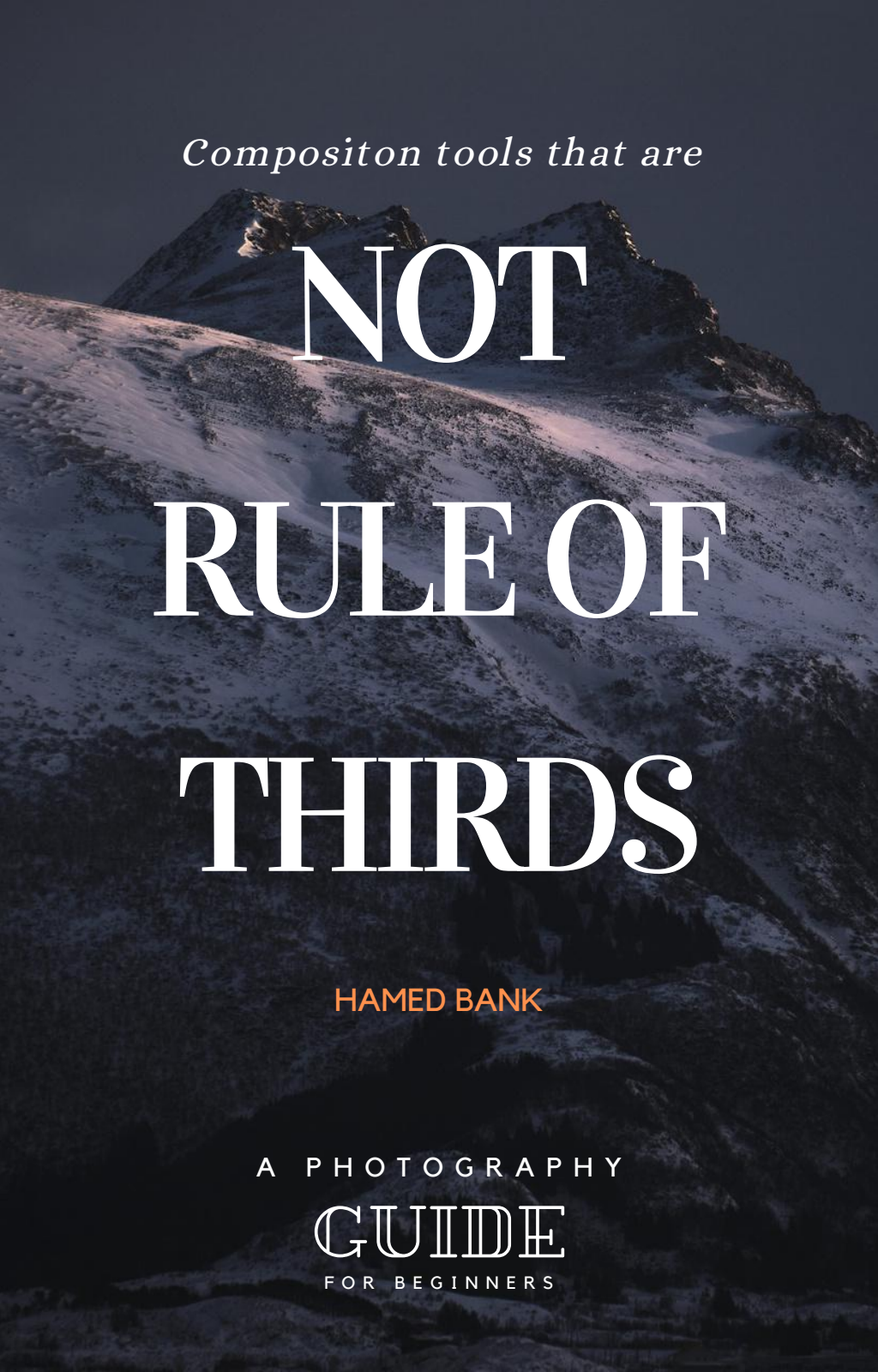




Composition tools that are

NOT RULE OF THIRDS

HAMED BANK

A PHOTOGRAPHY
GUIDE
FOR BEGINNERS



*Everything you
hear in photography,
take it with a grain of
salt. Nothing set in
stone.*



