

# AROUND THE HOME

By Kent DuFault

Every photographer has experienced that moment where they reach critical mass and feel that there is nothing left to photograph.

Storytelling with photography adds a new layer to the thought process of picture taking.

Telling stories with your photography is a beautiful way to inject some enthusiasm back into your hobby or profession.



Image 001 – Photograph by Nathan Dumlao

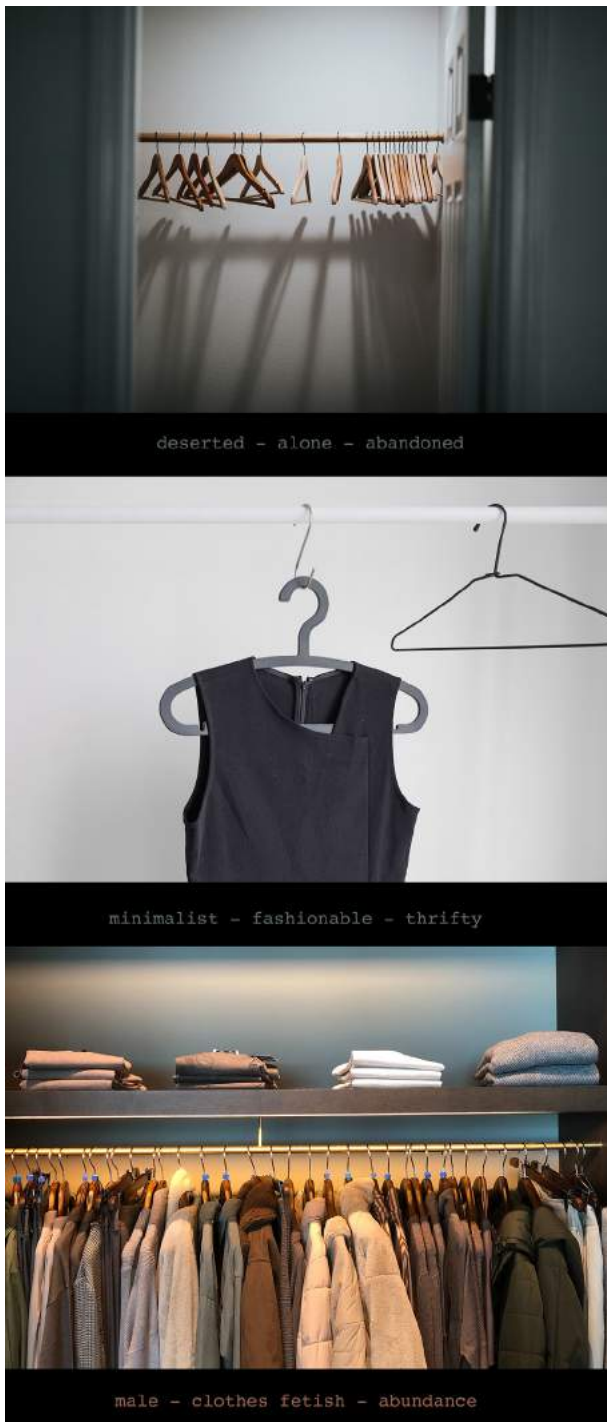


Image 002 – Photograph (T) by [Nathan Dumlao](#), Photograph (M) by [Henry & Co.](#), and Photograph (B) by [Dhruv Patel](#)

In Image 002, we have three pictures of three closets. Despite the similarity of location and props, each photograph tells a very different story.

In Creativity Prompt #2 for storytelling, our theme will be 'Around the Home.'

Telling photo stories with people, locations, and objects that you are most acquainted with can often be the most challenging. Many photographers see these familiar objects or places as dull and overly ordinary.

Completing the assignments in this creativity prompt will not only be entertaining but will also hone your abilities to look 'past the obvious' when composing a storytelling photo solution in any situation.



#### Assignment:

Photograph any or all of the closets within your home. Take your time and create a story with each attempt. Vary your use of props, lenses, camera-to-subject distance, and lighting. But every photograph must be indicative of having been a closet. For example, don't get so close that a viewer wouldn't know that it was in a closet. Be mindful of your story as you go through the creation process.

