where to go.

When it comes to architectural photography, I believe that a good photograph, or series of photographs, should be able to capture the idea behind the project, the essence that led the architect to design it that way and with those materials.

I also believe that training and references are important when developing your own style, both in photography and in architecture. In my case, I have many

photographic references, both past and present, and I discover new ones almost every day. I will list some of them in order of appearance in my photographic career: Joséph Hoflehner, Michael Kenna, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, Javier Arcenillas, Sebastiao Salgado, Ramón Masats, Gabriel Cualladó, @luison, @antonioeojeda, @macmario, @caroladdassi, and many more, past and future... In addition to all the wonderful and interesting people I meet along the way, who become friends or traveling companions.

FOLLOW JOSE LUIS MORALES

Website: www.joseluismoralesmartin.com

Instagram: [@morales3arc](https://www.instagram.com/morales3arc)

Instagram (mobile): [@morales3arcmovil](https://www.instagram.com/morales3arcmovil)

“...enjoy the photography you choose to do. Creative processes are not always easy....”

THE STORY BEHIND MY FAVORITE PHOTOS...



“HAT” MADRID, 2023 (MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY)

This shot was taken in 2023 in my hometown, Madrid. I was waiting at the Banco de España subway station for the sun to go down and draw lines of light on the steps, and for someone interesting to appear so I could photograph them. Suddenly, a typical elderly Madrilenian man with a hat appeared, illuminated in front of the shadow of the steps.

The main character seems to radiate a mysterious energy in a scene that experiments with light and shadow and the architecture around him.

This photograph was awarded first prize at the 19th Mira Mobile Prize in Porto in 2025.



**“FROM MY WINDOW,” LAS ROZAS, 2024
(MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY)**

For me, a photograph can appear anywhere, and this is a good example. One day, children were playing in the courtyard of the residential complex. Because of the noise they were making, I looked out of my daughter’s bedroom window. I discovered a striking scene, with the sun casting shadows on the building itself and the pavement. All I had to do was grab my mobile phone and wait a few seconds for the figures and their shadows to create magic.



“OVER THE BAY,” SANTANDER, 2024 (MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY)

This is an architectural photograph of the Botín Center in Santander, designed by the famous and award-winning architect Renzo Piano. For me, this image captures the essential idea of the building: a structure cantilevered over the bay, with a series of walkways between the two main volumes that emphasize the experience of “walking on water.” The peaks and projections are counterbalanced by the placid, calm waters on a day of flat, diffuse light.

In this case, I took the photograph with both my mobile phone and my SLR camera, and the two shots are practically identical.



“CULTURAL BRIDGE,” NEW YORK, 2010 (SLR CAMERA)

This image was taken on the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. My wife and I were visiting the city that never sleeps and had just watched Spain beat Chile in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Walking across the bridge, we came across a group of Buddhist monks, and I took out my camera to get a shot of them.

There were several of us taking pictures of them because of their colorful robes, so once I had taken the photo, and since the situation was a little awkward, I went over to chat with them and offer them the picture. Woody, a Thai Buddhist monk, was very kind and agreed to give me his email address... At that moment, I stepped back slightly and took this shot, which I'm very fond of.

Although it was technically difficult to capture without a flash, I like this photograph for the moment, composition, and color. I also think it tells a story: the story of Asian monks from the other side of the planet sightseeing in the quintessential Western city. It was published alongside an article entitled “The afternoon La Roja won” in the Sunday edition of *El País Semanal*, a nationally renowned newspaper.

THE IPHONE PHOTOGRAPHER WHO CHANGED DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Video Placeholder
Internet Connection Required

Can a smartphone change the way we see the world? Photographer Dmitry Markov built an entire, profound body of work using just his iPhone, proving that vision matters more than gear. His raw, honest photos zoom in on the realities of Russian society, creating perhaps the most honest street and documentary photography of our time.

In this video, Tatiana Hopper dives into Markov's defiant approach to the "gear myth," revealing why your camera truly doesn't matter and how the smallest tool can give you the greatest access to the human story.



Yellow Daisy

MIXING PHOTOGRAPHY & ART: 10 DIGITAL COLLAGE PROJECTS TO PUSH YOUR MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY FURTHER

By Nicki Fitz-Gerald

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Although I've spent a long time honing my street photography skills, I've always felt that the creative process was over too quickly; I'd shoot, edit, and it was done. I wanted to push my photography further, bring it into a more artistic space, and enjoy a more immersive creative process in the editing stage.

Collage has allowed me to slow things down. It's given me an opportunity to look again - and not just at what's in the frame, but what could be added, removed, layered, cut, torn, repeated, or reimaged. Drawing inspiration from the playful, process-led spirit of one of my favourite books, "Project Collage" by Bev Speight, the following ten digital photography projects offer some creative ways for you to treat your camera roll as a source of raw material rather than finished work.

All you need is a layering app (Procreate, Affinity Photo, Photoshop Express, or even Canva) and a willingness to experiment. I used Procreate on the iPad with an Apple Pencil to make all the pieces featured here.

As well as an overview of the project process, I've included a 3-step process with most of the projects so you can try them out yourself.

1. CUT & REBUILD: FRAGMENTED CITY

Towns and cities are perfect for collage. They're full of repeating patterns like windows, pavement grids, and intersecting lines. Instead of presenting a street scene as a single photograph, break it apart and reconstruct it. This project is about dislocation, breaking your image into fragments, and rearranging them to exaggerate perspective, repetition, or mood.

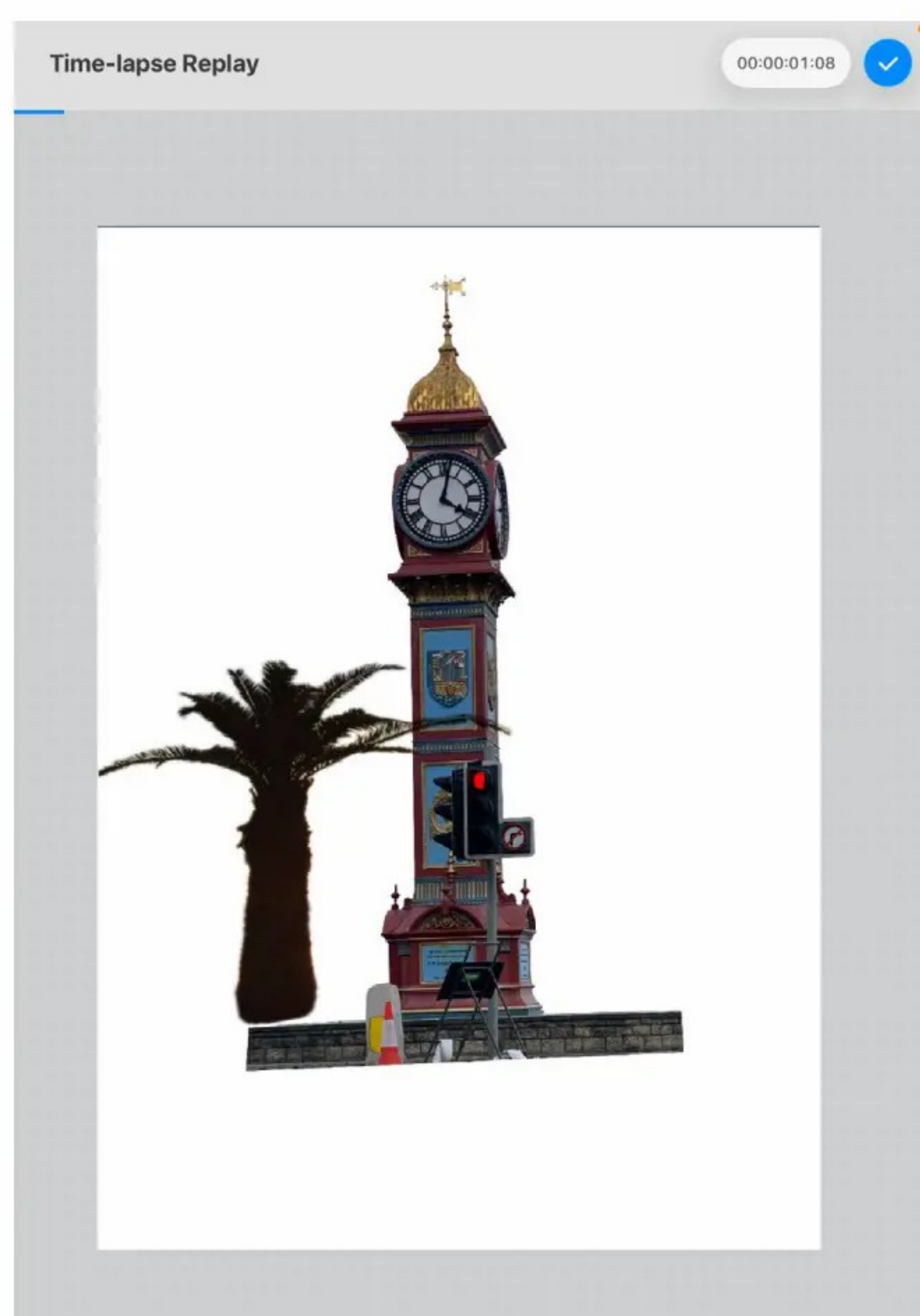
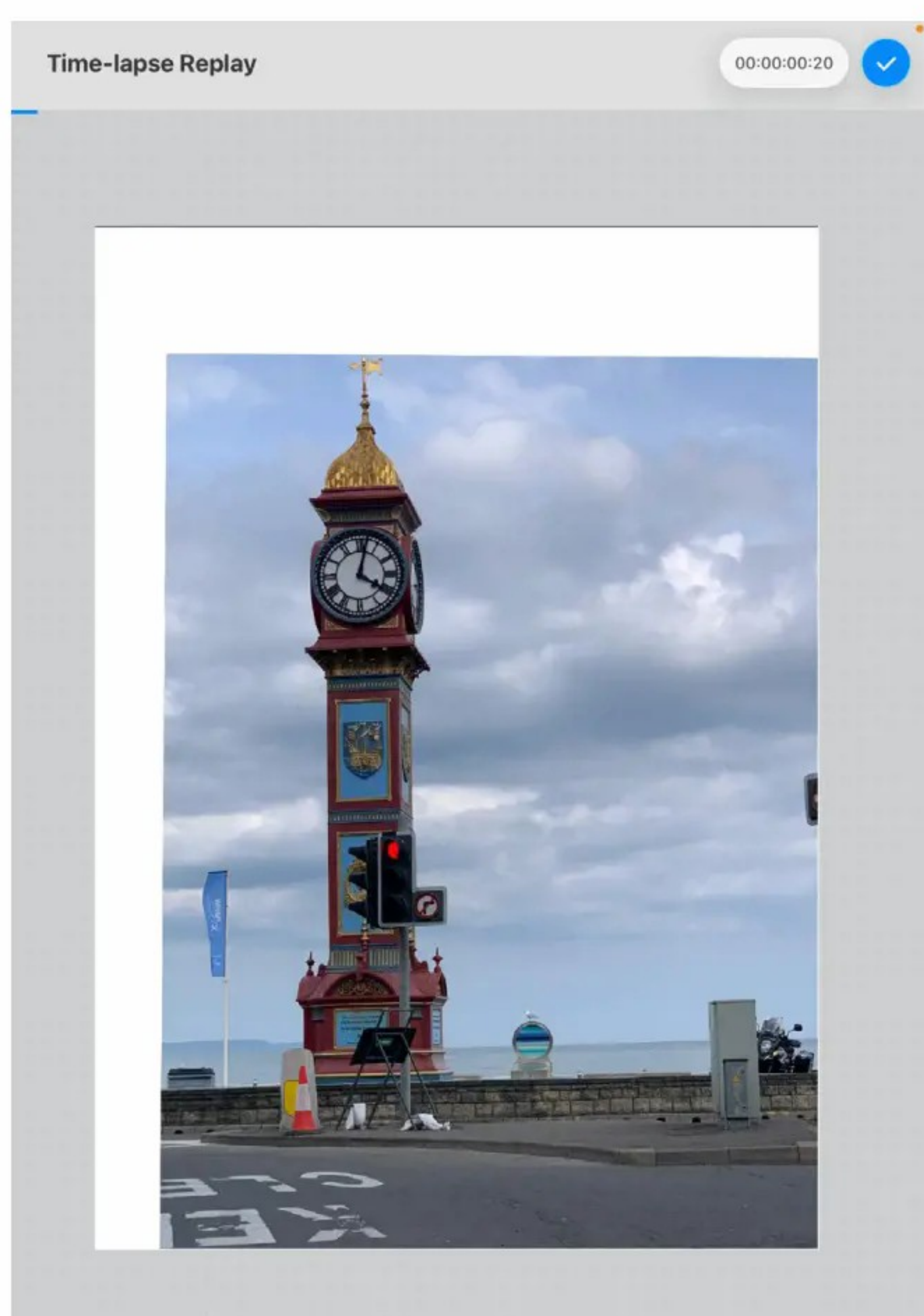


