

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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HOW A \$50 LENS  
MADE ME A BETTER  
PHOTOGRAPHER

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CANON 45MM F/1.2  
THE NEW NIFTY FIFTY?

### EXPERT GUIDE

GREY DAY  
PHOTOGRAPHY

*featured*

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# THE MILKY WAY



# PHOTOGRAPHY

## MASTERCLASS

### MAGAZINE



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**W**elcome to this edition  
of Photography  
Masterclass Magazine

There is nothing quite like standing under a canopy of stars, listening to the quiet of the night, and watching the glowing band of the Milky Way stretch across the sky. For us photographers, capturing this spectacle is often considered a rite of passage.

In this issue, we will walk through everything you need to know to capture breathtaking images of the Milky Way, from the equipment you pack in your bag to the final adjustments in post-processing.

Also in this issue, we interview Markus Auerbach, a photographer based

near Stuttgart in southern Germany whose striking architectural images are shaped by a minimalist eye and a belief that less is usually more. Drawn to modern buildings, industrial spaces and the quiet clarity of strong design, he creates photographs with a clear visual language, where lines, shapes, surfaces and shadow come together in pared-back, often abstract compositions.

We hope you enjoy this issue. If you try out any of the techniques mentioned, we'd love you to see your results, so please do share them with us in our [readers' Facebook Group](#), or on Instagram using hashtag #PhotographyMasterclassMagazine

Happy Shooting!



*Gill*



MESSAGE FROM GILL ROBERTS  
**THE EDITOR**

# EDITOR'S CHOICE

A Hand-Picked Selection of  
our Favorite Photos



By: Edgar Infocus Photography  
Shot Details: XXX  
[Instagram](#)



By: Ahmet Kahveci  
Shot Details: Canon EOS 6D, at 24mm,  
f/1.4, 1/500 sec, ISO 3200  
[Instagram](#)





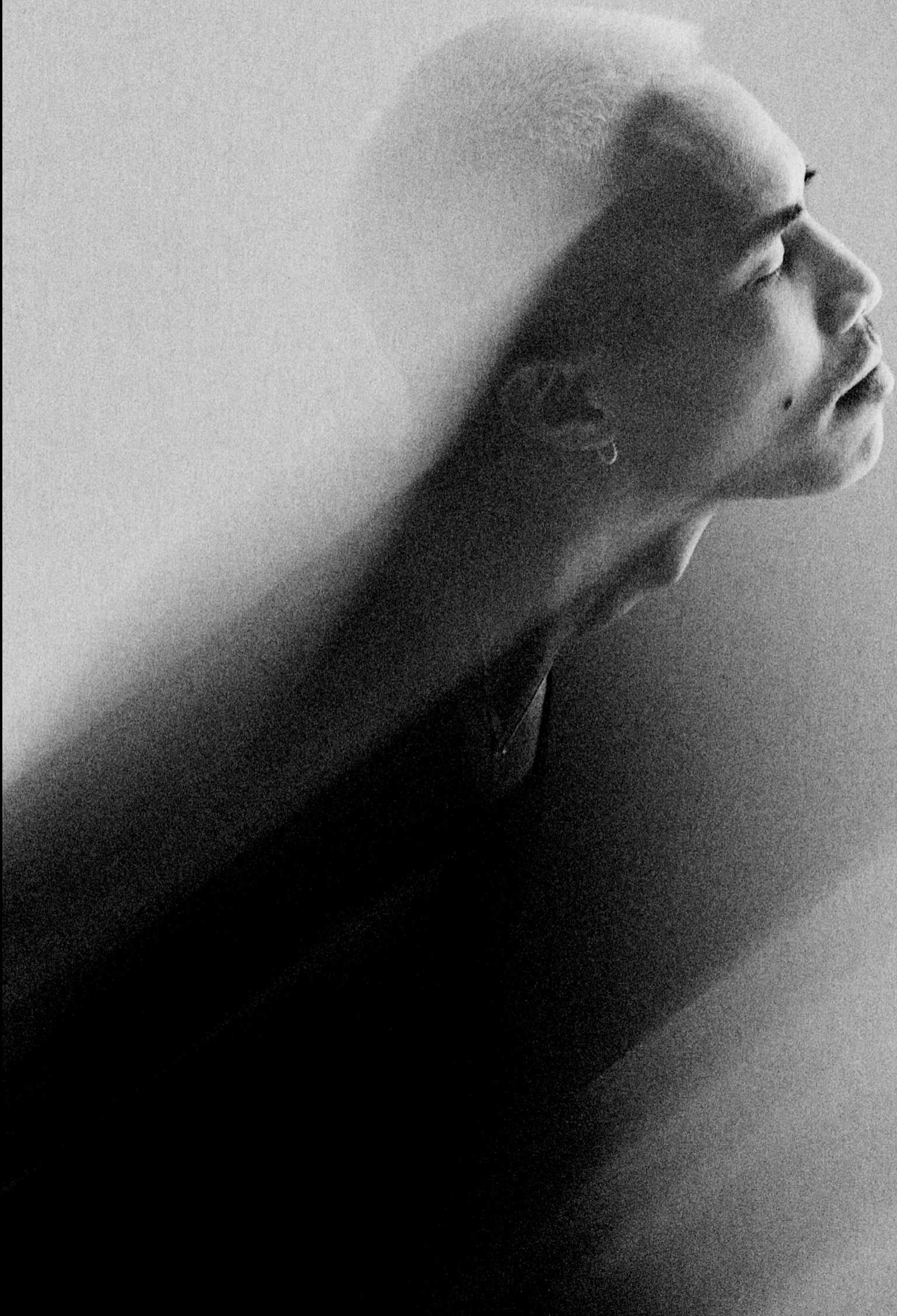


**By:** Hamed Farahpour  
**Shot Details:** Sony a7R III, at 50mm,  
f/5, 1/5 sec, ISO 50  
[Website](#)

EDITORS CHOICE



**By:** Jorgen Hendriksen  
**Shot Details:** Sony a7 III, at 200mm,  
f/2.8, 1/160 sec, ISO 1000  
[Website](#)







# OLD SCHOOL TECH NEW SCHOOL RESULTS

By Jeffrey Day



## HOW USING AN OLD 1970S NIKON \$50 LENS MADE ME A BETTER PHOTOGRAPHER

I bought a modern mirrorless, full-frame camera for one reason: autofocus that's genuinely excellent.

That mattered because my eyesight isn't what it used to be, and good autofocus removes one more variable. Then reality arrived. Full-frame lenses are expensive, and I didn't have any I wanted to use. I had crop-sensor lenses and an adapter, but the whole

setup felt wrong. Like buying a sports car and bolting on the steering wheel from a lawn mower.

In the back of the closet, I did have one full-frame lens: a 1970s Nikon 50mm f/1.8. Fast, sharp, inexpensive, and fully manual focus.

No autofocus. No shortcuts.

So I relearned the basics I used to take for granted: zone focusing and hyperfocal distance. They sound like textbook topics. In practice, they're simple, useful, and weirdly freeing.

This old lens didn't just work. It made me better.

## THE GIFT INSIDE A LIMITATION

The Nikon 50mm f/1.8 is easy to dismiss because it isn't exotic and because some versions have plastic parts.

Optically, it's strong. It can still hold up against modern lenses that cost far more. And you can often find it today for about \$50.

But this isn't really about the lens.

It's about what happens when the lens forces you to slow down, think in distances, and stop treating focus as something the camera should always solve for you.

Zone focusing and hyperfocal distance aren't "manual-focus coping strategies." In the right scenarios, they are faster and more consistent than autofocus, especially when timing matters.

## THE MINDSET SHIFT: STOP CHASING A POINT, BUILD A RANGE

Modern autofocus is terrific at finding a thin plane of focus.

Zone focusing and hyperfocal distance aim for something different: a dependable range of "sharp enough"

so you can shoot without refocusing every frame.

Instead of asking, "Did it nail the exact eyelash?" you ask, "Is my subject inside my sharp zone?"

That shift matters for street photography, travel, and anything where life moves faster than your focus box.

## ZONE FOCUSING: SPEED YOU CAN TRUST

### WHAT IS ZONE FOCUSING?

Zone focusing is a manual focusing technique where a photographer pre-sets the lens to a specific distance and uses a smaller aperture (like f/8 or f/11) to create a deep depth of field.

This establishes a "zone" of acceptable sharpness, for instance, from 5 feet to 15 feet away from the camera.

Instead of focusing for each individual shot, the photographer simply ensures their subject is within this pre-determined zone and can then capture fleeting moments instantly without the delay of autofocus.

This method is highly valued in fast-paced environments like street, event, and documentary photography, as it prioritizes speed and readiness over critically sharp focus on a single point.

### ZONE FOCUSING IS SIMPLE:

- Choose an aperture that gives you enough depth of field.
- Set focus to a distance where you expect your subject to be.

- Shoot when your subject is inside that distance range, your “zone.”

Once set, the camera becomes predictable. Predictable beats clever when you're trying to catch a moment.

## HOW TO DO IT

### 1. Switch to manual focus.

Set the lens or body to MF.

### 2. Choose an aperture that gives you margin.

Higher f-number means more depth of field. Start with f/8 or f/11.

Yes, you may need a higher ISO. That is usually a better trade than missing the shot.

### 3. Pick a working distance.

If people are typically 8–12 feet away, build your zone around that.

### 4. Confirm your near and far limits.

You can do this with:

- The lens distance scale (if available)
- Depth-of-field preview (if your camera supports it)
- A smartphone app (PhotoPills is a common option)

### 5. Shoot based on distance, not refocusing.

You are not constantly hunting focus. You are waiting for the subject to enter your zone, then shooting.

It sounds slower. It often ends up being faster.



## **H Y P E R F O C A L D I S T A N C E : S H A R P F R O M H E R E T O I N F I N I T Y**

### **WHAT IS HYPERFOCAL DISTANCE?**

Hyperfocal distance is a specific focusing point that maximizes the depth of field for any given aperture setting, ensuring that everything from a certain point near the camera all the way to infinity remains acceptably sharp.

When a photographer focuses their lens at this precise distance, the resulting zone of sharpness extends from half of the hyperfocal distance to infinity. This technique is particularly valuable in landscape, architectural, and astrophotography, where the goal is often to capture an entire scene with front-to-back sharpness.

By setting the hyperfocal distance, a photographer can be confident that both their foreground elements and the distant background will be in focus without needing to refocus for different compositions.



*Here's an example captured with this approach of a Gondola in Venice*



*Here's an example captured with this approach of a Postman in Bergen Norway*

In summary, when you focus at the hyperfocal distance for a given lens and aperture:

- The far limit reaches infinity
- The near limit is roughly half that distance.

This is why certain landscapes look sharp front to back. The focus isn't on the mountain. It's set to make the whole scene behave.

## HOW TO USE IT

### 1. Choose your lens and aperture

Wide angles make this easier, but it can still help at 50mm depending on the scene. Start with f/8 or f/11.

### 2. Calculate hyperfocal distance

Use an app so you don't have to guess (see below). Sensor size and assumptions matter.

### 3. Focus at that distance, or slightly beyond it

Distance estimation isn't perfect. A small bias farther out often protects infinity sharpness.

### 4. Lock it and shoot

This is great for panoramas or sequences where you want focus to stay consistent.

## USING AN APP TO CALCULATE HYPERFOCAL DISTANCE

There are several apps that will make the calculations for you. [PhotoPills](#) (iOS/Android) is a popular choice as well as [Hyperfocal - \(calculator\)](#) (Android), and [Simple DoF Calculator](#) (iOS).

These apps will determine the maximum depth of field, near and far limits, and focus distance based on camera model, focal length, and aperture.

Of course, if you have any of the AI apps installed on your phone like ChatGPT or Gemini, they too will make the calculation for you. Just ask and they will ask you for the information they need and will do the calculation.

## WHAT CHANGED FOR ME

Putting a manual 50mm on a modern camera and shooting with zone focusing and hyperfocal distance thinking produced a few immediate wins:

### Exposure Got Simpler

Aperture priority with Auto ISO kept shutter speed usable while preserving depth of field.

### Sharpness Got More Consistent

Not because I became a manual-focus wizard. Because I stopped relying on

last-second autofocus decisions in situations where autofocus can wobble.

### Composition improved.

This was the real payoff. When focus stopped consuming attention, I had more room for:

- Light direction and shape
- Timing and gesture
- Layering and depth
- Subject and background relationships
- Clean edges and stronger framing

My default setup became repeatable: f/8, focus set to a reliable working distance, aperture priority, Auto ISO. The camera became steady. My attention moved back to the scene.

That's the win.

## A FEW PRACTICAL TIPS THAT MAKE THIS EASIER

### Start With One Default Zone

Pick a common distance, like 8–12 feet, and practice until it feels automatic.

### Use The Environment To Judge Distance.

Sidewalk edges, doorways, benches. Physical markers keep you honest.



*Here's another example captured with this approach of the CBOT building in Chicago. I also missed shots. That is photography's favorite hobby.*

**Aim for “sharp enough” when the moment matters.**

Zone focusing is built for real life, not lab tests.

