



HOW TO SEE A PICTURE

By Graham Dainty FPSNZ

The simple keys to improving your photography

Being a photographer is the same as being an artist. You are expressing yourself through a photographic medium. Some of us express a lot and some keep their expressions quite well hidden. An artist who sculpts or paints has to have a clear vision of the finished product before they start or the finished art work will be a mess. Don't close yourself off to other mediums and styles, you may not like what you see or hear but that doesn't mean it's not right.

It's really very easy to get a photo, A photographer generally just has to put their camera up to their eye and record what is in front of them, but to get a great photo requires you to think like an artist. Before you get your camera out you should have these thoughts:

What attracted my eye to this scene / object? - light, colour, shape, mood. How does this scene/ object make me feel? - happy, quiet, sad, relaxed, alive How can I make the viewer of the final picture feel the same? this is the tricky one and this is the key to it all.

A good way to start is look at other photo's that you really like and analyse them.

For example a landscape:

What attracts my eye to this subject? - firstly the colour (flat misty / bright sunset / pastel dawn / overall tone – green forest – golden plains etc)

What is the composition? - is it balanced, on the thirds, bulls eye centre of interest, is it a wide horizontal shot or a tight in close shot, lots of detail or sparse of detail.

How does it make me feel?

How did the photographer achieve this? It will be the perfect combination of the above.

With your camera still in its bag , pre-visualize the final shot. One way to do this is look at your subject and think what you've seen before in a similar subject, " I saw a shot in a magazine once that stuck in my mind, it had a great bold foreground dead centre bottom third with the lake disappearing into the fog". This isn't cheating, your photo will look very different from the one you remember, but the design elements will be similar, you remembered the photo because it worked, so yours will also.

Now take your camera out and try different angles, lens, filters, anything else you can think of to obtain your photograph. Take your time! If it isn't working try and figure out what's missing and include it or wait until the conditions are right. It may be a long-term project that you may have to visit many times to get right.

The keys are;

Pre-visualization -- The ability to have an idea of the final shot or at least a step towards it. Sometimes the magic happens and you are in the right place and the right time and it all falls into place perfectly.

Being able to create mood – With composition, colour, subject.

Keep a scrap book, never throw out a photo magazine without cutting out the photo's you really like in them. You will soon have a great source of inspiration and a standard for you to aim for.

Study other photographers, study paintings and other artists. You may not like their style or medium but most art type people (including photographers) are passionate about their art so they will generally tell you a lot about what makes them tick and how they achieve the look they want.

Take your time with the taking of the photograph.

Analyze your own results.

Be serious about your work but don't take the whole thing too seriously, have fun.

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