

## Composition #2

### Introduction

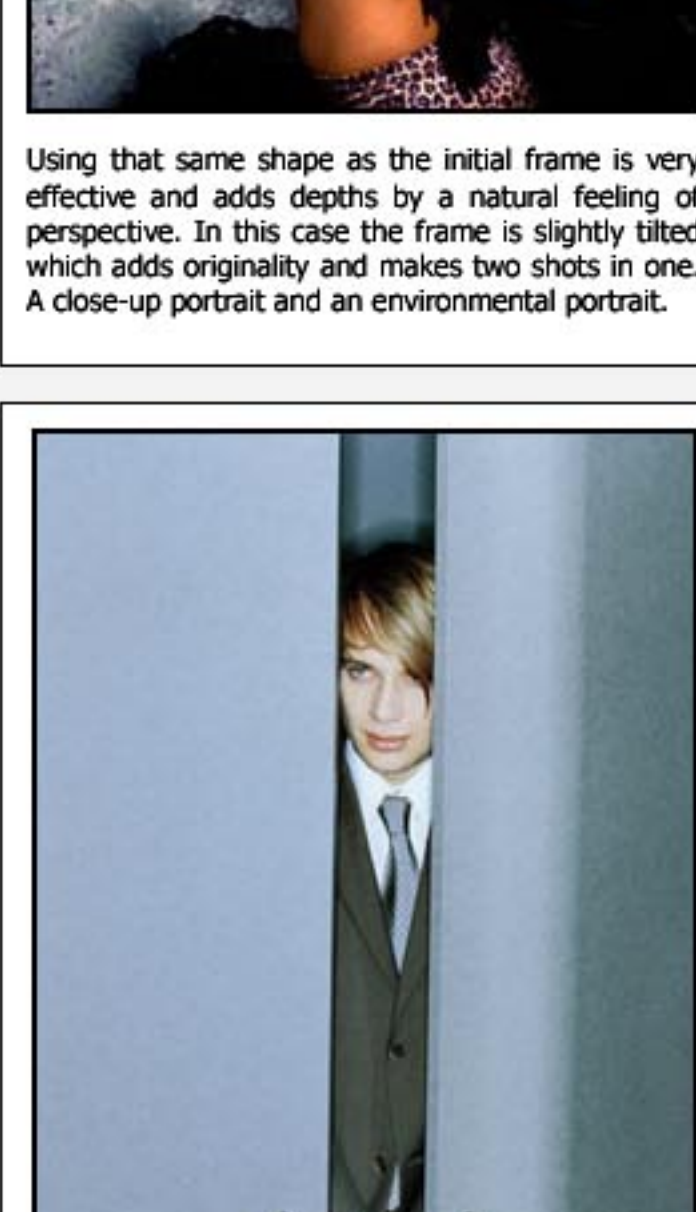
One of the most important aspects of composition is how it helps bring attention to your subject. The rule of thirds, for example, is a great tool for that purpose as it places the subject (or subjects) into strong parts of the image, into places that feel natural and balanced to the eye.

Another important aspect of composition is how it can help keeping the eyes of the viewer inside the picture. A good composition will play a great part in the magic that keeps the viewer staring speechless at the work of art you created.

There are three major techniques that will help you do that: **Inner framing**, **Lines & Curves**, and unusual **Point of Views**.

