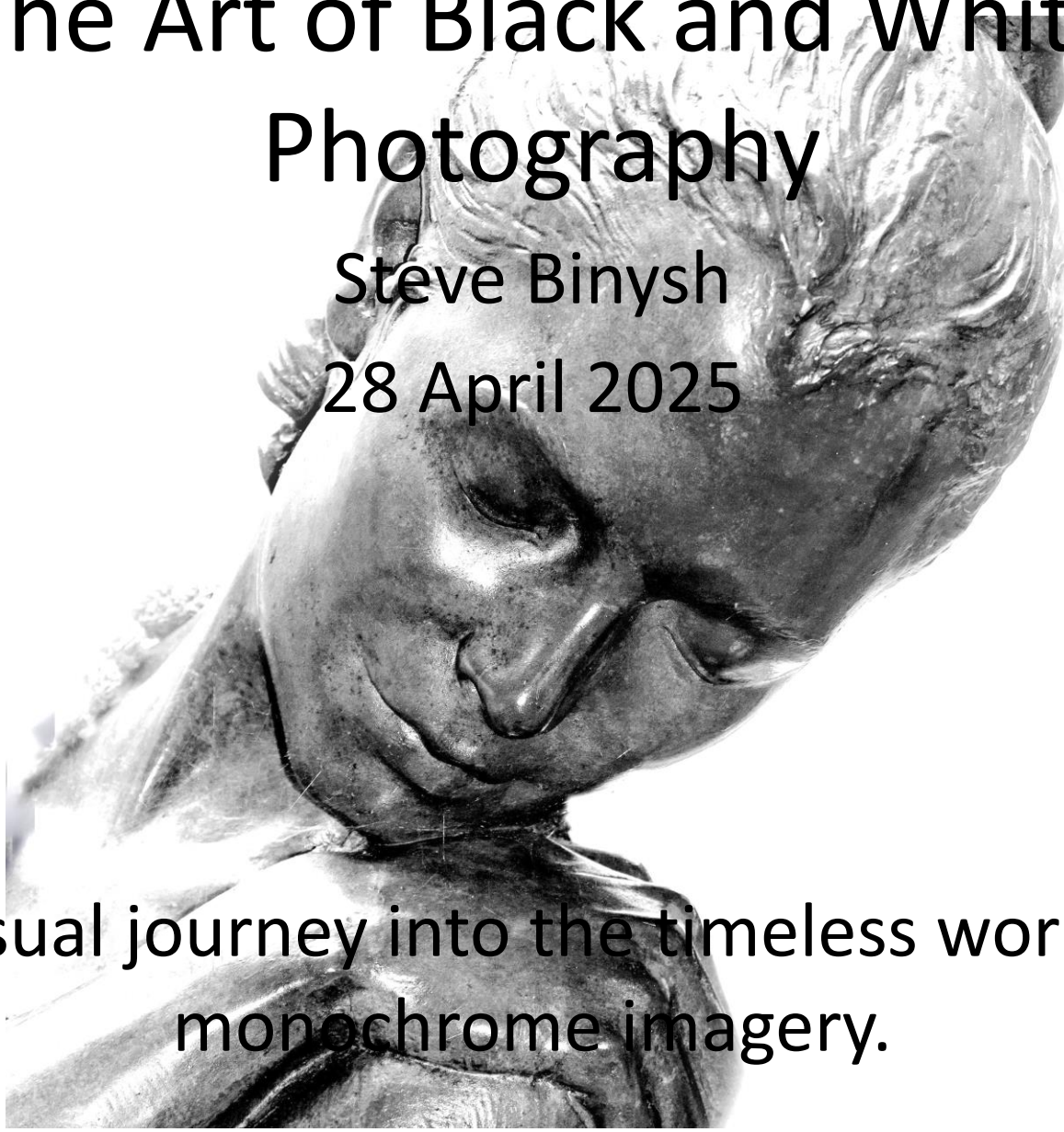


The Art of Black and White Photography

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28 April 2025

A visual journey into the timeless world of
monochrome imagery.



Why Black and White Photography?

- Timeless and classic aesthetic
- Focuses on emotion and mood
- Eliminates distractions of colour
- Highlights light, shadow, texture, and form

Difference with Colour Photography

Colour is

- More 'realistic'
- More relatable
- Colours relate emotion
- Story telling clues
- Greater separation and depth
- Vibrancy and aesthetics

Key Differences

Colour → Emotion through hues - **different shades and tones of colour** can evoke or express specific emotions, moods, or feelings.



Key Differences

- Colour: Emotion through hues



When to Use B&W Over Colour

- Dramatic lighting or high contrast scenes
- To simplify a busy composition
- Emphasizing mood or emotion
- When colour detracts from the message

