

Composition in Photography

Nancy Rosenbaum

President, Goddard Photo Club

February 2012

Composition

- Components of Composition
 - Rule of Thirds
 - Leading the Eye; Lines
 - Framing
 - Focus
 - Depth of Field
 - Angle of View
 - Distractions
- Nature Photography
- Portrait Photography
- Gallery

The Rule of Thirds



Find Lines

- Lines lead the eye from one point to another
- Diagonals can convey motion and energy
- Horizontals can convey stability, calm
- Verticals can convey strength, solidity, and power
- Arcs and semi-circles can isolate, emphasize, and frame an area
- Patterns create rhythm and movement



Lines, Continued



Lead the Eye into the Picture



Framing

- Filling the frame
 - How near or far will be the subject appear to the viewer?
 - Do you want the subject to fill the frame?
 - What other objects are in the frame (e.g., foreground and background objects)?
 - Do they support the visual story you are telling?
 - How do they contribute to or detract from the composition?
- Arrangement of objects in the frame
 - Point of view – left, right, down, up
 - Zoom in or out
 - Move closer or farther away
- Natural frames - use to your advantage

Filling the Frame



Natural Frames



©Nancy Rosenbaum



©Nancy Rosenbaum

Horizontal or Vertical?



Focus



Depth of Field

- Depth of Field – the range appearing in focus
 - Small f/ number = large aperture = shallow depth of field
 - Large f/ number = small aperture = long depth of field
 - Longer focus distance = longer depth of field
 - Longer focal length lens (e.g., telephoto = shorter depth of field)

Depth of Field



Focal length: 135 mm
Aperture: f/5.0
Subj. distance: 6.9 ft



Focal length: 18 mm
Aperture: f/3.5
Subj. distance: infinity

Depth of Field



Focal length: 82 mm
Aperture: f/8.0
Subj. distance: 4.6 ft



Focal length: 200 mm
Aperture: f/5.6
Subj. distance: 41 ft

Angle of View



Angle of View, cont'd.



Angle of View, cont'd.



Focal Length

- “Normal”
 - Field of view reproduces what the human eye would see
 - Relationships between distances appears “normal” to us
 - Focal length = diagonal size of the film or sensor
 - FL = 50 mm in a 35 mm camera; 28 mm in DX sensor camera; 22 mm in a four-thirds sensor camera)
- Wide angle
 - Field of view is wider than the eye would normally see
 - Objects appear farther away
 - Relationships between distances appear greater
 - FL numbers are less than the normal FL
- Telephoto
 - Field of view is narrower than the eye would normally see
 - Objects appear closer
 - Relationships between distances appear smaller
 - FL numbers are greater than the normal FL

Focal Length



Focal length: 55 mm



Focal length: 98 mm

Focal Length, cont'd.



Distractions

Train yourself to look at every element and object in the frame:

- Are there unwanted objects in the foreground or background?
- Are there places where colors or values (light/dark) are so similar that the subject seems to disappear into the background?
- Is there an extremely bright or dark spot that draws the eye away from the subject?

Intrusions

Unwanted objects that detract from the composition



Intrusions, cont'd.



Intrusions, cont'd.



Mergers

Two or more overlapping objects that appear to be joined



Mergers, cont'd.



Mergers, cont'd.

Border merger: object(s) cut off in an awkward place



Bright Spots or “Black Holes”

- The brightest values pull our attention
- Large areas of low value can also be a distraction



Seven Principles of Nature Photography Composition

- Clarify your message
- Keep it simple
- Be patient
- Fill the frame
- Consider verticals
- Find lines
- Place subjects off-center

from the *Beginner's Guide To Nature Photography* by Cub Kahn

Pay Attention to the Light



Portrait Composition

- Fill the frame with your subject
- Keep eyes in the upper third
- Use framing to concentrate all attention on your subject
- Create texture
- Use lines
- Change your angles

