

EXERCISES IN  
COMPOSITION | FOCUS | LIGHT | MOTION

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# 32 PHOTO ETUDES

BY JENN MISHRA



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**Riomaggiore Boats (Italy)**  
**Sony A7II 16mm 1/3@f4.5 ISO250**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



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# PHOTOYOGA

This e-book is part of the PhotoYoga series.

PhotoYoga is about photography and the art of well-being.

PhotoYoga focuses on the balance between the technical and artistic sides of photography. It is about integrating photography into a well-balanced life that includes time for nature, for contemplation, for seeing all the world's beauty.

PhotoYoga brings together resources that help us to relax, center, and stretch:

relax.

Photography is about getting out into the world and enjoying life as it happens.

center.

Photography is about finding out about who you are and focusing on the world around you.

stretch.

PhotoYoga is about stretching yourself and your photographic skills to capture your creativity within the frame.

This e-book is about stretching our skills as photographers.

Follow PhotoYoga on Instagram and Facebook  
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## WWW.PHOTO-YOGA.COM

**Colorful Sari (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony A7R3 175mm 1/1000@f6.3 ISO8000**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenn Mishra is an award winning travel photographer based in the St. Louis metro area.

She traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe with her trusty point-and-shoot camera for many years before discovering photography as an artistic passion. A 365 Project begun in 2015 honed her photography skills.

By profession, Jenn Mishra is an orchestral musician and university music educator. She is a prolific national and international speaker and is the co-author of the book *iPractice: Technology in the 21st Century Music Practice Room* published by Oxford University Press, as well as dozens of research and pedagogical articles on music performance and music education.

She and her husband continue their global travels, but even when at home, she tries to keep the same sense of adventure – looking for novelty in the everyday; finding the extraordinary in the ordinary.

She shares her philosophy and her passion for photography through the website PhotoYoga.

To see more of Jenn Mishra's photos go to her website [www.witsendphotography.com](http://www.witsendphotography.com) or follow her on Instagram @jennatwitsend

Jenn Mishra photographs with a Sony system.



”

*Photography begins right  
where I am – not where I  
was yesterday or where I  
long to be.*

QUOTE INSPIRED BY YOGA  
MASTER LINDA SPARROWE



**Musial Bridge (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony DSC-HX90V 1/250@f3.5 ISO80**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

# 1

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## INTRODUCTION

### What is an Etude?

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An etude (pronounced ā - tōod) is a technical study. The term comes from music. Student musicians study short pieces, called etudes, composed specifically to enhance a particular technical skill. The work will pay off later. The musician will be able to learn a musical piece easier because the skills needed will have been practiced before in

isolation. Etudes along with scales are not necessarily fun to practice nor are they the best music ever written, you'll probably never hear one in concert or on a recital. Etudes are the work a musician does behind the scenes. Etudes are the medicine of music. Musicians practice them to make them better performers.



## Photo Etudes

The idea of an etude, a technical study, can easily be applied to photography. Any exercise designed to enhance a particular photographic skill is a “photo etude”. The point of etudes is to focus attention on one particular technique.

In this book, 32 Photo Etudes have been written to enhance various technical skills in isolation. On an average day of shooting, photographers may use many different techniques. Practicing these skills in isolation gives photographers an advantage in the field. Attention can be fully committed to composition instead of technique. You may be able to capture photos that might have been missed because your attention isn't being diverted to photographic technique.

## Etude Goals

In each Photo Etude, the assignment is to create 12 photos. Twelve is a minimum number and these should be 12 *successful* photos – not attempts at the technique. Some techniques need more practice than others to master.

Don't get frustrated! If necessary, move onto another technique and return to a particular Photo Etude at a later time.

The etudes are grouped into categories, but are not necessarily in order of difficulty. It's likely each photographer will find some of the techniques easy and others more difficult – not necessarily in the same way as another photographer. Most of these Photo Etudes are broad and will adapt to any photographic genre by choosing a subject that fits with your own style of photography.

## Settings & Equipment

Some of these photo etudes can be done with any photo-making tool including smartphones; others require cameras that have manual settings or apps that can make the camera on a smartphone more flexible. Some etudes require special equipment like zoom lenses.

Adjusting the settings on your camera may be necessary to accomplish the goal of a Photo Etude. If this is the case, the setting will be in the description. If settings aren't mentioned, than you can choose what settings to use.

**Malecón Sunset (Havana, Cuba)**  
**Sony A7R3 24mm 1/400@f5.6 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



These are my default settings:

$f8$

1/250th of a second

ISO100

Having said that, I often use aperture priority mode or shutter priority mode on my camera if I'm only concerned with one or the other of these settings. I also may use auto ISO up to 5000 if I think the light is going to be changing frequently. I'll give you setting suggestions when it matters to the photographic technique, but otherwise, you can use my default settings or ones of your own.

## Abbreviations

A set of abbreviations accompanies each Photo Etude providing an overview of specific camera settings used. This will help you target Photo Etudes that emphasize a particular setting if you desire. The abbreviations will also give you a warning if a tripod or zoom lens is required. The following abbreviations are used in this e-book:

**C = Composition**

**SS = Shutter Speed**

**A = Aperture**

**Iso = ISO**

**T = Tripod**

**Z = Zoom lens**

## Posting Photos & Feedback

Members of the PhotoYoga Facebook group can post photos in the photo album created for this e-book.

PhotoYoga Group url

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PhotoYogaLife/>

Photo Etudes Album url

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.500350190483018&type=3>

PhotoYoga is a community and we can help each other master these photographic techniques.

