Creating Your Personal Photographic Style

Presented by Jeffrey Sward

?

Mike Lawn

Find out who you are and do it on purpose.

- Dolly Parton

Mike Lawn

Style Definitions

- Webster
  - Distinctive quality, form, or type of something
  - A particular manner or technique by which something is done, created, or performed
- Nate Torres
  - The way in which a photographer approaches their subject matter and creates their images. It is a combination of technical and creative choices, including the use of lighting, composition, color, contrast, and other elements that work together to create a cohesive aesthetic.
- Opera Aria AI
  - A unique and recognizable aesthetic or approach that a photographer applies to their work. . A photographer's style is a reflection of their artistic vision, personal preferences, and creative choices, which distinguish their work from others. It may enable viewers to recognize and connect with the photographer's images.

Original and Recognizable Style is Rare

- Very distinctive styles often instantly identify the photographer
  - Ansel Adams
  - Robert Franck
  - Diane Arbus
  - Jerry Uelsmann
  - Andre Kertesz
  - Laurie Simmons
  - Joel-Peter Witkin
  - Life Magazine controlled photojournalism
    - Margaret Bourke-White
    - W. Eugene Smith
    - Alfred Eisenstaedt
    - Gordon Parks

Technical Elements of Photographic Style

- Line
- Texture
- Shape
- Form
  - Three-dimensional aspect: depth and dimension
- Pattern
- Color

- Space
  - Positive and negative
- Composition
- Lighting
- Editing
  - Post processing
- Mood

**Style includes these elements,
but style is more than the sum of its parts**

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Style ≠ Subject

Subjects like these are often incorrectly listed as styles

Architectural Photography **   Associated Press ^^

Editorial Photography **   Fashion Photography **

Fine art photography   Food photography &&

Landscape photography   Photojournalism ##

Portrait photography &&   Product photography **

Sports Photography &&   Still life photography

Wedding photography &&   Wildlife photography &&

**   Could be a style if conforming to strong editorial controls
\#\# The editor decides before or after creation the content and purpose
^^   Famous style guide
&& Most commonly used approach has become a *de facto* style

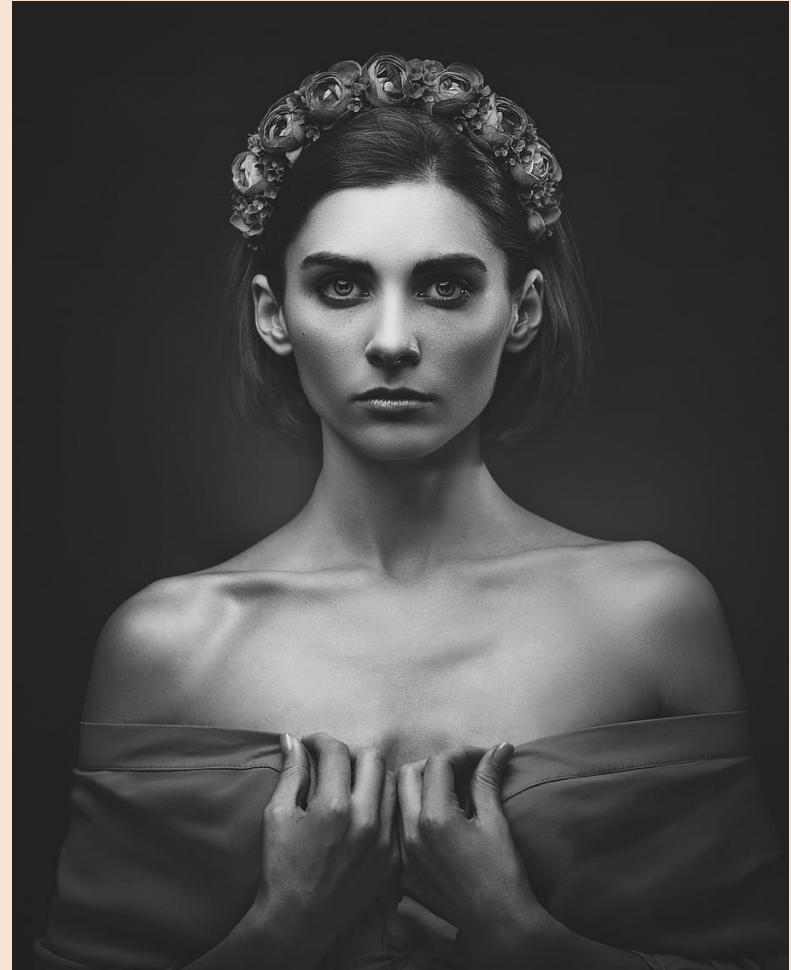# Same Subject Different Styles

Angela Carson
n.t., 1994

Diane Arbus
A child crying, N.J. 1967

Same Subject Different Styles

Same Subject Different Styles

**Harold Davis
Penny Inversion**

**Michael Brown
Day Lily Abstract**

Same Subject Different Styles

Same Subject Different Styles

**Jeffrey Sward
Mount Rushmore**

**Jeffrey Sward
Coke Machine in Mount
Rushmore Parking Lot**

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COMMERCIAL

REALITY

BRIGHTSIDE.ME

Same Subject Different Styles

Some photographer was involved in making each image

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Finding Your Voice Continuum