### Inner Framing

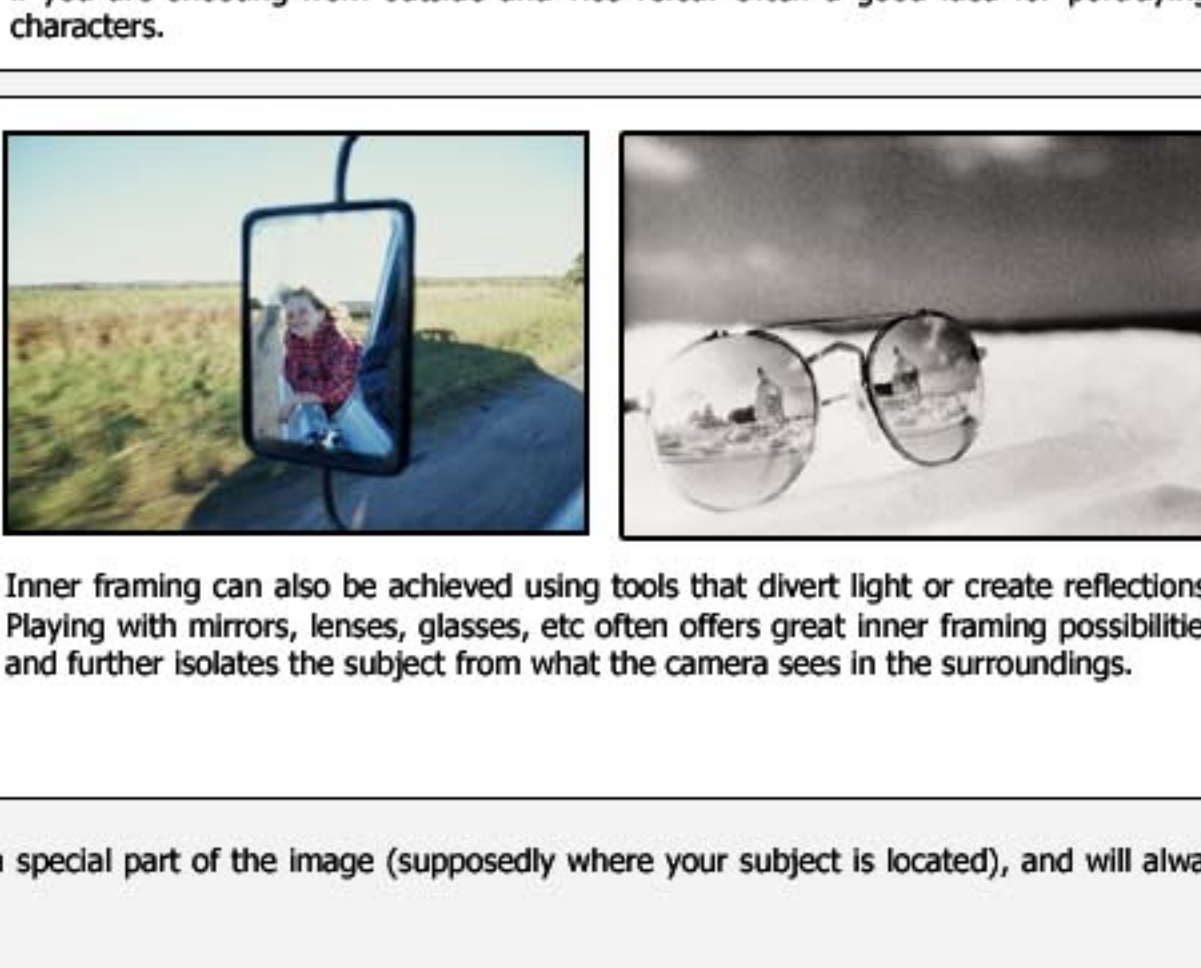
Inner framing occurs when your subject is placed in a special area of the picture that frames it from its environment. Your subject is then framed a **second time** inside the picture frame. This helps bring attention to it because your subject is even more isolated inside the original frame. It also often adds depth to the picture, leading the eye of the viewer forward inside it, to a smaller area of it.



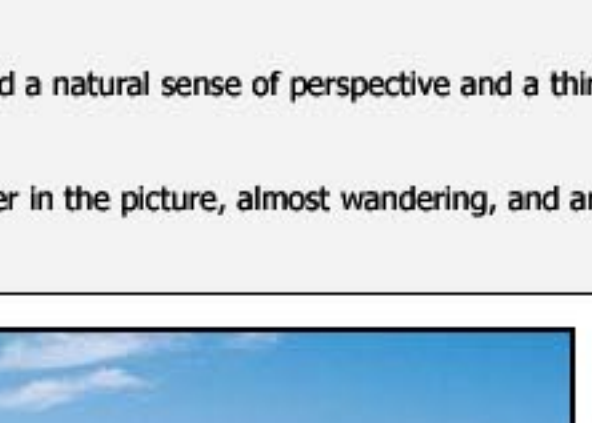
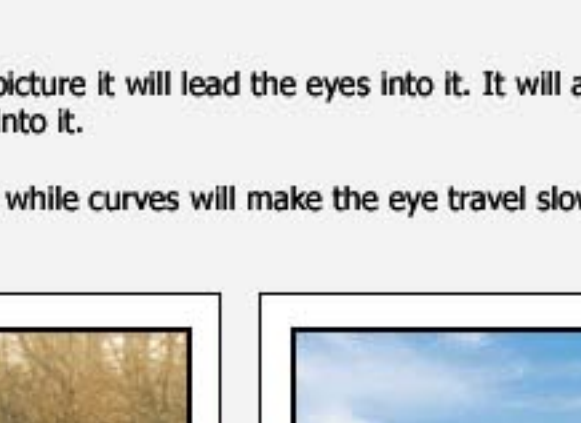
Using that same shape as the initial frame is very effective and adds depths by a natural feeling of perspective. In this case the frame is slightly tilted which adds originality and makes two shots in one. A close-up portrait and an environmental portrait.