**Classic Cars of Cuba (Havana, Cuba)**

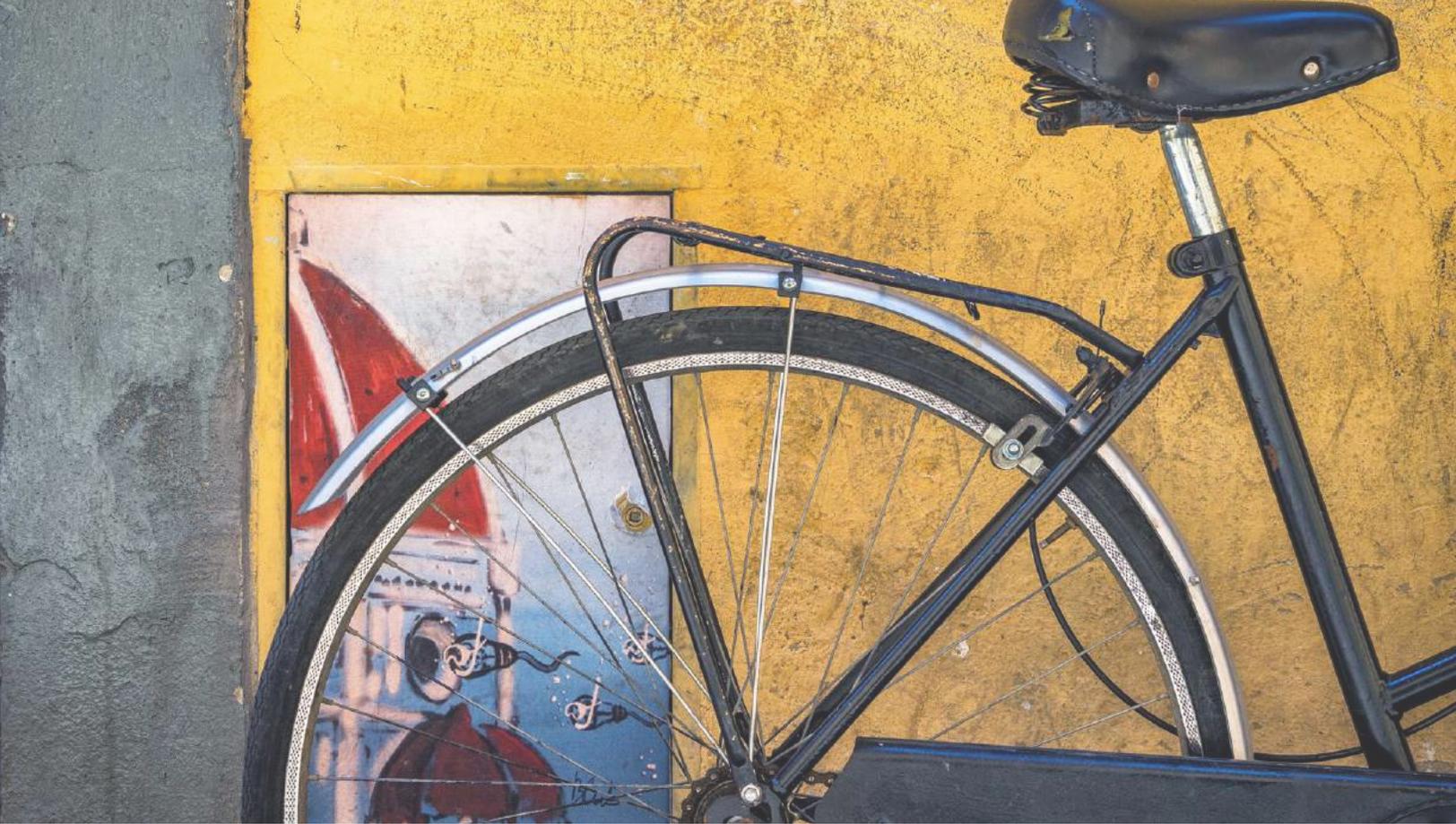
**Sony A7R3 32mm 1/125@f11 ISO100**

**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



*Photography does not just  
change the way we see  
things, it transforms the  
person who sees.*

QUOTE INSPIRED BY YOGA  
MASTER B. K. S. IYENGAR



**Artistic Graffiti and Bike (Florence, Italy)**  
**Sony A7II 65mm 1/80@f8.0 ISO400**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

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# SEEING THE SCENE

## Composition

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The exercises in this section focus on photographic composition. They are designed to help you see the world more deliberately. Some of the etudes focus on commonly used rules that generally result in balanced and interesting images. Others will help you see detail in the scene or explore new perspectives.

Composition is based in the eye of the photographer rather than the photo-making tool. The etudes in this section can be completed with any camera. The goal is to practice seeing the scene.

We must see the image first than we can capture it on film. Photography is in the eye.

# 2



**Motorbike Malecón (Havana, Cuba)**  
**Sony A7R3 141mm 1/1000@f11 ISO2500**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra Wits End Photography**

## ETUDE 1

# RULE OF THIRDS

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about taking photographs using the Rule of Thirds – placing subjects at what is generally considered the most effective places in the frame. Some cameras have a rule of thirds grid that will overlay on the image. If your camera has one of these, find it and turn it on! If not, mentally imagine a tic-tac-toe grid as you look through the viewfinder.

Take a photo walk and find subjects that are photographically interesting to you, flowers, people - anything really. Place

each subject either 1/3 of the way up or 1/3 of the way down in the frame. Place the subject 1/3 of the way from the edge of your frame – left or right, it doesn't matter.

This creates 4 “crash points” (upper left, upper right, lower left, lower right). Placing the main subject on one of these points is generally more interesting. The trick is to decide what your main subject is and place this subject deliberately off-center.

**Make 12 photos using the Rule of Thirds.**

## ETUDE 2

# RULE OF ODDS

*Composition*

This Photo Etude is about taking photographs using the Rule of Odds – placing an odd number of subjects in the frame, usually 3 or 5.

Choose a scene that has multiple subjects such as flowers, animals, or people. Scenes with multiple subjects can be complicated and it's not always easy to decide what to include in the frame and what to exclude.

When framing your image, choose a focal length (zoom in or out) or an angle that places an odd number of subjects in your frame.

Don't rely on cropping for this etude; capture the scene exactly as you want the final image to look. Make sure that any extra subjects are completely out of frame and not cut off along the edge.

**Make 12 photos using the rule of odds.**

**Wild Horses of Missouri (Eminence)**  
**Sony A7R3 300mm 1/1250@f6.3 ISO4000**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

**C**





**Dominoes in the Street (Havana, Cuba)**  
**Sony A7R3 69mm 1/800@f7.1 ISO4000**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

## ETUDE 3

# WAIT FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN

*Composition*

This Photo Etude is about patience – finding a scene and waiting for something to happen. Both street and wildlife photographers use this technique frequently.

Choose scene with an interesting background and interesting light. Find a vantage point where you can observe this scene for a period of time.

Wait for something to happen. Wait for a person or animal to come into the frame.

Be ready!

Don't move, wait some more and take another photo of the same scene with something different happening. Don't give up after a minute or two, street and wildlife photographers are known for their patience.

**Make 12 photos of the same scene with different subjects.**

## ETUDE 4

# STANDING STILL

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about looking at a scene in detail and from different angles. Choose a scene to photograph and plant your feet. It doesn't matter where you choose to photograph, even your back yard will work.

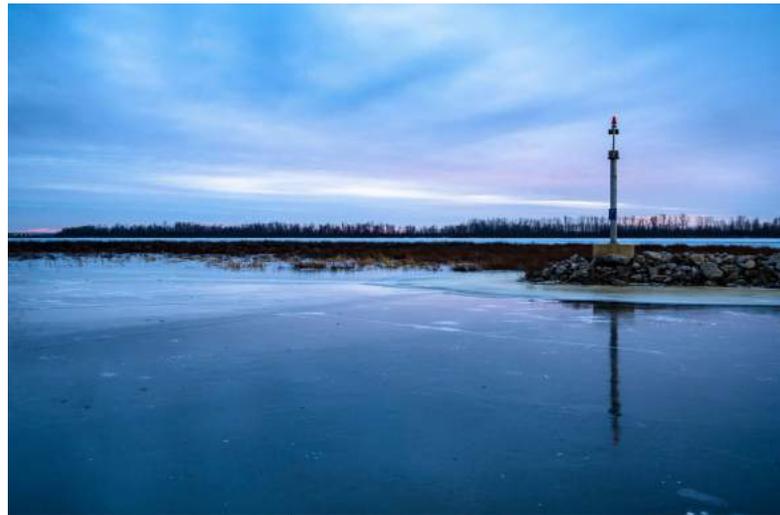
You can turn around 360 degrees, but don't move from your place. Really look at the scene. Look close, look wide, look at where the light is coming from.

You can zoom in and out if you have a zoom lens and you can bend down or stand on your toes.

Make as many photos as you can from this one position. When you think you've made them all, make 12 more. Your goal is to explore the scene deeply and see what you might have missed had you just taken one image.

**Make 12 photos of the same scene**

**C Z**



**Ice Under Clark Bridge (Alton, Illinois)**  
Sony A7R3 ISO800 1) 35mm 3.2sec@f11 2) 53mm  
0.8sec@f11 3) 16mm 4sec@f11  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography

## ETUDE 5

# LEADING LINES

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about finding and using leading lines to bring the viewer's eye into the photograph. Choose an interesting subject to photograph and then look around for lines that lead to the subject.

Lines may be actual lines, like a pattern on the pavement, or may be a wall, road, or railroad track that looks like a line in a two

dimensional image. Even light may provide a leading line.

