

THE SILHOUETTE

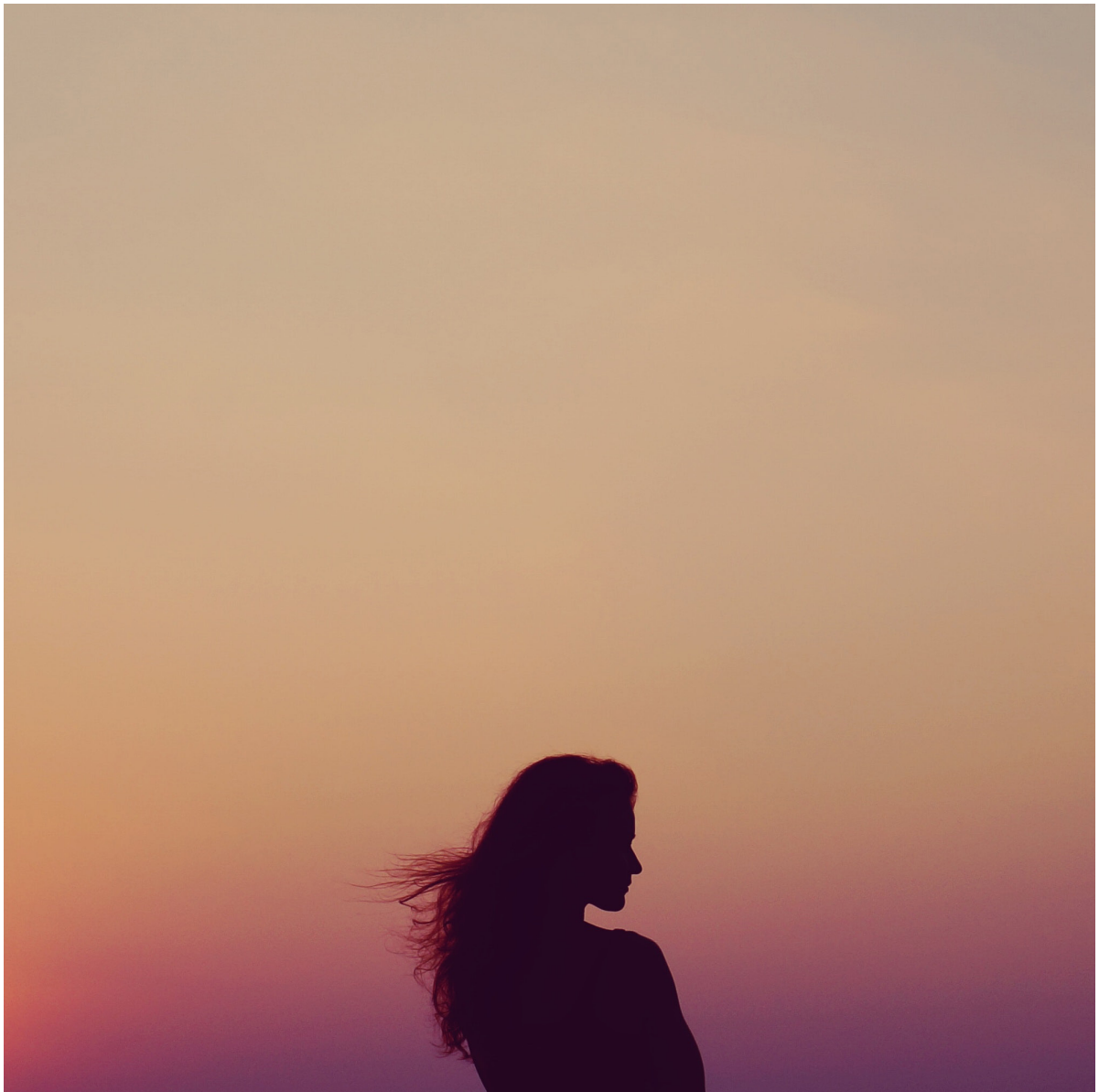
By Kent DuFault

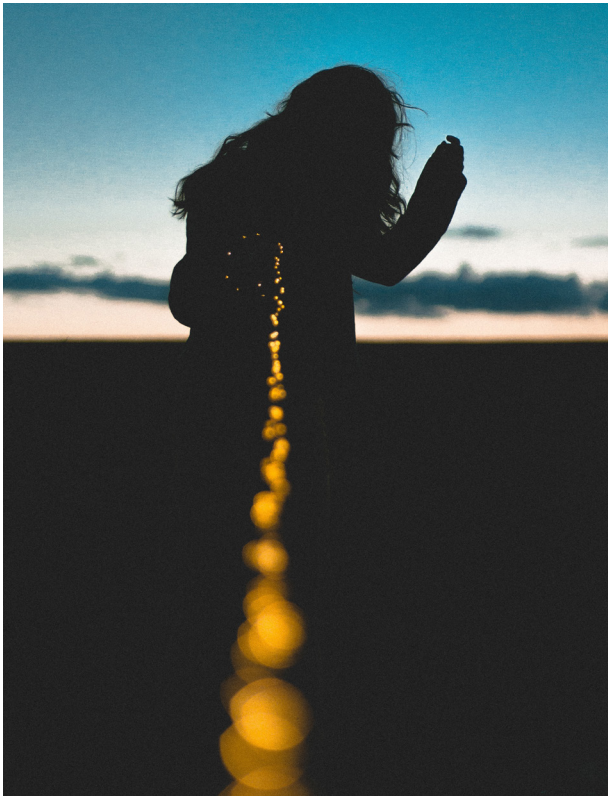
The silhouette is a mainstay in the photographer's creative arsenal. It is our version of the Lone Ranger: a hero sent to save the day when the lighting is bad, or the location is boring, or we simply need a quick idea.

