

Light and Color



Kinds of Light

- Direct Light – light from a single point, like the sun or a lightbulb
 - Front lighting
 - Back lighting
 - Side lighting
 - Spotlighting
- Indirect light – light from a broad region, like the sky or a window
 - Diffuse lighting
 - Reflected lighting

Front lighting

Front lighting is usually considered the least desirable lighting for photography. It occurs when the sun (or a lightbulb) is shining from directly behind the photographer.

- The lack of shadows makes the picture look flat, lacking depth
- The few shadows that do show up cause harsh contrast





Side Lighting

Side lighting is usually good for photography. It occurs when the sun is shining from the side (and can occur when the sun is directly above).

- Shadows from side lighting give a photo a feeling of depth
- Is good for emphasizing texture and form
- Relatively easy to deal with, photographically









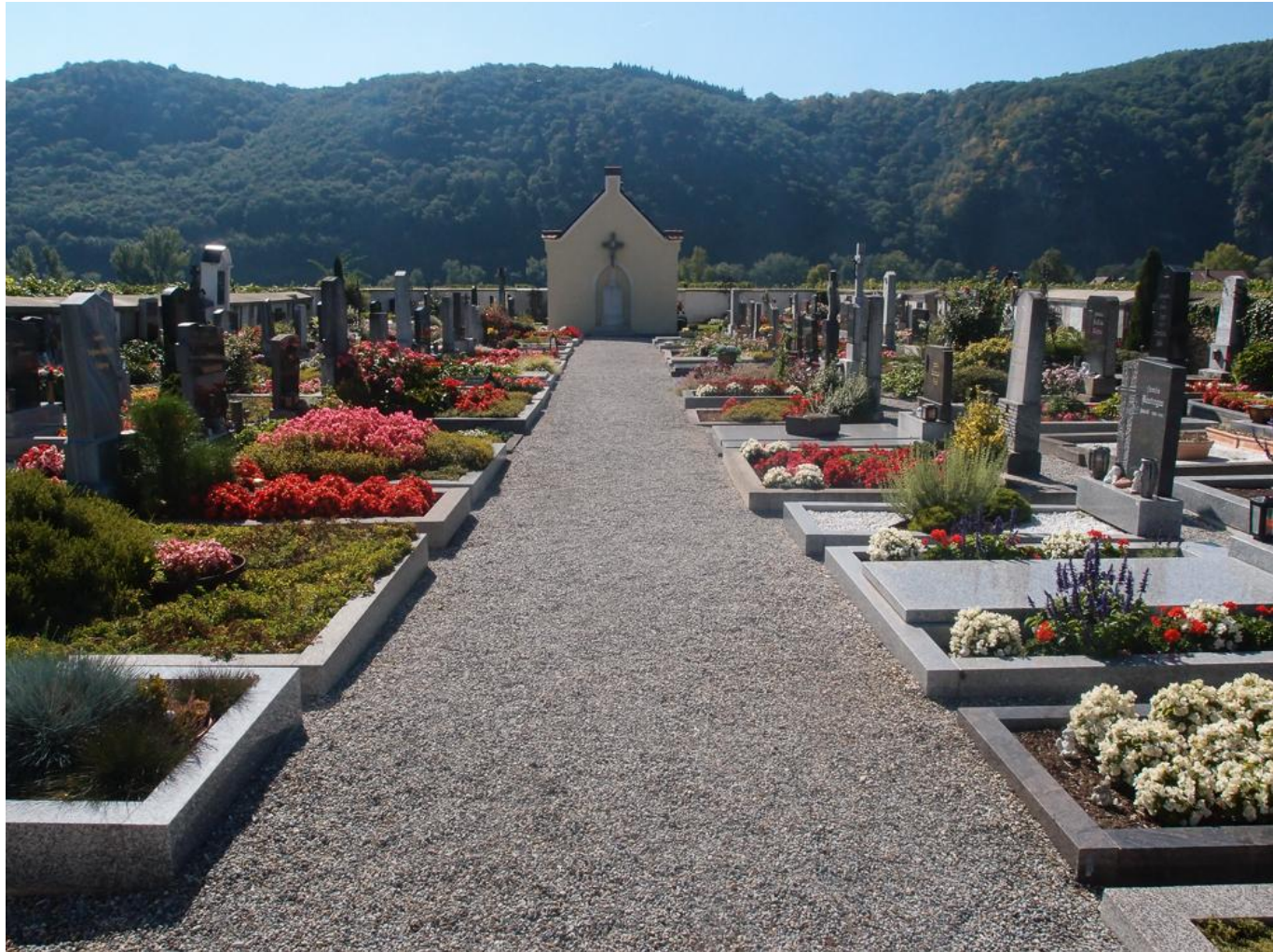


Back Lighting

Backlighting is when the light comes from behind the subject, toward the photographer. It can be a very engaging form of light in a photograph.

