

Pictorial Elements of Composition

PHO 2700 Advanced Digital Photography

Composition

Unless the visual elements in a photograph are organized and presented in a meaningful way, the image is likely to become only a shallow account of subjects and events that would have seemed far more intriguing had some planning taken place before the shutter was released.

Organizing the visual elements and presenting them in such a way as to convey meaning, mood, emotion or insight is the function of composition.

Composition

As you gain better control of your medium, you may increase your ability to emphasize important details and relationships, to subordinate others, to guide the attention of viewers, and to affect them intellectually and emotionally.

Composition

This lecture will serve as a basic expansion on terms you may have learned in Beginning Digital Photography. At the very least, these elements will help the you to further develop your composition skills and judgment.

Composition

- Composition refers to the way in which visual details are selected and organized within a photograph to convey meaning
 - The organization will alter the content of the visual image, and relationships among the visual elements
 - The approach taken depends on the photographer's interpretation in the scene

Composing Photographs

- Without the mind's organizing power the visual world would be completely chaotic
 - The mind helps us pick and choose what we see
 - We view details until a pattern of meaning emerges

Composing Photographs

- The mind, not the camera, selects and organizes visual detail so that meaning emerges
 - If a photographer is going to convey meaning, then the photograph must be organized around an idea to shared
 - Without this, a photograph is little more than a chaotic record of what happened before the shutter was released

Basic Compositional Concepts

Balance

- Achieving balance within your composition can be accomplished in several ways:
 - Symmetry
 - Using a visual counter-weight for a large mass
 - Color palette
 - Specific arrangement of large masses within the frame



Balance



Balance

Framing

- Fill the frame
 - Determine whether the subject's surroundings are important to the scene
 - If not, make the surroundings small in relation to the subject
- Move in until all extraneous information is no longer in the scene
 - Creates impact
 - Reveals more detail



Framing

Framing

Edward Steichen



Foreground - Background Relationship

- Include a foreground object to establish a sense of scale
- An overhanging branch or archway will provide depth, and guide the viewer's eye towards the subject
- Foreground details may contain information about the scene in the background

Foreground - Background





Foreground - Background

Leading Lines

- Lead the viewer's eye on a path through an image
- Direct the viewer's attention to a subject
- Can suggest a feeling or mood