A Brief History

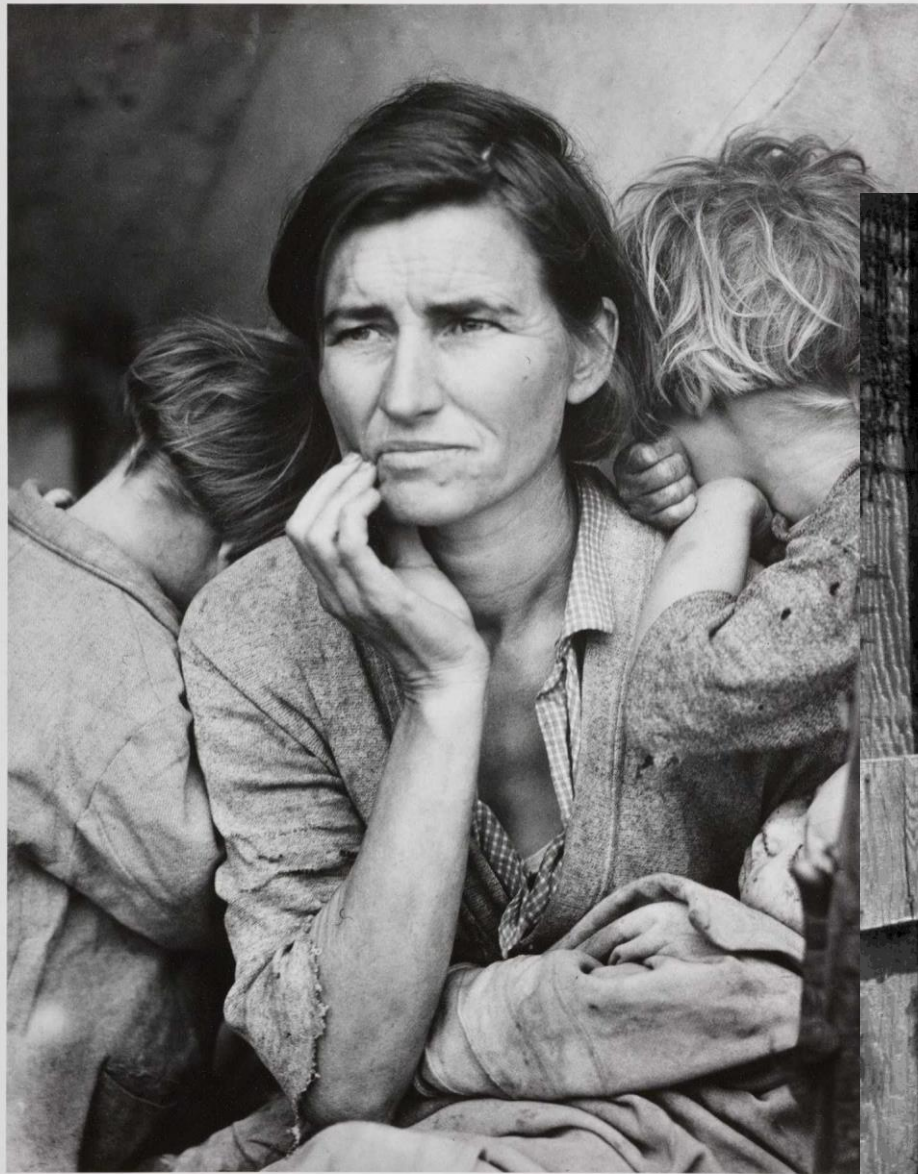
Early photography was black and white by necessity

Iconic works by Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange

Ansel Adams 1902 - 1984



Dorothea Lange 1895 - 1965



A Brief History

- Continued popularity in fine art and street photography

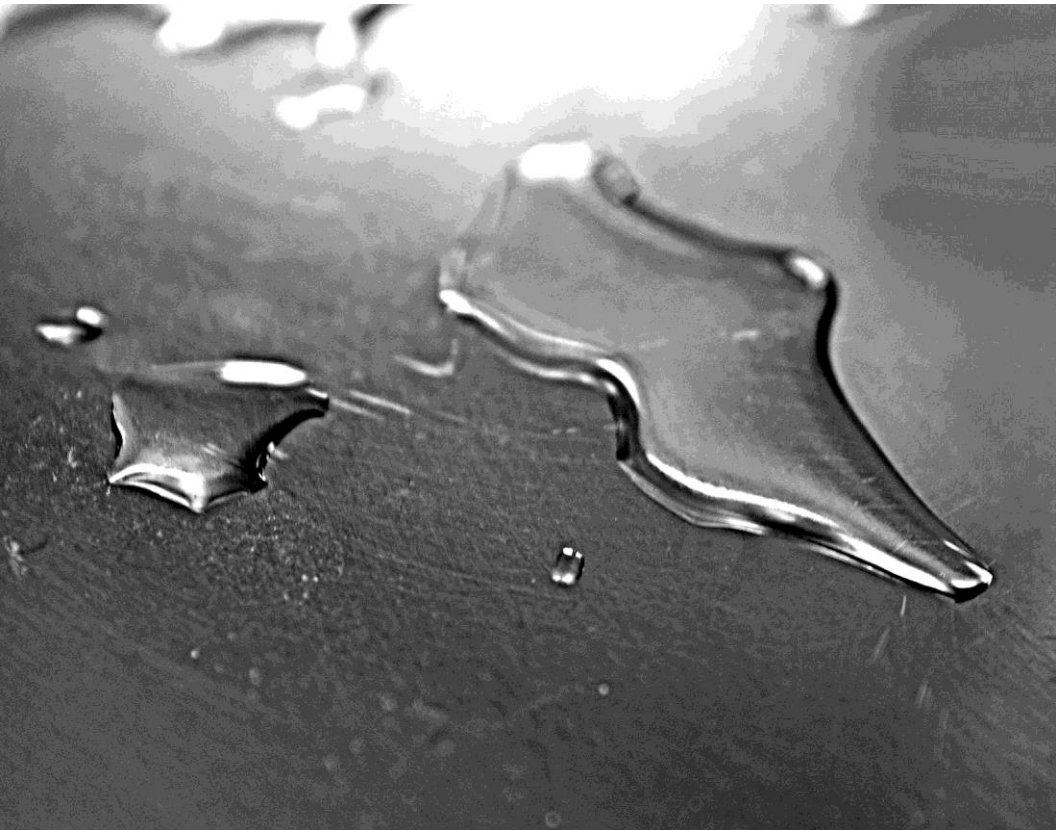


What is Black and White Photography?

- Imagery that uses shades of grey from white to black
- Emphasizes tone, contrast, shape, and composition
- Also known as monochrome photography – but is not quite the same

Monochrome vs. Black and White

- Black and white = greyscale (true absence of colour)
- Monochrome = single hue (e.g. sepia)
- Both focus on tonality and mood



‘Seeing’ in Black and White

Learn to visualise images as tones rather than colours

- Think about contrast, shadows, and highlights

Try squinting at a photo or still life

Break it into just 3 tones:

- Light
- Midtone
- Dark

Create a flat-shape version of the image with only those 3 values.