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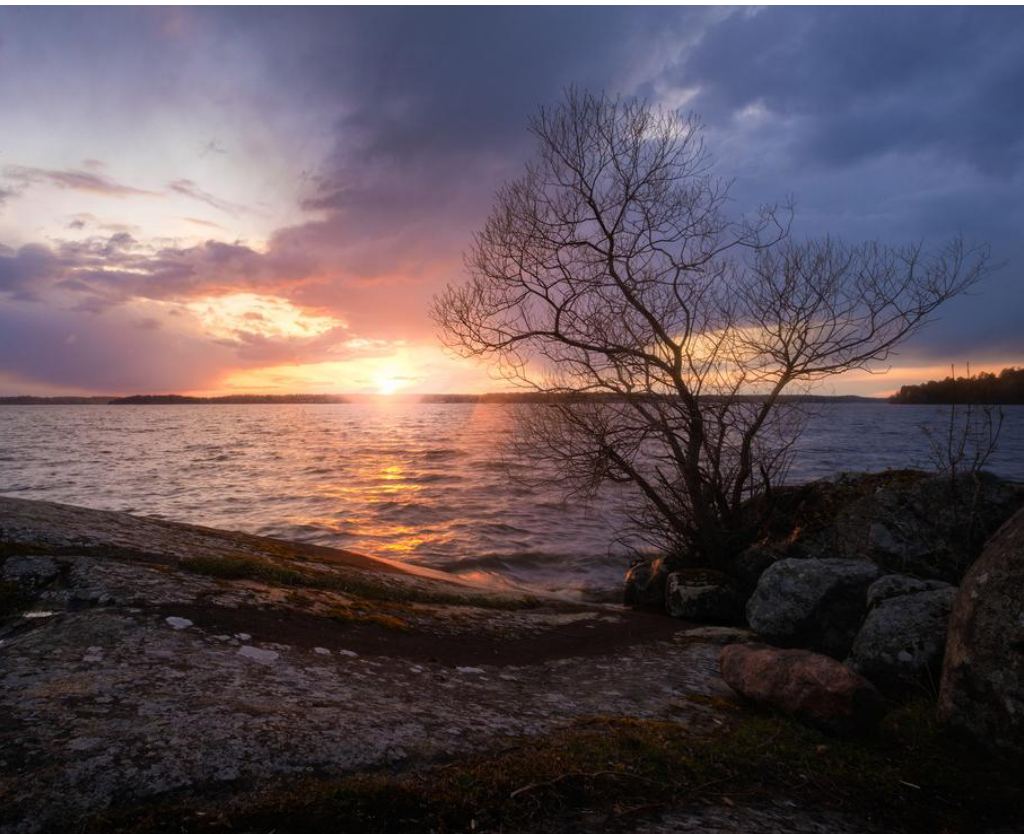


Why you should move away from the rule of thirds

For years I have stuck with the rule of thirds to compose my images, simply because it was the only way I knew to make an image. I had no clues about other techniques or compositional tools. And because of that, my photography never improved. But I was eager to learn. I searched about composition "rules", but any google search, brought me back to the same thing I already knew. I am writing this ebook to help people like young me, who want to level up their photography skills and improve as an artist.

I also should mention that I am a Landscape and nature photographer and the examples I'll show you here are all made in this genre of photography, but these techniques that I am about to share with you, can be used in street photography, wildlife, portrait, product photography or any other kind of photography, or even better, in any form of visual art and image making, regardless.





Clarification: This is not a guide on composition rules.

Before we jump deep into this book, I need to make something clear. One might think of composition as the placement of the elements in a photograph, or in other words, where to put the subject in the frames. But for me composition is more than that, it is the relationship between the elements. More specifically, the way in which all the elements in a frame work together to produce an overall effect.

So my goal is not to tell you where you should put your subject in the frame or where you shouldn't. The goal is to give you some freedom and some inspiration for the different ways that you can compose an image.

If like me you are tired of rules and want to know some other ways to create images. You picked up the right ebook. And, For you to grasp a better understanding of all methods mentioned in this ebook, I have an exercise for you at the end of the book.

Now, Are you excited to gear up and improve your image making skills? then let's begin.



Rule of thirds

Oh I know what you are thinking, I said Not rule of thirds but I want to make sure we are on the same page. Before we talk about compositional tools that are not rule of thirds,



first we need to understand what is Rule of thirds. If you know what it is, then feel free to jump over to the next section. I won't take any offense. I promise.