Leading Lines





Leading Lines

Leading Lines

Jerry Uelsmann



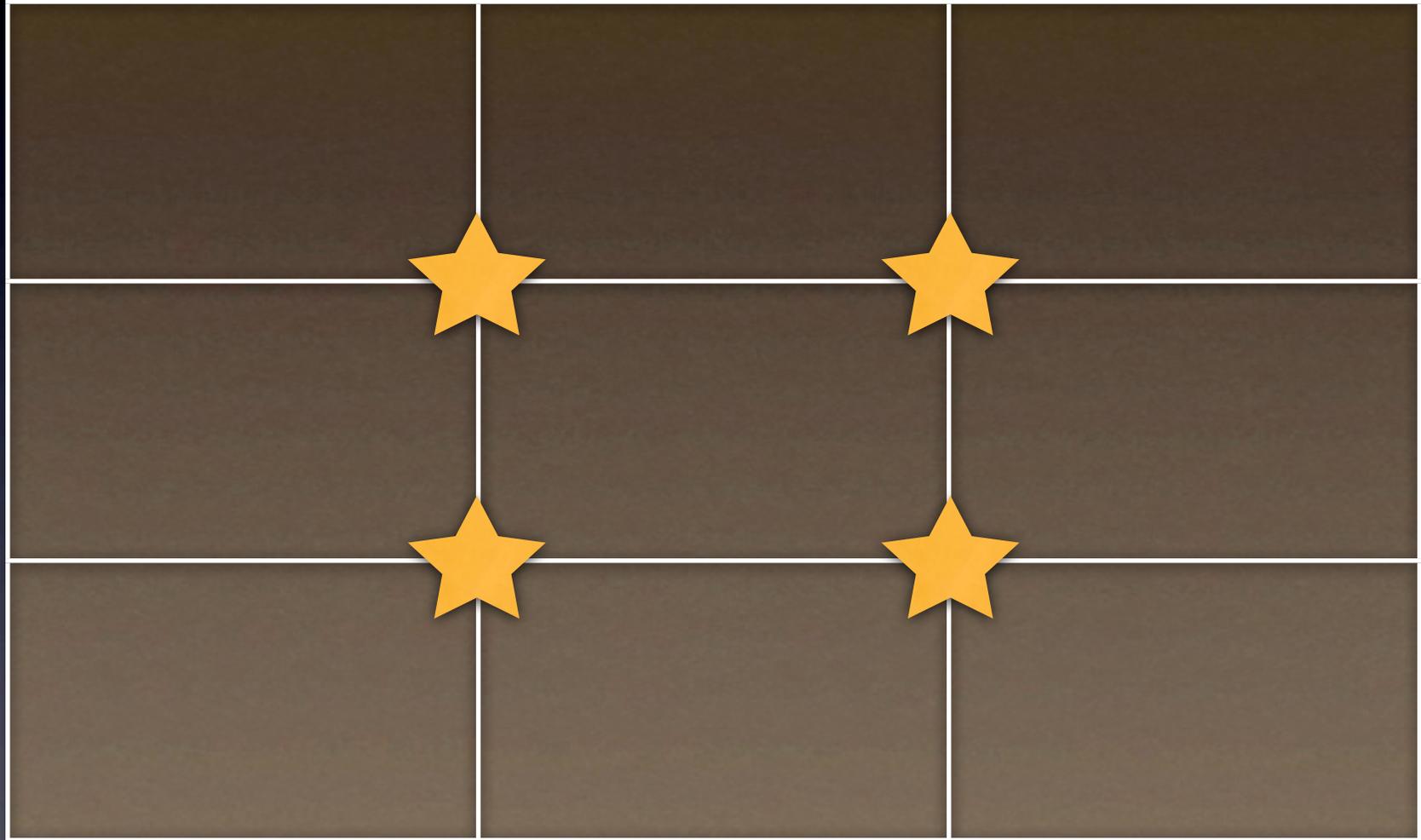
The Rule of Thirds

- To use the Rule of Thirds, divide the frame into thirds both vertically and horizontally.
- Where the lines cross are 4 intersection points. These points are ideal locations to put your subject for a balanced composition.
- The horizon should be placed at either the upper third or lower third (horizontally).