Natural scenery can sometimes offer inner framing possibilities. Always be on the lookout for those as they often offer great originality, which is harder to achieve with this kind of photography.



Framing your subject is often a great opportunity to use a contrast in color or lighting that will further isolate it. A door to an inside area will often offer a darker background if you are shooting from outside and vice-versa. Often a good idea for portraying characters.



Inner framing can also be achieved using tools that divert light or create reflections. Playing with mirrors, lenses, glasses, etc often offers great inner framing possibilities and further isolates the subject from what the camera sees in the surroundings.

Inner framing is a powerful way to bring attention to a special part of the image (supposedly where your subject is located), and will always add a touch of originality to a somewhat boring shot.

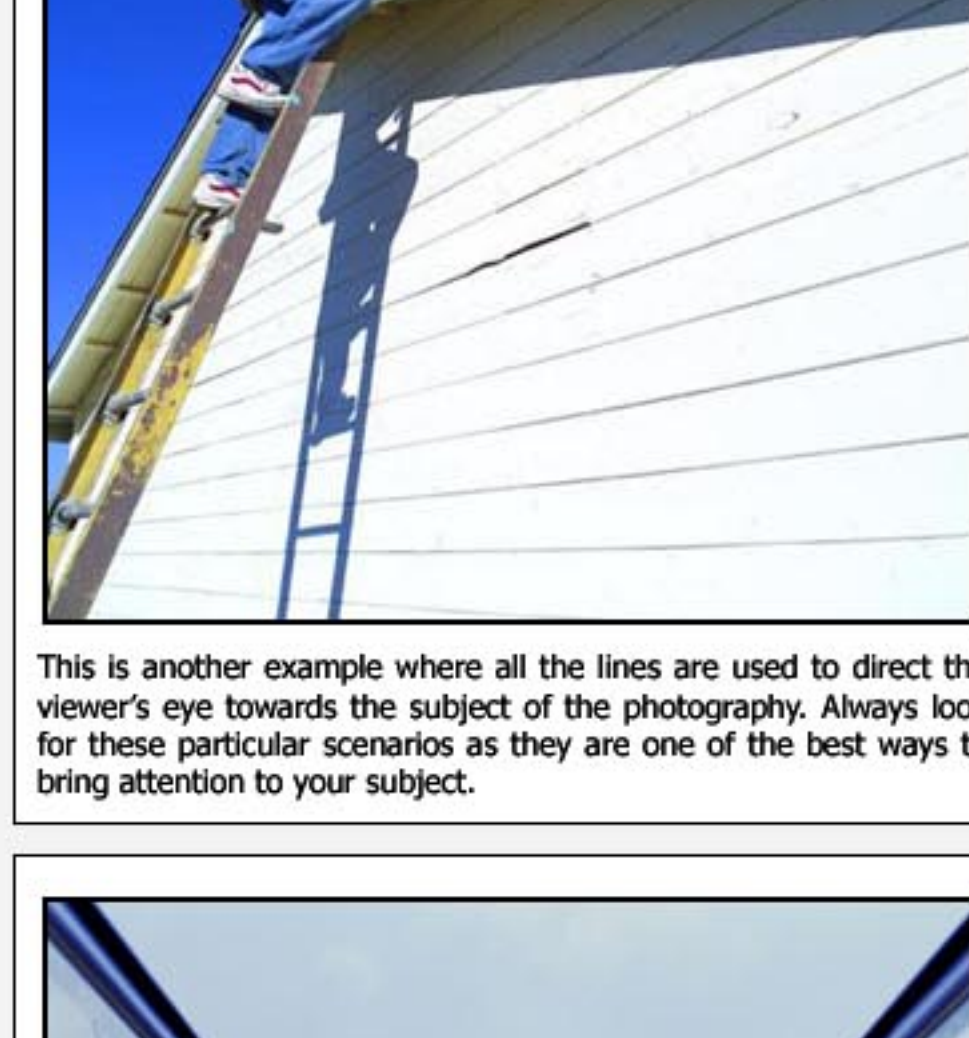
### Lines and Curves

Here's a fact: a photograph is two-dimensional. That's the way it is and there is nothing you can do to change that. Nothing? Not quite exactly.

