



Composition

A High Level View



Introduction

Over the summer I completed a on-line course on the fundamentals of composition.

The course reminded me of a lot I already knew, but had stopped thinking about plus some new points to look out for.

The following covers some of my output from the course with some of the main points to think about.

Remember
You Can't Polish a T*%d



Composition's Role

Three possible roles

1. Create Order
2. Direct the Viewer
3. Create Interest

Key.

Rules are an anathema to meaningful composition e.g. the so called rules of thirds.





Point of light
directs the viewer
to where you
want them to
view





The idea of this is the reveal where at the first glance you may not see what the image is about.

This may not work as the swimmer is in light so is easy to see straight away

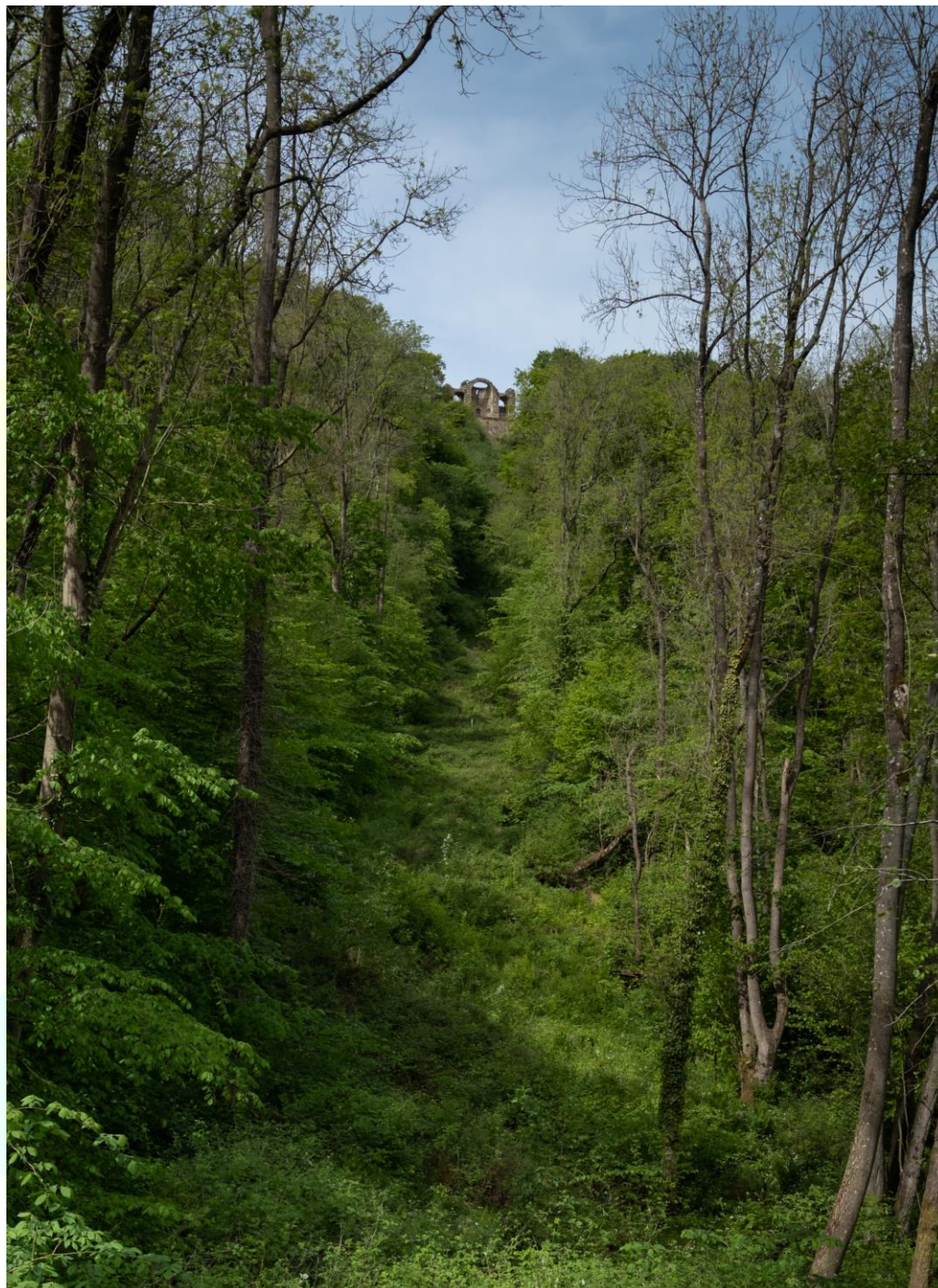


Creating Order,
The lane splits the
picture into two
with the tree
giving an element
of asymmetry



Frame and Framing

- The artificial yet accepted tradition of the bounding shape of the image
- The bounding area where you decide
 - What to include/exclude
 - How it divides
 - Where is the main subject/subjects
 - The shape



Vertical image
with the gap in
the centre and
the tree giving
length.



Symmetrical panoramic, the constrained windows lends itself to this shape



This graphic image interacts with the frame and send the viewer to the centre.



Contrast and Balance

- Contrast is one of the fundamental concepts of composition.
- Contrast between elements and parts of the image, from brightness and texture to sensation and meaning
- Balance is where the audience's values play a part in deciding whether relationships in a composition are comfortable, elegant, interesting or challenging.



Contrasts



As part of the basics course
