

Abstract Photography:

Seeing the extra-ordinary in the ordinary

Seminar at Orleans Camera Club

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There has been no commonly-used definition of the term "Abstract Photography".

"An abstract photograph **draws away from that which is realistic or literal.**
It draws away from natural appearances and recognizable subjects in the actual world.

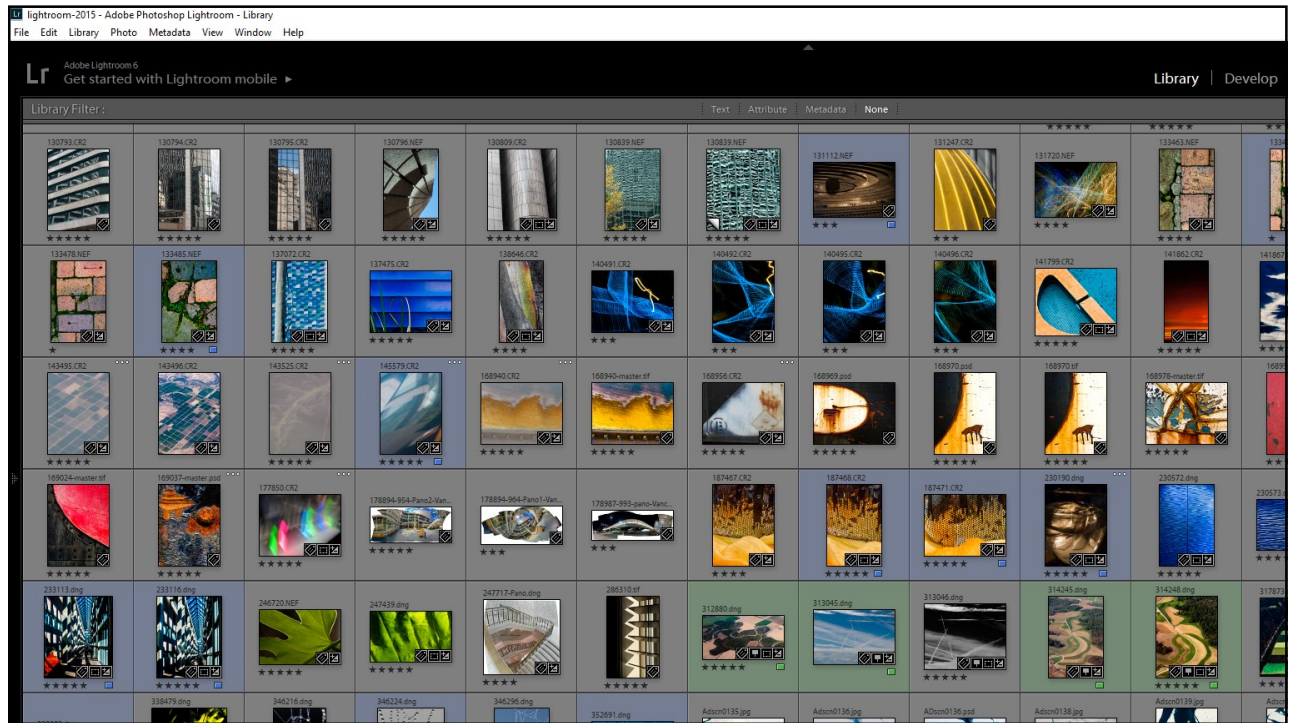
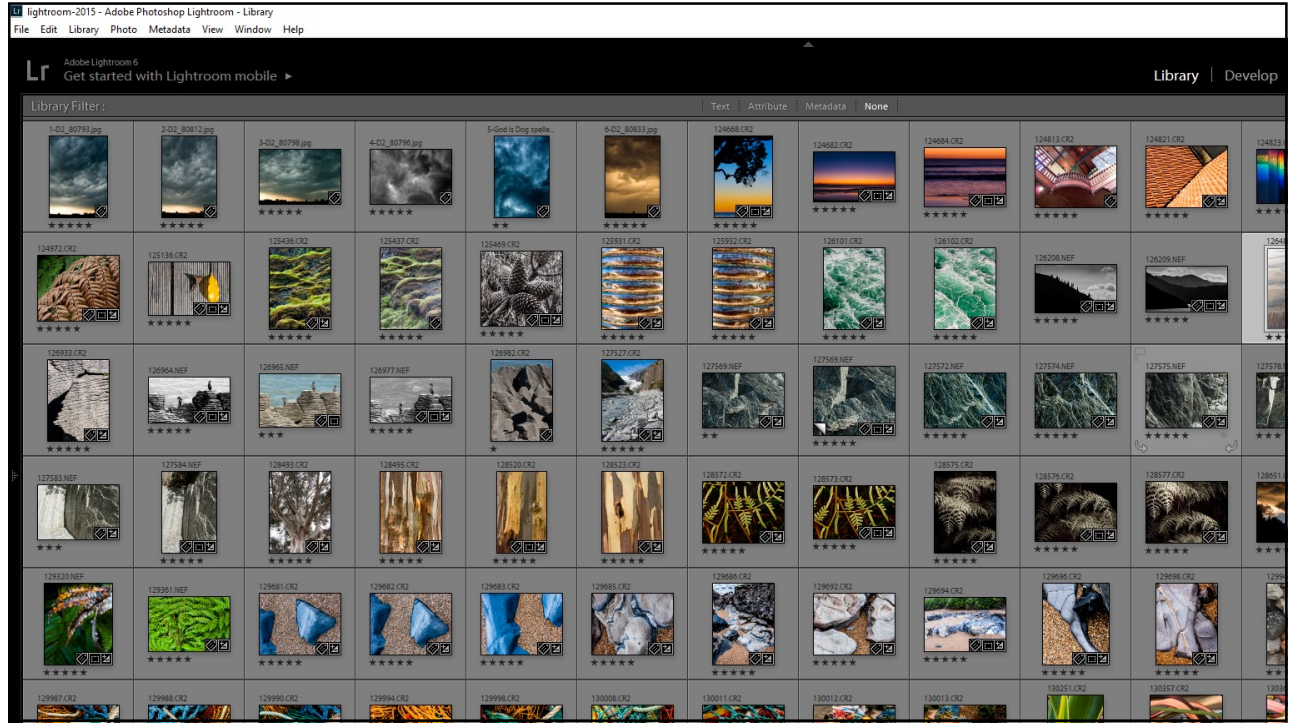
...Here's the acid test:

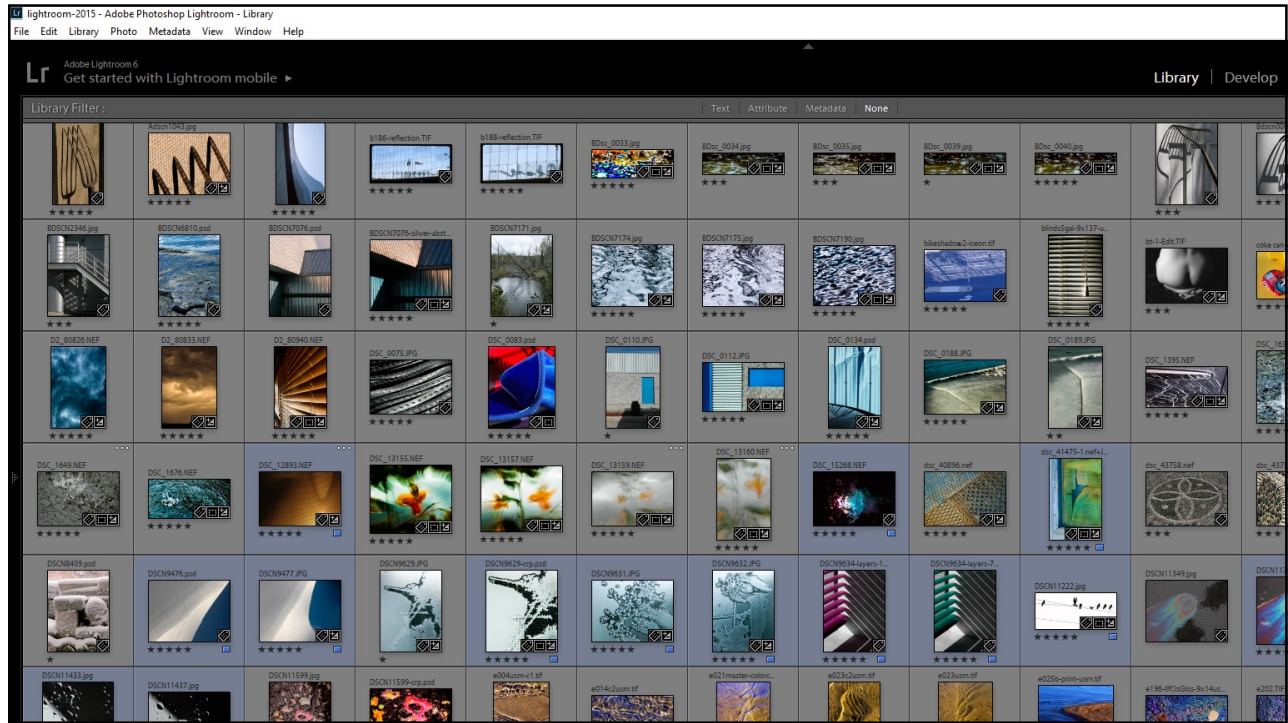
If you look at a photo and there's a voice inside you that says

'What is it?'

Well, there you go. It's an abstract photograph."¹

Photographer and Professor of Psychology John Suler,
in his essay
Photographic Psychology: Image and Psyche.