Inspired by the playful disruption found in contemporary collage practice, this exercise trains your eye to see structure beneath the subject. It forces you to consider composition in a more deliberate way. For example, what happens when a signpost shifts left? When rooftops are staggered? Or when water becomes simplified into shapes and then you plant a seagull in the middle of it all.

By dismantling and rebuilding your town or city using photographs, you stop documenting and start designing.

THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW

1. Import your street photographs one at a time. These should be important landmarks or strong features of the landscape, including buildings, foliage, signs, close-ups of patterns, etc.
2. Use a selection tool to cut out the subjects. Convert photographs to black-and-white to avoid color clashes and harmonise the piece. Move, rotate, or slightly overlap the fragments, leaving subtle gaps or introducing texture between sections.
3. Create abstract shapes with a muted color palette, perhaps cool blues or muted sepia, to unify the disrupted composition. Add more shapes to suggest the environment. I added some wavy shapes in my final composition to suggest the sea. I also added a large orange circle for the sun as I live in a seasonal holiday town known as "Sunny Weymouth" due to its unique microclimate. If you like to draw, add more visual interest by sketching out some basic shapes like the foliage. I love drawing palm trees, so I replaced the photographic one in the final piece with a hand-drawn tree, then added another to balance the composition. The linear drawings add striking contrast to the solid photographic shapes.



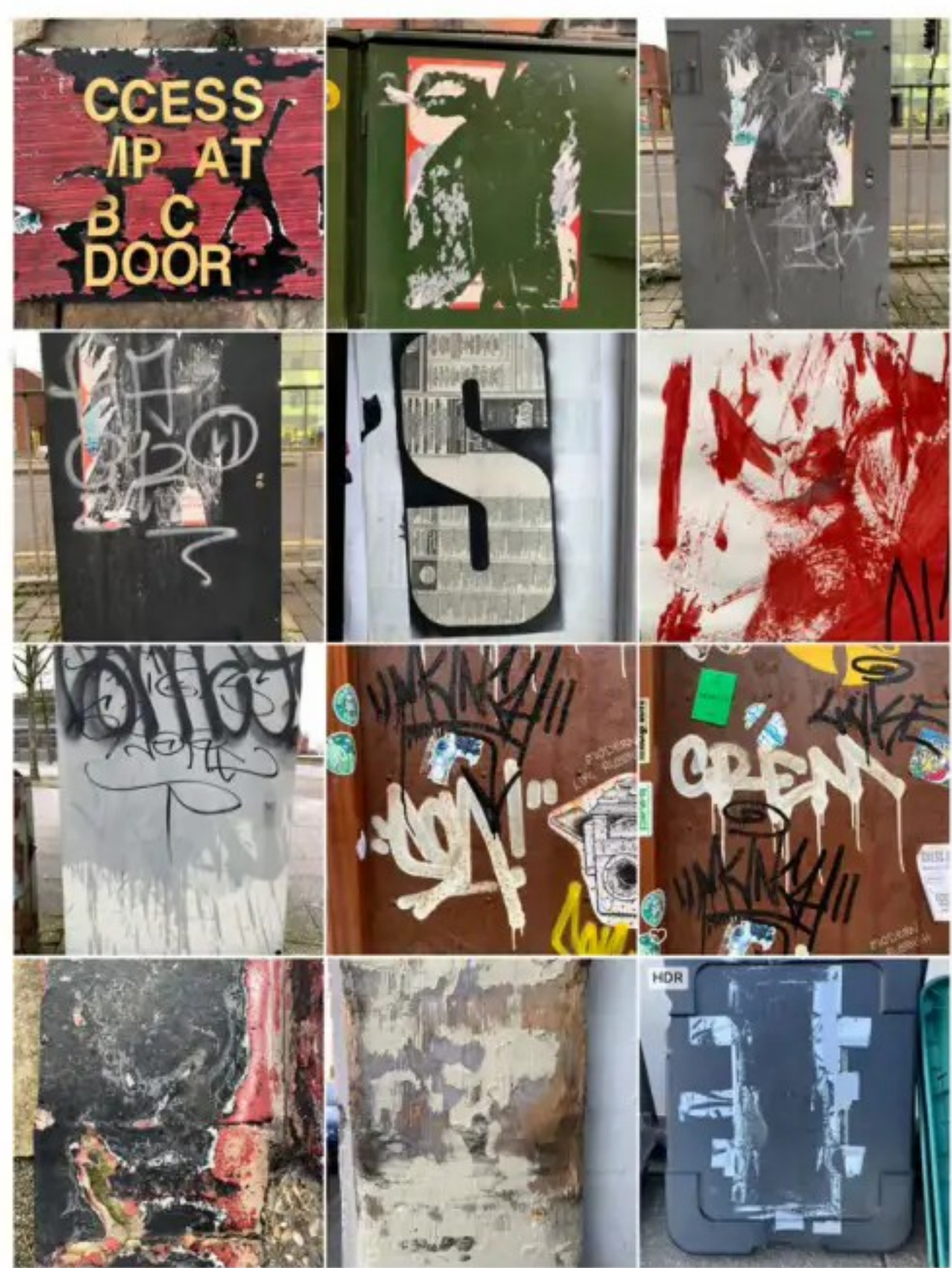
2. LAYERS & TEARS

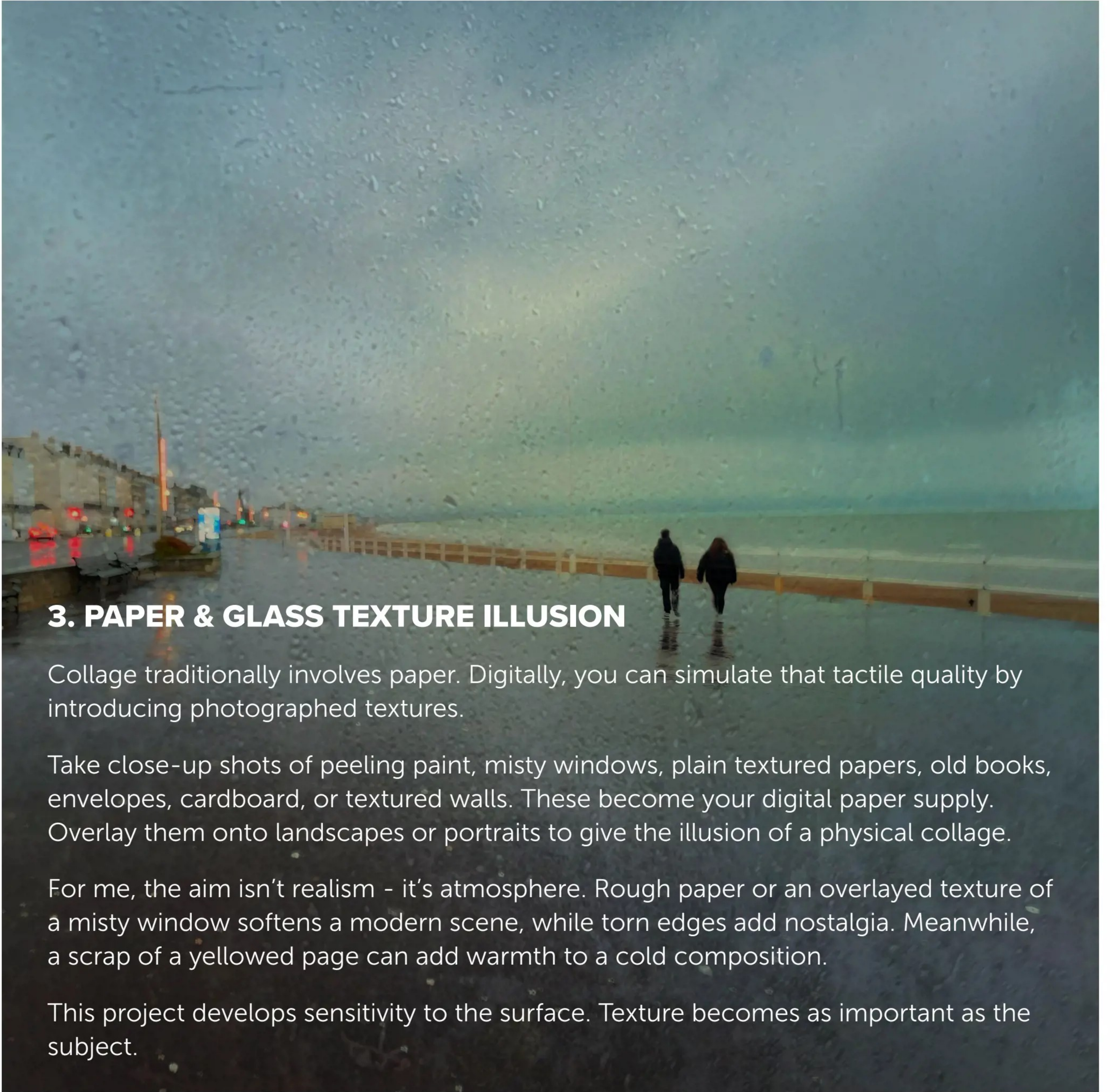
Street posters and peeling paint are already collages as time has done half the work for you. This project is about taking those characteristics and using them in a fresh abstract. Look for surfaces with rips, overlaps, lettering, glue stains, staples, tape or anything that suggests history. Strong type and bold shapes work especially well because they survive heavy editing and still read as “urban.”