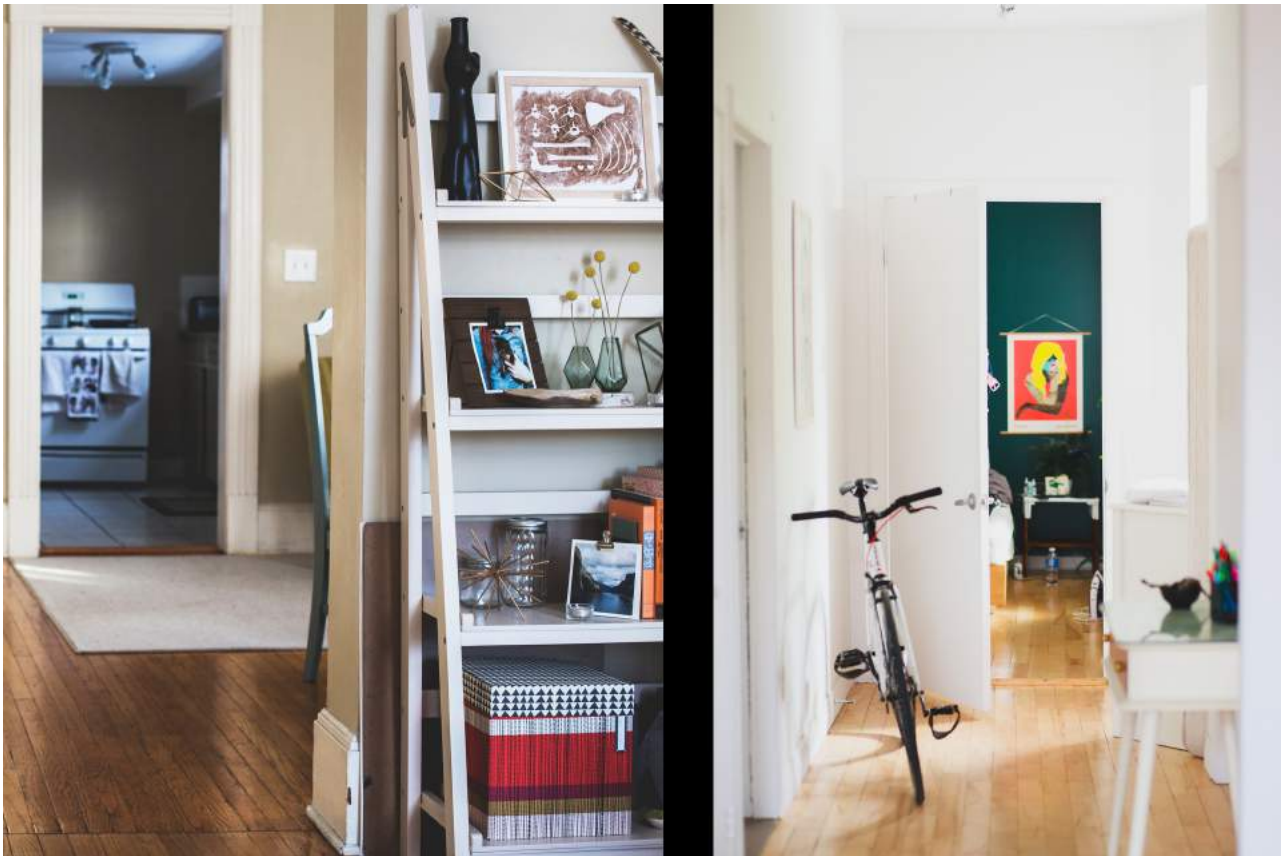


Image 003 – Photograph (L) by [Kari Shea](#) and Photograph (R) by [Alesia Kazantceva](#)

Image 003 contains two different photos by two different photographers. Each photographer attempted to tell a similar story about a home environment. One worked well, and the other did not.

Let's look at why.



Image 004 – Photograph (L) by [Kari Shea](#) and Photograph (R) by [Alesia Kazantceva](#)

In Image 004, the black arrow (R) and the black box with a red border (L) indicate the subjects of both photos. The subject is determined by the placement of critical focus.

The yellow arrows, on the left photo, indicate tools of composition that were used, including leading lines and a frame.

The yellow arrow, pointing toward the bicycle in the right photo, indicates a storytelling element that supports but doesn't overtake the subject. The other two yellow arrows (in the right picture) show us that this photographer also used a frame.

