

INTERESTING DETAILS

By Kent DuFault

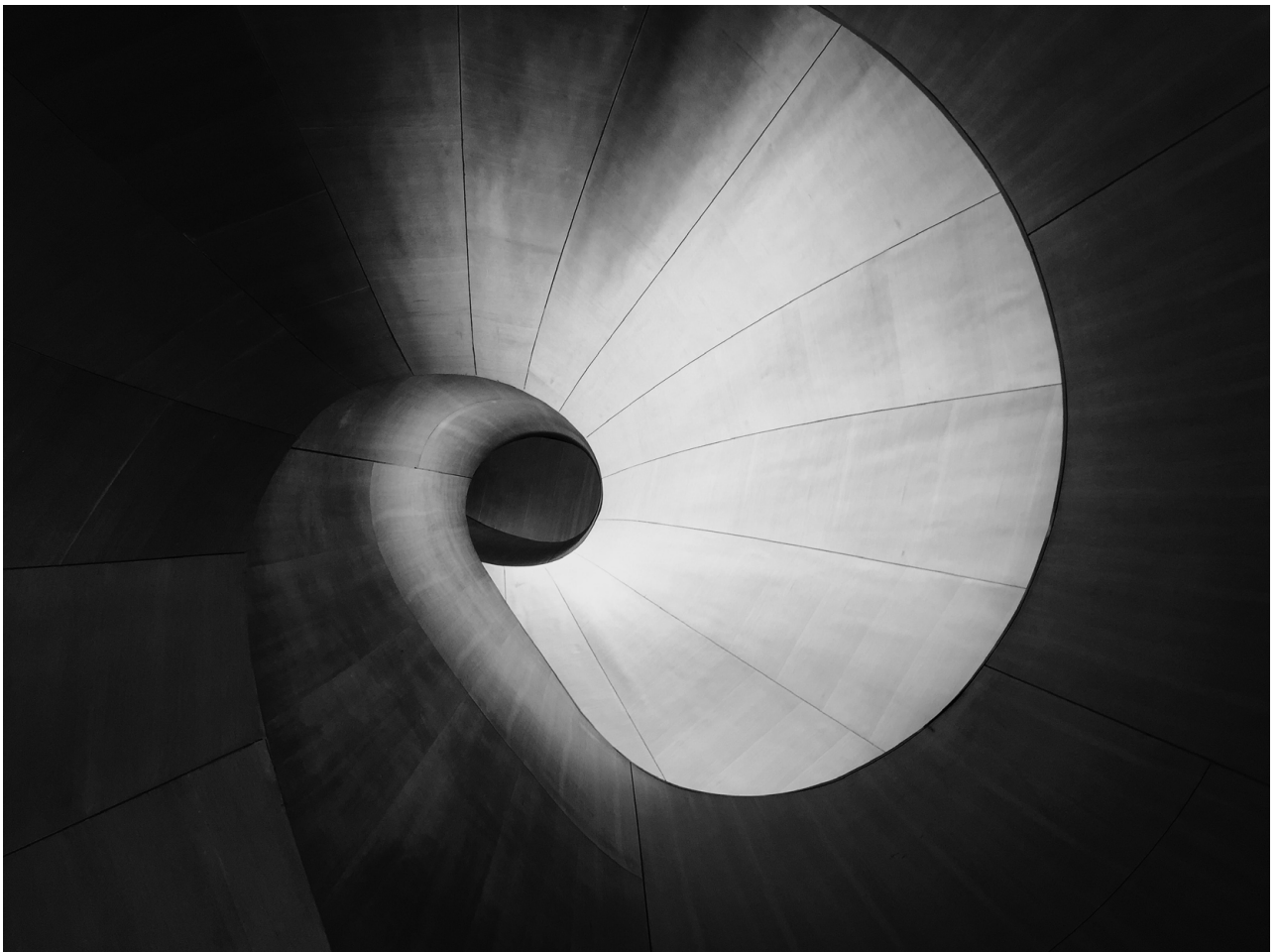
The design of architecture is an artistic endeavor all on its own. This is why so many photographers love taking pictures of architecture; creative intent is already present within the subject.

