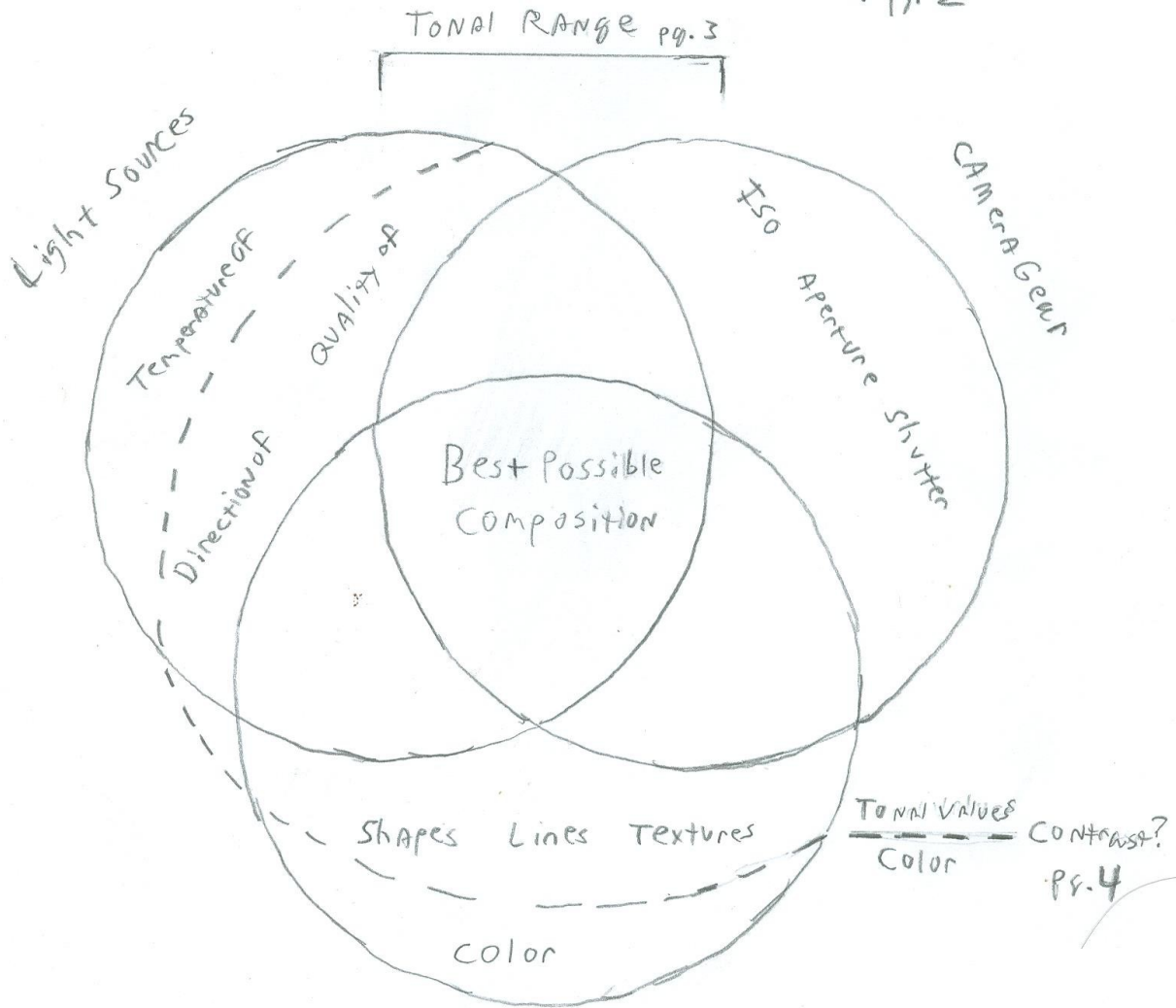


Limitations imposed by...

?
pg. 2



Scene Potential

... Creativity inspired by limitations!

