COMPOSITION

You don’t take a photograph, you make it.

… Ansel Adams

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There’s nothing worse than a brilliant image of a fuzzy concept.

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Your first 10,000 images are your worse.

… Henri Cartier-Bresson

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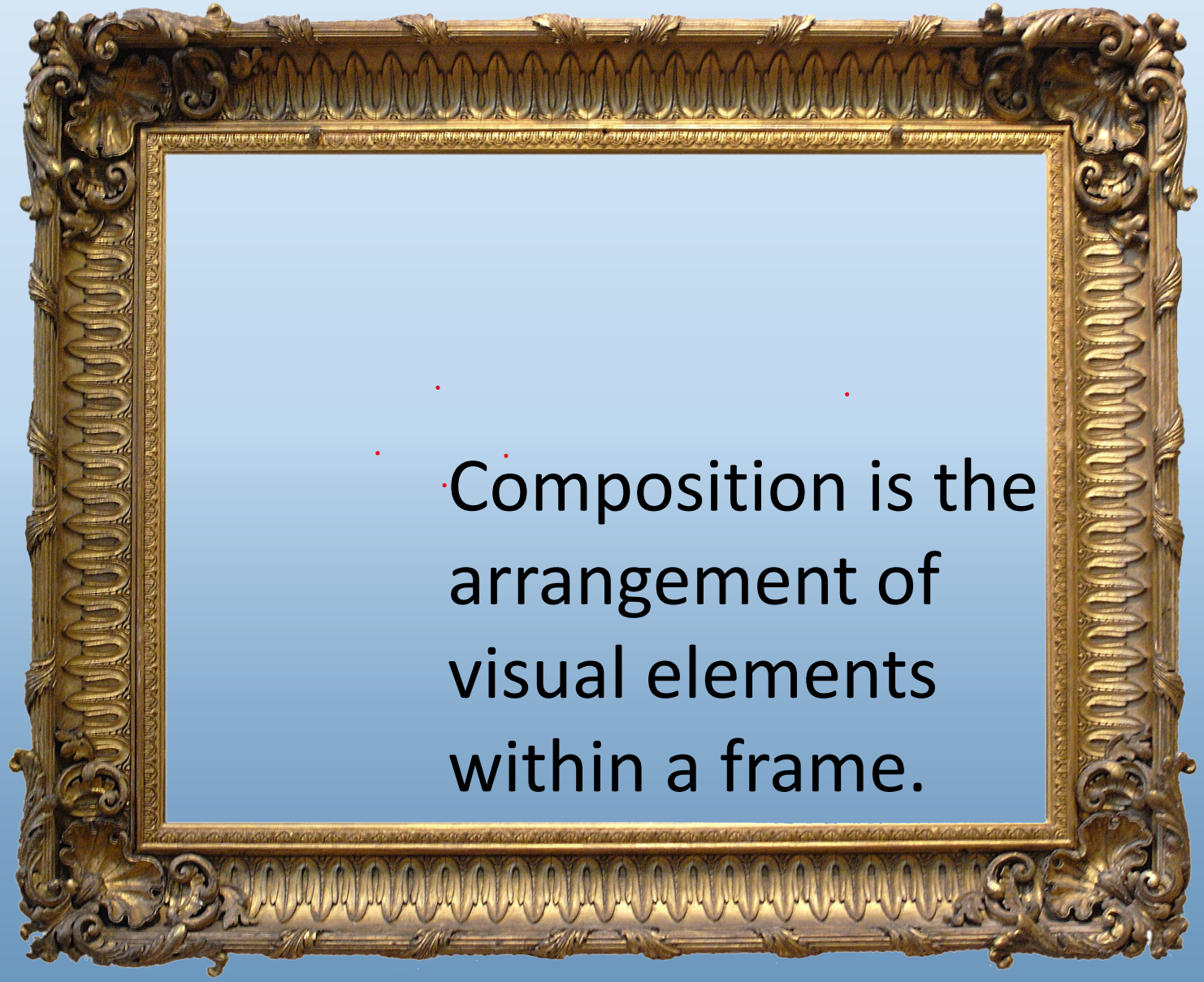
Photograph what makes your heart sing.