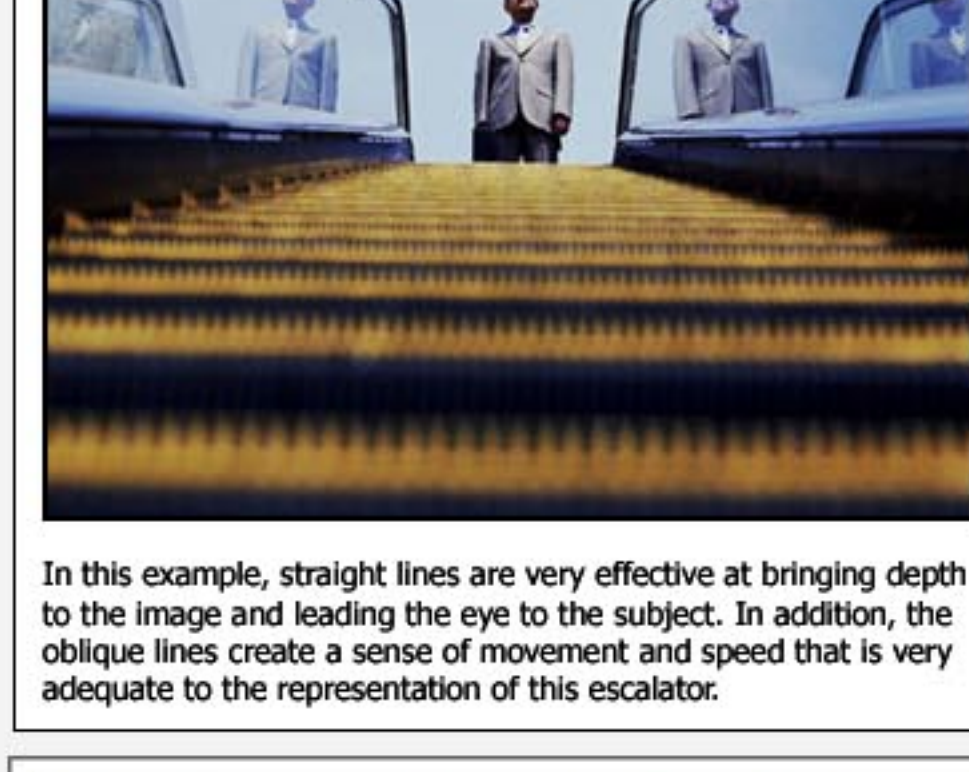
As we outlined in our first article on composition, diagonal lines in a picture often bring a sense of motion to it. This is because the human eye naturally follows lines in a picture and creates movement for them. Will it be a road, a railroad, wires, the vertical lines of a tall building, or spaghetti's, the eye follows the path.

Now, if that path is directed towards the inside of the picture it will lead the eyes into it. It will add a natural sense of perspective and a third dimension to your picture, inviting your viewer to dive into it.

Straight lines will bring speed and clarity to the picture while curves will make the eye travel slower in the picture, almost wandering, and are often great (if found) in landscape shots.