Colour and Texture



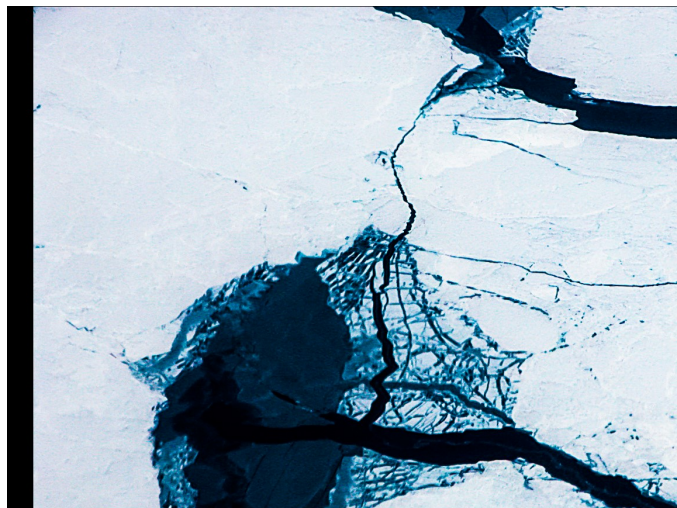
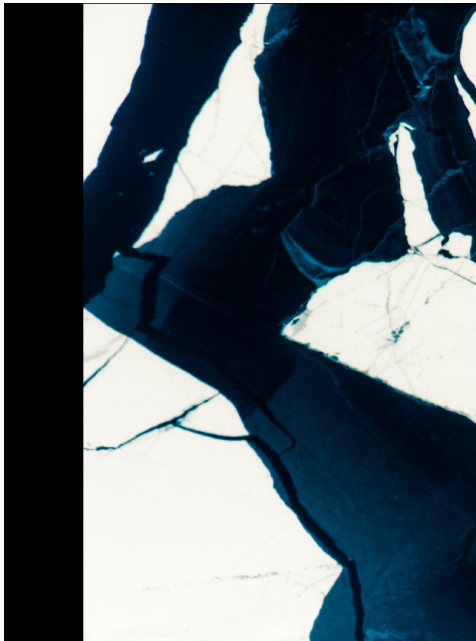
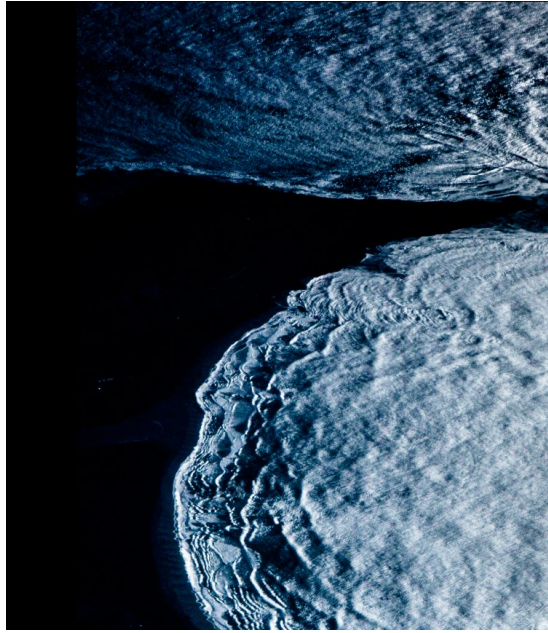
Interesting composition



Abstracts from planes.

Exploration of Different Perspectives (from above)

Commercial airplane
from 35000 feet



CONTRAILS

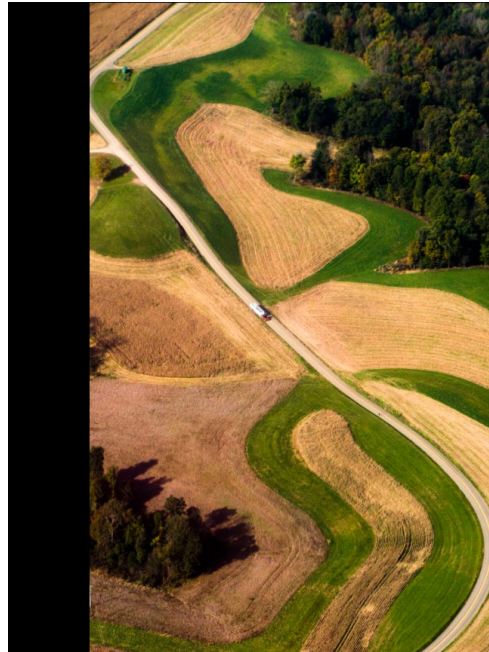


Photoshop above into picture at right



Exploration of Different Perspectives (from above)

Shots from the private airplane "SkyDreamer",
a Jabiru two seater airplane at 4000 feet



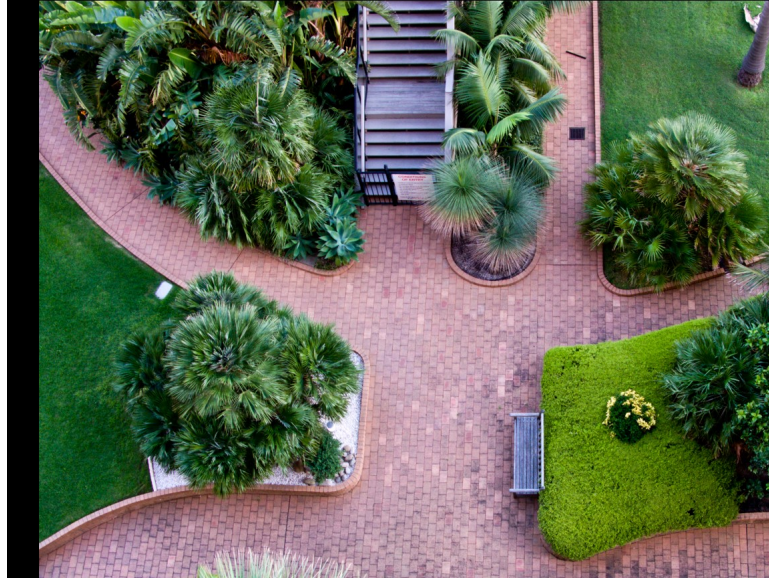


Photoshop above into picture at right

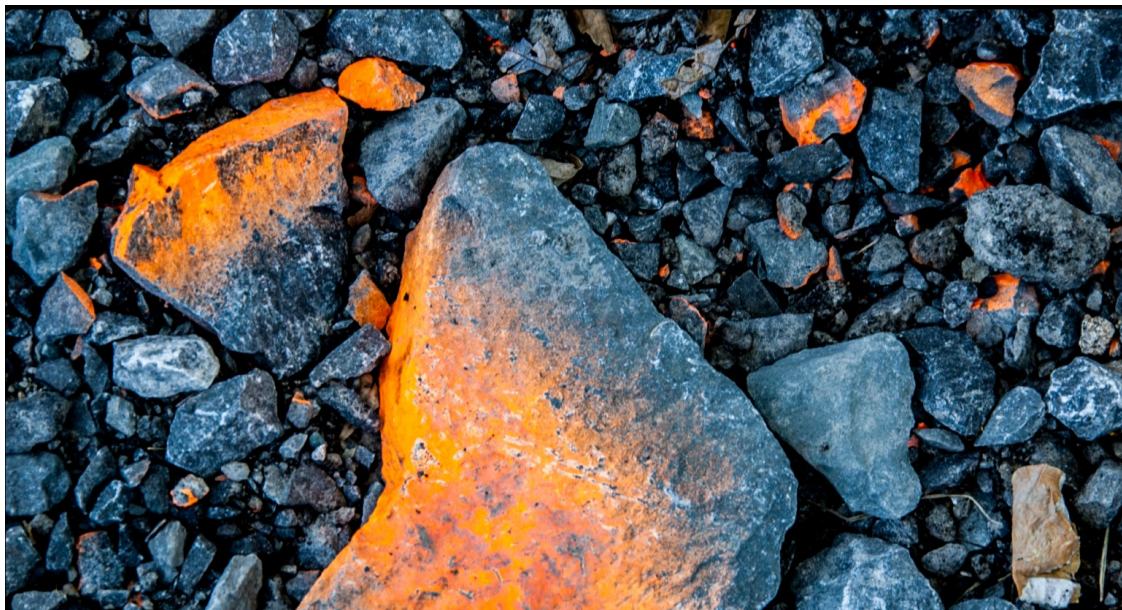


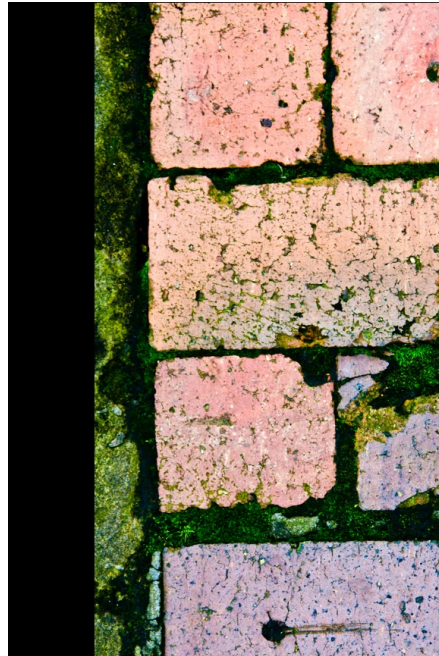
Exploration of Different Perspectives (from above)

From ~200 feet above.

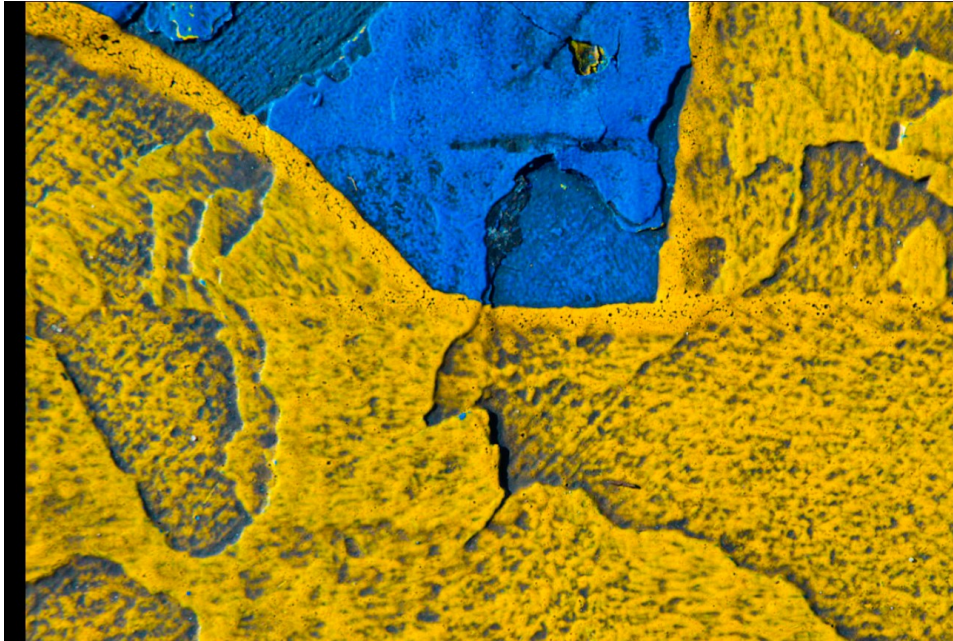
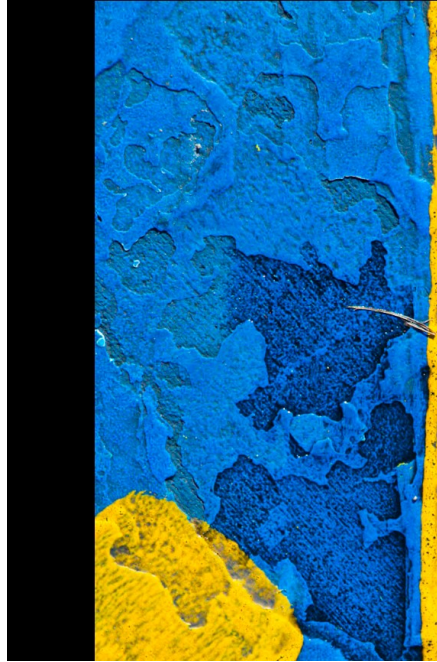


