

Composition Case Study #14

ADVANCED COMPOSITION

This image was created as part of a project for local tourism. It's been a very successful shot, not only for that project, but also as a stock photograph.

It's quite a beautiful scene, and I'm sure that helps with the acceptance rate.

What's interesting about it is that it does not follow any rules or tools in the use of space.

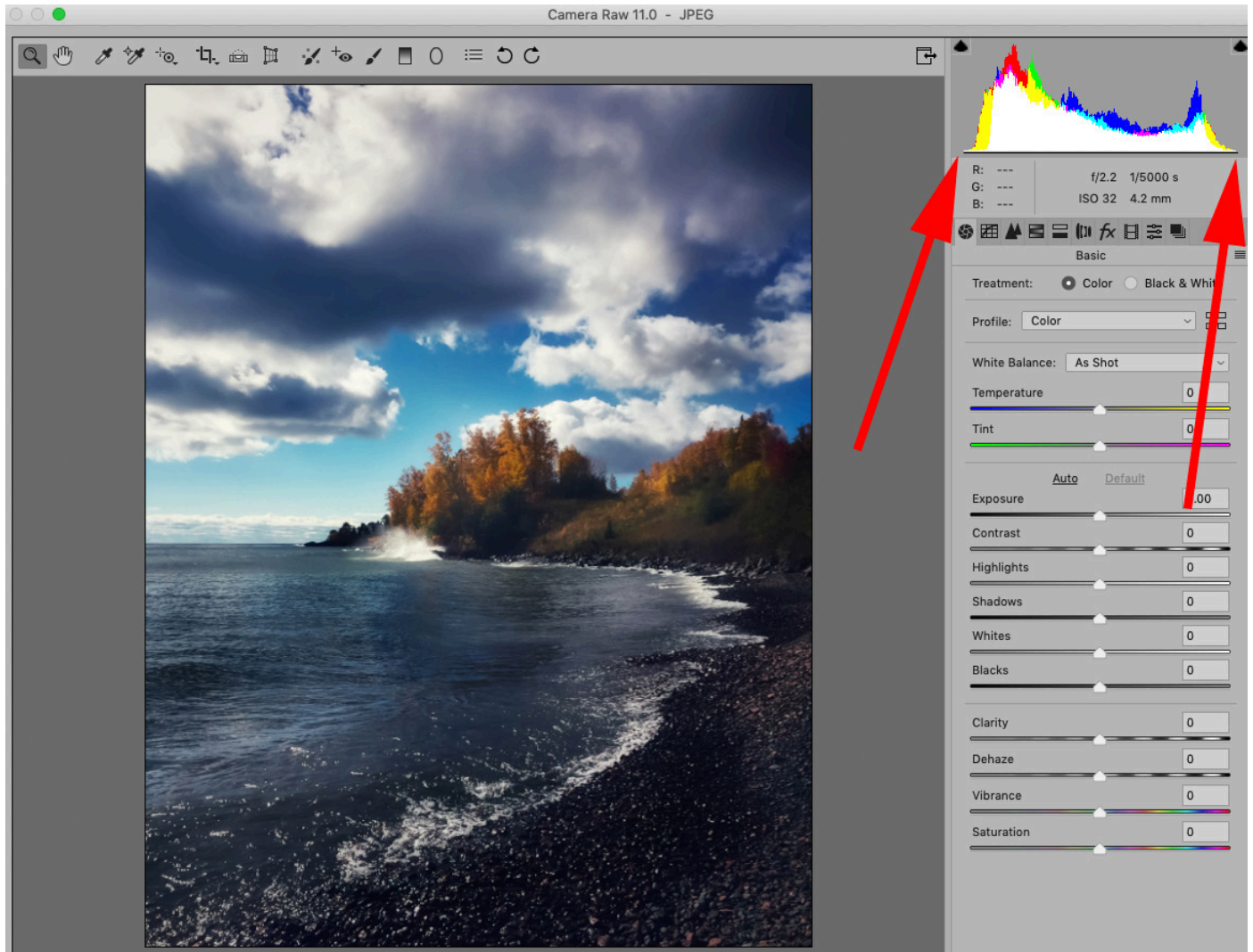
Sometimes, that can be a benefit. It allows the end user to 'change the format' of the shot to their specific needs through cropping.

If you compose a shot intended for sale in multiple uses too tightly, it would limit the sales opportunity.

