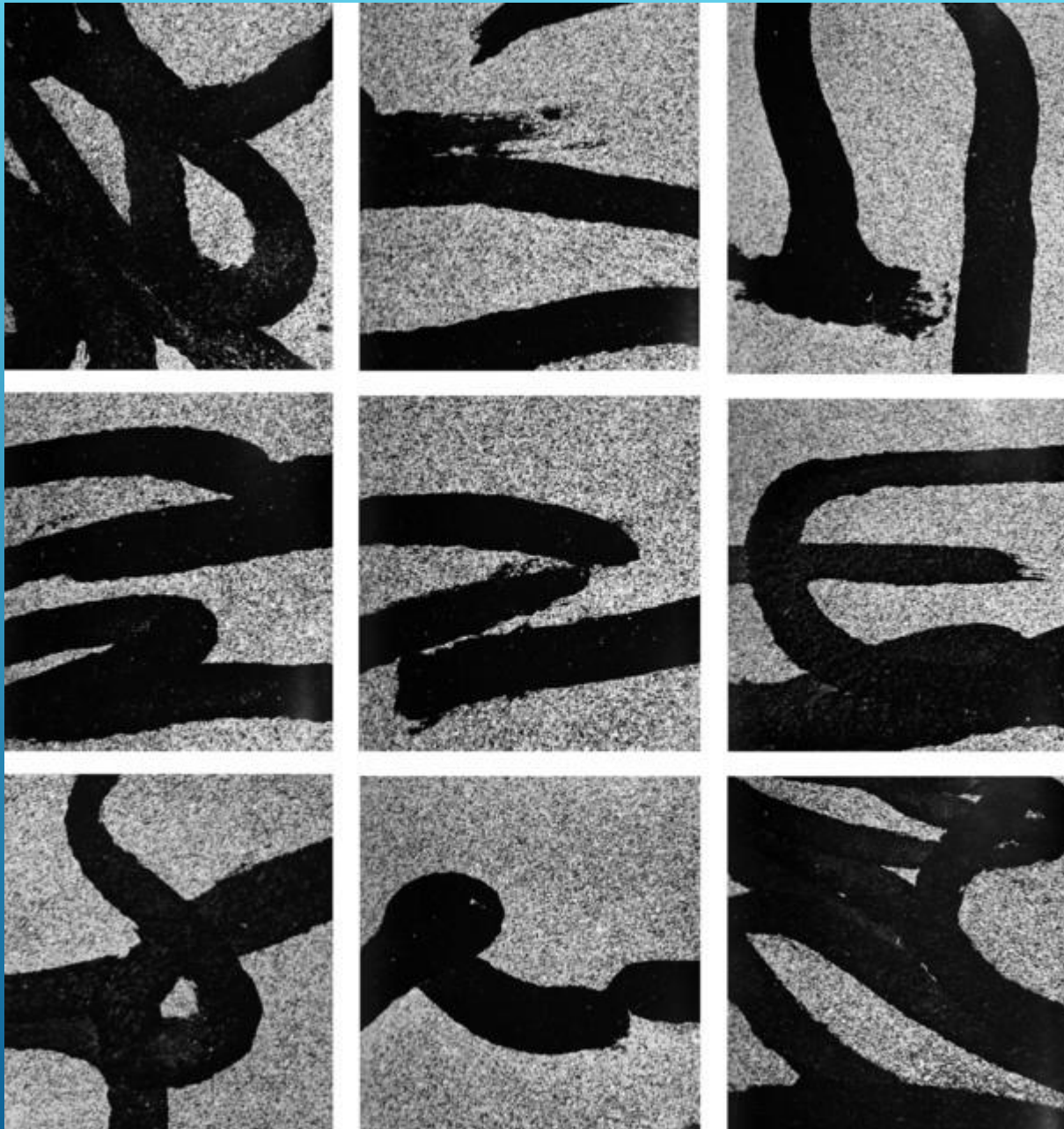


AN INTRODUCTION TO ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY

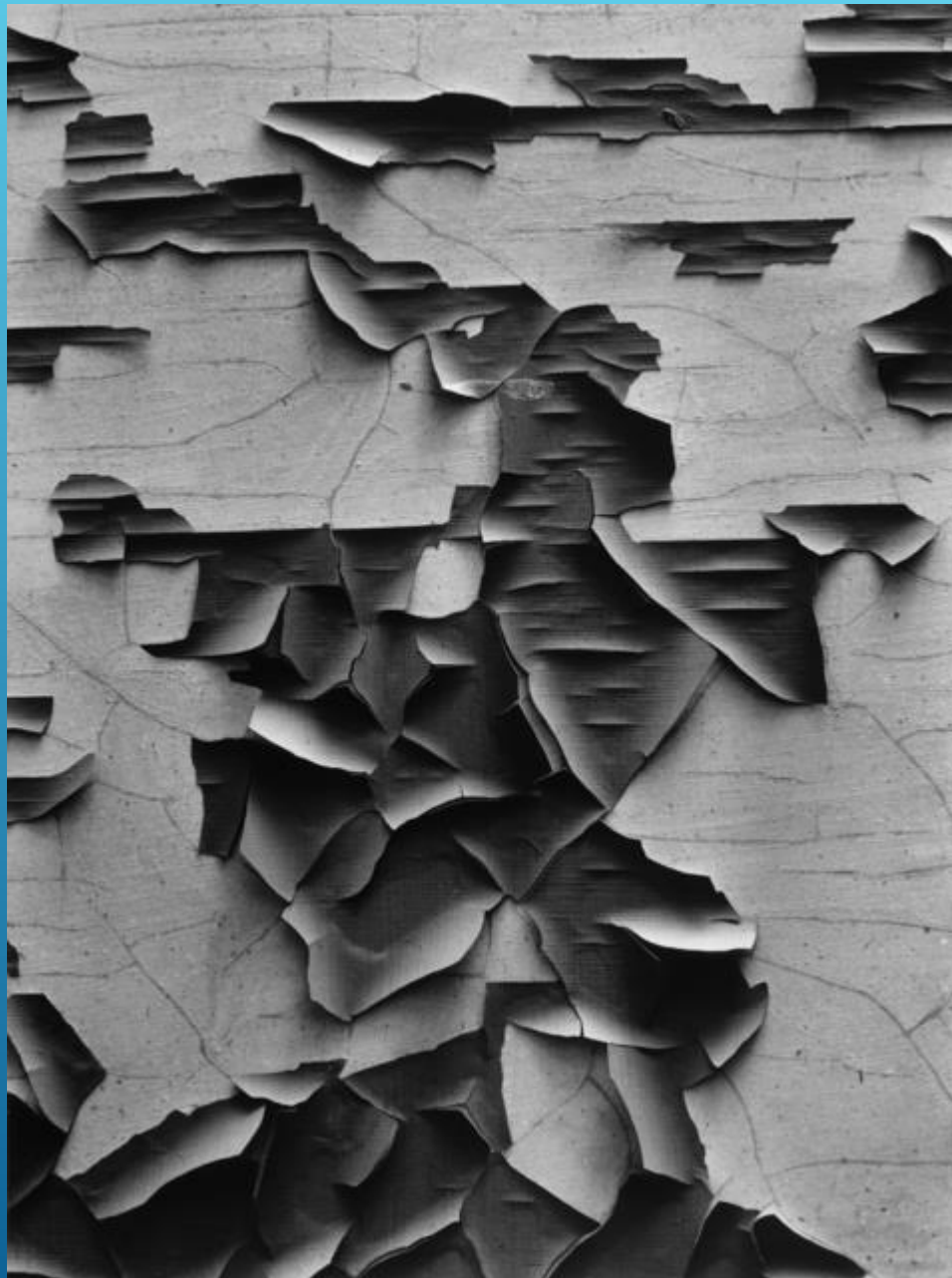
Set Subject for July 2019



Aaron Siskind

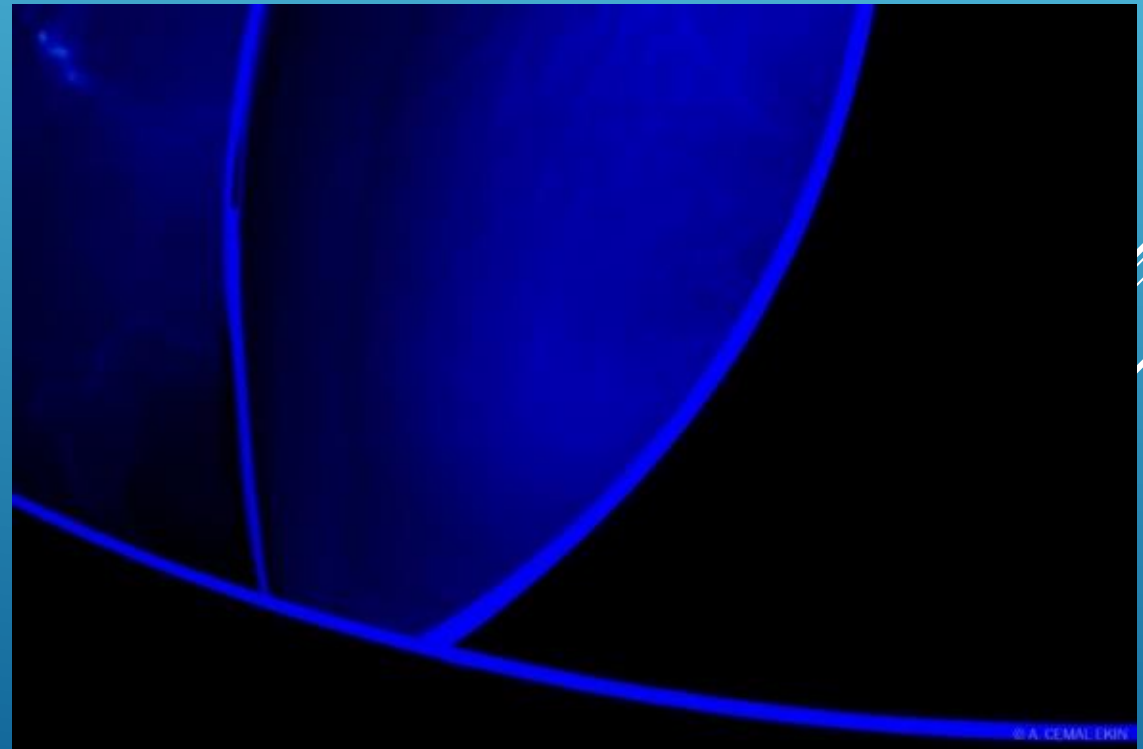
Though he began his career as a documentary photographer, Aaron Siskind turned away from representation and towards abstraction in the 1940s, using his camera to capture the graphic patterns, shapes, and forms he observed around him. By carefully framing his subjects, he would transform strands of seaweed on the sand into calligraphic brushstrokes.....





.....peeling paint into low-relief sculptures or graffiti on a wall into a Franz Kline canvas

- ▶ Abstract photography seems to be an elusive subject, hard to nail down to a single definition. This may be due to the abstract nature of the idea of “abstraction” and perpetuating misconceptions about abstract photography.

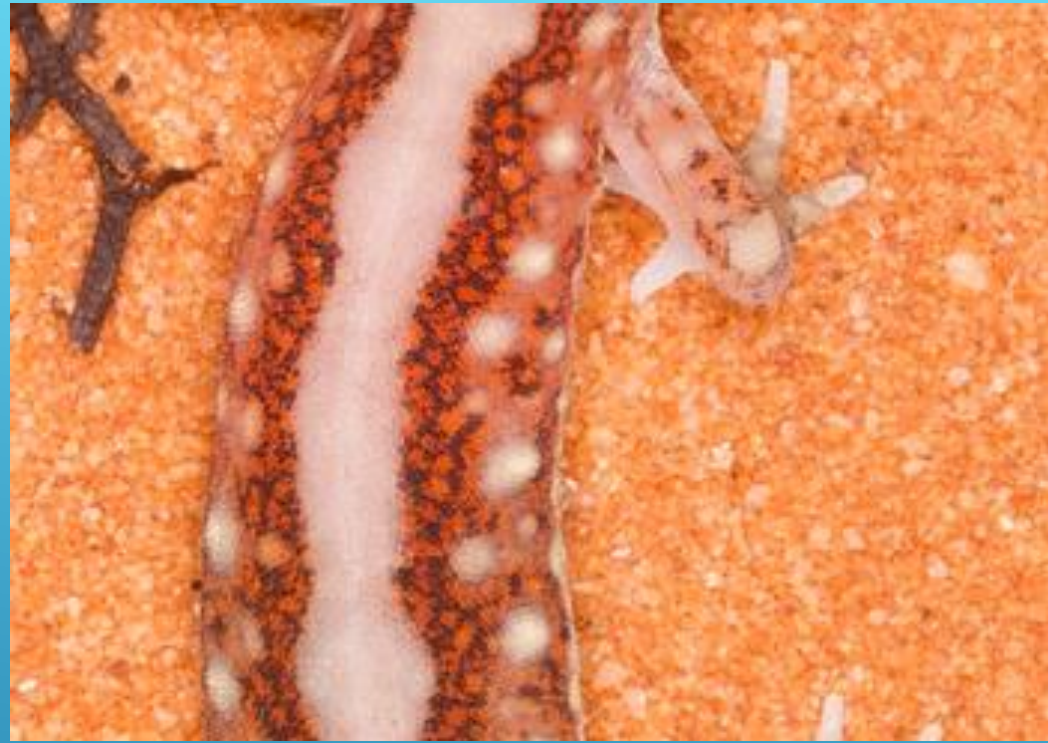


- ▶ What is abstraction? That should be at the heart of the discussion about abstract photography.
- ▶ Photographs are inextricably and forever tied to the objects that were before the camera.
- ▶ This unbreakable link to “reality” creates the illusion that photographs are always of *something* and that something makes or breaks the photograph.
- ▶ This view of a photograph looks through it with an effort to see the object which relies on this strong link between a photograph and the real world.



- ▶ When looking at an object, you may recognize the possibility of an abstract photograph because some sections of it may present strong lines, texture, colour, shape, or form, detached from the object itself.
- ▶ Either while you take the photograph by careful framing, or in post processing by careful cropping you may isolate the part that is of interest to you.





The image on the left could be considered abstract as it is taken without other context, but if you crop in more you can create another image with no context just colour shape and patterns.