‘Seeing’ in Black and White

Use camera settings or post-processing tools
to visualize the image

- Digital Cameras: select monochrome style
- Select RAW setting

Camera Settings



Filters

Experiment with filters

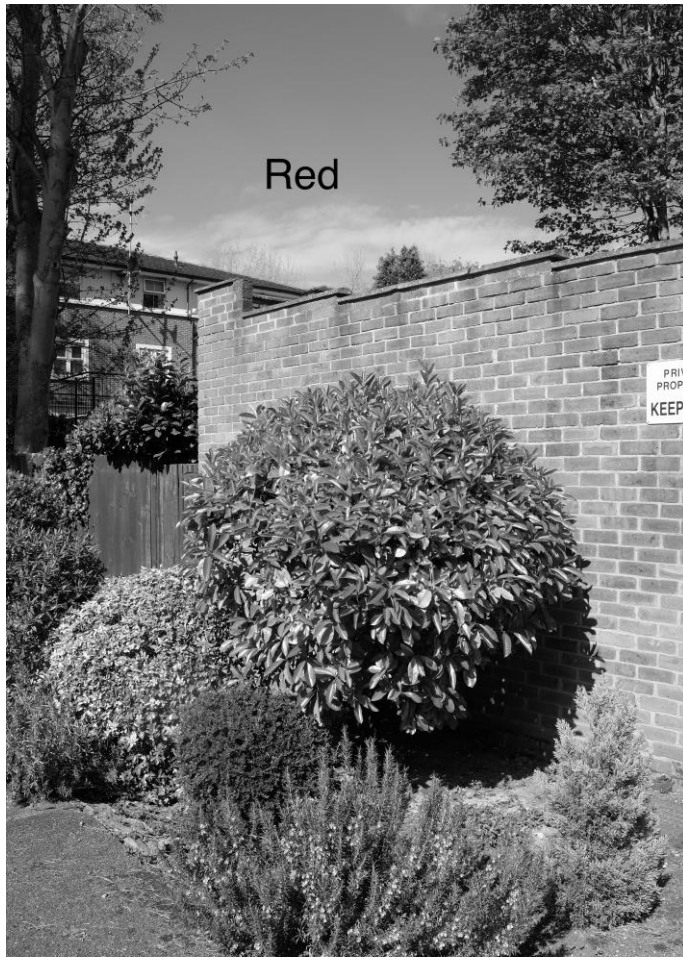
- Green: lightens leaves, red darker
- Red: darkens sky, lightens red
- Yellow: darkens leaves
- Polarising filters for sky



Filters

Green: lightens leaves, red darker

Red: darker sky, large bush lighter



Filters

Green: darkens red bush & brick wall

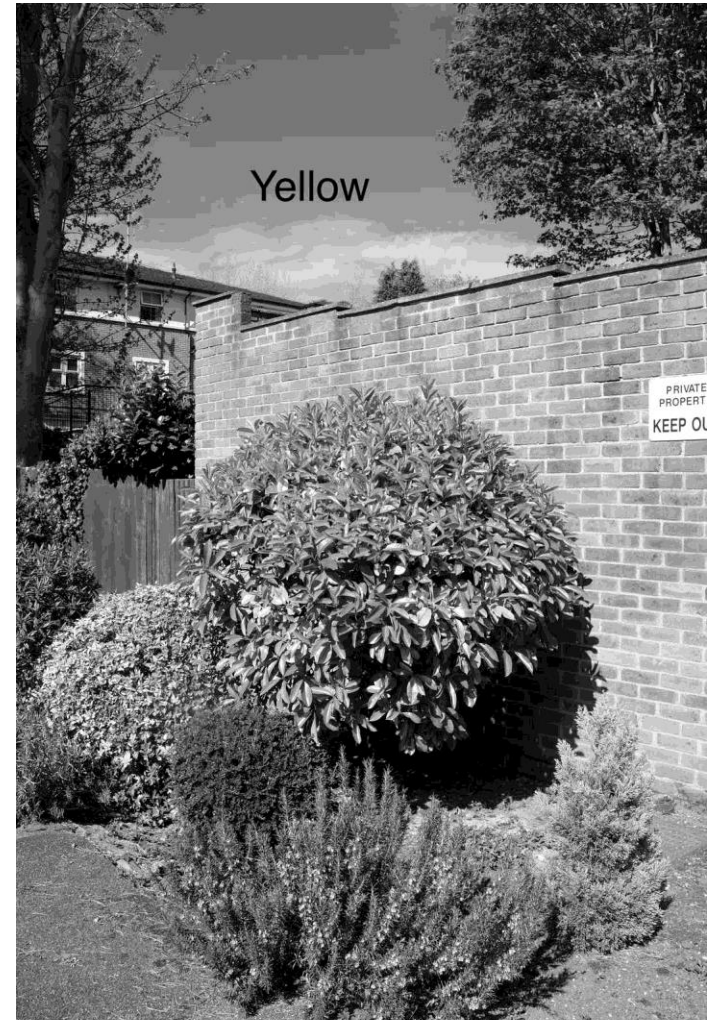
Yellow: darkens sky



Filters

Yellow: darkens leaves, darker sky

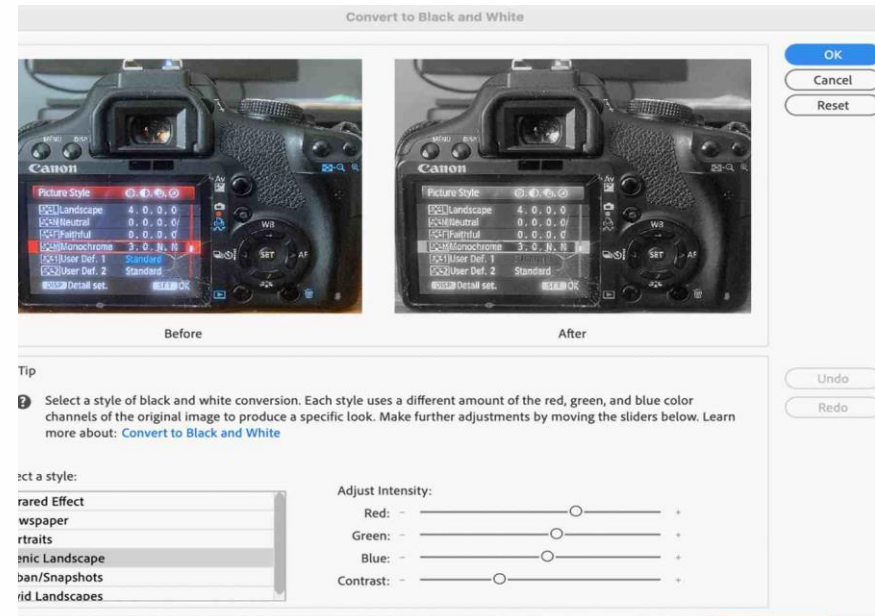
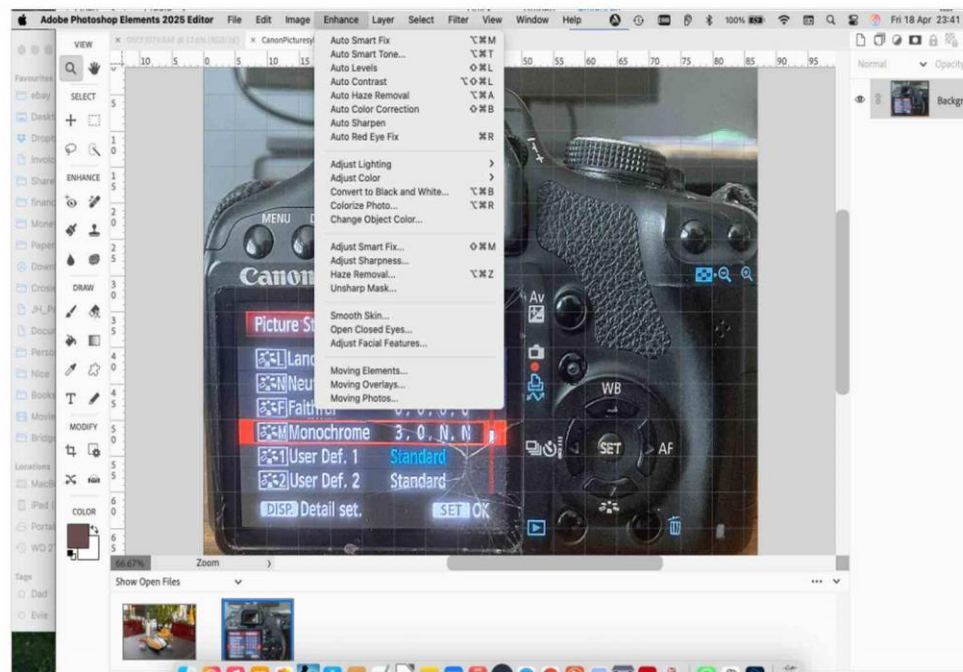
Red: darker bricks