If you don't immediately see a line leading into your subject, look again. You won't always find leading lines, but we often overlook possibilities so it's worth taking a bit more time to see if they are there. If not, try a different subject. Once you find leading lines, change your angle so the line leads from an edge of your photo towards the subject.

**Make 12 photos showing leading lines**

**Gateway Arch at Sunset (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony A7II 17mm 30sec@f9.0 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

**C**



## ETUDE 6

# REPEATING PATTERNS

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about finding repeating patterns. Go for a photo walk and look for repetition – multiples of something. In architecture, this could be a series of archways or windows or these could be naturally occurring patterns like waves. Anytime you see multiples, look to see if there is a repeating pattern.

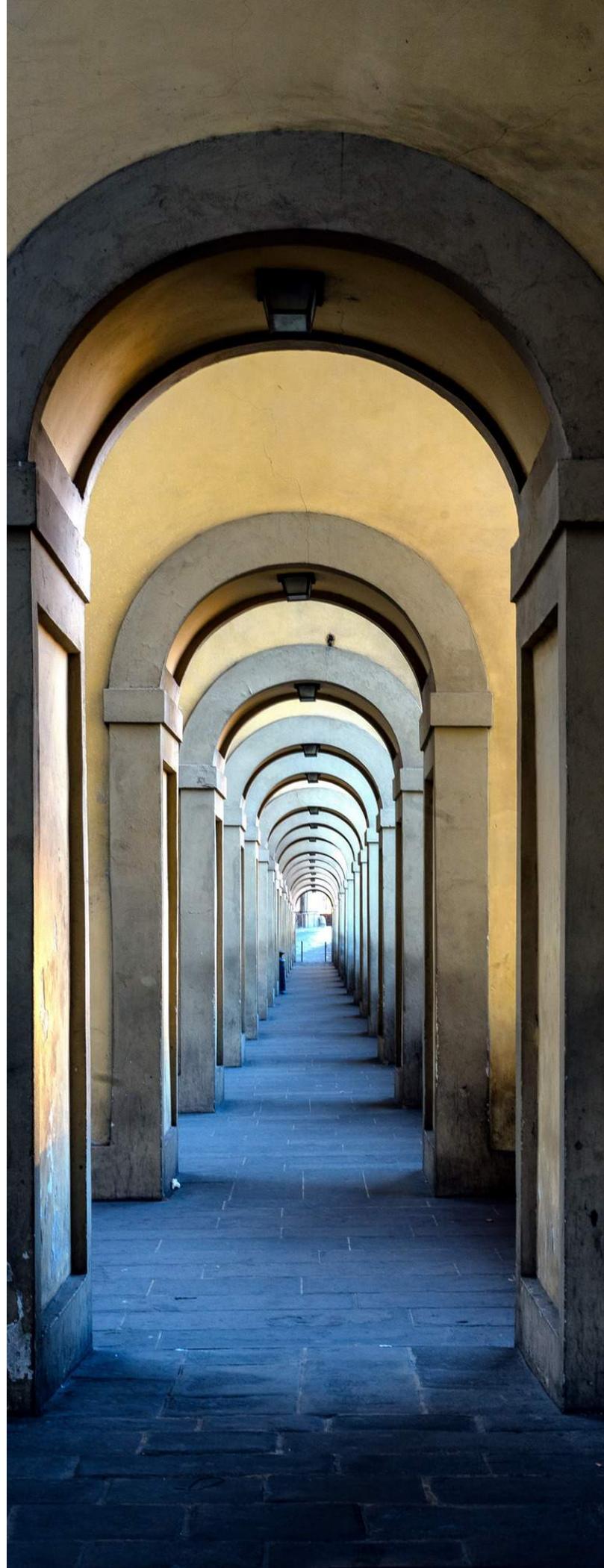
Compose your photo so that the repetition is obvious in the image. This may mean stepping to the left or the right or changing your height (e.g., getting low) to bring the patterns closer together.

You can make this etude a bit more challenging by composing around an oddity or a break in a repeating pattern. For instance, a change in color on just one element of the pattern or a flower that's just a little taller than the others.

**Make 12 photos showing repeating patterns**

**C**

**Florentine Arches (Florence, Italy)  
Sony A7II 39mm 0.5sec@f18 ISO100  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



## ETUDE 7

# GETTING CLOSE

*Composition*

This Photo Etude is about getting close and filling the frame. The tendency is for photographers to leave too much space around the main subject and being afraid to get close.

Chose an interesting subject and get close – then get closer! Zoom in or walk closer to the subject and take another photograph.

Don't rely on cropping for this etude; capture the scene exactly as you want the final image to look.

Don't be afraid to chop off part of a head or half of a flower. You'll be surprised how often you won't miss it.

If you have a macro lens, practice using it to get really, really close to your subject! A tripod may help you stabilize the image.

**Make 12 photos filling the frame.**



**Sunflowers (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony A7II 90mm ISO100 1) 1/400@f4.0 2)**  
**1/250@f6.3 3) 1/100@f8.0**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

## ETUDE 8

# GO LOW, GET HIGH

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about changing your perspective. Photographers tend to spend a lot of time shooting at eye level, but everyone sees the world at eye level; there's nothing new about this vantage point. Make your photos more interesting by seeing the world from a different perspective.

**Cuban Character (Havana, Cuba)**  
**Sony A7R3 94mm 1/800@f6.3 ISO5000**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

Getting low is especially necessary when photographing subjects close to the ground – like children or pets or flowers. Photographing from a low angle can make the subject look more powerful.

Find a subject that is interesting and experiment with taking photos from different angles. Get on the ground, stand on a ladder – whatever you have to do to see your subject from a different perspective.

**Make 12 photos of the same subject from different angles.**

**C**



## ETUDE 9

# ONE FOCAL LENGTH

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about using only one focal length for an extended period to practice seeing the world with that view. Use either a prime lens or set your zoom lens on one focal length and don't move it! It doesn't matter for this etude which focal length you choose, just that you choose one and stay with it.

Go for a photo walk and take multiple photos at this one focal length. Look at the photos and decide if you were too far away, too close or just right. After a series of practice shots, try to predict how close you need to be to frame the next subject just right.

**Make 12 photos using the same focal length.**



**Garden Walk (Edwardsville, Illinois)**  
Sony A7R3 90mm f2.8 ISO400 1) 1/2000; 2) 1/500;  
3) 1/320  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography

## ETUDE 10

# RECREATE A PHOTO

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about seeing and replicating detail in a photo.

Find a photo of a local scene or someone you know. The photo may be one you took in the past or from another photographer.

Using the photo as a guide, recreate it as closely as possible. Look for the light source, look for what is and is not in focus, look for any motion blur.