MOVING FURTHER AWAY FROM THE SUBJECT

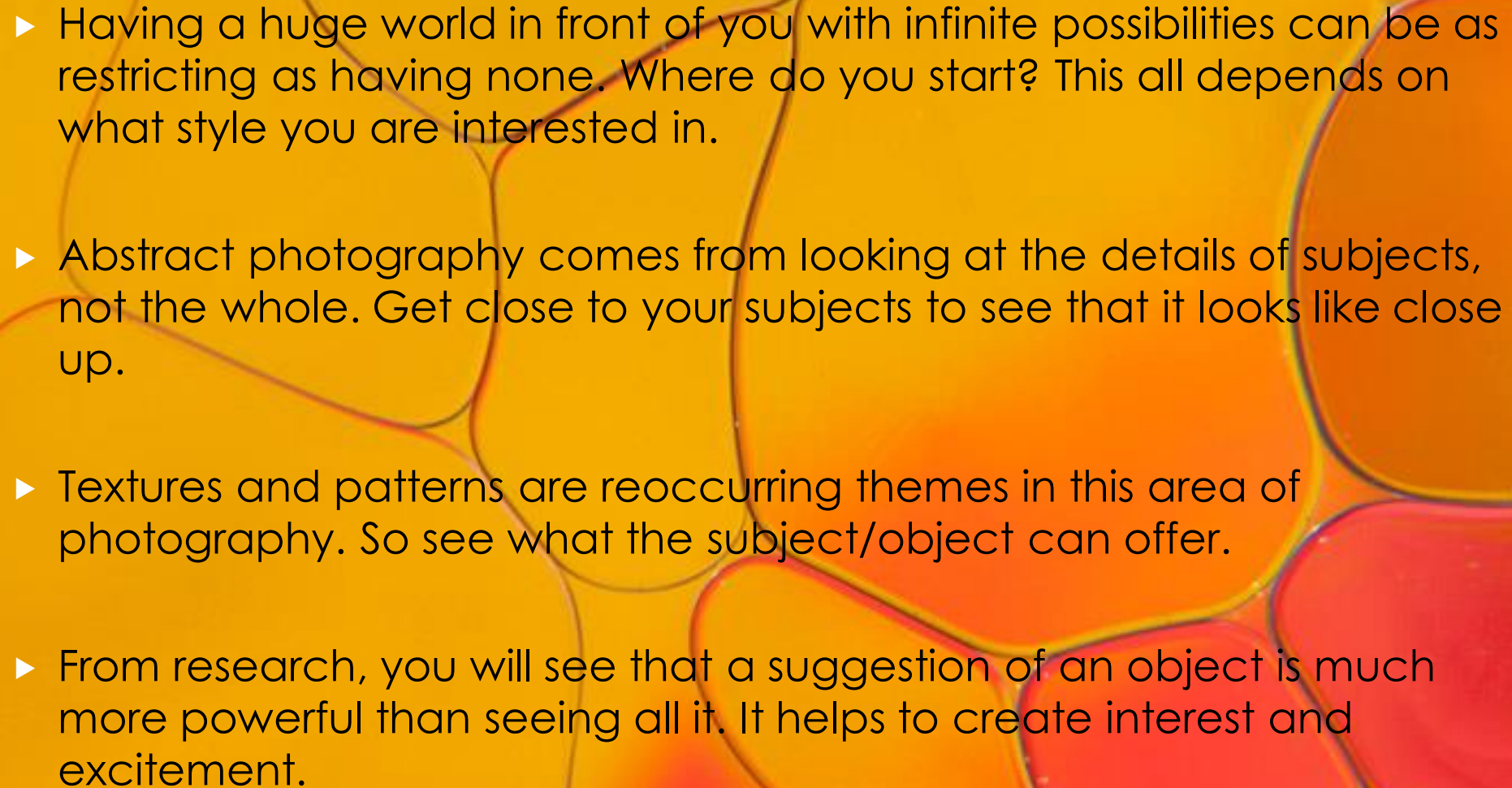


- ▶ As we move away from an object, we progressively lose information. This may become particularly pronounced at great distances like aerial photography where the view is minified as we rise above it.

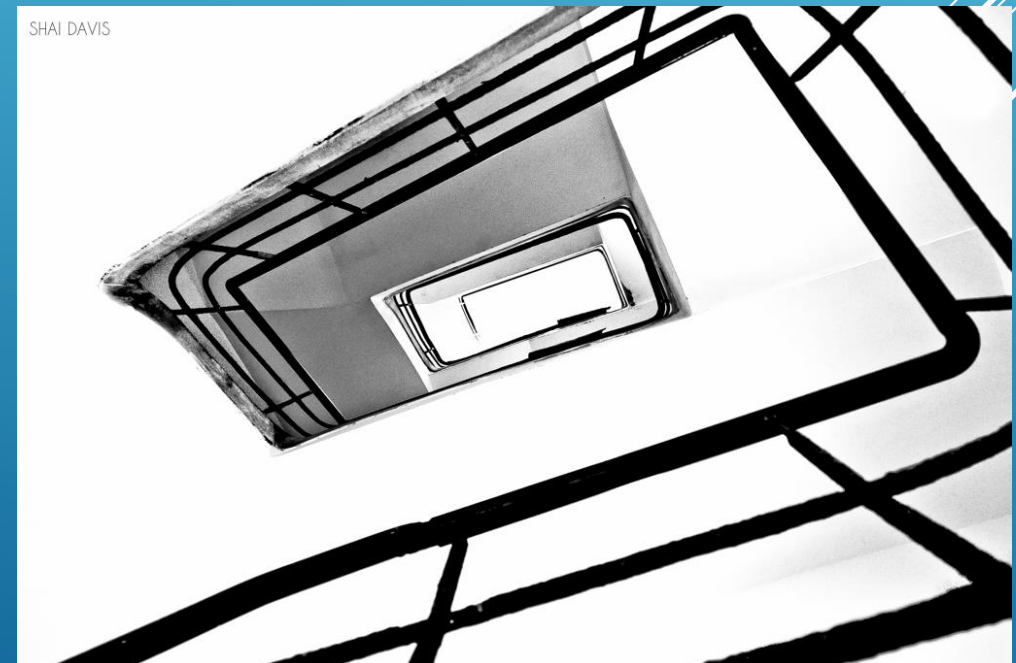
- ▶ Abstract photography is the view of an object where the entire shape is hidden from view. Fine Art photography overlaps the same notion. Yet, fine art focuses on a conceptual look at a subject and its surroundings.
- ▶ Fine art photography has the ability to work across many photographic themes. The photographer and their vision is more important than the photographed subject.
- ▶ Abstraction can be a simple macro image without much concept or idea behind it. It is another viewpoint and perspective of an object we might know inside out.

ABSTRACT VS. FINE ART



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- ▶ Having a huge world in front of you with infinite possibilities can be as restricting as having none. Where do you start? This all depends on what style you are interested in.
 - ▶ Abstract photography comes from looking at the details of subjects, not the whole. Get close to your subjects to see that it looks like close up.
 - ▶ Textures and patterns are reoccurring themes in this area of photography. So see what the subject/object can offer.
 - ▶ From research, you will see that a suggestion of an object is much more powerful than seeing all it. It helps to create interest and excitement.

- ▶ Using your Smart Phone is a great way to take ad hoc images of abstract ideas, on all your daily travels. This tool takes great quality images and it fits right into your pocket.
- ▶ Look for strong shapes. These add structure to your images. Get up close and fill the frame. This makes the object seem much bigger than it actually is.
- ▶ A great way to add a visual punch-in-the-face is to focus on colours. Contrasting colours grab people's attention where complementary colours show creative intent.



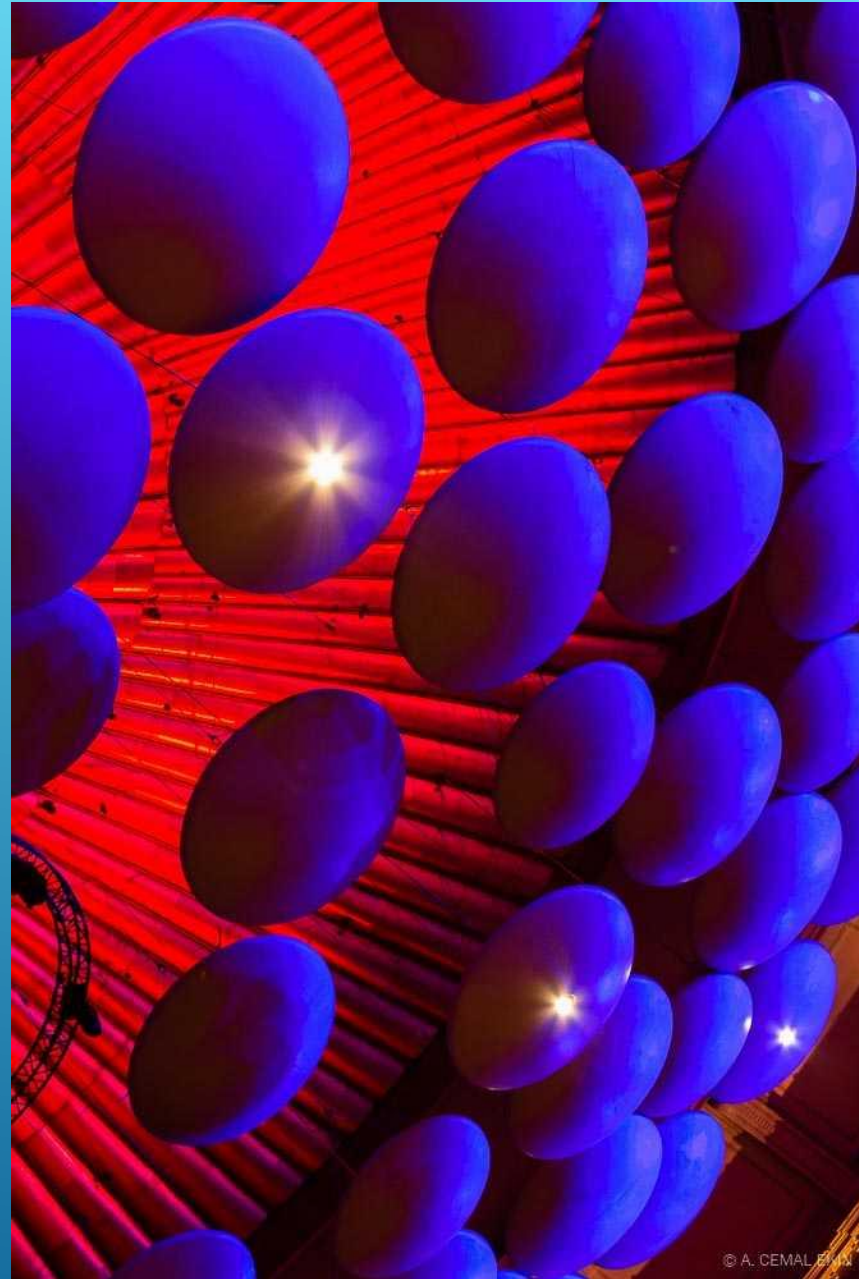


- ▶ Rather than looking at the building in front of you, see the shapes that make up the doors, windows, bricks, and roof. Identifying these circles, squares, rectangles, triangles is an exercise in deconstruction, freeing you from repetitive, overdone photographs and offering a new way to see the world.