Convert Colour to B&W in Post

- Avoid one-click greyscale—adjust channels for tone control

Don't just go straight to B&W



Converting to Black and White

Smartphones: select black & white live filters

- iPhone: Swipe to Photo > Tap filter icon
(3 overlapping circles)
> Choose Mono, Silvertone, or Noir.
- On Android (varies by brand):
Look under filters or photo modes and choose
black & white.

Use of B&W

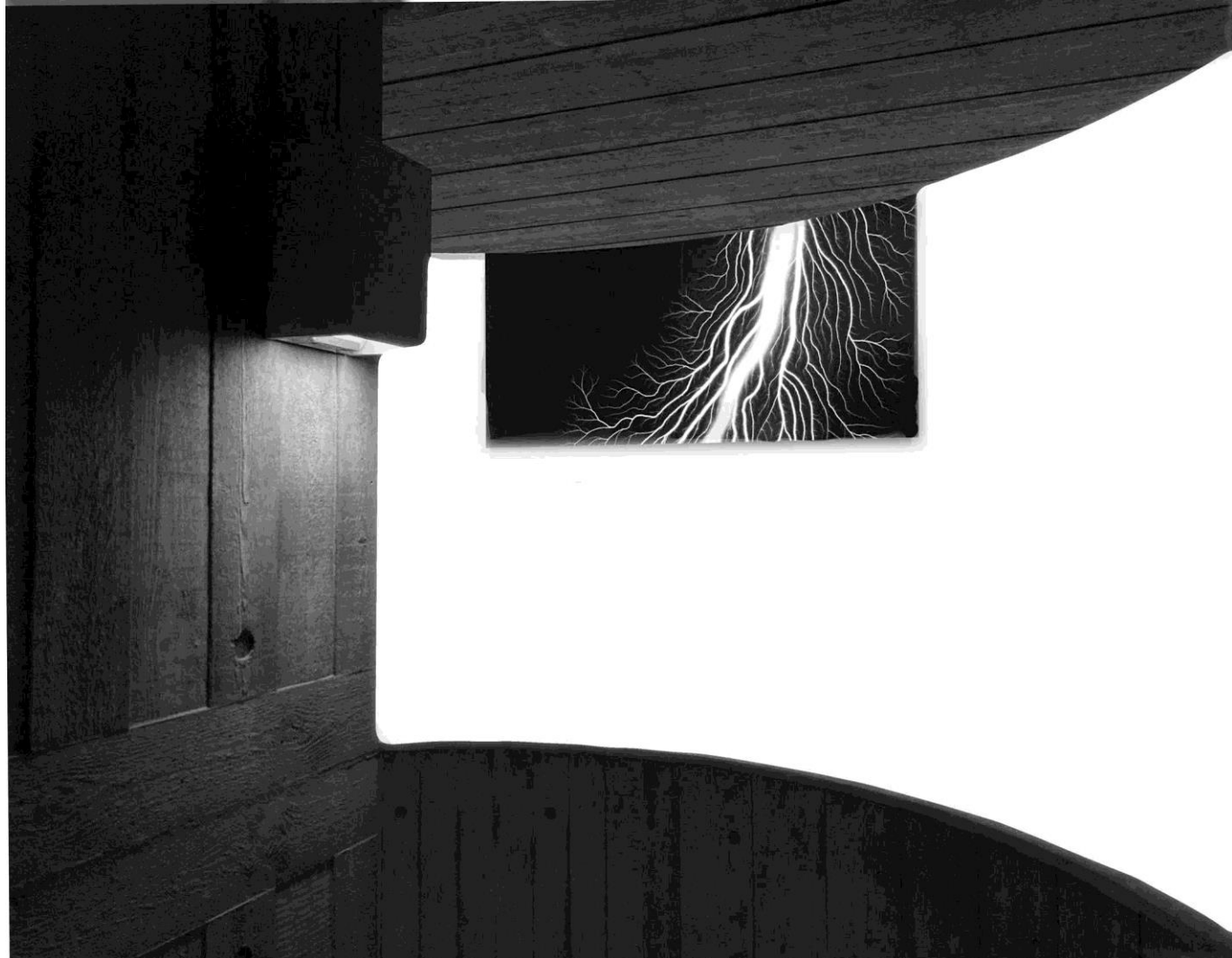
- Emotion through light, shape, and tone



