

Elements of Composition

The Rule of Thirds

The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine breaking an image down into thirds (both horizontally and vertically) so that you have 9 parts. The theory is that if you place points of interest in the intersections or along the lines that your photo becomes more balanced and will enable a viewer of the image to interact with it more naturally. Studies have shown that when viewing images that people's eyes usually go to one of the intersection points most naturally rather than the center of the shot – using the rule of thirds works with this natural way of viewing an image rather than working against it.

However, rules are meant to be broken and ignoring this one doesn't mean your images are necessarily unbalanced or uninteresting. If you intend to break a rule you should always learn it first to make sure your breaking of it is all the more effective!

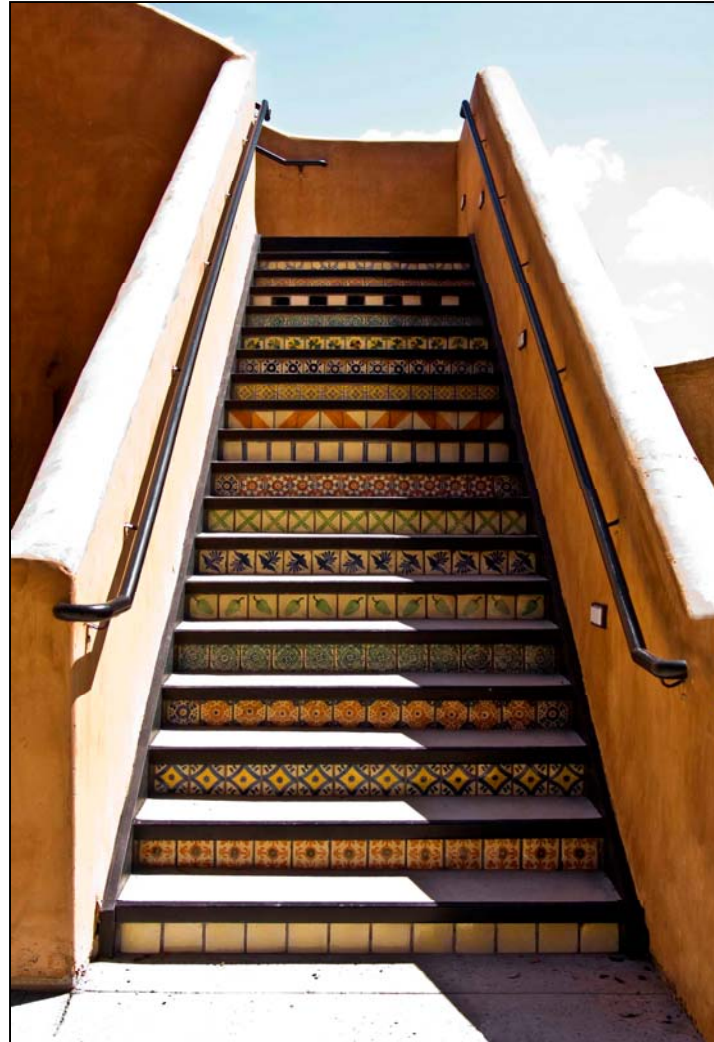




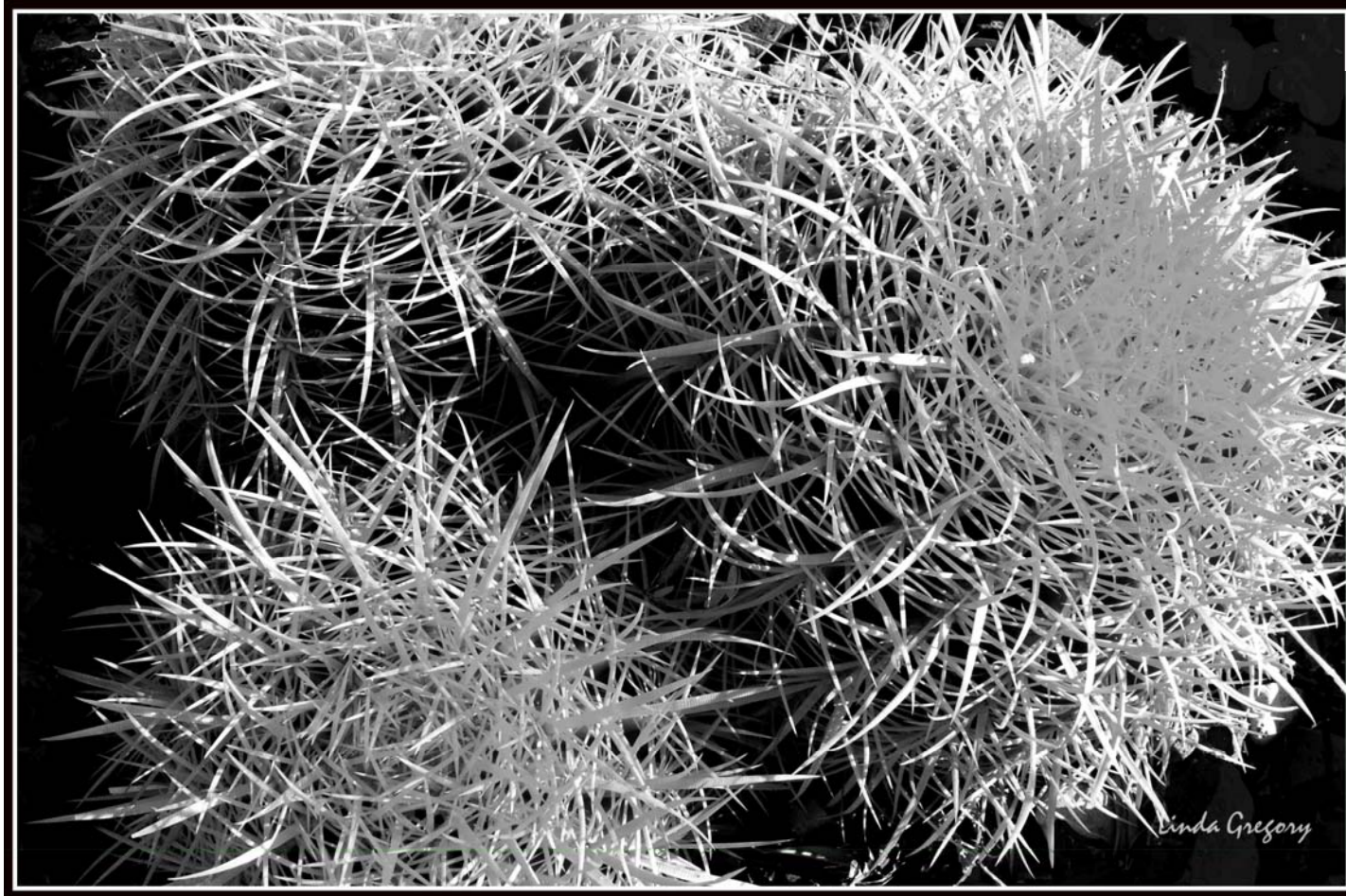
Pattern: There are patterns all around us if we only learn to see them. Emphasizing and highlighting these patterns can lead to striking shots – as can high lighting when patterns are broken.



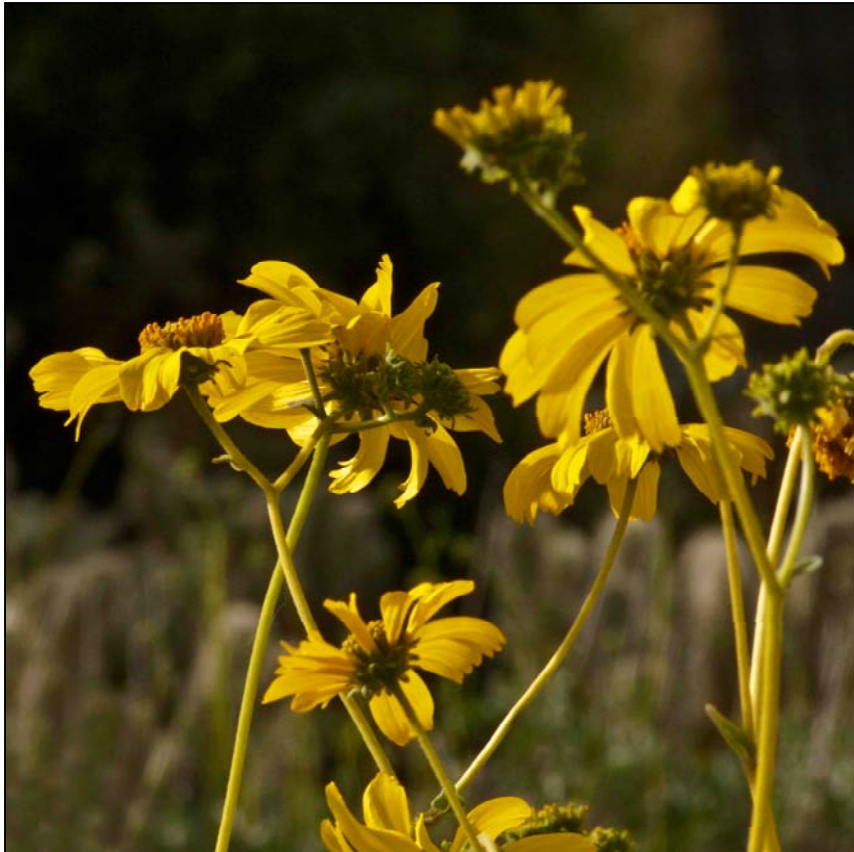
Symmetry: Depending upon the scene, symmetry can be something to go for or to avoid completely. A symmetrical shot with strong composition and a good point of interest can lead to a striking image, but without the strong point of interest it can be a little predictable. Experiment with both in one shot to see which works best.