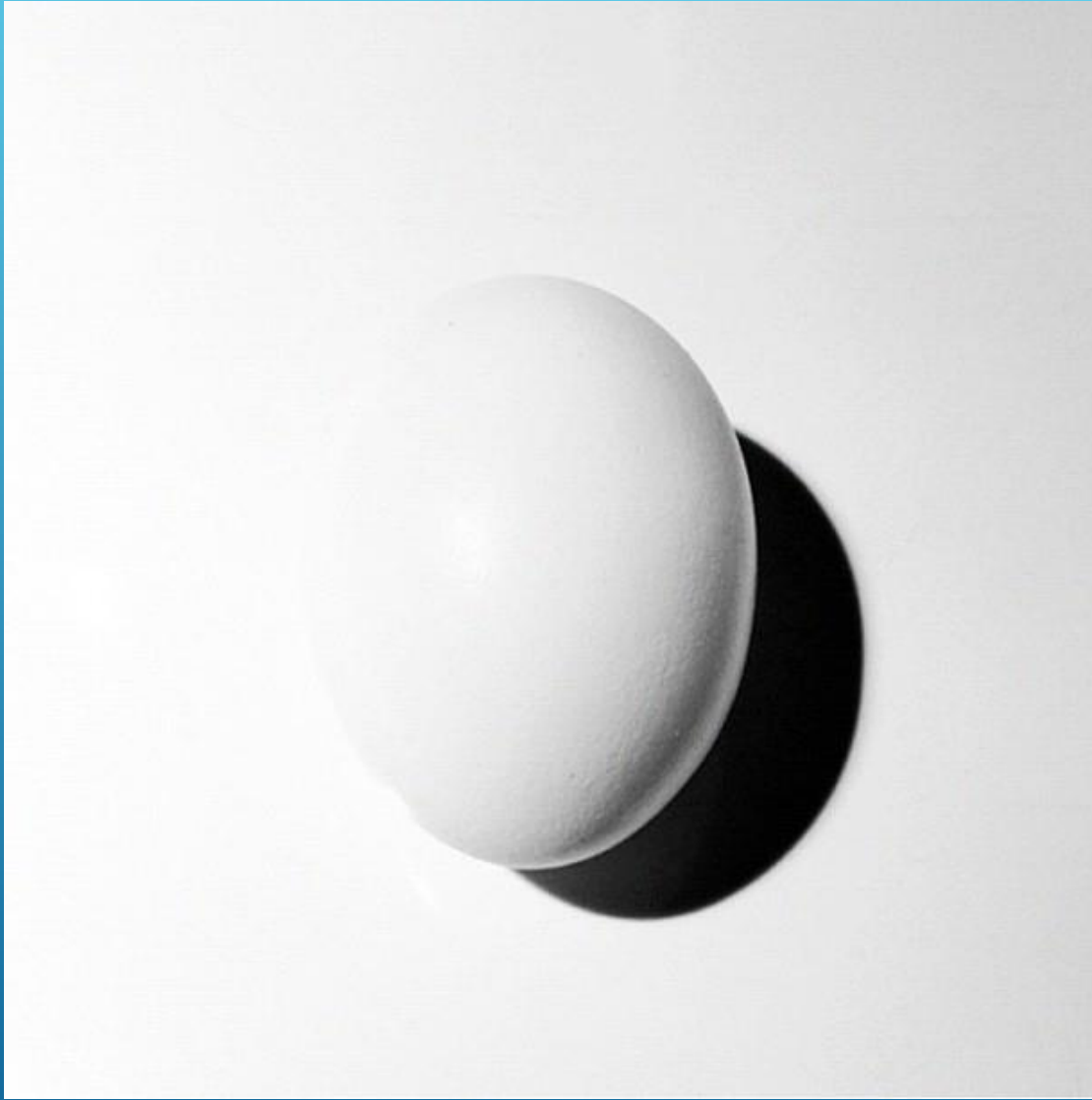




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SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Without shadows and highlights (the dark and light areas of your photo, respectively), there would be no photography. So it only makes sense that we test pushing it to the extreme, making the shadows and highlights themselves the subjects of our abstract photography.





BLACK AND WHITE

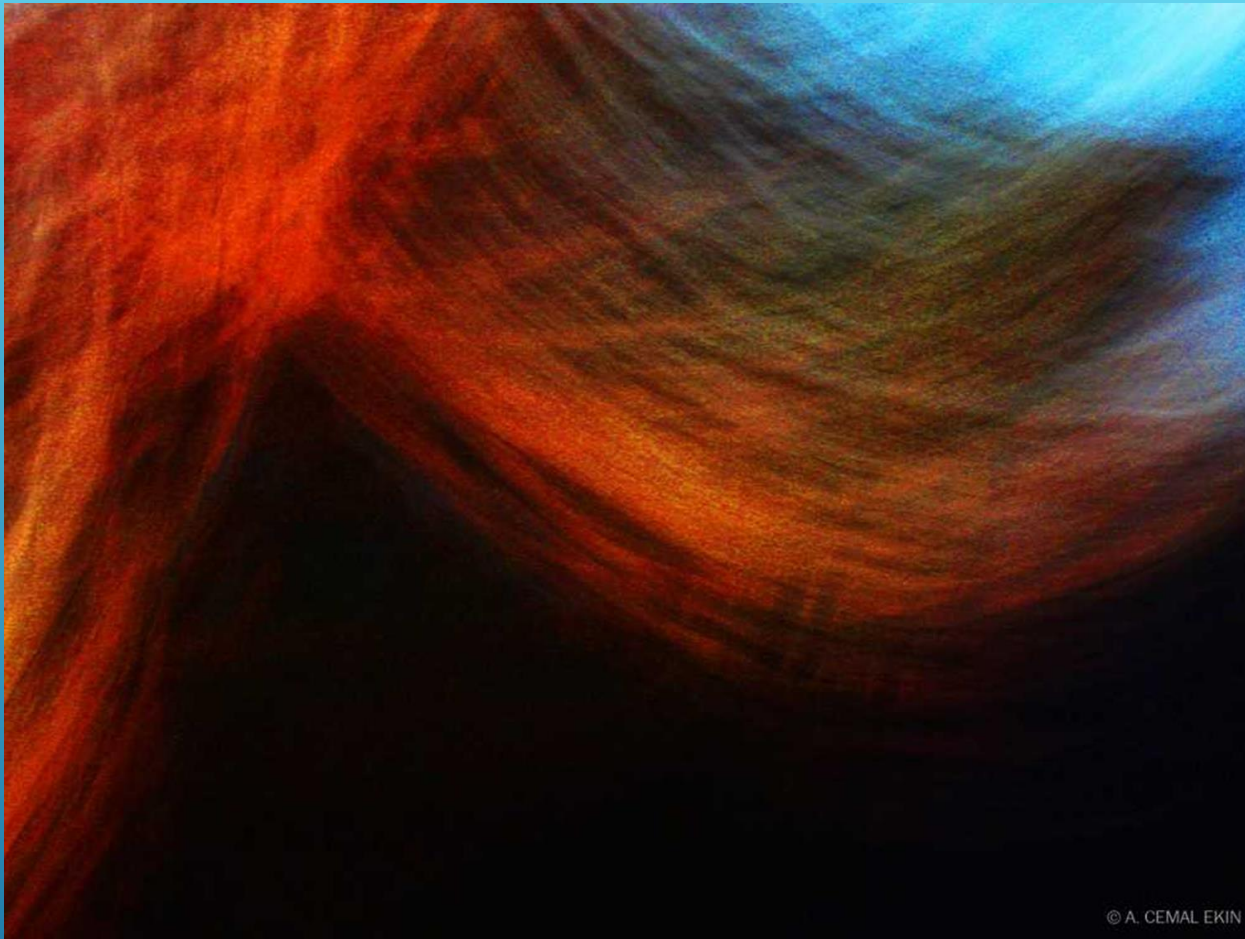
This technique works especially well in black and white. By stripping away meaning and colour from your image, your viewer is left with just the essentials of light and dark.



