

FLUX ACADEMY · A SCHOOL FOR SEEING

MODULE 6 · LIGHT & BLACK-AND-WHITE

# Light-Led Composition

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LESSON 033



## Light Leads, You Follow

- Light doesn't just illuminate — it composes
- The frame begins with light, not with subjects
- Follow the light; the photograph finds itself



## What You'll Walk Away With

- Understand light as the primary compositional force
- Learn to position your body in relation to light, not subjects
- Walk away with a repeatable light-first approach for any city, any time



## Most Photographers Miss the Frame Before the Moment

- Most photographers wait for action — and miss the light already there
- Great light is temporary; a great subject can appear inside it
- Reordering your priorities changes what you see



## Light Defines How You See and Compose

- Light gives shape and form to surfaces, people, and places
- Without light reading, composition is guesswork
- Visual understanding of light strengthens every frame you ever make



## The Three-Element Puzzle

- First element: a beam of light on a foreground object
- Second element: a silhouette anchoring the mid-ground
- Third element: a face stepping into light, adding emotional impact



## Find a Choke Point and Stand Still

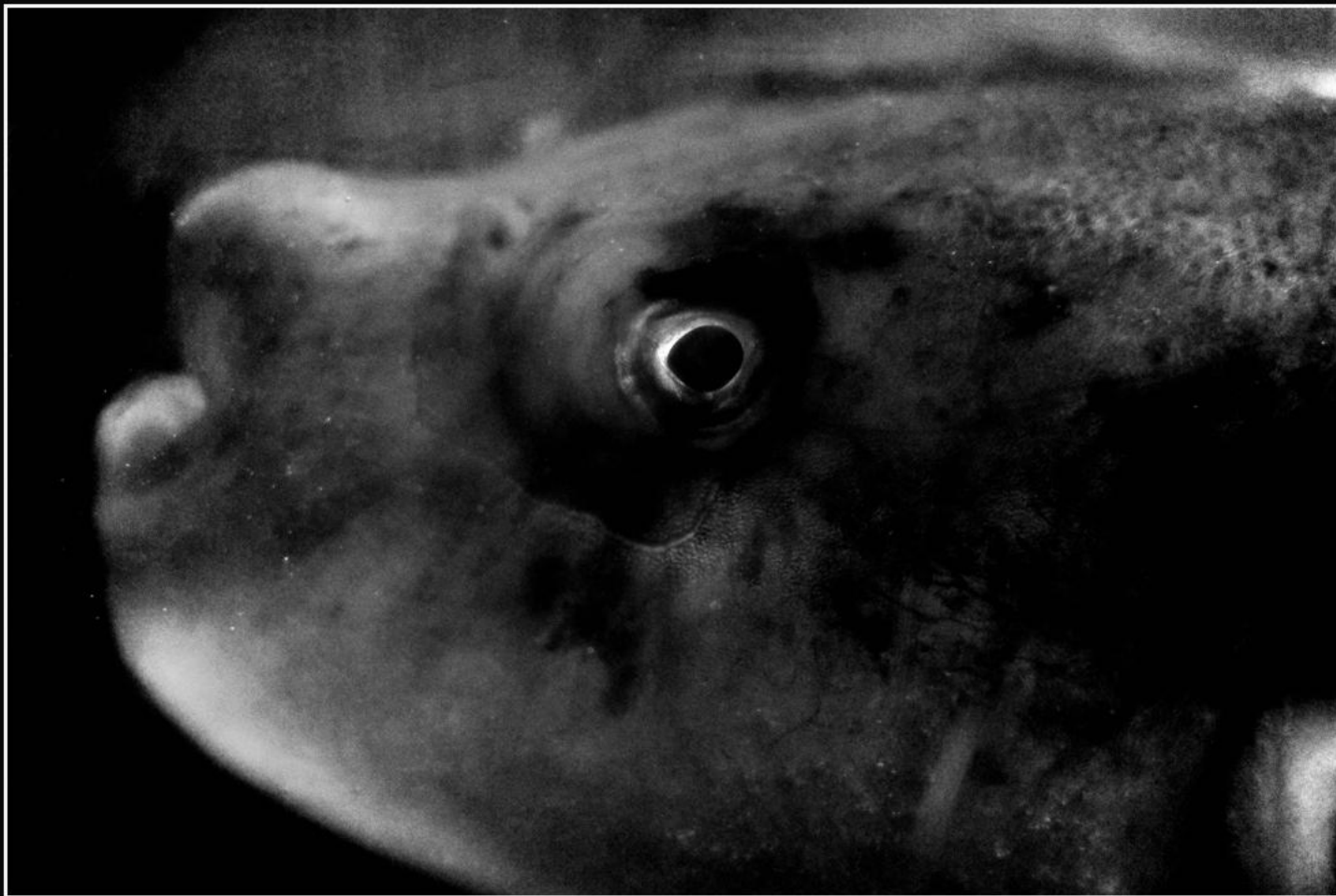
- A choke point concentrates people through the light
- Stand still; let the world move through your frame
- Snap focus, one meter — wait for the fish to swim in