**Treat autofocus as a tool, not a rule.**

Autofocus is excellent. Manual techniques are excellent. Use the one that's most reliable for the scene.

## **THE TAKEAWAY**

I assumed using an old, inexpensive, manual-focus lens would be a compromise.

Instead, it improved my process. It pushed me back toward fundamentals: distance, light, timing, composition. It gave me a workflow that can be faster and steadier than I expected.

Autofocus is still valuable, and I still use it.

But sometimes the best upgrade isn't a new feature. It's a method that makes you pay attention before you press the shutter.

About The Author:

Jeffrey Day is an avid amateur photographer based in the Chicago area, with a focus on urbanscapes, street photography, and minimalist imagery. His work emphasizes clean lines, quiet moments, and understated composition.

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# THE LOWDOWN ON THE CANON 45MM F/1.2 LENS

By Ryan Sitzman



## Could This Be The New Nifty-Fifty?

**W**hen people start to get serious about their photography, or when they at least want to move beyond a cell

phone camera and upgrade their skills and equipment, one of the first pieces of “fancy” gear that they buy is a 50mm prime lens.



Also called the “Nifty Fifty,” a 50mm lens is a smart, easy way to quickly improve your photography. That’s because a 50mm lens is fairly basic, so it pushes you to learn the fundamentals of photography, including the delicate dance between shutter speed, aperture, and ISO. Additionally, because a 50mm prime lens doesn’t have a zoom, it forces you to move closer or further from your subject, which can help you learn about photographic composition.

A 50mm f/1.8 lens is therefore widely understood to be a kind of must-have lens. It works great for people just getting into “serious” photography, but it also has a place in a professional’s gear bag. But once you’ve perfected the art of the Nifty Fifty, where do you go from there? One would think that the next step would be to get a “faster” lens with an even wider maximum aperture, such as an f/1.4 or even an f/1.2. However, one glance at the price tag of a high-end, wide-aperture lens can quickly stomp on the brakes of your delusions of photographic grandeur. I don’t know about you, but I simply can’t

justify spending \$2,500 on a lens. With Canon’s new 45mm f/1.2 lens, though, everything has suddenly changed. This Canon lens costs just under \$470, and it has quickly caught the attention of countless photographers.

I usually save the price discussion for near the end of these buyer’s guide articles, but in this case, the price really is what makes this lens stand out from the competition. The price can even influence our understanding of the lens’s performance, and it will likely be a factor when you’re considering whether it might be a good lens for you. For every positive aspect of this lens, you can add a mental note along the lines of, “...and it still manages to cost less than \$500!” And any of the lens’s drawbacks can be countered with an implied disclaimer such as, “...but still, remember that it costs less than one-fifth the price of some other f/1.2 lenses, so you shouldn’t expect it to be perfect.” With all of this in mind, let’s take a closer look at this new Canon 45mm RF-mount lens.

On the whole, this lens is simple, though it's not bare-bones or cheap by any means. Obviously, most lenses that cost four or five times as much as this one will tend to have a few more bells and whistles, but there's really only so much that can go into a lens. Camera manufacturers save most of the ostentatious features for the camera bodies, so lenses have to stand out from the crowd based mainly on performance, as opposed to features.

For example, this Canon 45mm has just a single switch, allowing the user to choose between Autofocus or Manual Focus, and there are no other switches or buttons. There are two movable rings; one is for the focus selector, and the other is a programmable ring with a slight clicky feel. That's really about it, but it's also about everything that most photographers will need from a

lens. Especially when you compare this 45mm lens to a professional Canon lens, such as their EF 50mm f/1.2 L lens, which costs \$1,550, or their RF 50mm f/1.2 L lens, which goes for a staggering \$2,600, then the price tag on the 45mm lens looks downright reasonable. Will you get better results with the pricier lenses? Possibly. Will the results be three to five times better? Highly unlikely.

There are several scenarios where this 45mm f/1.2 lens could be a great addition to your gear collection. With its wide-open aperture, the lens is most at home if you're shooting in low light, or if you're shooting in normal light and just want to separate the subject from the background. If you shoot at f/1.2, the lens can produce a really smooth, blurry background that's pleasing to the eye.





However, with such a narrow depth of field, anything outside of the direct center of focus tends to lose detail and sharpness, especially at the corners of the image. Depending on the situation, that may even be desirable. If it really does bother you, though, you can just move up a few stops and shoot with a narrower aperture, which will produce an image with a larger area in focus.

This lens could be equally useful for indoor portraits, as well as spontaneous, outdoor street photography. It's not quite as compact as most 50mm prime lenses, but it's still fairly lightweight, which makes it easy to carry around and shoot handheld for longer periods of time. As is the case with most wide-aperture lenses, there's a relatively long minimum focus distance, and you'll need to get at least 1.5 feet away from your subject for it to be in focus. Speaking of focus, the autofocus is quick, responsive, and quiet, and it can

track moving subjects well for both still photographs and video.

So what's the catch? How did Canon manage to make a competitively priced f/1.2 lens, and what corners did they have to cut? Well, the lack of in-lens image stabilization is the most notable area where the 45mm lens is slightly behind its more expensive cousins. The 45mm lens doesn't offer any image stabilization, whereas those fancier lenses can have several stops of in-lens stabilization. In-lens image stabilization can be a nice aid when you're moving or shooting handheld in low light. However, many new cameras offer impressive in-body image stabilization (IBIS), so if your camera body has IBIS, it can offset some of the movement. What's more, by not including in-lens stabilization, Canon was able to keep the weight of the lens to a very light and reasonable 0.8 pounds.

It's also notable that this lens doesn't have any kind of weather sealing, which makes it less ideal for using in dusty, humid, or wet conditions. However, it's not like any lens will do particularly well if you accidentally drop it in the sand, and then wash off the sand by dunking it in the ocean. For Free Mags Check [sastatus.com](http://sastatus.com) Weather sealing can help a bit, but if I ever have a lens get damaged by rain or dirt, I'd much prefer that it be one that cost me \$500, as opposed to \$2,600.

Finally, Canon apparently made one additional tradeoff to keep down the price of this lens, and that was to not include a hood with the lens. Of course, you can separately purchase a compatible hood for around \$60, but

if you were expecting to find a lens hood in the box, you'll be disappointed. Frankly, I can understand that a lens that's so reasonably priced doesn't include image stabilization or weather sealing, but to leave out a basic hood just seems a bit cheap - but that's just my opinion.

On the whole, this lens actually makes me wish I had a Canon camera body with an RF mount. This 45mm lens seems like a really fun way to try out some new photographic tricks. Additionally, the sub-\$500 price is surprisingly reasonable and competitive, and I think that it will give lots of photographers access to a high-end lens, without the high-end price.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Ryan Sitzman splits his time between the coffee fields of Costa Rica and the mountains of Colorado. You can find him on one of his [several websites](#).

VIDEO

# THE NEW NIFTY FIFTY: CANON'S 45MM F/1.2 IS ONLY \$469

by TONY & CHELSEA NORTHRUP



Chelsea reviews Canon's new 45mm f/1.2 lens to see if it could truly replace the legendary nifty fifty. She tests environmental portraits, travel and street, food photos, and more. Technical tests include flaring, chromatic aberration, sharpness, and vignetting.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Chelsea and Tony Northrup are photographers based in Connecticut. They are the creators of the top-rated photography book, "[Tony Northrup's DSLR Book: How to Create Stunning Digital Photography](#)" which features over nine hours of video training and free lifetime updates. To see more of their tutorials and photos you can follow them on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)

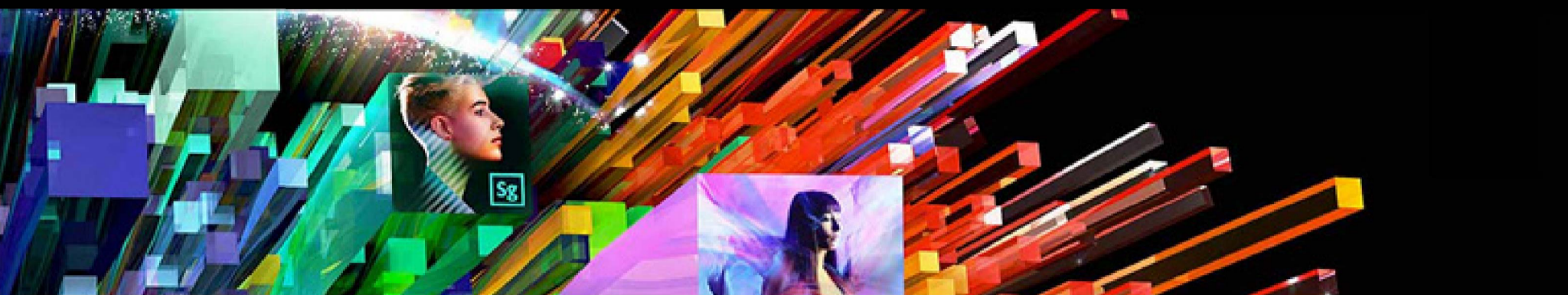
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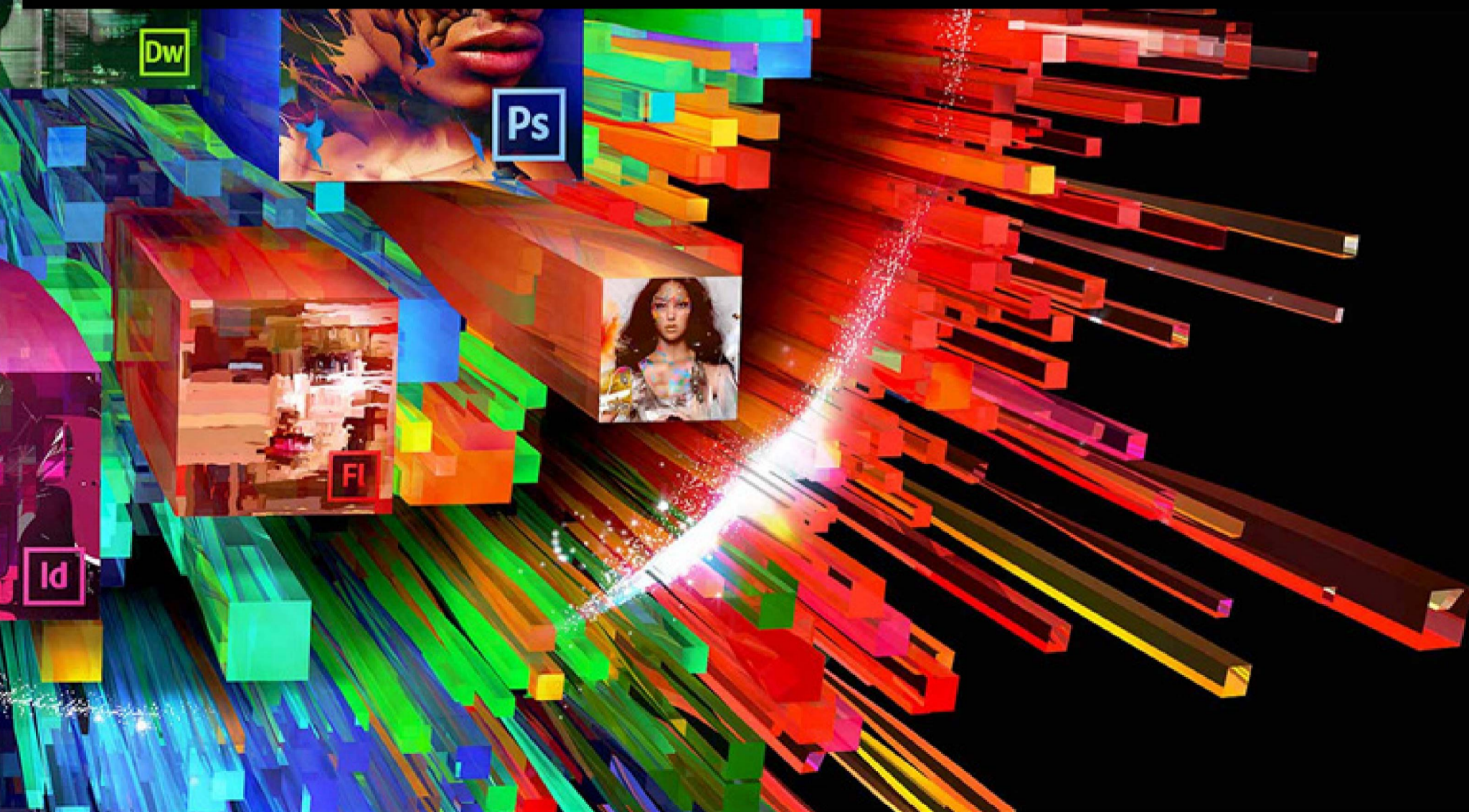


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# PHOTO EDITING:

One Image Color Graded Three Ways



# VIDEO TUTORIAL: **ONE IMAGE COLOR** GRADED THREE WAYS

by ADORAMA

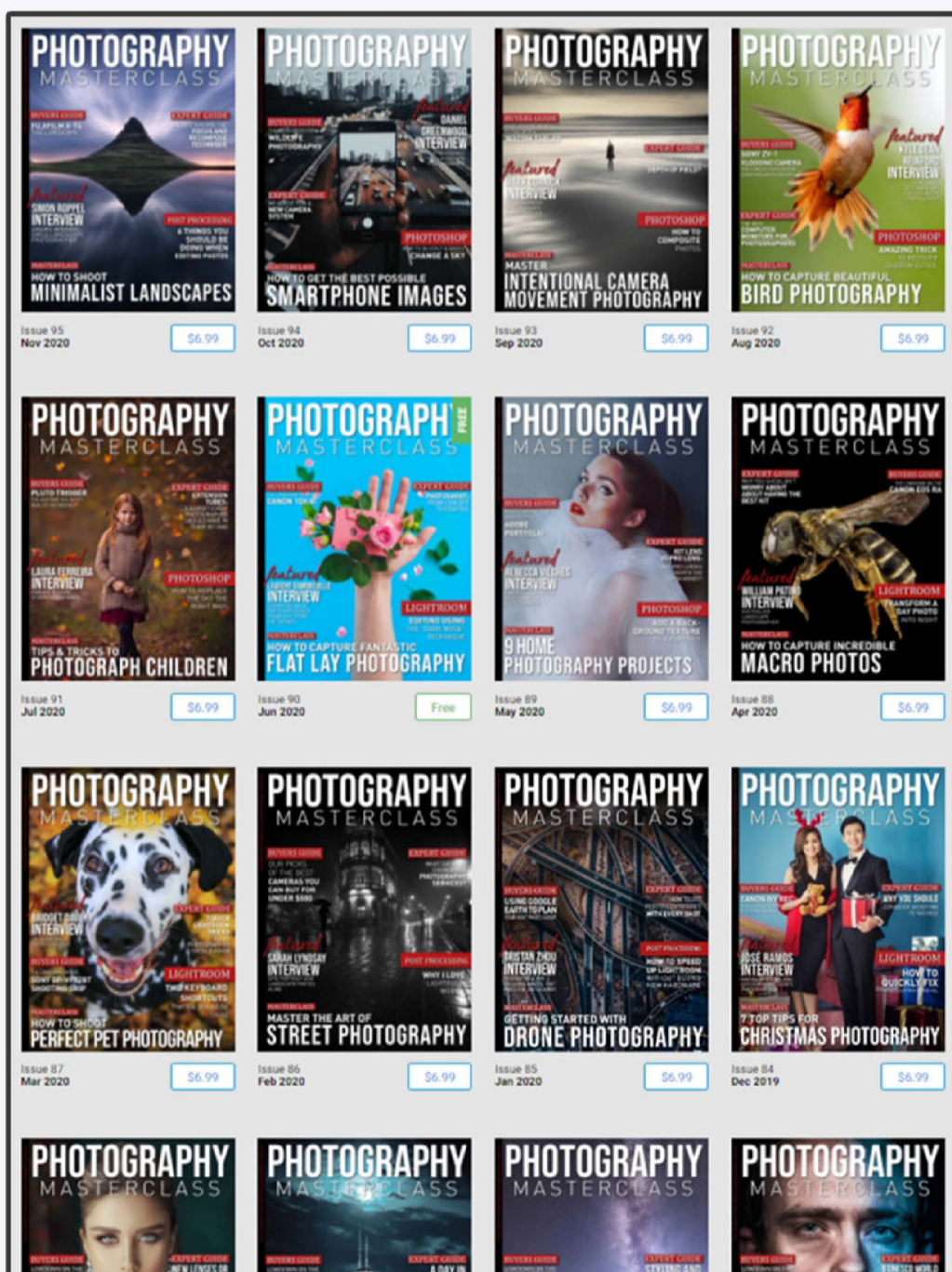


Every creative decision in post-processing contributes to the overall feel of an image. This video breaks down my process of color grading a single fashion image, showing how shifts in white balance, tone, and hue can turn one portrait into three completely different visual interpretations. In this video, I use Capture One to demonstrate the tools I use to color-grade a RAW image in three different ways.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Shop [Adorama](#) for a powerhouse lineup of cameras, lenses, cinematography gear, studio lighting, tripods, pro audio, computers, printers, and every cutting-edge accessory you need to manifest your creative vision.

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Your submission can be based on any topic relating to digital photography, including post production. We also accept reviews of cameras, lenses and equipment.

Submit your articles or videos at [Photographymc.com](http://Photographymc.com) and your content could appear in an upcoming issue!

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**STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO**  
PHOTOGRAPHING  
**THE MILKY WAY**

By: Riccardo Cervia  
[Website](#)



**By:** Evgeni Tcherkasski  
**Shot Details:** Nikon D750, at 12mm,  
f/2.8, 225 sec, ISO 8000  
[Instagram](#)





**By:** Benjamin Voros  
**Shot Details:** Canon EOS 600D, at 84mm,  
f/5, 1/200 sec, ISO 100  
[Website](#)



**By:** Casey Horner  
**Shot Details:** Sony a7 III, at 24mm,  
f/1.4, 4 sec, ISO 4000  
[Instagram](#)



**By:** Dns Photography  
**Shot Details:** Canon EOS 6D, at 19mm,  
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**By:** Ian Chen  
**Shot Details:** Sony a7R II, at 18mm,  
f/2.8, 20 sec, ISO 32  
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**By:** John Fowler  
**Shot Details:** Nikon D800E, at 24mm,  
f/4, 20 sec, ISO 1600  
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**By:** John Fowler  
**Shot Details:** Nikon D800E, at 12mm,  
f/13, 1/200 sec, ISO 100  
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# STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHING THE MILKY WAY

**T**here is nothing quite like standing under a canopy of stars, listening to the quiet of the night, and watching the glowing band of the Milky Way stretch across the sky. For us photographers, capturing this spectacle is often considered a rite of passage. It feels like

magic, but the truth is that photographing our home galaxy is entirely within your reach. It doesn't require a telescope or a degree in astronomy; it simply requires the right gear, careful planning, and an understanding of how to push your camera to its low-light limits.

Astrophotography is a slow, methodical process. It forces you to step away from the rapid-fire shooting of daylight photography and embrace patience.

In this guide, we will walk through everything you need to know to capture breathtaking images of the Milky Way, from the equipment you pack in your bag to the final adjustments in post-processing.

## ESSENTIAL GEAR

While you don't need the most expensive camera on the market to shoot the night sky, certain pieces of equipment are absolutely non-negotiable if you want crisp, vibrant images.

## THE CAMERA

You will need a camera capable of shooting in manual mode and capturing RAW files. Full-frame sensors are ideal because of their superior low-light performance and noise-handling capabilities, but modern APS-C (crop sensor) cameras are also more than capable of capturing stunning nightscapes.

## THE LENS

This is arguably more important than the camera body. You need a fast, ultra-wide-angle lens. Look for a focal length between 14mm and 24mm. This allows you to capture a vast expanse of the sky alongside an interesting foreground.

*Photo by: [Jake Johnson](#)*





*Photo by: John Fowler*

The lens should have a maximum aperture of  $f/2.8$  or wider (such as  $f/1.8$  or  $f/1.4$ ) to let in as much starlight as possible during the exposure.

### **THE TRIPOD**

A sturdy, reliable tripod is essential. You will be taking exposures that last up to 30 seconds, and even the slightest vibration from the wind or the press of the shutter button will result in blurry stars.

### **ACCESSORIES**

Pack a headlamp with a red-light feature to preserve your night vision while you adjust your camera settings. A remote shutter release or intervalometer is also highly recommended to avoid touching the camera to trigger the shot, though a 2-second self-timer can work in a pinch. Finally, bring extra batteries; long exposures and cold night air drain power incredibly fast.

## PLANNING YOUR SHOOT

You cannot simply walk out your back door to photograph the Milky Way, especially if you live near a city. Light pollution is the astrophotographer's greatest enemy. You need to find truly dark skies.

Websites like Dark Site Finder or light pollution maps can help you locate areas with minimal artificial light (ideally Bortle Class 1, 2, or 3 skies).

Timing is equally critical. The brightest, most photogenic part of the galaxy (the galactic core) is only visible during certain times of the year. In the Northern Hemisphere, "Milky Way season" runs roughly from late February to October,

peaking in the summer months when the core is highest in the sky.

Additionally, you must plan your shoot around the lunar cycle. Even a crescent moon can wash out the fainter stars. The best time to shoot is during a New Moon, or after the moon has set.

To remove the guesswork from your planning, use smartphone apps like PhotoPills or The Photographer's Ephemeris. These apps allow you to visualize exactly where and when the Milky Way will rise and set at any given location, helping you plan your composition days or even months in advance.





## THE MILKY WAY EXPOSURE TRIANGLE

Shooting the night sky requires you to take full control of your camera in Manual mode. Because you are photographing in near-total darkness, the traditional rules of the exposure triangle shift dramatically.

### APERTURE

Open your lens as wide as it will go - f/2.8, f/1.8, or f/1.4. Your goal is to gather as much light as physically possible.

### SHUTTER SPEED

This is the trickiest setting. If your shutter is open too long, the Earth's rotation will

cause the stars to streak, creating "star trails" rather than sharp pinpoints.

To calculate your maximum shutter speed, use the '500 Rule': divide 500 by the focal length of your lens. For example, if you are using a 20mm lens on a full-frame camera,  $500 / 20 = 25$  seconds, meaning your shutter speed should be 25 seconds or less to avoid star trails.

If you are using a crop sensor camera, you must first multiply your focal length by the camera's crop factor (typically 1.5x for Sony/Nikon or 1.6x for Canon) to find the effective focal length.

Using that same 20mm lens on a camera with a 1.5x crop factor, your effective focal length becomes 30mm ( $20 \times 1.5$ ).

Apply the 500 Rule to that new number:  $500 / 30 = 16.6$  seconds. In this case, you would round down to a 15-second shutter speed to ensure the stars remain tack-sharp.

## ISO

Because your shutter speed is limited by the rotation of the Earth and your aperture is already wide open, you must raise your ISO to achieve a proper exposure. Start at ISO 3200.

If the image is too dark, test pushing ISO to 6400. Don't be afraid of the digital noise; modern editing software is exceptionally good at cleaning it up later.

Finally, ensure you are shooting in RAW format. A JPEG compresses data and throws away the crucial shadow and highlight information you will desperately need when editing.



## THE ART OF FOCUSING IN THE DARK

Autofocus will not work in the dark. Your camera simply cannot lock onto the stars. You must switch your lens to manual focus.

Start by turning the focus ring to the infinity symbol ( $\infty$ ), but be aware that true infinity is rarely exactly on the line.

To achieve critical sharpness, turn on your camera's Live View screen. Find the brightest star or planet in the sky (or a distant streetlamp if one is visible) and center it on your screen.

Use the digital magnification button (not the lens zoom) to zoom in on that point of

light on your LCD. Slowly turn your focus ring back and forth until the star shrinks into the smallest, sharpest pinpoint of light possible.

Once you achieve this, be very careful not to bump the focus ring for the rest of the night.

## COMPOSING THE SHOT

A photograph of the Milky Way is beautiful, but an image of the Milky Way hovering over an interesting landscape is captivating. The stars alone lack context and scale; the foreground is what turns a snapshot of the sky into a compelling photograph.

Photo by: [Getty Images](#)





When scouting your location before dark, look for elements that will anchor your image. Silhouettes of jagged mountains, a solitary twisting tree, an abandoned barn, or the reflection of the stars in a still lake all make for incredible compositions.

Apply traditional compositional techniques like the rule of thirds or leading lines to guide the viewer's eye through the dark landscape up into the glowing core of the galaxy.

Because the landscape will be completely dark, you might consider "light painting" - using your flashlight to briefly and gently illuminate the foreground during the long exposure.

Alternatively, you can take a much longer exposure for the foreground (sometimes several minutes long at a lower ISO) and

blend it with your sky exposure later in Photoshop or another post processing software.

## POST-PROCESSING

When you look at your LCD screen in the field, the Milky Way might look a bit flat and washed out. Do not be discouraged as astrophotography relies heavily on post-processing to draw out the faint details, contrast, and colors hidden within the RAW file.

Import your image into a program like Adobe Lightroom or Camera Raw. Start by adjusting the White Balance. The night sky is rarely pure black, so aim for a cool, slightly blue/magenta tint (usually around 3800K to 4200K) to give the sky a natural, deep-space feel.

Next, increase the contrast to make the stars pop against the dark sky. The "Dehaze" and "Clarity" sliders are your best friends for Milky Way photography. By pushing these up slightly you will drastically reveal the structure and dust lanes of the galactic core.

Adjust the Whites and Highlights to make the stars shine brighter, and deepen the Blacks to restore the dark void of space. Finally, apply noise reduction. High ISOs introduce grain, so carefully push the luminance noise reduction slider until the sky smooths out, but stop before the stars start blurring together and the image looks plasticky.