… John Barclay

What is composition?



Creating a painting is an additive process: creating a photograph is a subtractive process.

- Composing a photograph involves creating order out of chaos.
- Keep elements that support the story, eliminate elements that distract from the story.

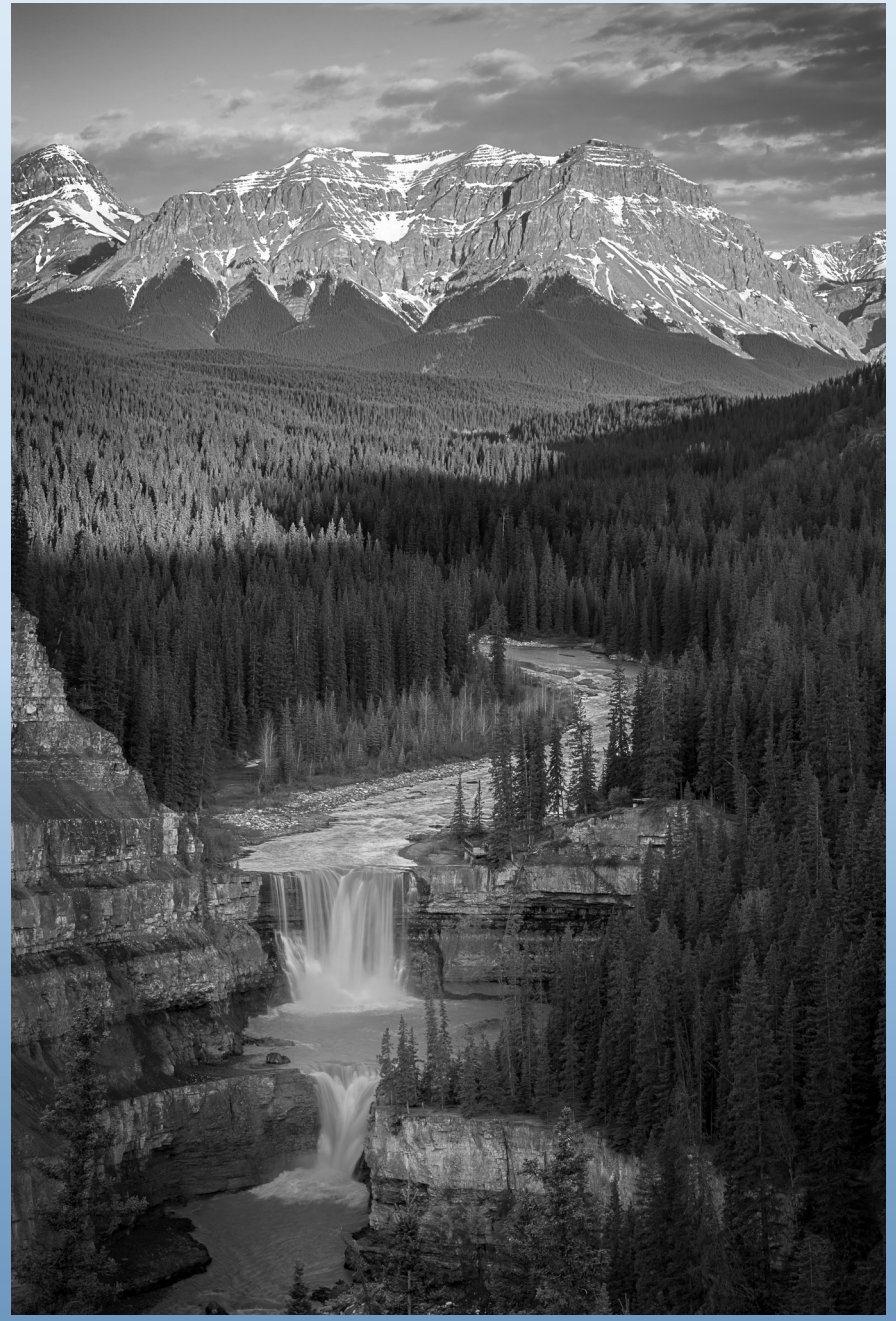
What’s involved with making a photograph?