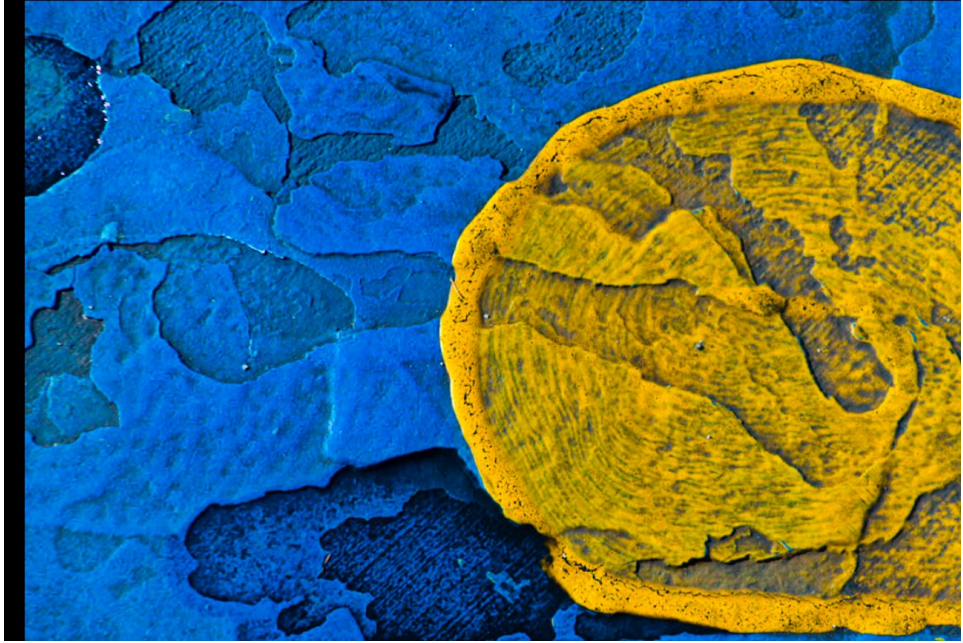
Exploration of Different Perspectives: **"Lookdown" photographs** (3 feet above ground)



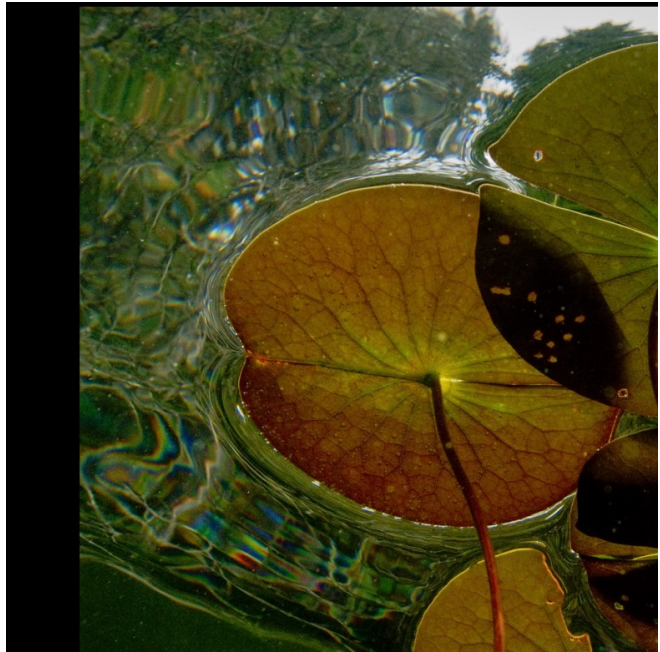
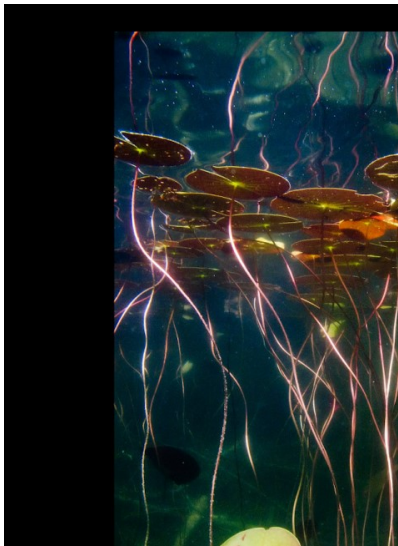


A subject with great potential.





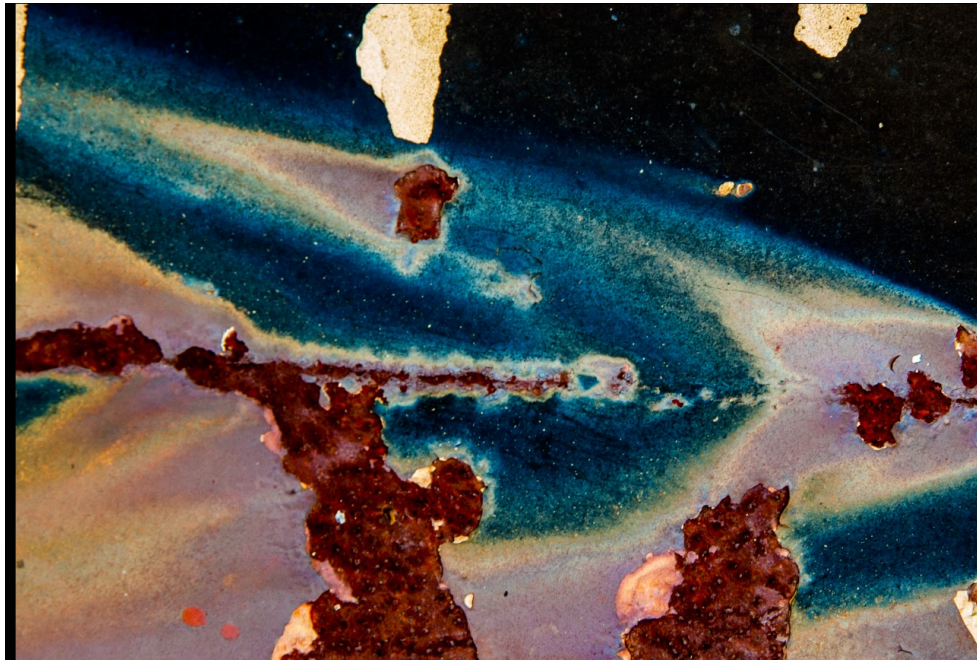
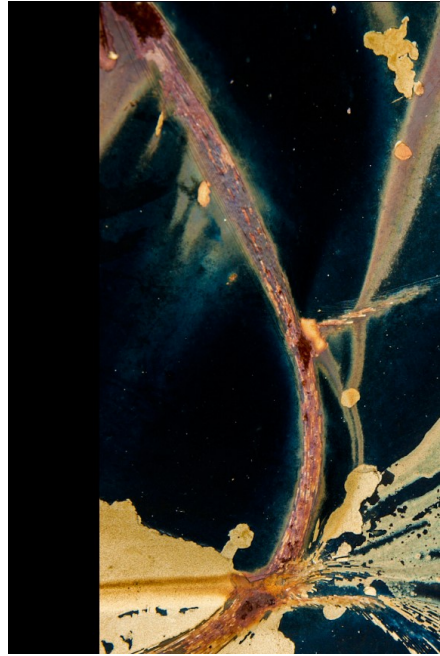
Perspective: from below