## IN CONCLUSION

Photographing the Milky Way is incredibly rewarding. It blends technical precision

with a deep appreciation for the natural world. Your first attempts might be out of focus, or ruined by a passing cloud, or too noisy, and that is completely normal. Photographing the Milky Way is a journey of trial and error.

The key is to keep practicing. Learn your camera's buttons by touch so you can navigate them in the dark. Refine your planning process. With a little patience and a lot of persistence, you will soon be creating awe-inspiring images that capture the vast, glowing majesty of our universe.

So, pack your bags, check the moon phases, and head out into the dark. The stars are waiting.



Photo by: [Luca Micheli](#)

# VIDEO TUTORIAL: 7 TIPS FOR BETTER MILKY WAY PHOTOGRAPHY

by Alyn Wallace



I'm sure many of you are buzzing to photograph the heart of the Milky Way galaxy. In this video, I share 7 tips for better Milky Way photographs

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# FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER: MARKUS AUERBACH



Markus Auerbach is a photographer based near Stuttgart in southern Germany whose striking architectural images are shaped by a minimalist eye and a belief that less is usually more. Drawn to modern buildings, industrial spaces and the quiet clarity of strong design, he creates photographs with a clear visual language, where lines, shapes, surfaces and shadow come together in pared-back, often abstract compositions. Whether working in color or black and white, Markus focuses on harmony, balance and precision, allowing the character of the subject itself to guide the image.



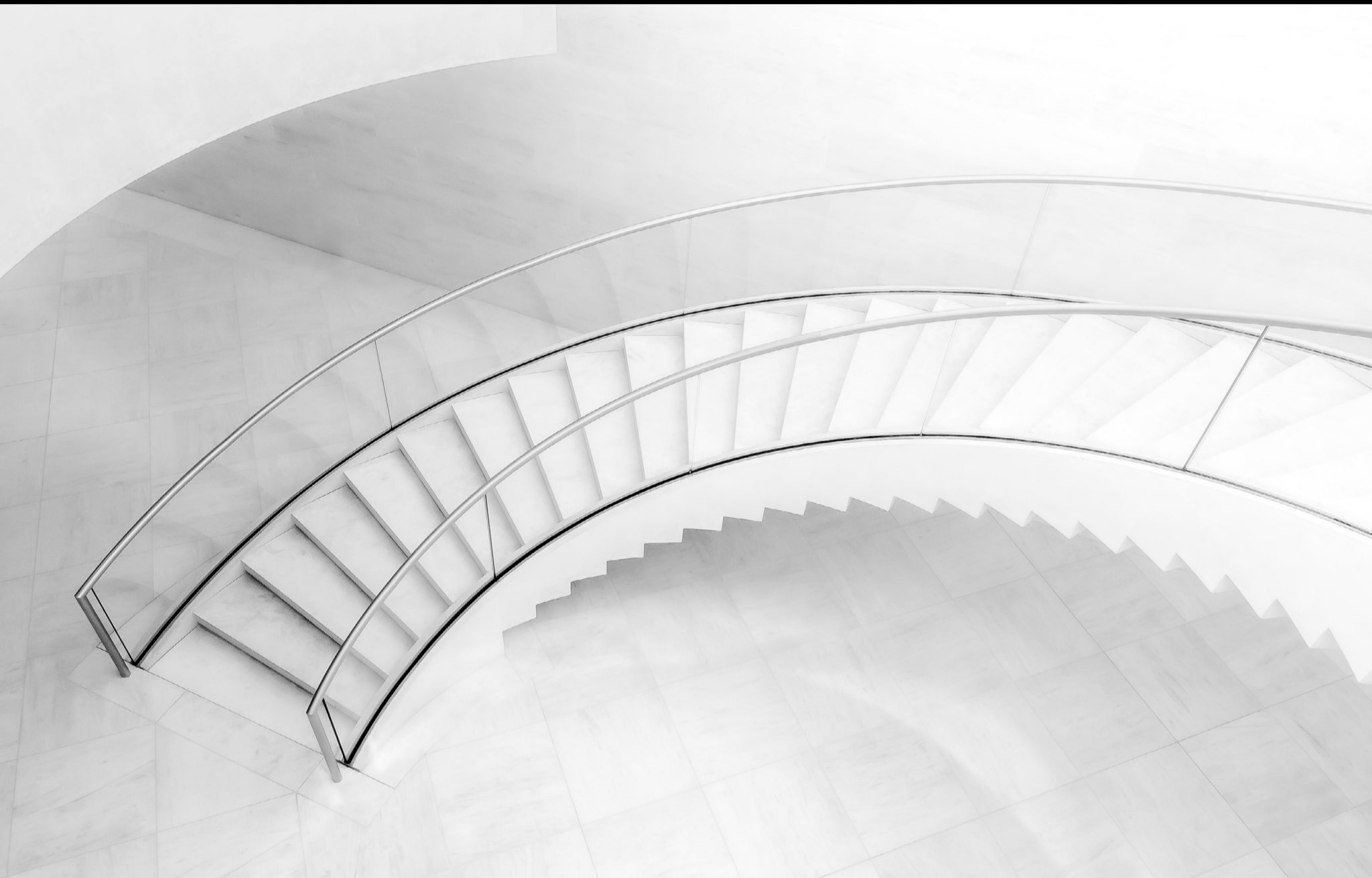
***Photographic Speciality/Style:***

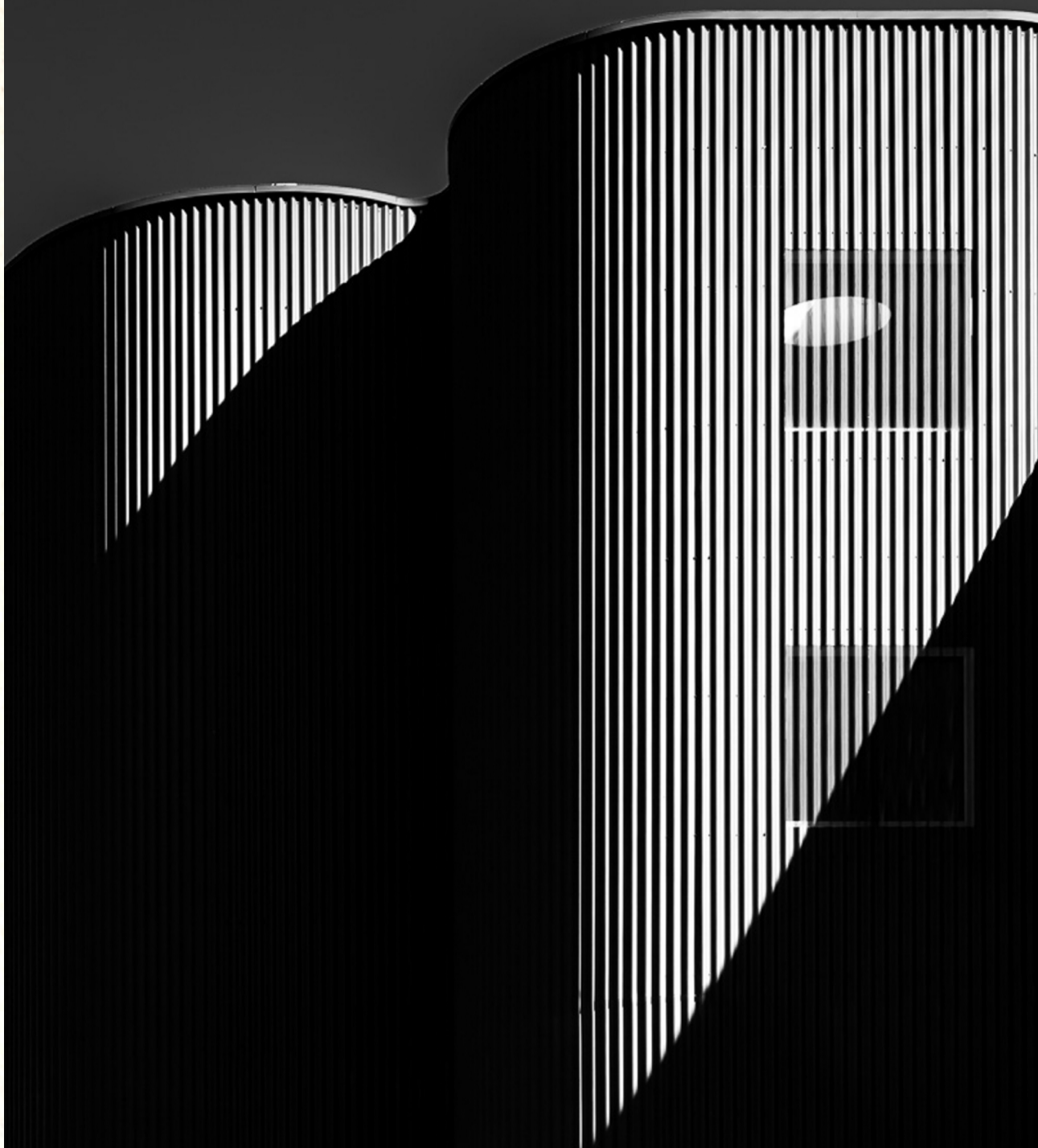
Architecture, minimalism, abstract, black and white. I generally compose my photos using a clear visual language. Less is (usually) more!

***Short Bio:***

Hello everyone, my name is Markus Auerbach, I am 62 years old and live in the Stuttgart area in southern Germany.







***When you're planning an architectural shoot, what catches your eye first - the light, the lines, the geometry, the materials, or something else entirely?***

It's something completely different: it's the subject! But let's start at the beginning.

Basically, I think about where I can find my subjects or which buildings and structures interest me. Generally speaking, I prefer modern buildings or new, modern neighbourhoods. I also find

industrial estates that aren't too old very appealing.

Furthermore, the day of the week and the chosen time of day often play an important role.

For example, when photographing in industrial and commercial areas, I definitely prefer Sundays, because people aren't working there then and it's therefore quiet.

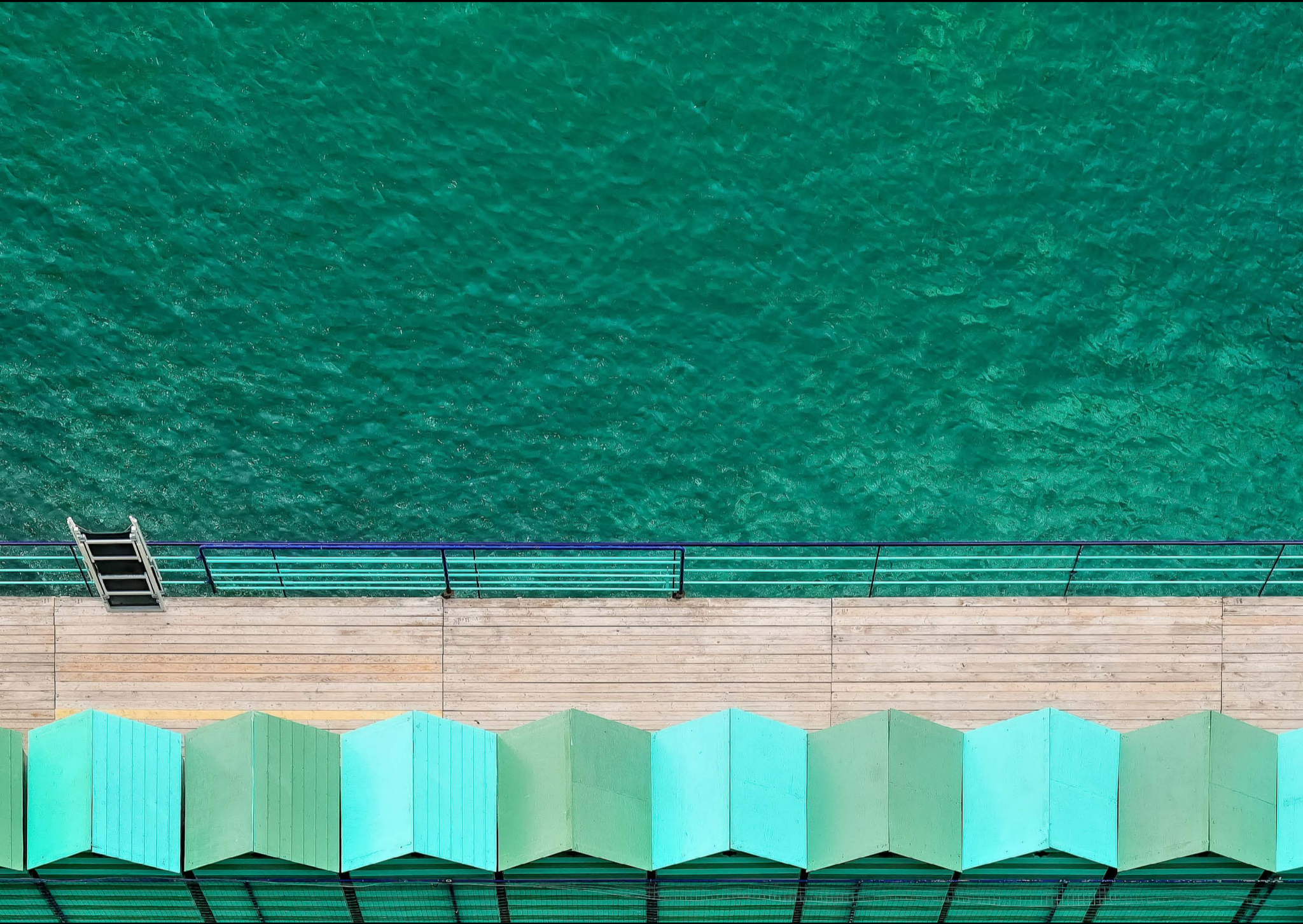
However, I don't usually carry out any intensive mental or intellectual preparation or planning. This allows me to take photographs as carefree and uninhibitedly as possible. I don't want to tie myself down to specific angles or shooting situations through intensive preparation.