<https://cdn.contrastly.com/wp-content/uploads/capturing-emotions-6.jpg>

Use of B&W

Emphasis on form and structure



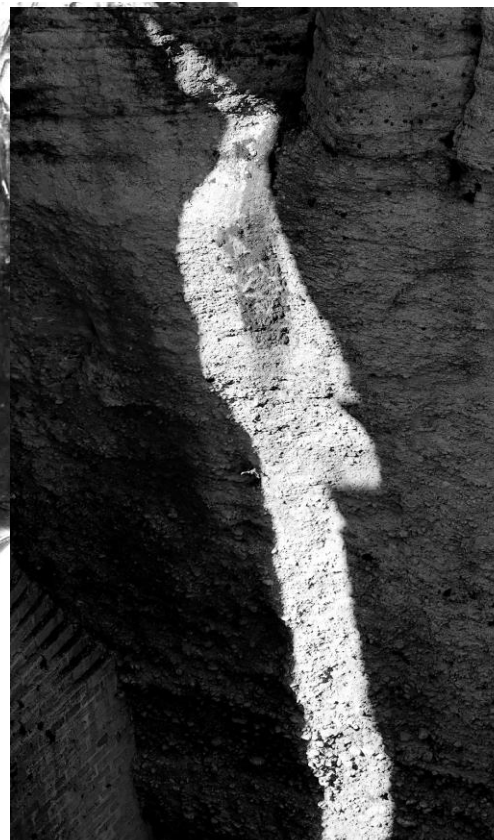
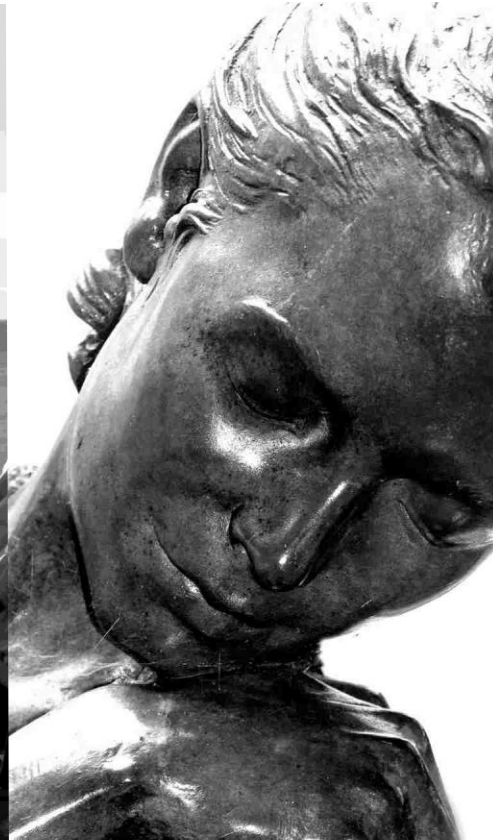
Challenges of B&W Photography

- No colour to rely on for storytelling
- Requires strong composition and light control
- More reliant on textures and tones



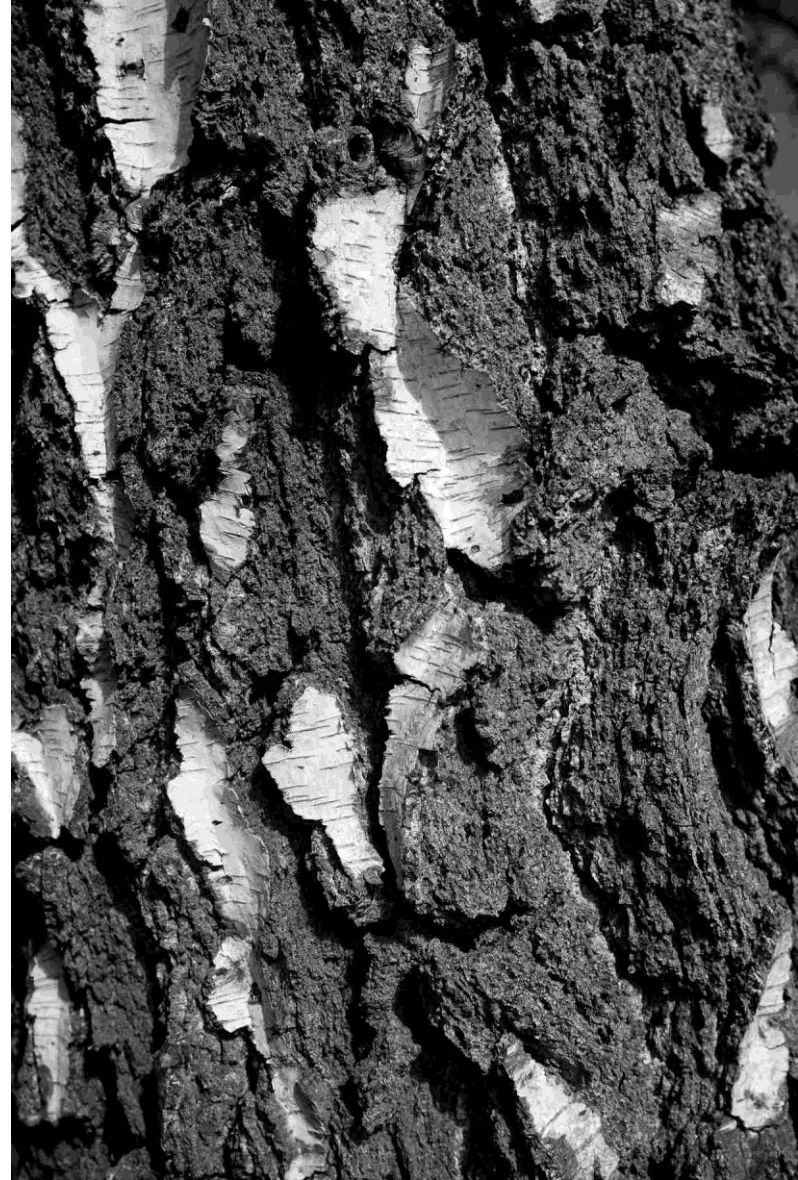
Light and Shadow

- Shadows add drama
- Side-lighting creates depth
- High contrast scenes work beautifully in B&W



Texture and Detail

- Rough surfaces and fine detail stand out
- Use lighting to bring out textures
- Works well for portraits, architecture, nature