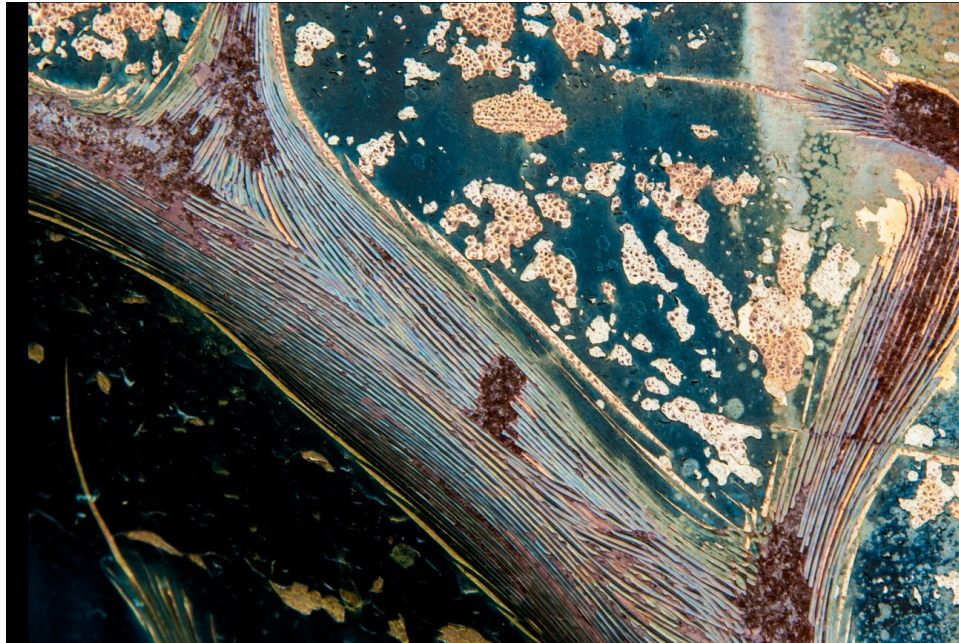


Paint and Rust



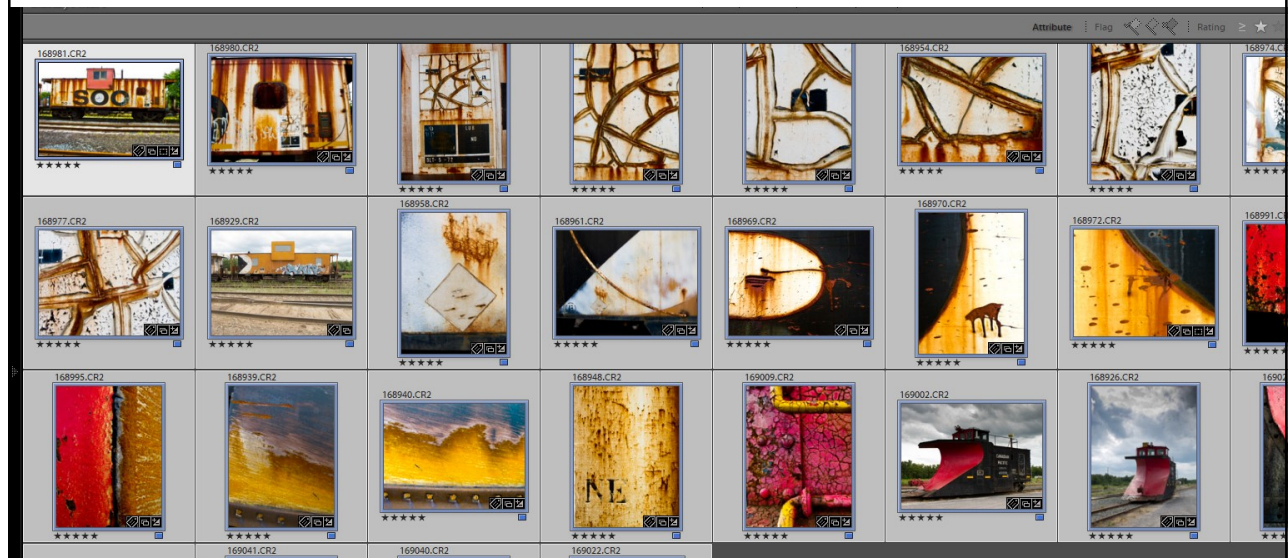
Great potential for abstracts





Train art.

Thirty five minutes exploring the train cars in Havelock Ontario train yards.
These are full frame, not cropped shots, so the take-away message is to get very close and compose in frame.



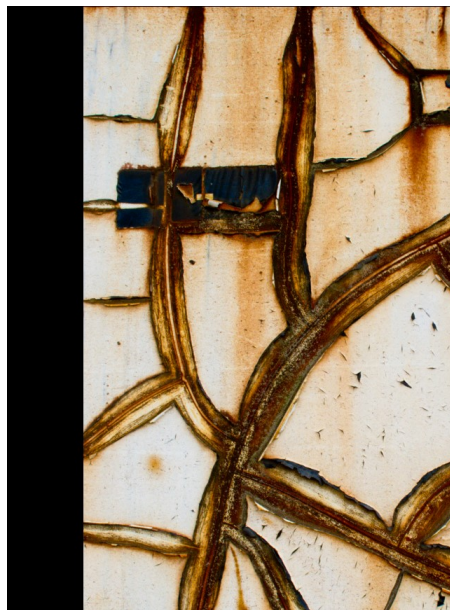
Caboose #1:
Huge potential for Abstracts... orange-brown rust, with peeling and cracked paint.
Got to get closer to find the abstract compositions.



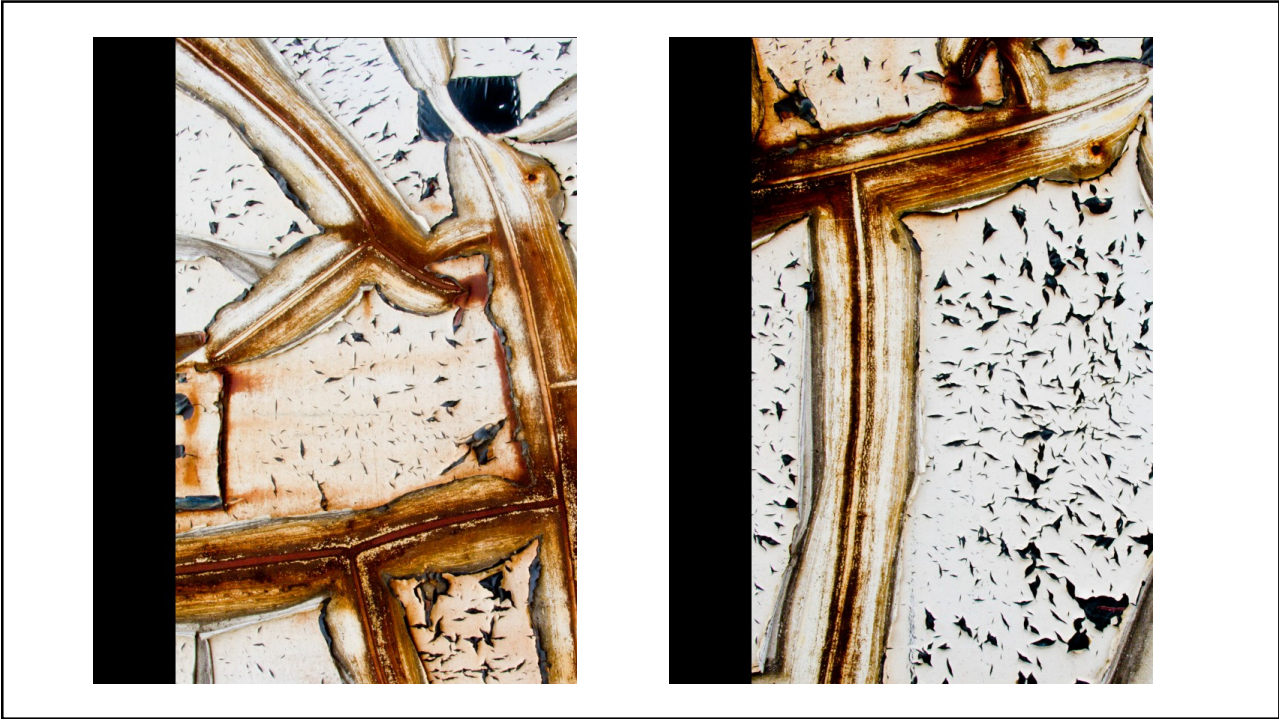
get closer



get closer



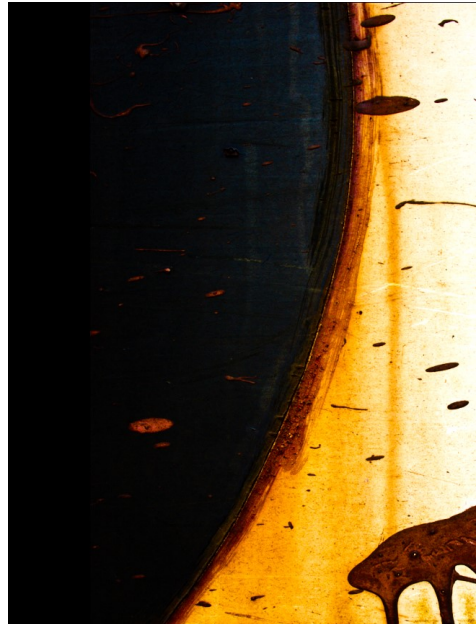
Much, much better... start looking

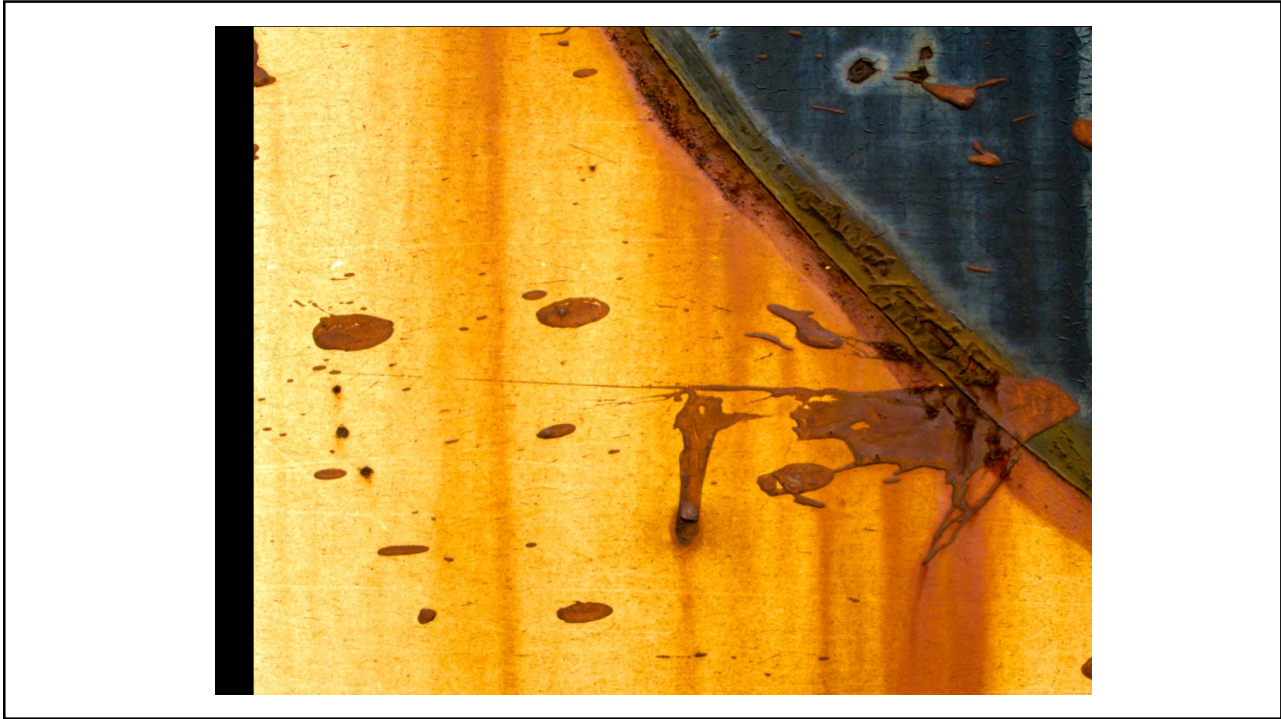




Caboose #2:
Explore both sides of the car.