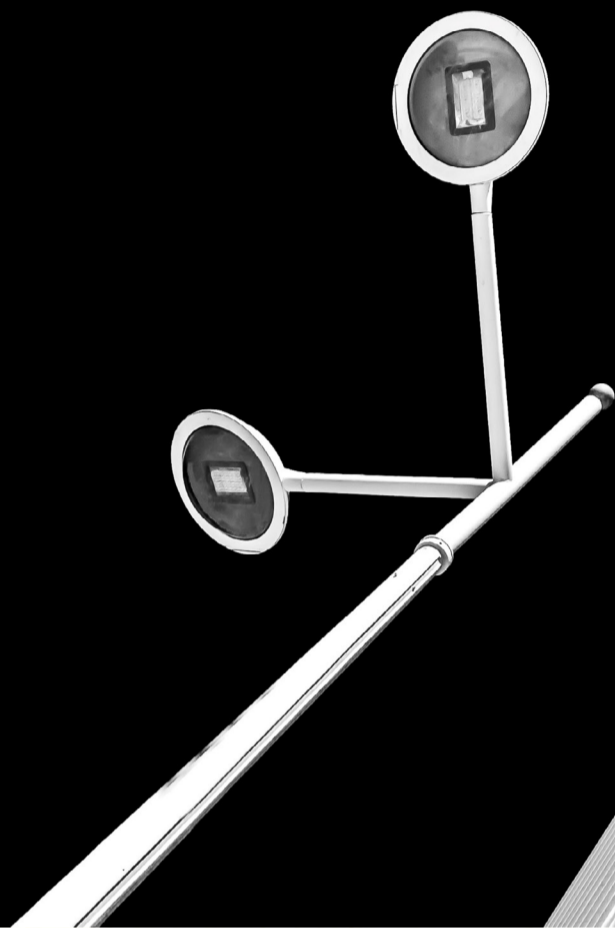
The impression I get on site is decisive for me. What do I see? Does the place appeal to me as a whole? How does a building or structure present itself to me?

When the conditions are right, the subjects emerge as if by themselves – I forget my surroundings and concentrate entirely on what I see.

However, I may also realise that the lighting isn't ideal, for example because a shadow is too small or doesn't look dynamic enough. I have therefore compiled a short list of buildings and locations so that I can revisit them at a later, photographically more favourable time and take photos there again.







***Could you walk us through your process for creating an architectural image, from first idea or location scouting through to the final photograph?***

I've already described much of this in the previous question. First, I choose a town, a building or an industrial estate. Then I wait for a suitable day, and off I go.

If things go well, I get into the 'flow' I described – I forget my surroundings and concentrate entirely on seeing and identifying subjects. This can easily take a whole day, punctuated by several breaks. I usually need a longer break every two

hours or so. That's when my concentration simply starts to wane.

Then, back at home, I upload everything to the computer and the post-processing can begin.

Every now and then, I also look at photos from shoots that took place quite some time ago. As I believe I'm constantly developing my skills in image composition and post-processing, I keep discovering new potential even in older shots.

And last but not least, I also look at lots of photos by other photographers and focus particularly on their image composition.



***How do you use light, shadow, and weather to create mood in your architectural images? Does this change when you're photographing a landscape?***

I'm not really that concerned with a particular mood a photo should convey. The composition is more important to me – that is, the arrangement of the elements within the frame.

Let me briefly explain what I mean by this: as my photos generally have a clear visual language, they usually appear pared-back or minimalist, sometimes even abstract, and are characterised by

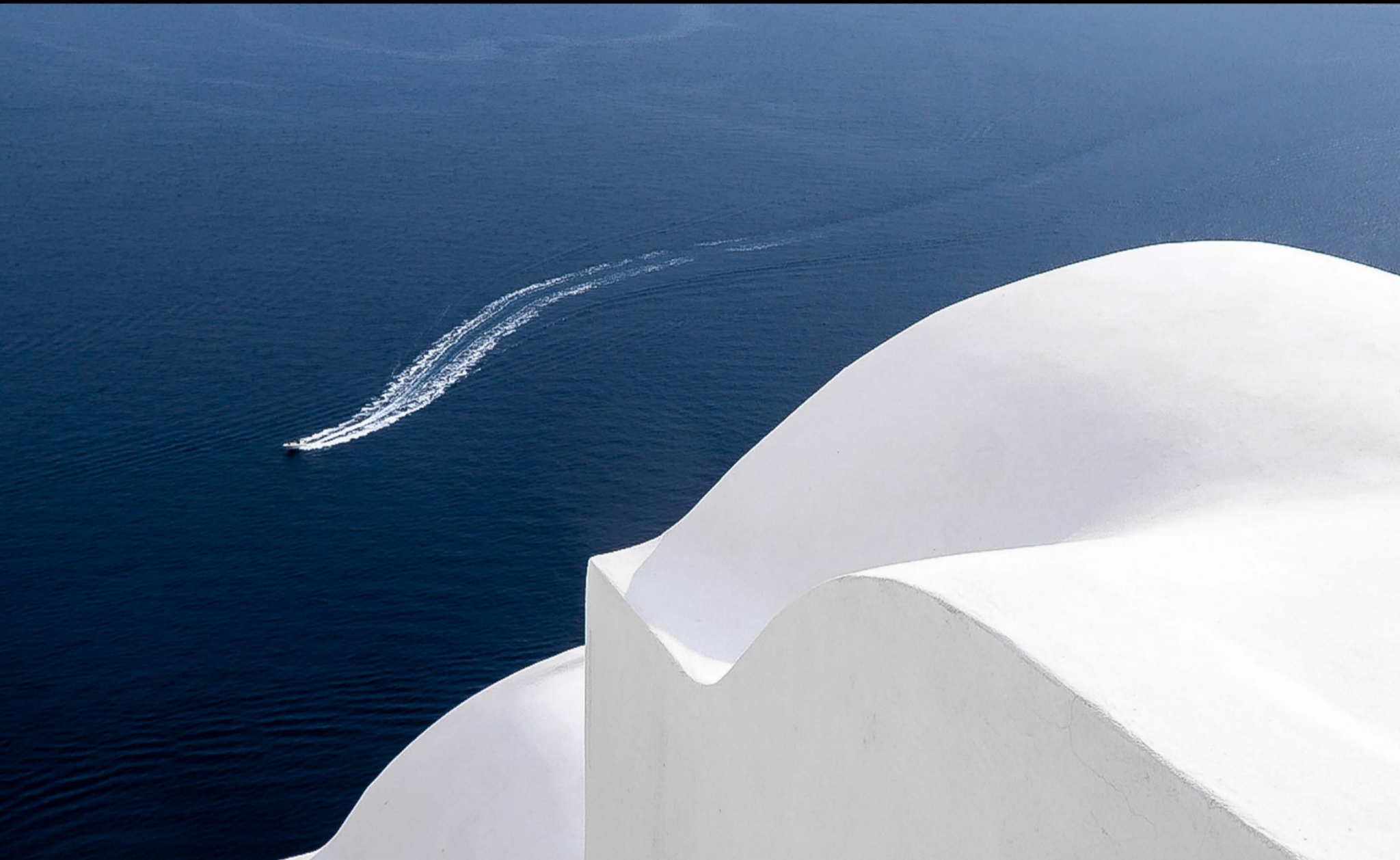
the clearest possible interplay of lines, shapes, colors and planes.

And of course I also enjoy photographing 'light and shadow' as well as black and white – but even with these photos, a clear visual language and composition are very important to me.

Ultimately, it's the result that counts. In terms of the key visual elements, I believe a photograph must strike a certain balance; it must appear harmonious yet exciting at the same time.

And this approach to photography naturally applies to landscape photography as well. I hope that the few landscape photos I have included here demonstrate this.







***How much of your final look happens in camera versus in post-processing? Are there any key steps in your editing that help define your style, especially for architecture?***

The final result of my photos always comes about during the editing process.

However, the extent of the editing varies greatly: there are photos that require little work, and others that demand more effort. It's difficult to generalise. What I can say, though, is that the subject has to be right. In other words: the content of the image

must be interesting to both me and the viewer.

And my post-processing is usually quite simple: cropping, straightening, adjusting the colors, and converting to black and white if necessary.

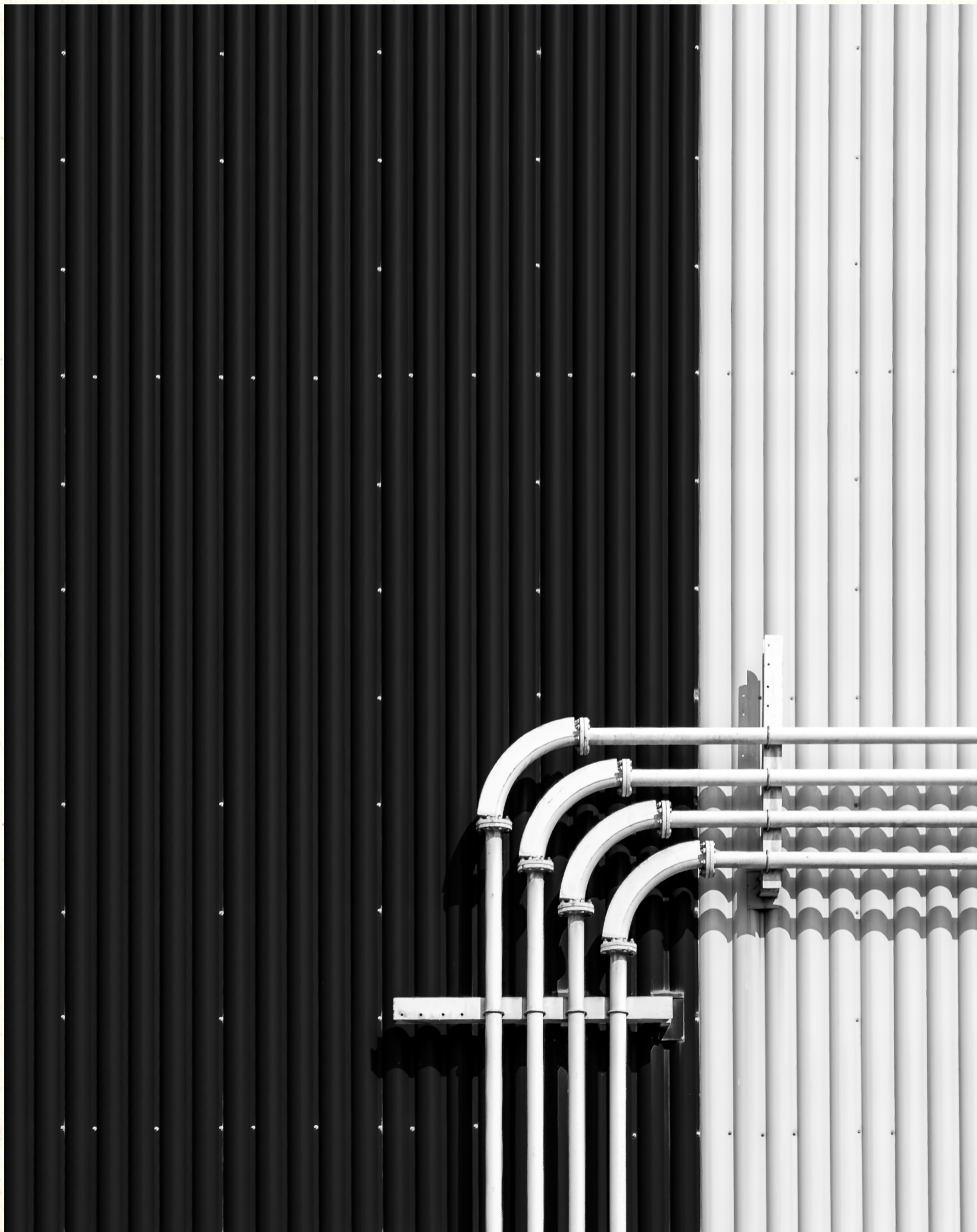
What defines my style when it comes to editing? Well, it's the clear visual language. And with architectural photography, it's naturally very important to me that horizontal lines are horizontal and vertical lines are depicted vertically :-)



***What's your favorite photo that you've ever taken & why?***

Oooh, a favorite photo? No, I don't have one... but the photos printed here really do

reflect my way of seeing things, my idea of minimalist photography. I really like all of these photos; otherwise I wouldn't have had them published here.