## You Only Control Three Things

- Where you stand
- When you click
- Where the subject is in relation to you





## Let Light Reveal What You Can't Plan

- The camera sees what the eye misses
- Underexpose; let shadows crush; let light speak alone
- Mystery and drama come from what's not shown



## Layering Light for Depth

- Foreground in shadow, mid-ground lit, background bright
- Layering adds depth and energy — the image feels alive
- Layers come from positioning, not complexity



## High-Key vs. Low-Key Light

- High-key: bright, vibrant, evokes joy and innocence
- Low-key: deep shadows, cinematic feel, adds mystery and depth
- Both are valid — know which mood the light is already giving you



## Expose for the Highlights, Crush the Shadows

- Expose for highlights — let shadows go to black
- Underexpose by one stop to crush unnecessary detail
- Isolation through shadow is a compositional choice



## Light Guides the Viewer's Eye

- Bright areas attract attention first
- Shadows create negative space, emphasizing the subject
- High contrast leads the eye through the scene in one clean path



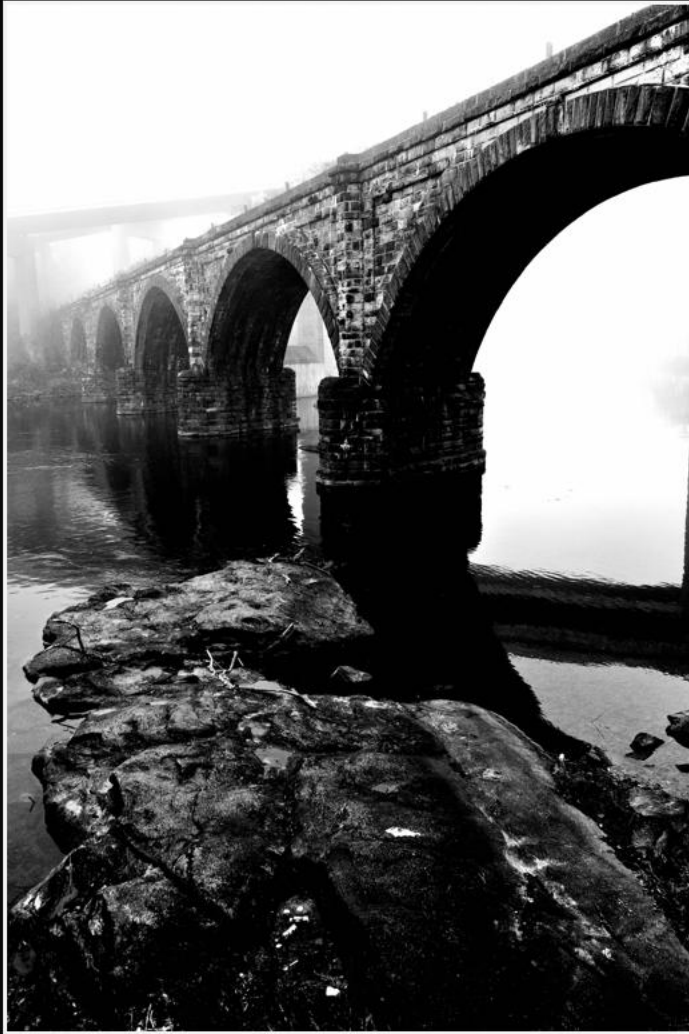
## The Sun as a Theatre Spotlight

- Hard midday sun can spotlight the mid-ground while the foreground stays shadowed
- Simple light-play creates visual and emotional tension
- No action needed — light alone generates the drama