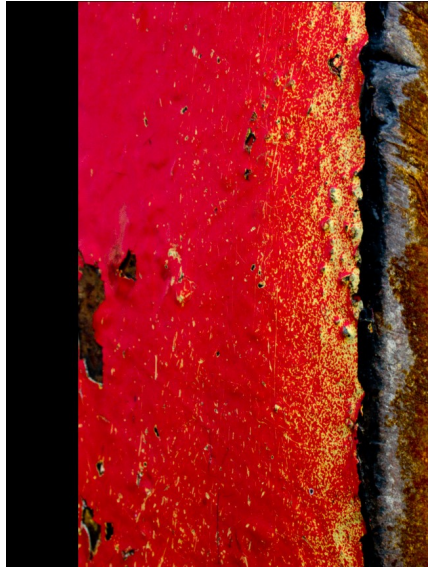




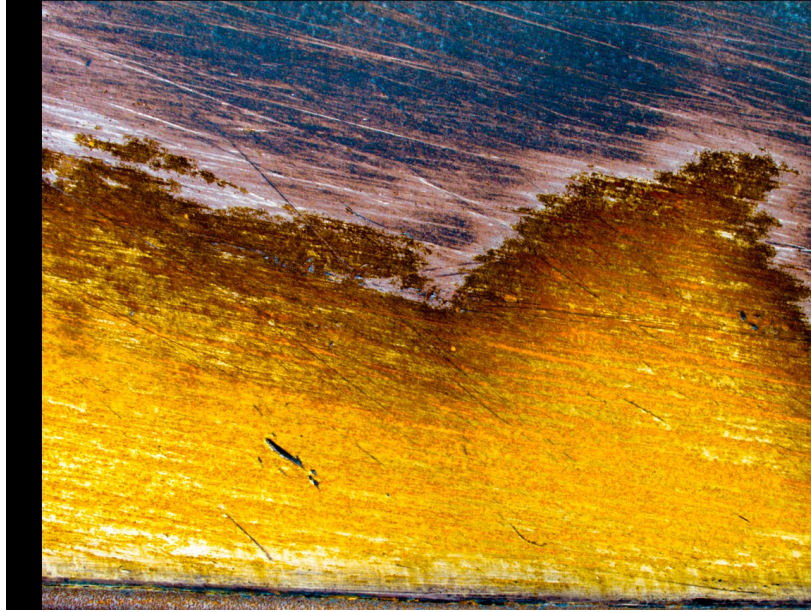


I know there is a picture here...

nice



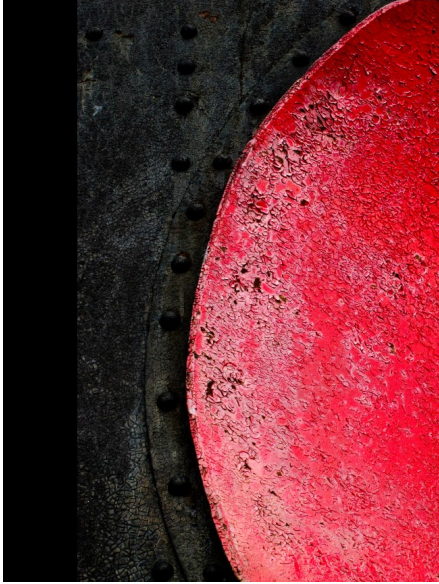
much better



Finally "Abstract" pictures of the train snowplow.



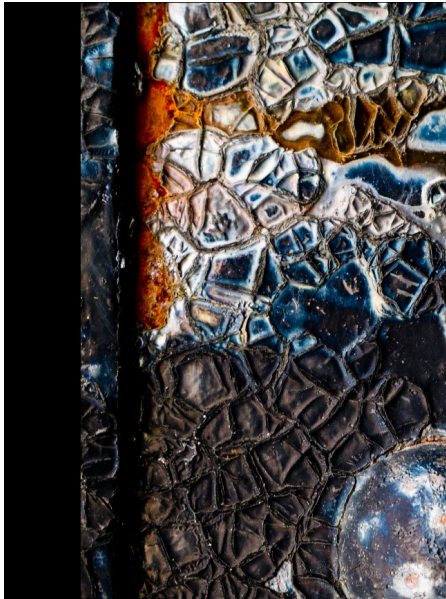
An OK abstract



Much better composition



Focus on the black paint and bolt is interesting.

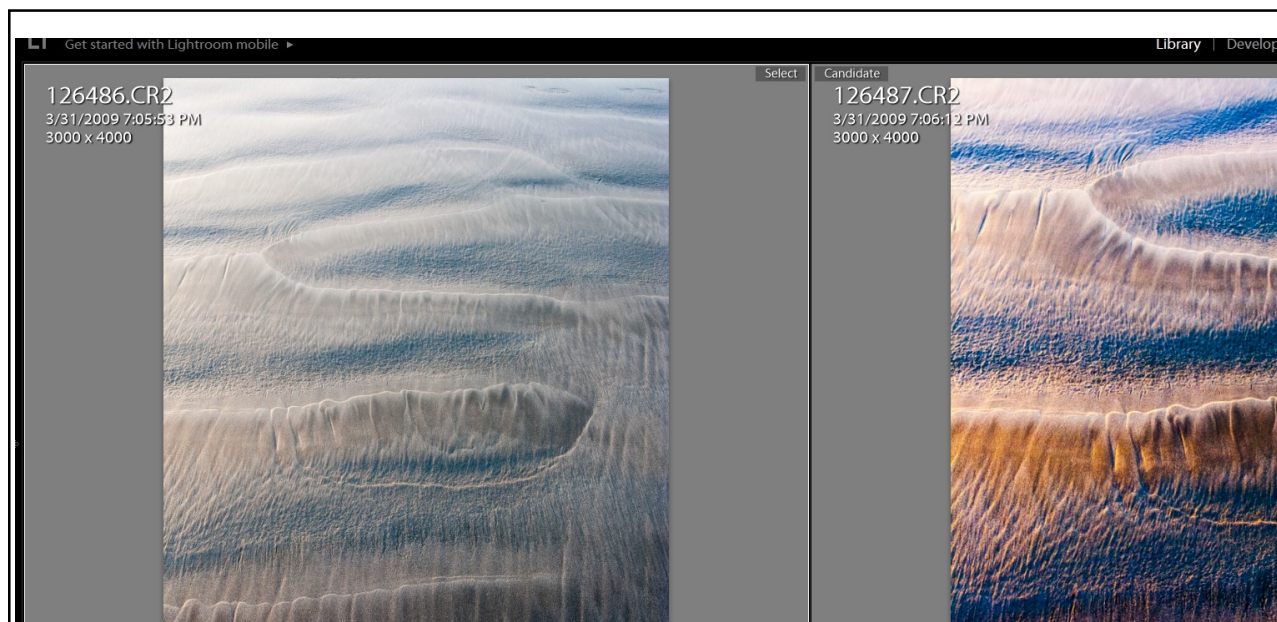


Isolate the colour in the cracked black paint.





A technical digression



How do I turn the drab but very interesting “sand” composition (left panel) into the colourful abstract on the right

1. Increase contrast
2. Increase saturation/vibrance
3. Increase Clarity
4. Darken (decrease Black)

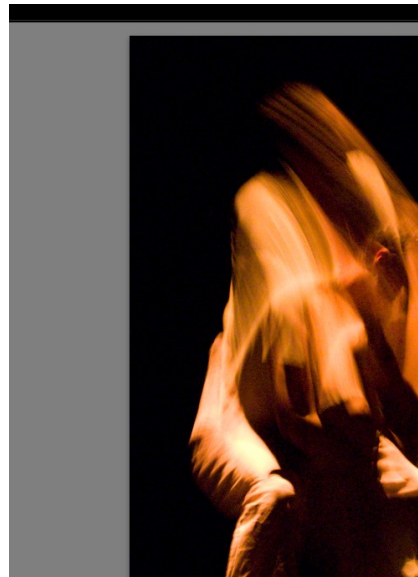
What you are doing is enhancing the subtle colours that are **inherently** hidden inside the photograph.

Don't be timid.

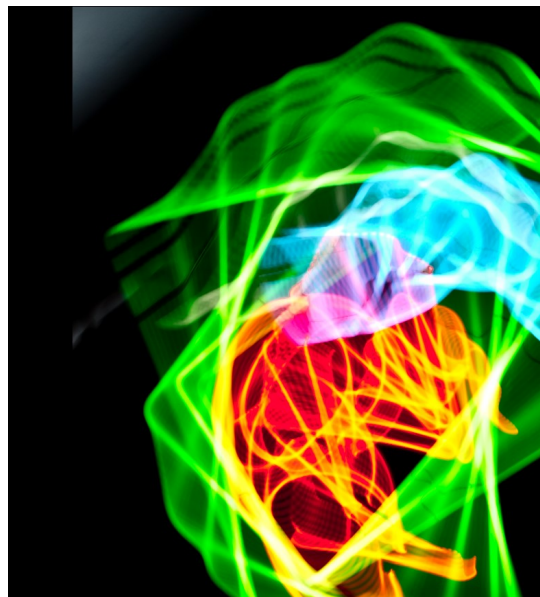
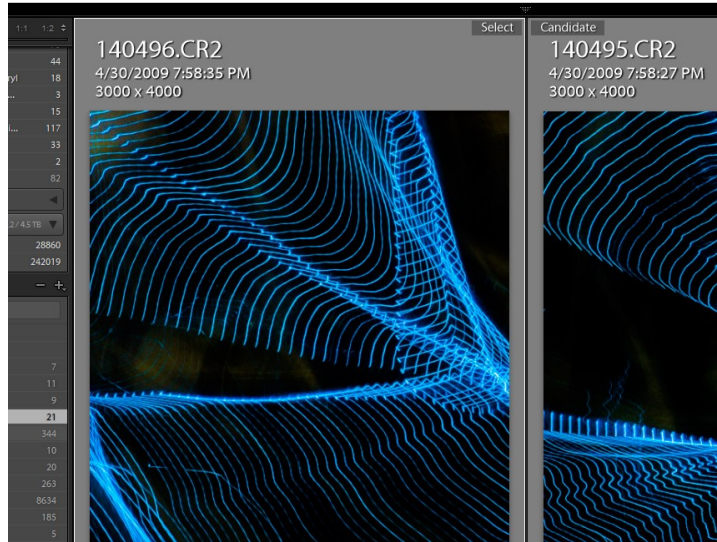
We are making an **ABSTRACT**, divorced from reality so you have free reign to improvise.

