WPS Theme Assignments
September 2022 – June 2023

1B   October 14, 2022   Cars

Karl Benz is credited with inventing the first motorcar "Motorwagen" in 1886. Henry Ford made the automobile available to the masses in 1908 with his assembly line production of the Model T.   Cars are a part of our everyday life and American culture in particular. As of 2020 there was an estimated 287.3 million automobiles, in the United States alone.

Your "car" image may be of a single automobile, multiples or a fleet of them. The car may be parked or in motion. You may choose to photographic as a whole or just a part of it. Your photo may be of the exterior or interior, in color or B&W, any vintage or model and you may choose to include people or not.

For this Theme Assignment, you are asked to portray the automobile in a manner that will pique the viewers' interest. To make this TA a bit of a challenge you will be limited to cars that are reasonably new and functional. ***This means that the old rusty cars, that we love to shoot, will not be admissible.***

2B   November 11, 2023   Minimalism

"Less is more", or "Do more with less" are just two expressions used in association with minimalist photography. The art of minimalist photography is about breaking a subject down to its essentials in order to tell a story in an impactful yet uncomplicated manner. Strong composition is critical and may be combined with the reliance on defined lines, alternating patterns or textures. Images may be rendered with either vibrant colors or in black and white. While the concept may sound easy, many find that distilling a subject down to its' most fundamental components, while being able to evoke the viewers' interest, is a challenge.

The world is full of clutter. Learning how to see through the distractions and render the essence of a subject will help you become a better photographer. It's a skill set well worth working on. Your task is to effectively tell the story of your subject in the most streamlined, yet effective manner. Simplify, Simplify, Simplify!

3B   January 6, 2023   "Let It Rain"

"Singin' in the Rain", "Purple Rain", "Here Comes the Rain Again", "November Rain", and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" are but a few of the titles of memorable songs about the beauty and emotional associations we have with this natural phenomenon. The topic of "Rain" can be approached in so many ways. Rain clouds, falling rain, rain puddles, walking in the rain, and rain droplets on any type of surface imaginable are all potential ideas. Your scene may be bucolic or a cityscape, your image may be wide angle or macro and you can decide to incorporate people, animals, objects, or not. Let your ideas pour out.

This Theme Assignment may result in you getting wet, so dress appropriately, put on your goulashes and don't melt.   Your task is to create an interesting image, with rain as the primary story line. There are no restrictions regarding style, content, setting etc., just as long as it looks wet. Remember the line attributed to Ansel Adams: "Bad weather makes for good photography".

4B   March 3, 2023   Depth and Perception

As photographers, we are aware that conveying a sense of depth in our images is important but can be a challenge. Our binocular vision enables us to see the world in 3-D, with an innate perception of depth. Photography is a transformative process. We capture something that is three-dimensional and present it as a two-dimensional medium. Without attention to details our image may have perceptual disparity and the viewer will have difficulty discerning depth. So, we need to utilize perceptual cues to create the illusion of depth. When used effectively, perceptual cues will help the viewer read the image more easily, perceive a sense of depth and lead to greater appreciation of our intent.

Your task, for this Theme Assignment, is to create an image with attention to the perception/illusion of depth. Any subject matter is fair game, it can be big or small, you may render the image in color or B&W and you can choose whatever representative style you would like.
However, there is one caveat to make this TA more challenging and encourage you to utilize different perceptual cues. **You will *not be allowed* to use the most familiar cue "linear perspective".** This limitation will help you put another tool in your toolbox. (*See List of Two-Dimensional Depth Cues -Below*)

Two-Dimensional Depth Cues:

- **Relative Size:** The same object will appear larger when seen close up than at a distance.
- **Texture gradient:** Textures become less pronounced and softer as they move more distally to the viewer. Objects with greater detail are perceived as being closer.
- **Color:** Color theory tells us that warmer colors (reds) "advance" while cooler colors (blues) "recede".
- **Shadow (lighting & shading):** The presence of a shadow helps to add the perception of dimensionality to an image. How light wraps around an object conveys information of its three-dimensionality.
- **Interposition(overlap/occlusion):** An object that is place in front of another object "blocks" what is behind and is interpreted as being closer, implying depth.
- **Aerial perspective:** Objects that are further away are less clear (sharp) then things closer because the atmosphere degrades clarity.
- **Height in the plane:** As an object moves closer to the horizon line it gets smaller and is perceived as receding, cuing the perception of depth.

And the one you can't use!

- **Linear perspective (converging lines):** When parallel lines, straight or curved, begin to converge as they move away from the viewer and approach the horizon line.
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5B   April 21, 2023   Dutch Angle

The concept of the Dutch (originally "Deutsch") angle originated in 1920s, as a cinematic technique of "German Expressionism" movies. You have seen this technique employed hundreds of times in many of your favorite movies. This photographic ploy is also used effectively in still photography. The technique is used to create tension in the moment and a sense of unease or disorientation in the viewer. The Dutch angle is achieved by tilting the camera on the X or "roll" axis, putting the horizon line on a diagonal. However, a minimal tilt will make your image look like a mistake, as if you were inattentive to keeping the horizon line

straight. Too much tilt, or too many vertical lines without the benefit of an anchoring horizontal plane will cause the image to appear unbalanced and contribute to the viewers' eye wanting to leave the frame.

Your assignment is to use this technique in a style and to a degree that suits your subject matter in order to create interest, tension, viewer unease and /or extenuate a sense of motion, all for the purpose of telling the story more effectively.

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6B June 9,2023   **Still Life**

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- As an art genre, still life has a long history with some of the most notable exemplars being rendered by 15th-16th century Dutch painters. By definition, a still life utilizes inanimate objects or subject matter. These can be manmade objects or natural flora or fauna – as long as the subject is not living.   You have complete control. You can create a setup, leave it for a day and then come back to play with it some more. Finding "interesting" objects, things with character, may not the hard as you anticipate, nor is it super critical. Commonplace objects are among the most frequently chosen subjects. Creating a pleasing still life will prompt you to draw upon all of your skills as a photographer. It is about compositional arrangement of the object(s), framing of the scene, then attention to lighting is critical and the background is also important.   Creating still life compositions will help you learn about the fundamental building blocks of photographic composition.
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- Your assignment is to create an ascetically pleasing still life, using as few or as many inanimate objects as you would like. There are no restrictions on the simplicity or complexity of your composition. You can render your image in color or black and white; to make it realistic, pictorial or abstract in presentation.
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