

Photography Outside the Box—Loads of ideas and inspiration for what to photograph next

Sample Document

Hello, and welcome,

This is a little taste of what you'll find in my ebook, *Photography Outside the Box*. Nobody wants to buy something they haven't had a look at first, so this will help to give you some idea of the content and layout. I've supplied the contents page, and then picked out one sample page from a few of the chapters—I haven't covered every chapter, so there's lots more to discover.

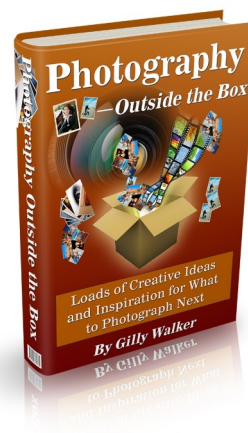
Hope you like what you see—if you do, then clicking on the banner above, or the book graphic below will take you to a page where you can purchase the book. And if you have any questions, just drop me an email and I'll do my best to answer them.

Best wishes,

Gilly x

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[Photo by Chris Darling](#)

Three types of Project

There are basically three types of project: the first is a one-off image designed to illustrate a concept; another leads to a series or collection of related pictures but doesn't necessarily have a particular story attached to it; and the third is the photo essay, which by definition tells a story of some kind. The term 'photo essay' is often used loosely to apply to any collection of related images, but I'm making a distinction between them here as I think it's useful.

Photo Themes

This kind of project concentrates on a well-defined theme, using pictures based around one specific subject. Its impact comes from the powerful visual statement made by seeing lots of images on one theme: in other words, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. For instance, if you take a picture of an unusual door then that can be interesting. But if you take another nine pictures of other unusual doors, the impact is much greater. Even photographing something that's quite ordi-

nary when seen on its own can make a intriguing collection. You can also physically group the pictures together in mosaic form so that they're all seen at once.

The subject matter of a photo theme doesn't have to be as tangible as a door or other physical object. It could be about light, or sadness, or wind, or it could be an exploration of a particular technique – eg, pinhole photography. You'd normally adopt a theme for your project when the subject matter doesn't form an obvious story, but where you show different aspects of the same theme. If you plan to make up a mosaic at the end, then it's easier (but not necessary) to keep all your images the same size, shape and orientation. Also, mixing black and white with colour doesn't really work – choose one and stick to it.

Photo Essays

Ok, I know the word 'essay' probably reminds you of school or college and makes you shudder a bit, but I promise you photo essays are a lot more fun. A photo essay has one strong theme and aims to

Chapter Two

Creative ideas to get yourself out of a rut

It happens to us all. You feel as if you have no new ideas, your mind's a blank and when you look at the contents of your latest memory card it looks pretty much like the one before it, and the one before that.....Here are some ideas to help recharge your creative batteries.



It's possible to create interesting photos in the most unlikely of places.

Change your colours

If you love black and white, take brightly coloured pictures. If you normally like bright colours, look for subtle shades. One intriguing idea is to shoot 'black and white colour' – colour shots that look as if they're taken in black and white.

Find the beauty in something ugly

Look for something you normally dismiss because you find it uninteresting or ugly. Spend some time trying to find something beautiful or interesting about it.

Take your glasses off

If you normally wear glasses, take them off before looking for a photographic subject. One of the few advantages of short sight is that it simplifies what you see – you become more aware of tones, shapes and blocks of colour. It might also help you see how using selective focus or overall blurring could increase the creativity of your shots.

Shoot with non-visual senses in mind

How could you represent a smell visually? What would sweet or sour look like? How could you show the softness of fur? Can you give the impression of sound in your image? This is a difficult one, but it will really stretch your creative muscle. Avoid

using obvious solutions such as showing citrus fruit for sour. Aim instead to show the feeling or experience of sour.

Set yourself some severe limitations

Make a wire hoop out of an old coat hanger, and throw it. Wherever it lands, find photo ideas that lie within the hoop. Or stand inside the hoop and see what you can take without moving.

