Black & White Photography

PHOTO 11 & 12

"I can get a far greater sense of 'color' through a well-planned and executed black and white image than I have ever achieved with color photography."

- *Ansel Adams*

Today most photos are captured and reproduced using colour.

As great as it can be to take photos that are 'True to Eye', in some cases colour can be a distraction within your photos.

Have you ever you ever seen a photo with too many colours? Or where one colour is completely out of place?

The art of Black & White photography is to boil down an image to its essence – the true feeling, emotion, expression, idea of the scene.

Black & White vs. Monochromatic

Previously, we looked at Monochromatic as a colour scheme to help compose photos. But you might be asking, 'isn't Monochromatic the same as Black & White?'

Short Answer: Yes, but not quite.

Long Answer: Monochromatic refers to the use use of 1 colour, but with changes in shade (add black), tint (add white), and tone (add grey). You can create the look of Black & White using a colour overlay, but it's not the same as have true Black & White values.

Black & White

Monochromatic

Colour or Black & White?

So, which do you choose to take photos in – Colour or Black & White?

Luckily, you don't have to make that decision before shooting. Post-Production software provides a lot of flexibility to adjust colour photos into workable black & white images.

Adding specific colour filters can help emphasize features in your photos. There are even 'catch all' tools that do a handful of adjustments all at once.

Original

Blue Filter

Green Filter

No Colour

Red Filter

The Elements of Black & White Photography

Not all photos are created equal – you can't just choose any colour photo and make it black & white.

To emphasize the impact (the essence) of a black & photo, photographer utilize several elements when planning their images.

These elements are like composition rules we have been covering except they are more centered towards highlighting common traits in black & white images.
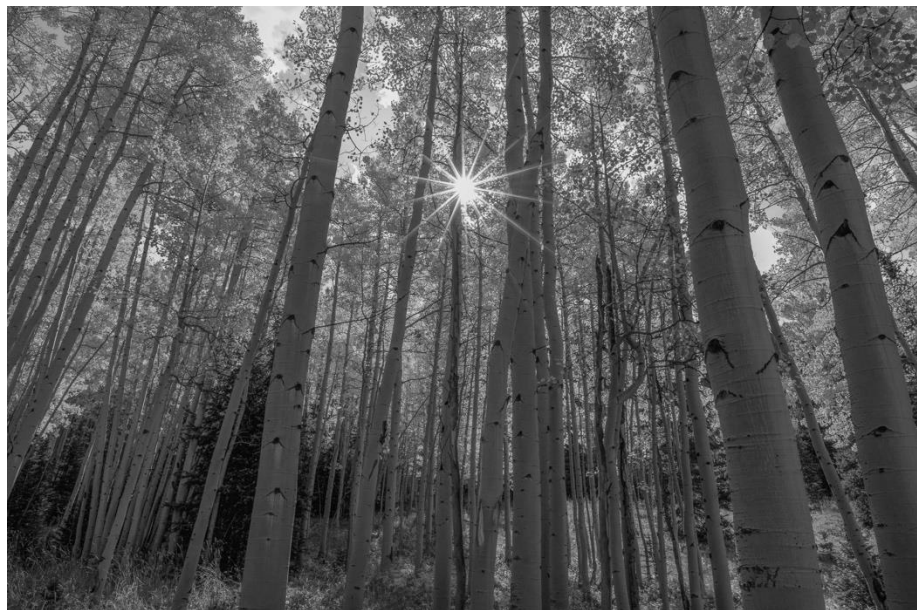
Shadow

Contrast

Tone

Shape

Composition

Emotion