The Rule of Thirds

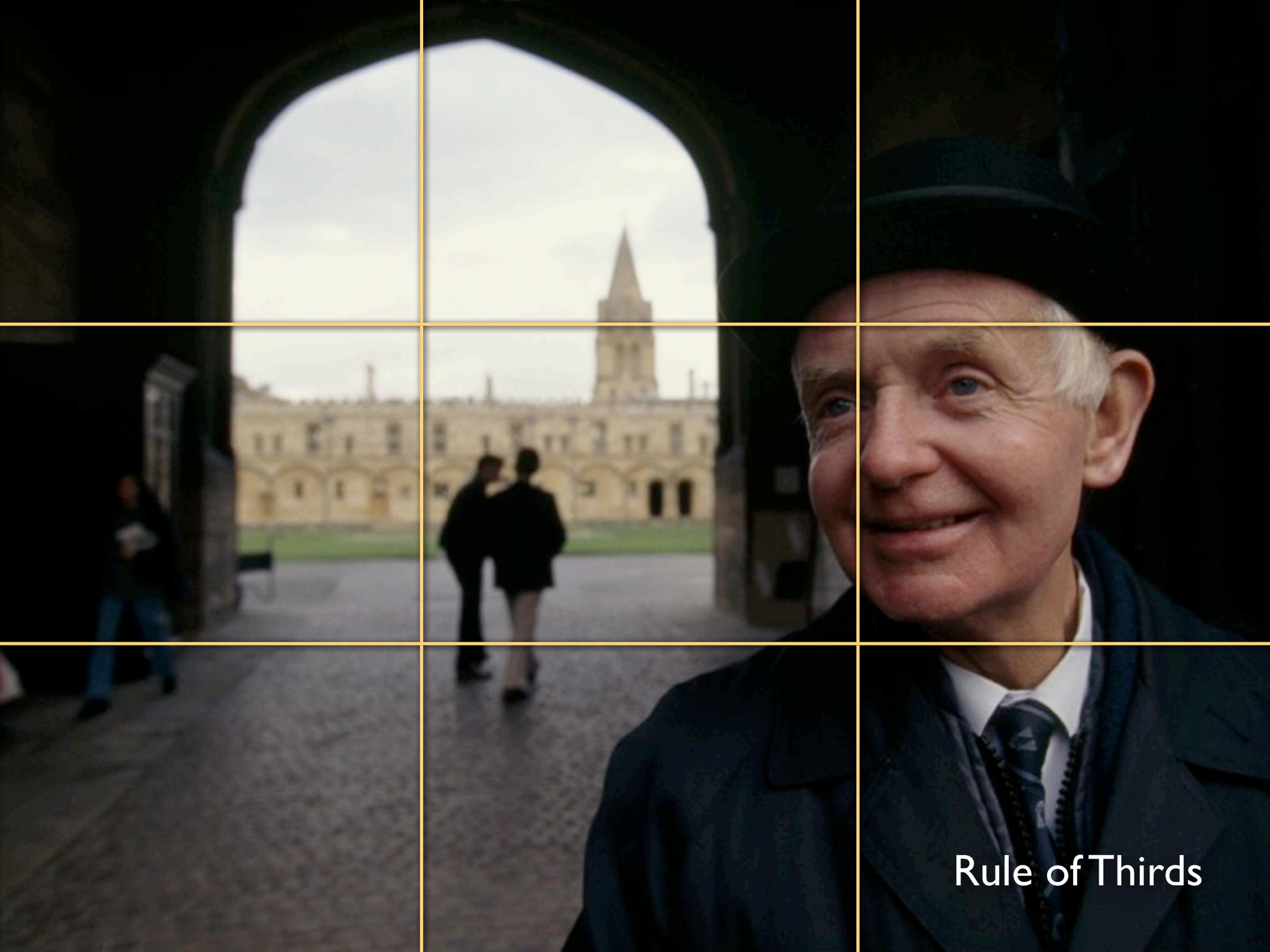


The Rule of Thirds





Rule of Thirds



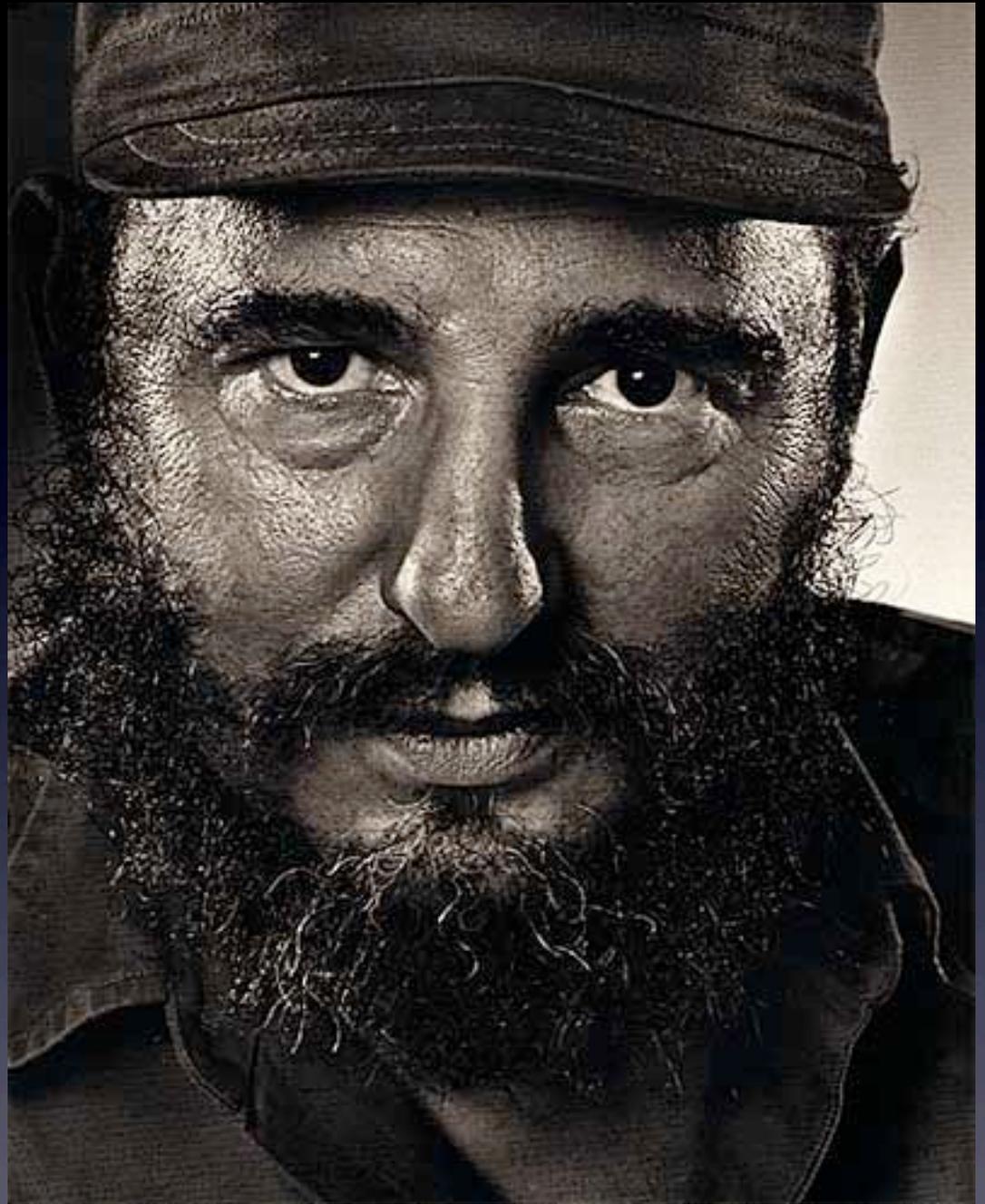
Rule of Thirds

Shape & Form

- Shape in photography refers to the 2-dimensional outline of an object
 - A silhouette is an example of shape in its purest form
- Form refers to the apparent 3-dimensionality of an object
 - A side-lit object reveals its true form with shadows and highlights

Form

Yousuf Karsh





Shape

Pictorial Elements of Composition

Pictorial Elements

Pictorial elements describe the characteristics of an image

- Line
- Mass
- Tone
- Contrast
- Color

Pictorial Elements

Line

- Refers to the arrangement (real or imagined) of outlines, contours, and other connecting elements within the image