Here we see a photographer's attempt to create something interesting using a silhouette. This is a very standard use of the silhouette technique.

However, there is so much more that the Advanced Composition Photographer can do with this amazing visual tool.

In this Creativity Prompt, I am going to provide you with some specific ideas on the creative use of the silhouette, and then you can then go out and explore on your own!

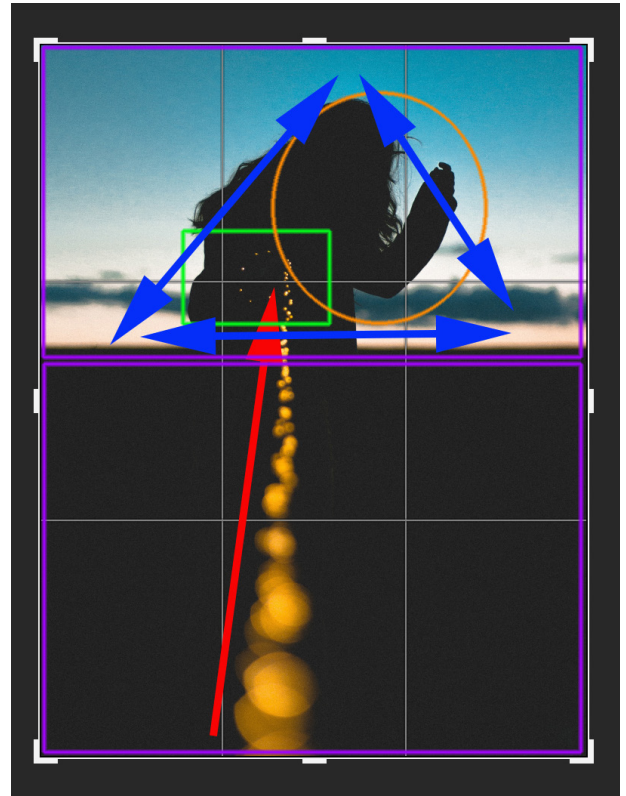




This is a very cool use of the silhouette. Let's examine the advanced composition of this picture and see how it all works together with the silhouette.

From a composition analysis, you can see the following:

- 1 The silhouette is the subject.
- 2 The yellow/orange string of lights is a leading line and focal point.
- 3 Placement of the objects within the frame creates a 1/3 – 2/3 use of space, that is divided, and placed within the Rule of Thirds.
- 4 Shape, contrast, and placement give the silhouette enough visual weight to become the subject.



Remember:

A stronger use of the silhouette is created when combined with other advanced composition techniques- that add interest and visual weight to the subject.



Assignment:

Get a string of holiday lights or yard lights. Combine them with a silhouette to create an interesting and challenging photograph. Do not imitate what you saw here. Create something new and uniquely yours!



In the first example, light was combined with a silhouette. For this challenging prompt, I want you to combine a silhouette with a translucent object. The above example uses a very sheer fabric.



This second example uses translucent smoke. Not all smoke is translucent! It depends upon how thick the smoke is.



Key Point:

Did you know that a silhouette and a shadow are two different things? Many photographers confuse the two!



Does this photograph contain a shadow or a silhouette? Actually, it contains both! The right tree is in silhouette. The man is casting a shadow, as is the other tree.

Is the man a silhouette? No, not technically, from the current camera position.

The definition of a silhouette is: the dark shape, or outline, of a person or object, as visible against a lighter background.

In the shot above, you could accurately describe the man as a "semi-silhouette". There are parts of him that meet the definition and parts of him that don't.

The definition of a shadow is: a dark area, or shape, produced by a body, or object, coming between the rays of a light source and a surface, creating a cast dark shape.

Do you see the difference?



Assignment:

Gather two or three translucent objects: cloth, plastic, paper, smoke, glass, etc. Create some photographs where you mix a silhouette with the translucent material for an interesting effect. Be sure to follow your knowledge on advanced composition. Did you notice that in both the example photographs, the translucent material was used as a frame for the silhouette, which was the subject? Can you think of any other ways to use it? After completing this part of the prompt, try combining a silhouette, a shadow, and your translucent materials for even more creative options!

**Assignment:**

For this Creativity Prompt, combine multiple silhouettes into a well-organized advanced composition.



One of the real visual strengths of a silhouette is its use of shape. In the above two photographs, the 'shape' of the silhouette 'is' the 'subject' of the photograph.

**Assignment:**

Spend enough time to create at least **five** strong photographs where the 'shape' of the silhouette 'is' the 'subject'.



Silhouettes are almost always a strong shape, and as such we often think of using them as the subject. However, through advanced composition, they can also be used as a composition tool to support a subject.

For the image on the left, the subject is the sunset. The silhouette of the man is a focal point.

For the image on the right, the subject is the moon. The silhouette of the trees serves as a frame.



Assignment:

Create four photographs where the silhouette serves as a composition tool for the subject. In each photograph, the silhouette should serve the following purposes; in photograph one it should be a focal point; in photograph two it should be a frame; in photograph three it should be a leading line; in photograph four it should be a contrasting shape.