- Backlighting forms sort of a halo around objects, and causes translucent things to glow.
- One must be careful about the light shining directly on the lens – best to shade the lens with one hand, yourself or have someone else do it.









Spotlighting

Spotlighting occurs when direct light falls on just a portion of a scene, usually a relatively small portion. When it is side lighting also, the results can be quite dramatic.



Diffuse Light

Diffuse light comes from many points, so there are no shadows. This can help avoid photos with confusing contrast.

- Occurs outdoors under overcast skies, or in shade
- Occurs indoors from windows, as long as the subject is not in sun coming through the window
- Usually gives nice color saturation
- Photos are quieter, less dramatic than with sidelighting





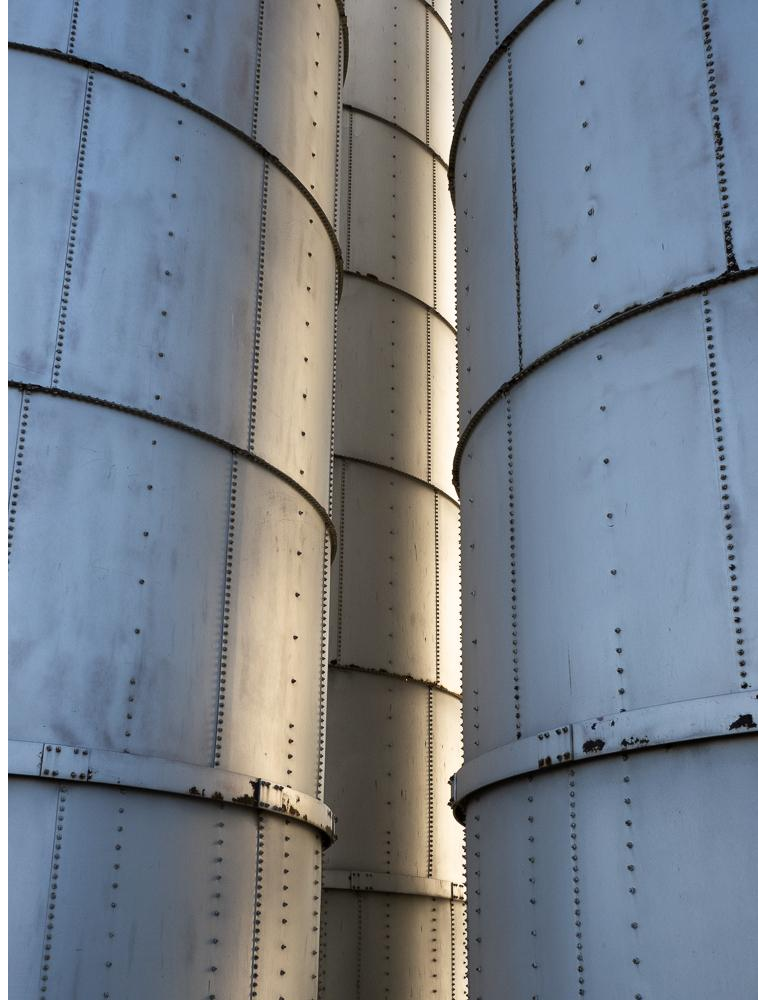
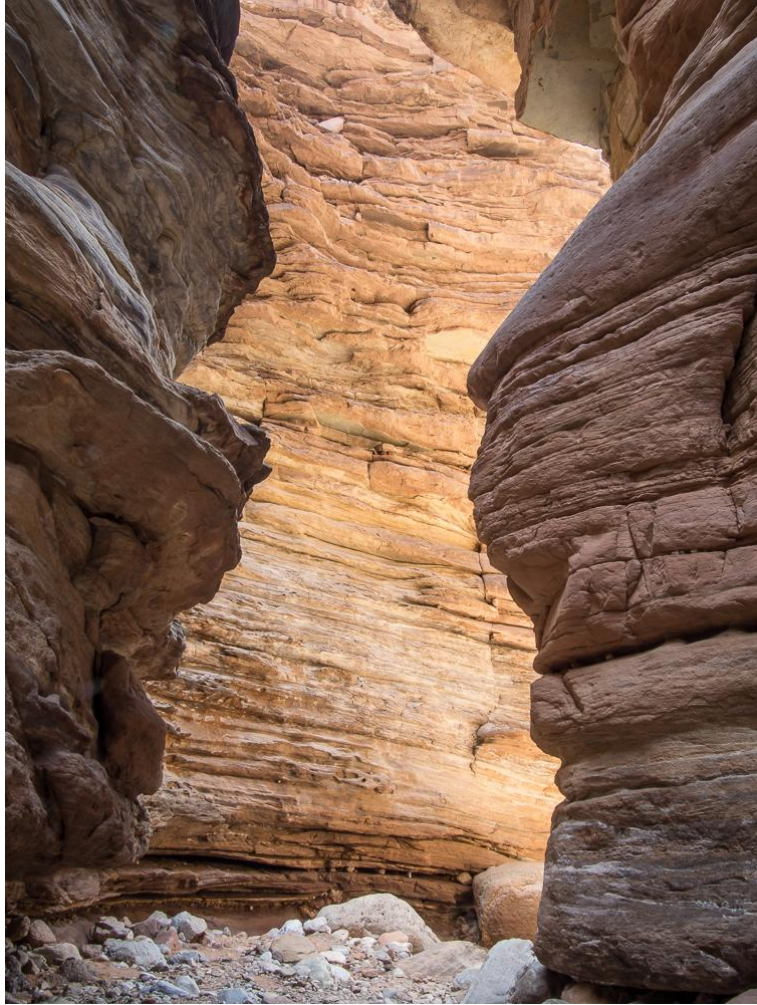




