

# WPS Theme Assignments 2023-24

## “Stairs/Staircases”

Stairs, they go up, they go down and sometimes they go around. The earliest known steps, carved into the sides of mountains date back some 4,500 years. In 2,000 B.C, the Egyptians created stairways as a means to ascend into their temples. In Old English, the set of steps was referred to in the singular as “he went up the stair”. Stairs can be found inside and outside of structures. They can be made of steel, wood, stone, glass, etc. Their design may be basic or elaborate.

Your assignment is to capture a compelling image of stairs, in whole, part, from any angle or any style.

## “Necropolis: City of the Dead”

Many people express a fascination with necropoli. Aside from visiting their departed loved ones, people go on guided tours or meander on their own through the rows of stone looking for famous people, reading inscriptions and imagining the lives of others. The term “necropolis” is derived from the Greek language and means “city of the dead”.

Among the most admired cemetery structures are the opulent mausoleums. The origin of this term comes from the tomb of Mausolus of Halicarnassus. A king in now modern-day Turkey, Mausolus commissioned the design and construction of a burial place for himself in 350 B.C. This four-sided structure stood 148 ft high, was adorned with a multitude of decorative reliefs and some 400 free-standing sculptures. Until its’ ultimate destruction, by earthquakes, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century this aesthetic masterpiece was listed as one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World”.

Many photographers consider cemeteries gold mines of potential. There are mausoleums, statues, gravestones, patterns, textures, a sense of grandeur and history. Being there also reminds us that we too have an expiration date and will all end up there one day.

For this TA, anything within the boundaries of the necropolis is fair game. Day or night, color or B&W, straight or abstract in style; it is all up to you. Watch your step, particularly at night. Beware of the Zombies, Vampires and Werewolves. They all want to put the bit on you.

## “Backlit”

Backlighting is a photograph technique where your main light source is positioned behind your subject. This technique can add drama, depth and emphasize interest to your image. However, this approach presents challenges to the photographer. Unless adjusted, your in-camera light meter will be fooled by the bright back light and underexpose your subject. This may be your desired effect, if your intention is to create a silhouette. If you want exposure and detail shown on your subject then you will need to adjust exposure by utilizing strategies such

as Manual mode, exposure compensation or using a fill light to help balance the exposure. Backlighting is popularly used for outdoor portraits.

This Theme Assignment is meant to challenge your compositional and exposure skills. Look for scenes where the light source is low and can be positioned behind your subject. You may choose any subject matter and/or style. Silhouettes are acceptable or you may choose to show more of your subject with appropriate illumination of the subject.

## **“Frame within a Frame”**

The concept of “Frame within a frame” is an effective photographic technique used to draw the viewer’s attention to your subject by helping to imply depth in your image. Frames may be grouped into four broad categories: architectural, natural, geometric shape and light/shadow frames. Commonly, arches, windows, tree branches and other structures are employed. Bokeh, created with a wide aperture, can be used to act as a frame. These vignettes may be placed in front of or behind the subject. Frames can be apparent, partial or implied. A suggested consideration is that your frame complements but does not compete with your primary subject.

Your task, for this Theme Assignment, is to utilize visual elements within your composition that will create a vignette about your subject that will help both separate it from the background, thus enhancing the impact’s impact. If the standard frame(s) seem a bit cliché’, then get creative. There’s no limit on your creative approach to this assignment.

## **“Wabi-Sabi / *Organic ONLY*” or Past Prime**

Occidental oriented photographers spend a considerable amount of time and energy striving to capture images that reflect ideal proportions, symmetry and over all perfection. This is particularly true with organic subjects. We have often heard judges and/or other club members making a critical comment that the flower is “past peak” or has some other blemish. The Japanese aesthetic concept of “Wabi-Sabi” reflects Buddhist philosophy and promotes mindfulness of and appreciation for the beauty in the imperfections and ephemeral nature of life.

In 1582 Japan, the ruling warlord enjoined Sen no Rikyu, the esteemed practitioner of Wabi-Sabi, to create a commemorative tea ceremony. Rikyu codified a ritual that incorporated sublime graceful and economic movements largely based upon peasant household practices. This celebrated ceremony is still practiced today, as originally set forth by Rikyu. However, in the day, the warlord interpreted the designed simplicity of the ritual was a covert mocking of his own peasant background. He ordered Rikyu to commit hara-kiri.

Photographic images reflecting this philosophy may be achieved through the choice of subject matter (things that are ordinary, imperfect, on the decline, or convey a forlorn emotion) or through the use of perceived “flawed” post-processing techniques (camera blur, light leaks/flare, notable grain, soft focus and/or unorthodox image alteration(s) ).

Wabii-Sabi is meant to acknowledge, accept and celebrate the transitory, imperfect, un-heroic and even melancholy aspects of life. For this TA you will be restricted to the choice of organic subject matter only. Any flora or fauna is acceptable but NO manmade objects like rusty cars and/or dilapidated buildings will be allowed.

Sever the visceral bonds of the endless pursuit for perfection. Embrace the transient, the forever changing, the unique and “flawed” aspects of the organic world around you. No one will command you to engage in seppuku for your efforts.

## **“ICM: Intentional Camera Movement”**

It’s not just shake, rattle and roll but shake, rattle and roll with artistic intention. ICM techniques have been utilized, as a creative tool, since the beginning of photography. In recent years, ICM has become increasingly popular. In contrast to more traditional photography, where there is an emphasis on keeping the subject stationary and rendering it “tack sharp”, ICM strives to cultivate an emotional response on the part of the viewer.

Preplanning is important. Subject selection, composition in conjunction with a complementary ICM technique will facilitate your artistic intent coming to fruition. Some popular ICM techniques include: panning the camera vertically, horizontally or on a diagonal. You can also rotate and/or zoom the lens. Random movements of the camera and any/or combination of any of the above techniques can work. The extent and speed of your movement(s) along with shutter speed and aperture settings plus the use of a polarizing or ND filter are potential considerations.

Don’t be fooled, ICM is harder than it looks. To be successful, the photographer needs to envision how the selected subject might look using one ICM strategy or another. Not any/all techniques will enhance the final appearance of an image. This is a TA where you should expect far more failures than successes. Choose any subject matter and ICM technique(s) of your preference to create an artistic and emotional evoking image.