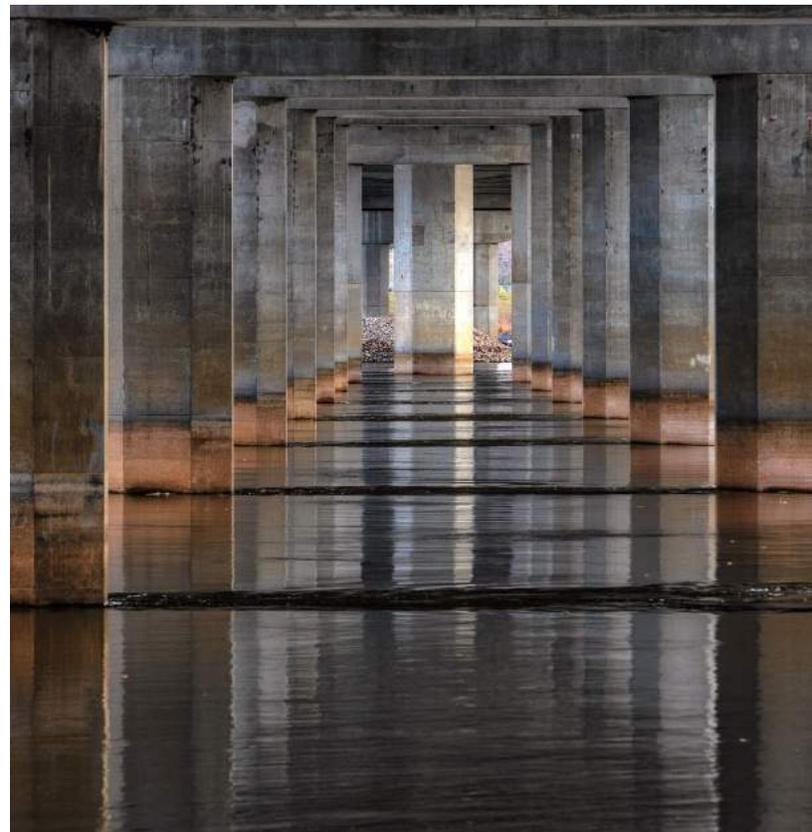
It's likely you won't be able to replicate every aspect of the photo, but look carefully at the photographic details and replicate what you can. Pay particular attention to composition, light, and focus.

**Make 12 photos getting progressively closer to the original photo.**

C

**Under Clark Bridge (Alton, Illinois)**  
Sony A7II 96mm 1/15@f19 ISO100  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography

**Under Clark Bridge II (Alton, Illinois)**  
Sony A7II 184mm 1/40@f10 ISO200  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography



”

*Essentially what  
photography is is life lit up.*

SAM ABELL



**Soulard Market (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony A7II 146mm 1/160@f6.3 ISO5000**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

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# SEEING THE LIGHT

Light & Shadows

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The etudes in this section focus on seeing and capturing light and shadows. Some of the etudes are designed to help you find light sources while others allow you to explore what happens when you change your relationship to the light.

Light is the medium of photographers – it is what we use to create photographs. Being able to see and use light is fundamental to photography. This series of etudes does not require the use of flash – that’s a whole other set of etudes! - but some of the techniques will transfer to the studio setting.

# 3



**Santa Fe Door (New Mexico)**  
**Sony A7II 28mm 1/30@f10 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

## ETUDE 11

### LOOK FOR LIGHT

*Lighting, Composition*

This Photo Etude is about looking for light. Go for a photo walk and look for light sources. Where is the light coming from? The sun? A street light? Where does the light bounce off? A wall? A car?

Look for where the light lands and take a photo. It doesn't matter if the subject is interesting or not, it matters only that it is illuminated.

Sometimes photographers look for a subject first – what we're going to photograph - and forget to look for the light. For this etude, look for the light first. Almost any subject can be enhanced if light is falling on it.

**Make 12 photos of lighted subjects.**

## ETUDE 12

# TEXTURED LIGHT

### *Lighting*

This Photo Etude is about looking at the angle of light and how it affects texture. You'll probably want a tripod for this etude and you'll need a constant light source – and maybe someone to hold it. The light doesn't need to be elaborate, it can be from a flashlight or the flashlight app on your smartphone.

Choose a textured subject. This can be any surface with a texture – a wall, a tree, a sign. Take photos while positioning and repositioning the light in relation to the surface. Look at the shadows and how long they are while the light is at different positions. At what point do the shadows disappear?

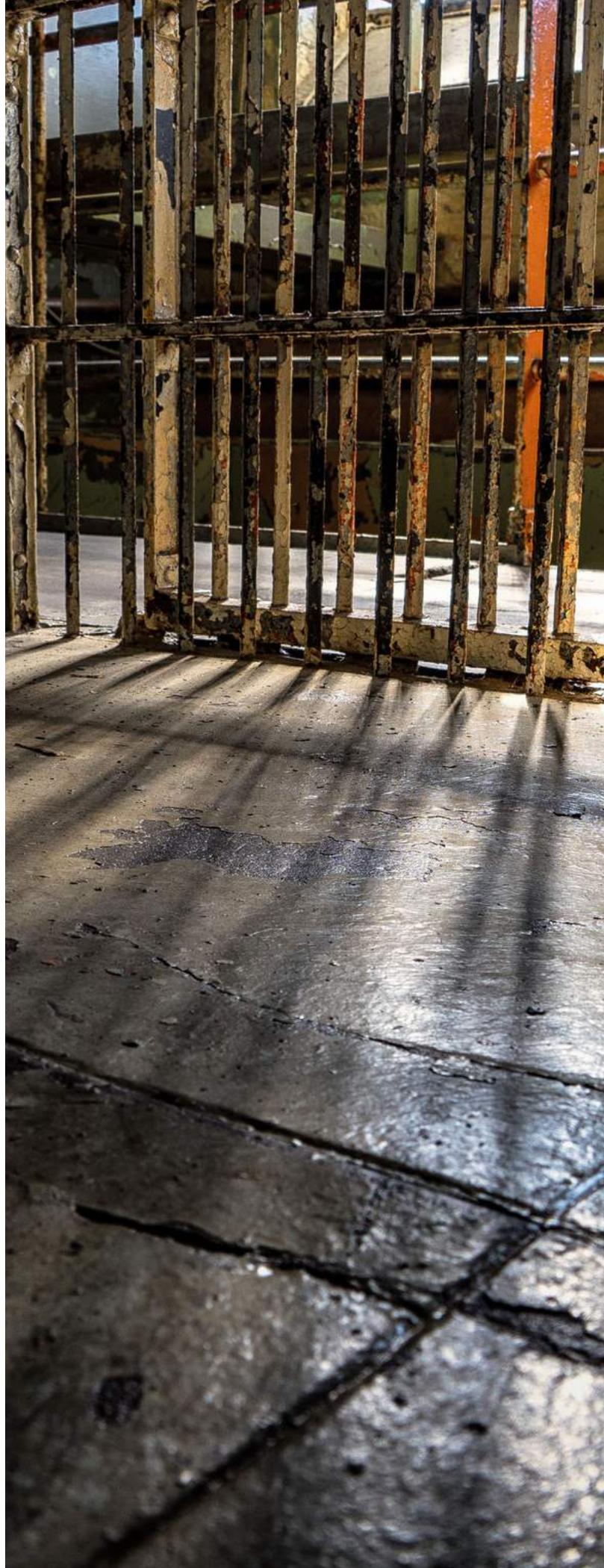
Light can add depth to textured surfaces or make them look flat.

This etude can easily be adapted to practice portrait lighting using one light. Substitute a model for the texture and use either a constant light or an off-camera flash. Look at the shadows created by the light as you move it.

**Make 12 photos of various lighting on a textured surface.**

**C**

**Abandoned Missouri State Penitentiary  
Sony A7II 1/15@f8.0 ISO100  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



## ETUDE 13

# SILHOUETTES

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about taking silhouettes – making the subject of your photo go dark against a bright background. Choose a scene that has a strong light source. The sun works.

Place your subject in front of the light source or move yourself so the subject is between you and the light source. This will

## C A S S

**Silhouette Sweethearts (Garden of the Gods, Illinois)**

**Sony A7II 1/200@f11 ISO100**

**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

backlight the subject.

Balance the light making sure your light source doesn't "blow out", become too white, or letting the subject become too dark and lose all detail.

Adjust your aperture to let in more or less light (larger number = less light). Adjust your shutter speed to let in more or less light (faster shutter speed = less light).