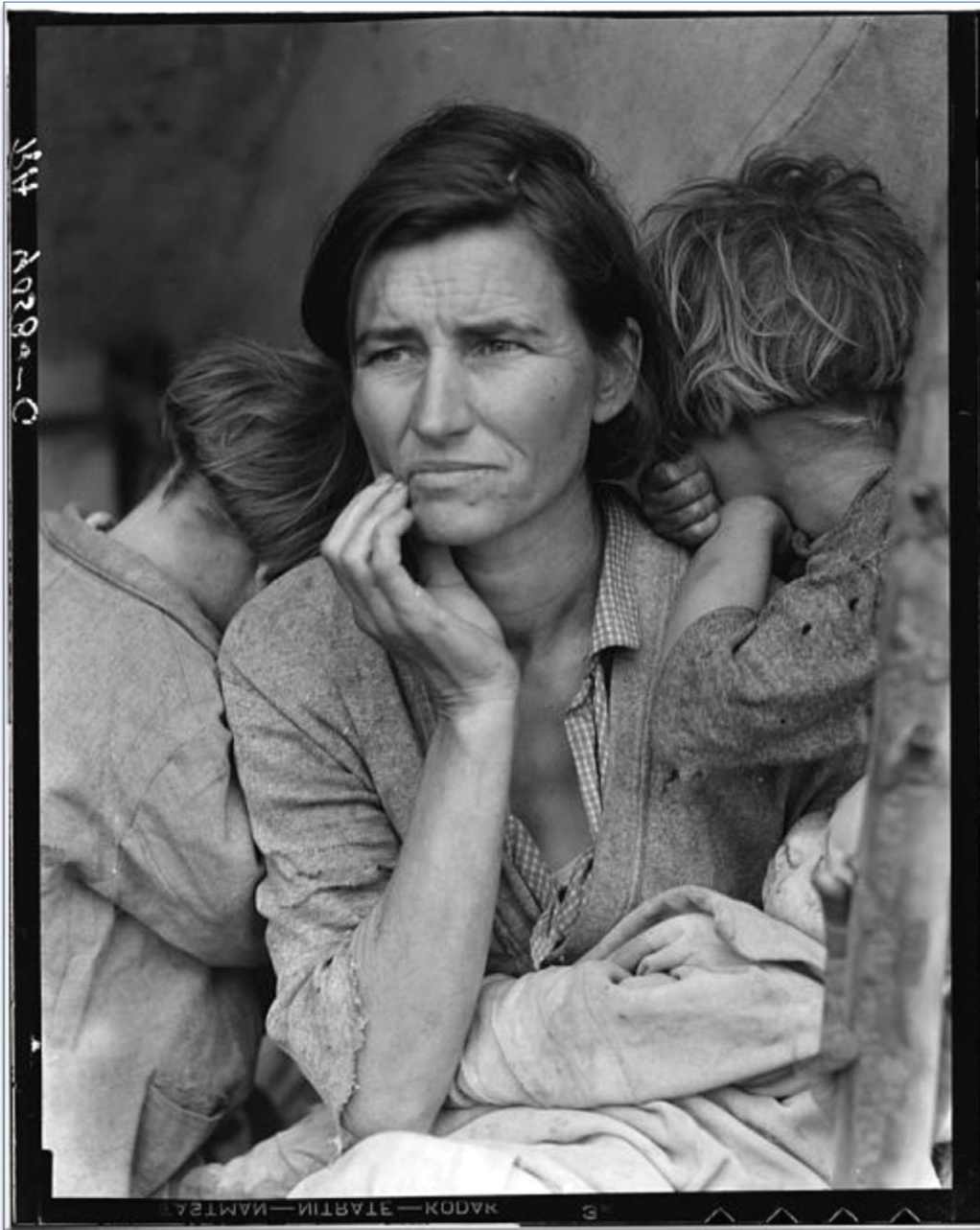
6 Tips for Perfect Composition in Portrait Photography by [Christina N Dickson](#)

Read more: <http://www.digital-photography-school.com/6-tips-for-perfect-composition-in-portrait-photography#ixzz1mB7Y82zC>