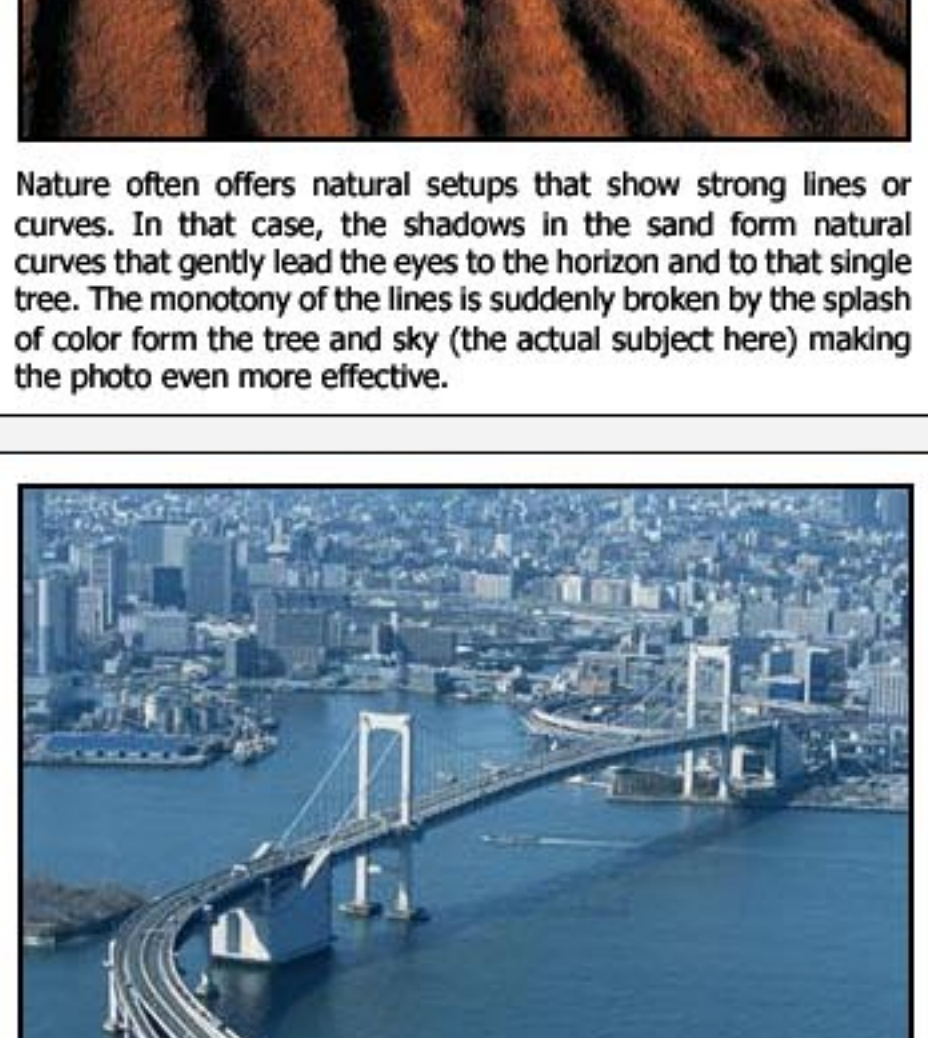
This is a great example of using a road or path, lined with trees to lead the eyes inside the picture. The perspective is natural and the eyes follow it directly towards the subject (the character) because all the lines in the picture are converging to it.



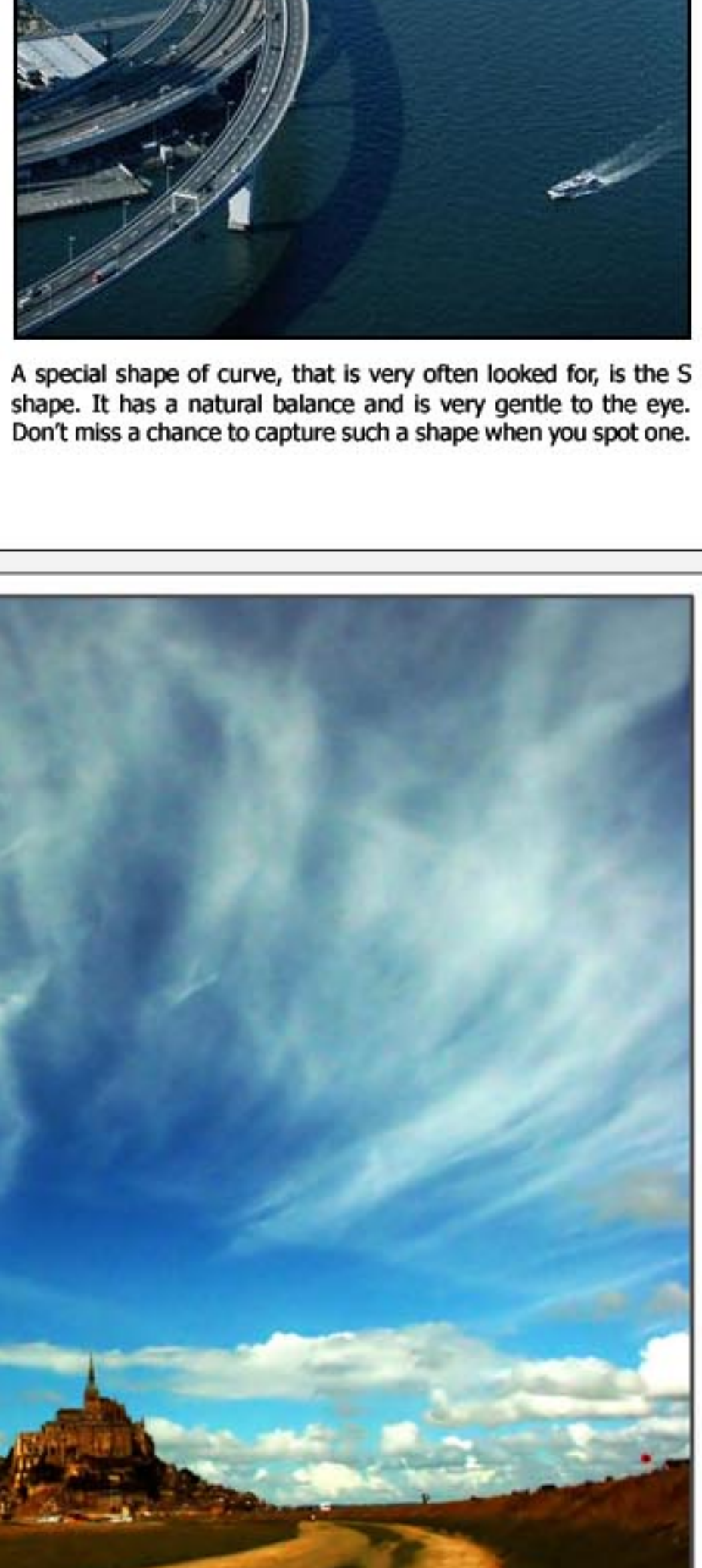
This is another example where all the lines are used to direct the viewer's eye towards the subject of the photograph. Always look for these particular scenarios as they are one of the best ways to bring attention to your subject.



