

ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY

art:

noun

the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

abstract art

noun

art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures.

From Wikipedia**abstract photography**

sometimes called non-objective, experimental, conceptual or concrete [photography](#), is a means of depicting a visual image that does not have an immediate association with the object world and that has been created through the use of photographic equipment, processes or materials. An [abstract](#) photograph may isolate a fragment of a natural scene in order to remove its inherent [context](#) from the viewer, it may be purposely staged to create a seemingly unreal appearance from real objects, or it may involve the use of color, light, shadow, texture, shape and/or form to convey a feeling, sensation or impression. The image may be produced using traditional photographic equipment like a camera, darkroom or computer, or it may be created without using a camera by directly manipulating film, paper or other photographic media, including digital presentations.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS ABOUT CREATING A PAINTING, BUT THE CONCEPTS ARE ALSO DIRECTLY APPLICABLE TO PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE MAKING (for this talk and in general, the creative process and design process for the artist and photographer are the same G)

The artist/image maker decides what principles of art he or she wants to use in an abstract image. While a photographer might not use all the principles of design in one image, the principles are intertwined and the use of one will often depend on another. For example, when creating emphasis, the photographer might also be using contrast or vice versa. It is generally agreed that a successful image is **unified**, while also having some **variety** created by areas of **contrast** and **emphasis**; is visually **balanced**; and **moves** the viewer's eye around the

composition. Thus it is, that one principle of art can influence the effect and impact of another.

“Knowing, understanding and implementing the principles of design enable the artist/image maker to guide the viewer successfully and help him or her understand what’s happening within an abstract image’

“When you look at any painting (or photographic image) and say, ‘Oh, I love that painting (image),’ there are many factors that contribute to that reaction,” says artist [Carol Staub](#). ‘Besides the subjective component, you love it because it is well-structured and features good use of color, shape, texture, size, line, space and value.’”

The elements and principles of art and design are the foundation of the language we use to talk about art and abstract images.

The **elements of art** are the visual tools that the maker uses to create a composition. These are line, shape, color, value, form, texture, and space.

The **principles of art** represent *how the maker uses the elements of art* to create an effect and to help convey the makers intent. The principles of art and design are balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, and unity/variety. The use of these principles can help determine whether an image is successful, and whether or not the image is finished. **(yes a photo can feel unfinished G)**

ELEMENTS OF ART: The visual components of color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.

Line An element of art defined by a point moving in space. Line may be two-or three-dimensional, descriptive, implied, or abstract.

Shape An element of art that is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width.

Form An element of art that is three-dimensional and encloses volume; includes height, width AND depth (as in a cube, a sphere, a pyramid, or a cylinder). Form may also be free flowing.

Value The lightness or darkness of tones or colors. White is the lightest value; black is the darkest. The value halfway between these extremes is called middle gray.

Space An element of art by which positive and negative areas are defined or a sense of depth achieved in a work of art .

Color An element of art made up of three properties: hue, value, and intensity. • *Hue*: name of color • *Value*: hue's lightness and darkness (a color's value changes when white or black is added) • *Intensity*: quality of brightness and purity (high intensity= color is strong and bright; low intensity= color is faint and dull)

Texture An element of art that refers to the way things feel, or look as if they might feel if touched.

PRINCIPLES OF ART

Balance refers to the visual weight of the elements of the composition. It is a sense that the work feels stable and "feels right." Imbalance causes a feeling of discomfort in the viewer.

Balance can be achieved in 3 different ways:

1. *Symmetry*, in which both sides of a composition have the same elements in the same position, as in a mirror-image, or the two sides of a face.
2. *Asymmetry*, in which the composition is balanced due to the contrast of any of the elements of art. For example, a large circle on one side of a composition might be balanced by a small square on the other side
3. *Radial symmetry*, in which elements are equally spaced around a central point, as in the spokes coming out of the hub of a bicycle tire.

See the article, *Balance*, for some visual examples of how the elements of art can be used to achieve balance.