OK now, Turn the camera on on your phone and go to the camera settings, make sure you turn on the Grid lines overlay, there we go , that is the rule of thirds guideline grid. As you can see this 3x3 grid divides the image in 3 columns and 3 rows with 2 vertical and 2 horizontal lines that are equally spaced within the frame. Something like this image.



These lines are guides to find a good place for your subject within the frame. Means if you put the subject on any of these lines, or even better, on any of the intersections of those lines, you have a strong composition (according to this rule) This is exactly what I have done in the image above.

I also made sure I had a good breathing room in front of my subject (the deer) so it faced towards the "negative space" in the frame, not away from it. If I had put him on the right intersection point of the grid, the image would convey a different feeling.

There are other compositional rules out there, like golden ratio and fibonacci spiral that are more exciting than rule of thirds. But since they are very similar to the rule of thirds, I'll leave them out.

Now , enough of these overused compositional tools and let's move forward with our photography.



Symmetry

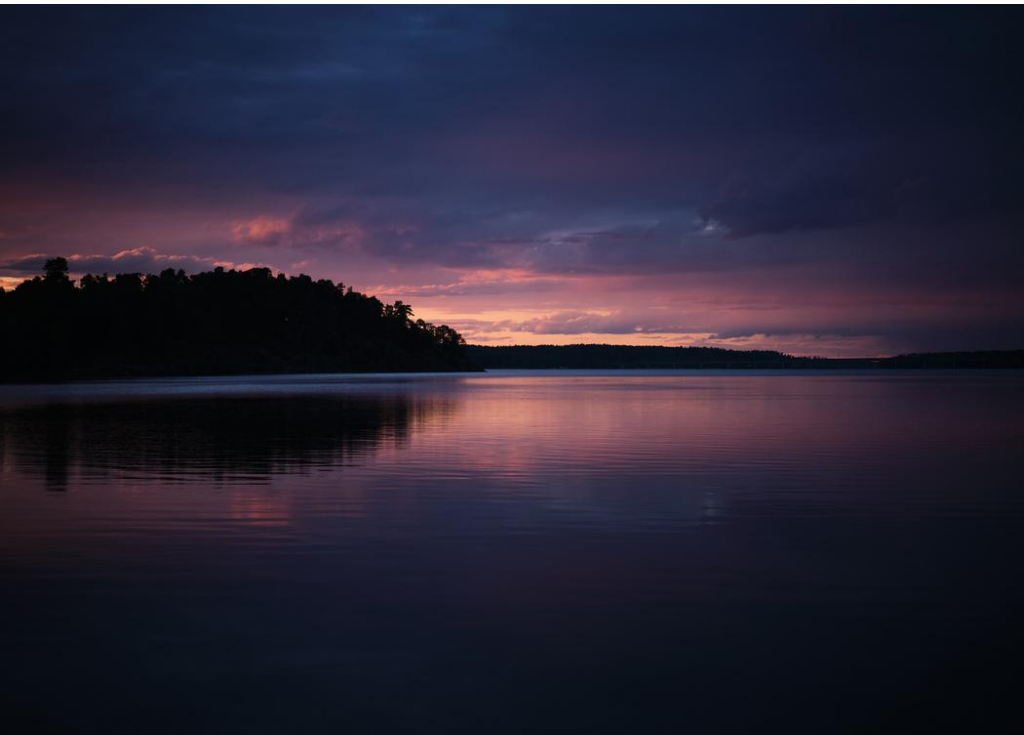
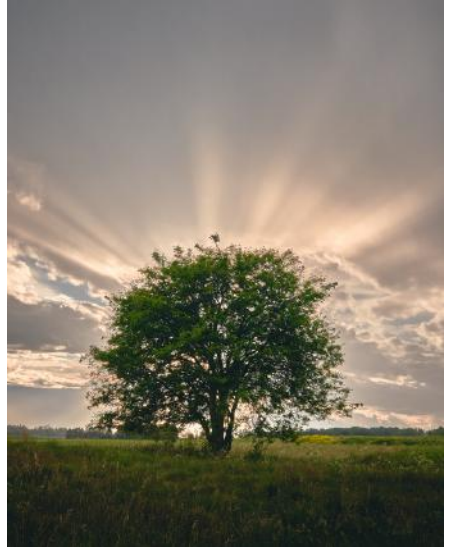
OK let's start with something totally different: Symmetry

Symmetry is a great way to compose an image. Especially in architecture, product and food photography, etc.