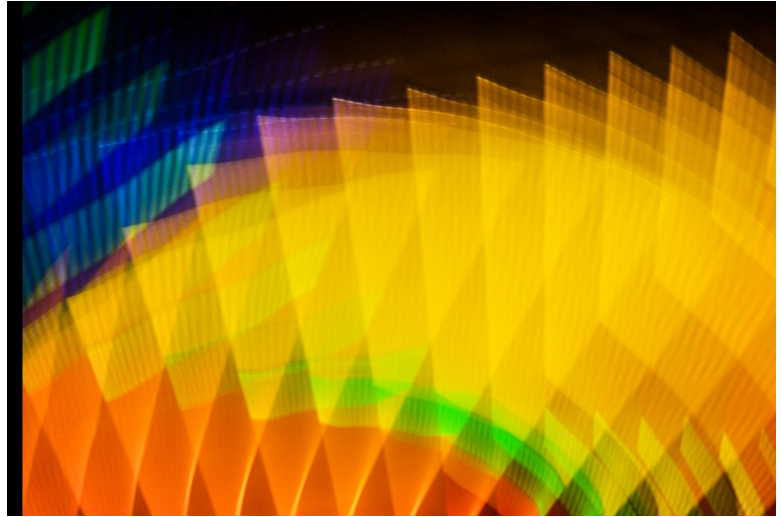
Movement can create abstracts

Exploration of MOTION
Dance... with slow blur

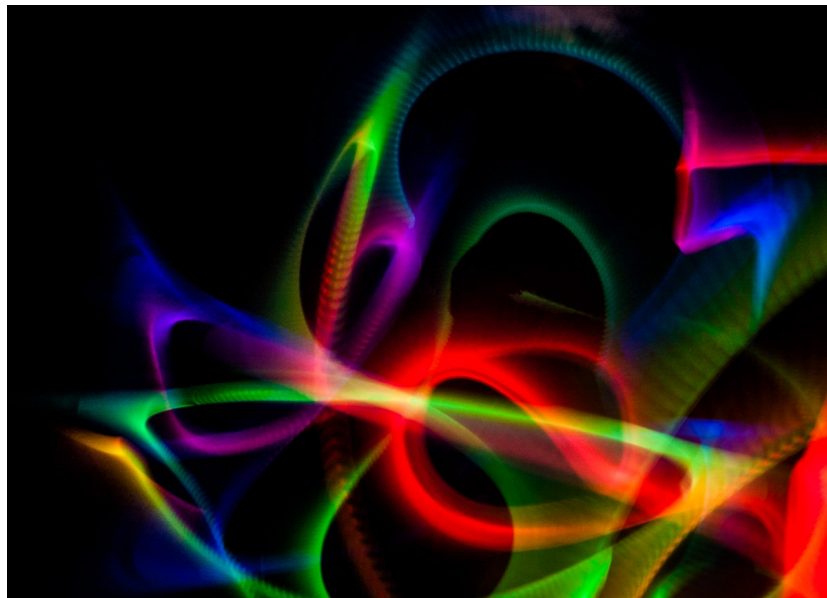


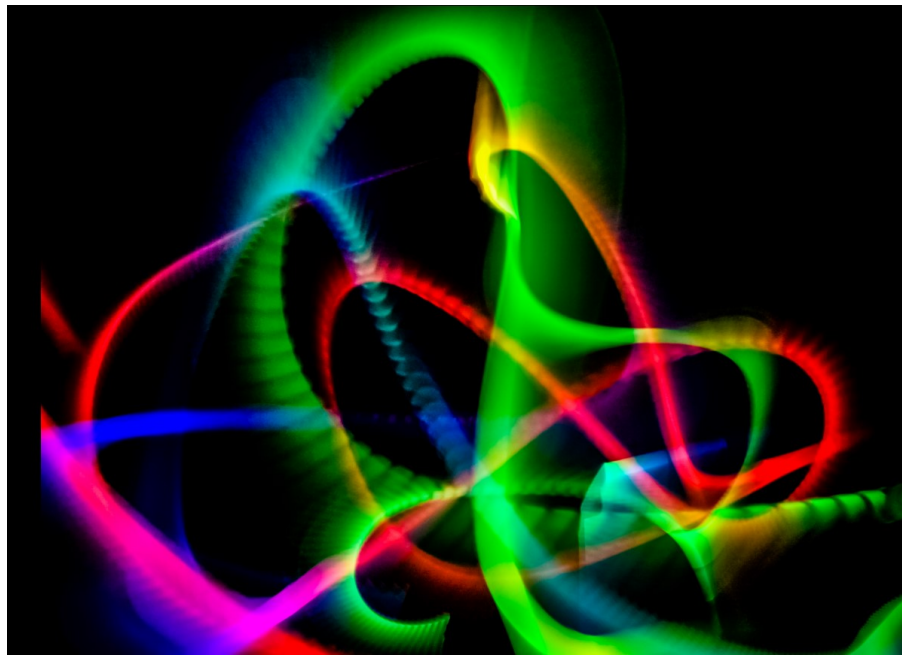
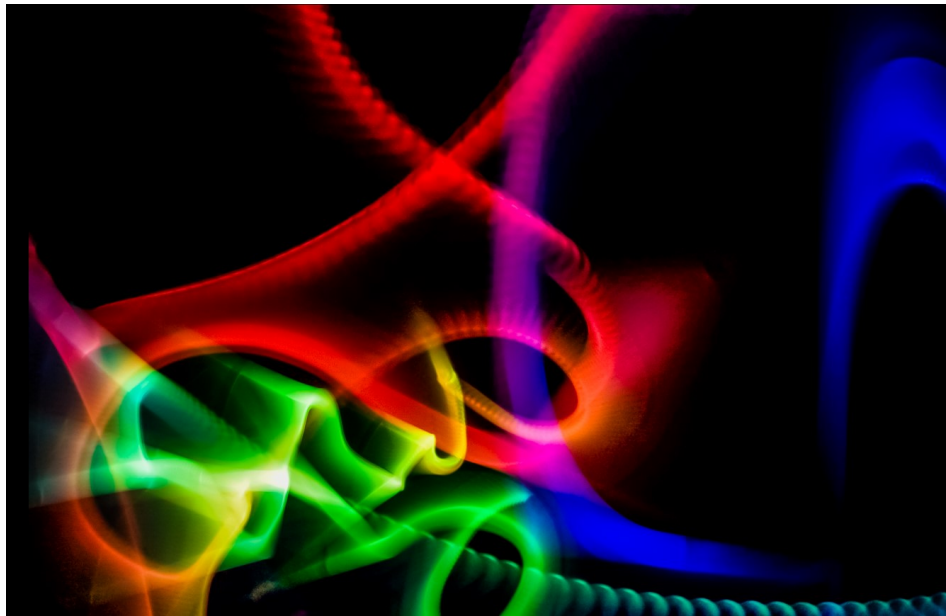
Light Painting: Neon lights



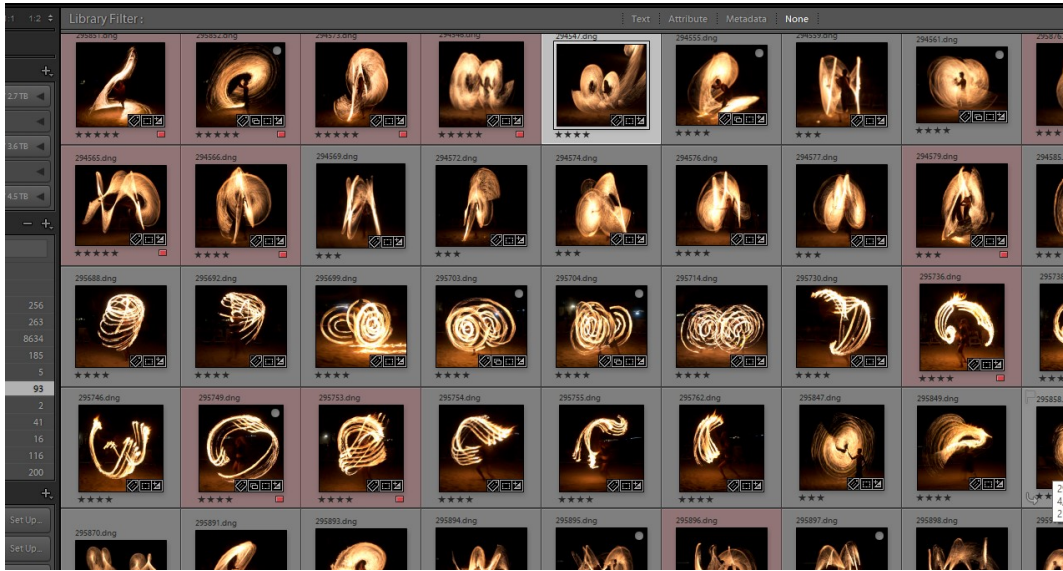


Light Painting: Light Sabre





Light Painting: Fire Dancers



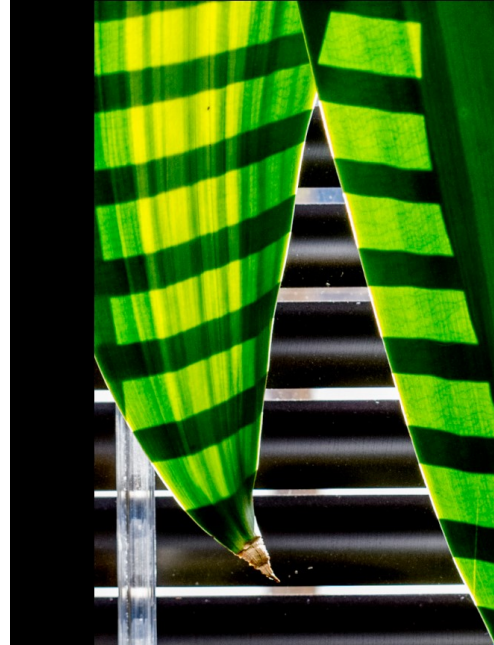
Light Painting: Fire Dancers



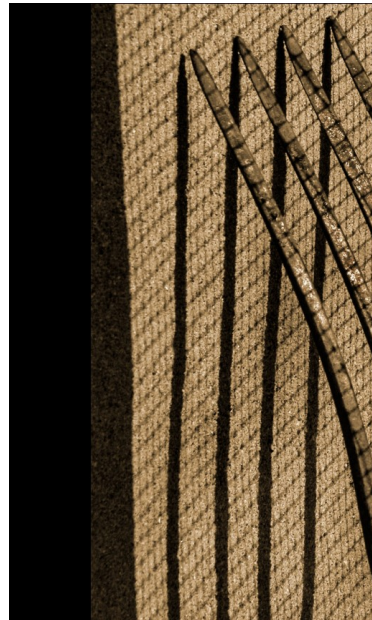
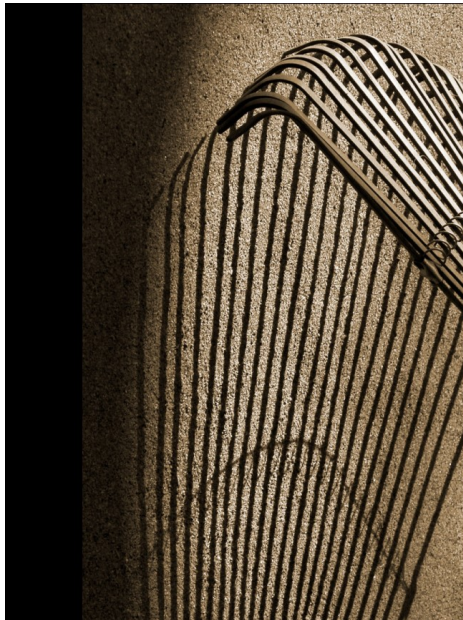