- The eye
- The brain
- The craft

A Framework for building composition

- A well-defined subject
- Depth (3D in a 2D medium)
- Simplify
  - Fill the frame
- Perspective
- Edge patrol
- Keep what contributes, eliminate what doesn’t

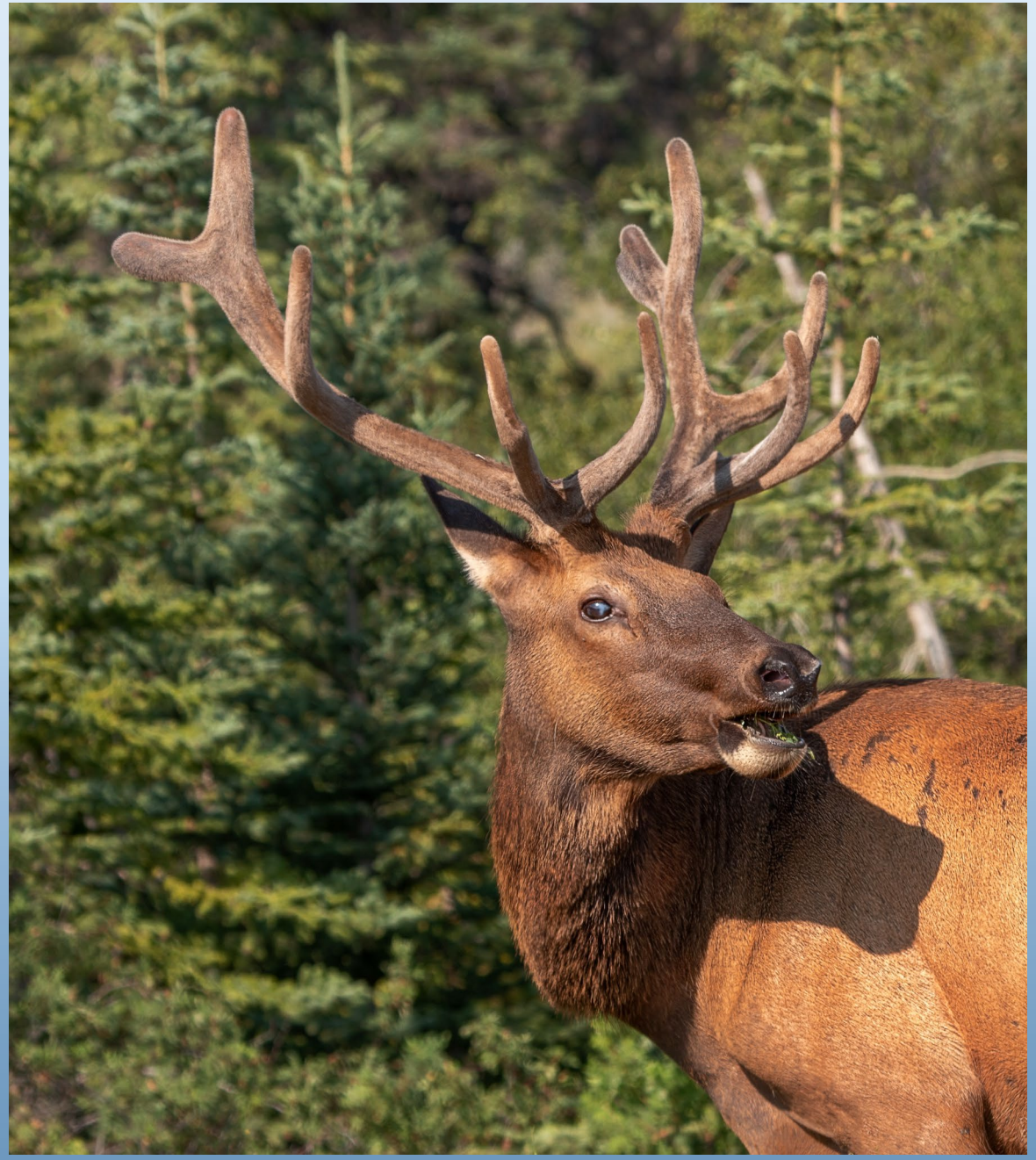
Well-defined subject



Well-defined subject

Depth

Depth



Simplify, fill the frame

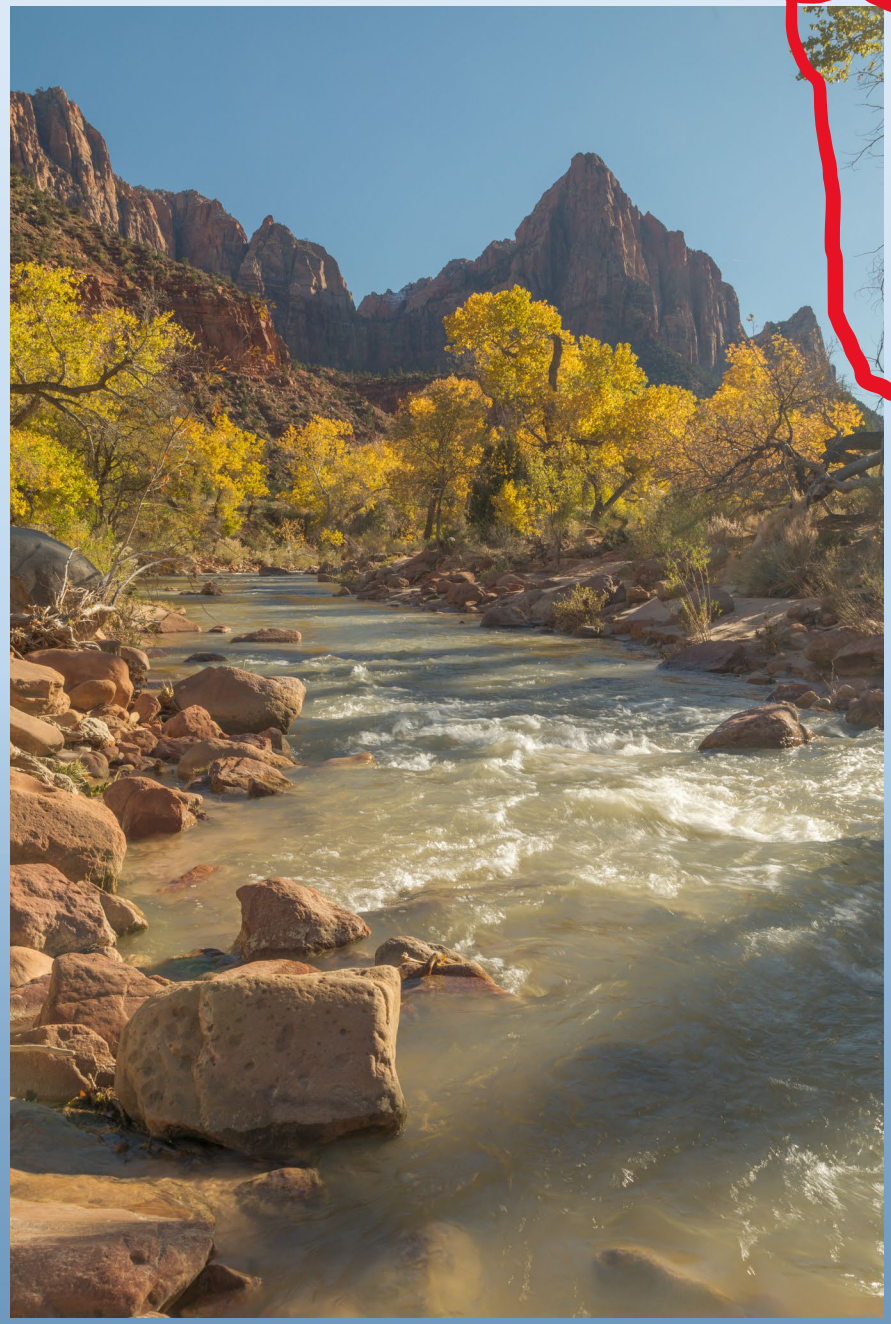
Simplify, fill the frame

Perspective

Perspective

Edge Patrol

Edge Patrol



Edge Patrol