If an art director sees your image and they want to use it in a horizontal format, but you composed it so tightly that only a vertical format works, you just missed a sale.



Photograph by Kent DuFault



I always start my evaluation of an image by looking at the histogram. The exposure was perfect, with no clipping.

You may be looking at the camera settings and thinking, "What the heck was he doing? Look at them: ISO 32, 4.2mm lens, f/2.2, and 1/5000th of a second. That seems crazy!"

The reason for those settings is because I shot this with my iPhone.

Make no mistake, professional-quality images that can, and will, sell to customers can be made with

a smartphone these days if you exercise good technique, especially in composition.

I did have my LUMIX mirrorless camera with me, so why did I use the iPhone?

The light hitting the trees was there for less than a couple of seconds. The clouds were moving fast, and that beautiful light occurred only once while I was standing there, and only momentarily.

In your photography, use your knowledge and the best tool for the job.



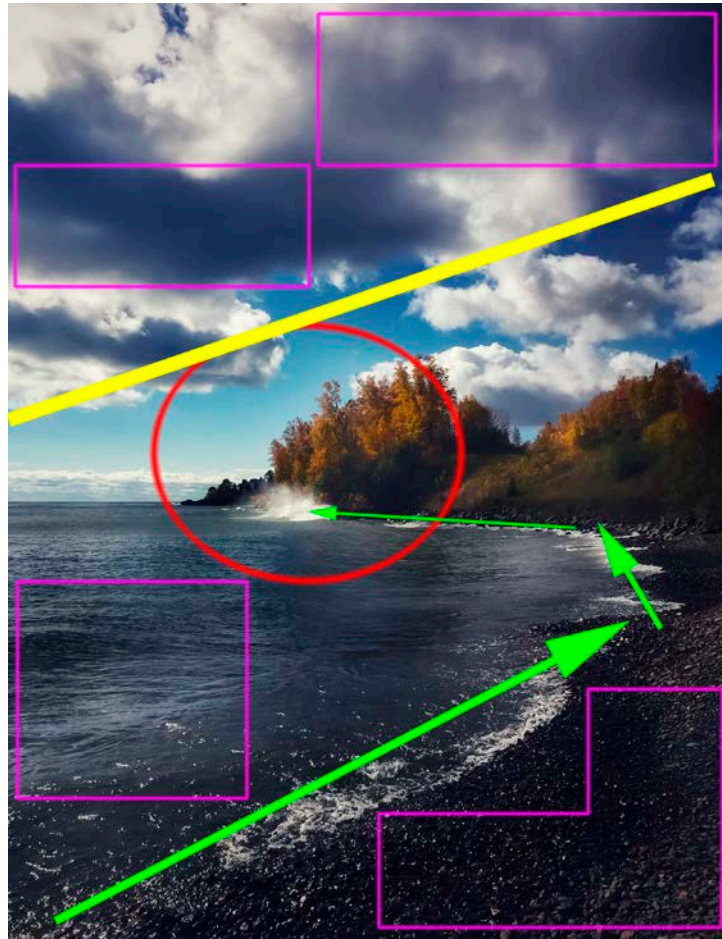
I started playing around with the crop overlay tool in Photoshop to see if the composition could be improved. Here we are looking at the Golden Spiral.



Here we are looking at the Golden Triangle.



Finally, we are looking at the Golden Ratio.



Here is a breakdown of my original composition.

After evaluating the different possible crop scenarios, I believe that my original composition works best, even though it follows no rule of space.

The red circle indicates the stopping point for a viewer within the composition.

Is the red-circled area the subject? No. The entire landscape is the subject, which is often the case with landscape photography.

However, don't leave a viewer hanging. Give them a place to stop in their exploration of your photograph. In this case, it is the area within the red circle.

The green arrows show a curved leading line that brings the eyes right toward the stopping point.

What is the crashing wave? It is a focal point!

The broad yellow line is an interesting component to this shot.

The contrast between the white clouds and the blue sky creates a line of demarcation through contrast.

A line of contrast has the effect of stopping a viewer's eyes from moving in a direction, and they will then follow along the line.

What is happening in this case? The line of contrast stops the eyes from moving upward. It then directs them back downward toward the stopping point within the red circle.

Again, I can't emphasize this enough if you are interested in shooting for commercial purposes. The purple boxes indicate areas where a graphic designer or an art director could place copy over the photograph if they desired.

However, the photograph also satisfies if left just as it is.