Take twenty steps

Take your camera for a walk, but stop after every twenty steps. Look around you and find something of interest to photograph. Then take the next twenty steps and do the same. Keep going.

Lock yourself in the bathroom

You have to stay in the bathroom for 1 hour and all you're allowed to do is take pictures. Once you've done the obvious things you'll get thoroughly bored, but this is when you start to get creative.

Stick to the rules

Go back to basics and shoot with the rules in mind. It's easy to get lazy and disregard good practice. Beginning again can improve your pictures.

Break all the rules

Probably a bit more fun than the above! Pick a rule

Chapter Three

Cool ideas for photographing people and pets



Photo by striatic

- [Little old ladies](#)
- [People on bicycles](#) and [girls on bicycles](#)
- People on mobile phones

Point of view

Changing your angle of view can dramatically alter the mood of a picture. Most people pictures are best shot at eye level; too low an angle can exaggerate the size of mouth, nose and chin, and too high an angle can make the head look too big. However, you can create different effects by deliberately using unusual angles. Shooting someone from a low angle adds a feeling of power and authority to them, and although a high angle is usually unflattering and makes people look shorter, it can give a dramatic effect or get rid of a distracting background. A high angle can also make someone look vulnerable – useful if this is the effect you want.

Remember you can even shoot portraits from behind – someone's back view can be surprisingly recognisable and revealing of character. Profile views also often work well, and if you shoot these with strong backlighting you can produce a cameo-style silhouetted effect.

Shooting people from a distant height or low point



Photo by Dewald Botha

can be fun. For height, try balconies, multi-storey car parks, flats and apartments (above ground level), historic towers, open-topped double-decker buses, tall buildings with viewing platforms, step-ladders, hill and mountain tops. Underneath is more difficult, but you might have luck with basement flats, staircases, escalators, bottom of hills/ mountains with people on top of them, looking up anywhere that people can look down. Another variation is people on fairground rides shot from below.

Placement in the frame

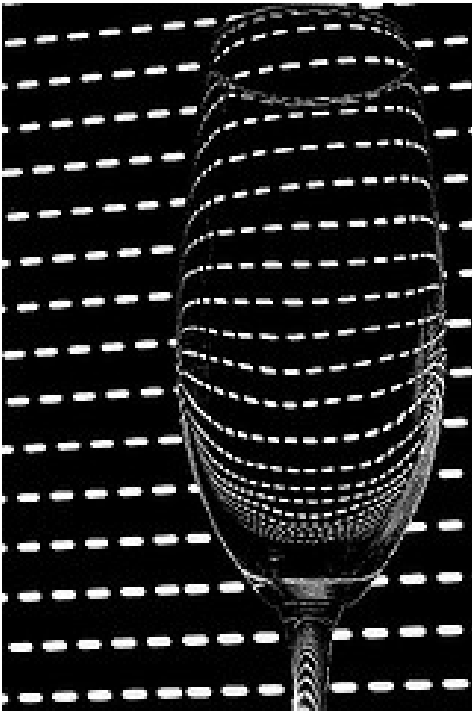
Play with lots of alternatives. You don't have to place your person plonk in the centre of the frame: have them off to one side, or place them close to the top or bottom for an unusual effect. You can have them disappear off the edge of the frame, or zoom in and fill the frame so that you can only see part of their face. And just because it's a portrait, it doesn't mean they have to fill the frame. Leaving some empty space can be really effective.

Group pictures that work

Getting everyone smiling and with their eyes open at once is the usual problem here. Tell them all to keep their eyes shut until you say 'open' and then

Chapter Four

Ordinary things to photograph in extraordinary ways



*Photo by
Jenny Downing*

*Photo by
Jenny Downing*

10 different angles

You can use this idea on any object or even on people and animals. Just find ten different angles to take the shot from – as varied or as unusual as you can – and make an interesting photo out of each.