But it can be used in portrait and wildlife and nature photography too, to convey a certain feeling.

In symmetry, you will do the opposite of what rule of thirds asking you to do. You will put your subject right in the middle of the frame. But of course your subject should have symmetrical features to allow you to use this technique.

Reflections are the best subjects that allow me to use this kind of composition.



Symmetry

Symmetry can be horizontal or vertical or both. Have a look at these images and see which one is which.



This image of an artichoke, is a good illustration of both horizontal and vertical symmetry. It may not be exactly and mathematically symmetrical, but it does feel symmetrical, and that's what matters.



Leading lines

Using lines in any kind of shapes and forms in your photos is a great tool in your arsenal.

Leading lines are one of the most powerful compositional tools and most desired lines in landscape photos. Usually, it is a line that starts from the bottom of the frame and leads the viewer's eyes to the background or the main subject.



The white water in this image is acting as a leading line that takes the viewer's eyes from the left corner and leads them to the mountain.



Leading lines



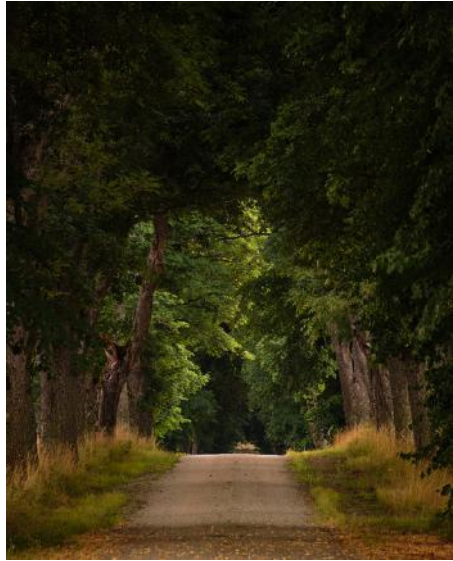
In this example, the river acts as a leading line and helps the viewer experience a visual journey through the scene, from the bottom right corner, to the background and the pink sky.

And remember, leading lines can be either straight or curved, as we call them S-curves or C-curves. In this example the river is sort of an S-curve

Here you can see some more examples of using leading lines in photos. Some of them are a bit less obvious than others.



Leading lines



On the top left image, The fallen branch in the foreground creates a C-curve, The road and grass on the top right image and the frozen water, reflecting the northern light are acting as a leading line

TIP

Lines and forms are the building blocks of a composition. Next time you are out shooting pictures, try to simplify the scene in your mind and look for the shapes and lines.



Diagonal lines

Diagonal lines can be used to create dynamic and movement in a frame, while horizontal and vertical lines are more static.

Vertical lines bring a sense of power and stability, while horizontal lines tend to be calmer.

How many diagonals can you see in this image? Are there any other type of lines too?

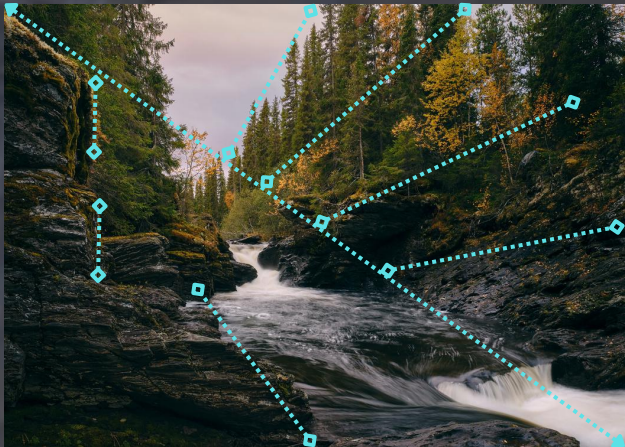


TIP

If you are shooting next to moving water, Use long exposure, to create lines and texture in water.



If we look closely to this image (which is another composition of the same river shown in the previous section) you will be able to see a lot of diagonals, even a broken one that comes from the top left corner to the bottom right (created by the top of the rock on the left and completed with the river on the right down corner). I have marked a few of the lines here.



