

Howdy. Howdy, folks, and welcome the
Moose Podcast, number 405.

What is it about composition?

How are you folks doing? Trish, you had a marvelous 4th of July. I saw some really some really cool shots, really great, imaginative ways of telling our country's story with the celebration of the 4th of July. But tip of the hat to all of you who shared your photographs, that that's one of the big things about photography that I think we need to do more of it. It can brighten everybody's world, including your own. Well, here we are. Made the corner. Gone past solstice. Gone past half the year. Heat waves are starting to hit. It's summer. Hope that you are out there shooting, just watching those daylight hours, not only for your your exposure and your storytelling, but also your skin. Keep in mind that sun, it does a number on our little wimpy skin. No matter how protected that cover is, it can can be beaten. So be careful. Hydrate, dunk on that sunblock and get out there and make those shots and share them. I want to thank my good friends at Bedford Camara Bedford's Doc Khan for sponsoring the MUS podcast right now. Bedford Pix You might not have heard that. I don't talk about it very often. Bedford Pix, Bedford Pix, Kcom, they're 50% off all their printing and these guys take printing really serious. They do an incredible job. I know firsthand they had many a conversation with Steve and their texts and I'm telling you, these guys do a great job and you might not know they do amazing printing right now, 50% off everything they print. Really cool. And of course, you know, you've got this week a number of the what they're calling the nightgown calls touch and try going on at the stores with the z63 now still don't have mine. Long story, but you can go out and touch this amazing new camera. The the 240 P I hear is really phenomenal. It's got me really chomping at the bit so you can do that. And of course, Bedford's has all the other great gear and service and inventory and they also have the moose discount after you check out. So give Bedford's a call. I click a drop in smile and remember to mention your moose arou to get that discount at the end of your purchase. So. Bedford Scott Thank you, guys. So what is it about composition? Now I say that you got to keep in mind that I definitely come to this whole composition proposition a whole lot from a different point of view than most. And to understand that I was very fortunate to grow up in a home where. The elements were arranged, everything from the furniture to artwork on the walls and shelves and and the lighting. Everything was already in an order that was so visually pleasing that it put anybody who came into the house at total ease. And I grew up kind of at the knee of my older sister, who is a phenomenal artist, phenomenal artist with any medium except photography, which is I kind of I thought was always ironic because everybody else in the family were photographers. But anyway, so it was we never talked about any of those things that you hear people talk about. And I was just that's how I was molded, especially in the woodshop, where we would create things that were not only super functional but were very pleasing to the eye, using lines and shapes to move you around through the character of the wood. So the wood itself, we would select it based on that character and then would build it to emphasize that character. And I have no doubt that all of that greatly influence and still influences the way that I approach everything and anything photographically. Now, I understand this doesn't help you per say. But bear with me. I'm going to try to help you through it. Now, the first thing you might be saying is we're going to talk about composition, not look at a bunch of examples. And that's correct. That's how once I started getting into photography, we talked about it as much as we looked at examples. One of my first really strong. Classes on composition was in high school. It was photographic. And the cameras were actually taken out of our hands. And the assignment was really simple.

And I wish I could find the bloody book. That was our textbook for that. I know it's here somewhere in this house, but I can't find it. But keep in mind, we're talking about a book that, you know, I was this would be 1973. It was a textbook. And the title was not composition. It had the weird elements in it, but I don't remember what else. And that's why I always talk about arranging elements. It goes back to that book. But anyway, back to the assignment. We had to go and first collect, I think it was ten or 12 magazines of our favorite subject. And so for me, especially back then, it was hot rides. Not hard to do. And so then you had to acquire those magazines because you're going to cut them up. And we had a number of compositional principles, and that's important part of it. And it was really stressed that all these composition principles were merely a suggestion or a guide. They were not carved in stone. They were not to be etched in in the memory as the own way of doing it. They were just the first stepping stone in the way that you would arrange elements in a photograph. To move the viewer's eye through that photograph to tell a story. And there were things like formal and informal ballots. All those, you know, those. Yes. The rule of thirds. There was a member correctly. There was 15 principles of composition. We had illustrate. And then you had to present that. In a very entertaining way to the teacher and the class. And what I did was simply. Glued. All the photographs are all paper. Then you would spin a roller and there as to two apertures in a box and the top aperture is a big one that show the picture. And the bottom one was the title What Compositional Principle I was illustrating. And there is probably. 1214 of us geeky kids in that class, and it left a heck of an impression. Because it was really stress. The composition is how people after the fact try to explain things. And that's why I wanted, you know, what is it about composition? And a number of times I see people make comment to my photographs on Instagram, which I'm I'm really very grateful for, but people will say what great composition and it would take me initially back to the high school class. And I don't personally see that as a compliment because if you are analyzing a photograph by composition, that to me I've failed. None of those things that you are told that you need to learn and classes you need to take to master it. Should be apparent in the final photograph that makes sense to you. And I think people get really all all tied up in a knot worrying about composition. That they come up with things like the Golden Triangle and rule of thirds, things that are, you know, the S-curve. If people understood that the S-curve when it comes to composition, is a major marketing tool. Then perhaps when you start thinking about composition that way, you might realize that a lot of the things that people talk about for composition is the way to manipulate your mind, to buy things. And yes, photographically, you could easily be, you know, say that you are trying to sell something. So there is the first thing that you might want to, you know, perhaps put in the back of the mind if you want to go further into, you know, actual, I would say, book study. But, you know, thinking about this now, there is and I'm going to talk about the mind's eye because it's really important to understand. And in this process, you might start Googling things like the mind's eye or how it is the mind's eye, see. And while there's limited information out there now, one thing that might come up. Might strike you as being a curious item is the vivid a visual imagery questionnaire, the v v IQ now the v v IQ. Yeah, I've taken it and I'm not going to say my score because it's irrelevant, but. If you go and do the barbecue, it starts to give you, I think, a window into the power of the mind's eye and the way that you are you. And that's really the important part is understanding. This is is is this the thing about, you know, what is it about composition? It's really about the way you. Want to tell a story. Another way to think about it. If you've not done already, I've done it for giggles. Go to something on the web. Like