In your layering app of choice, treat each photo like a sheet of paper. Stack two or three poster shots, then start “tearing” back the top layers using selections, erasing, masks, or rough brushes. Blend modes are the cheat code: Multiply, Screen, Overlay, and Soft Light quickly add unexpected layers to the process. This is where creative accidents can happen. Work fast; allowing five minutes per version forces you to think and stops you polishing the life out of it. Finish with a few loose paint scribbles or pencil scuffs so the image feels handled, not merely edited.

THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. Photograph 3–5 peeling posters/ paint textures with clear type or strong shapes.
2. Layer 2–3 images, then cut/reveal areas with selections, masks, or eraser “tears.” You can do this with freehand cutting out tools or use rectangular or eclipse tools. I used Procreate’s Rectangular Selection tool to quickly cut out parts of the top layer.
3. Rapid-fire blend modes, add scribbles, and export a small series (triptych works well).





3. PAPER & GLASS TEXTURE ILLUSION

Collage traditionally involves paper. Digitally, you can simulate that tactile quality by introducing photographed textures.

Take close-up shots of peeling paint, misty windows, plain textured papers, old books, envelopes, cardboard, or textured walls. These become your digital paper supply. Overlay them onto landscapes or portraits to give the illusion of a physical collage.

For me, the aim isn't realism - it's atmosphere. Rough paper or an overlaid texture of a misty window softens a modern scene, while torn edges add nostalgia. Meanwhile, a scrap of a yellowed page can add warmth to a cold composition.

This project develops sensitivity to the surface. Texture becomes as important as the subject.

THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. Photograph textured materials with your phone's camera in good, even light - like near a window. If light is poor, try photographing a texture out on the street, or even a steamy bathroom window. Dirty or misty windows can work a treat!
2. Next, import the texture above your main image. Use blend modes (Multiply, Overlay, Soft Light) to merge them. I used Multiply for this image.
3. Finally, mask selectively if necessary. Let texture sit in shadows or skies while preserving key details.

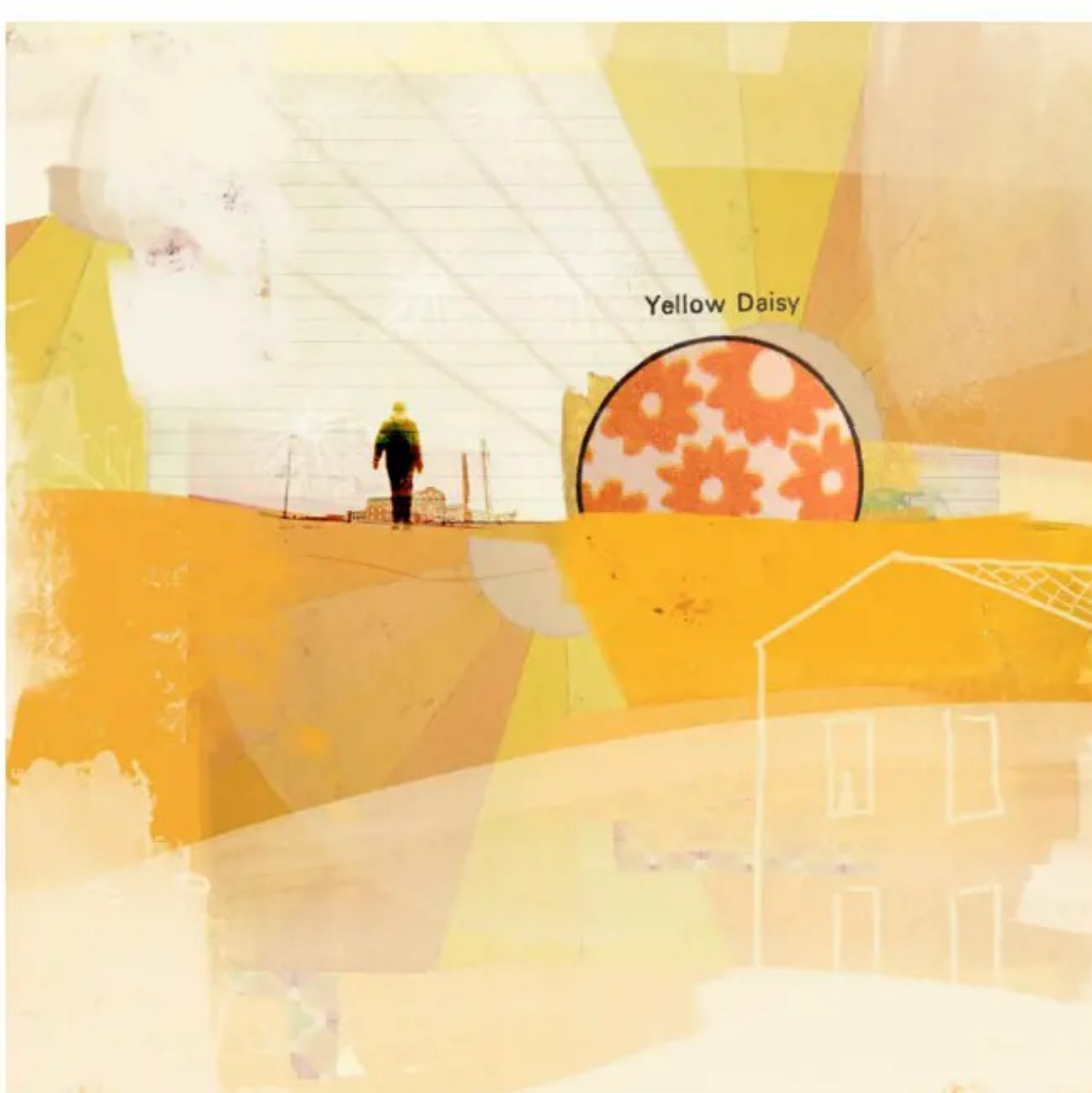
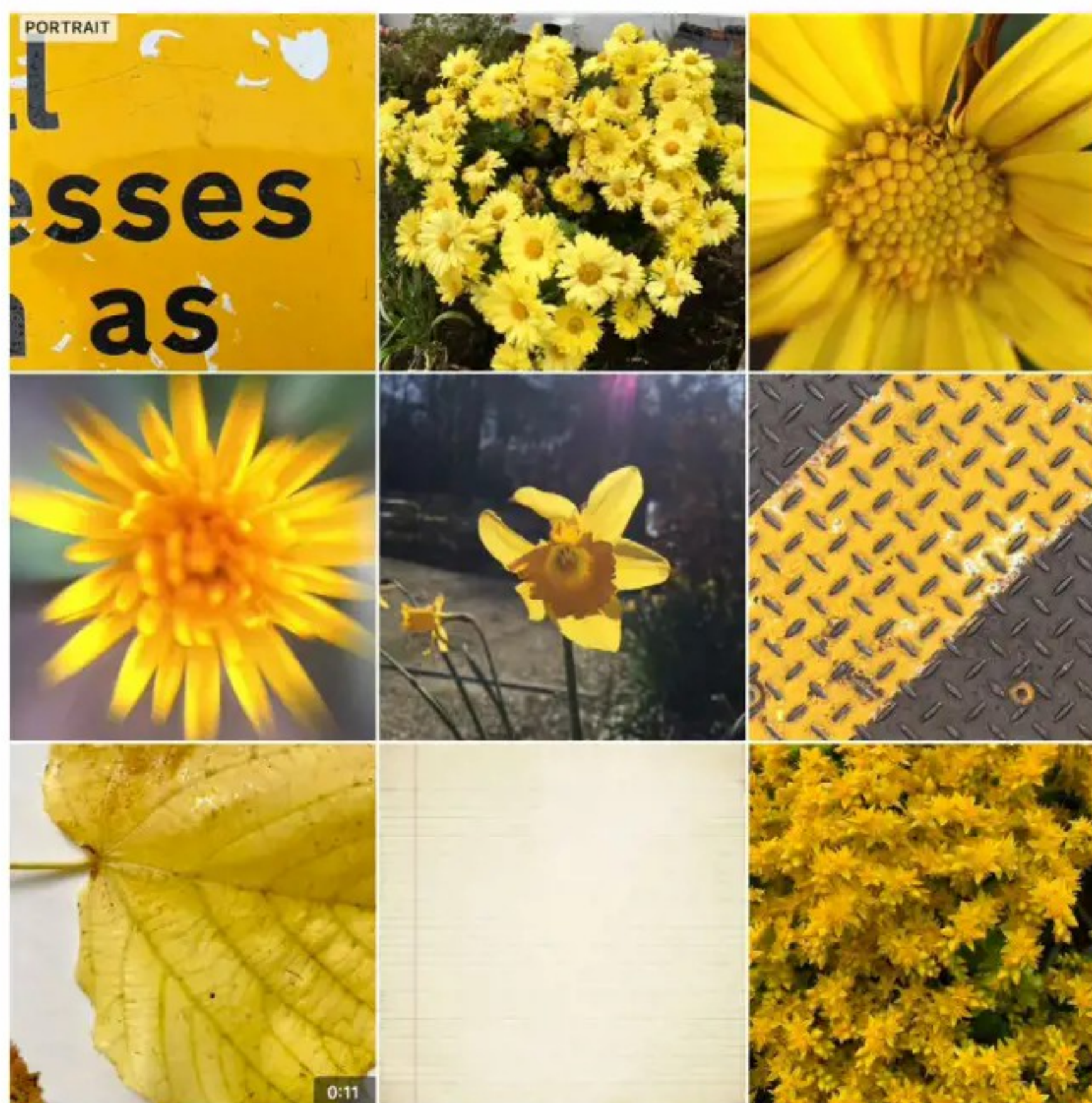
4. LIMITED PALETTE MOODBOARD

Collage is something that thrives on constraint. Choose one color family, for example, spring yellows or fresh greens, and build an image entirely within that spectrum. It may help to look at a color wheel to see which colors sit next to each other.