at the Bauhaus contrasts
were taught as one of the
fundamentals of design

Point/Line	Area/Line
Plane/volume	Area/Body
Large/Small	High/Low
Smooth/Rough	Liquid/Solid
Much/Little	Strong/weak
Straight/Curved	Broad/narrow
Sweet/sour	Thick Thin



Contrast between
the metal and the
cow parsley.



Contrast in hard
lines and soft
portrait also in
colours.



The Viewer's Eye



- Photography has a role when it is displayed.
- When making an image you need to think about the role of the audience.
 - Visual weight
 - Attraction and repulsion
 - Expectation (Gestalt)
 - Preceptive and depth in two dimensions,



Gestalt Theory



The human brain is exceptionally good at filling in the blanks in an image and creating a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. It's why we see faces in things like tree leaves or sidewalk cracks.

7 Principles

1. *Simplicity* – The mind looks for simplicity, lines, curves are preferred as are balance and symmetry
2. **Similarity** – grouping by how similar
3. **Proximity** – grouping by how close
4. **Common Fate** – Grouped elements assumed to move together
5. **Continuity** – The mind tends to continue shapes and lines beyond the end points
6. **Closure** – Elements roughly arranged are seen as a complete outline
7. **Segregation** – For something to stand out it need to be separate from it's background.



Example of
closure

In this there are
two circles one on
the path and the
other above to
the right.





Strong perspective and by clipping the end boat again gives the idea of continuation.



Repeating Patterns
cropped to the edges so
view doesn't know how
long the row continues.



Not sure which way
works best.



Graphic Elements



Graphic elements can be broken down to the following points.

- Lines
- Points
- Vectors (Moving Parts & Anticipated movement)