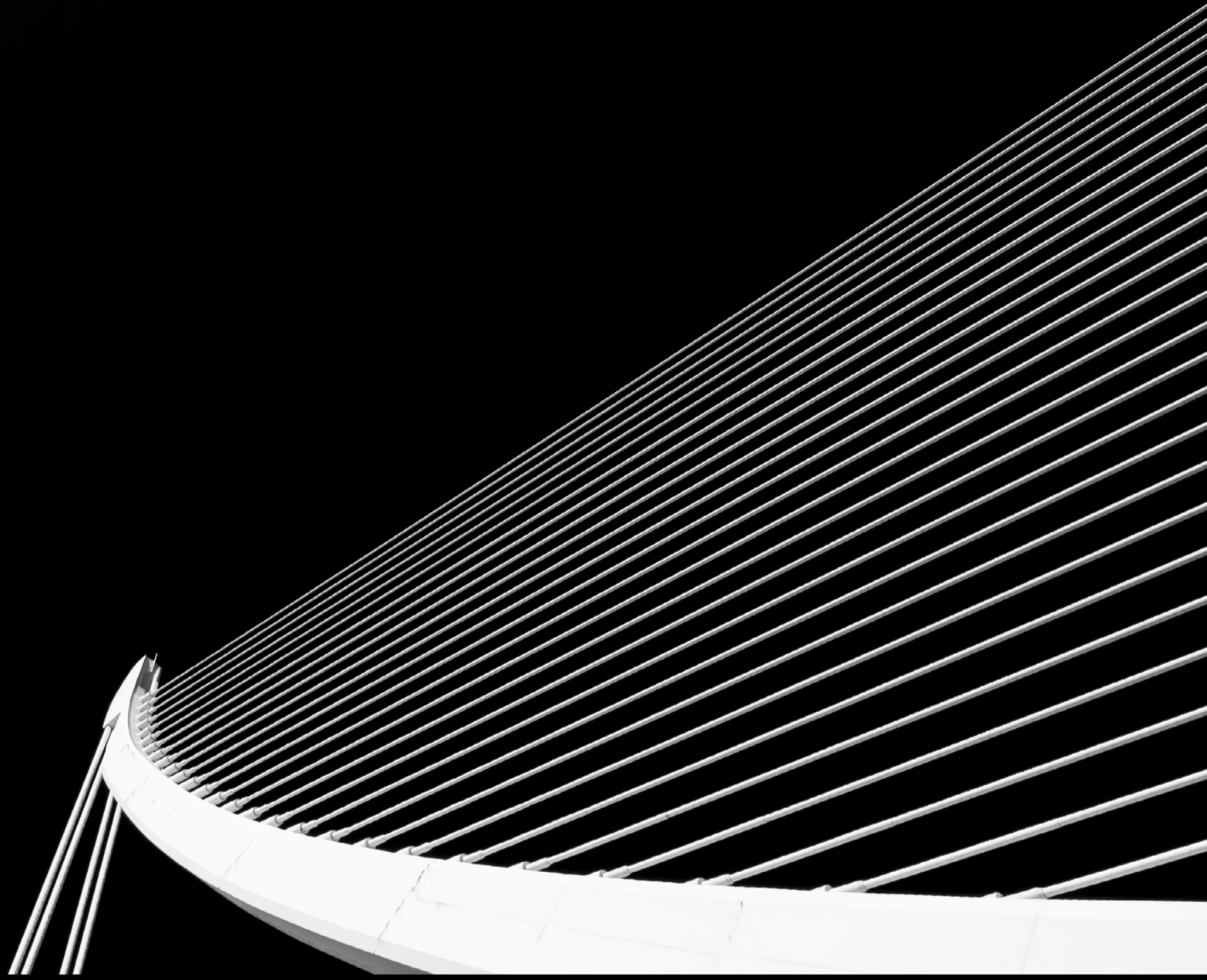




***Are there particular cities, buildings, or types of structures you find yourself drawn back to again and again? What keeps pulling you back?***

No, not really. But there are places or buildings that I'd like to visit a second or third time. But only after a considerable amount of time has passed, i.e. only after a few years.

Why? Because I want to keep developing as a photographer, and it's an exciting process to see how such a building affects me after a long time. Does it appear more interesting to me photographically? Do I gain new perspectives? Do I see subjects that I didn't see before?



***Who or what inspires you - other photographers, architects, artists, or environments - and how does that inspiration show up in your images?***

I am particularly inspired by photographs of buildings I haven't seen before and which I then find interesting. And, of course, looking at other minimalist-style photos.

***What's inside your kit bag, and what's the one piece of kit you couldn't do without? And what would be inside your dream kit bag?***

I own two identical camera bodies, namely the Panasonic DMC-G70 with the two lenses "Lumix Vario 1:2.8/12-35 ASPH" and "Lumix Vario 1:2.8/35-100". Nothing else, and that's often already too much.

I only have a second body because I'm too lazy to keep changing the lens. Although

'constantly' is a massive exaggeration: at least 80%, more likely 90%, of all my photos are taken with the 12-35 standard zoom.

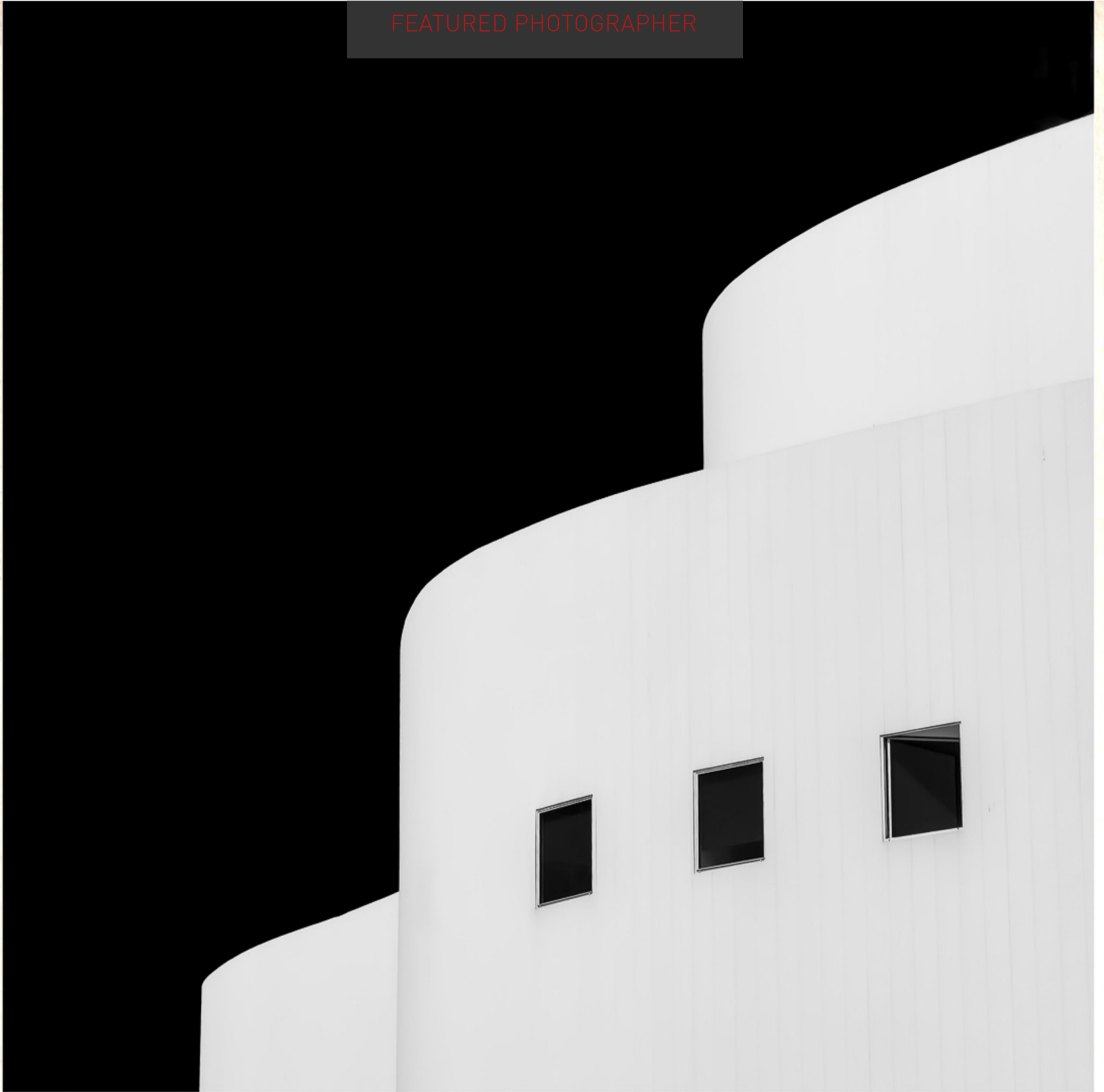
This also suits my style of photography: minimalist kit creates space for seeing, observing and recognising. Freed from accessories and technology. So no unnecessary baggage, but a focus on the essentials, on our environment, on my photographic journeys of discovery.

And so I believe that when it comes to kit, the rule usually applies: less is more!!

What I do sometimes miss, though, is an ultra-wide-angle lens, around 8-14mm. But then I'd need a third body, and that would really be too much... No, this is fine as it is! My photos are conceived in my mind or recognised by me, and I don't need extensive kit for that.







***Looking ahead, are there any projects, locations, or ideas in architecture (or landscape) you're excited to explore next?***

Yes, there certainly are. I'd very much like to photograph the railway station in Liège (Belgium) very soon, designed by the internationally renowned architect Santiago Calatrava.

And Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Oslo (Norway) would certainly be worth a photography trip for me at some point. Besides, modern museums always appeal to me greatly. But even so, I find plenty of subjects quite simply in the immediate or wider vicinity.



# PHOTOGRAPHY

## MASTERCLASS

### MAGAZINE

# GRAB OUR NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER EXPOSURE CHEAT SHEET

**NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER EXPOSURE CHEATSHEET**

Neutral Density (ND) filters reduce the amount of light entering your camera, allowing for longer shutter speeds without overexposing your image. This is essential for creating smooth water effects, motion blur, or shooting in bright conditions with a wide aperture.

Use the table below to determine your adjusted shutter speed when using an ND filter:

- COMPOSE YOUR SHOT**  
and set your exposure without the ND filter.
- FIND YOUR CURRENT SHUTTER SPEED**  
in the left column.
- CHOOSE YOUR ND FILTER STRENGTH**  
and look across the table to find the correct adjusted shutter speed.
- ATTACH THE ND FILTER**  
and use the new shutter speed to achieve the desired effect.

**TIPS** When using very strong ND filters (e.g., 10 stops), a tripod and remote shutter release are recommended to avoid camera shake.

EXPOSURE TIME WITHOUT ND FILTER	3 STOPS (0.9) ND8	4 STOPS (1.2) ND16	5 STOPS (1.5) ND32	6 STOPS (1.8) ND64	7 STOPS (2.1) ND128	8 STOPS (2.4) ND256	9 STOPS (2.7) ND512	10 STOPS (3.0) ND1024	11 STOPS (3.3) ND2048	15 STOPS (4.5) ND32000
1/8000s	1/1000s	1/600s	1/400s	1/300s	1/250s	1/200s	1/150s	1/100s	1/80s	4s
1/4000s	1/600s	1/250s	1/125s	1/60s	1/30s	1/15s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	16s
1/2000s	1/250s	1/125s	1/60s	1/30s	1/15s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	32s
1/1000s	1/125s	1/60s	1/30s	1/15s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	2s	64s
1/500s	1/60s	1/30s	1/15s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	2s	4s	128s
1/250s	1/30s	1/15s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	2s	4s	8s	256s
1/125s	1/15s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	2s	4s	8s	16s	512s
1/60s	1/8s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	2s	4s	8s	16s	32s	1024s
1/30s	1/4s	1/2s	1s	2s	4s	8s	16s	32s	64s	2048s
1/15s	1/2s	1s	2s	4s	8s	16s	32s	64s	128s	4096s
1/8s	1s	2s	4s	8s	16s	32s	64s	128s	256s	8192s
1/4s	2s	4s	8s	16s	32s	64s	128s	256s	512s	16384s
1/2s	4s	8s	16s	32s	64s	128s	256s	512s	1024s	32768s
1s	8s	16s	32s	64s	128s	256s	512s	1024s	2048s	65536s
2s	16s	32s	64s	128s	256s	512s	1024s	2048s	4096s	131072s
4s	32s	64s	128s	256s	512s	1024s	2048s	4096s	8192s	262144s
8s	64s	128s	256s	512s	1024s	2048s	4096s	8192s	16384s	524288s
15s	128s	256s	512s	1024s	2048s	4096s	8192s	16384s	32768s	1048576s

AND GET THE CORRECT SHUTTER SPEED TO USE WITH YOUR ND FILTER EVERY TIME!


