

U3A Composition

'You don't take a photograph you make it'.

Thank you to Ian I am not sure if there is anything else to say but here goes. Please feel free to ask questions at any point.

A quote by Ansel Adams who was a famous American landscape photographer known particularly for his images monochrome and the occasional colour image of Yosemite National Park.

I think that your pictures can tell a story too, enabling others to understand the way the author was feeling at the time or conveying what they saw.

So Telling a Story and enjoying yourself.



At this point let me introduce you to Bailey our Labradoodle, apologies if you do not like dogs as he is my model for today. Is this just a picture of a winter scene with a dog in fancy dress or is it much more.

Lets look at the composition of the picture first. In the bottom third of the picture there is strong foreground interest in the snow-covered rocks which are also on a diagonal in the frame. Bailey is the main subject and point of focus, he is slightly off centre in the frame.

Finally there is an interesting background in the trees and mountains in the top third of the frame.

What else does the picture say

The main subject is Bailey, the image is also about the setting winter in the Cairngorms. So for me, the image portrays happiness, humour and as well as the beauty of the environment

Slow Down and Think



To reiterate what Ian has already said you need to slow down and start to think about the subject you see. Think about what **you** want the picture to look like.

With digital we now have the luxury of being able to see our pictures straight away, so take a picture and then review it. Look around the frame, have you cut the top off a tree, cut someone in half or is there something in the background which looks like it is sticking out of someone's head.

I composed this image carefully in the viewfinder, I wanted to show the iris flowers in there setting at Bodnant Garden in North Wales.

I didn't want the image to be a record shot of the iris flowers I also wanted to show some the other feature of the garden with the distinctive Pin Mill in the background, along with the Willow statue which was on display last year. There is also a photographer in the frame giving a sense of scale to the image.

Portrait or Landscape



Two pictures of a summer's day at Loch Morlich in the Cairngorms, both were in the same spot within a few seconds of each other. The obvious difference between the two pictures is the formats one is a portrait and the other landscape but which is the better image ?

Compositionally both pictures have good foreground interest within the grasses leading you through to the trees and the mountains in the background.

I prefer landscape format for this image just because I feel there is too much sky in the vertical picture which tends to lead the eye away from the main subject.

Waiting for the Right Moment

Again two pictures were taken on the same day one vertical and one horizontal

A change of season Winter at Llyn Padarn in Snowdonia

The obvious difference is the format but although both pictures where taken from the same spot by Lake Padarn on was taken an hour later than the other one.

In the image on the right the reflections are deeper, the light is warmer, there is light illuminating the tree and the mountains plus there is a great cloud formation too.



In comparison, the vertical image was taken an hour earlier there is no light on the tree. There light on the hills has not the rich tones but I feel the images real weakness is the relatively bland sky.

A Different Point of View



Back to Bodnant Garden with Bailey and Pin Mill is in the background which has the added bonus of being a still day so there are reflections of the building in the Lily Pond. The principles of these two images is of course applies to taking pictures of your friends and family.

This time we have two images in a vertical format which do you prefer?

The left-hand picture is just a record shot I was stood up with the camera a should level, it's composed well with Pin Mill in the background and perfect reflections in the water, however Bailey just looks really bored in the foreground.

In the picture on the left, Pin Mill is the main subject of the image. bailey just happens to be in the foreground looking rather bored.

In the left hand picture this time Bailey is the main subject and Pin Mill provides the background interest. I have simply moved closer to him and got down lower with the camera to create a different viewpoint. Bailey is much larger in the frame and he is engaging with me thus adding a little extra to the picture. The same goes obviously for all types of portraiture for those with two paws as well as four.

The thinking process



I was a scientist by trade and spent a lot of time looking down a microscope so when I took up photography I developed a love for macro work and in particular flower photography.

I would like to share with you my thought process when I was taking this group of Helianthus flowers in my garden. This first image is just a record shot to illustrate what I was initially seeing. I then decided I would like to isolate a single flower. I thought initially a horizontal format would suit the image but on moving in even closer this is the image I finished up with this.



Move around your subject

Flowers again this time Bluebells I have already moved in and isolated one flower in the left-hand picture but it's not what I envisaged. By simply moving a few inches to right and taking from the side not only is it lit better but I also preferred the background which less distracting and the colours are more complimentary. This hopefully illustrates that by simply moving just a few inches you can transform the whole look of a picture.



This obviously can be applied to any subject you can transform a landscape by moving taking one step closer or moving a foot to the left. Experiment take lots of pictures of the same subject but at different angles, formats and viewpoints then review them and decided which one you like best.

Finally am going to show a couple of images with compositional faults for you to critique please feel free to ask any questions.

Looking around the Frame.



1. Bailey is **photobombing** the image, he is also what we term **very tight** in the frame. It is important to allow a bit more space around a subject.
2. It's that tree again but I have cropped the top off the tree.
3. I am not sure if I saw the two people when I took the picture.

Look around the frame, move in close but don't crop off part of your flower or cut somebodies feet off.

Is there something in the background that is distracting, does it look like something in the background is sticking out of their head.

Look to your Horizon.



If you have a picture with a horizon in it is it straight? This picture of Bailey on the beach illustrates that I wasn't holding my camera straight. The sea looks like it is running out of the frame and Bailey is running downhill too.

Finally I wanted to show what can be done to improve an image without manipulation in photoshop or using any filters?

1. First I have straightened the horizon so Bailey isn't running downhill.
2. Cropped of the top of the image to exclude the lighter parts of the picture.
3. Cropped some off the right-hand side so Bailey wasn't in the middle of the picture
4. And finally I have flipped the picture horizontally to he is running into the frame. The eye naturally moves from left to right.

The most important thing is to have fun.....

and enjoy yourself, don't be scared to experiment or worry about making mistakes.