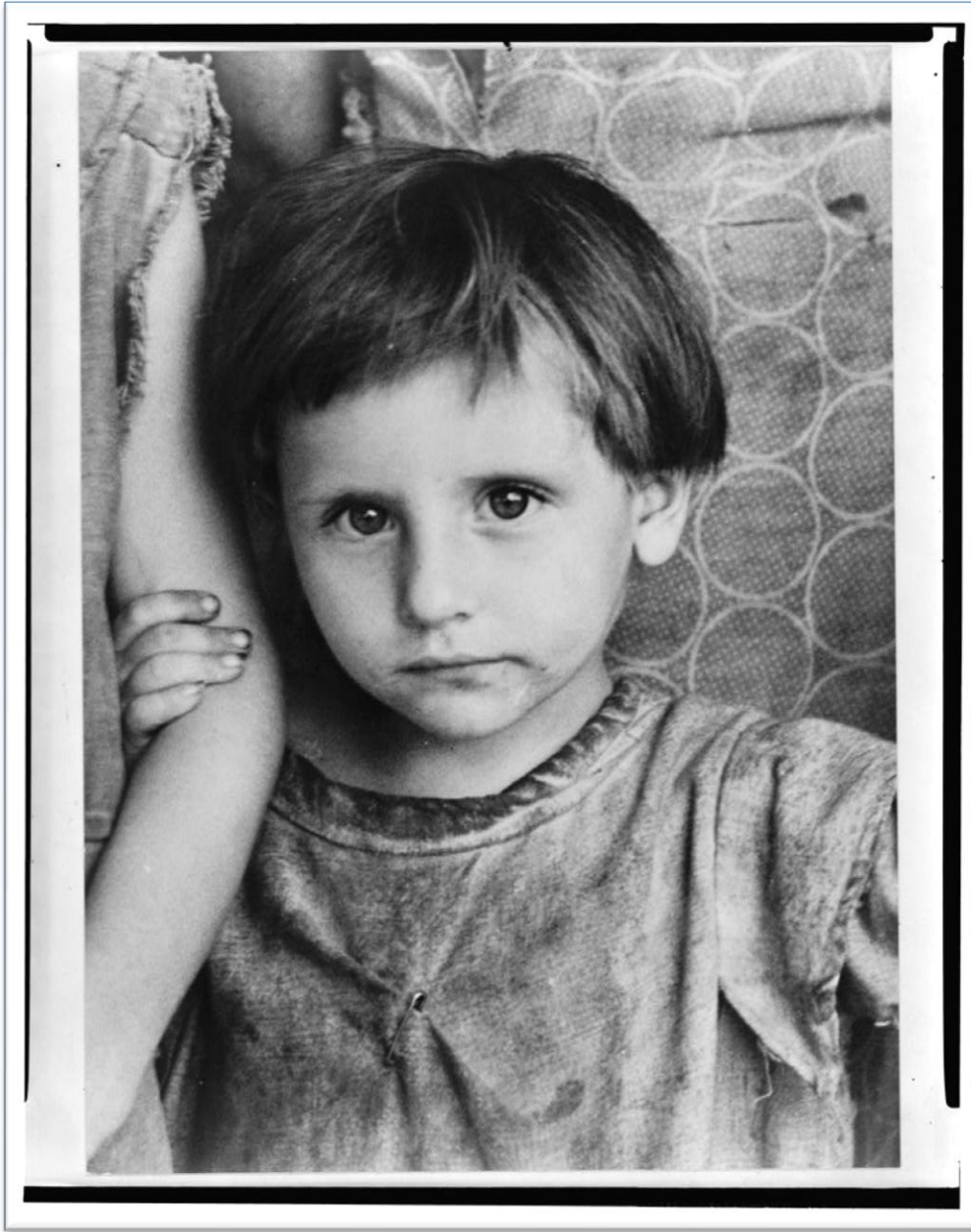
GALLERY

Courtesy Library of Congress



Dorothea Lange

Migrant Mother, 1936



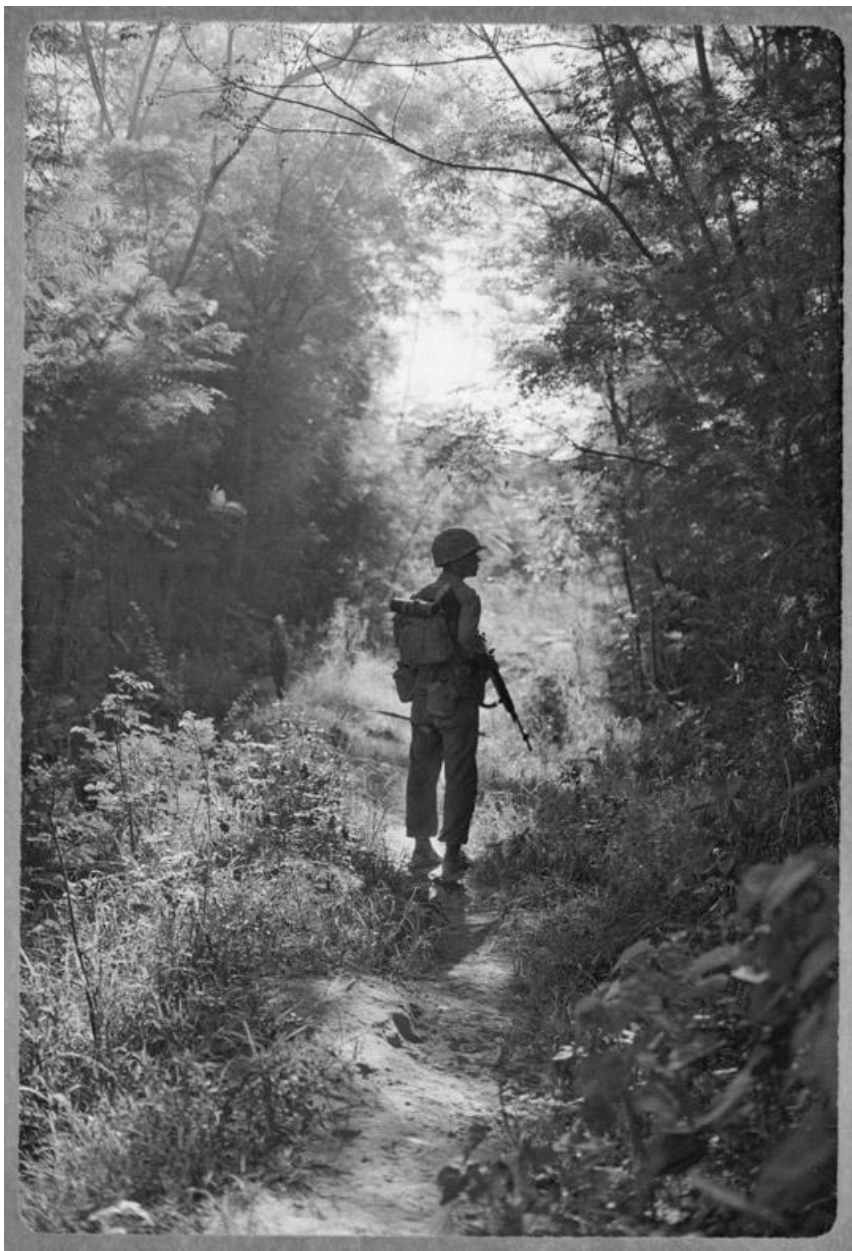
Walker Evans

Laura Minnie Lee Tenge , 1935



Thomas Askew

Weeding sugar beets for \$2.00 an hour, 1972



Photographer Unknown

Vietnam... A Marine walking point for his unit during Operation Macon, a marine moves slowly, cautious of enemy pitfalls... 1966



Thomas Askew

Atlanta University, Georgia, 1899



American Colony (Jerusalem), Photo Dept.