Collect five to eight photographs sharing the same tonal harmony: sky, fabric, walls, hands, flowers, or typography. Cut fragments from the images and arrange them into a unified composition.

By restricting the colors used, you simplify the decisions you need to make and enhance the emotional coherence. The image will start to feel more intentional rather than chaotic.

This project strengthens your awareness of hue and temperature. Instead of relying on filters, you're visually curating.



In this image, I've chosen warm colors and a little bit of green for balance. You don't have to be strict as long as most of the image has a dominating hue (yellows, oranges, etc).

Explore and Play: Layer abstract shapes like torn paper across the canvas, each shape on a separate layer. Adjust each fragment using color balance tools to maintain tonal unity.

5. REPETITION & PATTERN REMIX

Repetition is powerful. A single photograph can be quickly duplicated to create a unique, repeating pattern.

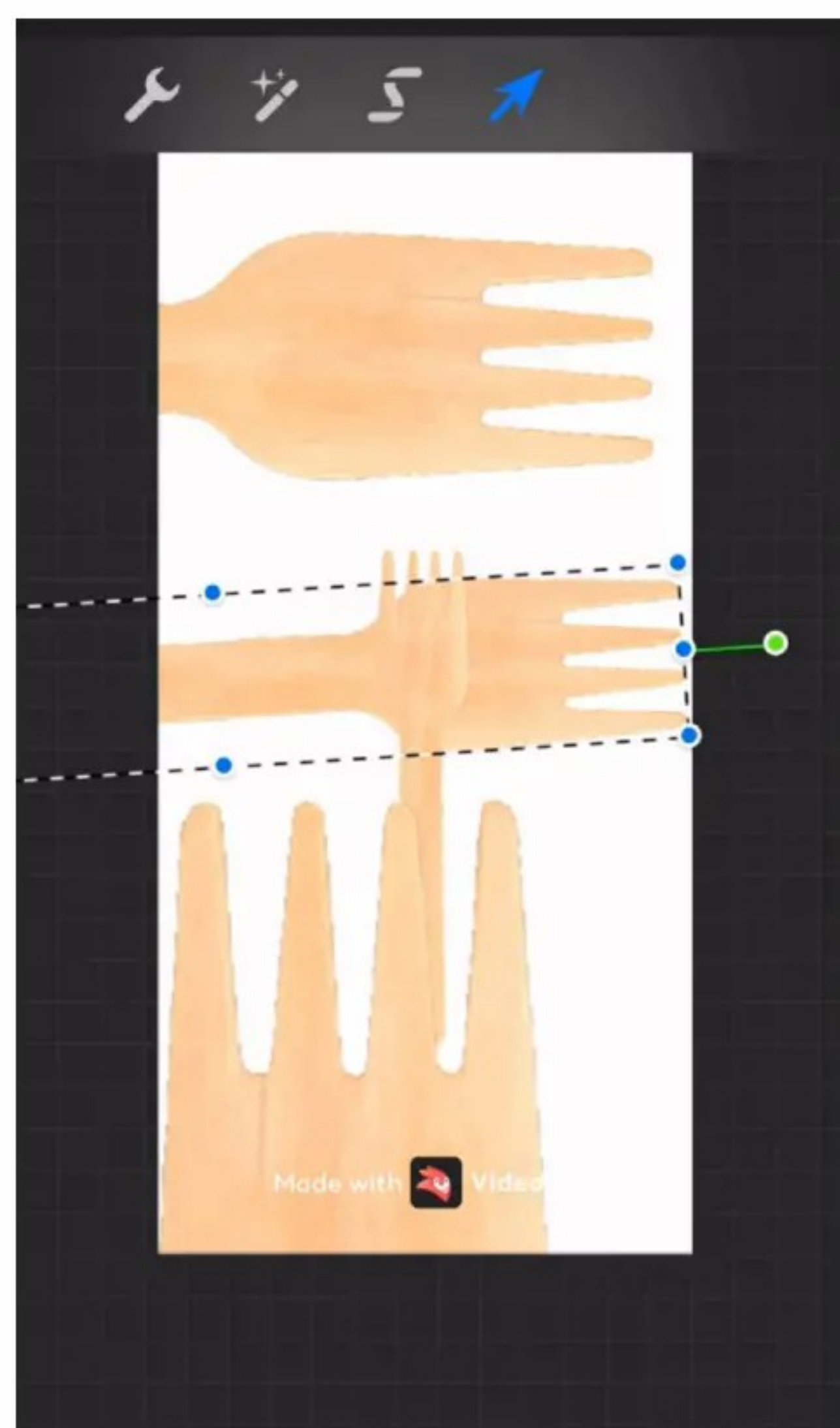
Photograph something simple like stairs, windows, railings, hands or even cutlery. Here, I photographed a disposable wooden fork I found in the street. Once you've found your subject, duplicate the image several times in your editing app of choice. Recolor and crop each one slightly differently, then resize, rotate, and flip until you get something you like. Try using blend modes to create beautiful overlay effects.

By repeating and rearranging, you're able to create an abstract pattern from an ordinary object. This project echoes traditional collage play, like cutting, reusing, and repositioning, but with digital freedom.

This process helps train you to see shape and form rather than subject matter. Forks become graphic shapes. The spaces between become new shapes and part of the design.

FOUR STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. First, import your image and duplicate the layer several times.
2. Next, rotate, resize, recolor, and crop each layer to isolate repeating shapes.
3. Experiment with colors and blend modes. If you struggle with color, use a color palette preset. These are often included in your layering app.
4. Arrange in a grid or in a diagonal direction. You could also crop the final piece to balance the composition. Generally, I find it easier to work within a square format with this type of project.



6. NUMBER MASHUP - ABSTRACT COMPOSITION

A single number (or letter) can become a whole new language if you let it repeat and misbehave. This is a quick way to turn everyday signage into something that has energy, movement, and visual interest. It's a bit like creating a typographic storm.

Start by hunting for a number that has presence. Look at street doors, bus stops, painted markers, and labels on crates. Shoot your subject cleanly first, then shoot it again badly: tilted, cropped, half-shadowed, or scuffed. That variety is what will make the final piece feel alive rather than like a tidy pattern.

Next, in your app, isolate the number and duplicate it several times. Scale, rotate, flip, overlap. Let some copies fall off the edge; let others merge. Use subtle shifts in opacity to create depth, and introduce one unexpected change, such as a different texture layer, a color wash, or a heavy grain, so the composition doesn't become too formal. The goal here is to "tumble" the elements together, not "tile" them cleanly.



THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. Photograph one bold number/letter on a textured surface (plus a couple from wonky angles).
2. Cut them out, duplicate, then resize/rotate to build a falling, layered stack.
3. Add grain/texture and light opacity changes to push foreground/background separation, or if your layers app allows, add a little drop shadow to each of your elements.

7. MISSING PERSONS

This is another one of my favourite projects - it's wonderfully unsettling. You remove the subject and force the background to speak. The figure becomes an absent presence in the frame, and suddenly the scene takes on a staged, haunted, or oddly comedic feel depending on the choices you make.

Start with your own photos (street, beach, park, interiors) where a person is clearly readable in shape. You can also photograph magazine figures if you want sharper silhouettes and more graphic contrast.

In Procreate (or a similar app), use the Freehand Selection tool to cut around the outside of the person so the background shows through. The trick is to keep the cut believable and include awkward bits like hair flyaways, coat hems, and shopping bags. Try building a "case file" collage using multiple scenes, each with a missing figure, arranged like evidence. You can push the narrative with tiny details, such as the same silhouette repeated in different locations, or one scene left untouched as the "before."



THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. Choose 5–8 photos with clear figures and a readable background context.
2. Freehand-select each figure, then fill with flat color (white works brilliantly).
3. You could also try partially or fully filling some of the silhouettes with a new color, pattern, or texture and see how that changes the narrative.

8. COMPOSITE MASHUP

This is a great fun “Frankenstein” project to try out. It’s a chance for you to create a believable (or joyfully unbelievable) composite by combining elements that shouldn’t belong together. Anything is possible, like my example here shows. This image is mostly made with urban photos from my collection, except for the Victorian portrait (arms). A street sign became the torso, a drain cover was used for the head, all perched upon a pair of seagull legs. The tension comes from the mismatch between scale, era, texture, and context. Your job is to make the mismatch feel intentional.

Choose one or two “anchor” images as your starting point (like the arms and graffiti in this image), then add 2–4 cut-out elements. Don’t add too many; one bold element beats five timid ones. You could also add a light paper grain over everything to instantly make it feel like one piece.

In my image, I also added a bit of light shadow under the feet to ground the piece. I also let rough edges show occasionally, as I think this helps keep the work human and stops it from looking like stock-photo trickery.

THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. Start by picking one anchor background, then gather 2–4 unrelated subject photos (your own or archival).
2. Cut out the subjects, and play with scale/placement, then build one strong “collision” as the focal point.
3. Unify with a single texture overlay and add a gentle color grade to make the composite feel like one world.