COLOUR

How do you take a picture of colour? Not a picture with colour – but a picture that is about colour itself. You know how sometimes words start to lose their meaning when you repeat it over and over?

Well, sometimes it helps to find a particularly colourful scene and just stare at it for a long time. Eventually, you'll stop seeing the individual items, and just notice the colours that comprise the scene. That's the time to click your shutter!

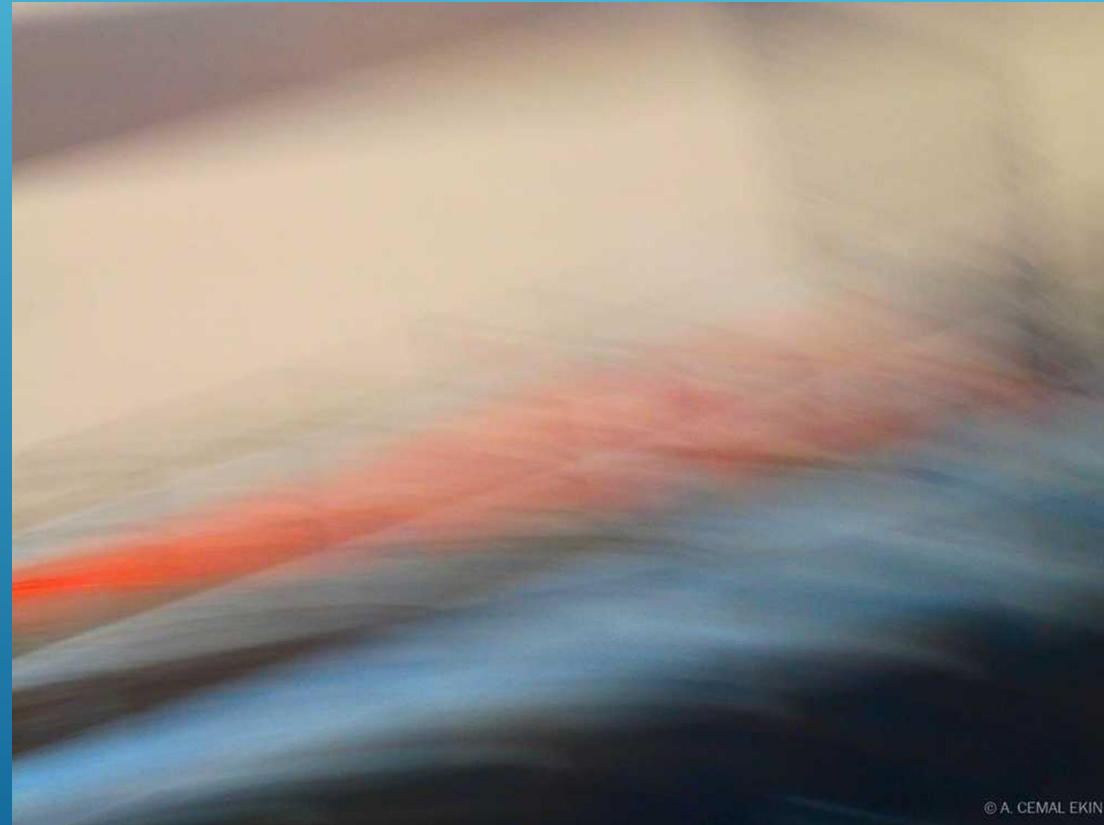


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TIME EXPOSURE AND MOVEMENT

With extended exposure and movement, the image can be distorted and blurred to create an abstract image of colour and flow.

Filters can help to increase the time lapse that the shutter is opened without over exposing the light producing an affect that presents an artistic image.

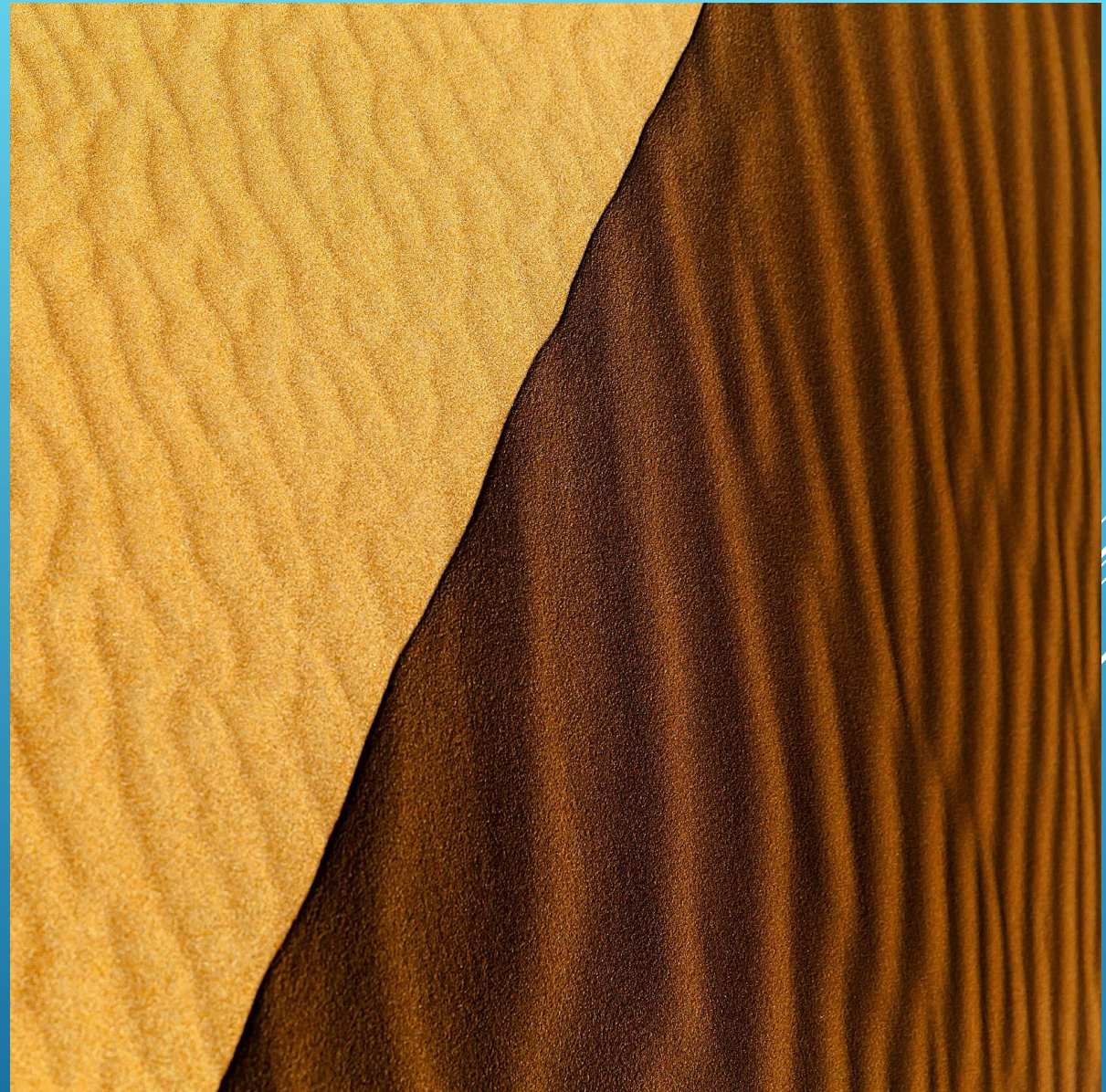


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TEXTURES

It's incredible how many emotions you can arouse with just texture; we have associations for silky, gritty, rough, finished, coarse, mesh, studded, and even furry.