We see in color, think in color, and capture the world in color yet underneath this dominant perception of the world is a structural component taken for granted. Photography was not always digital or able to capture color so black and white wasn't an option but part of the process at one time. Was a skill set lost in the change? The ability to pre-visualize how a scene might look when printed was an asset to the photographer as film had a limited number of exposures and cost money to get prints made. As a digital photographer we can get instant feed back and unlimited number of pictures on a memory card but the cost is more files to sort through and more processing time in post. Black and white photography in the digital age may be a way to get back to the earlier mindset.

Besides black and white photography being an exercise in composition what other reasons might make it something to consider trying to learn. Three reasons given in the lecture by Eileen Rafferty that inspired this talk are listed below but she gave more examples and reasons to use black and white photography for composition and effect in her lecture.

* Black and white is one step removed from our normal perception of the world and lends itself to more surreal and abstract imagery.

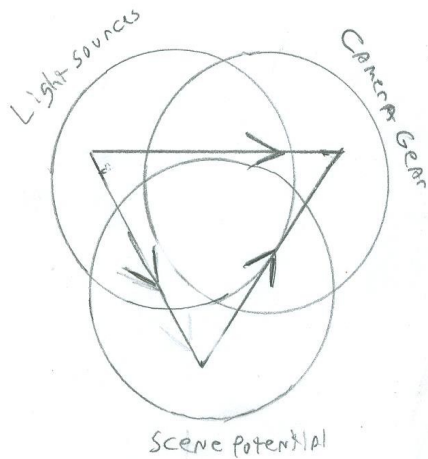
* With a series of subjects shot in various light conditions black and white can unify the series as a whole.

* Color adds an emotional level to an image so removing color can lessen the impact of emotionally charged imagery. Photo journalism is a good example of this due to subject matter covered.

What draws our eyes into a scene? As a photographer it is your job to guide the viewer to where you want them to look. Be it the overall color or underlying structure of the scene here is the generic list.

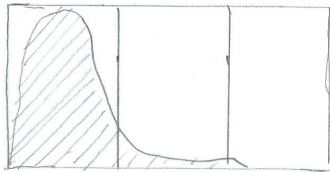
Color related -
Bright part of a scene

Other than color -
Strong lines, textures, and shapes
Faces or figures
Sharp areas
Bright areas
Areas of high contrast

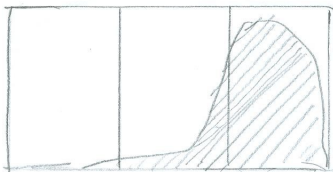


The camera records the direct light as well as the light interacting with the scene to help create the overall tonal range.

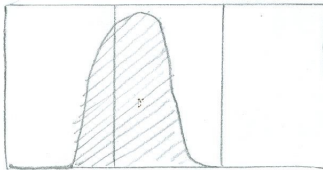
Tonal range is dictated for the most part by the light sources and their interaction with the scene itself to determine how the histogram looks with the ideal image having a strong mid tone range with shadows and highlights present. The mood set by the usual imagery isn't always the only choice so four other patterns can be aimed for as well. Low key is darker and more moody while high key is brighter and happier as examples and interpretation of them. As with everything these things are open to debate but one piece of advice about exposure I saw was to expose to the light you have.



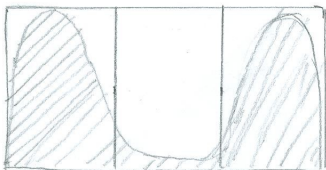
Low Key
Most of the image information is bunched up in the shadows.



High Key
Most of the image information is bunched up in the highlights.



Low Contrast
Most of the image is bunched in one area only.



High Contrast
The image has mid tones but mostly the shadows and highlights are present.

Is the contrast from color or tonal values? This can be a hard question to answer and will take practice to train your eye to see it. Remember painters have been around longer than photographers yet still have to puzzle out the answer to this same question. One solution is to squint, looking through almost closed eyes, and with the reduced level of visual detail overall tonal range can be “seen”. Another solution is optically based via filters and can be of some help as well.

Ansel Adams in his book *The Negative* suggested a #90 filter (dark amber) to briefly look through and assess tonal values. The limited viewing time was to prevent your brain from getting use to the filter and reducing its effectiveness. Tiffen produces a black and white view finder called the Tiffen #1 to judge relative highlights and shadow densities as well. My solution was found while looking at painting sites and mentioned Sew Red glasses to see tonal values. Basically dark red filters in glasses form and my first version was two layers of candy apple red tray from Party City.

