

ABSTRACT READING PART 1

TIPS FOR CREATING GREAT ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY

BY RON BIGELOW

Abstract photography can create very impressive photos. However, people tend to perceive abstract images differently than other images. This is because abstract images rely more on form, color, and curves than they do on image detail. On the other hand, most photographers tend to think more about detail when considering photographic subjects. To recognize abstract photography opportunities, one must learn to look at our world differently.

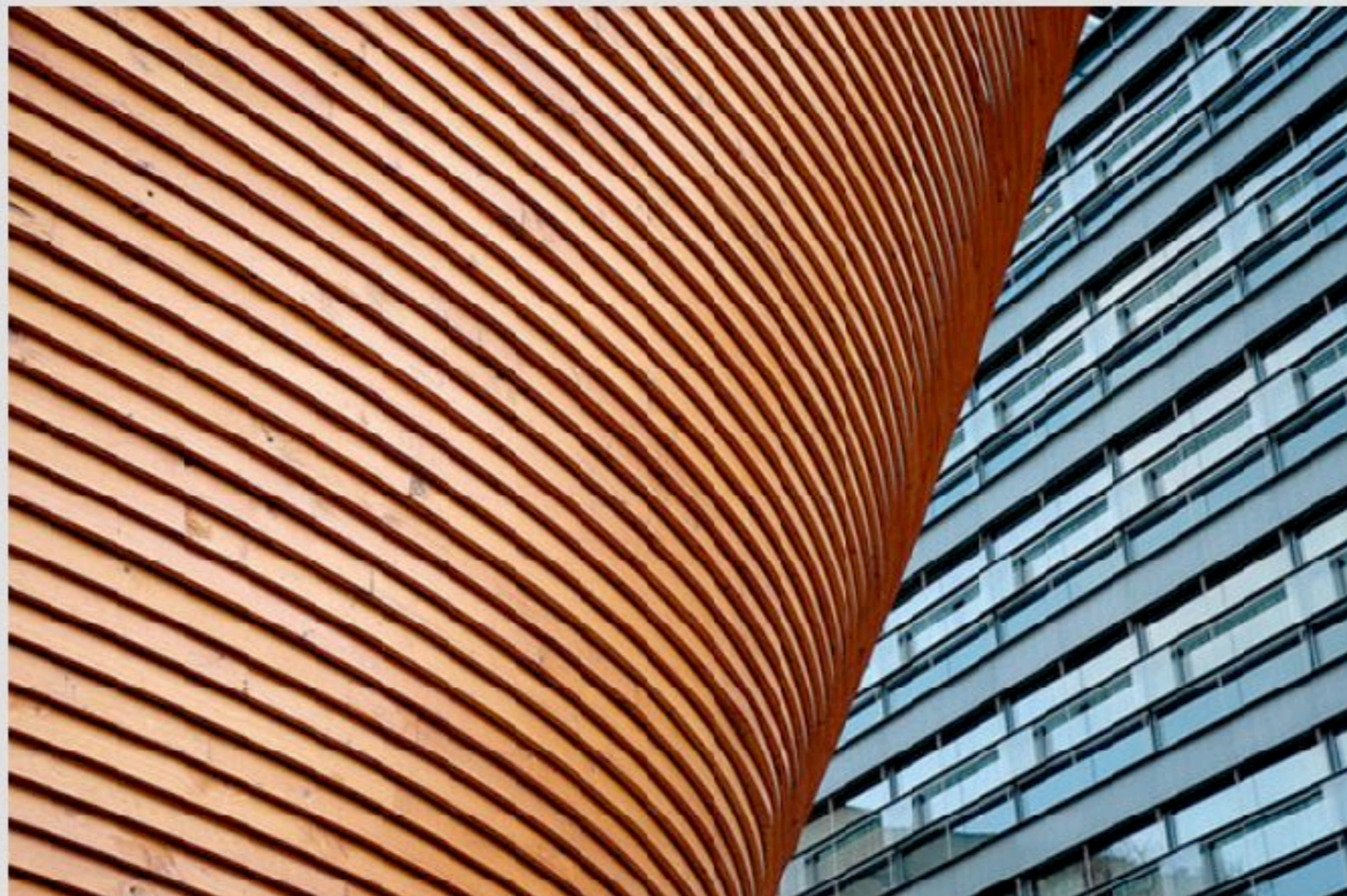


Photo by [Alvaro Arenas](#); ISO 800, f/8.0, 1/125-second exposure.

DEFINITION OF ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY

Abstract photography does not have a commonly accepted definition. Of course, creating a concrete definition of an abstract concept is a bit challenging. Nevertheless, it is necessary to create a definition for this article. That way, some boundaries can be put around the subject. Thus, it will be easier to decide what fits within the subject matter. For this article, the definition of abstract photography is as follows. Abstract photography:

- Does not represent the subject in a literal way
- Communicates primarily through form, color, and curves rather than image detail

WHY SHOOT ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY

Of course, the first question that should be asked is why one should take abstract images. That is, why would a photographer focus on capturing abstract images when there are other photographic opportunities out there?