Take one household object

Similar to the above, but not restricted to angles of view only. Try using different lighting techniques, for example – a really good photographic exercise is to pick one object and light it in different ways that bring out its texture or colour or shape. Then add in some unusual lighting such as candlelight. You don't need expensive equipment for this: experiment with desk lamps, candles, torches, natural light, even the light from a television in a darkened room (this can give quite an eerie effect). You can

get lots of help and inspiration on lighting from www.strobist.com

Another variation might be to photograph one object in a variety of different settings or surroundings. You could take a child's toy or doll and place it in different situations or locations, or have the same hat turn up in every photo – perhaps lying on a chair, on a wall, being worn, being thrown in the air, and so on.

Or you could concentrate on close-up shots, producing interesting fine-art style abstracts that make it difficult to tell what it is.

The box below will give you some ideas to get you started, but you could also wander round your home and garden with fresh eyes, looking at things you normally take for granted with a photographer's eye.

Toys	Washing lines	Dishes	Fabric
Signs	Garden tools	Clothing	Shoes
Tools	Books	Lamps	Crystals
Food	Pencils	Glassware	Candles
Clocks	Phones	Boxes	Cup and saucer
Chairs	Houseplants	Lights	Toilet rolls
Scissors	Ornaments	Luggage	Cushions
Kitchen utensils	Soft toys	Furniture	Vases

Chapter 6

Don't let rain stop play! - Things to do with your camera on a rainy day

A photographer who only works on sunny, windless days will miss out on a lot and limit their photographic vision. Wind, storms, snow, mist and fog, rain, darkness and other non-conventional conditions can give opportunities to see things in an entirely different way. In this section, we'll be looking at just one of these: rain.



[Photo by Dale Smith](#)

Rainy Windows

Wet, steamy windows offer all sorts of possibilities. Sit inside a café or a car with a steamed up window and see if a photo opportunity presents itself. Steam and rain add a soft-focus effect which can make for an amazing photo. If you're out in the rain, look into places with rainy/steamed up windows for interesting candid portraits – eg, people sitting in a café or bar. Or how about a window streaming with rain, with the soft shapes of green trees outside?

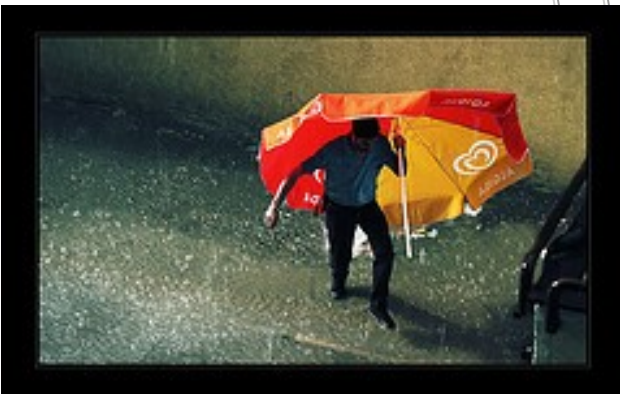
Umbrellas

Umbrellas have an intrinsically pleasing shape and often come in bright colours. You could post process your image afterwards and change it all to black

and white, keeping the colours of the umbrella. Or make a collection of unusual umbrellas.



[Photo by Catherine](#)



[Photo by Armend Krasniqi](#)



[Photo by Sharon Mollerus](#)

Chapter 7

Great ideas for abstract and impressionist photography

You probably started out in photography because you wanted to make pictures of recognisable scenes, people and objects. Nothing wrong with this at all. But sometimes you can just get a little tired of producing pretty pictures of recognisable things. Sometimes even the most amazing landscape photography just starts to look like the same old, same old. And sometimes you're just tired of photographing the same things in the same ways.

It's time to start thinking about going abstract. You may have avoided this sort of thing because of its arty connotations – perhaps you think you don't have the ability. Or maybe you simply don't understand what it's all about. I'd like you to let go of those beliefs and come to it with an open mind. Anyone can do abstract, and it's great fun.