Contrast is the difference between elements of art in a composition, such that each element is made stronger in relation to the other. When placed next to each other, contrasting elements command the viewer's attention. Areas of contrast are among the first places that a viewer's eye is drawn. Contrast can be achieved by juxtapositions of any of the elements of art. Negative/Positive space is an example of contrast. Complementary colors placed side by side is an example of contrast. Notan Japanese design is an example of contrast. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/japanese-notan-artists-history-designs.html>

Emphasis is when the artist creates an area of the composition that is visually dominant and commands the viewer's attention. This is often achieved by contrast.

Movement is the result of using the elements of art such that they move the viewer's eye around and within the image. A sense of movement can be created by diagonal or curvy lines, either real or implied, by edges, by the illusion of space, by repetition, by energetic mark-making.

Pattern is the uniform repetition of any of the elements of art or any combination thereof. Anything can be turned into a pattern through repetition. Some classic patterns are spirals, grids, weaves. For examples of different pattern types see the *Artlandia Glossary of Pattern Design*. A popular drawing practice is *Zentangles*, in which an abstract or representational outline is divided into different areas, each of which contains a unique pattern.

Rhythm is created by movement implied through the repetition of elements of art in a non-uniform but organized way. It is related to rhythm in music. Unlike pattern, which demands consistency, rhythm relies on variety.

Unity/Variety You want your painting to feel unified such that all the elements fit together comfortably. Too much unity creates monotony, too much variety creates chaos. You need both. Ideally, you want areas of interest in your composition along with places for your eye to rest.

abstract

adjective

existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence.

verb

consider (something) theoretically or separately from something else.
"to abstract science and religion from their historical context can lead to anachronism"

extract or remove (something).
"applications to abstract more water from streams"

Noun

a summary of the contents of a book, article, or formal speech.

photography is about seeingalways
abstract photography is about looking closer
looking past what the subject is to see what the subject is made up of.

One approach to abstract photography is to pay attention to why you want to shoot.

look at that colour...
Isn't that building unique...
I love that light...
That's a gorgeous church...
That takes my breath away...

Ask yourself why?

Explore that question, isolate the design elements that drew you, you will probably wind up with an abstract image

You DON'T have to know what all the design elements are called
YOU DO HAVE TO KNOW WHAT YOU LOVE TO SHOOT

Some subjects such as shadows and reflections lend themselves to abstracts, but any subject may result in an abstract.

Some photographers, like Chris Harris, recommend high contrast and a minimum of 2 design elements are necessary to create a successful abstract image.

The scope of abstract photography is limitless.

I took a workshop hosted by Chris Harris and Dennis Ducklow called Your Creative Vision. This is where my journey toward abstract photography began.

