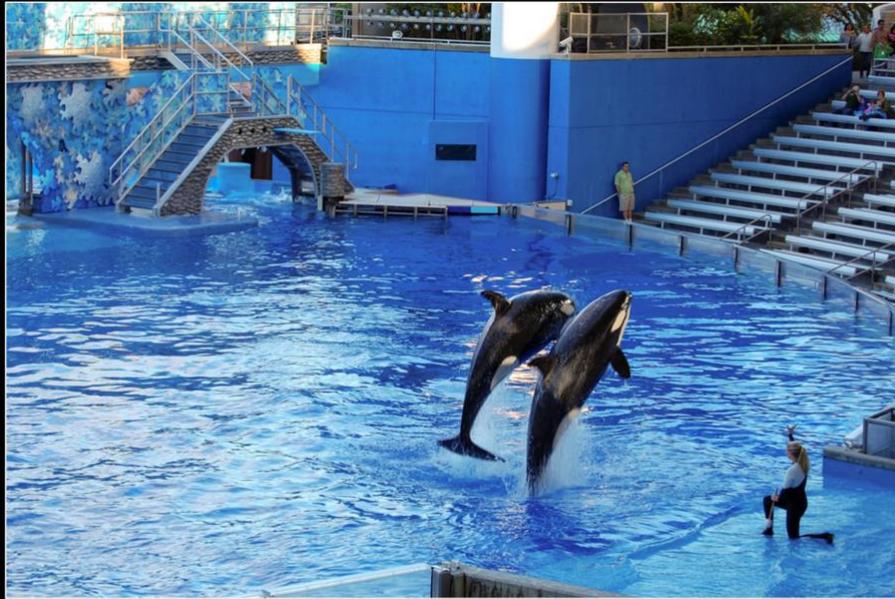


Adding visual interest to your photography... It's all about Subject and Presentation.

By Chuck Palmer

In a previous article we explored why viewers may find the subject of our photograph interesting (See February, 2016 f-stop). A viewer will often find a photo interesting if she has a personal interest in the subject, or the subject evokes an emotional response from the viewer, or the subject takes the viewer to an unusual place or situation, or finally, if it conveys a story to the viewer. But why can't we rely on subject alone to create an interesting photo? Take a look at the photos below. Both photos show people interacting with Killer Whales. A pretty interesting subject. But which photo do you like best? What makes the difference? . . . Presentation.



An uninteresting photo of an interesting subject



An interesting photo of an interesting subject

Viewers find photographic images interesting because they find the subject interesting or the presentation of the subject interesting, but preferably we want both. We have all seen some pretty uninteresting photos of some very interesting subjects, and we have also seen some very interesting images of subjects we would not find all that interesting all by themselves. What made the difference? It was how the photographer presented the subject to his viewer.

Let's define Presentation as how design principles of art are utilized and arranged in the frame to help us present a subject in an interesting way. Presentation encompasses everything about how we perceive the subject: its brightness and color; its size; its relative distinction to other elements, to foreground and background; whether it is fully revealed or left somewhat ambiguous, either through light, color, depth of field, size, obstruction, or field of view. Some may call presentation... composition. But let's set aside principles of placement, like the rule of thirds, since they are often discussed. Let's take a closer look at some of the other tools of image presentation:

- A good image presentation has much to do with the **Design Elements of Interest** we include in our image. Elements that commonly have a great deal of visual interest to most viewers include Lines, Shapes, Patterns and Repetition, Shadows, Negative Space, Reflections, People and Faces, Frames in the Frame, and Color.
- A heightened sense of **Visual Depth** through strong perspective tends to improve a viewer's sense of being there in front of the real scene. They feel like they are there and are therefore interested in looking deeper into the image. Composing your photo to add Linear Perspective, Diminishing Perspective, Sharpness Perspective, or Tonal Perspective can add a great deal of visual interest to your photography.
- We can also use **Creative Techniques** such as Black and White photography, Panoramas, conveying action and motion by Panning on a moving object, or Intentionally Blurring all or part of a scene to create an impressionist look and feel. Many viewers will linger longer in images when we skillfully apply Creative Techniques to add interest to our photography.
- And finally, decisions we make about our **Point of View**, and the **Field of View** of our image can make a significant difference in the interest our viewers have in our photography. Point of View simply means the position from which the camera sees the scene. Field of View is what your lens together with the camera can see and capture from left to right and top to bottom. The "View" we choose as photographers will make a real difference on how our viewer sees the world through our images.

It is probably impossible to make an image that is universally interesting to everyone. But we can evoke our viewers to linger a little longer in our images by capturing an interesting subject with an interesting presentation.

Stay tuned! In future articles we will dive deeper into these valuable Presentation Concepts and Tools and how we can best use them to add to our viewer's experience and our own creative satisfaction. In the meantime, May the Remarkable Photos always be Yours.