Joshua Lutz



Matthew Ferri



Kristin Ashburn



Heather Liebenson



Alex Coppel



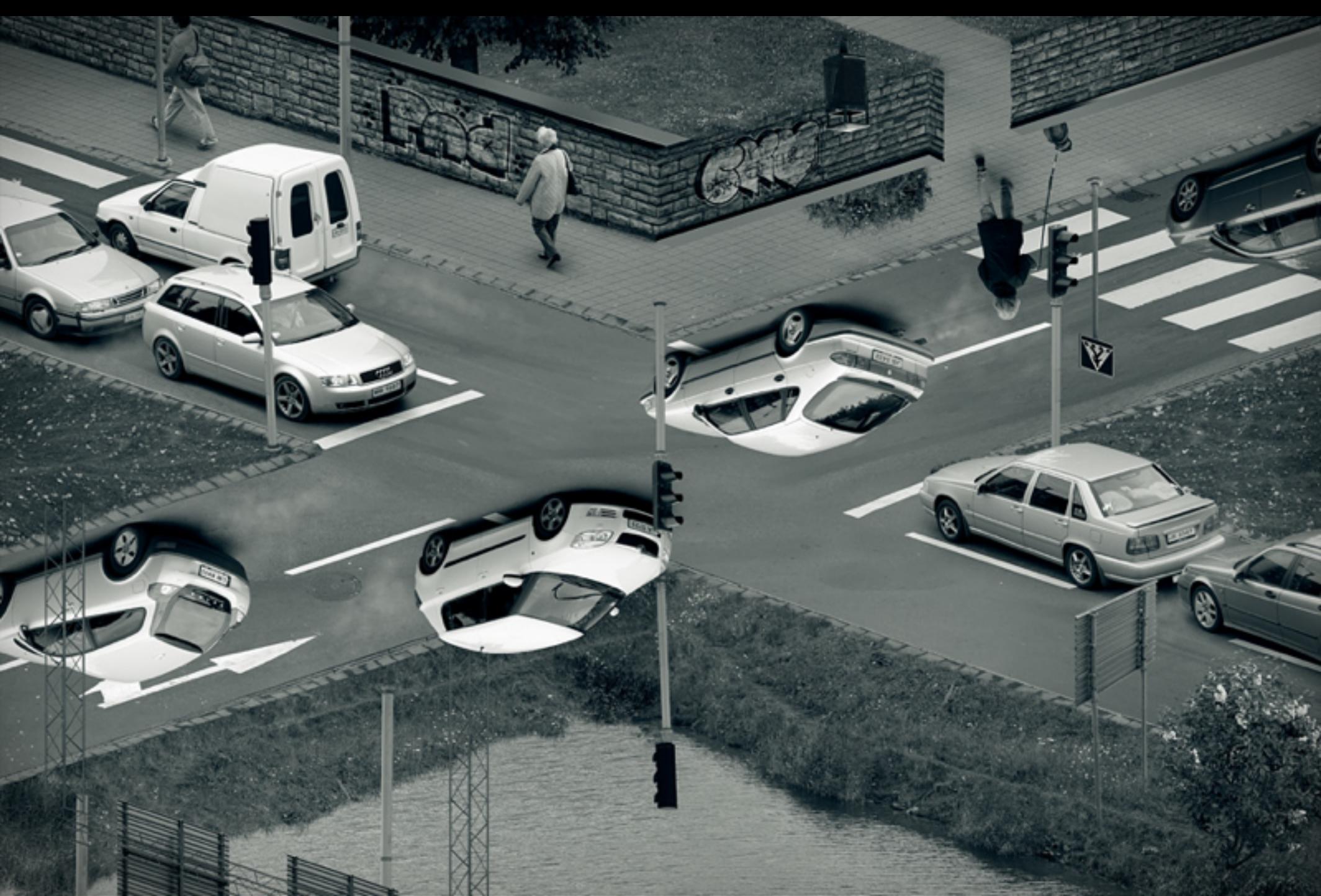
Mark Blinch



Annie Griffiths



David Doubilet



Erik Johansson



Ilya Naymushin



Vivek Prakash



Scott G. Winterton



Javier Manzano



Erik Johansson

Pictorial Elements

Line

- Refers to the arrangement (real or imagined) of outlines, contours, and other connecting elements within the image

Mass