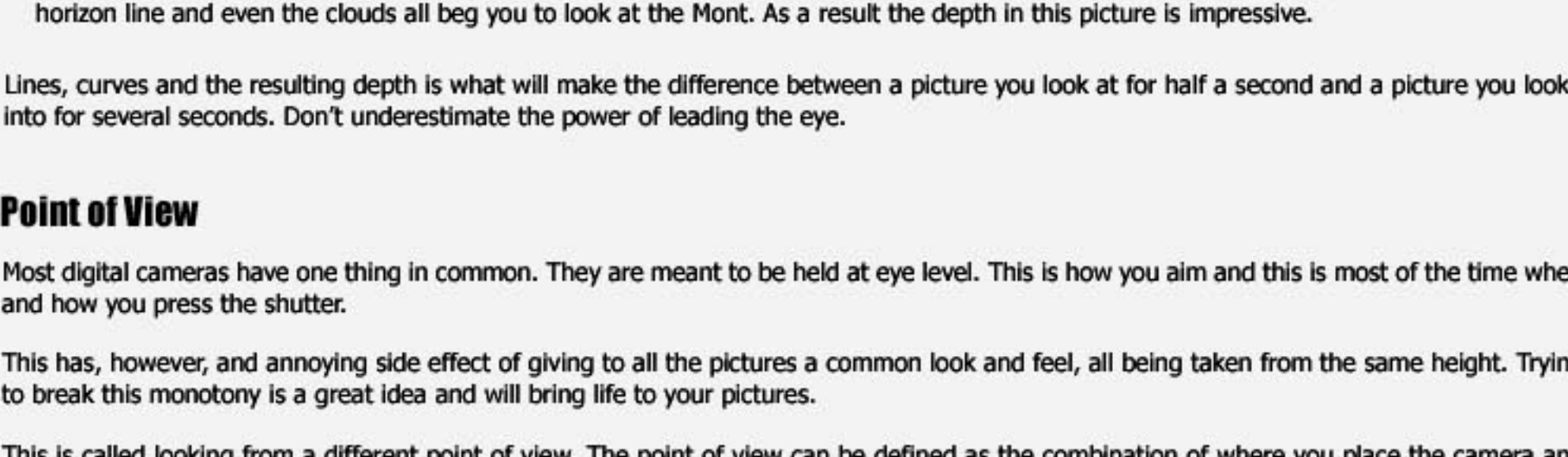
In this example, straight lines are very effective at bringing depth to the image and leading the eye to the subject. In addition, the oblique lines create a sense of movement and speed that is very adequate to the representation of this escalator.