While I do enjoy taking photos of buildings, bridges, and other architecture, I get really excited when I start exploring the details of a building, or the architect's vision (so to speak).

I often search for more semi-abstract angles, and I occasionally include people when it helps establish a story element.

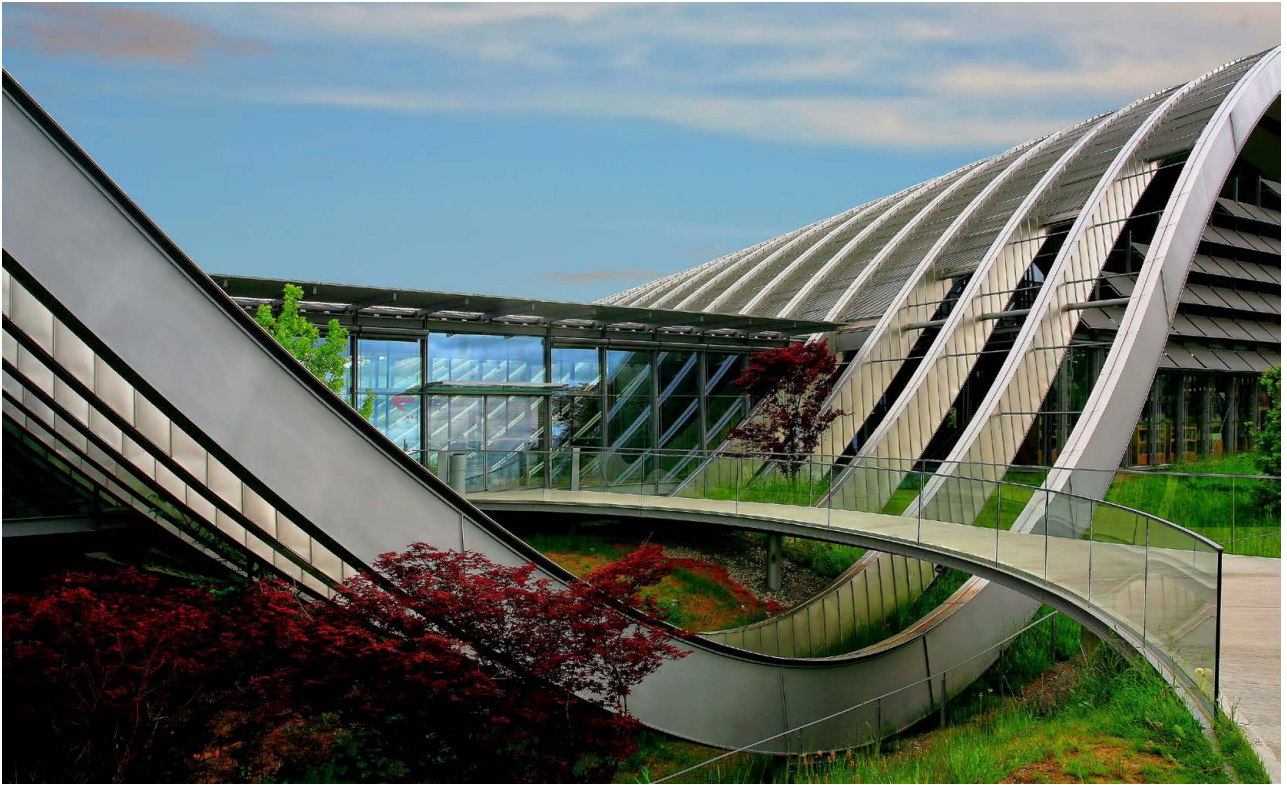
Another significant part of creating photos of architecture in this manner is that the same location constantly changes as the lighting moves.

You can visit the same building many times over the years and never get the same picture twice!