Here shadows of the two small plants create diagonal lines versus the horizontal line created by layers of the grass.



Frame in Frame technique



One of my favorite compositional techniques is what is called frame in frame. In this method, one can use an object or a group of objects or elements in the scene to create a frame or a window for the main subject inside the frame of the photograph.

Let me show you some examples:

In the image above, obviously, the foreground branches made a window to frame the lake house.

In these types of photographs, the position of the photographer (the camera) related to the scene is more important than ever.

In the image on the right, I used the foreground flowers to frame the subject. I wanted the framing flowers to be out of focus so the viewers feel that they are sneak peeking over the butterfly, or create a container for the subject that creates the sense of safety and security.



Frame in Frame technique

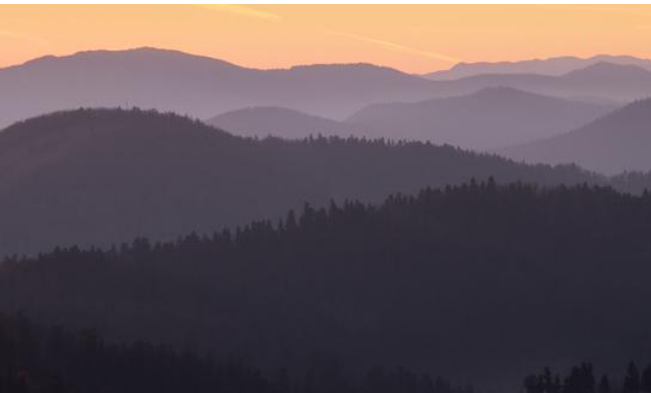
Here, the grass's blades create a frame for the lizard's eye. The question here is, who is sneak peeking at whom?

If you want to learn more about this technique, you can read my blog post about this technique [here](#).



Using layers

With certain atmospheric conditions, like fog, or maybe in some lighting scenarios, you might be able to include layers in your frame. In that case, making an image out of layers is a great composition strategy that elevates the photo by adding depth to the otherwise 2D image.





Sand pattern.

Above is a pattern in the sand made by receding tide on a sandy beach.

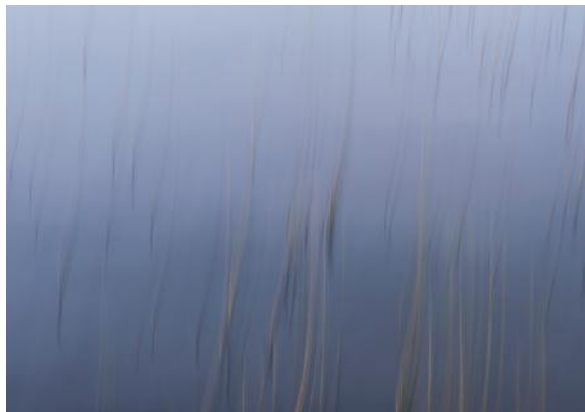
The image on the right is a picture of some small reeds in the water that has been captured with ICM technique (ICM stands for Intentional Camera Movement. Using a bit longer shutter speed and move the camera while taking the photo).

a picture of reeds in the lake with ICM technique

Patterns

Crafting Pattern Shots: A Creative Endeavor

Capturing pattern shots is a thrilling experience. With this type of photography, you can fill the entire frame with a repeating pattern. However, keep in mind that the image can quickly become monotonous due to everything inside the frame having equal value or visual weight. But, if you choose an interesting pattern, it can transform into a dynamic and abstract piece of art. Alternatively, it can be a texture shot, which has its unique qualities worth exploring.



Breaking the Pattern

If you ask me what is more exciting than making pattern shots, I will say breaking the pattern. Even though one can argue that this is not a compositional rule, it is definitely a good composition technique. The key here is to find a subject that stands out from the rest of the repetitive elements in a scene. Like the example below, the naked tree and the fallen trees, both are breaking the otherwise uniform shapes of the tree trunks in this forest scene.



In the following image, the oak tree at the center of the scene disrupts the uniform pattern in a striking way. Rather than following the "rule of thirds" or other guidelines, I purposefully positioned it at the center of the frame to create a powerful composition.





Breaking the Pattern

I think this one is self-explanatory.