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TIMELAPSE

# SPIRIT OF THE GOLDEN WETLANDS CINEMATIC AERIAL JOURNEY DJI INSPIRE 3

by ANDREW STUDER



SPIRIT OF THE  
GOLDEN  ETLANDS

Experience the breathtaking transformation of Texas' Caddo Lake in this cinematic aerial timelapse by Andrew Studer that captures the vibrant fall colors, misty mornings, and rich wildlife of this rare and magical wetland.

BEHIND THE SCENES:  
**ANDREW STUDER'S**  
"SPIRIT OF THE GOLDEN WETLANDS"  
CINEMATIC AERIAL JOURNEY  
DJI INSPIRE 3

Andrew gives us a behind the scenes look  
on how he put it all together



**O**nce a year, the bald cypress trees of the Texan wetlands shed their needles and turn a vibrant orange. Filmed entirely using the DJI Inspire 3, 'Spirit of the Golden Wetlands' captures this brief seasonal transformation from the air and highlights the unique atmosphere, fall colors, and wildlife that call the swamp at Caddo Lake home.

From the mysterious low fog drifting across the water to the warm light filtering through the Spanish moss that hangs from the trees, Caddo Lake is one of the most interesting places I've been able to film nature and it has grown to have a very special place in my heart. I hope that this short film provides just a glimpse of how beautiful wetlands are and how even forests such as these need to be protected.



Not that long ago, ancient bald cypress forests stretched across the southeastern United States, with trees that lived for over a thousand years. Towering and massive, these old-growth giants were often left unprotected and were heavily logged during the rise of the timber industry. Today, only small pockets of cypress swamps remain, and even fewer contain the untouched ancient trees that once defined them.

Wetlands like these are critical to biodiversity and water health, and the

bald cypress stands at the heart of it all. I hope this short film offers a glimpse not just of their beauty but also of what we still stand to protect and what has already been lost.

0:00 Morning Mist Over Cypress

1:31 Warm Light Awakens the Wetlands

3:09 Birds on the Bayou

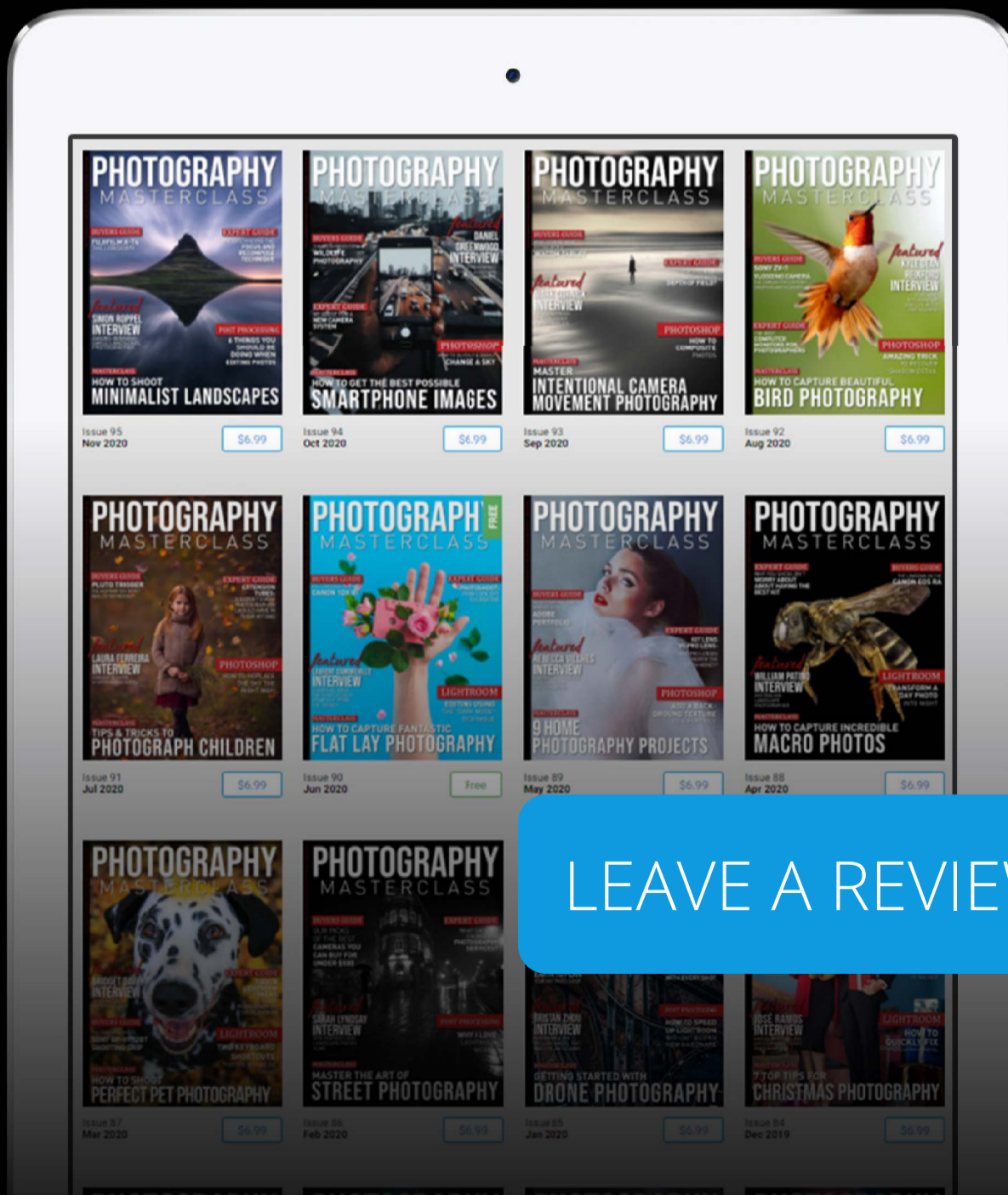
5:44 Stillness in the Swamp

6:48 Moonrise Over the Cypress

Music by: Tony Anderson & Ryan Taubert  
licensed via MusicBed

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# READERS GALLERY

Your Very Best Shots Showcased



**SOLITARY SENTINEL- THE MAIDEN'S TOWER,  
ISTANBUL**

**By:** Erich Nussbaumer | Monochrome Pics  
**Shot Details:** Pixel 10 Pro XL, at 7mm, f/1.7,  
1/2000 sec, ISO 21

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#)



**LISBON TRAM**

**By:** Jessica Li

**Shot Details:** Nikon Z6 II, at 55mm,  
f/4, 1/400 sec, ISO 125, +0.3 EV

[Instagram](#)



**By:** Jessica Li  
**Shot Details:** Nikon Z6 II, at 24mm,  
f/5.6, 1/40 sec, ISO 12800, +0.3 EV  
[Instagram](#)





**SOLITARY SENTINEL- THE MAIDEN'S TOWER, ISTANBUL**

**By:** Erich Nussbaumer | Monochrome Pics

**Shot Details:** Olympus E-MX1, at 95mm,  
f/13, 1/200 sec, ISO 1600, -0.3 EV

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#)



By: Cassandra Commerer



**SNOW DRIFTS ON PILED RIVER ICE**

**By:** Dave McLean

**Shot Details:** Nikon D850, with Tamron 70-200mm  
F2.8 lens set at 70mm, f/9, 1/125 sec, ISO 100

[Facebook](#) | [Website](#)



**THE SPIRIT OF ISTANBUL AT THE BLUE MOSQUE**

**By:** Erich Nussbaumer | Monochrome Pics

**Shot Details:** Olympus E-M1 Mark III, at 9mm,  
f/6.3, 1/800 sec, ISO 200, +0.3 EV

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FIND OUT MORE

# HOW TO CREATE STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHY FROM A GREY DAY

by School of Photography

**S**o, you've planned a photography outing... and the weather lets you down. A flat, grey sky. No drama. No contrast. Just dull light. It's tempting to stay indoors—but that would be a mistake.

Because with the right approach (both in-camera and in editing), you can turn a "boring" grey day into a powerful, moody image.

In this guide, we'll walk through exactly how to do that—based on a real edit workflow in Lightroom.

## WHY GREY DAYS AREN'T THE PROBLEM

Flat light often gets a bad reputation. But here's the truth:

It's soft and even (great for detail)

It removes harsh shadows

It creates a perfect base for black and white photography

The key isn't avoiding grey days—it's knowing how to use them creatively.



## START WITH A STRONG SUBJECT

In this example, the focal point is simple but effective:

A lone tree.

### WHY IT WORKS:

- Clear subject
- Strong silhouette
- Emotional, minimal feel

Add in a bit of luck—like animals positioned near your subject—and you've got a compelling scene.

## CAPTURE MORE DETAIL WITH BRACKETING

Grey skies may look flat, but they often contain hidden texture.

### TO BRING THAT OUT, SHOOT MULTIPLE EXPOSURES:

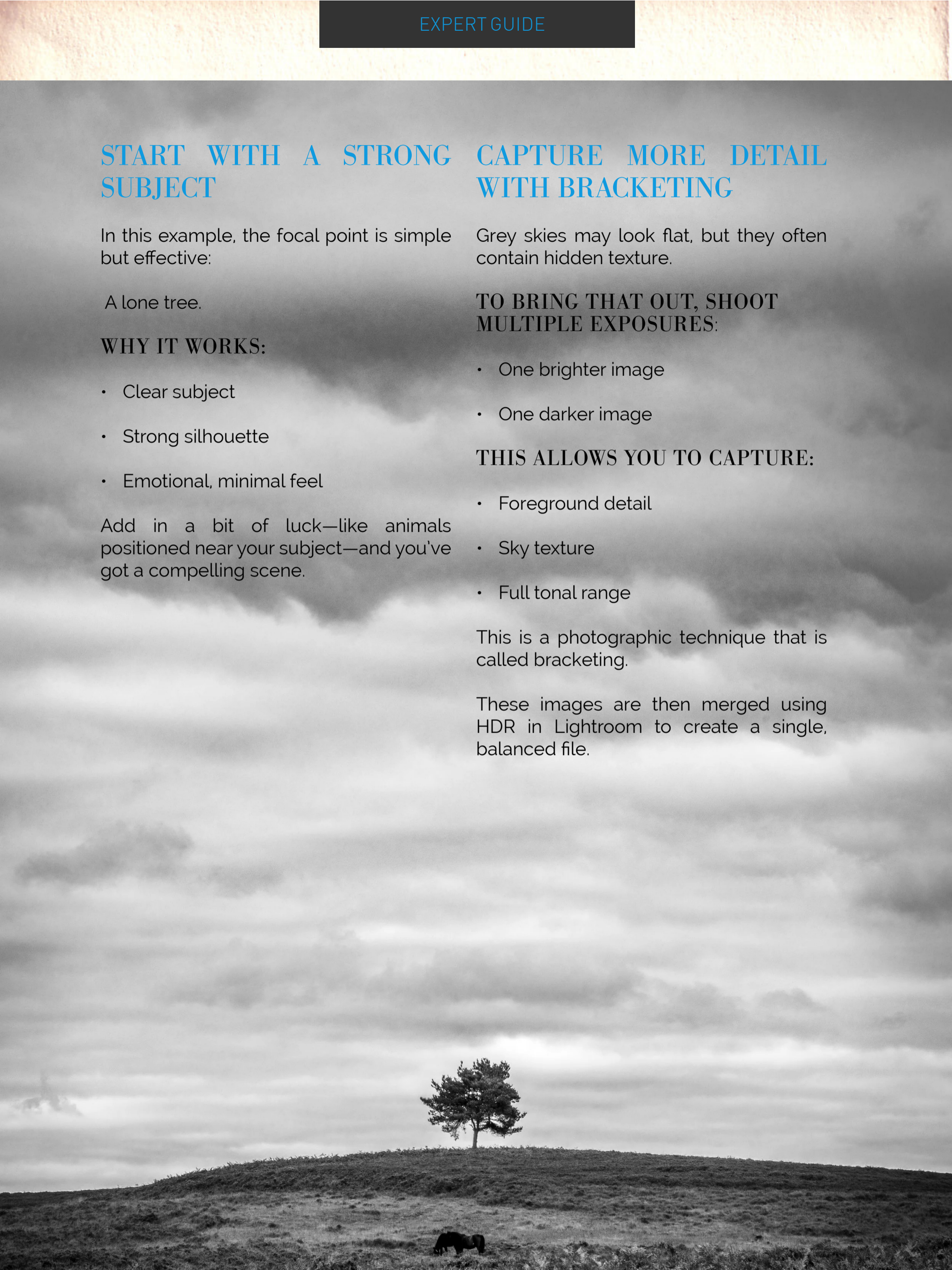
- One brighter image
- One darker image

### THIS ALLOWS YOU TO CAPTURE:

- Foreground detail
- Sky texture
- Full tonal range

This is a photographic technique that is called bracketing.

These images are then merged using HDR in Lightroom to create a single, balanced file.