I'm going to define abstract photography very simply,

as any form of photography that doesn't aim to show things in a straightforward, representational way. (I'm not saying this is the right way to define it, it's just how I'm doing it here.) Your subject matter might be recognisable but simplified and boiled down to its essence, or it could be that it's distorted in some way. Or it may be just a swirl of colours or lines.

Shooting abstracts will help you look at ordinary things in a very different way; it will help you improve your creativity; and it will open up a whole new world of potential subject matter. All of this can be extremely rewarding in its own right, but the additional skills you'll learn will transfer back to your normal photography as well.

I hope I've persuaded you to give it a go! Here are some ideas to get you started.



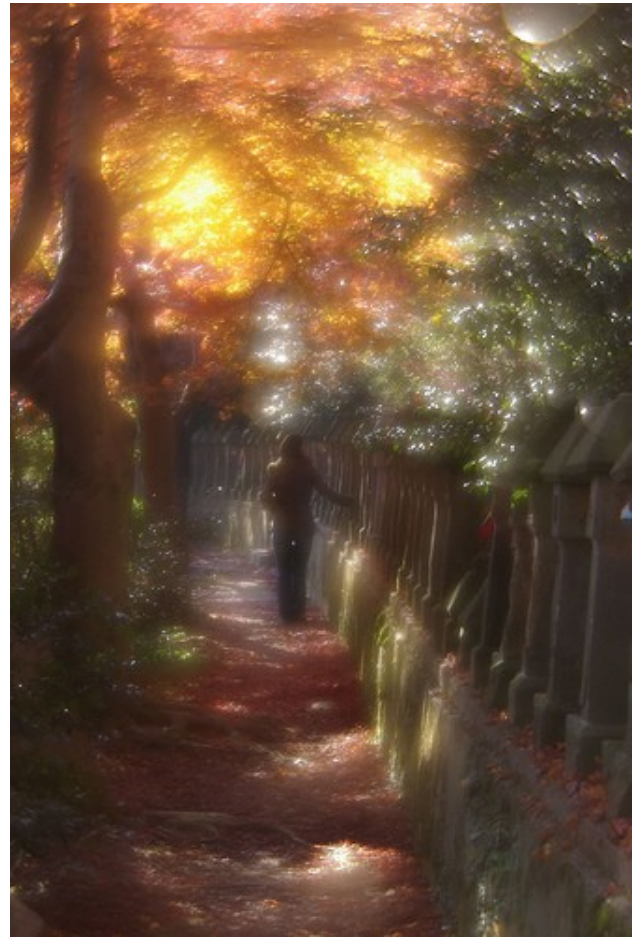
The edge of a leaf reveals interesting texture, colour and line when seen up close.

Get in Close

A first step in abstracts is to go in so close that it's difficult to tell what you're looking at. This will often mean using a macro lens or equivalent, but it can be done with larger objects and a normal lens. Concentrate on seeing the interesting textures or lines within the object you're shooting and arrange your composition around these.

Shoot with Shallow Depth of Field

A gentle introduction to going abstract is to shoot with your aperture wide open so that you get a very limited depth of field. This will give you a very soft, blurred, semi-abstract effect.



A soft focus effect combined with beautiful light gives a dreamy effect to this image.

[Photo by tsuda](#)