As an exercise, name as many textures as possible and go on a Texture Hunt – documenting them and seeing what feelings they inspire. You'll often discover great colours, patterns and repetition in the textures you document, making it an absolute Abstract Wonderland.

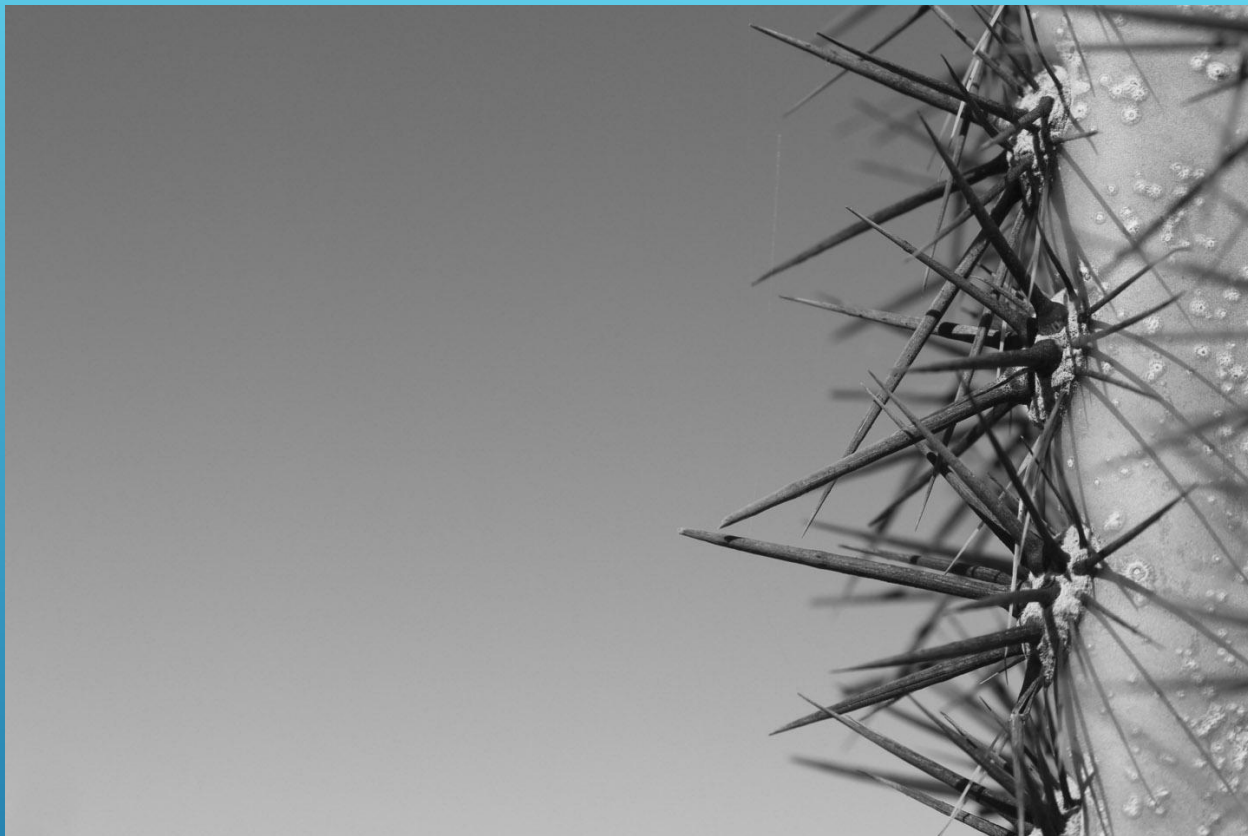






MACRO

There are entire alien worlds hiding right beneath us! Macro photography offers a wonderful opportunity to explore the foreignness of the everyday. It helps to have a Macro lens for your camera or phone, but the newest Smart Phone cameras do a great job of getting you really close to a subject.



Try looking at the veins of a leaf, or a close up of an creepy-crawler, or a computer circuit board, or the ridges of a roof. You'll discover just how abstract everyday objects can be. For added fun, post your photos without explaining what it is, and see if your viewers can identify them!

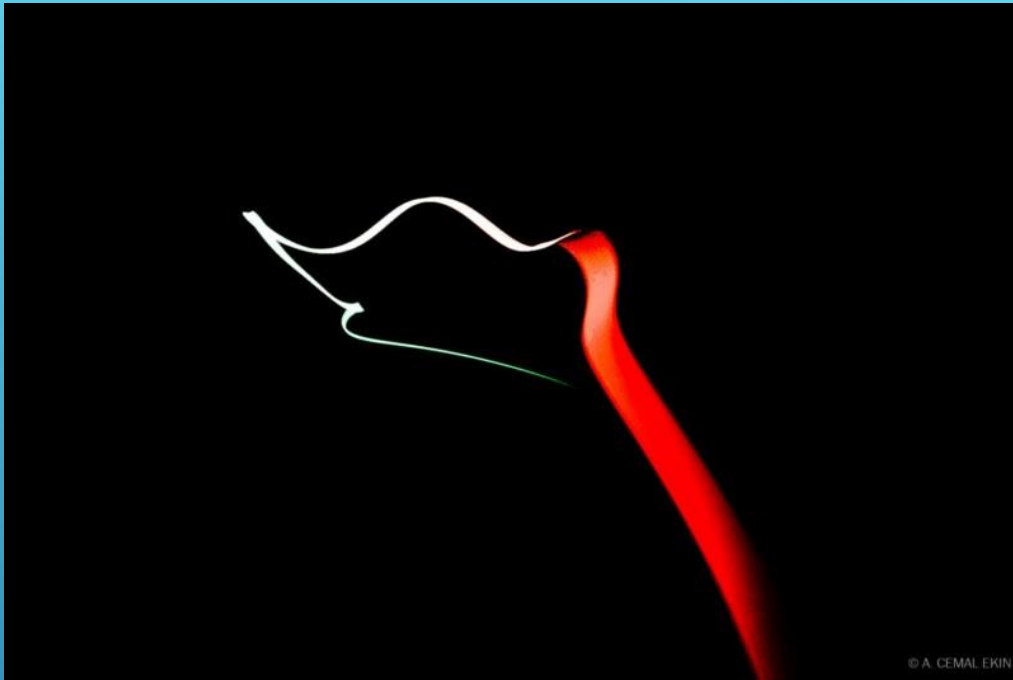
You can even shoot through a water-filled glass for some crazy distortions! Try different fabrics, wraps, plastics, and glasses (even sunglasses!) to see what you can come up with.



- ▶ As we get closer to some subjects, the detail that was not apparent may emerge as an abstract photograph separate from the object photographed.
- ▶ What you see on the right presents strong lines that seem to radiate from an arc and puncturing the black edges.
- ▶ The actual object becomes immaterial. The strong monochromatic orange colour accentuates the abstraction even further.

