

FLUX ACADEMY · A SCHOOL FOR SEEING

MODULE 6 · LIGHT & BLACK-AND-WHITE

Seeing in Black & White

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LESSON 030



B&W Is Not Depiction — It's Vision

- Black and white is not a filter — it's a way of seeing
- You're not removing color; you're revealing what's underneath
- "Black and white is not a depiction of reality — it's what reality could be"



What You'll Walk Away With

- Understand why black and white changes the way you see
- Know what to look for before you raise the camera
- Build the mindset that makes monochrome inevitable



Color Was Hiding the Real Subject

- Color draws the eye to the wrong things
- Competing hues distract from light, form, and gesture
- Strip color and the real photograph appears



It Changes How You Live, Not Just How You Shoot

- Three years of black and white changed how Dante sees everyday life
- The shift is perceptual — it rewires how you walk, look, and feel
- Photography becomes a way of living, not a session you schedule



The Core Shift: External to Internal

- In color: photographing the external world
 - facts, places, things
- In black and white: photographing the internal — perception, emotion, intuition
- "I'm not photographing facts anymore — I'm photographing my soul"



What "Writing With Light" Actually Means

- The word photography comes from Greek: phos (light) + graphé (writing)
- Black and white returns you to that literal origin
- You're writing with light — shadow is just the page



What to Actually Look For

- Contrast — highlights and shadows, not color
- Patterns, textures, reflections, negative space
- Gesture and form — the human element that elevates the frame



The Chiaroscuro Approach

- Expose for the highlights — crush the shadows
- Inspired by Caravaggio's chiaroscuro — deep dark, bold light
- "Kyoto Scuro" — extreme play of light and darkness as a guiding vision



The Third Element Completes the Frame

- You have a strong subject and beautiful light — but something's missing
- The missing ingredient is a gesture — a small human motion
- Third element completes the frame — subject + light + gesture



Forcing Luck Through Repetition

- Return to the same spot again and again, at the same hour
- Study the patterns: where movement happens, how the light beams land
- Repetition makes a rare alignment inevitable



Shoot the Periphery, Not the Main Event

- At any big event, the main action is rarely the picture
- Watch the edges — the reactions, the small private moments
- Gestures can echo each other across the frame; intuition catches it



Abstraction Between Fact and Dream

- Black and white works in the space between documentation and abstraction
- A photograph feels like a fact — it's really a fragment, a question
- "Life becomes a dream when you raise the camera and look more closely"



Cloudy Days, Harsh Light — All of It Works

- Black and white doesn't depend on golden hour
- Overcast sky = nature's diffuser; rain and texture become expressive tools
- "No matter where I am, what time of day it is — there's always something to uplift"