Man in a swimming costume
©Australian National Maritime Museum



9. TEXTURE & PATTERN PIE (OR CAKE)

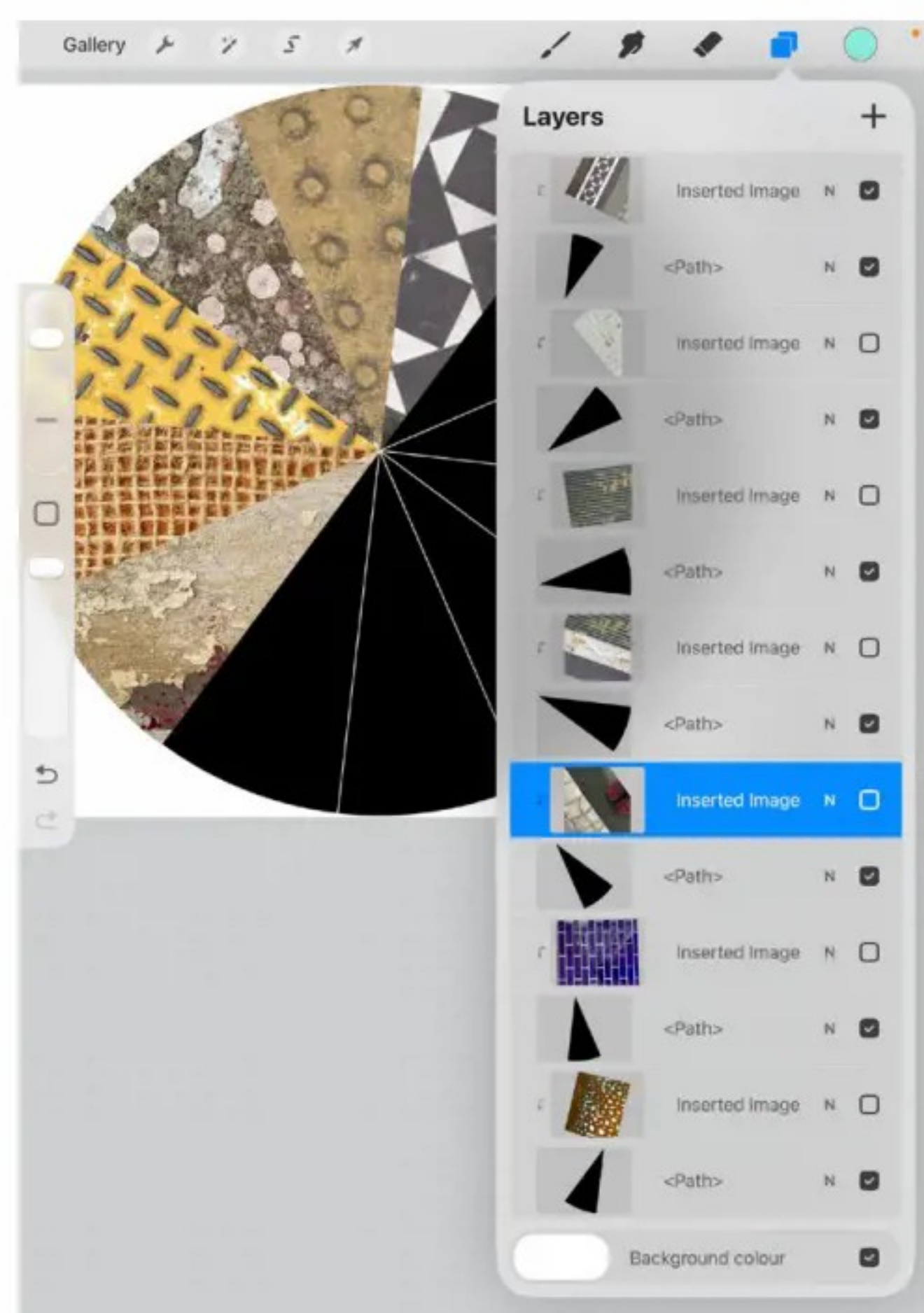
This is one of my favourite projects for exploring the environment. I do this exercise with nearly every new city or town I visit. This project turns your surroundings into a sampler or a little catalogue of surfaces you would usually ignore. The magic is in the hunt. Look for tiles, packaging, fabric, rust, brick, bark, carpet, scratched paint, kitchen foil, or pavement markings. Photograph textures straight-on where possible, and with even light, so they behave nicely when clipped into the shape. Collect more than you need; editing is all part of the fun.

In your editing app, make a circle and divide it into wedge segments like a pie chart. Each wedge will become a container for one texture. Next, clip your photos into the wedges using clipping masks (or selection + mask). If that feels fiddly, do the “cake” version and stack rectangular strips, one texture per layer, like a geological history slice (see photo far-left).

Once filled, you can push it further by repeating a single texture, inserting a “wild card” texture for disruption, or adding tiny labels like a field guide. It’s simple, but it quickly helps to train your eye to look out for new textures and patterns on future trips out with your phone camera.

THREE STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. Photograph 10–15 textures/patterns in consistent light (home or outdoors).
2. Create a pie (wedges) or cake (stacked strips), then clip each texture into a segment.
3. Try this exercise with lettering or shades of the same color.



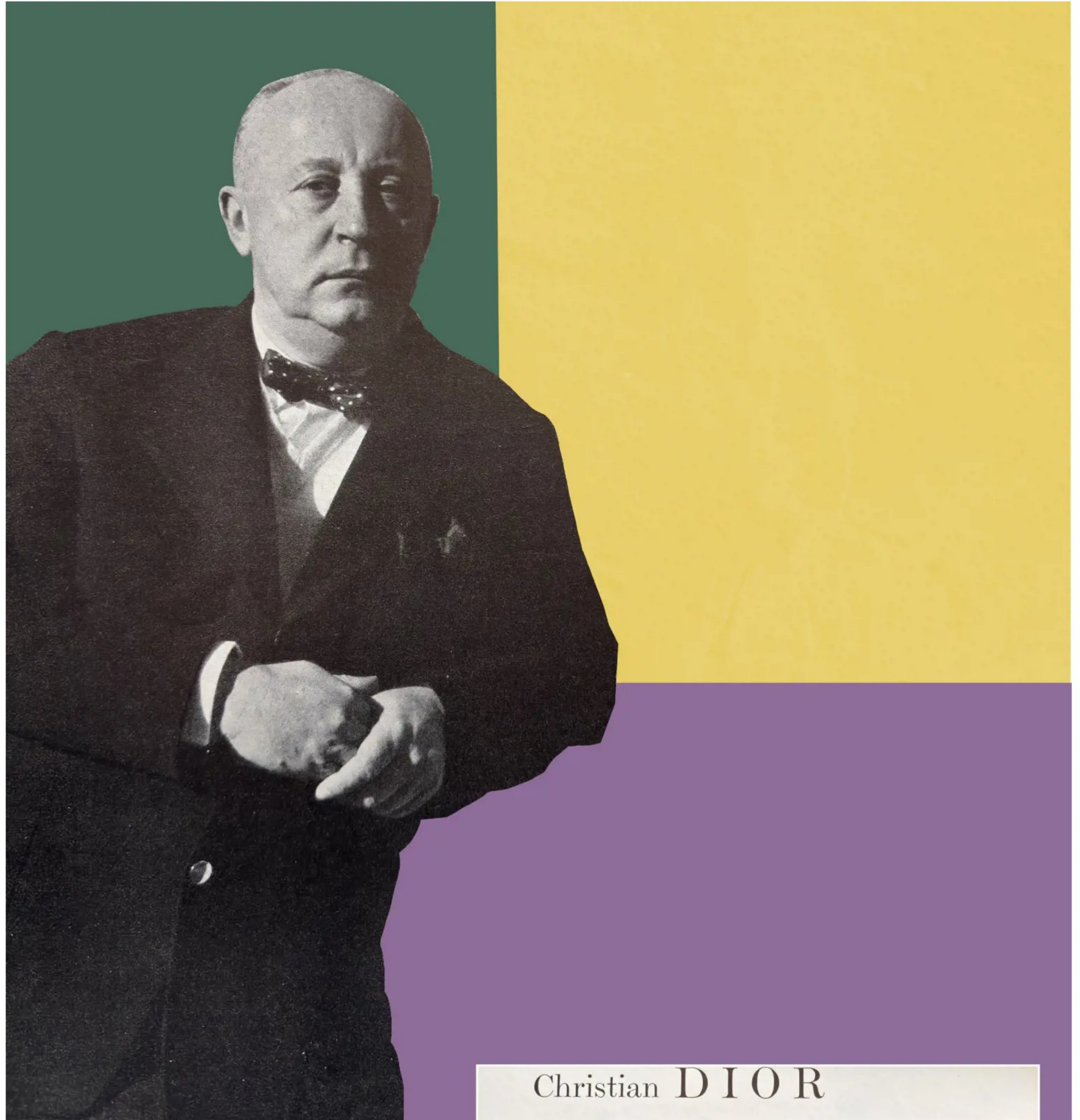
10. COLOR SPACES

This project is about using flat color blocks to remake an original photograph and start thinking about design. With this project, you're not "fixing" the photo, but instead giving it a new lease of life and finding new ways to use the space.

