

Abstract Photography For Beginners

Source: David Peterson

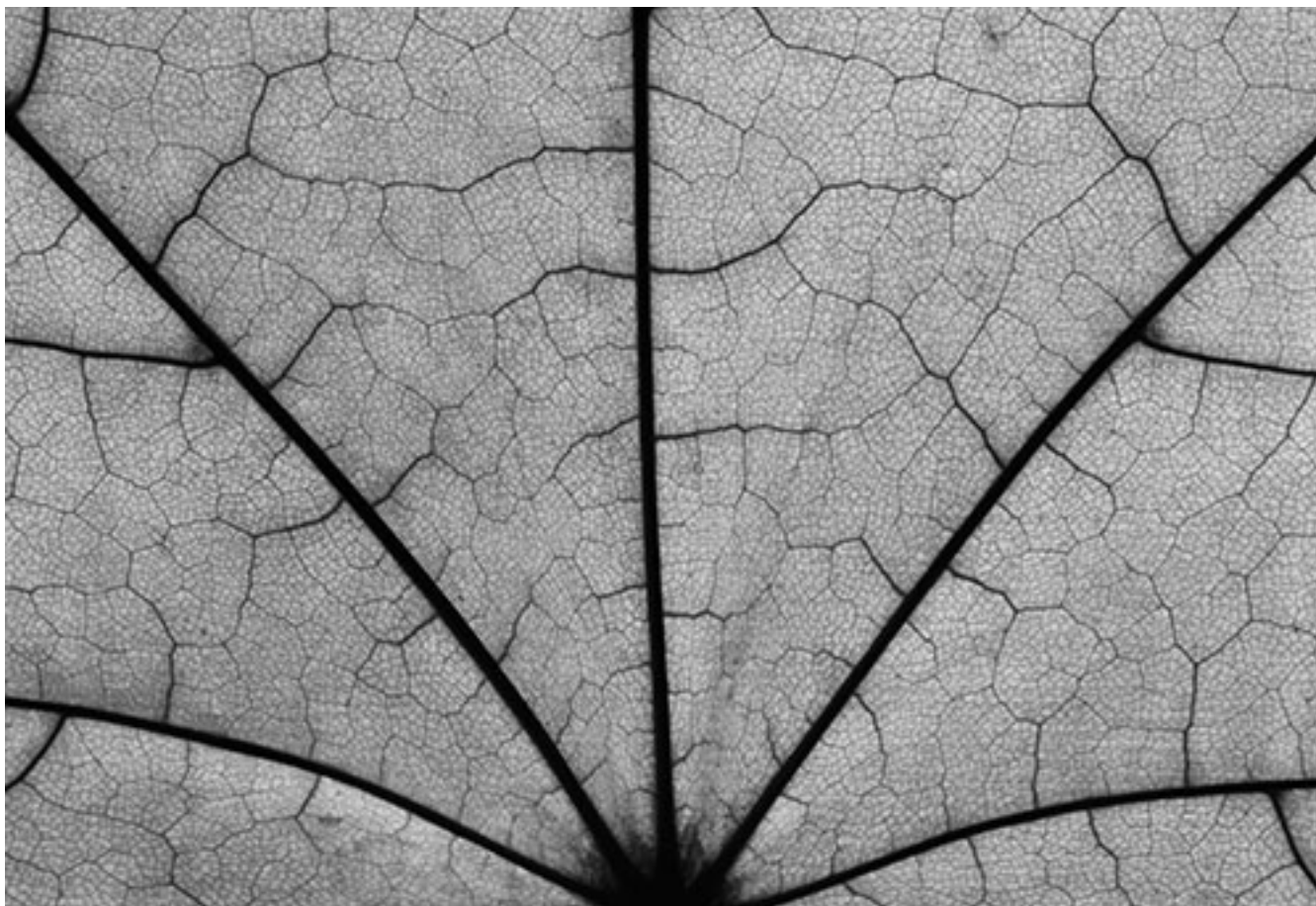


Photography as an art is usually based on your viewer looking at all the parts of a photograph and forming meaning based on their world experiences. Abstract photography removes the parameters of context. So it frees you to create the meaning you wish to convey... so your viewer will be able to look at something in a completely new light. Abstract photography is the art of stripping away and stripping down. It helps to have a keen eye for detail and the ability to see an object (often a common everyday item) as its individual parts rather than the whole. Abstract photography is a challenge but there are some basic tips to get you started off in the right direction.

Look for Lines and Curves

Line and curves are going to give your viewer something to base their new meaning on and add visual interest. Without these shapes, your eye wouldn't travel through and across the image. Instead, it would pull your eye to whatever element catches it first (usually the brightest or darkest part of the photo) and keep it there. So your viewer doesn't get an appreciation for all the details and eccentricities of whatever you have abstracted. Lines have other uses too, like in visual design.

Go Macro Part of abstracting an item comes from compartmentalizing. One way to do just that is to use a macro lens to get up close and personal with the details of a person, place or thing. While this can be done with cropping in post, you'll lose some of the resolution and sharpness that comes with getting the shot in camera through proper composition.



Shoot Through Another Object

Abstract photography often makes use of objects and turn them into filters. Shooting through a glass bottle, a rain splattered window, or even water might give you just the distortion or light refraction you need to create a really interesting and truly abstract image.



Experiment and Recognize Your Control

Shoot out of focus, use extreme angles and extreme light. One of the parts of abstract photography that seriously freaks many photographers out is the lack of rules. Despite the 'anything goes' attitude, it's important for you to know how your camera works so you can properly manipulate your results. Embrace your complete control and run with it. Abstract photography gives you freedom not found in wedding or portrait photography. If you feel something would look better red, change the color. Would the photo be more interesting upside down? Rotate it. Get power hungry and don't be afraid to be manipulating reality to your every whim.

Seek out Texture and Patterns

Emphasizing patterns is one way to take a picture of a normal object that is composed abstractly. They are great tools to move your eye across the image in the intended direction and simply make your photograph more interesting in means of color, shape, or depth. They also do a great job of stripping associations and creating a space for abstraction to take place.

Start at Home

If you can abstract an item that you look at every day and remove the mundane framework you associate it, you will be able to do that for other people and you will be able to think abstractly when you are on location. One of the coolest abstract photography projects I've seen was done by a friend of mine who is the proud dad to four Labrador Retrievers. All of his dogs are tennis ball obsessed and as such their home has been overtaken by what feels like hundreds of tennis balls. He decided he would try and find a way to abstract them so he went through them and found the ones he felt were the most visually interesting and photographed them with a macro lens. He was able to take an item he sees multiple times a day and recreate it through his art.



Photograph what Catches your Eye

It might seem simple but photographing the bits and pieces of things is the best way to start shooting abstract photography or improving the photography you already do it. So often we don't listen to our own visual interest, instead looking for what is "right" to photograph.

Remember

If you are interested in abstract photography, the world is full of colors, shapes, patterns and details for you to capture and manipulate. Don't be afraid to go outside of your box. The only way to really train your eye to look for potential abstract subjects is to practice and keep trying techniques you aren't sure will actually work. Abstract photography is a lesson in seeing the world in a different light and recognizing your power to change it as you see fit because it is the nature of this particular art.