Using a photo critique to improve your photography is not a new idea but it is a new step and concept to me. The ability to do some limited preview of the image just taken is an opportunity to correct issues while the light and your scene is still available. Provided you have the battery life to spare why not have a list of questions to help critique the results in field. I see this step as a way for you the photographer to add new elements to your mental checklist until maybe a new set of questions or observations is needed. Maybe another view point to consider is each type of photography could have a specific ideal composition to keep in mind. No matter the reason here are some questions noted from two articles I found helpful to start making a smaller list for your purposes.

How to Critique a Photograph

Does the image tell a story?

What does the photo say to you?

Is there a way you can photograph the subject in another way to add context?

Does your photograph invoke any emotion in you?

Photography is all about light!

* You should always be looking at the light sources in your environment. Try to determine how they will effect your image.

* Consider the color of light, harshness of light, direction of light.

* Analyze how light falls across the frame

Did you capture it from the right angle or perhaps another angle would have made a better image?

Was there a dull light or lack of light?

What would you do if you got to shoot the image again?

Is the image sharp?

* The sharpness of an image is the result of lens quality and focus accuracy.

* Focus is the most important technical ability to master.

Improve perspective in photography.

Is your image from an interesting perspective?

Did you use an eye level perspective or obscure one?

Does the perspective work for the subject you are photographing?
Does it provide the best point of view?
Does the perspective change the story or does it distort the truth?

Check the composition / framing.

- * Look at your photograph and take a mental note of how your eye is drawn into / across the image.
- * Does your eye become drawn to the subject or does it wonder around the image and float off the edge. (Consider cropping to simplify and constrain the eyes movement.)
- * Assess how your image complies or breaks the rule of third and standard photographic rules. (If you break them you had better have a good reason.)

Breakdown the foreground and background

Have you considered the foreground and background?

Is there a clear separation between the foreground and background?

- * Have you thrown the background out of focus by using a wide aperture removing it completely?

If this is the case is the subject tack sharp or did you miss focus?

- * Make sure to identify the foreground, middle ground, and background. Assess them separately for items that you may want to remove in post-processing.

- * Always run your eye around the frame to identify parts of the image that pull the eye out.

We want eyes on the subject as much as possible.

Is there any contrast?

- * There are two types of contrast that image can have. Tonal contrast (b/w) and color contrast. Tonal contrast is the contrast between dark and light parts of the image.

Did you consider any form of contrast in your image or is there disticnt lack of contrast?

What made you take the image?

Look at your image and think what is good about your image, what is bad and ask how could you improve it?

Why did take the image in the first place?

What draws your eye in?

Did you capture what you intended to capture or was the end result some sort of happy accident?

10 Ways to Critique a Photo

Where is the visual weight?

Where are my eyes immediately drawn?

Where do you want the eyes to go?

Are there any distracting elements?

(whatever isn't adding to the photo is taking away from it.)

Is the exposure / metering correct?

Would it look better through a different focal length?

What is the background doing?

(If can make your background more interesting it adds to the photo.)

How is your composition and balance?

(Don't follow rules just for the sake of it, do it to best suit your image.)

Does the photo require post production?

(If a photo needs post production work because of bad technique then work on improving your skills.)

Is the color accurate?

Does the depth of field suit the photo?

Is the photo cliché?

I pulled the above list of questions from two websites I found in a search. Both focused on doing the critique after your photo is back home but one did mention the benefits of also applying critiques infield.

How to Critique a Photograph

<https://www.culturedkiwi.com/critique-your-own-work/>

10 Ways to Critique a Photo

<https://expertphotography.com/10-ways-to-critique-a-photo/>

This talk was inspired initially by a lecture on youtube called Seeing in Black and White by Eileen Rafferty on the B & H Photo channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8Hh8S-Z68s>

It is 1 hour and 54 minutes long but worth a viewing since she covers this subject very thoroughly using her own pictures and other artist pictures to illustrate the concepts. I have adapted keys bits of the lecture and included observations along the way as I tried to put it into practice.