

## Composition and the Vertical Plane

For the past few weeks, I've been looking through my work, breaking down my compositions by drawing over them with marker and my iPad. I believe that *composition is the glue that holds together any work of art*—whether it's a photograph, music, architecture, painting, or drawing.

I believe it is the duty of a photographer—or any artist, for that matter—to embrace the unknown, taking risks, headfirst into danger, with **courage and curiosity** at the forefront, putting *order to chaos* within our work.

Think of a sculptor, working alongside the laws of physics. Think particularly of the sculptures that are positioned on top of the columns in City Hall, Philadelphia. The danger and risk required to build those structures—whether it's the sculpture itself or the architecture—is unfathomable to me as a mere mortal, viewing this grand work from the ground level.

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## The Horizontal vs. Vertical Plane

The **horizontal plane**, or what we could call the material world, is very base. You have your food, your shelter, your material things that you use on a day-to-day basis—your phone, your computer, tablet, camera, etc.

But the **vertical plane**, towards the heavens, is much more interesting, *lofty*, and *uplifting for the spirit*. I believe the human is more than merely a physical vessel—we are a spiritual vessel who carries the **light within**.

That light within is like a fire that charges the soul, that sets us in motion—through our mind, how we think, feel, and respond to the stimuli of this world. The material world only provides epiphenomena: the cold air on your skin, the warmth of a bath, a good meal of red meat.

These are important—they nourish your body and prepare you for tomorrow. But if you become too focused on the material—on grinding in the gym, solely on the physical—you’ll find it becomes *base, boring, and banal*.

Once you’ve built up strength and vitality, you begin to seek something more. Something that propels you beyond the horizontal.

I find my true strength comes through **God**, a connection to the divine, through prayer and gratitude.

*When you start your day with prayer, in silence, in nature—this is a form of spiritual nourishment that can’t be found in food, sleep, or comfort.*

Every artist needs a source of inspiration. And perhaps the ultimate source of inspiration for any artist *should be the divine*. Our Creator breathed life into us—and that very breath is what gives us the power to create.

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## Order and Chaos

Let’s look at the etymology of the word **composition**:

- **com** — meaning “together”
- **positio** (from *ponere*) — meaning “to place or put”

Composition literally means *putting together*.

When you go out into the world to create photographs, there’s so much chaos to indulge in. This chaos, I believe, is what fuels us. It’s the frenzy of the street corner—the bustling markets, the horns honking, the people shouting, talking, chattering. All of it is raw inspiration.

So the question becomes:

***How do we put order to all this within the frame?***

How do we *compose* from the chaos of everyday life?

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## Intuition

Through analyzing my photographs, I've started to recognize the instinct—that **gut feeling**—that guides me. It's not the two eyes, but the whole body. It's the feet walking the streets, it's the sense of pattern, rhythm, light, and movement.

That **decisive moment**, when everything aligns, comes from intuition.

You can study the fundamentals of composition forever—but to *create* one, you must also learn how to **feel**.

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## Trust Your Gut

When I go out into the world, I follow my intuition. My gut tells me to turn left, not right. To walk one more block.

You have to throw logic out the window and enter the **flow state**.

Don't walk the same path every day. Don't repeat yourself.

To make a strong composition, you must *let go*. Forget what you think you know. Forget what a composition "should" be.

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## Shoot From the Hip?

Many of my best photographs haven't been made at eye level. A lot come from **hip level**—the perspective of a child.

Think of a child, filled with wonder, looking down at leaves, up at the clouds and trees and sun. Through that *childlike perspective*, we may find more compelling images.

When you walk through the world with the **spirit of play**, everything else falls into place.

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## Photography Has Nothing To Do With Photography

When I say this, I mean:

***Photography is about how you engage with humanity.***

A photograph is just your body's position in space relative to your subject and background. That's it.

But the way you feel about life—the way you treat people, the way you interact with the world—that's what reflects back in your photos.

I seek to **uplift** humanity. To raise it to something transcendental.

The world today aims for mediocrity. Everything looks the same. Box buildings. AI-generated images. Slick perfection.

But the best photographs are **imperfect, organic, authentic, fluid**.

***Imperfection is perfection.***

Let us play on the edge between order and chaos. Let us shoot from the gut. Let us trust the instinct. That's how we'll create stronger compositions.

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## Why Does Composition Matter?

Composition matters because it's what we **see** when we look at a photograph.

You're not hearing a photo. You're *looking* at it.

If it's flat, it probably relies too much on a moment, or subject, or character.

But a **strong photograph** combines the content *and* the composition. That's what holds it together. That's what makes it stick.

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## The Vertical Plane (Again)

Let's come back to the vertical.

If our goal is to uplift humanity as artists, we must remember: we are bound to the **horizontal plane**.

We are flesh. We bleed. We feel sorrow, pain, greed. We lust, we fall short. This is our divine design.

But through *art*—through creating photographs, music, sculpture, poetry—we can **strive upward**.

We can uplift the world in front of us.

*Life is worth living because we strive upward despite being bound by gravity.*

We move into the unknown, in the face of danger. We seek order in chaos. This is where I thrive.

And maybe—just maybe—through composition, we can move from the horizontal to the vertical.

Upwards.