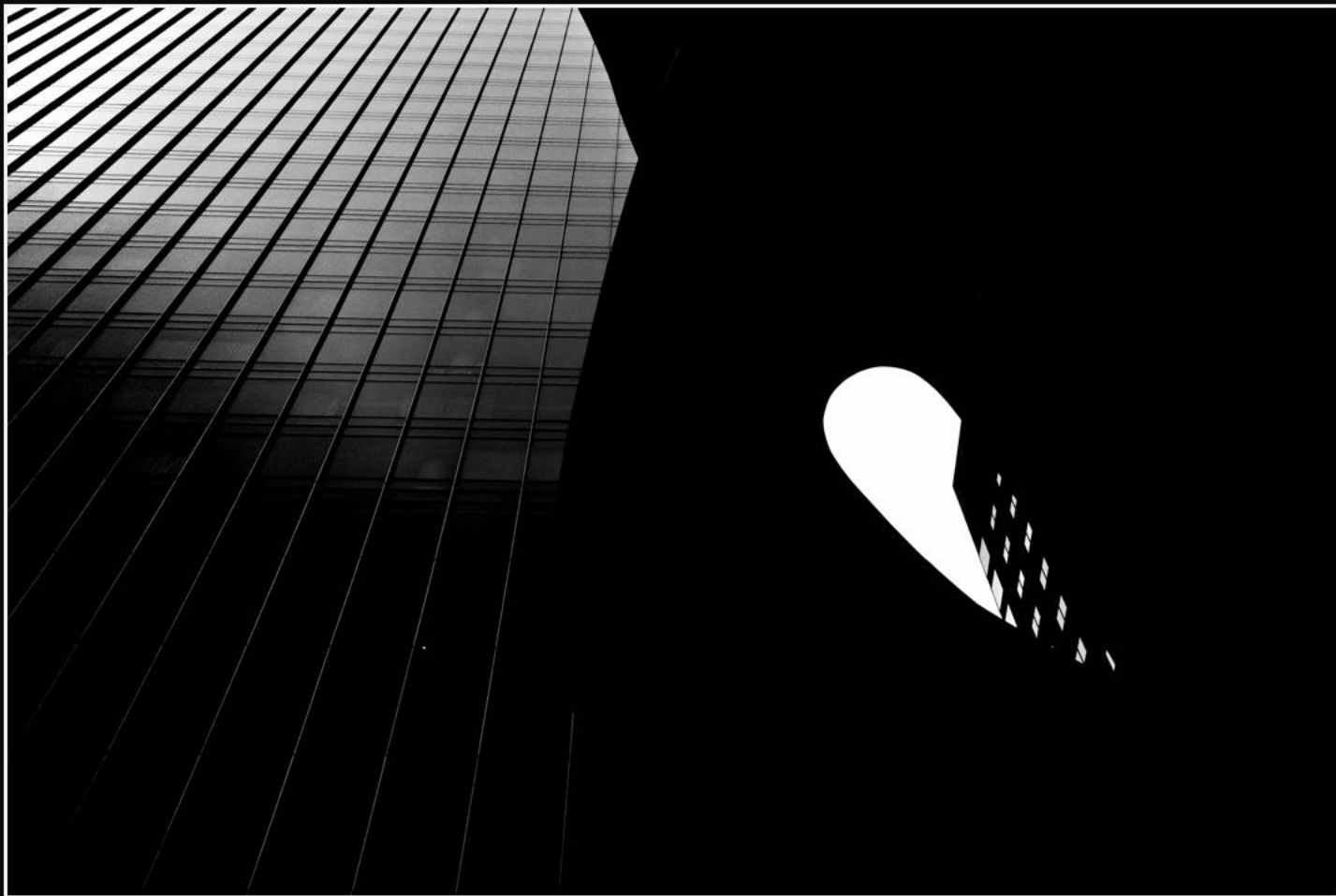
The Constraint That Creates Freedom

- One camera, one lens, one tonal vision = creative constraint
- Constraint forces focus; focus breeds authentic expression
- Removing color removes perfectionism — play and spontaneity rush in



You Cannot Make the Same Photograph Twice

- Light is always shifting — every return to the same street is a blank slate
- Inspired by Heraclitus: "You cannot step in the same river twice"
- This keeps curiosity alive — same location, infinite new possibilities



Seeing in B&W Before You Shoot

- Train yourself to read scenes in tones, not colors
- Ask: where is the light? Where are the shadows? What's the contrast?
- Bake black and white into the camera so the LCD shows you a monochrome world



Bake It In and Walk

- Set high-contrast black and white as your in-camera profile today
- Shoot JPEG — what the camera sees is what you get
- Walk for one hour. Respond. Don't control.



Hunt the Three Elements

- In every scene, identify: (1) subject, (2) quality of light, (3) a gesture or third element
- Wait for the third element before pressing the shutter
- Subject + light + gesture = the complete frame



Return to the Same Spot

- Pick one location — return daily for one week
- Study the light at different hours, different weather, different seasons
- You force luck through repetition, discipline, and observation



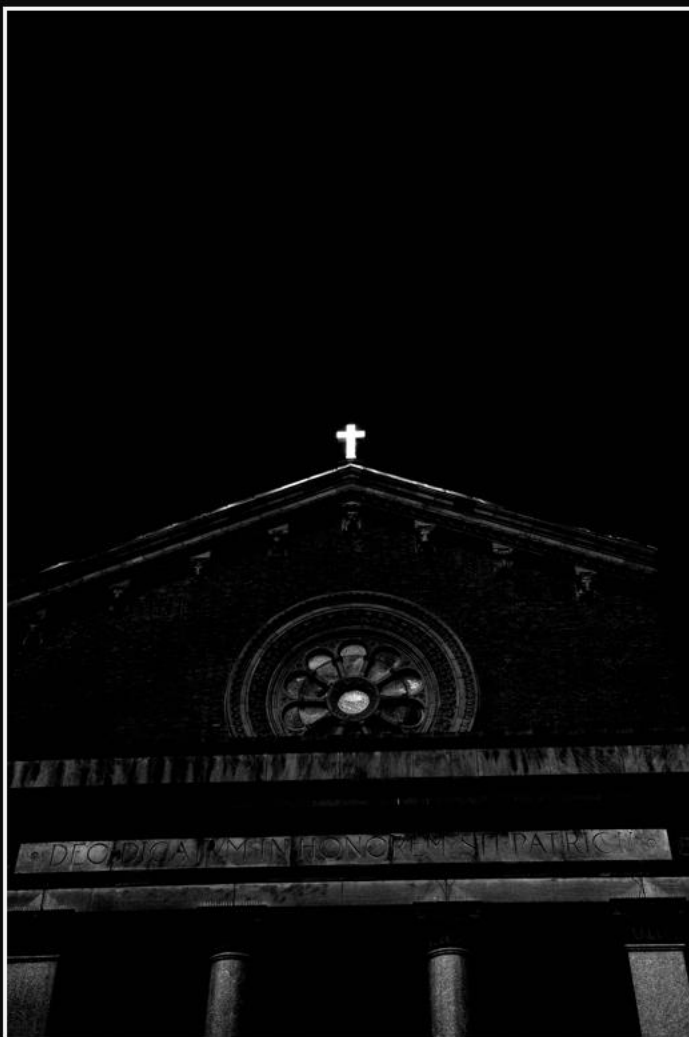
Still Thinking in Color

- Shooting subjects that only work because of color — they collapse in monochrome
- Mistake: not previewing in B&W — surprises you in post
- Fix: bake the profile in so you see monochrome live while shooting



Chasing Drama Without Substance

- High contrast alone does not make a meaningful photograph
- Mistake: crushing shadows for drama without a real subject or gesture
- Great B&W needs both tonal drama and human truth inside the frame



Building on What Came Before

- Lesson 029 established the principles of simplifying the frame and removing distractions
- Seeing in B&W is the natural extension: remove the biggest distraction of all — color
- The perceptual shift in this lesson operationalizes everything Lesson 029 set up



See the Light. Trust the Shadow.

- Black and white is not an aesthetic — it's a perceptual practice
- Strip color, find light — see what reality could be
- See the light. Trust the shadow. Walk.