if you are a blog post or and you go to WordPress and you can start writing something and then a box will come up. If you have it checked that says, Hey, I will sit there and write this faster for you, just blah blah blah and click it. And yeah, it can be really darn accurate. But the first thing you're going to notice is that your voice is gone. And let me tell you, when I do it, smoke comes out of the computer. Because, you know, there's other things besides the way I speak and write all that grammar stuff, you know, just kind of, you know. But that's another story. The whole thing here is really simple. We all tell our story differently. So we all organize our stories, our visual stories the same way using as people want to say, the rules of composition. And there is no rules. If you all do it by the rules of composition, then why don't you just have air? Take your photograph, because it's all going to be homogenous. It's not going to be unique. And man, we need unique these days. We need everybody's voice chiming in with their own personal slants and ideas and romance and passion. So. How does help you put that camera I as you go out inspired to go shoot to make the shots. Well, I'm going to give you two things, just two things to think about. And that's plenty, let me tell you. Because in those two. Boy, we open up Pandora's box of photographic challenges. Now. I always talk about how I arrange the elements in my photograph. And you might be saying, how are you arranging the elements when you've got this plane zipping by? You can't just make it stop. You can't go out, move things. How are you arranging elements to tell the story? And that's a really great question. First each understand that the photographs you see. Is the winds were the elements that I want to arrange when I start the whole process actually gel in that one picture. The one before it. The one after it. Are more likely. Don't have all those elements arranged the way I want to. Which is why you're seen that one I post. Does that mean I pray and spray? There are some instances for sure I do. There's some. Is this where? Yeah, I arranged it. I up the iso. There are times where I'll take a picture and I will delete it because it doesn't work. It's all based on arranging elements now. I've mentioned before, for example, when I'm planning Swan was something that I know or I have an idea where it's going to go. So I'm a stick with aircraft because that's something that it's kind of, you know, a mental obvious picture. We know the plane's going to go a certain direction or path. I'm always going always, always, always, always going to take the lens I have that I'm going to use. And I'm going to focus on the background, kind of focus on the background. And I'm going to pan and I'm go slowly and I'll look for bright areas, busy areas, areas that are blurred to a really cool pattern. I'm going to look at all those background elements before the plane even approaches. And if I don't like what I'm doing, I'm going to move to. I find that background backgrounds that important is a major element. It's the stage we set for our star, the subject. So that's the first element and. In that process when the plane goes and flies in front of the bell background that I have already predetermined is what I want. I'm going to shoot only when it's in front, push the trigger, fire that shutter only what's in front of the background I desire and the other backgrounds. I'm a not shoot then. So in that process, yeah, you could say I'm going to pray and spray because I'm going to not shoot. And then I shoot a bunch walls in front of the background, not shoot, but I've already predetermined the background. That is the best background for that subject now. How does that come about? Well, there's there's two things, man. I wish I could find that book anyway. The the mind's eye. In other words, the way that our visual acuity goes out and looks at things and we prioritize how we're going to assemble the pieces that the mind is bringing in and assemble those pieces. And you got to keep in mind that. Our visual memory and our eyes and the way it's all connected is just a