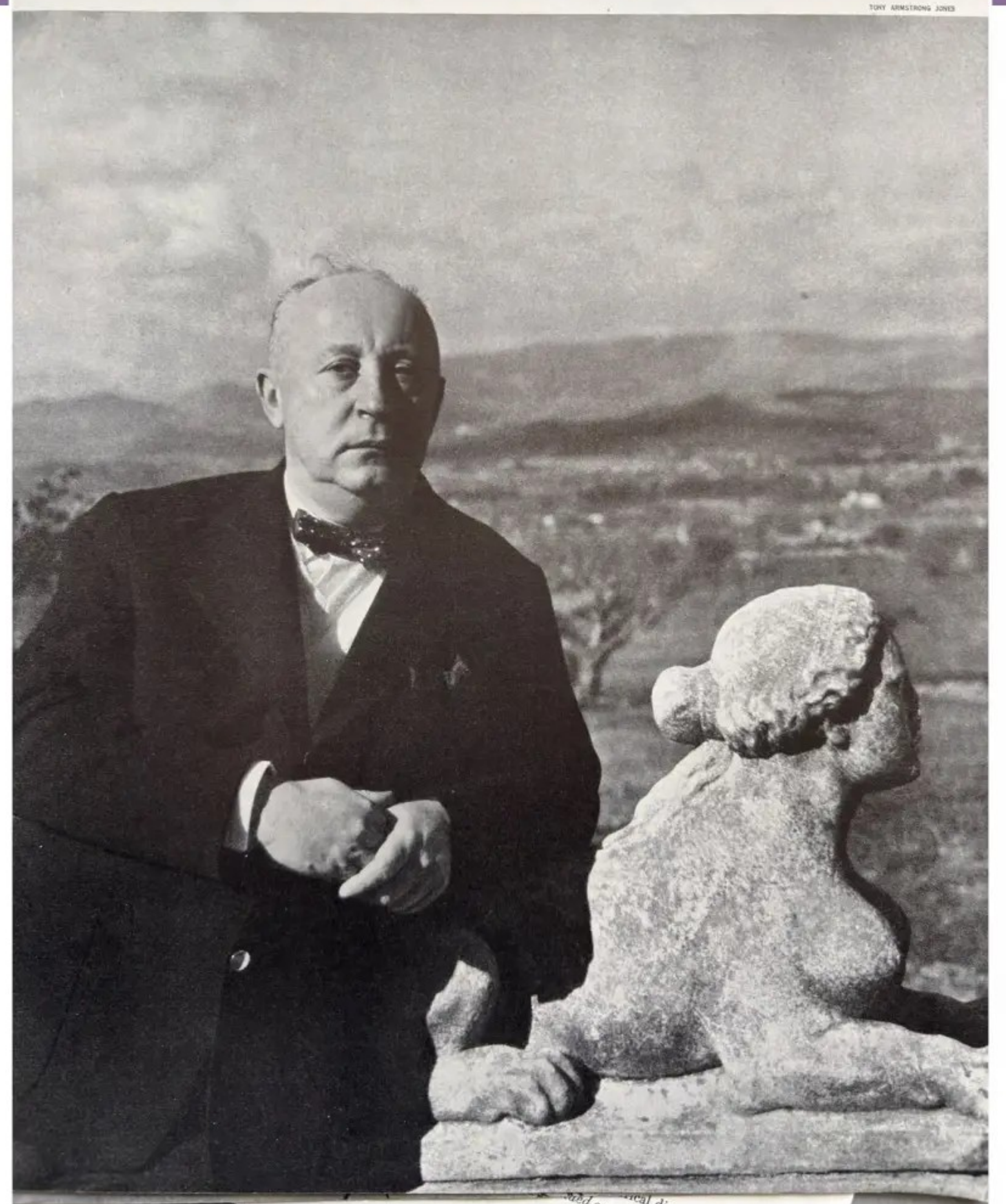
My example opposite shows a cut-out subject leaning against bold, divided color fields; it's part design, part collage, and part moodboard. My suggestion is that you start by choosing a subject with a strong silhouette of a person, bird, statue, or object that instantly reads when cut out.

Create a background made of 2–6 rectangular color bands or areas. Then place your cut-out subject on top and start adjusting the relationship between the objects. Ask yourself whether the subject belongs, clashes, floats, or dominates.

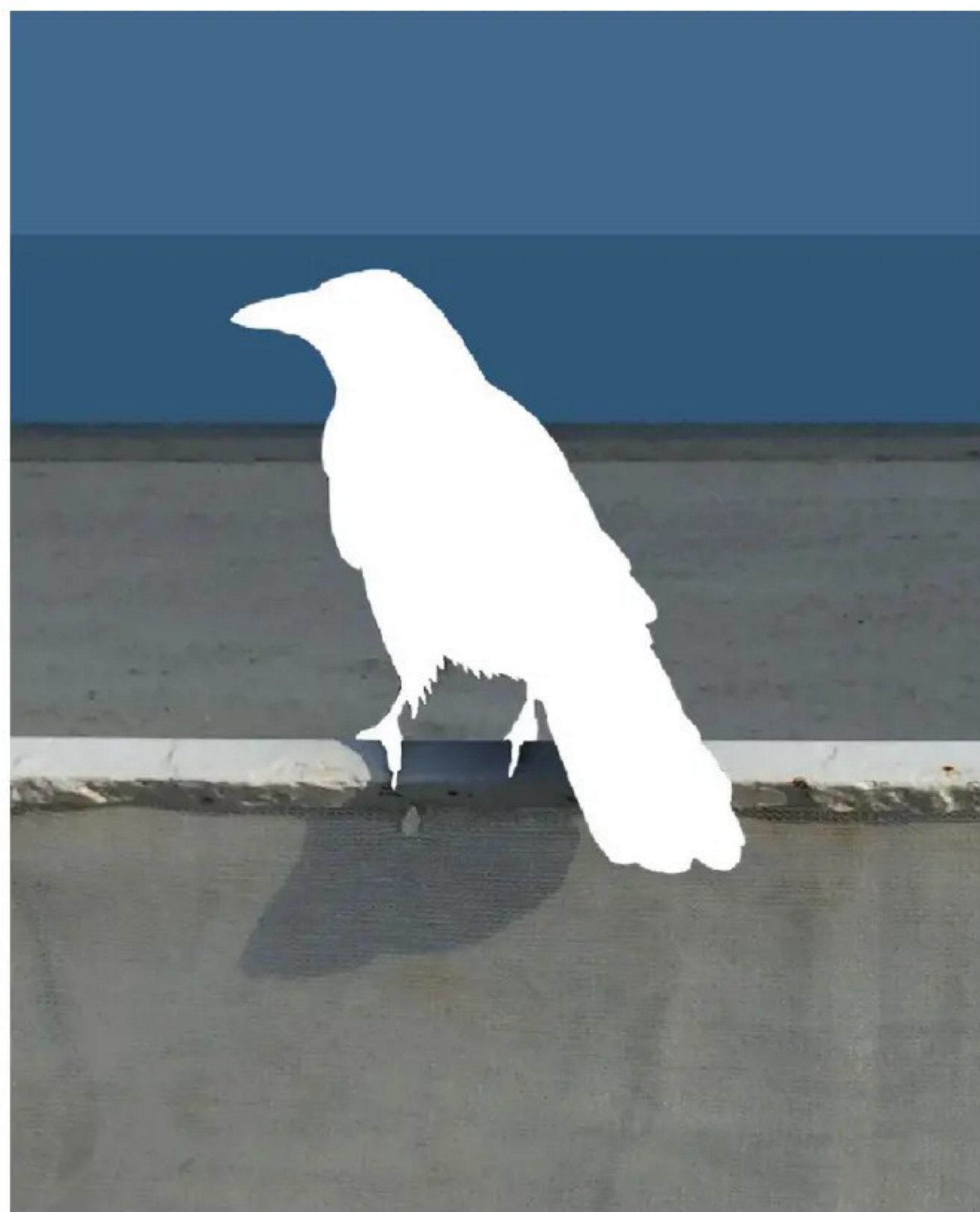
Even though I've removed the statue the figure was leaning on, I've placed the color shapes, so it still feels like the figure has a surface to lean upon. I also isolated his head in the green shape to emphasise it. You can keep the subject photographic (for tension) or turn it into a flat silhouette (for punch).



Christian DIOR



Finally, if your original photo is color, sample colors from it so the palette feels connected, even when it's bold. This is a brilliant way to make ordinary shots look like posters.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Collage transforms mobile photography from capture to construction, which encourages curiosity. It's an approach that pushes you beyond just using filters and into making design decisions about composition, scale, texture, and color. Most importantly, it forces you to slow down.

Instead of asking, "Is this a good photo?" you begin asking, "What else could this become?" which is really exciting because every photograph has the potential to become a new piece of art or part of an existing artwork.

About the Author

Nicki Fitz-Gerald is an artist, experimental mobile photographer, author and teacher who uses her iPhone and iPad to blend traditional and digital image-making methods together to create rich and textured works both figurative and abstract. She is the author of two Rocky Nook titles: "Digital Collage with Procreate," soon to be reprinted, and "The Art of iPhone Photography" (co-authored with Bob Weil). Nicki just launched her 10th online class "Digital Collage Made Simple", designed for Digital Collage beginners.

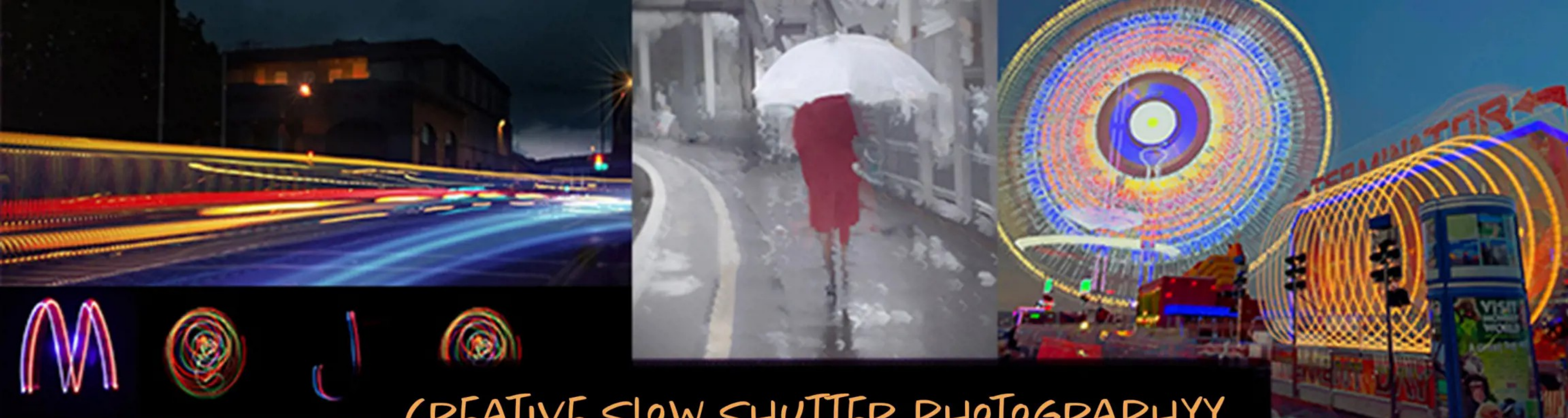
You can find out more about this course on the Courses section of her website:
www.nickifitzgerald.com

For me, my camera roll isn't just an archive. It's my materials box.

Why not try one of these projects this month? Or try all ten. Or maybe combine them, break them, even ignore the rules and invent your own.

Because once you begin mixing photography and art, the phone in your pocket becomes something far more interesting than a camera - it becomes a mobile studio.

If you'd like to give Digital Collage a try, check out Nicki's brand new course [Digital Collage Made Simple](#).