Texture: Images are a two-dimensional thing yet with the clever use of texture, they can come alive and become almost three dimensional. Texture particularly comes into play when light hits objects at interesting angles.



Depth of Field: The depth of field that you select when taking an image will drastically impact the composition of an image. It can isolate a subject from its background and foreground (when using a shallow depth of field) or it can put the same subject in context by revealing its surrounds with a larger depth of field.



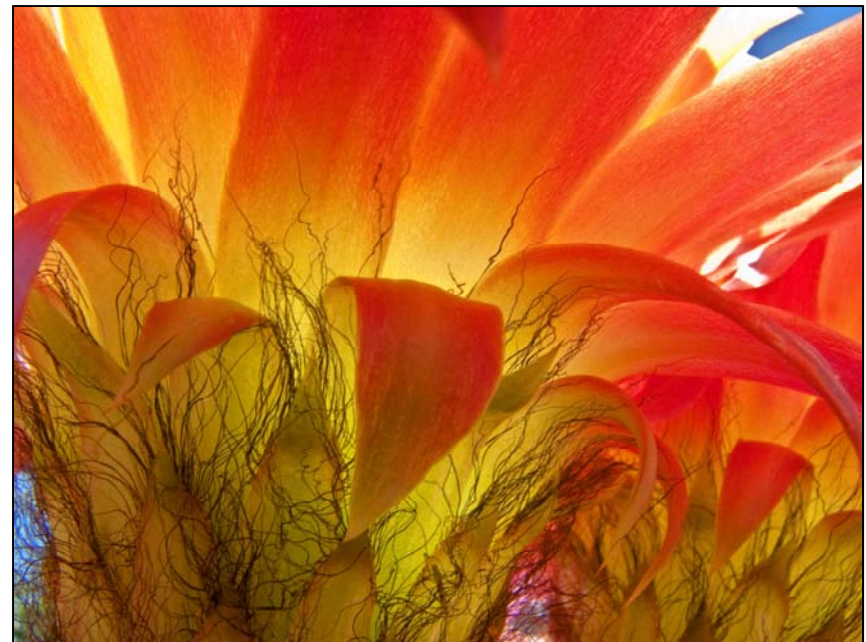
Lines: Lines can be powerful elements in an image. They have the power to draw the eye to key focal points in a shot and to impact the “feel” of an image greatly. Diagonal, horizontal, vertical and converging lines all impact images differently and should be spotted when framing a shot and then utilized to strengthen it.



Framing: Framing can be used within the composition of a shot to help you highlight your main point of interest in the image and/or to put it in context to give the image depth.



Perspective: The perspective that a shot is taken from is another element that can have a big impact on an image. Shooting from up high and looking down on a subject or shooting from below looking up on the same subject drastically impacts not only the “look” of the image, emphasizing different points of interest, angles, textures, shapes, etc., but it also impacts the “story” of an image.



Space: There can be a fine line between filling your frame with your subject (and creating a nice sense of intimacy and connection) and also giving your subject space to breathe. Either technique can be effective so experiment with moving in close and personal and moving out to capture a subject in its context. Sometimes it's what you leave out of an image that makes it special.



Balance: The positioning with elements in a frame can leave an image feeling balanced or unbalanced. Too many points of interest in one section of your image can leave it feeling too “heavy” or complicated in that section of the shot and other parts feeling “empty.”



Color: The colors in an image and how they are arranged can make or break a shot. Bright colors can add vibrancy, energy and interest – however in the wrong position they can also distract viewers of an image away from focal points.

Colors also greatly impact mood. Blues and greens can have a calming soothing impact while reds and yellows can convey vibrancy and energy.