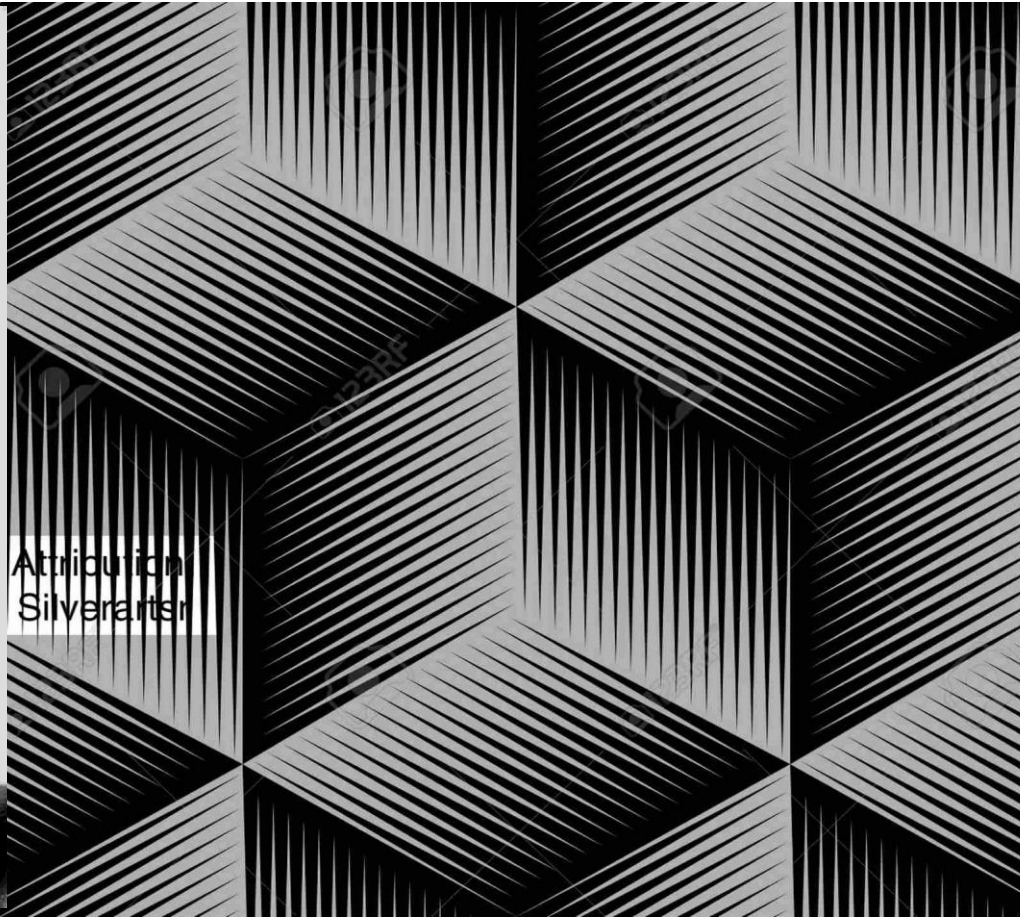
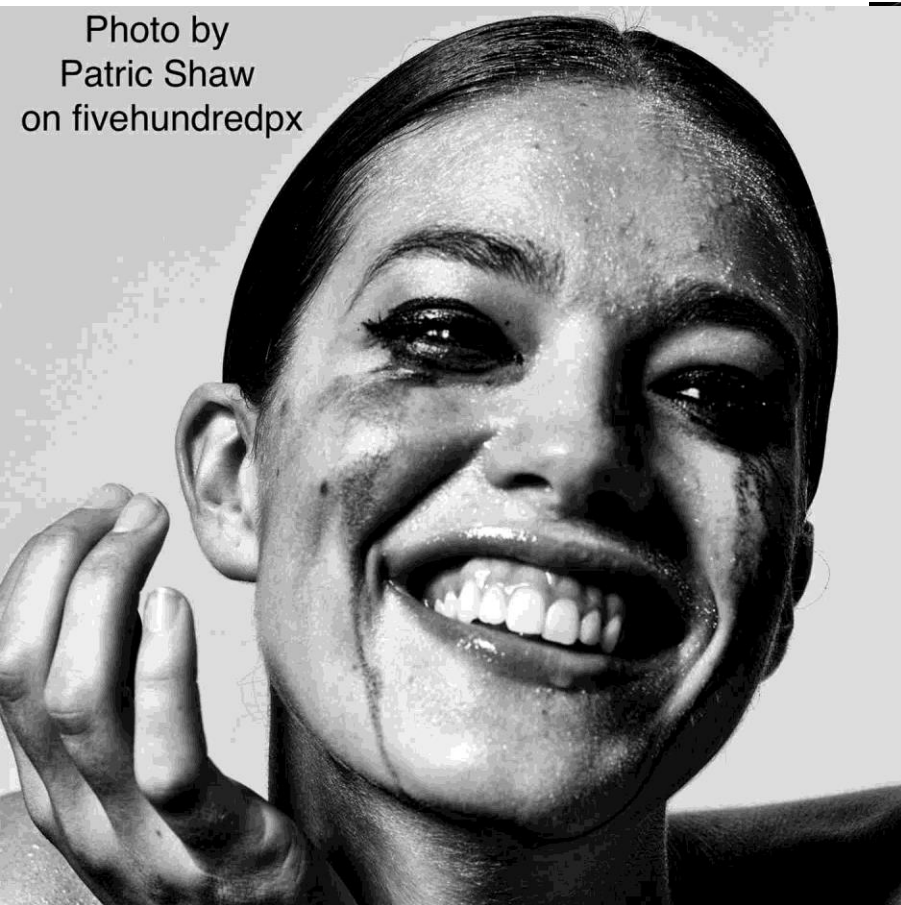
Subjects That Work Well

- Architecture, landscapes, street photography
- Portraits with strong expressions
- Abstract forms, patterns, and shadows



Subjects That Work Well

- Portraits with strong expressions
- Abstract forms, patterns, and shadows



Contrast is All



Complete Guide to Black
and White Photography
SPENCER COX

Tips for Success

Shoot in RAW

- Provides full tonal range
- Easier to make high-quality B&W conversions
- Retains colour data for flexibility