Keep the composition simple and make sure multiple shapes have space around them or they'll merge into a black blob.

**Make 12 photos of silhouettes.**



## ETUDE 14

# MOVING SHADOWS

### *Composition*

This Photo Etude is about deliberately photographing shadows as they move during the course of a day. This etude will help you practice seeing where the light is and is not falling on a scene and when light changes.

Choose a static scene or object that is sometimes in the sun and sometimes in the shade and visit it at different times of the day. Notice how the shadows fall across the scene and the light changes with the time of day.

Now chose a different scene and try to predict where the shadows will be as you visit it at different times of the day. A compass or sun tracking app may help you figure out how the sun will move across the sky.

This etude can be adapted to portrait photography. Place a willing model in the scene and look at how the shadows fall on his or her face at various times of the day. Consider how the shadows could be modified using a reflector or off-camera flash.

**Make 12 photos of shadows in the same place at different times of the day.**

C



Great Sand Dunes National Park (Colorado)  
Sony A7R3 1) First light 256mm 1/30@f11 ISO100  
2) Late Morning 228mm 1/100@f11 ISO100  
3) Evening 209mm 1/250@f11 ISO320  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography

## ETUDE 15

# LOW LIGHT

### *Low Light Conditions*

This Photo Etude is about taking photos in low light conditions. For this particular etude, don't use flash or tripod.

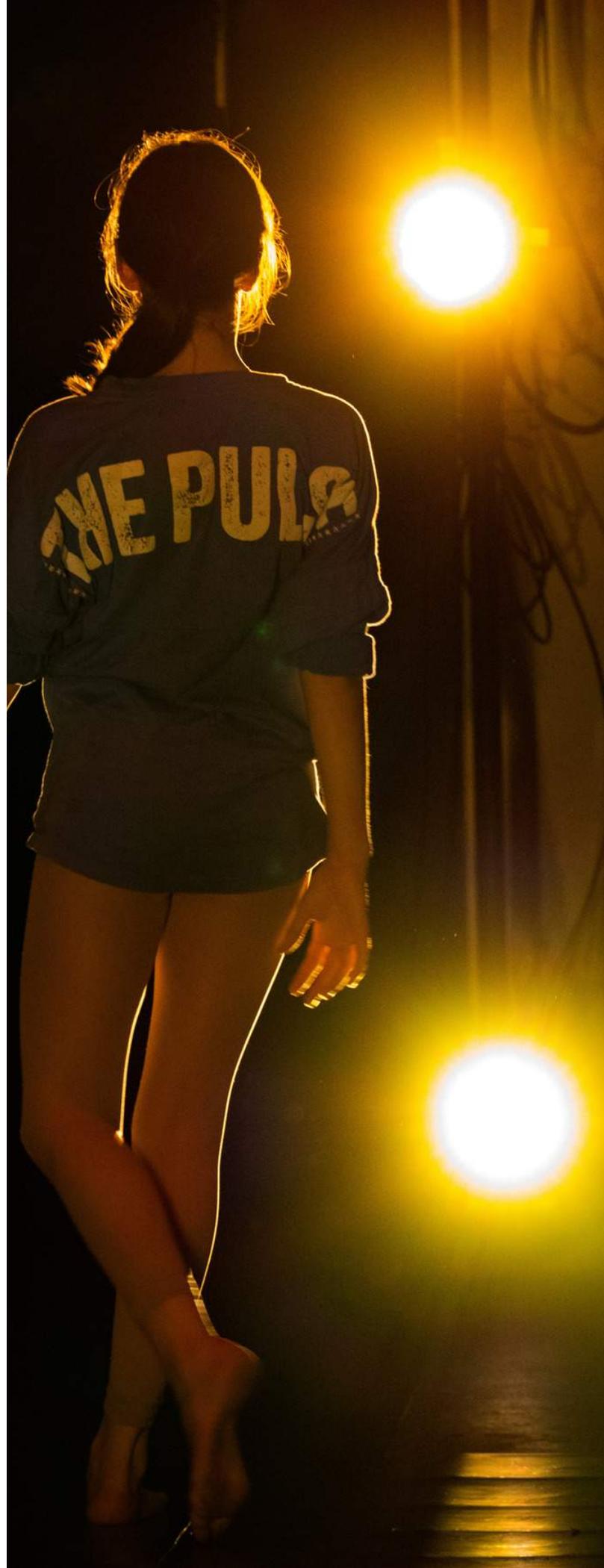
Choose a scene that has light, but not much of it. This may include candlelight or dim interior conditions such as occur with event or concert photography. Low light conditions can also occur during many evening and indoor sporting events. Our eyes can see much more light than our cameras can.

Adjust your camera settings to get as much light as possible into your camera. This includes opening up your aperture (smaller number) and raising your ISO. Most modern cameras can tolerate ISOs of 5000 or even 8000. There will be grain in the photos with higher ISOs, but some of this can be smoothed in post-processing. Slow your shutter speed as much as possible, but movement in the scene and handholding the camera may limit how slow you can make your shutter speed.

**Make 12 photos in low light conditions.**

## A SS Iso

**The Pulse (St. Louis, Missouri)  
Sony A7II 300mm 1/125@f9.5 ISO6400  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



## ETUDE 16

# STARBURSTS

*Lighting*

This Photo Etude is about making photographic starbursts – making a light source radiate in a pattern. Choose a scene that has a strong light source. The sun works, but so do street lamps.

You're going to be shooting into the light source, not usually recommended because of the hot flare and blown-out highlights that may occur. Embrace the flares!

**Cienfuegos Train Riders (Cuba)**  
**Sony A7R3 40mm 1/1000@f25 ISO1250**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

Choose a small aperture (high number = small aperture) like  $f18$  or  $f22$ . At small apertures, the light has to squeeze through a small hole, which emphasizes the rays of light and creates a starburst effect. If the light source is too bright, this technique may not work. Try finding something to place between you and the light source to partially block the light. An object partially in front of the light source also changes the shape of the starburst.

If the scene is too dark, lower your shutter speed and/or raise your ISO to compensate for the smaller aperture.

**Make 12 photos of starbursts.**

**A**



”

*The camera has always been a guide, and it's allowed me to see things and focus on things that maybe an average person wouldn't even notice.*

DON CHADWICK



**Tree in Reflection (Alton, Illinois)**  
**Sony A7R3 35mm 1/60@f11 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

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# FINDING THE FOCUS

## Focusing

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The etudes in this section are all about focusing and increasing your ability to selectively focus on a scene. For some of these etudes you'll need to dig into your camera's user manual to find out what focusing options are available with your system - you may be surprised at the focusing tools you

have.

Our cameras often do much more than auto focus! Some of the skills developed in this section can be taken much further. Selective focus in a scene for instance can be used to focus stack an images. The final etude is about manual focus, the ultimate selective focus.

# 4

## ETUDE 17

# SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD

### *Focusing*

This Photo Etude is about making photos with a shallow depth of field – selectively pinpointing a focus point and blurring out the rest of the photo. There's a lot of math involved in controlling depth of field, but we'll keep it simple here.

Choose an interesting subject that has distance from a background. For instance, flowers in a field. The greater the distance between the subject and the background, the more successful you will likely be.

Select the widest aperture you have -  $f2.8$  or  $f3.5$  (low number = wide aperture). Increase the shutter speed to balance the amount of light coming into the camera.

Get close to the subject and focus on it. The focusing distance of your lens determines how close you can get. If you're having trouble focusing, back up a bit. Make sure the lens is focused on the subject and not the background.