- Refers to the areas of density within the image that cohere together



Thomas Senf



Justin Guariglia



Lee Balzano



Alex Druzhinin



Dionys Moser



Annie Leibovitz



Thom Jackson

Pictorial Elements

Line

- Refers to the arrangement (real or imagined) of outlines, contours, and other connecting elements within the image

Mass

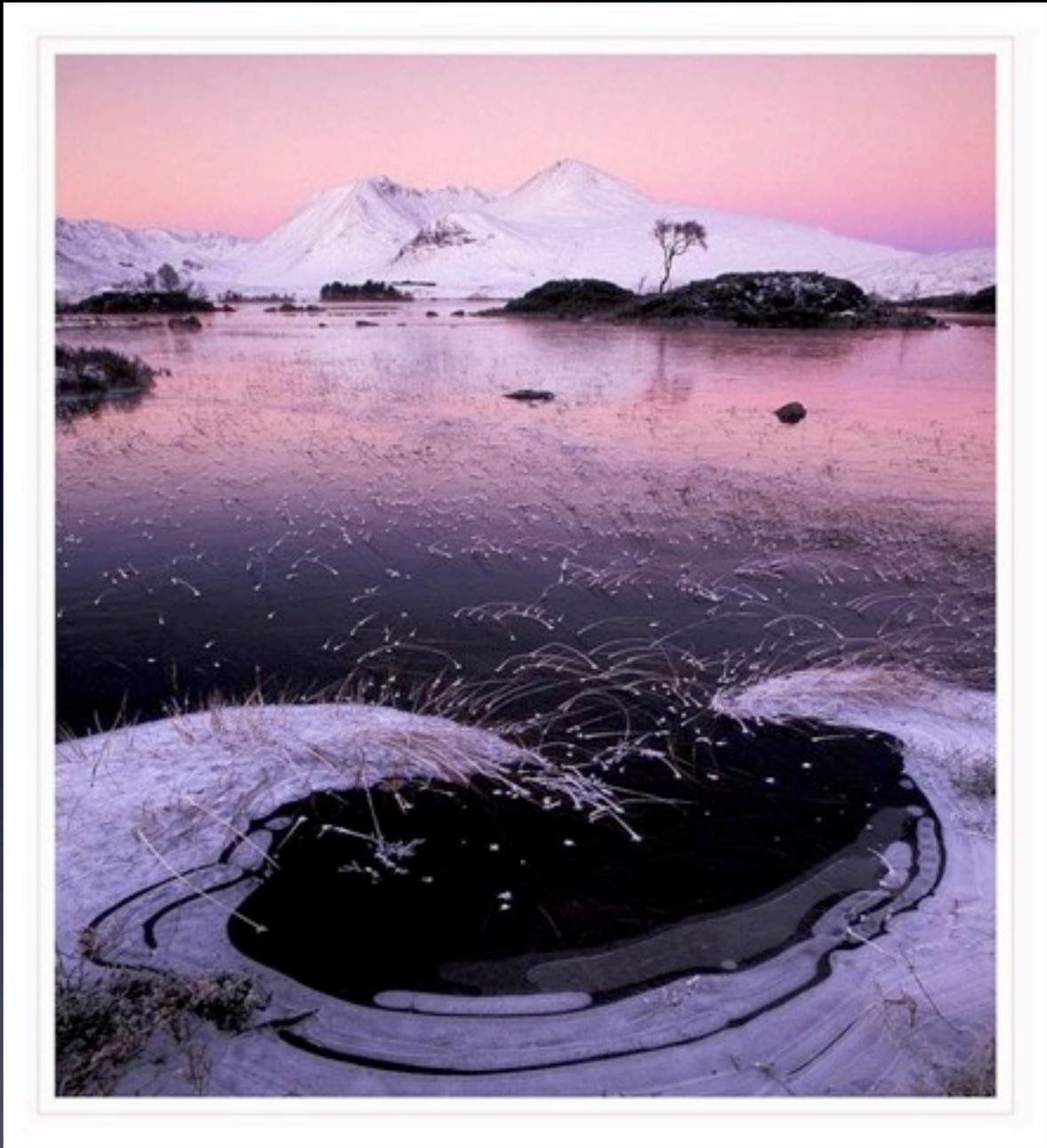
- Refers to the areas of density within the image that cohere together