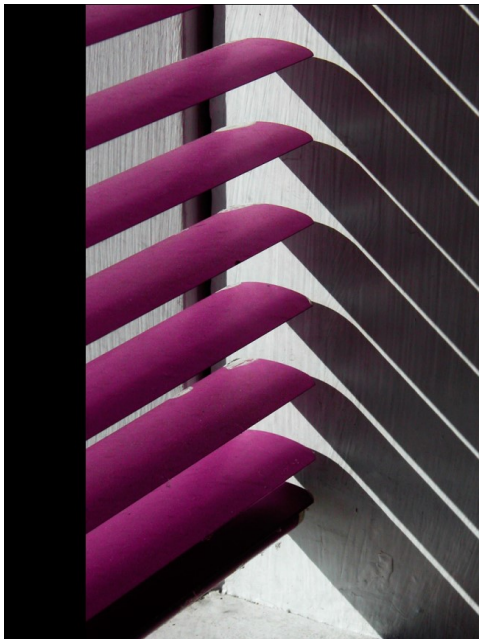
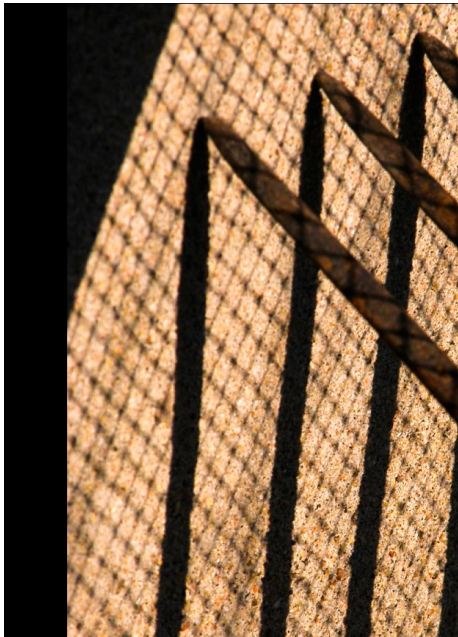
Shadows

Shadows



Shadows



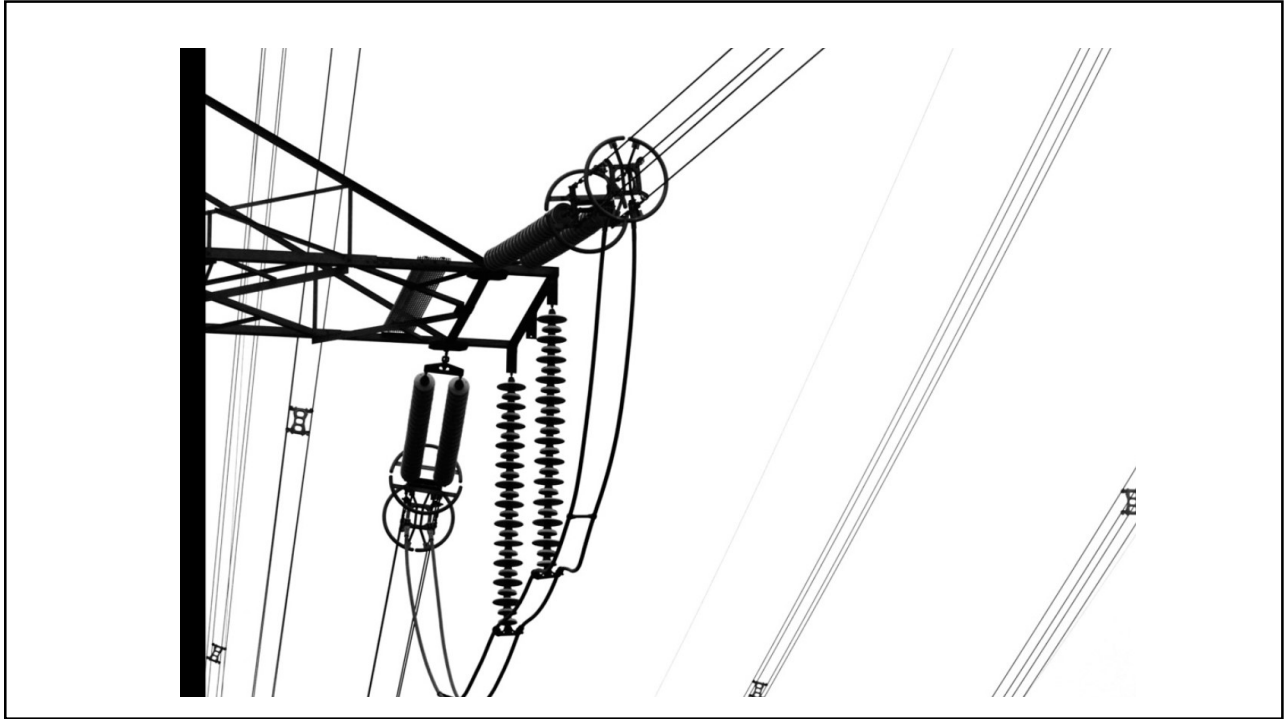




Composition is key

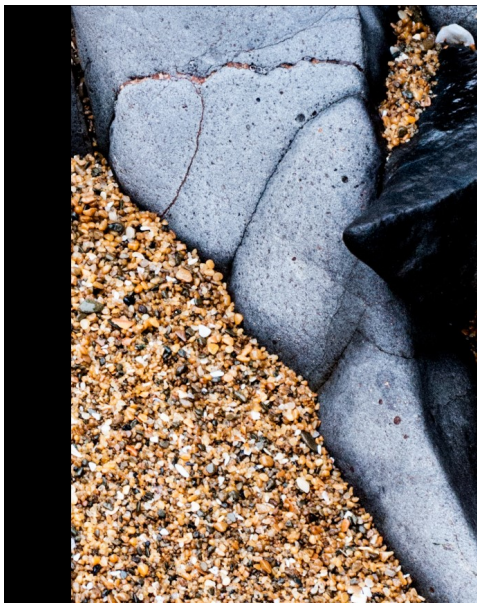
Hydro lines

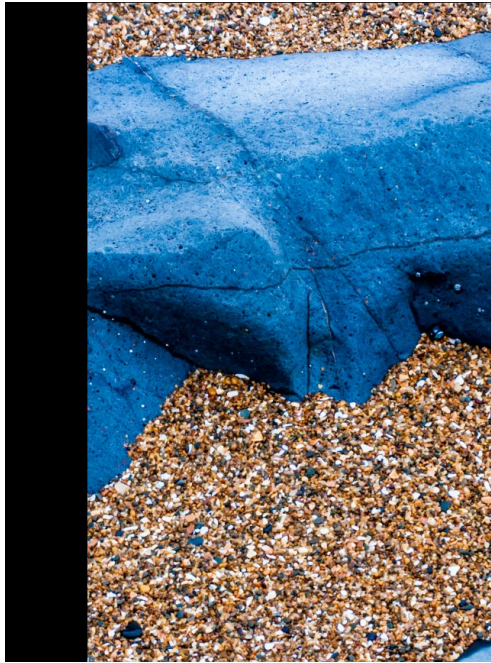




Potentially unlimited abstracts on this beach in New Zealand





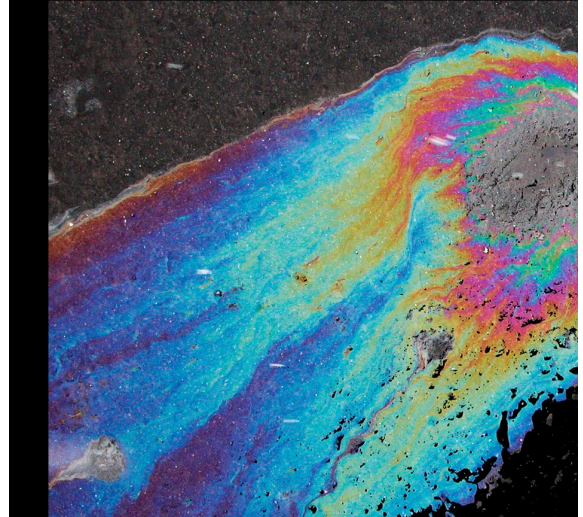


There must be an abstract in this cliff-face





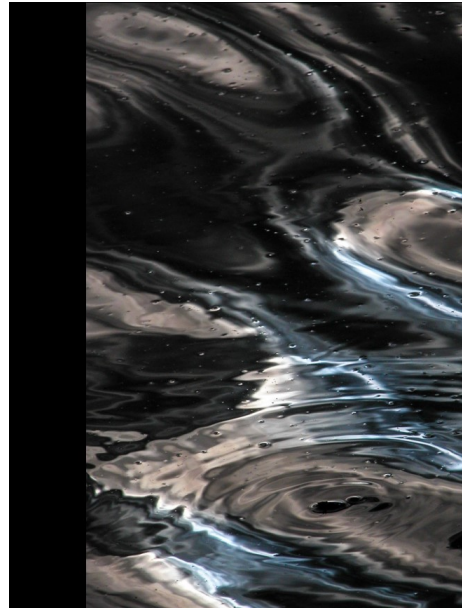
Gasoline on wet pavement



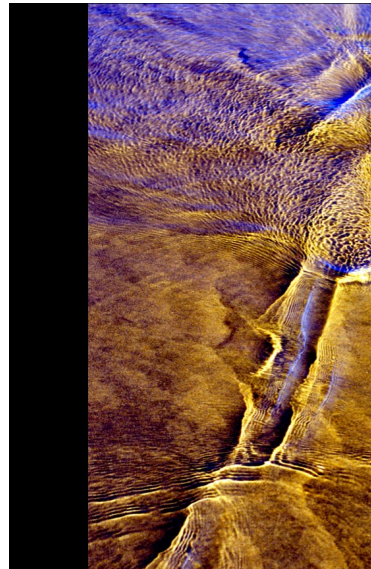
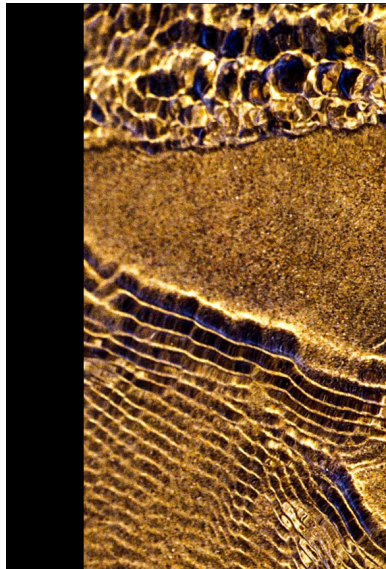