There are two primary reasons. The first reason is that abstract images can really stand out when done well. That is really the most important reason. However, there is another reason. Abstract images can be created just about anywhere a person happens to be. That means that you can create abstract images in your home, backyard, or neighborhood. This saves the time and expense of travel (which is required for many other types of photography).

THE ESSENTIALS

Abstract photography has three essentials: form, color, and curves. It is important that an abstract photographer think in terms of these essentials.



Photo by Valerie

Form: Form refers to the shape of objects. Form functions as the structure upon which an abstract image is created. Fundamentally, form creates the heart of an image while color and curves add enrichment. Consequently, it is very important that an abstract image begin with good form. This can be accomplished by selecting objects with pleasing, interesting, or dynamic shapes.

Of course, the next question is, "What makes good form?" However, it must be understood that abstract photography is more of an instinctual art form. That is, people react to it emotionally rather than logically. Consequently, form must be treated in a similar manner. Thus, it is necessary to locate objects that create an emotional reaction. When you look at an object and think, "Wow, that is impressive," you have found a strong form.

Color: Color draws the viewer's attention. In addition, it stimulates the viewer's perceptual system. In addition, color serves to hold the viewer's attention for awhile. When the viewer's attention does wander, color helps bring the viewer's attention back.

Using a saturated or intense color is one approach to using color. Another approach is to use colors that contrast.

Curves: Curves can help to spice up an abstract image. That is because curves control the movement of the viewer's eyes. There are a couple of ways that curves can be used. First, curves can add interest by helping to guide the viewer's attention to an image's center of interest. The result is a stronger center of interest and a better image.



Photo by [Giuseppe Milo](#); ISO 100, f/4.0, 1/500-second exposure.

The second way that curves can add interest is somewhat more subtle. In this case, the curves don't point at the center of interest. Instead, the curves course through the image in an elegant or dynamic way. Despite the fact that the curves do not point toward the center of interest, they nevertheless function to control the viewer's eyes. With this approach, the viewer's attention will travel back and forth along the curves. Consequently, the viewer's attention has been focused on the image.

IN SUMMARY

Form, color, and curves provide us with a great start to producing some impressive abstract photos. On the other hand, there is a lot more to explore about abstract photography.

About the Author:

Ron Bigelow (www.ronbigelow.com) has created an extensive resource of articles to help develop photography skills.

ABSTRACT READING PART 2

Creating beautiful images is easier when you know a few photographic techniques. And that's especially true for abstract photography. This short article covers four techniques that work very well for creating abstract images. The techniques that will be covered are selective focus, light and shadows, curves, and texture. Each one of these techniques can be utilized with many different types of subject matter. The real key is to practice these techniques on all sorts of objects. The more you practice, the better you'll become.



"abstract" captured by aber

THE POWER OF THE SELECTIVE FOCUS TECHNIQUE

If you're searching for an easy but effective abstract photography technique, selective focus is the technique for you. A narrow depth of field is achieved by the selection of a large aperture. The camera is then focused on the center of interest of the image. The rest of the objects in the image will fade into a soft blur.

There are two things which can be done to make your images even more notable when utilizing this technique. First, the color of the background should be different than the center of interest. The second point is that the center of interest can be made even stronger by using curves to point toward the center of interest.

THE USE OF LIGHT AND SHADOWS

Using the interplay of light and shadows can create drama in an image. Some photographers tend to think only in terms of light. This is a mistake, for light is nothing without shadows. Shadows are not just a lack of light. Instead, shadows function to make the light come to life. It is the shadows that shape the light, that draw attention to the light, and that integrate with the light to produce striking photographic opportunities. This is especially true with abstract images.

So, what is the shadows' role in this technique? The primary role of the shadows is to help to define the forms. In other words, the shadows' role is to help the forms to stand out. Consequently, it should come as no big surprise that the more interesting the objects in an abstract image, the more likely that the image will be successful. The shadows then function to make the more prominent.



"Abstract" captured by Joe Lohr Photography

For instance, the shadows may surround the center of interest so that the viewer's interest is naturally drawn to that point.

THE POWER OF CURVES

When it comes to abstract photography, curves can be utilized with powerful effect. For this technique to be effective, the curves must be the dominant characteristic of the subject matter. In a way, the curves almost become the center of interest.

Curves that display grace or a touch of the dynamic work best. It is essential that the curves flow together smoothly. Simply having a lot of haphazard curves running in every which direction will not work.

THE USE OF TEXTURE

A technique that is very similar to the use of curves is the use of texture. In fact, texture and curves are often used together. When used to create impact in an abstract image, the texture should be a very strong characteristic of the primary subject in the image.

In addition, the texture must work in harmony with any curves that are present.



"The Dome" captured by Richard Crowe

These abstract photography techniques provide a good foundation for capturing abstract images. Then again, there is much more to the subject of abstract photography.

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