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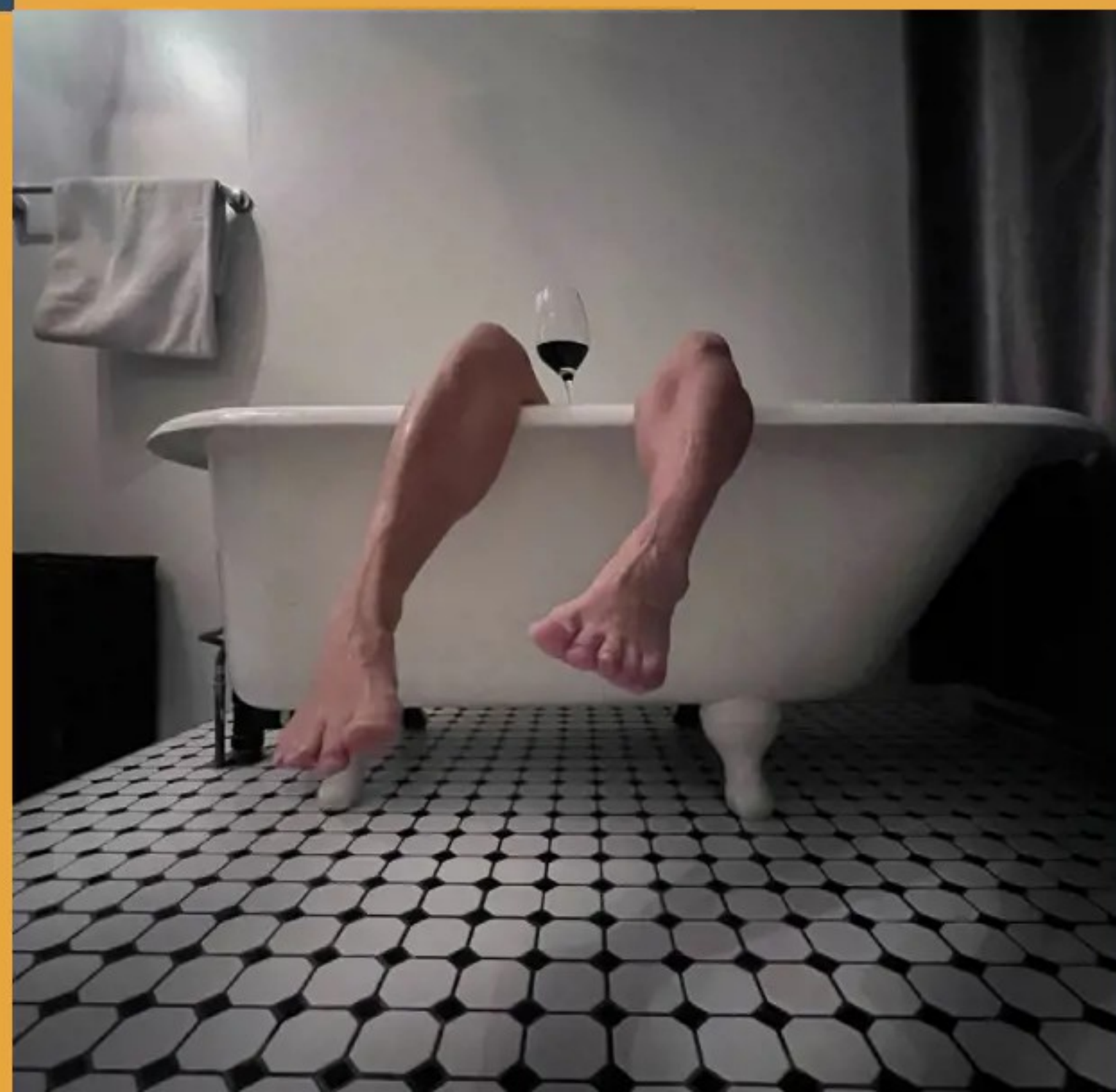
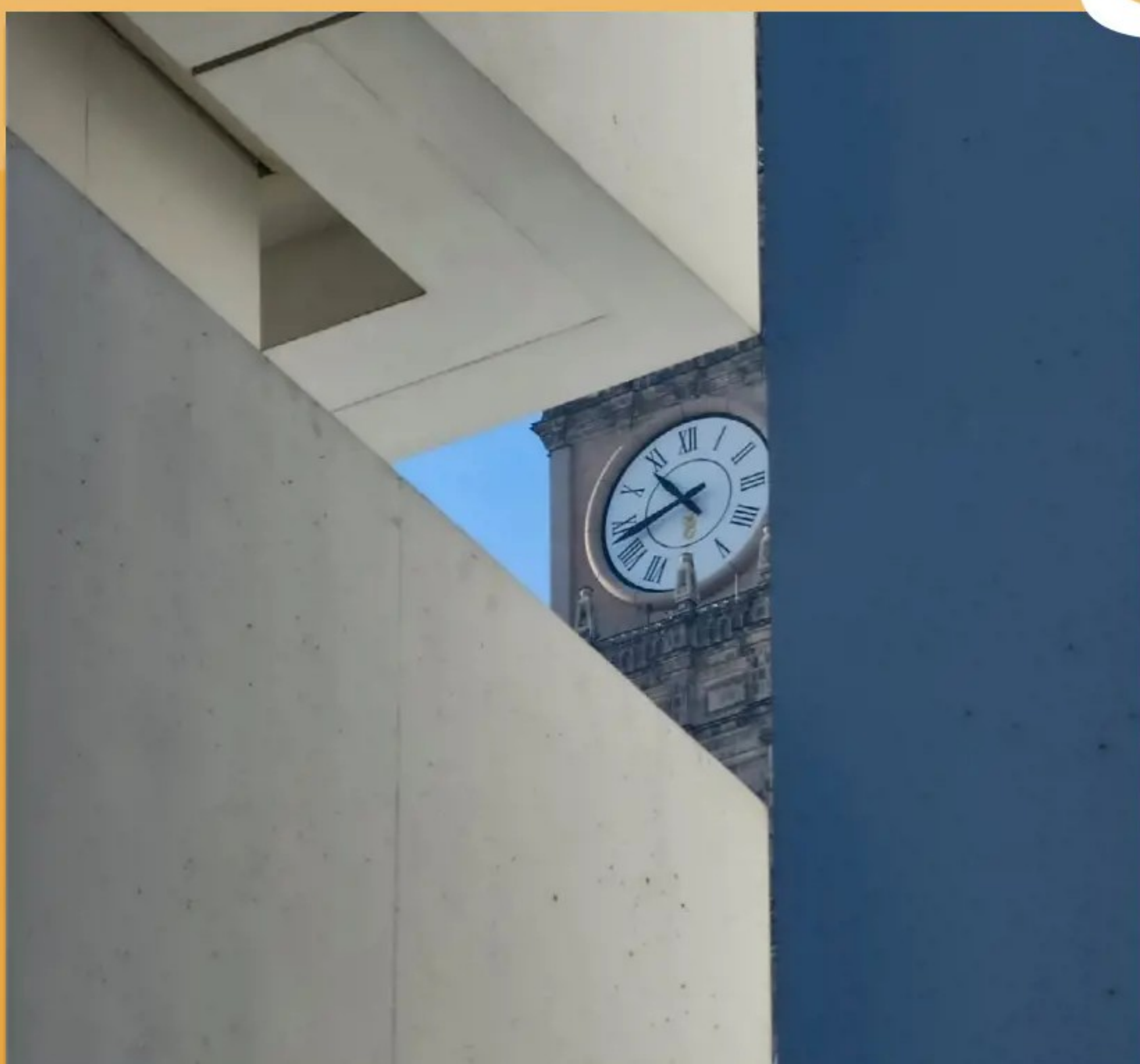


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Five Inspirational Photographers To Follow on Instagram

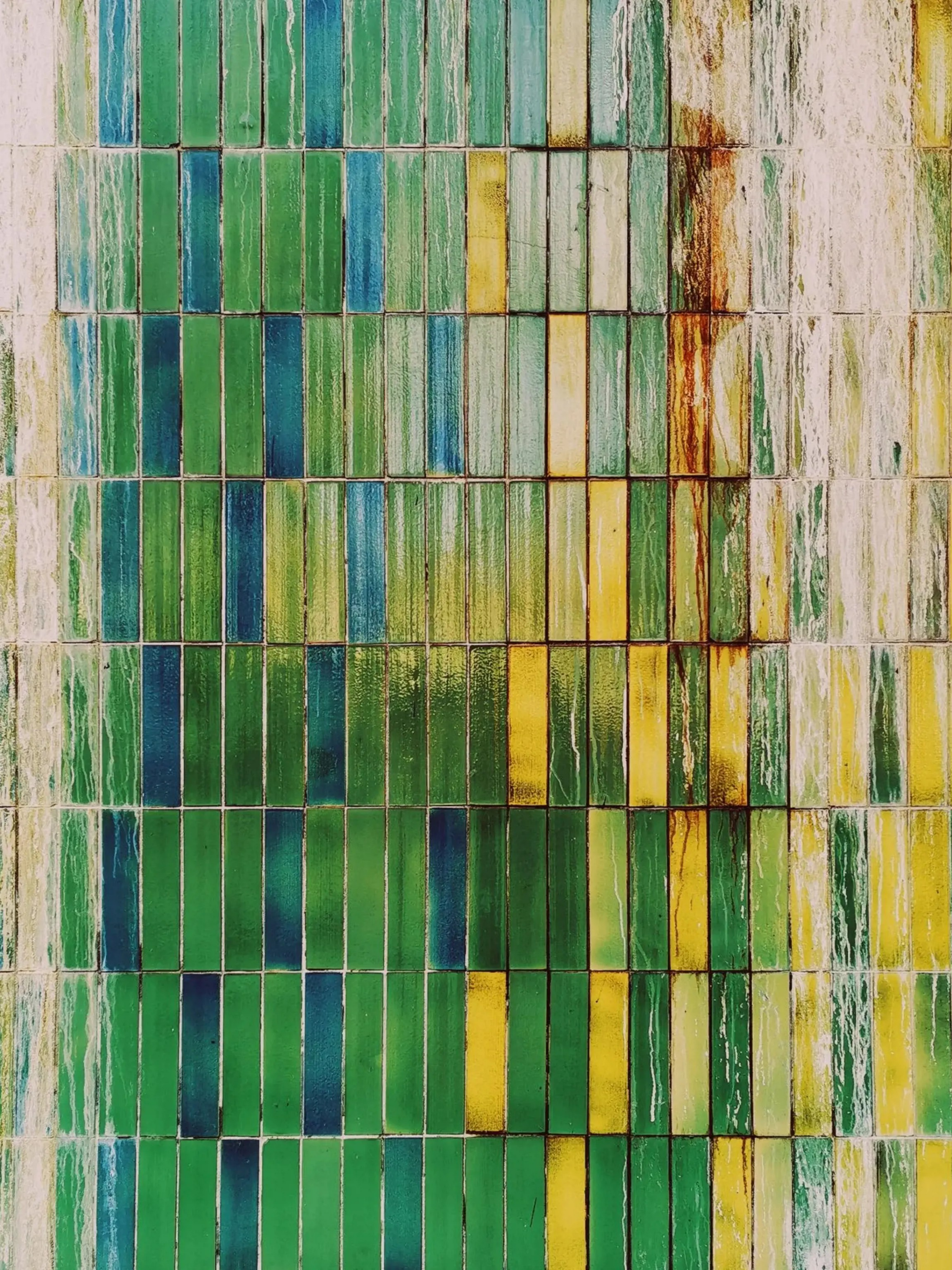




ŁUCJA MARKOWSKA - @[LUCJA.MS](https://www.instagram.com/lucja.ms)