Reflections

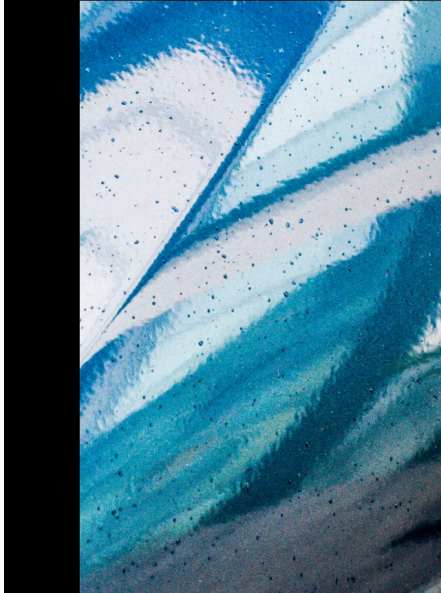
Reflections in water



Reflection of wave patterns on sand



Reflections on cars

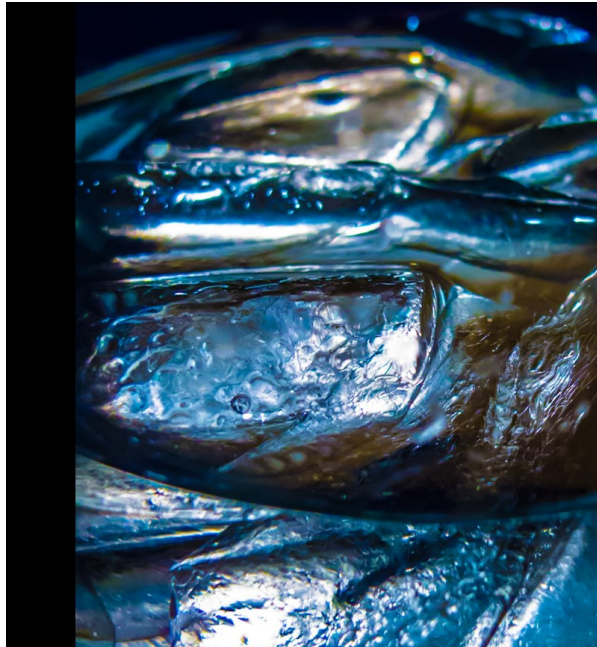
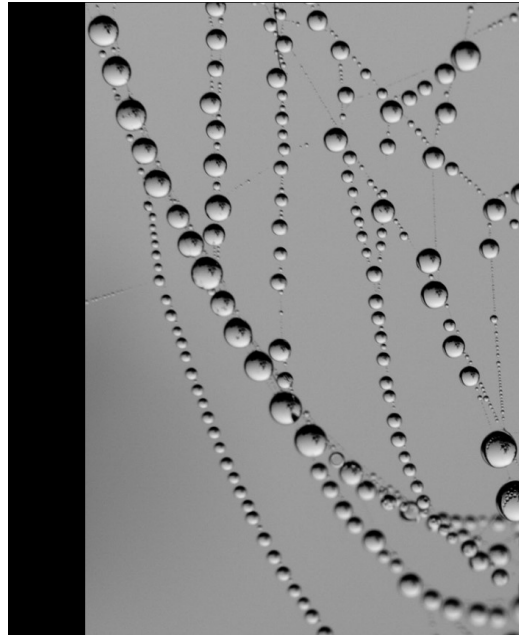


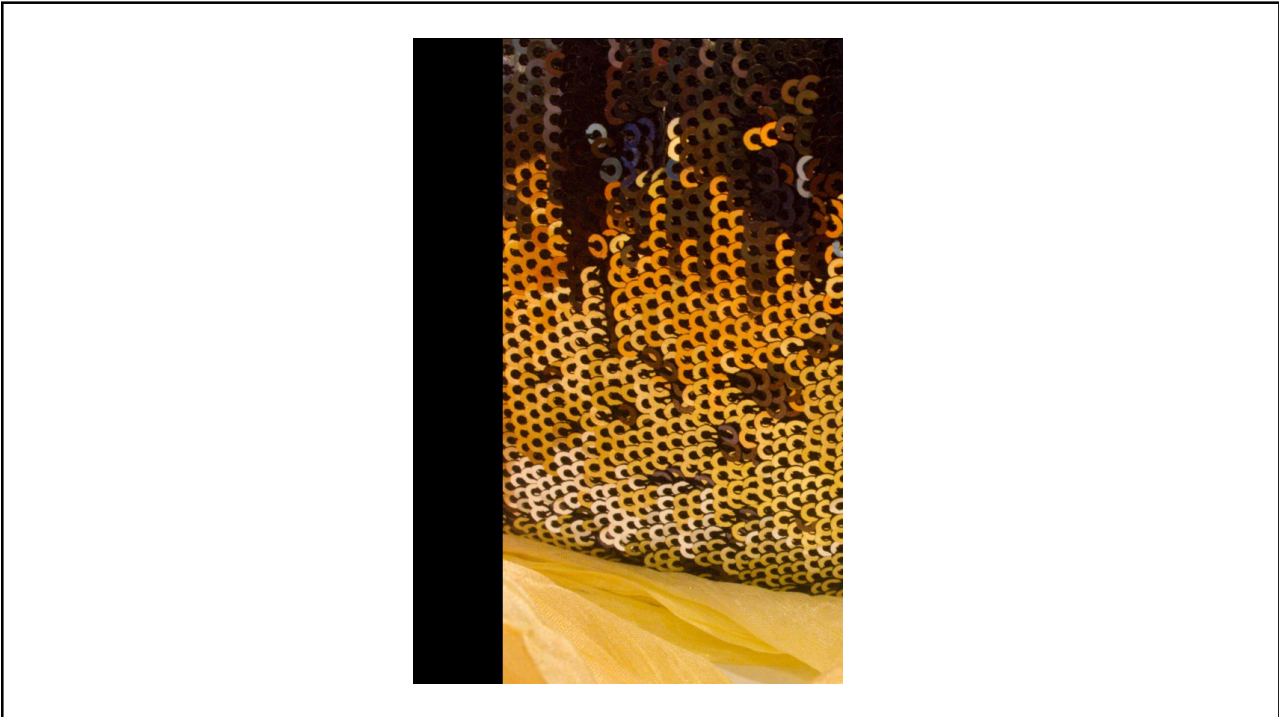
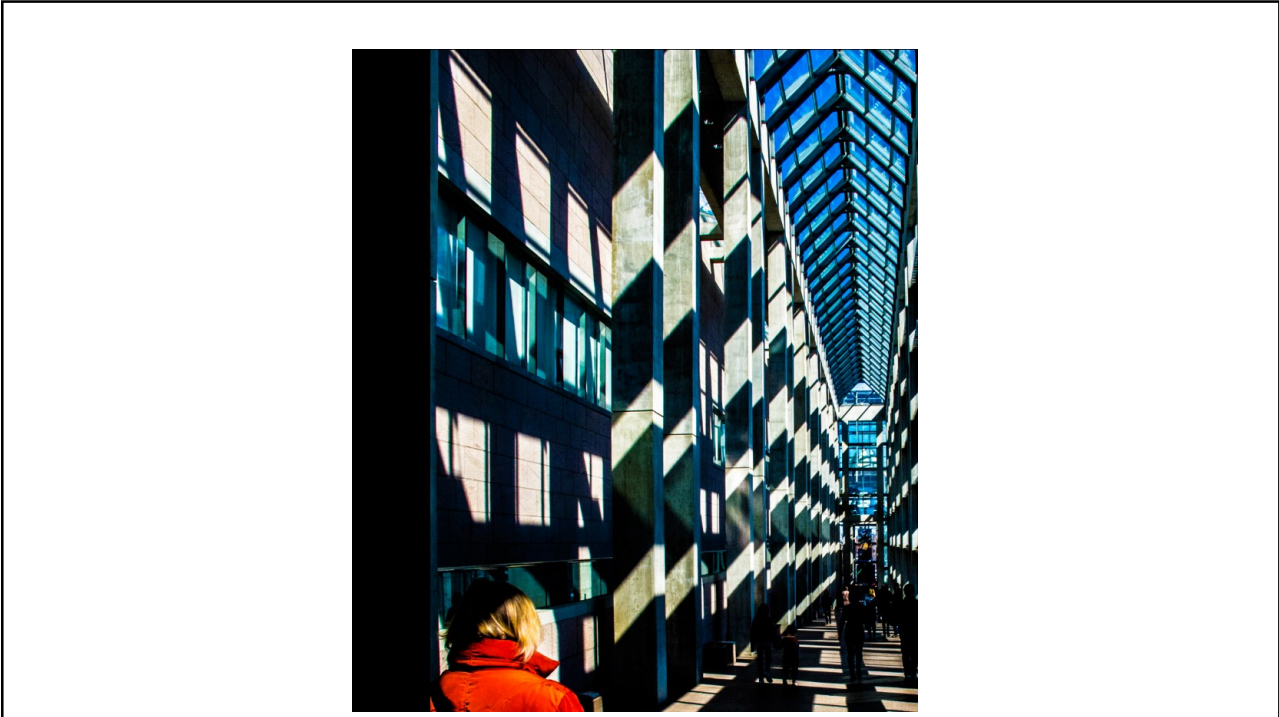
Reflection in hubcaps



Reflection / distortion in windows







Take-away messages from this seminar

- 1: Shoot lots of pictures and select later.
- 2: Compose in the viewfinder... select the most interesting compositions.
3. Get close and then closer.
- 4: Abstracts are everywhere, all you need is a camera and an adventurous spirit.

From the book "My Name is Asher Lev" by Chaim Potok (about Abstract Expressionism):

"I began to understand ... why and how he painted as he did.

The canvas was a two-dimensional field.

Any attempt to convert it into an object of three dimensions was an illusion and a falsehood.

The only honest way to paint today was either to represent objects that were *recognizable*, ...

or to do away with objects entirely and create paintings of **color and texture and form**,

paintings that translated the volumes and voids in nature into fields of color,

paintings in which the solids were flattened and the voids were filled and the planes were organized... "