The amount of blur depends on how wide your aperture is and distances between you and the subject and between the subject and the background.

**Make 12 photos using a shallow depth of field.**

## A SS

Tibetan Prayer Horn  
Sony A7II 240mm 1/20@f6.3 ISO1600  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography



## ETUDE 18

# EYE FOCUS

### *Focusing*

This Photo Etude is about focusing on the eyes. Our eyes go directly to any eyes in a photo, so it's important to practice getting a sharp focus where it counts. Choose a living subject, a person or a pet works, and make sure you can see at least one eye.

Living things have a tendency to move around, even if they are being cooperative, but your job is to keep the eyes in focus.

## A

**Snowy Buffalo (Lone Elk Park)  
Sony A7II 300mm 1/1000@f5.6 ISO3200  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

Use an aperture that is sufficiently deep so that you get both eyes in focus – at least  $f5.6$ . If your camera has a good auto-focus, especially an eye-focus setting, try it or set a focus point on the closest eye.

Be careful that you're getting the eyes in focus and not the nose, ear, cheek, beak, wing, etc.

To take this etude to the next level, combine it with the "Looking for Light" etude. When focusing on the eye, try to capture a catch light - a light source - in the eye. A catch light adds life to an eye reflecting the light source.

**Make 12 photos showing eyes in focus.**



## ETUDE 19

# FOREGROUND FOCUS

### *Focusing*

This Photo Etude is about finding a foreground element to add to a scene. This etude will help you practice composing with depth. Including a foreground element makes landscapes more interesting and leads the eye into the frame. You'll need a tripod for this etude.

Choose an interesting landscape and then look for objects or patterns in the foreground that can be included in the frame. Flowers, rocks, or patterns in the sand work.

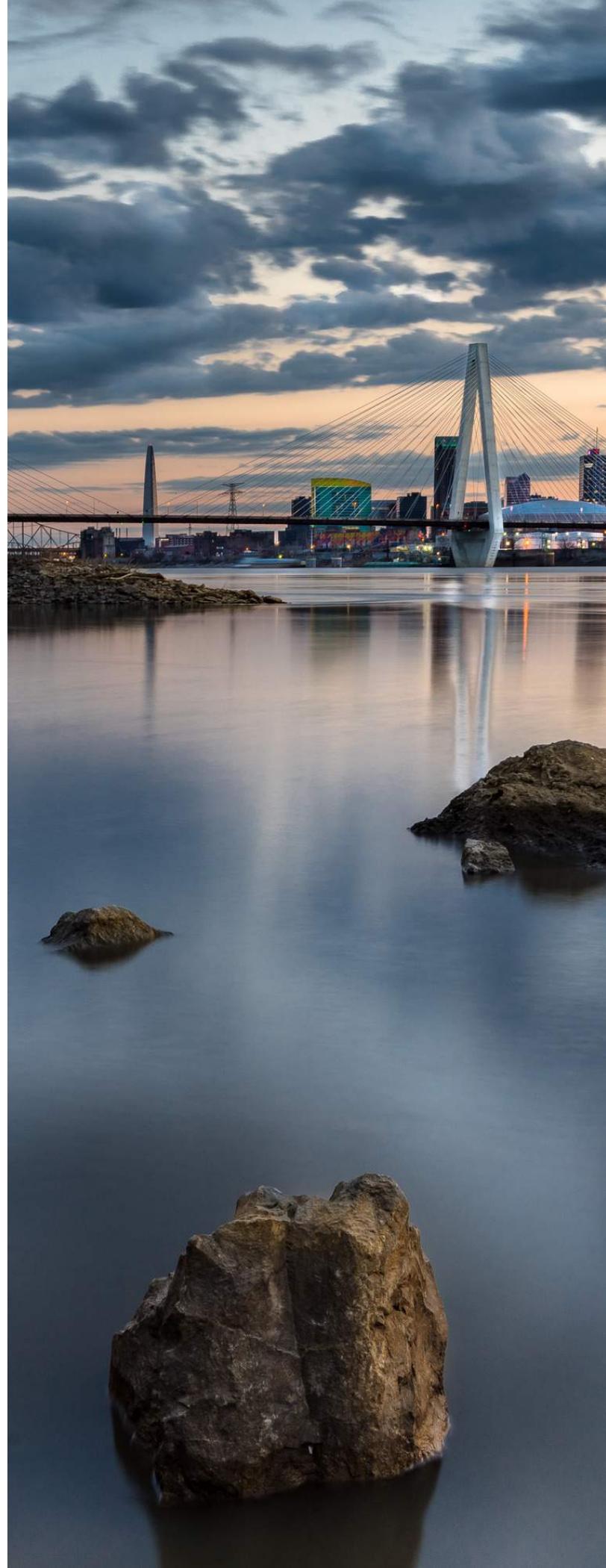
This etude is about moving around a scene and changing our position – sometimes even getting low to include a foreground. It means exploring the scene more fully and deliberately, and switching your focus between background and foreground.

It's tricky to get both the foreground and background in focus. A general rule of thumb is to focus 1/3 of the way into the frame at an aperture of  $f14$  or  $f16$ . If you're interested in more information, look into hyperfocal distance.

**Make 12 photos showing focus of both a foreground element and the background.**

## C A T

**Musial Bridge Sunset (St. Louis, Missouri)  
Sony A7R3 29mm 8sec@f16 ISO100  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



## ETUDE 20

# FOCUS POINTS

### *Focusing*

This Photo Etude is about controlling and changing focus points in your image. You'll need a tripod for this etude.

Choose a static subject and frame up the subject with your camera on a tripod. Choose the widest aperture (low number) of your camera to emphasize the effect.

Set your camera's focus setting to allow you to move the focus point around the scene. This is an opportunity to dig into your camera's user manual to find out what focus options you can control in your camera. Take multiple photos each with a different focus point without moving the camera.

Photographers might use this technique and then focus stack the images later for sharper photos.

**Make 12 photos showing a different focus points on the same subject.**

# A T

**Tibetan Monks at Prayer**  
**Sony A7II 157mm 1/20@f6.3 ISO1600**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



## ETUDE 21

# MANUAL FOCUS

### *Focusing*

This Photo Etude is about manually focusing your camera. Most cameras have good auto focus, but there are times when the camera does not choose to focus on what you want to focus on.

Turn off your camera's auto focus and turn on manual focus. You may use every other feature your camera has to help you focus. Some cameras magnify when you manually focus, some have focus peaking. Make sure your diopter is adjusted correctly (little dial

next to viewfinder). This is an opportunity to dig into your camera's user manual to find out what your camera has to offer besides auto focus.

Go for a photo walk and look for interesting, static subjects. Manually focus your camera and take the photo. If your camera allows, zoom in on the LCD screen and check to see if the image is in focus.

This skill is particularly useful for astrophotography. Choose a bright star and focus until the star becomes a small clear pin-point of light.

**Make 12 photos that you successfully focused on manually.**

**Red Berries in Snow (Illinois)**  
**Sony A7II 185mm 1/320@f6.3 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



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*Photography takes an  
instant out of time, altering  
life by holding it still.*

DOROTHEA LANGE



**Here Comes Kalhi! (St. Louis Zoo)**  
**Sony A7R3 24mm 1/160@f5.6 ISO6400**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

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# CAPTURING MOTION

## Shutter Speed & Long Exposure

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The etudes in this section are all about selectively showing motion in an image. Photography can uniquely stop time, freezing a fleeting moment that would otherwise pass us by. Photography can also show the passage of time through techniques like long exposure.

Some of the techniques in this section create a unique sense of time that we can not normally see in reality like zoom blur and panning. Included is even a photographic magic trick that will make people in the scene disappear.