Łucja Markowska, aka @lucja.ms on Instagram, is a Polish photographer known for her striking use of minimalism and geometry. Łucja's approach is to focus on tightly cropped frames, which allows her to draw your attention to the subtle shapes, patterns, and textures that often go unnoticed in the urban landscape. Rather than looking to capture the obvious, Łucja finds beauty in overlooked corners and everyday scenes, transforming the mundane into visually arresting art. Her portfolio is a testament to the power of perspective, showing how creative framing and a keen eye for detail can reveal extraordinary moments in seemingly ordinary places.







NICOLA JANE - @[NICOLA.JANE](#)

Nicola Jane is a photographer from Toronto, Canada, whose Instagram features imaginative self-portraits shot in surreal and abstract ways. Her ability to transform ordinary environments into dreamlike scenes showcases an expert flair for visual storytelling. Shooting with both her iPhone and a Canon DSLR, Nicola also showcases an impressive collection of portrait and fashion photos, often playing with unusual angles, lighting, and color palettes to create a distinctive mood. Nicola's work demonstrates what can be achieved with a creative mindset, proving that compelling imagery is possible without elaborate setups or expensive gear.









SAM BENFOLD - @CAMERA_INMYPOCKET

Sam Benfold, aka @camera_inmypocket on Instagram, showcases a wonderful collection of photography from her travels around the world. Whether she is capturing the shimmering waterways of Venice, the rugged highlands of Scotland, the bustling streets of Paris, or the varied landscapes of the USA, Sam consistently manages to convey the unique character and atmosphere of each destination. Her keen attention to detail, combined with an eye for compelling compositions and natural light, results in images that invite viewers to experience each place as if they were there themselves. If you are a fan of travel photography or simply looking for fresh perspectives on familiar locations, be sure to explore the work of @camera_inmypocket and let her journeys spark your own sense of adventure.



PERFUME
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Jhony USA
Perfume
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PLANTA QUEEN



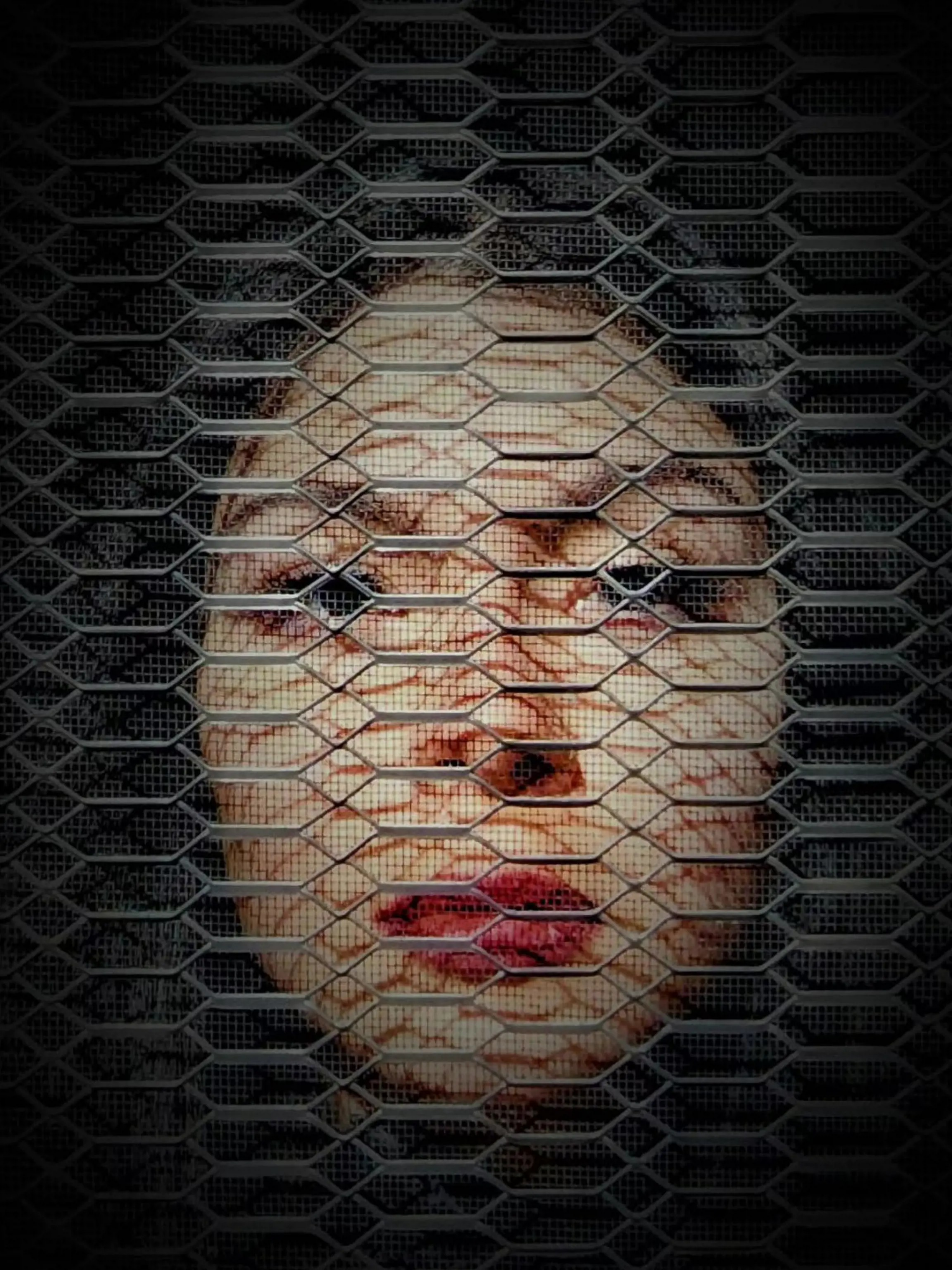




CERRINA SMITH - [@CERRINASMITHPHOTOGRAPHY](https://www.instagram.com/cerrinasmithphotography)

Cerrina Smith is an award-winning photographer from Wyoming, USA, who shares a wonderful mix of photographic styles on her Instagram account. From people portraits to animal portraits, from nature to still-life images, Cerrina's photography has a sense of purpose that steers clear of busy compositions and instead focuses on individual subjects that help convey a genuine sense of purpose. Be sure to check out Cerrina's work on Instagram for some award-winning inspiration.









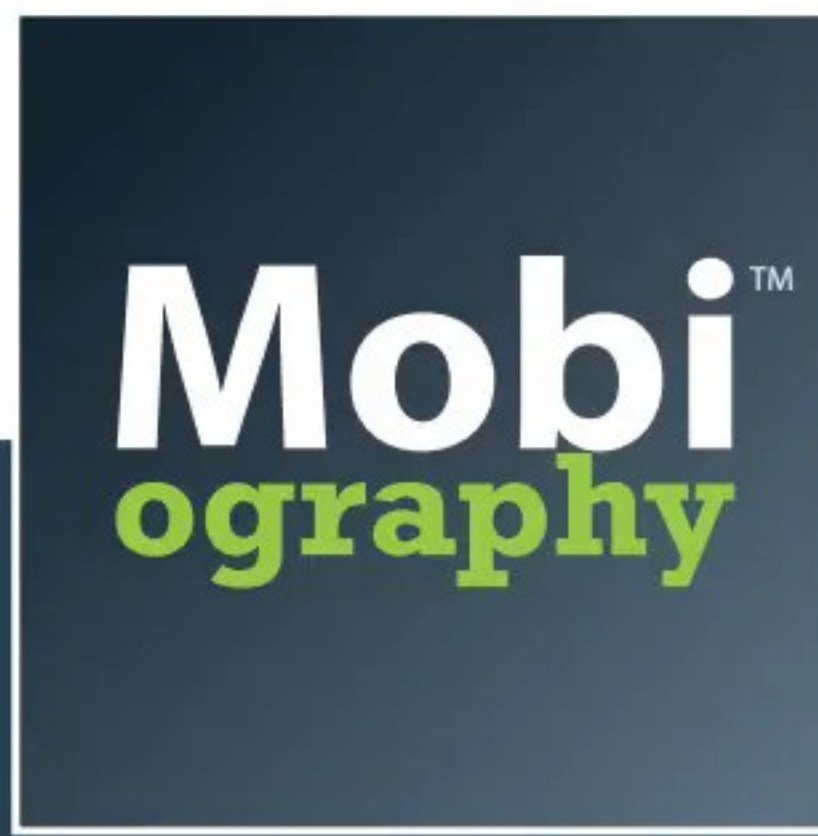
MILENA WOJDYŁA - @LIFEBYMLENA

Milena Wojdyła is a Polish photographer who captures shapes, patterns, and curves in the urban landscape around her. Using tightly cropped frames, she creates compositions that draw the eye into the scene. This approach is most evident in her architectural and urban photography. In her street and travel photography, Milena captures a slightly different approach and captures candid moments alongside big, open landscape vistas. Her work reveals a keen eye for detail and a unique ability to find beauty in everyday spaces. Be sure to check out Milena's work if you are looking for inspiration for inventive urban photography.









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