<https://unsplash.com/photos/o-dkYSvidB4>

Arturo Castaneyra – Apple iPhone 6, 4.2mm lens, f/2.2, 1/60th, ISO 40



<https://unsplash.com/photos/opFPVxMRpP8>

Ricardo Gomez Angel – Canon EOS 5D, 28mm lens, f/11, 1/250th, ISO 400

Critical Thought: When searching for exciting architectural details, the shot doesn't necessarily have to be a 'close up.'

When tackling this creativity prompt, it is an excellent exercise in honing your style and vision with your photography.

This photographer clearly loved the gentle slope in the detail of this building, and so do I! It's a great composition that uses architectural detail in a classic and well-defined photo.



Assignment:

Spend a day photographing architectural details. Ensure you shoot some close-up work and include shots that encompass a component of the construction and design. (Such as the example photo above.)

Evaluation: Did you find one type of shot easier to locate than the other type? Did you identify any stylistic tendencies, such as having an eye for angles or enjoying curves? How did your wider shots turn out? Were you able to highlight a design aspect without having to get super close?



Key Point:

Interesting architectural details can be a close-up photo or a wider shot composed to highlight one or two aspects of the overall architectural design.

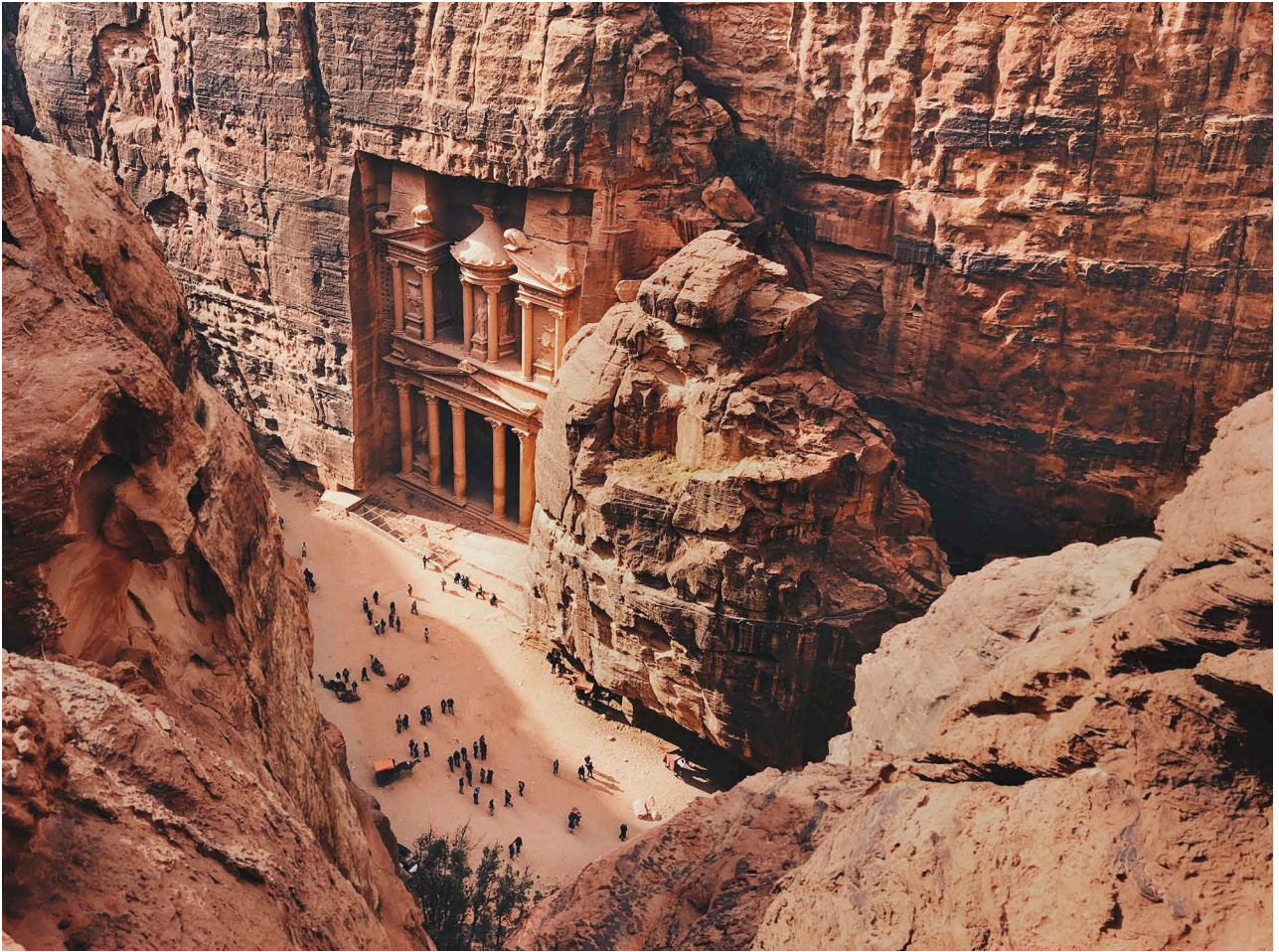


<https://unsplash.com/photos/uTQgW9pnNT8>