## CONVERT TO BLACK & WHITE

When color isn't adding anything, remove it.

- Black and white helps:
- Emphasise contrast
- Highlight texture
- Create mood

Start your edit by switching to black and white, then adjust:

- Highlights
- Shadows
- Blacks
- Whites

This builds a solid tonal foundation.

Basic panel in lightroom



LIGHTROOM SCREENSHOT OF A BASIC PANEL

## USE THE BLACK & WHITE MIX FOR DRAMATIC SKIES

This is where the magic happens. The Black & White Mix panel lets you control how underlying colors appear as tones.

For example:

- Darkening blues makes skies more dramatic
- Adjusting specific tones increases contrast selectively

By targeting darker cloud areas, you can pull out incredible texture—even from a dull sky.



LIGHTROOM'S BLACK AND WHITE MIX PANEL

## SHARPEN AND CLEAN THE IMAGE

Next, refine the technical quality:

Apply sharpening (especially important for certain camera systems)

Remove chromatic aberration (those unwanted colored edges)

These small steps make a big difference in overall polish.



LIGHTROOM'S DETAIL PANEL

## FIX DISTRACTIONS

Even a strong composition can be weakened by small distractions.

### IN THIS CASE:

- One horse disrupted the balance of the scene
- 
- It was removed using Lightroom's Remove Tool (with AI detection)

### THE RESULT:

- Cleaner composition
- Stronger visual flow

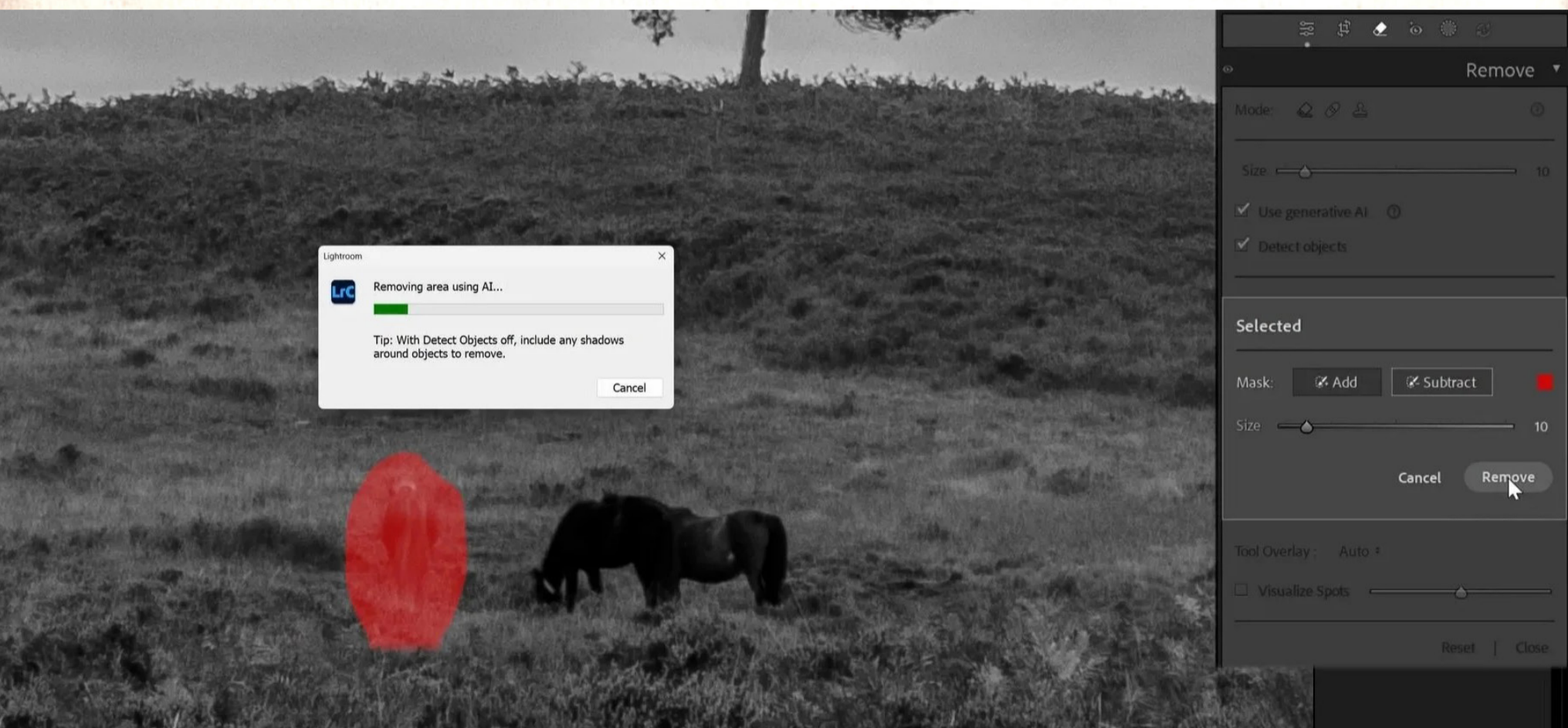
## CROP FOR IMPACT

Cropping helps refine your composition further.

A 4:5 ratio works well for:

- Social media
- 
- Strong vertical framing
- 
- Emphasising the subject

Small adjustments like straightening can also improve the final look.



SCREENSHOT OF HORSE BEING REMOVED IN LIGHTROOM USING REMOVE TOOL WITH AI DETECTION

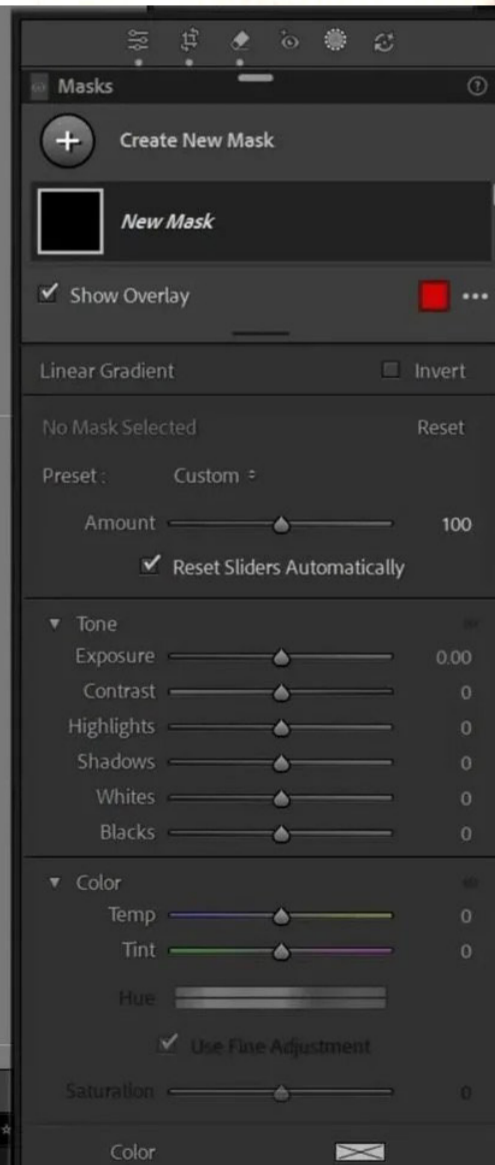
## ENHANCE THE SKY WITH MASKING

Masking is essential for adding depth.

### USING A LINEAR GRADIENT:

- Darken or adjust the sky
- Increase contrast
- Add mood

This creates separation between sky and foreground, making the image more dynamic.



SCREENSHOT IN LIGHTROOM USING  
A LINEAR GRADIENT

## ADD A CUSTOM VIGNETTE (THE RIGHT WAY)

A standard vignette can sometimes ruin parts of your image.

Instead:

- Use a radial gradient mask
- Invert it
- Darken only the outer areas

Then refine it by:

- Subtracting areas (like your subject or foreground)
- Keeping important elements untouched

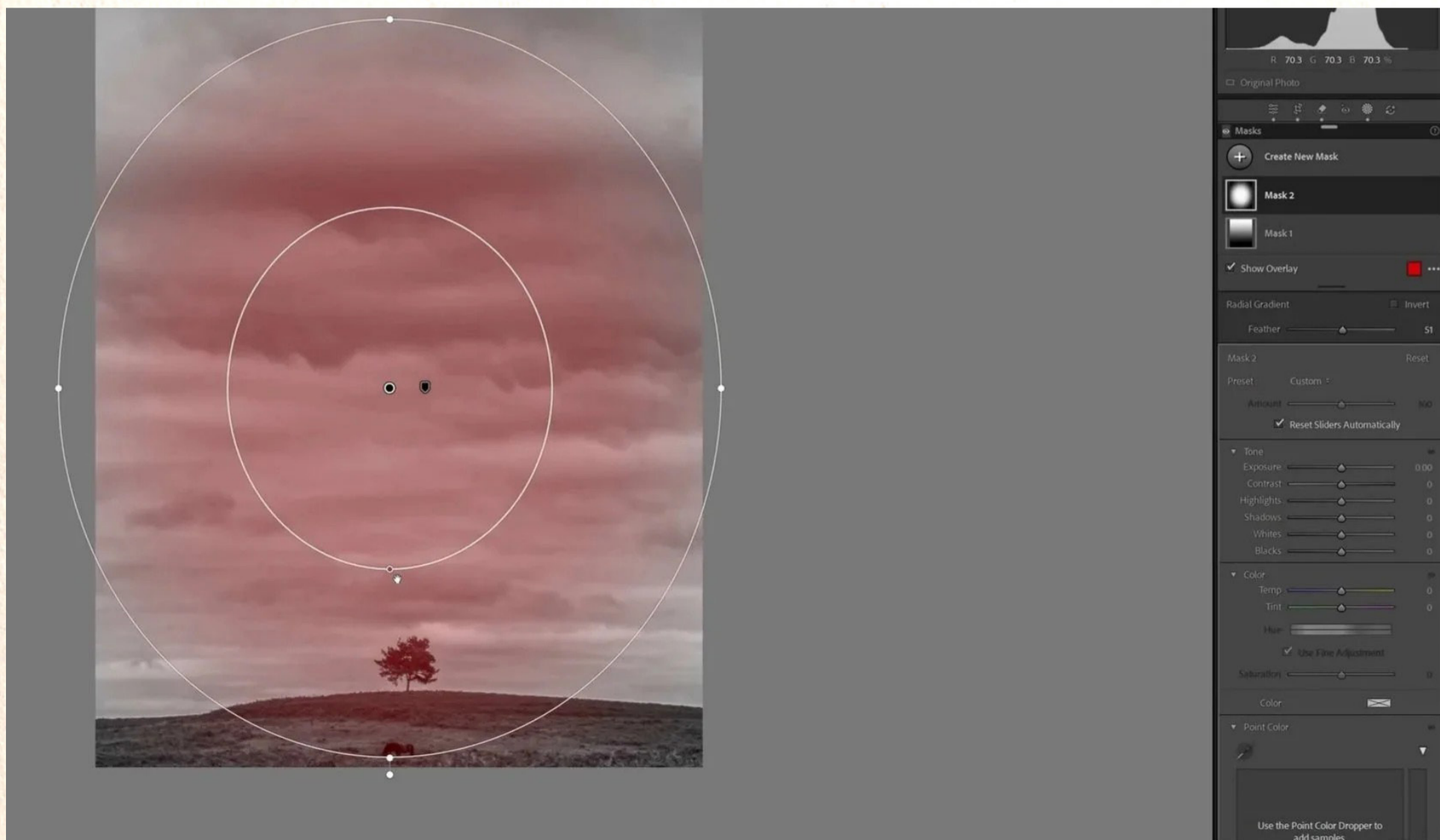
This gives you a controlled, professional vignette.

## THE FINAL RESULT

What started as a flat, uninspiring scene becomes:

- A dramatic black and white image
- Rich cloud texture
- Strong focal point
- Balanced composition

All from a grey day.



SCREENSHOT IN LIGHTROOM USING  
A RADIAL GRADIENT MASK

## THE BIG LESSON: JUST GO OUT AND SHOOT

The most important takeaway? Don't let bad weather stop you.

Even on the dullest days:

- You can find a subject
- You can compose creatively
- You can transform the image in editing

With the right skills, you'll almost always come away with a strong photo.



FINAL IMAGE OF A TREE IN A LANDSCAPE WITH A DRAMATIC SKY

# VIDEO TUTORIAL: **GREY DAY** PHOTOGRAPHY

by THE SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY

## GREY DAY PHOTOGRAPHY



So, you've planned a photography outing... and the weather lets you down. A flat, grey sky. No drama. No contrast. Just dull light. It's tempting to stay indoors—but that would be a mistake. Because with the right approach (both in-camera and in editing), you can turn a “boring” grey day into a powerful, moody image. In this guide, we'll walk through exactly how to do that—based on a real edit workflow in Lightroom.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

The School of Photography deliver high-quality photography courses online, in person and in books, and are a leading provider of photography education to schools and colleges in the UK. You can follow more from The School of Photography on their [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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