Reflected Light

Reflected light can be used to create engaging photographs. It occurs when a subject is lit from light reflected off of another surface.

- Often occurs in canyons, or in narrow streets or alleyways
- Sometimes occurs together with backlighting
- Can be found in other scenarios, too - if you learn to see it, you will start noticing it in many places.





Color in Photography

Jay Maisel on color:

“Color” is quite different from “colors.” In an image with many colors we find that all the colors compete with each other rather than interacting with each other. The result: colors.

When you are working with limited colors they have the capacity to interact. The result: color.

Some have said that if you take a great picture in color and take away the color, you’ll have a great black-and-white picture. But if you are shooting something about color and you take away the color, you’ll have nothing left.



Photographing With Color

- Look for complementary colors – red with green, blue with orange, purple with yellow
- Look for similar colors, together
- Look for very little color, or little color with a dash of brighter color

Complementary Colors

One of the most interesting effects of color comes when there are complementary colors adjacent to each other.



Complementary colors – blue and yellow



Complementary colors – red and green







Similar Colors

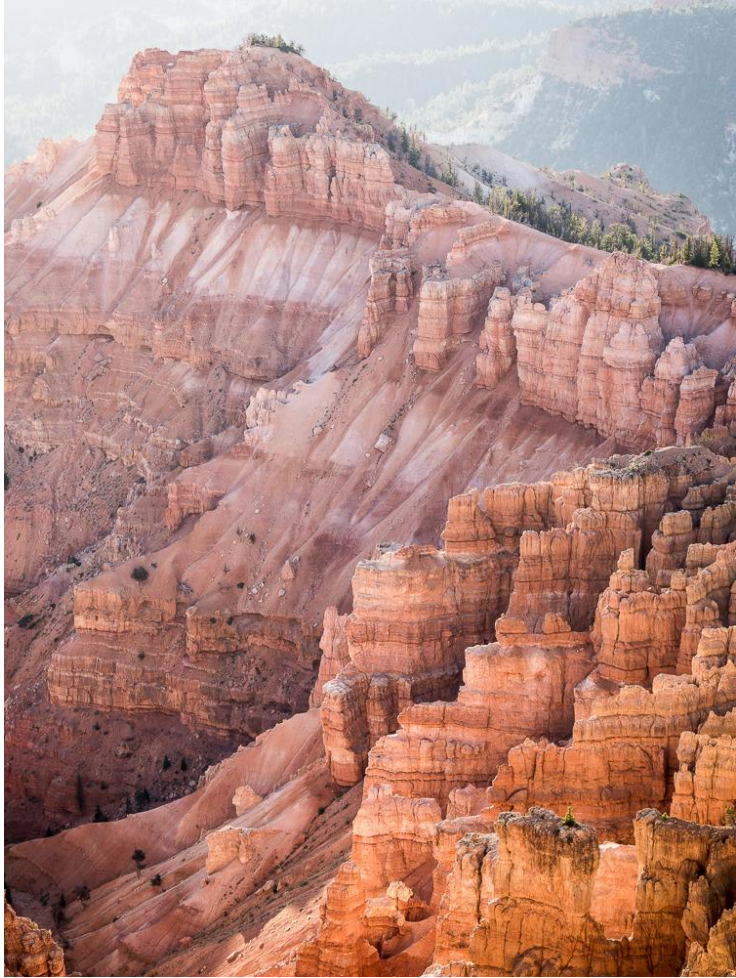
The opposite effect from complementary colors occurs when all the colors in a scene are closely related. This can be quite effective in photographs at times.



Almost one color!



Different shades of the same color





No Color Color

Some photographs have almost no color, but just enough to be appealing. In those cases, much of the allure is in the slight hint of color.







Color of Light

Direct sunlight is pure white, or colorless. But light often has color of its own, due to being filtered, reflected, or from a diffuse source that has color.



Light is often warmer early and late in the day. This effect occurs because dust particles in the atmosphere filter out blue light, leaving red and orange light.



These boulders are brown and gray, and the ice on them is white, but everything appears blue because they are in the shade, and the light falling on them comes from an overhead blue sky.



Better as Black and White

There are some photos with little color, or unappealing color, that are better as black-and-white photos.