Egyptian camel transport passing over Olivet, 1918



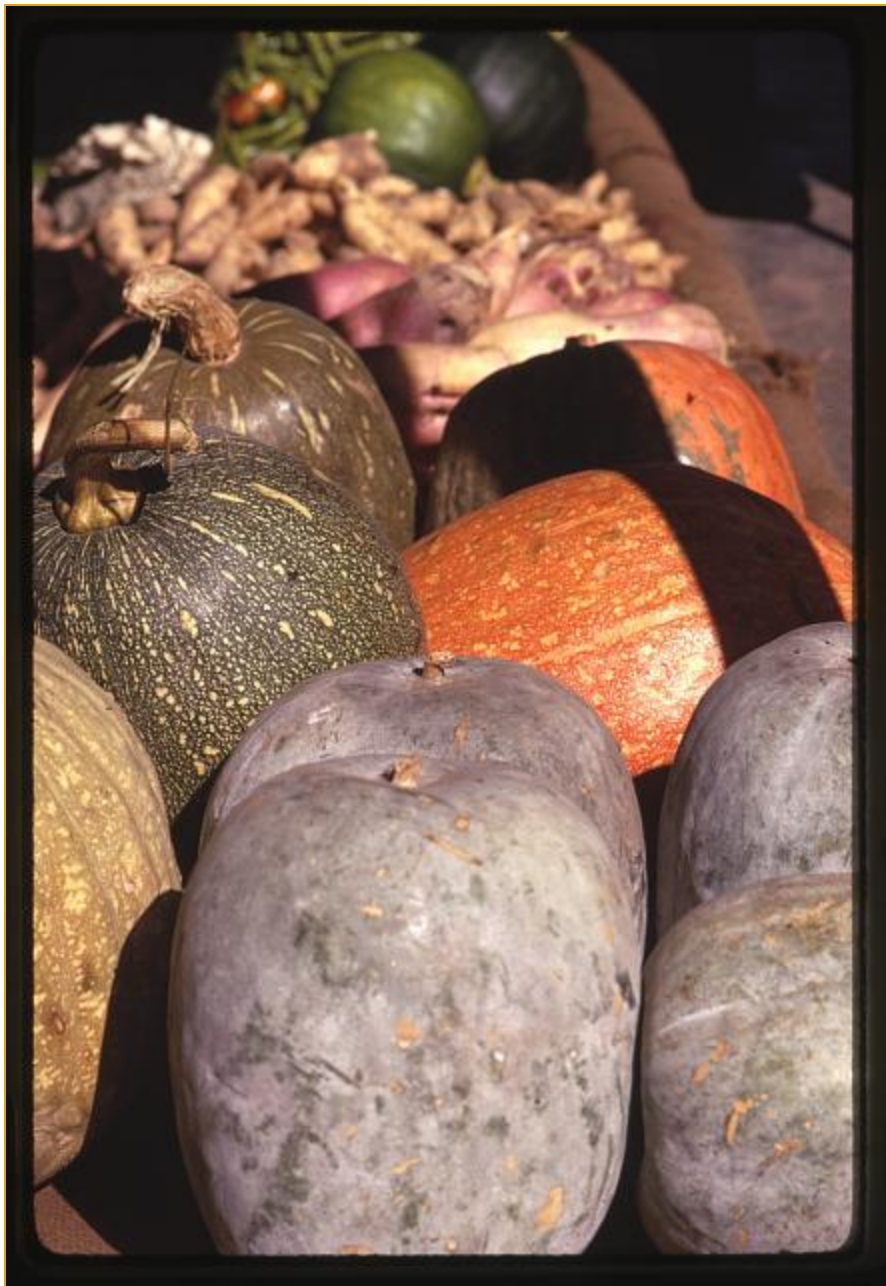
Alice S. Kandell

Mount Kānchenjunga, Third Highest Mountain in the World, btw. 1965-1979

2/21/2012

Goddard Photo Club

40



Alice S. Kandell

*Sikkim, Oversized Melons
and Fruit Grow, 1969*



*Annuaire de la Ville de Constantinople
Hôpital des Femmes*

Abdullah Frères

Tuberculosis Ward of the Hasköy Hospital for Women, btw. 1880 - 1893