Tone

- Refers to the color quality or brightness value in a portion of an image



Lars Topelmann



Brian Clark



Panya Wong



Irving Penn



David Roossien

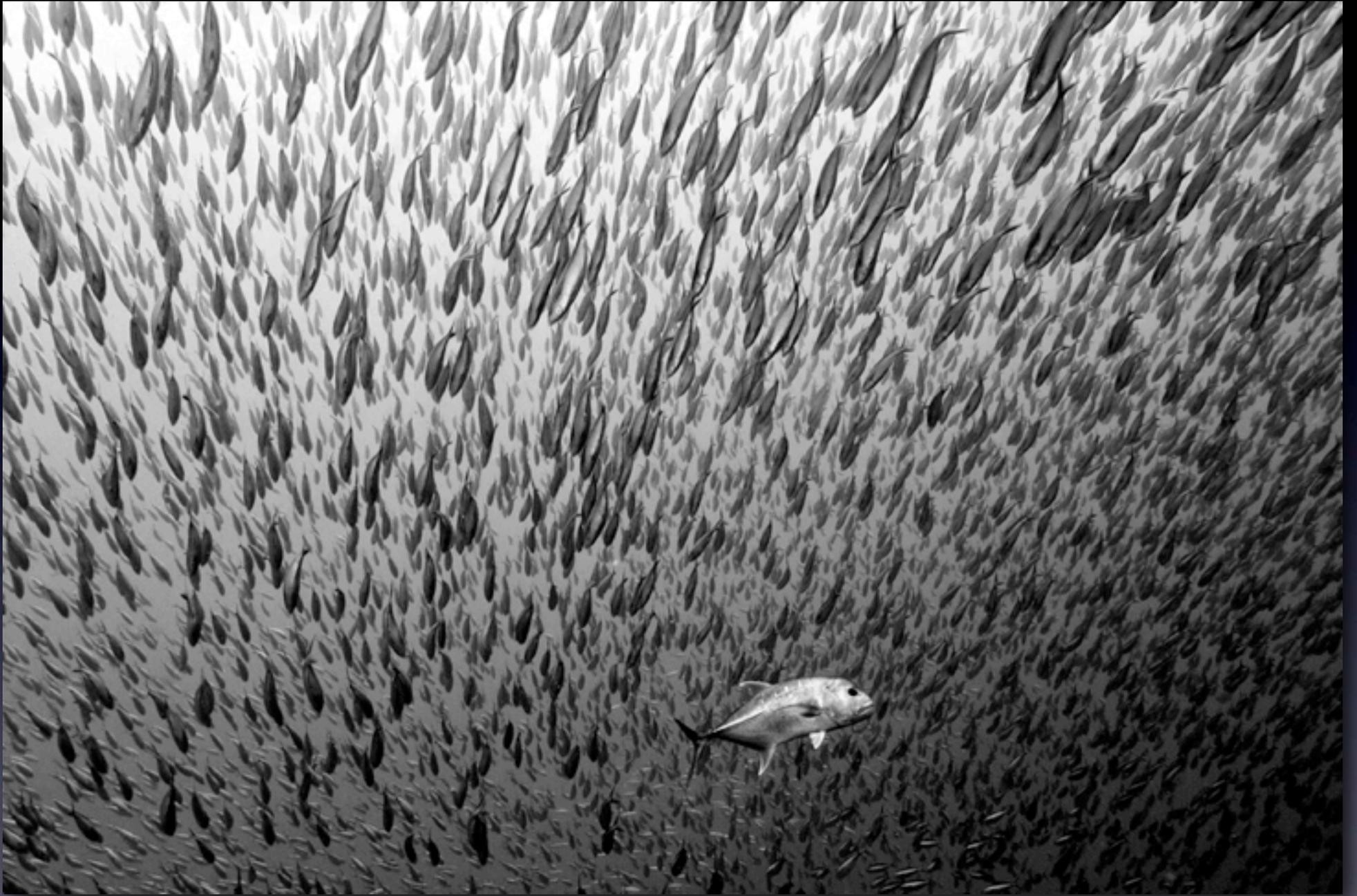
Pictorial Elements

Contrast

- Refers to the magnitude or brightness differences between adjacent masses



Doug Burgess



Fransisca Harlijanto



Eric Guth



Shane Rucker



THE ILLUMINATED MAN

Dwane Michals



Karl Root



Amd Wiegmann



Asif Hassan



Silvi Gecht



Guillermo Labarca