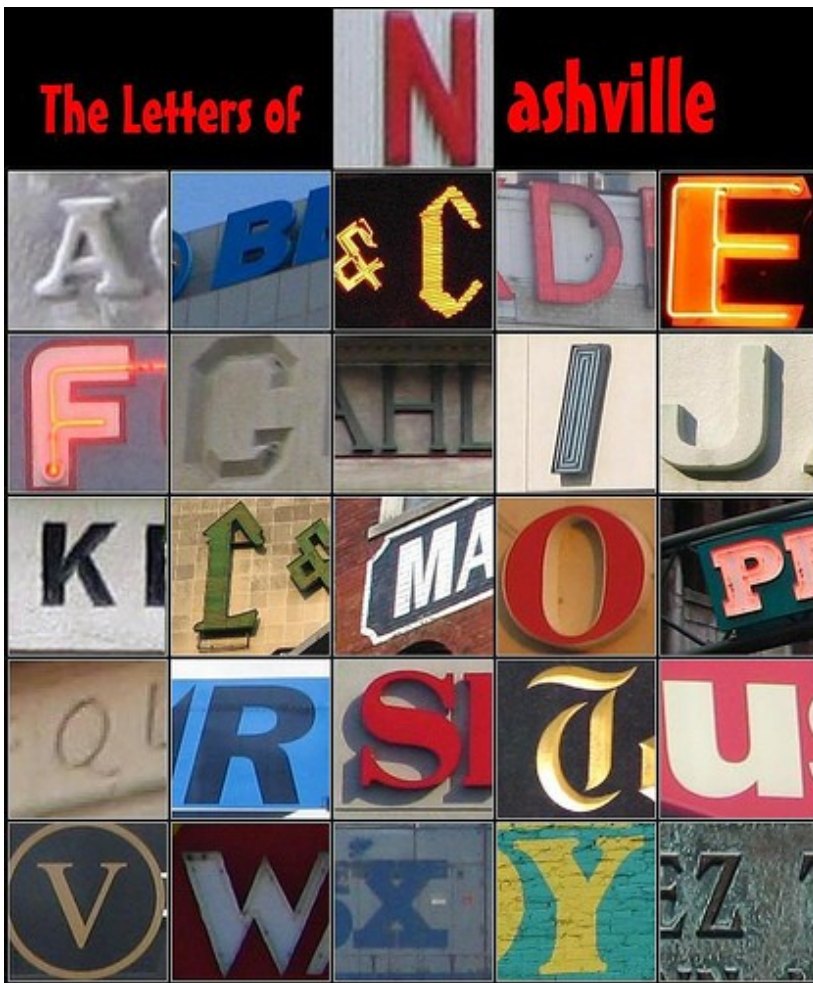
Soft Focus

A soft focus effect is another gentle introduction to going abstract. There are lots of ways of achieving this. You can use a soft focus filter on your camera, place a clear filter over the lens (for protection) and smear Vaseline or lip balm on it, breathe on the lens, or stretch a piece of an old pair of tights over the lens. If you use tights, you can get different effects depending on the colour of the tights. If you smear some sort of substance over your filter, remember that you don't have to put it over the whole filter – you could, for example, leave a clear patch in the centre.

Chapter Nine

Some off-the-wall things to do with your camera

Here's a collection of quirky things that don't quite fit in anywhere else.



Say it with Photos

The aim of this is to take pictures of signs and other objects in order to convey a message or spell out your name or other word. For example, I (letter or shape) love (heart symbol or word) you (letter U) John (street sign with name John on it). You can use street signs, shop signs, symbols, naturally occurring shapes or anything else that will work. When you've got them, combine the photos to state your message. You can put them in a horizontal or vertical line, or in a square format, or any way you choose.

A variation on this theme would be to match the content of the photos to the message. For example, 'Save the Forests' could have 'letters' formed from shapes found in branches, letters found carved into bark, and you could form the more difficult to find letters out of pine cones or leaves.

You could also simply collect all 26 letters of the alphabet, as Brent Moore has done above.

Secret lives of benches

[Jay of The Plug](#) attached a cheap disposable camera and a note to his local park bench, which read:
*Good afternoon,
I attached this camera to the bench so you could take pictures. Seriously. So have fun. I'll be back later this evening to pick it up.
Love, Jay / The Plug*

He collected it later that day and found the film used up and full of images taken by an assortment of people who'd visited the park bench that day. You could try something similar – it doesn't have to be a bench, just something that you can attach a camera to and that lots of people will visit.

From an object's point of view

Try shooting your photos from the point of view of an object or even part of a living thing. For example, you could put your camera inside the washing machine (not when it's on, no) and take a portrait of yourself looking in from its point of view.