Mike Swigunski – Apple iPhone XS Max, 6.0mm lens, f/2.4, 1/199th, ISO 16

When creating an 'interesting detail' picture, remember that the architecture is the subject, and you must compose every aspect of your photo to support that subject.

This photographer had a good idea, but by placing the focus on the rocks in the foreground, the architecture has lost visual weight as the subject.



https://unsplash.com/photos/5_Bu25SV6X8

Alex Vasey – Apple iPhone 8, 4.0mm lens, f/1.8, 1774th, ISO 20

This photo used a similar technique. However, the lighting and critical focus are placed on the architectural detail, making it far more successful.



Assignment:

Photograph architectural details where you place foreground objects to frame and highlight your subject. Practice on correct placement of the critical focus and determine for yourself the proper depth of field.

Evaluation: How did this work out for you? I bet it was easy to find objects to frame your chosen subject, but how did it go with the focus and DOF? Are you going to give it another try? You should, and you should select different locations to photograph, as it will stretch your skills.



Key Point:

Focus placement and depth of field are critical steps to success in architectural photography! Remember what your subject is and that the critical focus should always be placed on the subject.



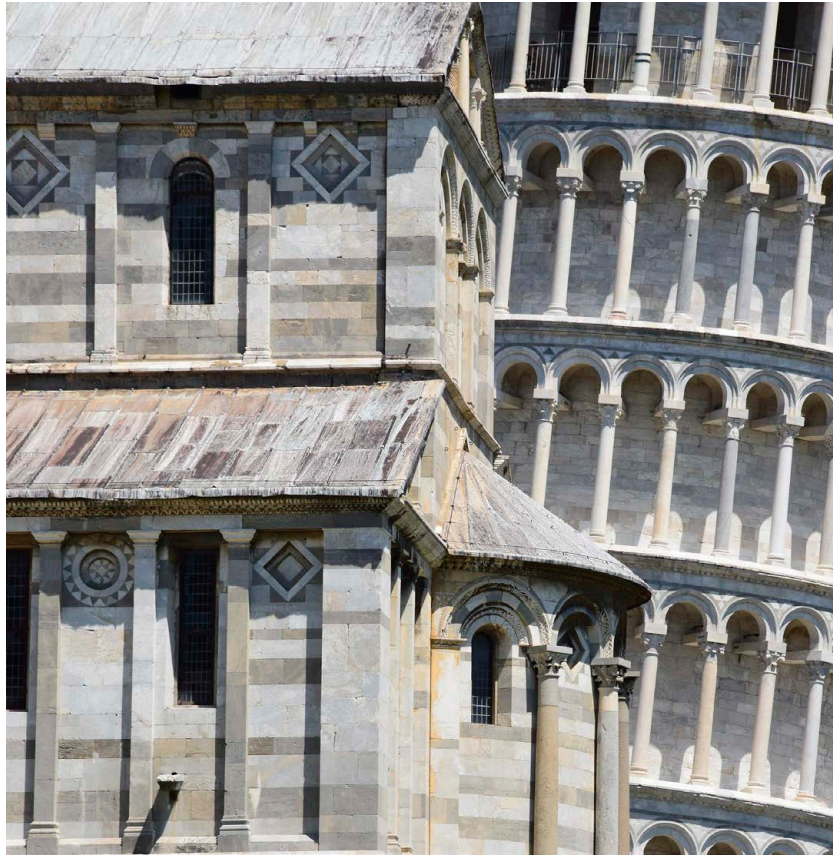
<https://unsplash.com/photos/F5HtPjpBb9k>

