

## **10 DYNAMIC PHOTOGRAPHY COMPOSITION TIPS**

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How to make more dynamic, sexy, and edgy compositions:

### **1. Shoot from the gut**

When you're out shooting, don't use your brain too much. Composition should be intuitive – from your gut.

### **2. Internalize composition**

To build intuitive compositions, study a lot of dynamic compositions when you're home and not taking pictures.

Study dynamic compositions from the masters of composition – Henri Cartier-Bresson, Andre Kertesz, William Klein, Bruce Gilden, Daido Moriyama, Diane Arbus, Lisette Model.

### **3. Anti-symmetry**

Symmetrical pictures look “nice” but are boring. To make a DYNAMIC picture is to make a picture that is full of energy, life, and excitement – pictures that cause the heartbeat of your viewer to increase.

Dynamic pictures are uncomfortable to look at. Dynamic pictures are EXCITING and SEXY!

#### **4. Dynamic and simple**

A powerfully composed picture is *both dynamic and simple*. A simple picture is very difficult to make. Leonardo da Vinci once said, “Simplicity is the ultimate mark of sophistication.”

To make a simple composition: CLEAN BACKGROUND, fewer distractions in the background, simple hand gestures (but complex in emotions), strong contrast (use a flash, or shoot in contrasty lighting situations with minus-exposure compensation), and with a strong singular subject.

#### **5. Inject mystery in your pictures**

Dynamic compositions require participation from the viewer.

A bad picture is too easy to comprehend and appreciate. A dynamic composition requires the viewer to use some mental energy – to appreciate the picture. Therefore, a dynamic composition will have some MYSTERY in the picture – which requires them to use their brainpower to *interpret* your picture, come up with their own story, and fill in any blank spots.

#### **6. Dynamic compositions are *off-balance***

Anything that seems that it can fall over at any moment is dynamic. Dynamic compositions are also AGGRESSIVE. Study the architecture of Zaha Hadid— which is off-balance, aggressive, bold, elegant, and overwhelming. Our pictures should not be meek. They need to be BOLD and MAKE A STATEMENT. They need to be opinionated – to show your opinion. Your perspective of the world.

#### **7. Unexpected**

Dynamic compositions are unexpected. They need to SHOCK your viewer a bit. Shoot from perspectives which are unique and unusual. Shoot from a very low angle, or from a very high angle shooting downwards.

To exaggerate unique perspectives, use a wide angle lens like a 35mm or 28mm lens. Wide angle lenses add more DRAMA and DYNAMISM to your compositions, because they distort the scene, take on a wider view of the scene, incorporate more visual elements, and are more complex to look at.

## **8. DIRECT**

A dynamic composition is DIRECT. When shooting with a wide angle lens, shoot HEAD-ON.

Avoid shooting from the side from “oblique” angles. When you shoot head-on, it gives the viewer the feeling that the subject in the picture is going to collide with you. This puts the viewer in the shoes of the photographer, and transports them INTO THE PHOTOGRAPH.

Anything that puts the viewer into the picture is a good thing.

## **9. DYNAMIC EMOTION**

A photograph without emotion is dead. You need to EVOKE an emotion from your viewer, or else they will not remember or feel your picture.

As humans we are driven by emotions. Evoke emotions in your pictures by making pictures that have EYE CONTACT, that are shot at a close distance (.7 meters-1 meter), that have dramatic light (use a flash, or shoot during “golden hour”—sunrise or sunset), or have facial gestures or hand gestures that evoke movement and emotion.

## 10. TAKE MORE RISKS

We all know how to make symmetrical, unambiguous, and “safe” compositions. Anyone can compose a “safe” composition with the “rule of thirds” and with symmetry.

But this is boring. Be more ambitious with your compositions, by adding LAYERS, DEPTH, and TILT your lens (Dutch angle). Get close to your subjects, be aggressive with your shooting, and put your focus to the subjects furthest away (pre-focus at 5 meters).

Don't always focus on who is closest to you. Decapitate people by not including their faces in the picture— just show their hands, legs, or limbs.

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