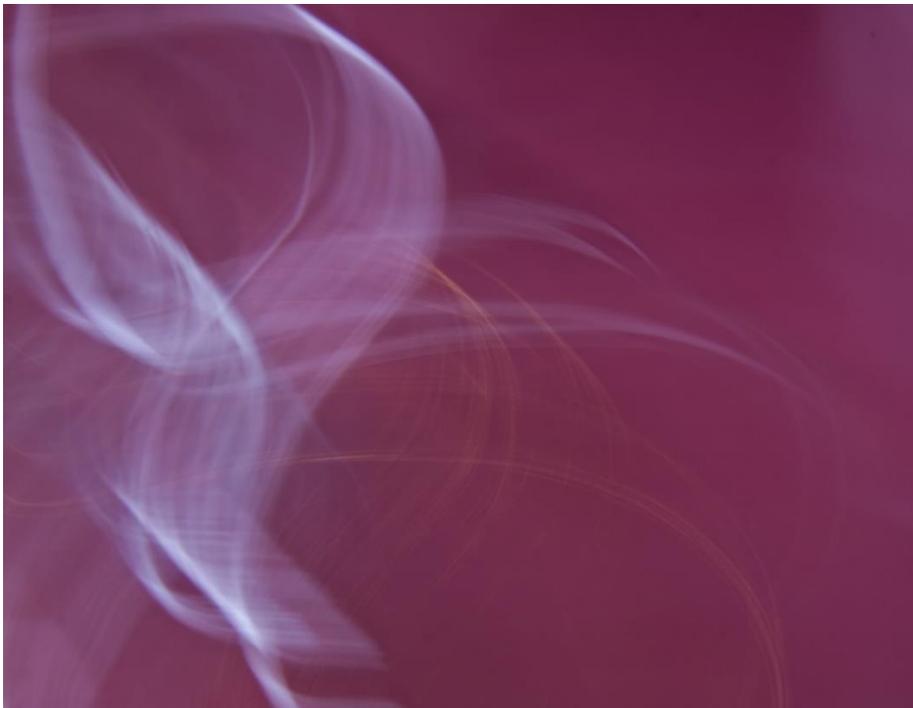
<https://www.chrisharris.com/events/>

The following images are a reflection of what I learned, my personal style, interests and skills (I love diagonals curves light etc.) They were created by camera movement, by framing in camera, and by post processing; to crop out elements or to add elements

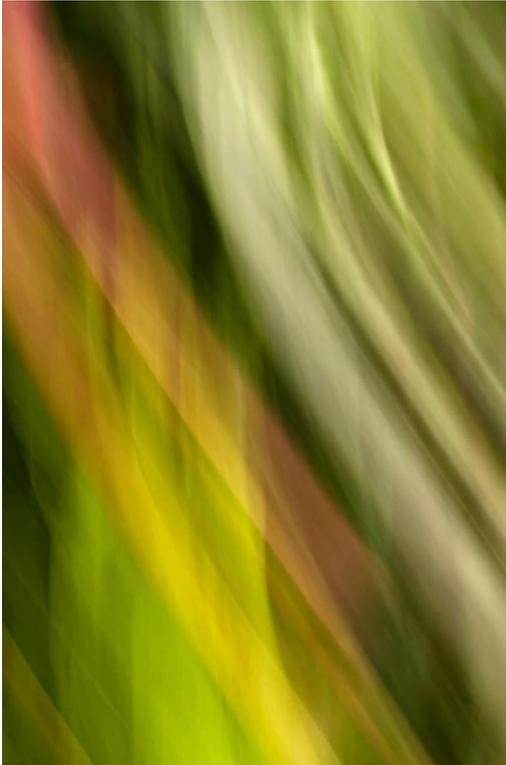
- We can use **camera movement** like a brush to place colour and light anywhere we want to create an abstract.



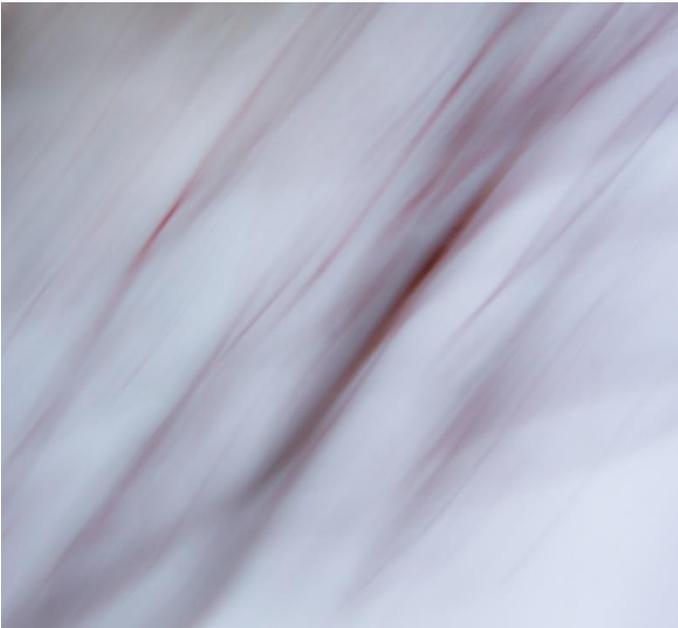
Light/dark, curves, repetition, contrast, 2 colours, movement, balance



Light, contrast, s curves, diagonal, repetition, 3 colours, movement, rhythm



Diagonal lines, contrast, repetition,
curve, opposite colours orange/green,
movement



Two colours, diagonal lines,
contrast, movement, reflected
light, softness...balance

- Some abstracts are created by cropping.