The red X on the left photo indicates that this area is an eye snag; it draws the viewer's eyes away from the subject in the foreground.

The red arrows on the right photo indicate proper placement of out-of-focus foreground interest as well as the use of leading lines, both of which adequately support the subject as the main point of interest.



### Key Point:

Your story is about your subject. Unlike writing a mystery novel, you most definitely want your viewers to know what your subject is. They can then more readily discern the story.

In the right of Image 004, we know the person who occupies this space likes a minimalist décor, they're into bicycling, and they enjoy modern art.

In the left of Image 004, we learn almost nothing about the space or the occupant.

**Remember:**

Where you place the critical focus plays the most significant role in setting up what will be perceived as your subject. The human mind will always direct the eyes toward a point of focus first.

**Assignment:**

Create a series of photographs within your home where you photograph from one room looking into another room (just like the example photos in Image 003). Tell your story by practicing your placement of focus and using depth of field. Make careful choices about what to include and what to exclude from the shot. Show your results to others and ask them what they think the story is. Learn from their response. If you're excited by this prompt, try it at the homes of others as well, such as family or friends. That will clear your mind of pre-conceived notions and further nurture your willingness to tell a story in an unfamiliar environment.





Image 005 – Photograph (L) by [Helen Ngoc N.](#) and Photograph (M) by [Henry Dick](#) and Photograph (R) by [Riley](#).



### Assignment:

Take a moment and create a list of objects in or around your home that would clearly tell a story about you and your home. Do you love dream catchers? Do you play the cello? What is your favorite chair? Once you have your list, it's time to get busy. Photograph the objects on your list in an exciting and storytelling manner. Is someone sleeping under the dream catcher? Is your favorite chair covered in snow? Tell me. How could the photo story of the cello, its location, and its owner have been stronger?



Image 006 – Photograph (T) by [Tina Dawson](#) and Photograph (M) by [Ava Sol](#) and Photograph (B) by [Roberto Nickson](#)

Let's introduce a new element to the storytelling photography prompt around your home: people!

Take a look at Image 006. The top photo was obviously directed, and the photographer attempted to tell a story about the woman in her home.

The problem occurred in the execution.

Look at the left third and upper third of the frame. Those areas contain little to no critical storytelling or composition-forming elements. The result is that the story element is lost in the middle of the frame.



### Remember:

Don't make your viewers work hard to figure out your subject and your story.

Now, look at the middle photo on Image 006. It's a pretty and artsy picture, and overall I like it. But it tells no story. The picture doesn't tell us anything about the woman, room, home, or the relationship between any of them. This could have been resolved by including some pertinent props.



### Remember:

You can add and remove items to make your story stronger. Think like a painter and design the canvas, which is your frame.

The bottom photo in Image 006 is the best of the three. It still falls a bit short in the storytelling department. Much of the frame is wasted on non-essential elements. Plus, the depiction of the relationship between the woman and her dog isn't as strong as it could have been with some minor tweaks.



Image 007 – Photograph by [Roberto Nickson](#)

Even a post-production crop helped strengthen the story, as you can see in Image 007.



#### Key Point:

Cropping is one of the best post-production tools available to you when you're trying to 'boost' the story of a photo.





Image 008 – Photograph by [Drew Coffman](#)

Image 008 is a perfectly executed, around the home, storytelling photograph.

We get a sense of the place and the person. The dog provides an essential storytelling element, as does the hammock and décor of the room.

The composition is perfect. Every element brings the eyes toward the center of the frame.

The man's feet are the subject and not the dog. Do you know why?

Critical focus is placed upon the shoe. Plus, the hammock adds visual strength to the feet of the subject by providing a frame. The legs offer repetition of shape to the hammock and act as a leading line toward the shoes as well.

The Nike logo is a strong shape. The right shoe is also the highest point of contrast in the frame.

So, even though the dog's face is a strong point of interest, it is pushed away as the subject, and the pooch simply becomes a storytelling element.

This photograph could easily be an advertisement for Nike because the story is strong.



### Assignment:

Create some storytelling photos around your home that include at least one person. Try including several people as well just for fun. Use all the information that we've discussed here to create your amazing photos that work as well as Image 008.