**Most People
Operate Here**

**Concentrate
on reacting;
ignore issue**

**Planning
Visualization**

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How to create personal photographic style (Nate Torres)

- Specialize
- Do what you do, but differently
- Research
- Improvise, adapt, overcome
- Observe your own work (difficult)
- Identify Your Re-occurring Elements or Designs
- Assess the Themes and Moods
- Write It Down in a Journal (Before and after)
- Ask for Others' Opinions

Same Subject Different Styles

Nate Torres
Carly Belle

Robert Frank
Movie Premier

Creating Your Own Style in Photography (Alan Schaller)

- Spend your time doing the things you are good at, and get better at them.
- Don't buy kit because someone else likes it. Discover what works for you and use that.
- Shoot as often as you can, and have a camera with you all the time
- Look at other photographers' work. Don't copy it, but appreciate their ideas and methods and see how those things might help your own work
- Don't feel limited by the 'rules' of photography. Do your own thing. Concentrate on making the pictures you like.

Same Subject Different Styles

Alan Schaller

Andre Kertesz

Pumpkin pie is a living symbol of mediocrity. The best pumpkin pie you ever ate wasn't all that much different from the worst pumpkin pie you ever ate.

Garrison Keillor

How to Create a Personal Photographic Style (Opera Aria AI)

- Study and analyze
- Identify your interests and passions
- Experiment and practice
- Find your voice
  - This is the whole point, and very difficult.
- Embrace your strengths.
- Edit consistently
- Shoot with intention

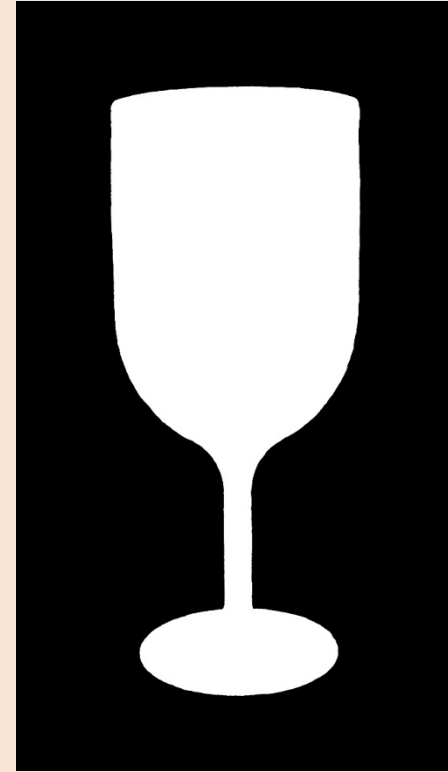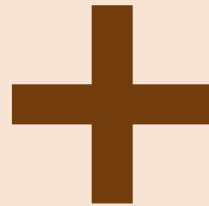# Same Subject Different Styles

**AI created
Swiss Woman**

**Diane Arbus
Blonde Girl**

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Tools Are Cheap. Solutions Are Expensive. (IBM)

- Seamless background
- Prop table
- Clamp
- Studio flash with umbrella
- Black foam core
- Square brackets from hardware store
- Gaffer's tape
- Topaz masking tools
- Photoshop
- Subject

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Complexity: Tools in Use

+

Simplicity: Solution

=

Simplicity from Complexity

Rollink on Unsplash

Complexity from Simplicity

Samantha Lee Osner

Simplicity from Complexity

Steve Roberts

Complexity from Simplicity

Marta Ferreira

Complexity or Chaos?

Weegee the Famous
Crowd at Coney Island 1940

Zen and the Art of Simplicity and Complexity

Discussion

Altan Gokcek

Details are easy
Simplicity is difficult
Intent is very difficult

Discussion

References

- Herrigel, Eugen, and Hull R F C. *Zen in the Art of Archery*. Martino Fine Books, 2020.
- Bayles, David, and Ted Orland. *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking*. Souvenir Press, 2023.
- Presentation pdfs
  https://www.jeffreysward.com/speaking/speaking.htm
- Photoshop – Lightroom comparison chart
  https://www.jeffreysward.com/editorials/psvslr.htm
- Links page for photographic resources
  https://www.jeffreysward.com/editorials/photores.htm

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Notes About Photoshop and Lightroom

Attribute	Photoshop	Lightroom
Introduced	1987	2007
Scope	Manipulation, creation, and enhancement of single images. Pixel level perfection. Fine-tuning, retouching, precise local adjustments.	Organizing and processing groups of photos. Quick access to frequently used controls.
Target user base	Creative professionals. Photographers as well as photo retouchers, fine artists, graphic designers, compositing artists, etc..	Photographers

- Full chart link in references at end