The design elements of repeated curves, repetition, contrast, light reflection and pattern have been isolated to create the abstract. Little concrete reality is left.



This is the original with reality present. Its not as abstract as the one above

- **Reflections** are a natural source of abstraction.



The movement in water reflections changes the forms you see resulting in an abstract



This one has strong colours (enhanced), opposites on the colour wheel, diagonal lines, movement, repeated shapes and drama due to the intensity of the colour and the placement and direction of the black.

- **Shadows** are a natural source of abstract images.



They comprise dark forms with no detail thus obscuring reality.

The light grey tone is crucial to this image, without it there would not be enough design elements.

This image is primarily texture and 3 tones. The amount of light area balances the amount of black. I was first drawn to the texture in the grey, then I saw the shadows.

- **Architecture** is a source of abstract images.



- **Weathering** creates abstracts, often by adding texture.



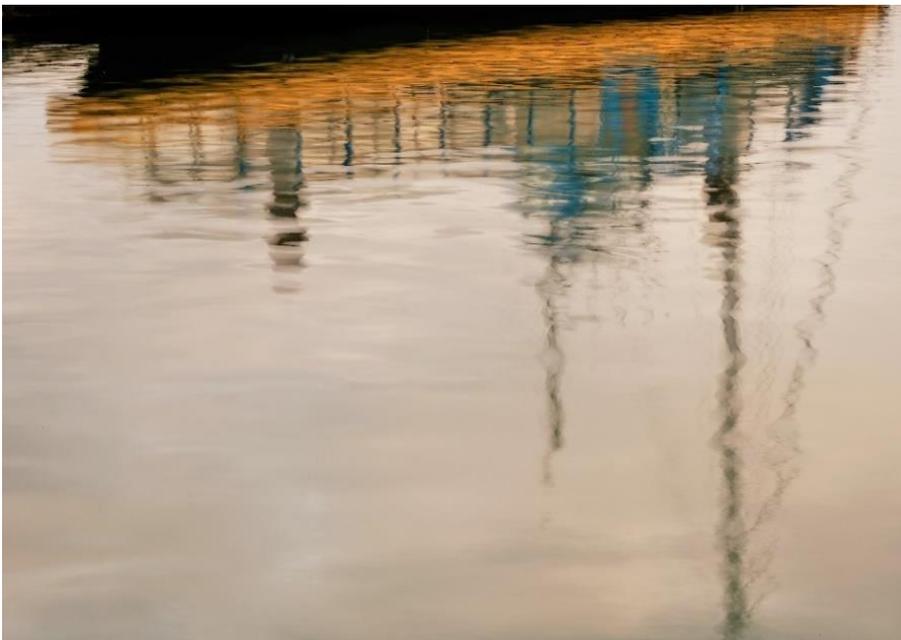
- We can **add filters** to obscure reality, add texture, and create an abstract.



- We can use **post processing to 'finish'** an image.



I changed the blue colour in the bottom triangle shape to make the image feel balanced and finished.



This image felt incomplete to me.



I edited it. It now feels finished to me and it is more abstract than the original image.

Summary

- PAY ATTENTION TO WHY YOU ARE SHOOTING.
- WHAT DRAWS YOUR EYE? SHOOT JUST THAT.
- LESS IS MORE WHEN SHOOTING ANYTHING, ESPECIALLY ABSTRACTS.
- CONTRAST IS KEY, AND A MINIMUM OF 2 DESIGN ELEMENTS