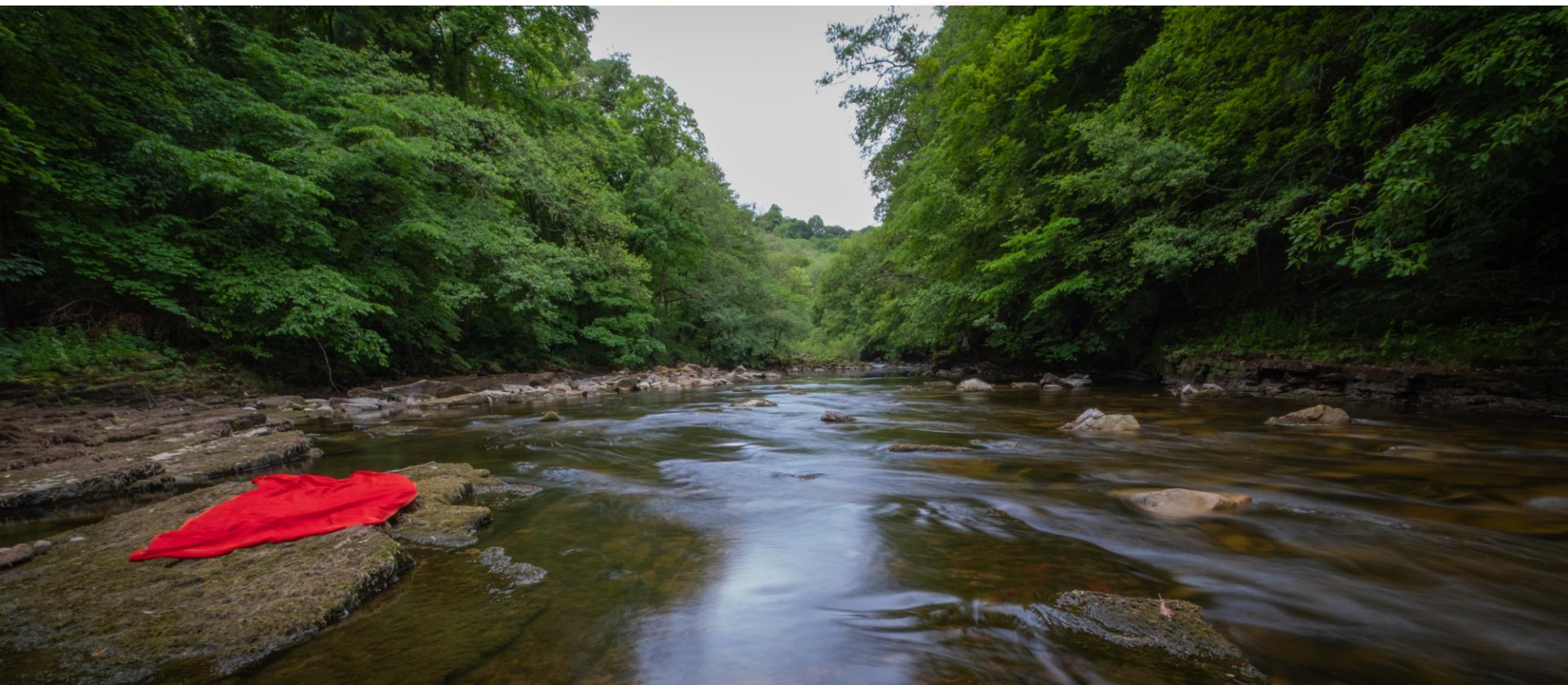
Cartier-Bresson used to view the images upside down to be able to see the graphic elements without being distracted by the content.



The coloured lines, coloured balls in the river form distinct vectors drawing the eye with them.



Strong vertical
lines moving the
eye upwards



Point of colour in landscape gives interest.



Light and Colour



- As Photography is painting with light this is a key element in composing and image.
 - Light Quality
 - Direction
 - Exposure
 - Colour
 - Accent
 - Relationships
 - Pallets
 - Black and White