Nature often offers natural setups that show strong lines or curves. In that case, the shadows in the sand form natural curves that gently lead the eyes to the horizon and to that single tree. The monotony of the lines is suddenly broken by the splash of color from the tree and sky (the actual subject here) making the photo even more effective.



A special shape of curve, that is very often looked for, is the S shape. It has a natural balance and is very gentle to the eye. Don't miss a chance to capture such a shape when you spot one.



This photograph from **rain1man** is a great example of the use of natural curves to bring the eyes to the main subject. The roads, the horizon line and even the clouds all beg you to look at the Mont. As a result the depth in this picture is impressive.

Lines, curves and the resulting depth is what will make the difference between a picture you look at for half a second and a picture you look into for several seconds. Don't underestimate the power of leading the eye.

### Point of View

Most digital cameras have one thing in common. They are meant to be held at eye level. This is how you aim and this is most of the time when and how you press the shutter.

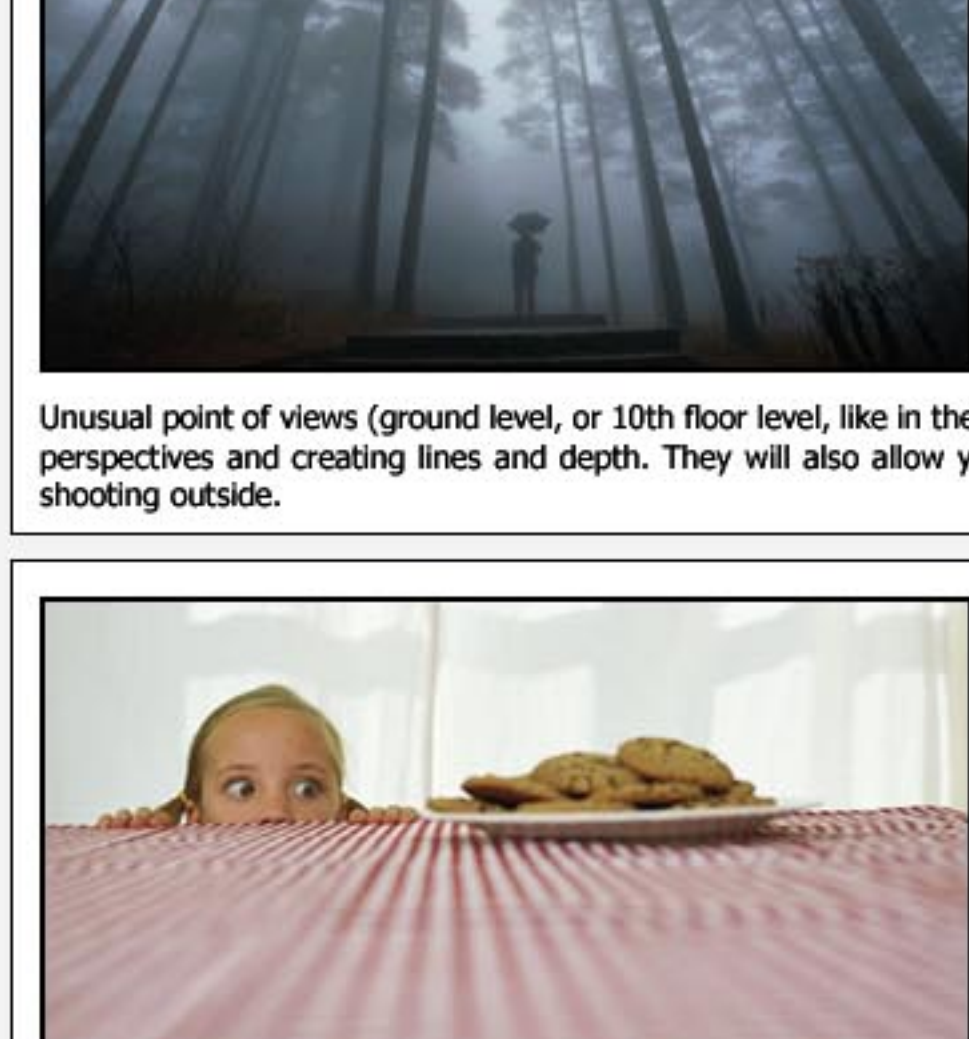
This has, however, and annoying side effect of giving to all the pictures a common look and feel, all being taken from the same height. Trying to break this monotony is a great idea and will bring life to your pictures.

This is called looking from a different point of view. The point of view can be defined as the combination of where you place the camera and where you aim.