Abstracts

Speaking of patterns, I want to take a moment and talk about abstracts. Creating abstract images can be an enjoyable experience. Of course, an abstract image doesn't have to be a pattern shot, but sometimes it is easy to turn a pattern into an abstract. The examples I have here are the textures on the melted and refrozen snow, and the last one is ice. As you can see, they can be pictures of anything, hence they are abstracts.



It should be noted that abstract photography is not a tool of composition, but rather its own genre. While it may be linked to patterns. Nonetheless, to provide a more comprehensive understanding, we have included it in this discussion.





Epilogue

The topic of composition is vast, and we have only just touched the surface of this fascinating subject. As I stated at the beginning of this book, my objective is to inspire you to utilize different approaches to image-making and give you the freedom to experiment with your photography.

While there is still a lot more to discover on the topic, let's leave it at this for now. Please follow me on YouTube and/or Instagram for more tips and further discussions. You can find me on both platforms using the links below:

[YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@hbphotos](https://www.youtube.com/@hbphotos)

[Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/hamed.bank.photography/](https://www.instagram.com/hamed.bank.photography/)

Exercise 1

Go out and take some pictures. Each time, choose only 1 to 3 of the guidelines discussed here, to make photos, and send up to 3 of the best ones to this email address:

info@hamedbank.com.

*** Images must be JPG and less than 6 MB each. ***

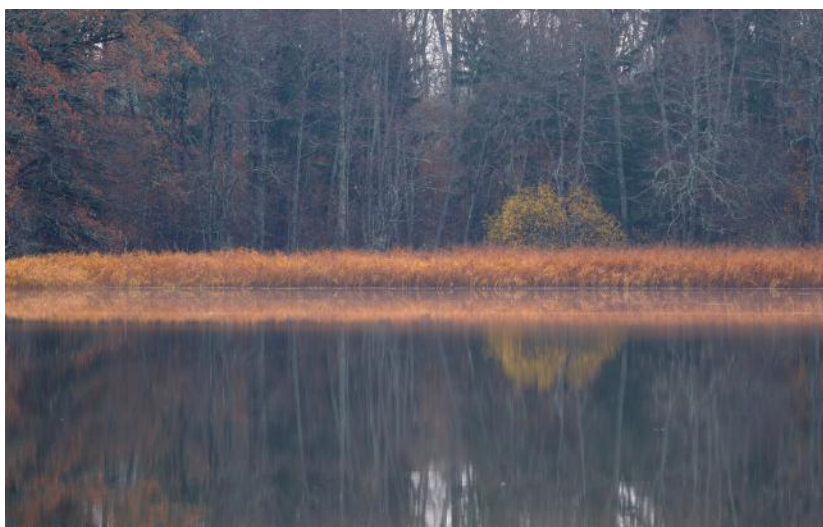
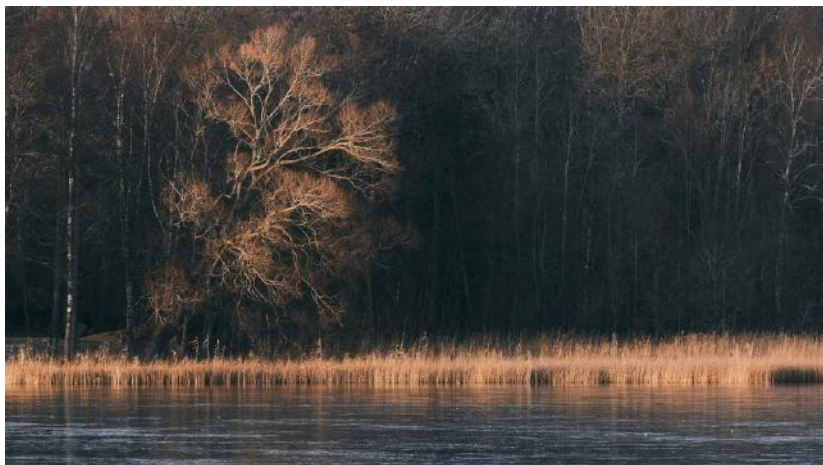
Every month, I will pick a winner and critique the chosen images, which will be shared with the community through my monthly newsletter. If you prefer not to share your photos with others, specify that in your email and I will do it in private instead.

