

CREATIVE LIVING

Stop to compose and get 'stopping power' in pictures

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY



MONTE NAGLER

What separates a good photograph from a ho-hum snapshot? What makes your friends and family ask to see more instead of thinking, "I've seen enough?" The answer lies in getting impact or "stopping power" in your pictures, and one of the best ways to accomplish this is by good, effective and careful composition.

Composition can be thought of as meaningful placement of the main subject and supporting elements in the picture, including the elimination of unnecessary and unwanted detail.

The next time you look through your camera and are about to press the shutter, stop! Yes, stop and take a really good, second look.

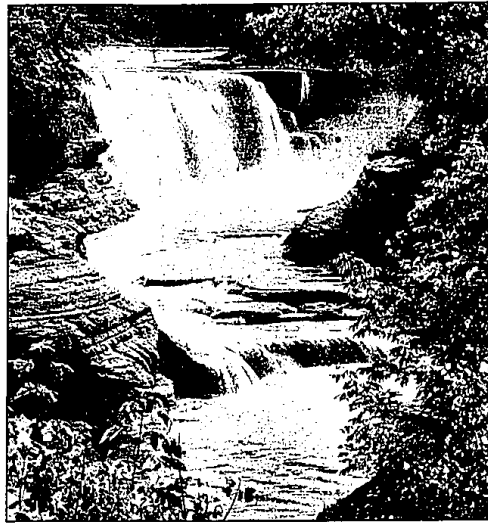
Examine the subject. If it's a person, is there a tree or telephone pole "growing" out of his or her head? Is your subject placed in a dynamically strong part of the frame? Check all four corners of the viewfinder. Is there something there, perhaps distracting, that doesn't belong?

Good and careful composition begins with a solid look through the camera and a careful determination of what you, the photographer, want to record on film in the most effective way.

Here are some basic guidelines to help you plan and obtain good composition:

- Consider vertical vs. horizontal. Most cameras produce a rectangular picture, so try fitting the format to your subject. People and trees, for example, go up and down, so most often a vertical composition should be used. Horizons go sideways, so a horizontal format is appropriate.
- Move in close! Filling the frame with your subject is perhaps the best way to add stopping power to your shot. This way, your picture is simplified and the viewer's attention isn't distracted. When photographing a person or animal, filling the frame is easily done with a telephoto lens.
- Check subject placement. Avoid placing the main subject smack in the middle of the picture. Photographs appear static and less interesting this way. Rather, by placing the subject off-center, a dynamic quality will be given to your shot that will make it much more exciting.
- Frame your subject. Remember to use tree branches, a doorway or window, even an archway to give your picture special impact.
- Use lead-in lines. Elements in a photograph should help lead attention toward the subject. Lead-in lines can be roads, fences, streams, pathways, etc.
- Watch your horizons. Remember that a low horizon line will accentuate spaciousness, especially with a dramatic sky. A high horizon line will de-emphasize the sky and instead suggest closeness.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave him a message by dialing (734) 963-2047 on a touch-tone phone. His fax number is (248) 644-1314.



Call for falls: Monte Nagler carefully "surrounded" the waterfall with trees and bushes to effectively frame his shot. The photograph of the falls was taken in upper New York state.

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