

## Capturing Motion in Time: Part 1 of a 5 Part Series

By Holly Chadwick, Photographer

Photographic techniques can imply a sense of motion in time, but do they really capture it or is it forced? Life around us is always moving, shifting moment to moment, even if it's only subtle as leaves fluttering. The camera continues to evolve as a versatile tool to capture this motion in time. Time-lapse photography, for example, has made gorgeous videos possible with compressed time. Who hasn't seen a commercial using this technique? Keeping the shutter open can imply a subject in motion in a still photograph, which is popular in night photography. Pan the camera while snapping photos to get a lens blur effect to relay motion, popular in street photography and sports.

### BASIC MOVEMENT

The developing techniques and the gadgets that support timing of camera are dynamic, fun to play with and help achieve a certain effect. Before using the increasing number of tools cameras offer, we might best begin by considering two basics when portraying movement in our photography: Why we are taking a photo of a subject in a particular moment in the first place? And, how can we utilize our timing skills in our shots?

### MAKING IT REAL

If we look at motion as energy to capture, an energy that defines the character of the subject, it's important to translate the energy in the final photograph. This is our "why" to take a photograph. Capturing that energy is more about timing, specifically, when to click the shutter to take the photograph than the camera's timing. In this article I discuss capturing motion in time to create a sense of energy with the framing of the composition itself.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EXAMPLES

It's undeniable that "BridalVeil Fall" (as seen here: [https://shop.anseladams.com/bridalveil\\_fall\\_p/5010101.htm](https://shop.anseladams.com/bridalveil_fall_p/5010101.htm)) leaves a sense of grandeur and cosmic energy captured in the still serenity of this Ansel Adams photograph. And it's undeniable that "Inside Religion: St. Hyacinth's Basilica" (as featured in Lenswork #61) leaves a sense of peace with cosmic energy in this Robert Swiderski photograph. But what are the commonalities between these very different photographs that makes them capture this energy compositionally?

"BridalVeil Fall" has compositional directional cues for the eye. We can follow the water fall down its natural progression and then slowly make our way back up through the trees to follow the waterfall down again. It's a steady down and meandering up. The steady magnificent energy of the falls is communicated of the subject by Adam's choice of composition. The photograph wouldn't have the same energy if he had cropped the trees. It would be one magnificent eye swoop down the falls and left unsettled without the trees.

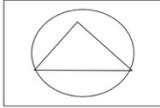
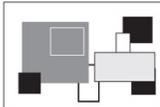
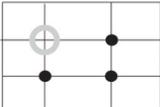
“Inside Religion” is a very different photograph with strong verticals and a glowing focal point at the bottom of a nun’s hands in prayer. It relays a similar sense of energy yet is compositionally very different. As the eye goes across the rhythm of the pews and settles on the hands in prayer, it portrays a restful energy despite the vertical interruptions. “Inside Religion” communicates a moment of solace in a chaotic world.

Both photographs direct the eye to take in the moment of the photograph while relaying the energy of the subject.

## 12 COMPOSITIONS

One way to capture certain feelings of energy is to review compositions that just work and the energy they imply. Below is a compositional chart with 12 common compositions that good photographs tend to have with my energy notes. Use this as a guide when thinking of the energy a certain composition may exhude.

### 12 Compositions for Photography

| DIRECTION THE EYE TRAVELS:  | ENERGY NOTES:             | DIRECTION THE EYE TRAVELS:  | ENERGY NOTES:           |
|---|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|    | balanced and restful      |    | continuous, one speed   |
| 1. Cantilever   |                           | 7. Horizontal   |                         |
|  | Flowing                   |  | restful, focusing       |
| 2. Constellation  |                           | 8. Large Center/Portrait  |                         |
|  | Interrupted, dynamic      |  | dynamic, punctuated     |
| 3. Cruciform  |                           | 9. Meander  |                         |
|  | Dynamic, punctuated       |  | variety of motion       |
| 4. Curves   |                           | 10. Overlapping Frame   |                         |
|  | Flowing, dynamic          |  | dynamic tension         |
| 5. Diagonal   |                           | 11. Tension   |                         |
|  | stable, restful, focusing |  | continuous, multi speed |
| 6. Golden Section   |                           | 12. Vertical  |                         |

MOTION MOMENT + FRAME + COMPOSITIONAL CADENCE = ENERGY

Now after reviewing basic composition, I think it comes down to these four things to keep in mind when taking a photograph. These are the things to ask giving us our “how” to take a photograph.

1. What exact moment should be captured of the subject? This applies if the subject is in motion or not.
2. What should be chosen to be kept in the frame? What should be kept out of frame?
3. Are there any compositional cues to be included that lead the viewers eye to feel the energy of the subject?
4. Can this flow of energy be interrupted with a compositional technique that give a sense of cadence, slow or fast, to the energy of the subject?

I will be going into each of these four questions along with example photos in the following parts of this series. Look for part two next week. In the meantime, I suggest playing with the compositional basics in photography and studying favorite photographs and asking what kind of energy they exude.