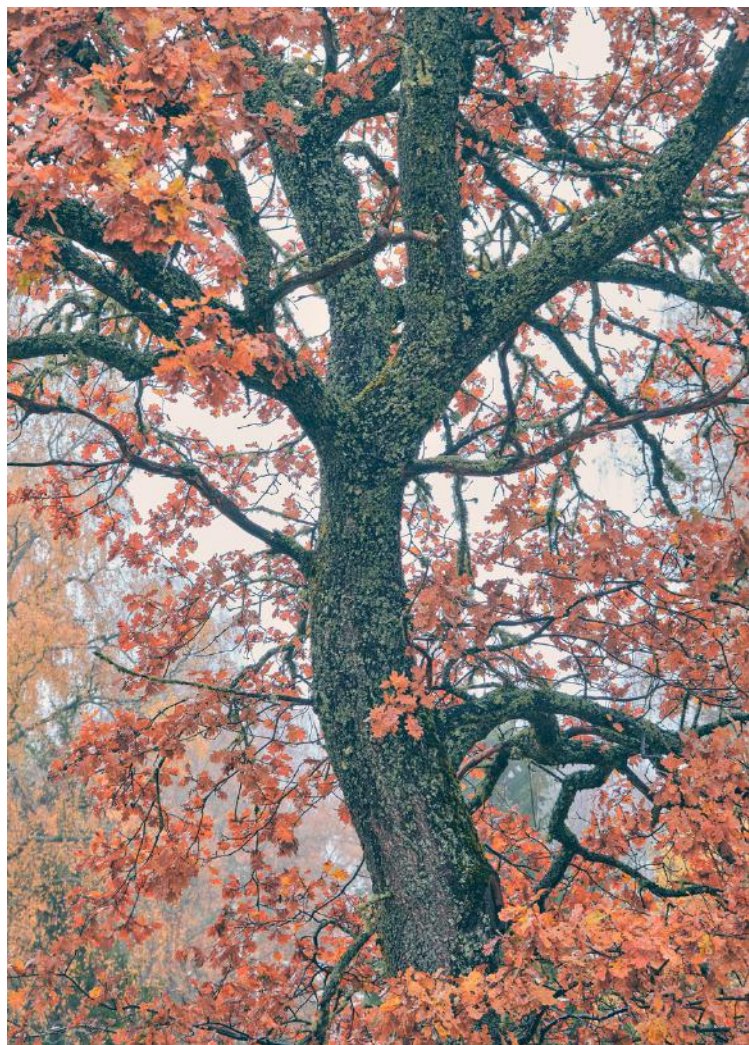


Exercise 2

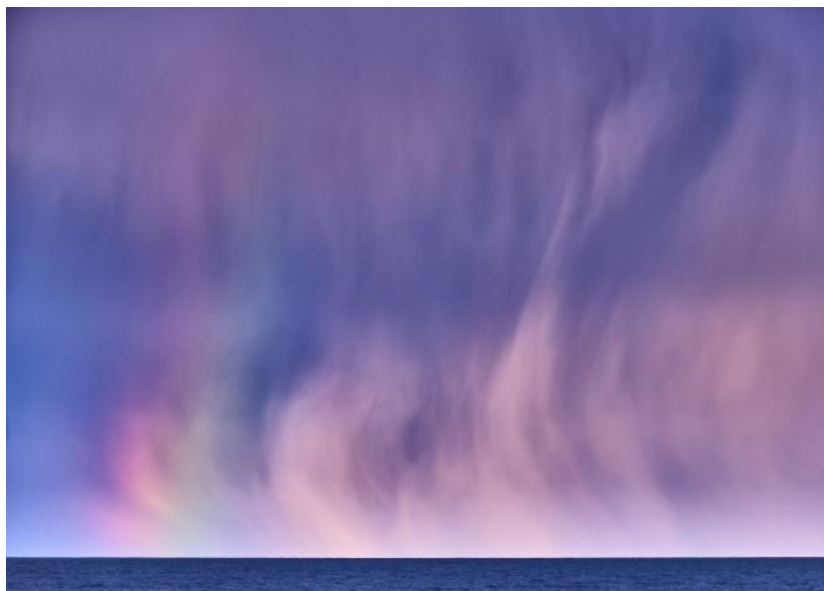
This one is simple. Browse through the following pages and examine each picture to determine which techniques were employed. Keep in mind that it could be a combination of several techniques or none of them. For example, I might have used leading lines, symmetry, and even the rule of thirds in one image. There is no shame in using the rule of thirds. After all, it is a great tool in our arsenal. The point is to not get stuck with just that one tool for all of our images. So let's get started!