# 5

## ETUDE 22

# FREEZING MOTION

### *Fast Shutter Speed*

This Photo Etude is about freezing motion – making a moving subject stand still. Choose a subject that's moving fast. This can be anything from raindrops to racecars to birds in flight. Sports subjects also work.

Your shutter speed will need to be fast to freeze motion. How fast depends on how fast your subject is moving and how much light you have. For instance, birds in flight might need a shutter speed of 1/1200 or faster! Keep speeding up your shutter speed until your moving subject freezes in the frame.

Burst mode may come in useful here. Take multiple photos of the subject. A slight change of gesture or motion can make or break a photo.

If your photo is dark, open up your aperture (lower number) and increase your ISO. It's ok if the photos are a bit grainy for right now.

**Make 12 photos of motion frozen.**

## SS

**Wild Horses (Eminence, Missouri)  
Sony A7R3 300mm 1/2000@f8.0 ISO4000  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



## ETUDE 23

# MOTION BLUR

*Long Exposure*

This Photo Etude is about motion blur – selectively blurring something that's moving. You'll need a tripod for this etude. Choose something to photograph that is moving like moving water, clouds or a dancer in a colorful costume or in the case of the photo below, a moving train. This technique is used to blur moving water which many

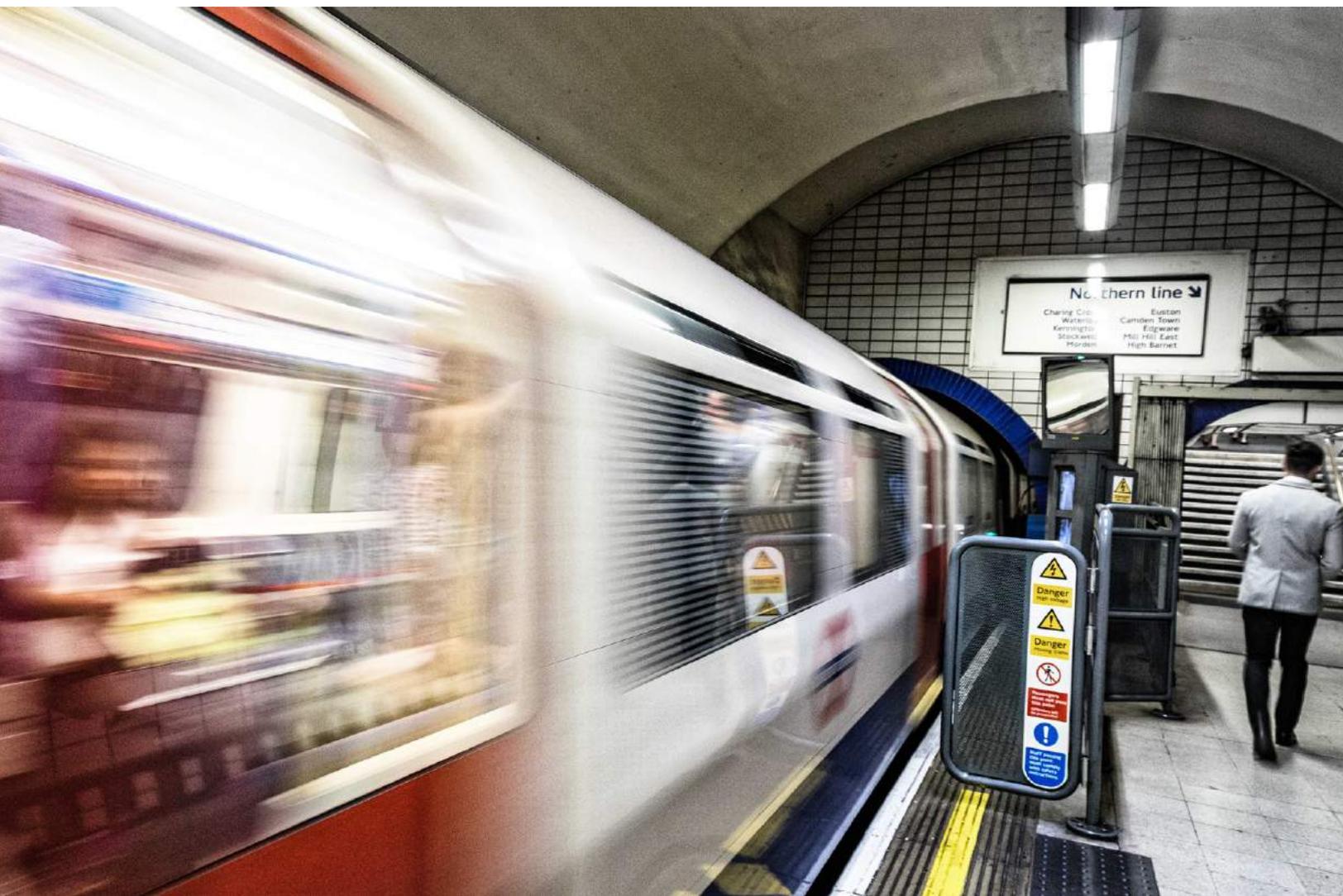
## SS T

**On the Underground (London, England)**  
**Sony A7II 25mm 1/13@f6.3 ISO800**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

people find peaceful. Your shutter speed will need to be slow – at least a second, but you can go much slower

The speed that you choose will change the amount of motion blur. If photographing water, the water's texture will change depending on how slow you set your shutter speed. Slow moving clouds may need a shutter speed in the minutes. Remote triggers allow your camera to expose for as long as you want. Neutral density filters are often used to reduce the light coming into your camera and allow longer shutter speeds.

**Make 12 photos showing motion blur.**





## ETUDE 24

# NIGHT EXPOSURES

*Long Exposure*

This Photo Etude is about using long exposures to take photographs at night. You'll need a tripod for this etude.

Choose a static night scenes to photograph - cityscapes or street scenes work well. Your shutter speed will need to be slow. How slow depends on how much light is in the scene. The full moon for instance reflects a lot of light so the shutter speed is not as long as you might think (1/100th of a second). Scenes with very little light may

**Manarola Night (Italy)**  
**Sony A7II 16mm 30sec@f16 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

need a shutter speed in the minutes. Remote triggers allow your camera to expose for as long as you want.

If you have a bit of shake in the photo, use a trigger or set the 2-second timer on your camera and try not to touch the camera or tripod during the exposure.

The screen on the back of your camera may make the scene seem brighter. Look at your histogram if you have one. Use shutter speed, ISO, and wider aperture to try and move the graph away from the left edge.

# SS T

**Make 12 photos showing long exposures at night.**



## ETUDE 25

# LIGHT TRAILS

*Long Exposure*

This Photo Etude is about making light trails – blurring moving lights into lines. You'll need a tripod for this etude.

Choose a place where there are a lot of moving lights. A street with lots of cars works well, but choose a place where you'll have good view of the cars without being in danger - an overpass for instance.

Take a photo as the lights move through the scene. If you have a slow enough

**Light Trails at Westminster (London, England)**  
**Sony A7II 24mm 3.2sec@f10 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

shutter speed, the subject will disappear leaving only streaks of light.

Your shutter speed will need to be slow – at least 2 seconds, but you can go much slower. The slower the shutter speed, the more lights you will capture and the longer the trails, but remember you're also letting in more light. If your photos are too bright, make your aperture smaller (larger number) or use a neutral density filter to block some of the light.