Changing one or the other will have a great deal of effect to what's going to be in the frame once you press the shutter. The key to an original composition is to change the point of view. Look up, look down, tilt your camera... Place your camera on the ground, on a wall, on a stick. Camera on a stick? You bet.

Climb a few stairs, a tree; lay in the mud, in the water. No wait... don't put your camera under water, forget this one.

Looking for unusual point of view is often hard, but it is even harder if you don't try. It sometimes only takes moving a few feet away to find a better spot, to have those lines converge the right way, or give a commonly photographed area a brand new look.



Looking at characters from up above or down below will change the way their features appear, focusing on the upper or lower parts of the body and showing different aspects.



Unusual point of views (ground level, or 10th floor level, like in these examples) will often bring originality to your shots by exaggerating perspectives and creating lines and depth. They will also allow you to concentrate on showing large areas of sky or ground if you're shooting outside.



Here's a good example of an unusual point of view. Looking straight up helps bring this jump picture to the next level. Notice how the composition is tilted, with the bar in diagonal too.



See, that's what I meant by underwater. Now that is one pretty unusual point of view, don't you think? Wait... hum... forget about it again, I don't want to be sued because your camera battery melted down or because your lens makes funny bubbles when you change the aperture. Yeah, forget about it. Hum, sorry.



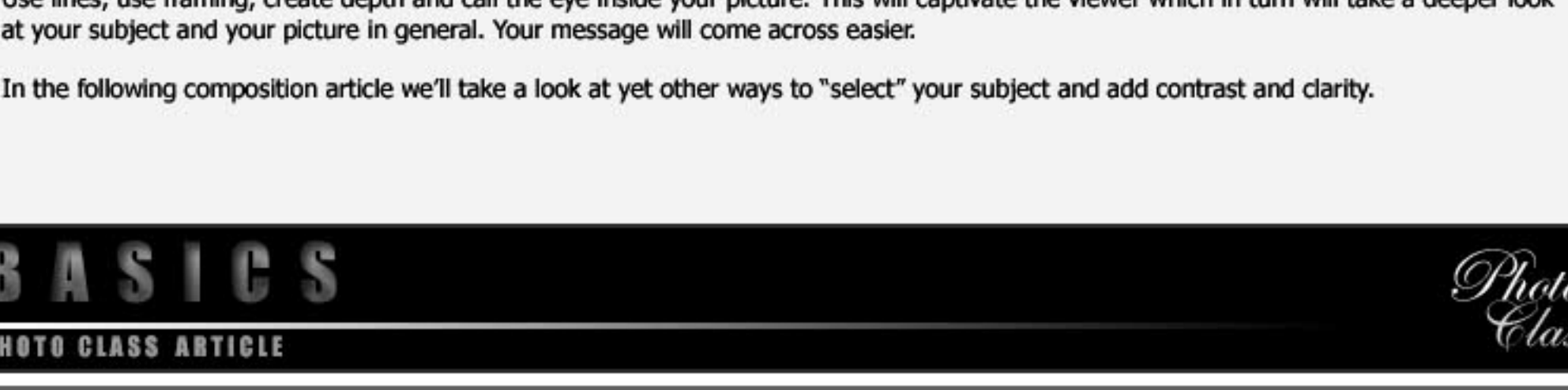
Here the camera was simply tilted to the right by a few degrees. Look at how this changes the shot. It breaks the monotony and adds to the sense of effort the athlete is giving. It looks like he is climbing in addition to running.

Never be afraid to try something new or get a little dusty or dirty to get a better shot. Look for the unusual spots, the "not so common" places or views.

### Going Further

As you may have noticed by reading, the three techniques or rules, whatever you want to call them, are often tied together. Changing the point of view can create lines, and lines from a tunnel or a room can lead to inner framing.

Using the knowledge of the three can bring even more interesting pictures. Here is what I'm talking about:



This picture from welder, "Oscillation", gathers the three concepts in an admirable way. The camera was tilted to create only diagonal lines and bring originality. The successive framing from the arches creates lines that bring attention to the subject, framed in the last arch. The resulting depth is incredible. Enjoy.

### Conclusion

Use lines, use framing, create depth and call the eye inside your picture. This will captivate the viewer which in turn will take a deeper look at your subject and your picture in general. Your message will come across easier.

In the following composition article we'll take a look at yet other ways to "select" your subject and add contrast and clarity.