## Set Up on the Light, Not the Subject

- Let light on a wall or surface be what draws you, not a person
- Build on that light first; wait for someone to enter naturally
- Light creates the narrative before the person arrives



## A Reflection Is Already a Composition

- A reflection of light in glass, water, or a discarded mirror can be the whole frame
- Wait with the camera ready; let a subject enter the reflection
- Light creates the composition; the subject seals the story





## Reflections Amplify and Redirect

- Light bounces off glass, metal, water, windows
- Reflections create complex, layered compositions
- Use them to redirect and amplify light you've already found



## The Landmark Exercise

- Pick one landmark in your city
- Photograph it at different times of day across multiple sessions
- See how light transforms the same subject into something new each time



## The Choke-Point Stand

- Find a choke point in your city with strong directional light
- Lock snap focus, underexpose one stop, hold your position
- Shoot for 30 minutes without moving — just let people swim through



## Chasing Subjects Instead of Light

- Chasing subjects produces flat, confused frames
- Without a light anchor, compositions have no structure
- Find the light first — subjects are secondary



## Fighting the Light You're Given

- Harsh midday light isn't bad — it's a different tool
- Overcast isn't boring — it's soft and layered
- Learn each quality of light rather than waiting for "perfect" conditions



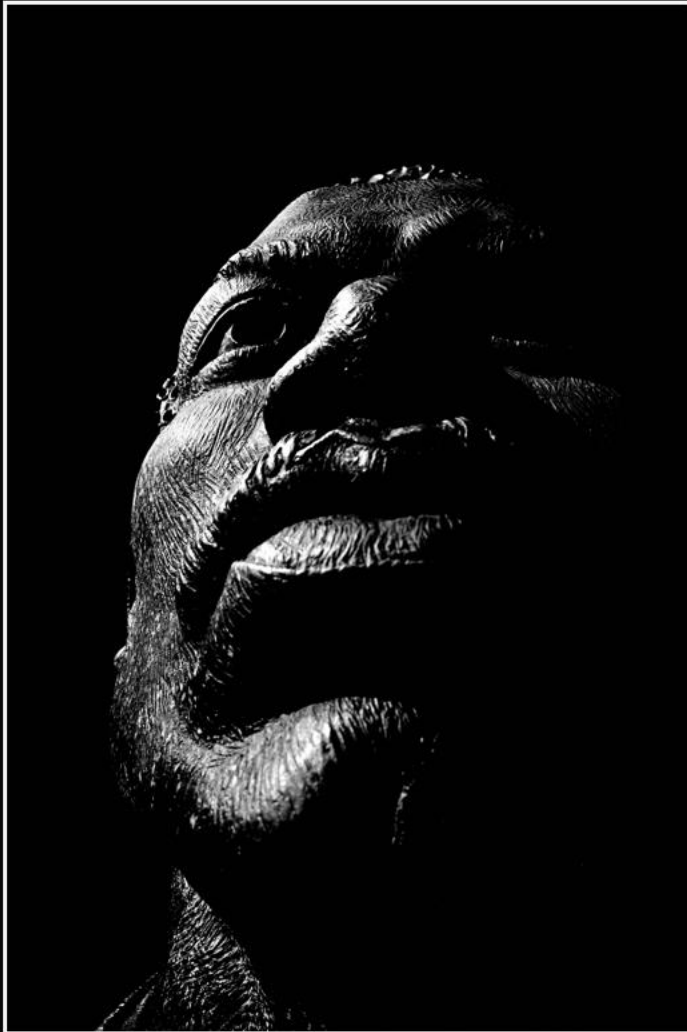
## Building on Direction and Position

- Lesson 032 established where and how to position within a scene
- This lesson takes that positioning and ties it directly to light
- Now you're not just placing yourself — you're placing yourself in the light



## What Happens When You Add a Subject

- Lesson 034 brings the human element inside the light-led frame
- Gesture, expression, and emotion layer on top of the light structure
- The frame is already built — the subject becomes the final piece of the puzzle



## Find the Light, Build the Frame, Let Life Walk In

- Light is the first compositional decision — always
- Position yourself in relation to light, not subjects
- Find the light. Build the frame. Let life walk in.