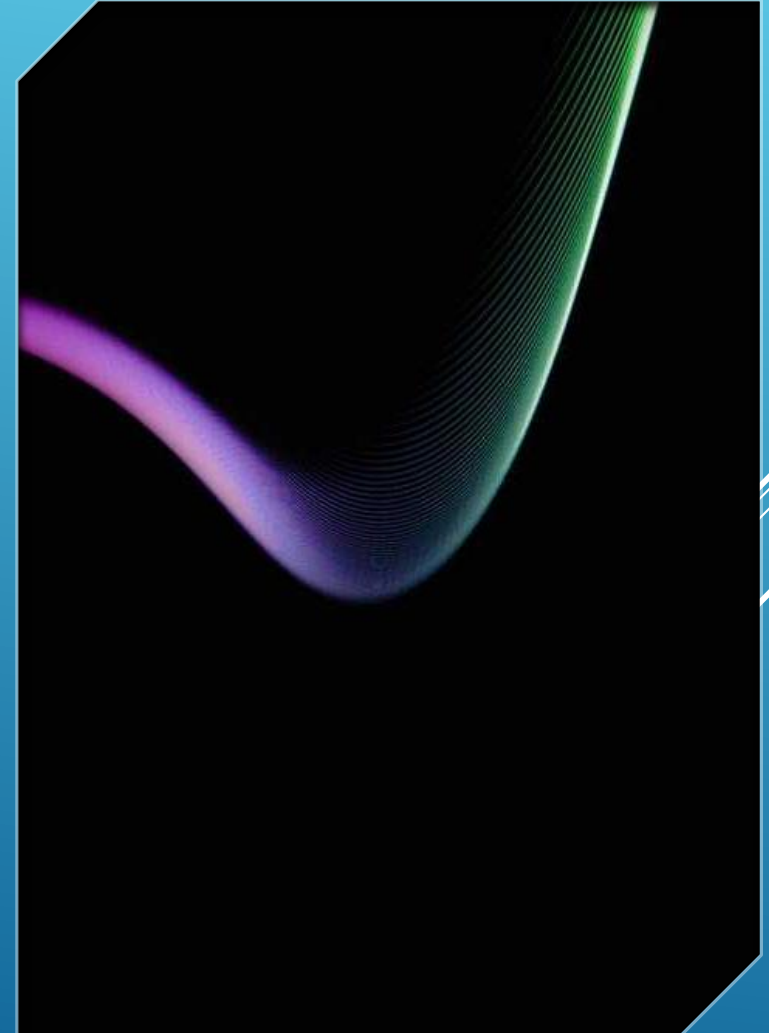


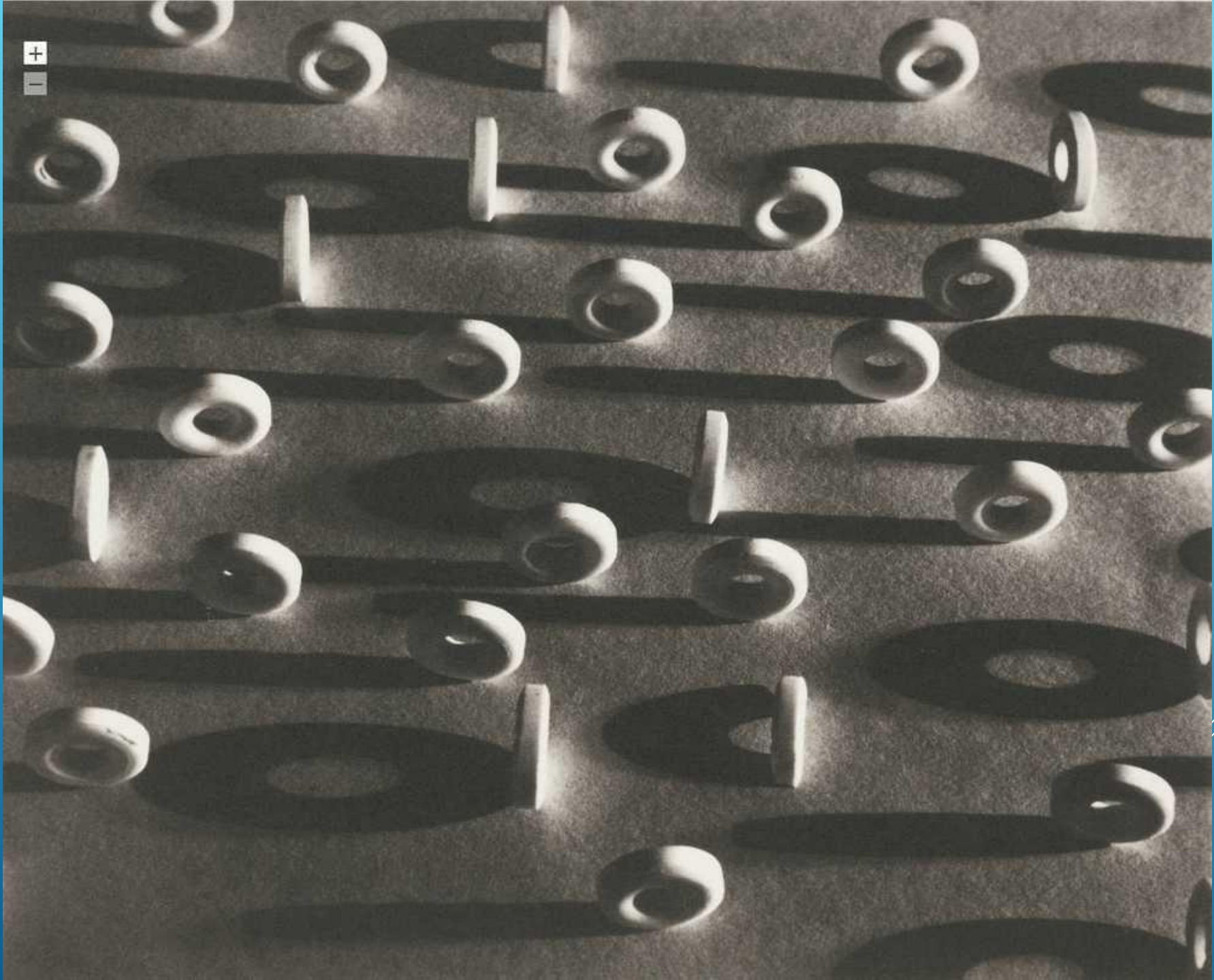
RANDOMIZED PATTERNS



You may or may not recognize what these images represents, that does not matter. The important thing to know is that it was created as pattern by the camera as it occurred in 5-6 seconds, whatever shape it may take.

Light painting is an easy way to get an abstract image with interesting shapes.



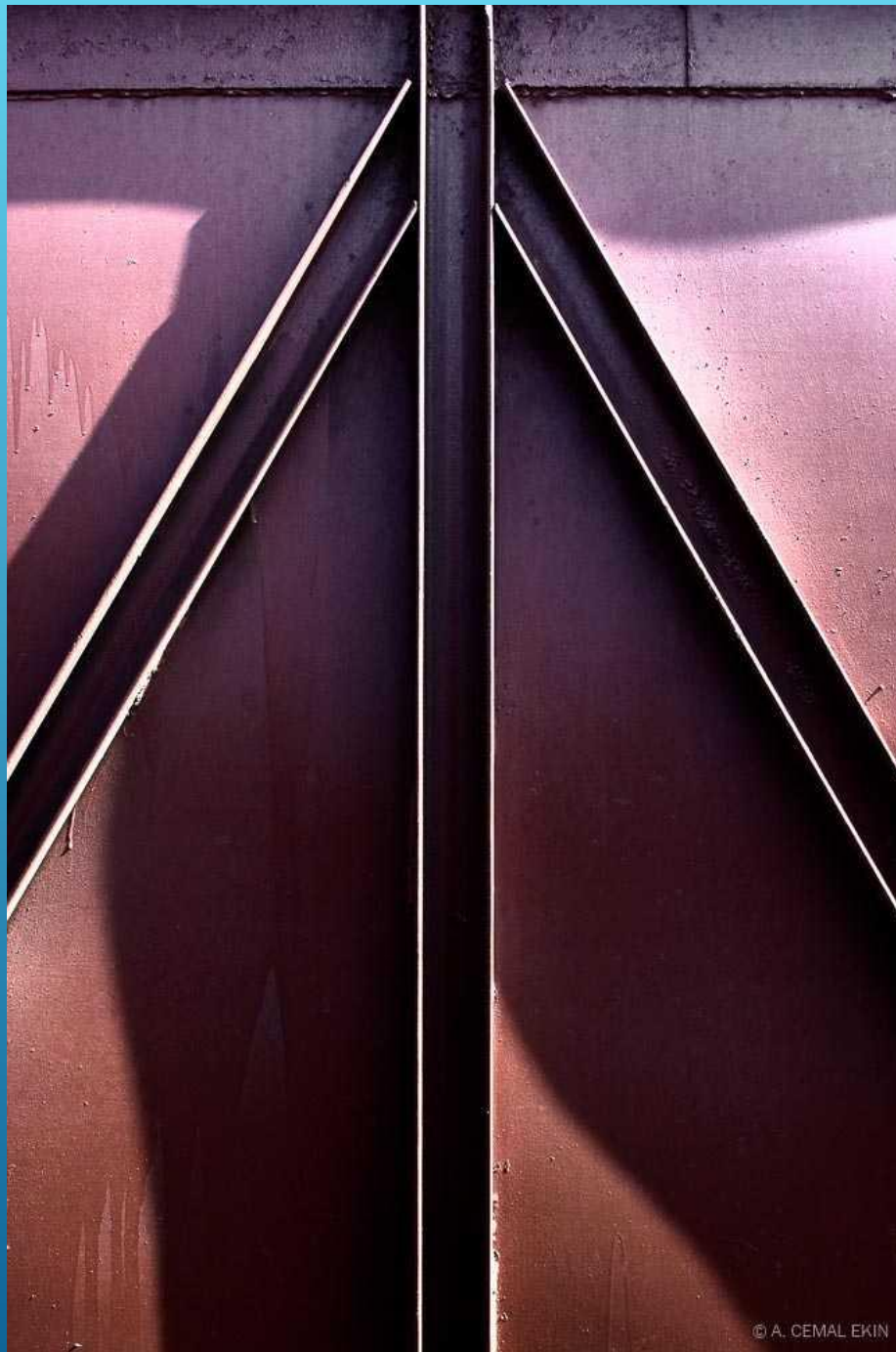


LINES

Lines are a basic tenant of composition in photography and a great way to add depth to your photographs. The gradient of light to shadow highlight the evocative lines.