Have fun:

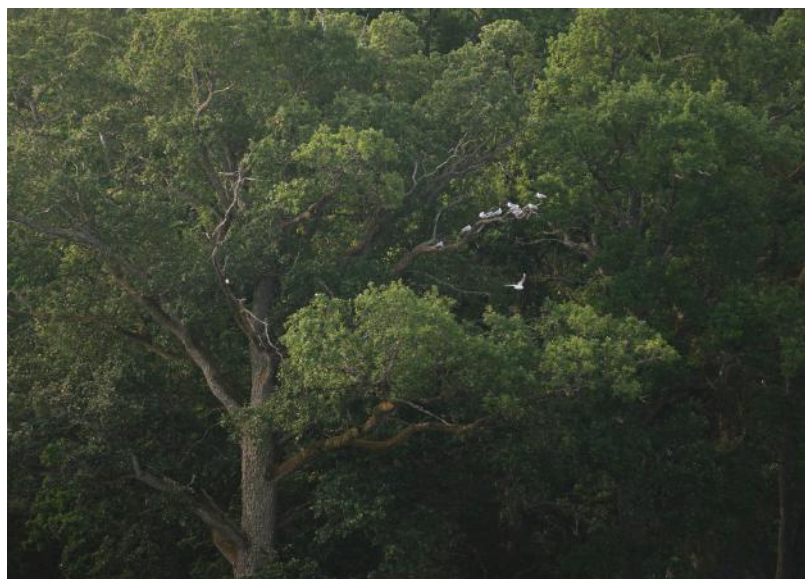


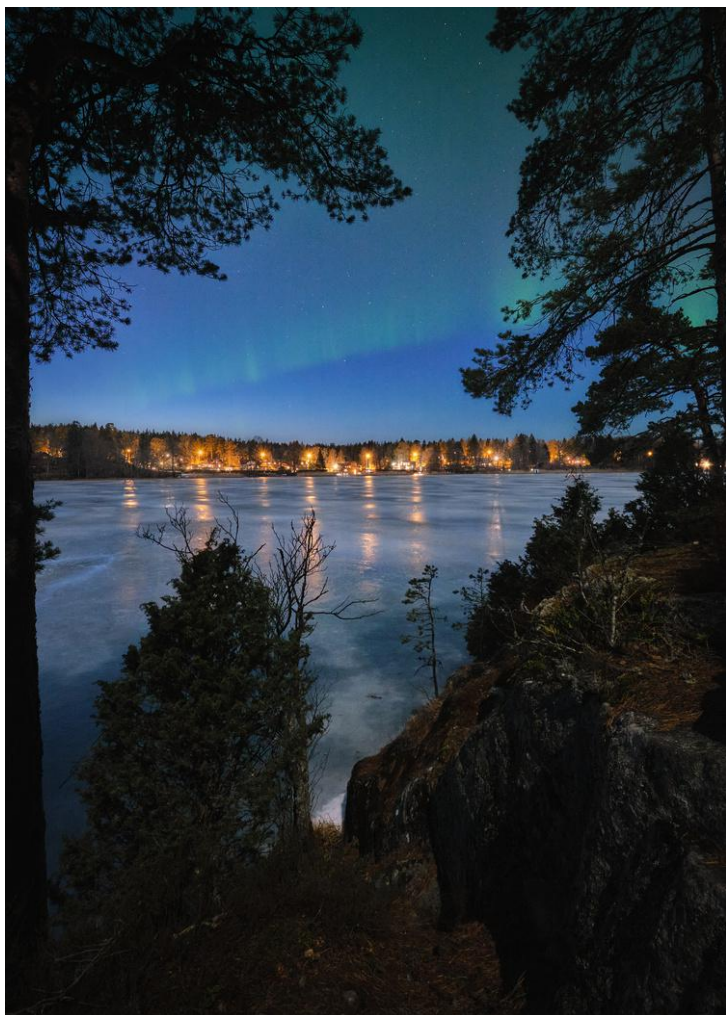
















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