**Make 12 photos showing light trails.**

**SS T**

## ETUDE 26

# DISAPPEARING PEOPLE

*Long Exposure*

This Photo Etude is about making people disappear from your image using a slow shutter speed. You'll need a tripod for this etude. This technique is used when you want to photograph a landmark or a street, but want all the tourists in the scene to disappear.

Choose a place where there are lots of people moving around and a static main subject. Your shutter speed will need to be slow – at least 10 seconds, but you can go much slower.

**Chicago Bean (Illinois)**  
**Sony A7R3 17mm 20sec@f8.0 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

The slower the shutter speed, the more people will likely disappear, but remember you're also letting in more light. If your photos are too bright, make your aperture smaller (larger number) or use a neutral density filter to block some of the light.

Take a photo of the scene. If you have a slow enough shutter speed, the moving people will disappear leaving only the static subject. If you still see people, than they either weren't moving while you were taking the photo or you need to slow down your shutter speed even more. It's ok to leave a few ghosts in your image.

**Make 12 photos showing the how you made the people disappear.**

**SS T**





## ETUDE 27

### PANNING

*Long Exposure*

This Photo Etude is about panning – making a moving subject stand still while the background blurs. This technique is used to show speed.

Choose a subject that's moving against a background. To practice panning, choose something that's going to happen many times - cars along a street or bike racers going around a track. People walking down the street are ok, too. Repetition will give you plenty of opportunities to practice.

## SS T

**In the Lead (Edwardsville, Illinois)**  
**Sony A7R3 70mm 1/25@f4.5 ISO5000**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

Your shutter speed will need to be slow – at least 1/30th of a second or as slow as you can handhold your camera. To create the panning effect, when the subject goes by, move your camera at the same speed as the subject while pressing the shutter button, following the subject with your camera. If you move the camera at the same speed as your subject, it will stay in focus, but the background will blur.

Don't give up! Panning takes practice. Pre-focusing on a spot where the subject will be also helps.

**Make 12 photos showing the panning technique.**

## ETUDE 28

# ZOOM BLUR

*Long Exposure*

This Photo Etude is about creating a zoom blur – the effect that a scene is quickly moving towards or away from you. You will need a zoom lens for this etude and a tripod.

Choose a scene with a strong central point. Your shutter speed will need to be slow. The speed that you choose will change the amount of motion blur. Explore by trying shutter speeds between 1 and 10 seconds.

**Shrine of Light (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony A7II 29mm 0.7sec@f19 ISO400**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

Pre-focus on the center point. Then press the shutter button while you simultaneously zoom the lens. The trick is to zoom in a constant motion and try not to move the camera too much.

Experiment with zooming quickly and slowly while the shutter is open. Experiment both with zooming in and zooming out.

**Make 12 photos showing zoom blur.**

**SS T Z**



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*Photography is a dance  
between control and  
surrender - when to push  
and when to let go becomes  
part of the creative process.*

QUOTE INSPIRED BY YOGA  
MASTER JOEL KRAMER



**Manarola (Italy)**  
**Sony A7II 19mm 5sec@f16 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

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# BONUS ETUDES

## Putting Techniques Together

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The etudes in this section will help you review techniques practiced in the previous etudes and help you put it all together. Feel free to go back to any etudes to practice techniques that you're still working on.

The etudes in this section reinforce the exposure triangle, encourage you to be a teacher of your own equipment, and finally, have fun and break all the rules!

# 6



## ETUDE 29

# ONE SIDE OF THE TRIANGLE

### *Exposure Triangle*

This Photo Etude is about understanding how the three elements of the exposure triangle work together: Aperture, Shutter Speed, and ISO. You will need a tripod for this etude.

Choose a scene and put your camera in Manual mode. Below are 12 settings. Set your camera on the given setting and then figure out what the other two settings need to be to get the best exposure possible of the scene. Write down your final settings.

**A SS Iso T**

**Columbia Bottom Sunflowers (St. Louis, Missouri)**  
**Sony A7R3 29mm 1/40@f18 ISO100**  
**Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

It is possible that some scenes cannot be properly exposed with the given setting.

Photo 1 Aperture *f*8.0

Photo 2 Shutter Speed 1/100

Photo 3 Aperture *f*4.0

Photo 4 ISO 1000

Photo 5 Shutter Speed 1 second

Photo 6 ISO 100

Photo 7 *f*16

Photo 8 Shutter Speed 1/500

Photo 9 ISO 800

Photo 10 *f*22

Photo 11 Shutter Speed 1/1000

Photo 12 ISO 5000

**Make 12 photos using the given setting, adjusting the other 2 settings to balance the exposure.**

## ETUDE 30

# TRADING CAMERAS

### Review Settings

This Photo Etude is about knowing your camera buttons and settings better by teaching them to another photographer.

Go for a photo walk with a friend who is willing to trade cameras with you for a couple of hours. This works best if your friend is using a different camera system, but since we often set up our cameras differently, even the same brand of camera may feel different.

Show your friend the basics of your camera and take a photo walk. Help your friend use your camera, but also pay attention to what is easier and what is more challenging on the borrowed camera.

By teaching someone else how to use our system, we can learn a lot about what settings we know well and what we're still working on.

**Make 12 photos using a borrowed camera.**

**Oia Windmill (Santorini, Greece)  
Borrowed Olympus 10mm 1/500@f10 ISO125  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**





## ETUDE 31

# BREAKING THE RULES

### Review

This Photo Etude is about breaking the rules – any rules – all rules. Whatever photographic rules you know, whatever rules you learned in these etudes, go out and break them.

Sometimes the most creative photography breaks the rules.

**Horse Huddle (Eminence, Missouri)  
Sony A7R3 251mm 1/1000@f5.6 ISO2500  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**

Be free to experiment. Chop people's heads off (photographically), focus on someone's nose, place your subject dead-center in the frame, place your horizon off-kilter. It doesn't matter! This etude is about play and discovery and it is fun way to review the rules you've learned.

**Make 12 photos showing photography rules being broken.**

## ETUDE 32

# CHOOSING PICS

### *Curating*

This Photo Etude is about curating your photos – making choices about which photos are the best and how photos relate as a collection.

Review the 372+ photos you have made for the previous 31 etudes. Look at the quality of the photos independent of the technique you were practicing. You're looking for the best photos, even if a photo wasn't necessarily the best expression of a technique.

Choose your 12 best photos.

If you're having problems whittling down your best, try selecting half (186 photos), than half again (93 photos), than half again (46 photos), than half again (23 photos), and finally select your best 12.

Once you have the 12, order the photos into a series that makes some sort of sense to you. This is your Photo Etude Portfolio.

**Choose 12 of your best photos made for these etudes and share your Photo Etude Portfolio on the PhotoYoga Facebook page.**



# FINAL THOUGHTS

Congratulations! If you've gotten this far you've mastered photographic techniques that you can build on.

Musicians study etudes to improve their technical skills. The ultimate goal is to learn the skills, integrate them - and then forget them.

The skills themselves are foundational and secondary to the expression and interpretation of the music.

Photography is the same. The skills learned in this book are not the end goal, they are foundational to making expressive photographs. How you use these skills is what matters.

Now, go out into the world and make beautiful photographs!

If you've enjoyed the photography used in this e-book, go to the Wits End Photography website at [www.witsendphotography.com](http://www.witsendphotography.com)

For more photography education, go to:

**[WWW.PHOTO-YOGA.COM](http://WWW.PHOTO-YOGA.COM)**

**Chariot Festival (St. Louis)  
Sony A7R3 240mm 1/1000@f6.3 ISO8000  
Photo by Jenn Mishra, Wits End Photography**



EXERCISES IN  
COMPOSITION | FOCUS | LIGHT | MOTION

# 32 PHOTO ETUDES



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