marvel. We take it for granted because we how as soon as we wake up and open our eyes, there it is until we go to sleep. It's just functioning. It works great. Yes. We might need glasses and those. This, that and the other. But it's a marvel. It's a marvel. So we have to kind of take what is we take for granted and actually stop for a second and think about how it's it's working. And we have to not only think about how it's working, but then how can we use that functionality? That is a global thing, right? It's not cultural, but it's a global how we can use that to reach the viewer and to tell our story, and most importantly, grab those heartstrings and get them involved. Well, two things I want to talk about, which I've talked about before is light and bright and sharpness, which has been found at number one. And number two, thing in the mind searches for and latches onto. In its quest to understand the visual information that's coming in. Now, here's the thing that it's really, really hard. To just gel is the fact that our camera, as I lovingly say, is a cool, heartless bastard. It doesn't work this way. Light and bright for the camera. Okay. Is a number and numbers don't work when it comes to romance and passion. I've talked many times how there's no slider for those things and sharpness. Yes, the camera can autofocus, but as you know, you have to tell the autofocus system which one to use. You have to engage it, and then you have to, for the most part, tell it what the subject is, even if it's just as simple as putting the subject in the viewfinder. I mean, you can't point to the left and say, okay, take the picture of the bird on the right. So the camera it is requires and no, in fact insists demands on your input. And the more input you give it. That is truly you, the more it's going to do what? Deliver what you want. So light and bright. Now light and bright if you put numbers to it, right, which up to 47 or higher, which you're tired and talk about. Paperwhite In other words, the ink is not going to put down any ink on that paper when you're printing. It's just going to be paper that kind of bright. Light and bright, so lighter than or brighter than those elements in a photograph will grab the mind's eye. It just goes super right to it. It can't help itself. It's just the way we are wired now. If you have a subject. And let's just say it's just. For discussion sake. The subject is in the lower right hand corner. But you have a nice, beautiful, puffy cloud in the top left corner. It's going to be a lot of work for you to take the mind's eye, which is lashed on those clouds and come down to. That lower right hand corner. That's just a stretch. And the mind's I love simplification. Complication. It just says, I'm out of here. And that's why you flip the pages of magazines as quickly as you do. Those things that grab your attention are using these basic elements. You could say compositional principles of selling. To make you stop and look at a page. But the way the Elmas are arranged in that photograph that is going to actually sell your story, your emotion, and grab heartstrings. That's what photo editors are really blessed at, really telling you. And when you get that's why I always encourage you to get into publication, is because you're going to start learning these things that there just isn't any great class or great book. I've watched them. I've gone out looking at all of them, hoping. But it's as soon as you start saying. Rules. Okay. And you don't say these are just a stepping point, then you're just becoming a compositional robot. That's not what you want to be. I don't think that's what your photography should be. So light and bright is going to grab the viewer's attention first thing. The moment the eyes are going to go out, scan and boom. You want to do a simple test. Take a piece of white paper no matter how big or small you want it, and put it on your dining room table and try to take your eye away from it. You can't you know, your eyes can go right to that white thing every time. And then if you know, you can make it a shape and that goes down the list of how quickly mine grabs and make it a shape. It's it's and then wow.

And then if you want to see what happens, put cotton balls on it and watch how sudden your mind doesn't go to it as fast. Because the second thing the mind's eye locks onto is sharpness. So we go back to that first example. We have a puffy white cloud in the top left corner and we got a subject in the lower right corner. If you make that subject in the lower right corner, tack sharp and the rest of frame out of focus. Now you're really screwing with somebody's mind because they in go to the cloud and then the mind is going to go to the little sharp element in the bottom right corner. And then it's going to go how how do they relate how the and you're really messing with the way the mind's eye wants to circulate through an image. Now. White and bright is not a bad thing. It's not a good thing. It's a thing you have to think about as you arrange elements. It is something that has to kind of be in the forefront and then sharpness is the next. And I would encourage you to just play with those two elements as you arrange elements and photograph and what comes to sharpness. Keep in mind that 99.9% of the photographs, that of mind that you see out there, I've shot wide open. I don't close down. So the depth of focus is only as much as that focal length, that F stop I'm using, which is wide open. Am I distance to the subject and distance from the subject to the background? Permits. Yet. I'm going to be manipulating your eye to see things as being sharper than they are. And in that process, move your eyes. Through the frame. It's no different than the way that I'm hopefully kept your attention during this podcast, and I have arranged the elements in this dialog to bring you to the point where you have to realize that what it is about composition is it's a really easy handle to say, I don't know. It's not. An avenue. That you can use to truly bring out your visual story that's going to come from the way you arrange the elements to tell that story. And elements are everything that photograph, everything from out-of-focus to in-focus, from light to dark, shades of black and white, and all the color you can put in there and a whole bunch more. So don't fall into that trap. What is it about composition? You folks have a marvelous week. Go out there and shoot and make every click. Your story.