The light reveals detail where the darkness separates the structure. The whiteness of the subject lends an ethereal look to the overall image, as if the subject were a pair of wings.





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Nature

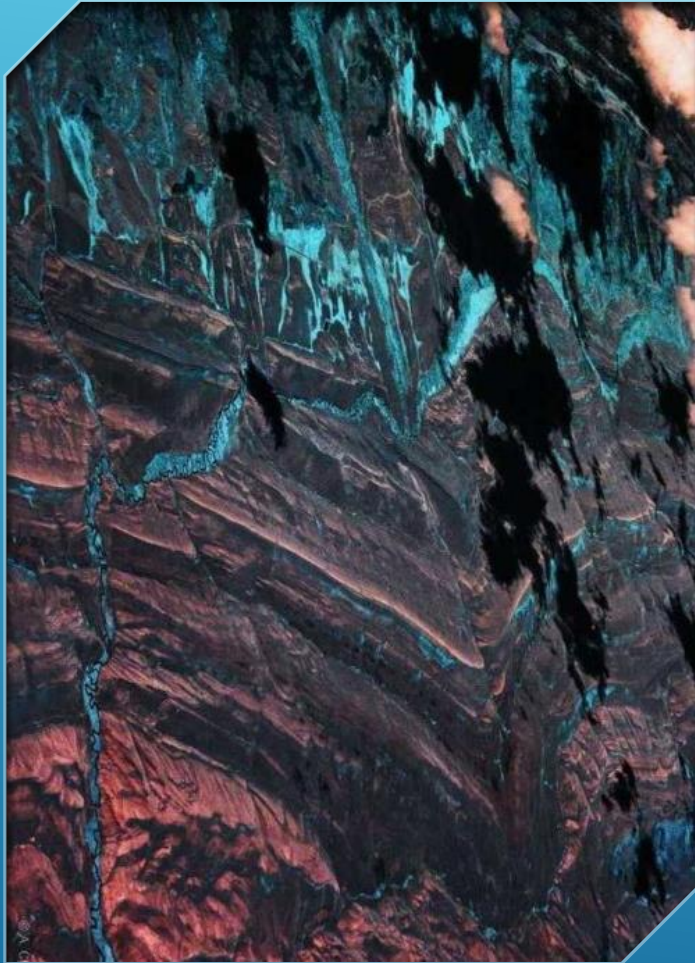
The complexity of organic life is both astounding and diverse. That's why it makes such good subject matter for abstract photography.

The photographer emphasises warm colours and soft organic lines to create an abstract image.









ALTERATION

Colour and tones are strong elements of a photograph. We expect certain relationships between different areas of the photograph and colours and tones in them. Either while photographing or in post production, it is possible to alter this expected structure and create a different kind of an abstract photograph.

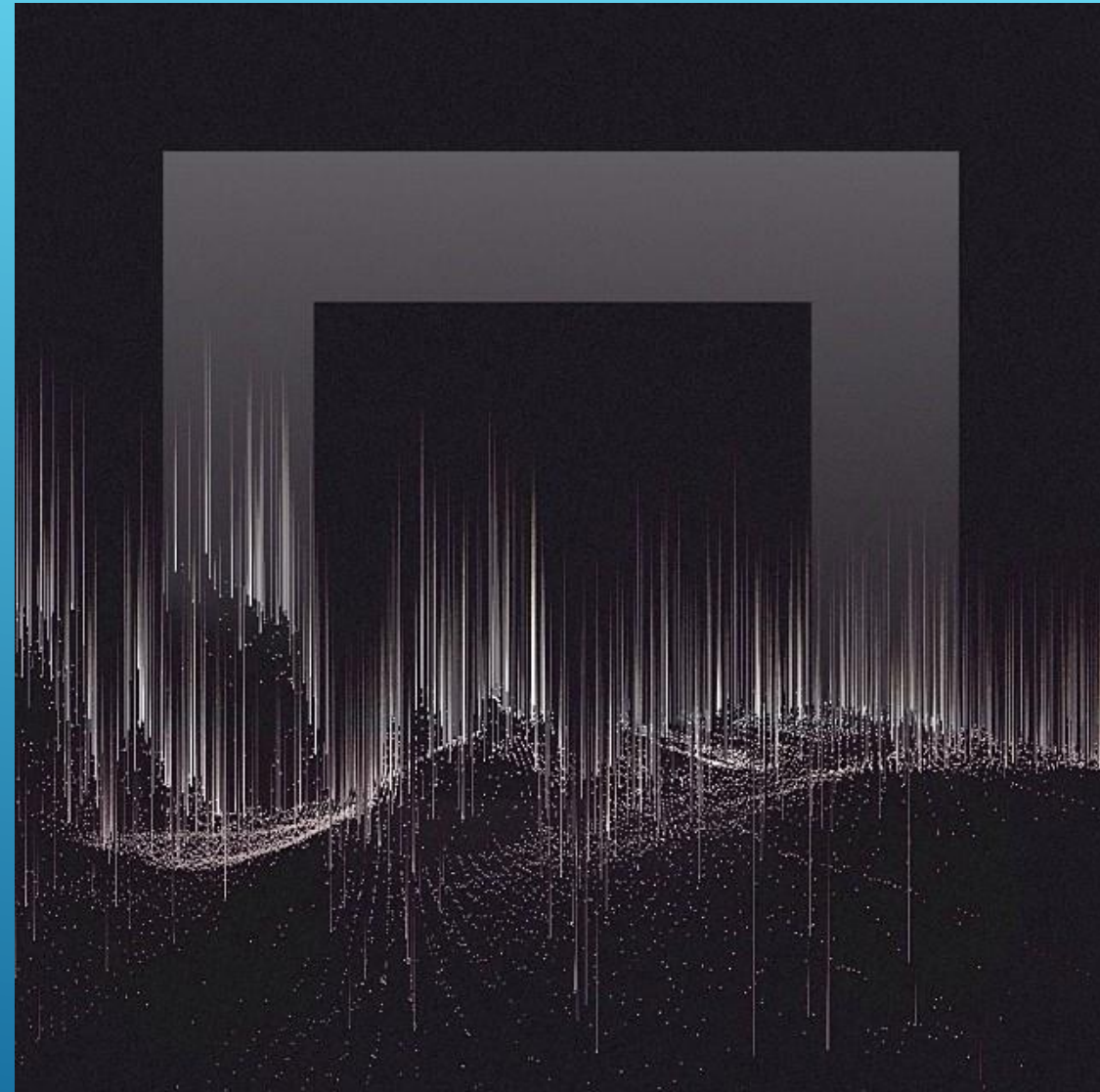
This photograph is done using an infrared sensitive camera.

POST PROCESSING

Post processing software can manipulate or alter an image to be something different to the original capture.

An abstract image is not defined by its inscrutability. It's defined by its prioritization of the elements, rather than the meaning, of the image.

In other words, you may recognize the subject of a photograph – but if the photo is not about the subject, but is about its colour, or form, or structure, for example, it can still be abstract.



REFERENCES

- ▶ <https://expertphotography.com/complete-guide-abstract-photography-112-tips/>
- ▶ <https://petapixel.com/2017/03/20/introduction-abstract-photography/>