Alex Vasey – Canon EOS Rebel T3, 37mm lens, f/5, 1/50th, ISO 640

Here's an interesting question. When does an architectural detail shot become a boring snapshot?

I think the answer to that question would vary for all of us. However, for the sake of discussion, I feel that this shot of the Leaning Tower of Pisa falls into that category.

Yes, it's recognizable as a famous landmark, but that's really where the story ends.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/RQCGHv2Bpn0>

Taylor Smith – Nikon D3300, 135mm lens, f/11, 1/500th, ISO 280

I find this shot to be similar yet much more visually enjoyable. Composition has been employed in a manner that is missing in the first example.

Could this shot be better? I think so. A person standing on the tower walkway or perhaps less of the foreground building would have enhanced the tower as the subject.

However, it's not bad. The unusual angle of the columns does pull your eyes right toward the tower. It's missing that something extra that would rivet the eyes toward that part of the composition.



Assignment:

Spend a day photographing architectural details. In each circumstance, spend time looking for that unique feature or element that acts as a focal point, thus riveting a viewer's eyes right to the spot where you want them to be looking. This spot could be highlighted by including people, or perhaps a bird, a flag, or even the lighting. But something visually substantial must attract immediate attention.

Evaluation: How hard did you have to look to find that special feature? This is a great learning point for any type of photography. Great photos require time and energy. Rarely do they appear right in front of you. I have found that exploring a subject (taking multiple shots from various points of view) will almost always lead to better pictures.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/4rcJ2TRznMc>

Matt Flores – No EXIF

Key Thought: When photographing architectural details, ask yourself, “Is it important to know where the structure is and what it is?” If so, you must take that into consideration when planning your shot. The above picture depicts the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C., arguably one of the world’s most famous and well-known buildings. Yet, this picture could be from numerous locations with buildings of similar design anywhere. There isn’t enough information here to tell us what this building happens to be.



Assignment:

Photograph architectural details while including clues that tell a random viewer where the building is located and what the building is known for.

Evaluation: I bet you found this assignment a bit harder than some of the previous ones. That’s good! You’re stretching and growing in your visual communication skills.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/PAPuMrjuKIU>

Adrien Olichon (left) – Fujifilm X100F, 23mm lens, f/2.5, 1/250th, ISO 2000

<https://unsplash.com/photos/fQNV8jrdLO0>

Mahdi Soheili (right) – Apple iPhone 6s, 4.2mm lens, f/2.2, 1/2300th, ISO 25

Now we have come to my favorite aspect of detail photography of architecture: the semi-abstract.

As a creator, you are always open to creating whatever you want. That's the joy of it.

So, all of these prompts are merely nudging you to try something new and get you thinking about new ways of doing what you already love: taking pictures.

Semi-abstract architectural detail photography is my favorite pastime. There are no rules. It is merely you, your camera, and your artistic sense.

Do you think symmetrically or asymmetrically?

Do you see it in black and white or color?

Do you enjoy bright, vibrant colors or muted hues?

It's game-on when you take on this last Creativity Prompt!



Assignment:

Spend some time with this project. Create a portfolio of at least ten images that are semi-abstract architectural details—no rules on this one. Simply satisfy your creative need. The only prerequisite is that I want you to stick with it until you've created at least ten that you are super proud of (twenty would be better).

Evaluation: After completing this last prompt, did you discover something about yourself? Do you see architecture in a particular pattern? Are you drawn to graphic elements or mysterious shadows? It's all fun!