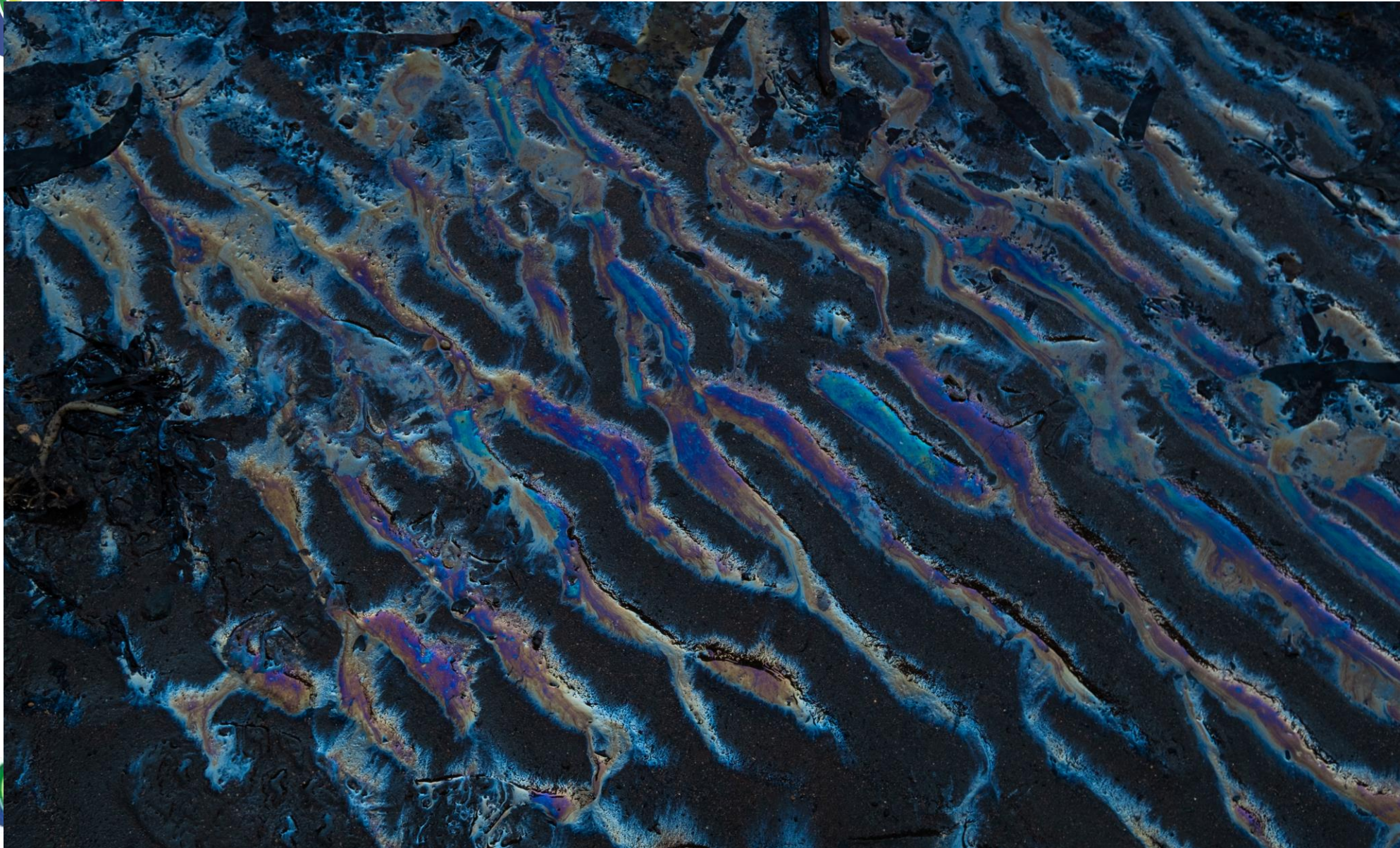


Different colours
give different
moods, here the
muted shades
along with the
side light gives the
idea of evening



High key & black and white.

With black and white the shapes become much stronger.



Low key and cool
coulors



The Mechanics



- The mechanics and optics of the camera and lens create their own graphic elements and effects in the image.
 - Focus, shallow, deep tilted
 - Shutter and Motion
 - Focal Length (Wide to Long)



Long lens flattens the image making everything more enclosed.





Shallow depth of field gives an idea of surrounding without distracting from the main subject.





Deep focus giving all elements in the image in focus.

With high f stops though you can lose quality. Due to wind couldn't stack image.



Freezing
movement gives
clarity while
keeping the idea
of movement.



RIPON CITY
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Conclusions



- No rules just guides.
- If use on set of “rules” or style images can become very similar.
- Don’t concentrate on one part use many aspects to create interesting images.
- Further Reading
 - The Photographer’s Eye – Michael Freeman.
 - The Photographer’s Eye: A Graphic Guide – Michael Freeman.