Irving Penn



Ansel Adams

Pictorial Elements

Contrast

- Refers to the magnitude or brightness differences between adjacent masses

Color

- To the visual sensations produced by different wavelengths of light



Eric Fredline



Andrzej Dragan



Joel Sartore



Tim Laman



James L. Stanfield



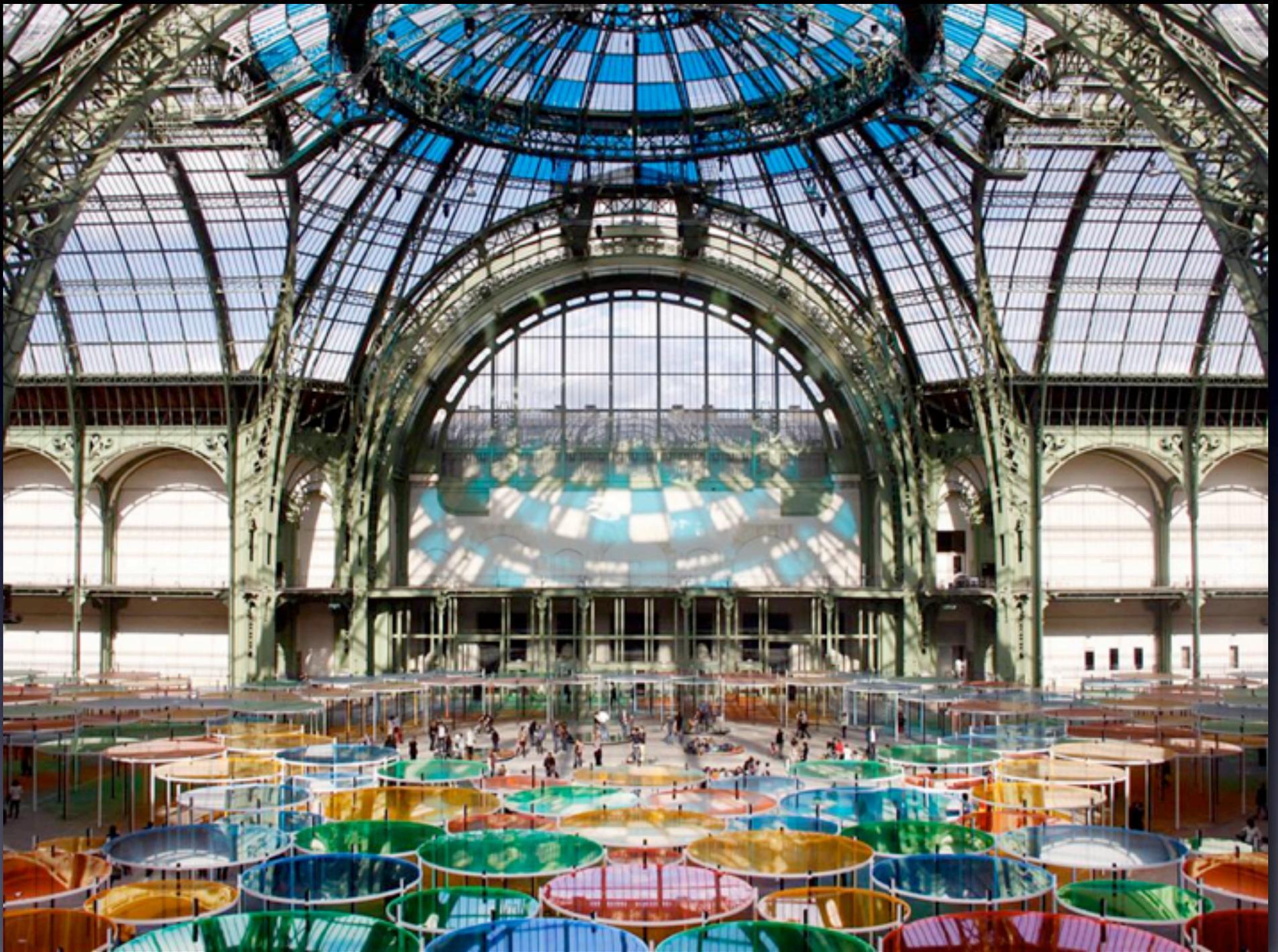
Norbert Rosing



Bill Hatcher



Jodi Cobb



Lance McMillan



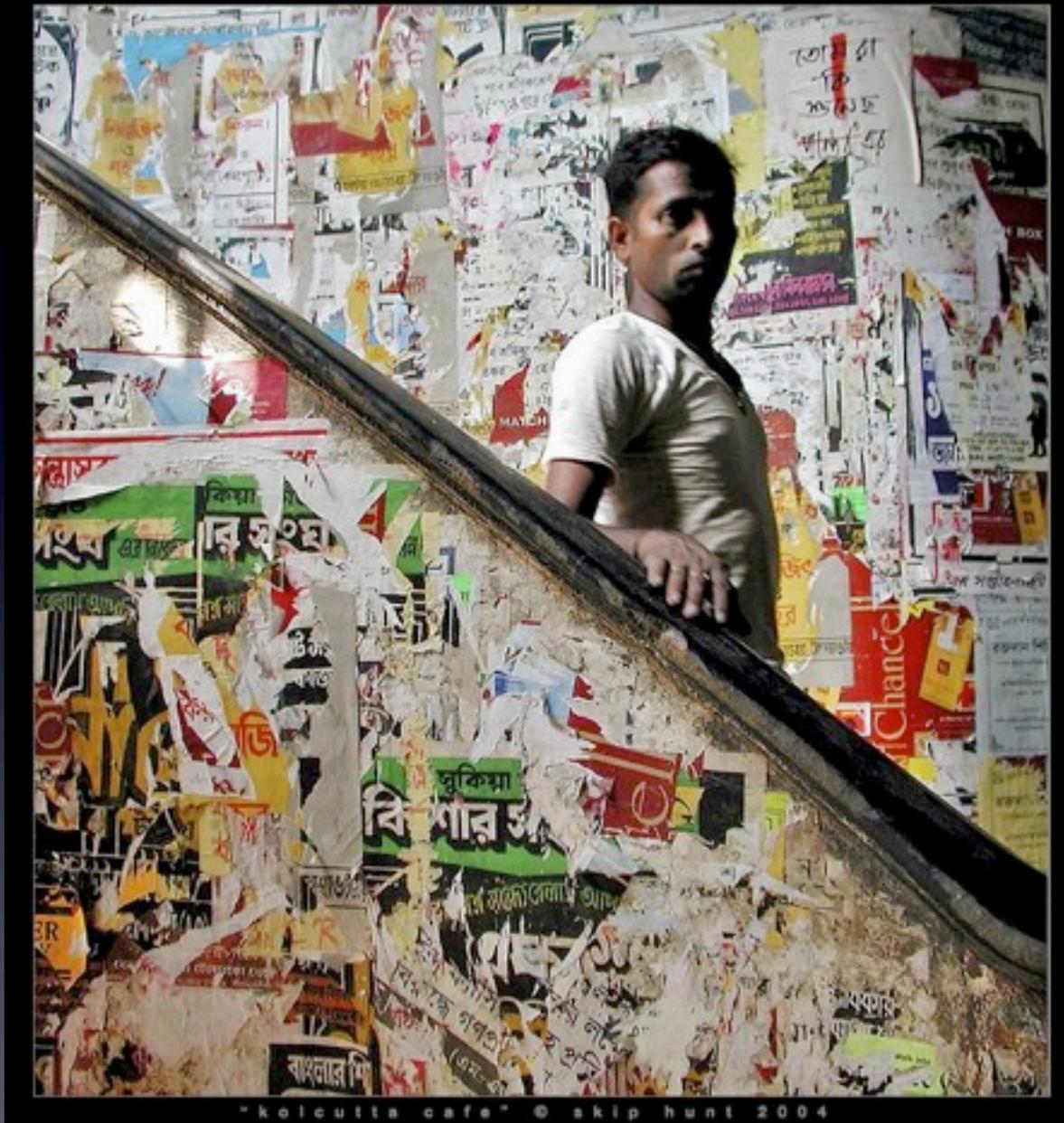
Annie Leibovitz



Erik Johansson

Functions of Composition

- One function of composition is to achieve emphasis within the image
- In an effective composition, pictorial elements within the scene are *selected* and *emphasized* to communicate the photographer's ideas
- Other elements are subordinated, or eliminated altogether
- Thus, a major function of composition is to focus the viewer's attention upon certain details. Doing this, the photographer communicates a central or dominant idea.



Skip Hunt



Nina Andersen