

2017 Special Subject Explanations

Cell Phone Photography

This special subject category is reserved for photos taken with a cell phone camera. This is a singular criterion for this category, so the subject material may be of the photographer's choosing, however, the subject material should not be altered to a degree that it is not recognizable. (Excludes altered reality). The image may be in color or monochrome. Normal post processing of your image is allowed.

Curves

Curves convey energy and movement in a photograph. For this category, images should contain curved lines as a feature that is notable in the overall photo. We find curves in nature in subjects like rivers, waves, animals, portraits, and landscapes. Man-made curves can occur in buildings (think Disney Hall), staircases, bicycles, machinery, bridges, and so forth. Both "C" and "S" curves are prized in photography as a means of guiding the viewer's eye through an image.

Glass

This category requires inclusion of glass in the image submitted. Any form or depiction of glass is acceptable. Examples would include stemware, building glass, flower vases, mirrors, glass wind chimes, colored lights, and so forth. Images may be presented in monochrome or color.

Patterns

Patterns, both natural and man-made, bring a sense of visual rhythm and harmony to photographs that, like a series of repeating notes in a melody, capture the imagination. Patterns appear whenever strong graphic elements—lines, colors, shapes, or forms—repeat themselves.

Once you become aware of the power of patterns, you will discover them almost everywhere: in a field of Maine lupines, in crowds of faces in a stadium, even in the zigs and zags of modern architecture. The secret to finding patterns is to explore potential subjects from a variety of angles. While you might not notice the colorful design of umbrellas as you maneuver a crowded Paris sidewalk, they become blatantly clear from an upper-floor window or balcony. Lighting is another potent painter of pattern. Fresh plowed furrows in a cornfield, all but invisible on a dull, overcast day, rise into waves of highlight and shadow when lit by a bright, low-angle sun. Close-ups are also filled with pattern—consider the swirl of seeds in a sunflower or the intricate tracings of color in a butterfly's wings.

The key to emphasizing patterns is to isolate them from their surroundings. By excluding everything but the design, you create the illusion that the repetition is infinite, extending beyond the frame. Telephoto and longer zoom lenses are excellent tools for isolating and extracting patterns by enabling you to exclude extraneous images.

Patterns also reinforce the emotional appeal of their components.

Street Photography

The first image that typically comes to mind for the term street photography is an image of a stranger just walking down the street in a city like New York, London, or Tokyo. This is a huge part of street photography of course, but it is only one part, and it can cause confusion over the true meaning of the term. Street photography is candid photography of life and human nature. It is very similar to candid photography, but the photographer documents the public space as he or she sees it. It is a way for us to show our surroundings, and how we as photographers relate to them. We are filtering what we see, to find the moments that intrigue us, and to then share them with others. It's like daydreaming with a camera.

People do not need to be present for an image to be considered a street photograph. The photograph need not be taken in a city, or in a busy market. It can be taken anywhere, and can portray nearly anything, as long as it isn't posed or manipulated. It can be shot at a family barbecue, or in the middle of 5th Avenue in New York City.

While many may consider the term as clunky, there is an elegant side to it that I think is often missed. The street is the most public and accessible of places, and street photography is the most public and accessible form of photography. A street photographer should not just look at the popular tourists spots but try some behind the scene and out of the way locations. Anyone can do it. You do not need an expensive camera. You do not need a big studio, professional lighting, or beautiful models. We all have the same content out there, and it's up to us to figure out how to capture that and bring it home.

In addition, while technical quality is always important to every form of photography, it is not celebrated in street photography in quite the same way. A nature or landscape image needs to be sharp. It usually needs to be able to be printed at large sizes with great technical quality. In these genres you can pick the perfect location, frame it the perfect way, choose the perfect equipment and settings, and continue to come back until you get the perfect lighting. With street photography, on the other hand, the best image of your life can pop right in front of you on the way to get your morning coffee. This spontaneity is what's celebrated. That is why grainy images, slightly off-kilter framing or imperfect focus will not always ruin a street photograph. Sometimes they will, and we must aim for technical mastery, but other times they can add to the realness of the moment. Sometimes these deficiencies may actually improve the image.

Transportation

The category of transportation is open to images that have at least one component involving transportation. This can include any mode of transportation such as car, bus, train, airplane, mule, sled, etc. The mode of transportation need not be the central feature in the image, but must be included as a part of the image. Images presented may be shown in color or monochrome.