Pre-Visualize in Monochrome

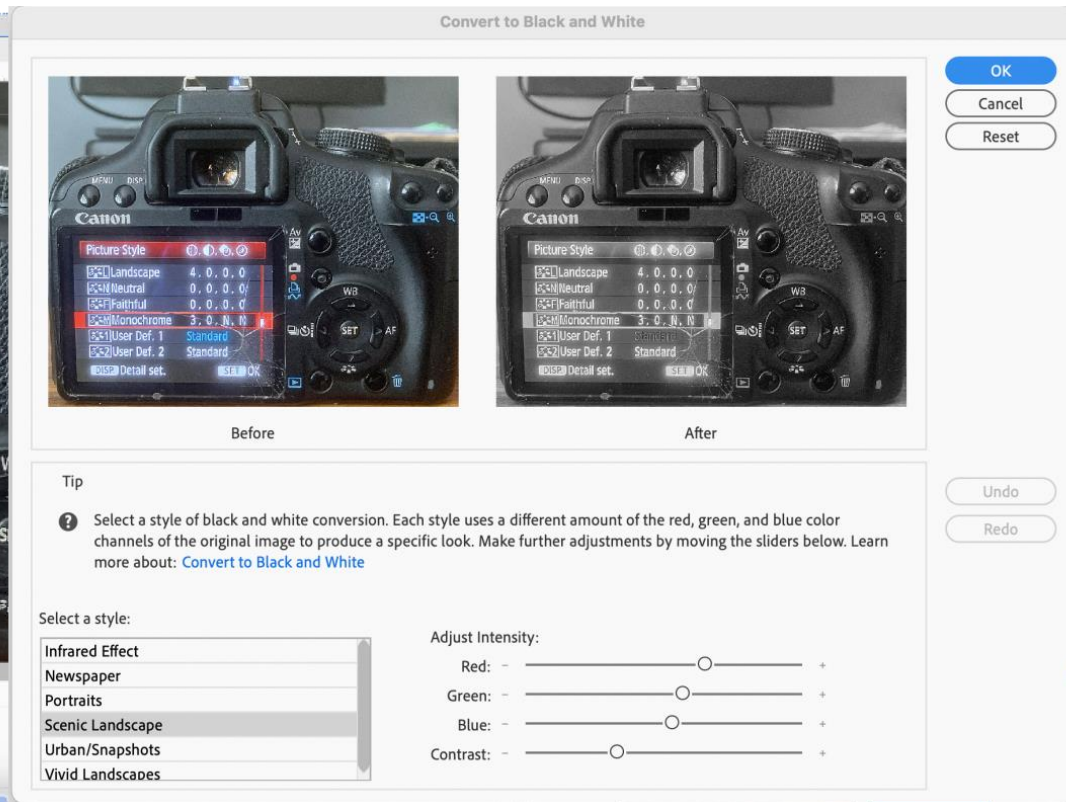
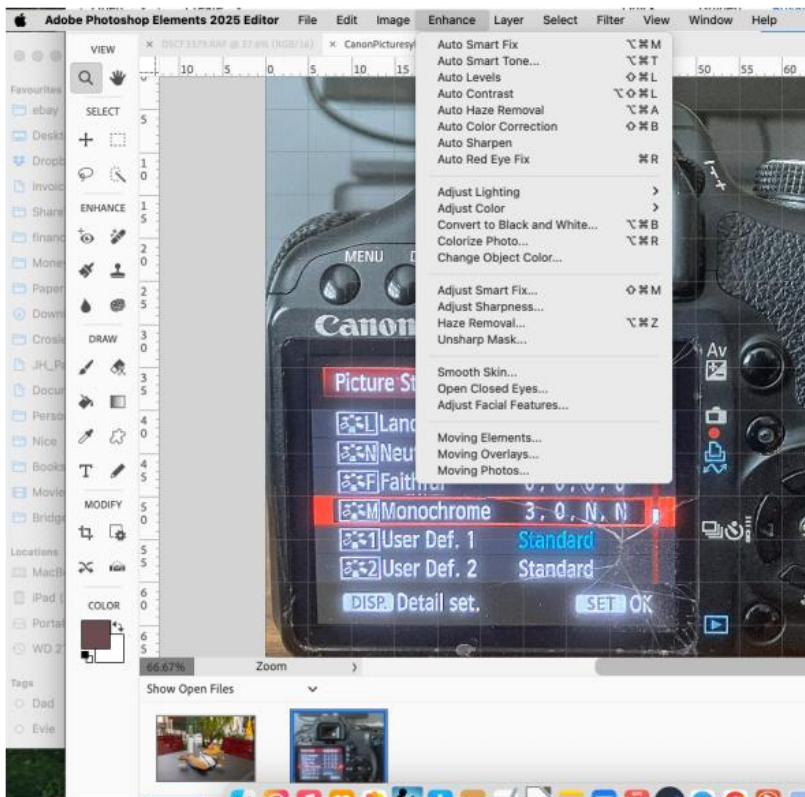
- Switch camera preview to B&W (RAW retains colour)
- Practice seeing shapes and tones in the scene
- Think in highlights and shadows

Convert Colour to B&W

- Use Lightroom, Photoshop, or Capture One
- Smartphones: free apps or try Snapspeed
- Avoid one-click greyscale—adjust channels for tone control
- Try plugins like Silver Efex Pro

Convert Colour to B&W

- Avoid one-click greyscale—adjust channels for tone control



Convert Colour to B&W

- Smartphones: free apps
- Try Snapseed for conversion

Adjusts:

Contrast

Highlights/Shadows

Structure/Texture

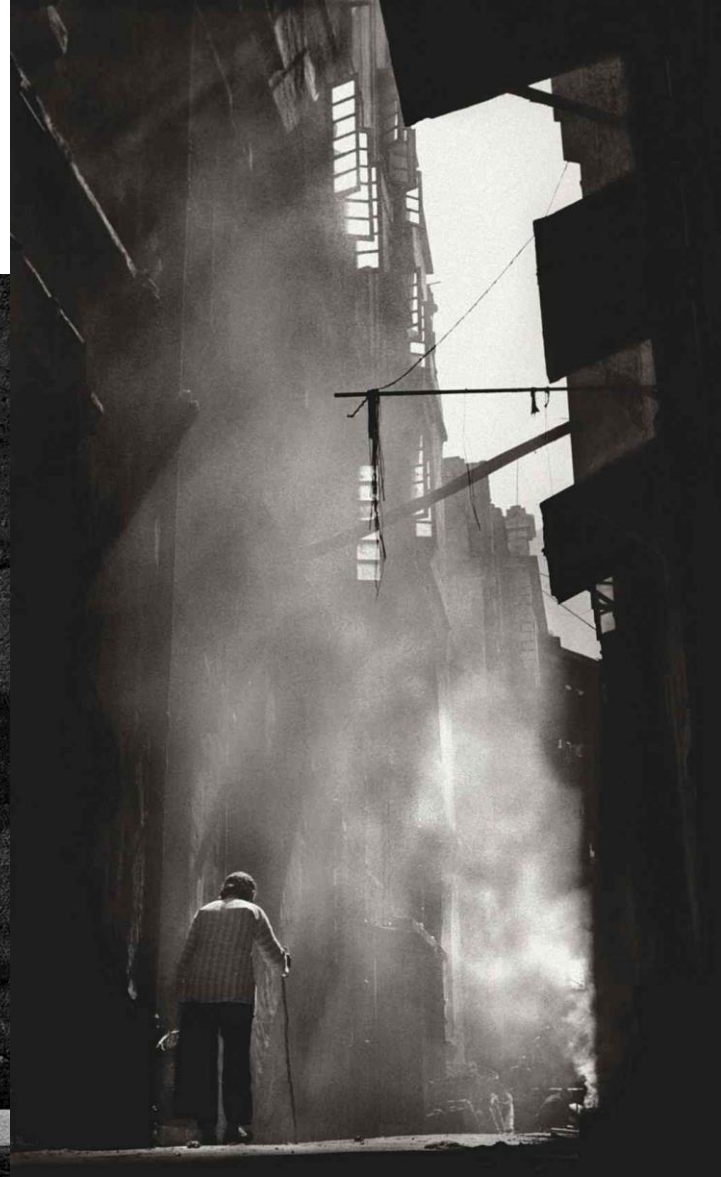
Grain

Recommended Websites & Blogs

- Digital Photography School (digital-photography-school.com)
- BWvision (bwvision.com)
- Fstoppers B&W Category (fstoppers.com)
- 500px for inspiration (500px.com)

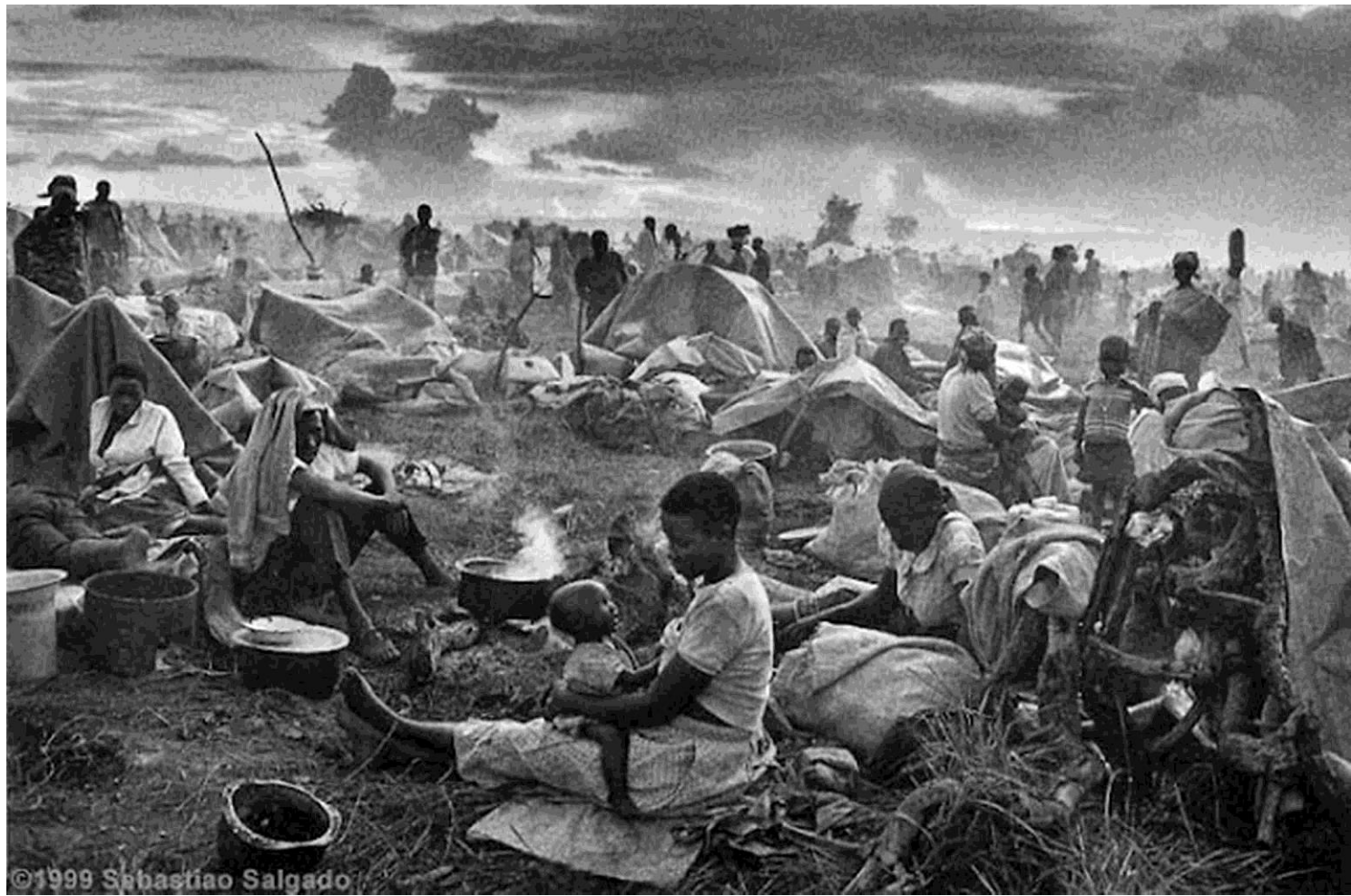
Other Inspirational Photographers

Fan Ho – Street
scenes & geometry



Other Inspirational Photographers

Sebastiao Salgado – Documentary depth



Other Inspirational Photographers

Sebastiao Salgado – Documentary depth



Final Thoughts

- Black and white photography is about emotion, form, and light
- Strips away distraction to tell a stronger story
- Practice, patience, and vision are key

Thank You / Q&A

Enjoy your monochrome journey!

Questions?