Keep what contributes, eliminate what doesn’t

5 triggers to making a photograph

- Luminosity
- Contrast
- Color
- Geometry
- Atmosphere

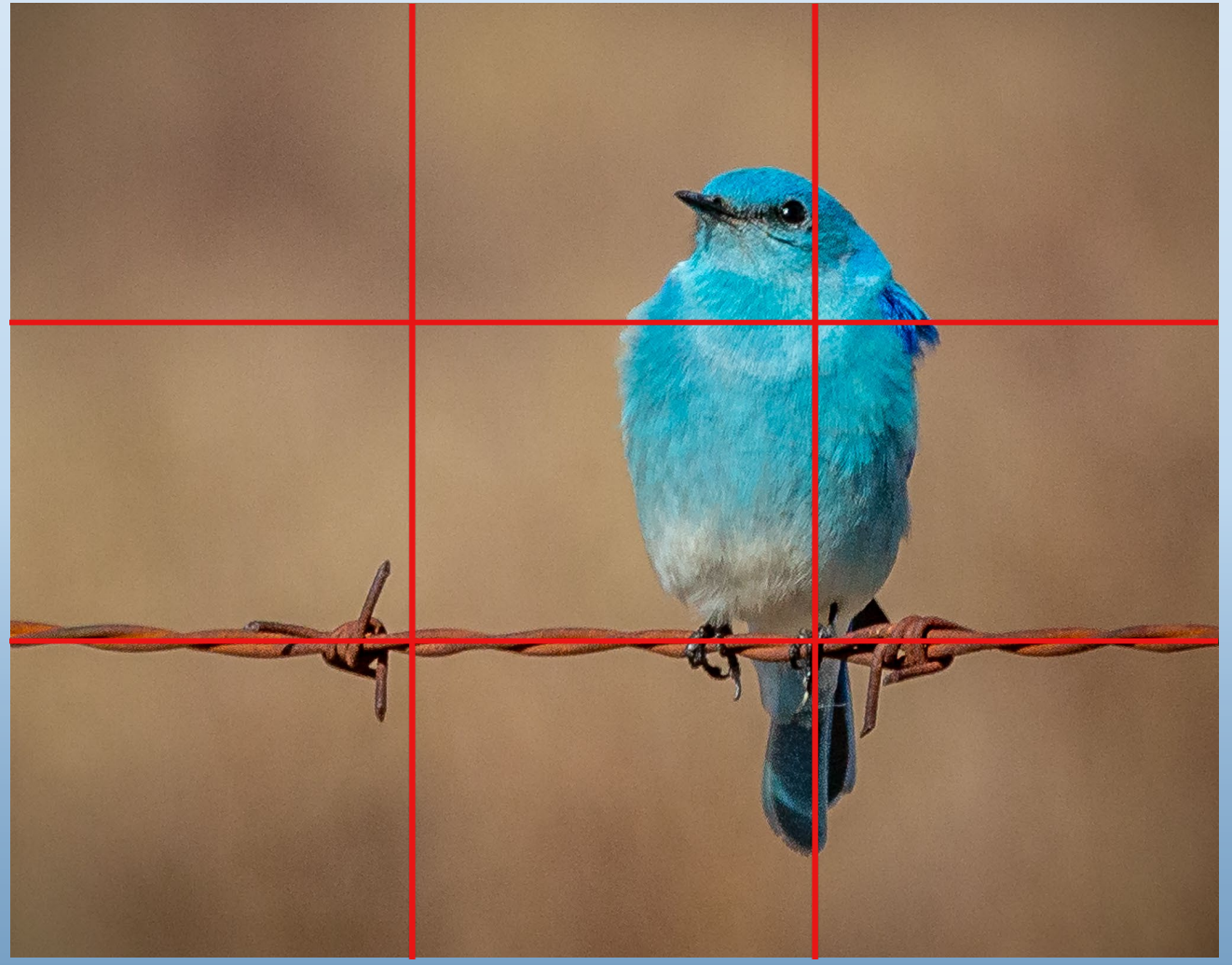
Alister Benn
www.expressive photography.com

Compositional Tools

Rule of Thirds

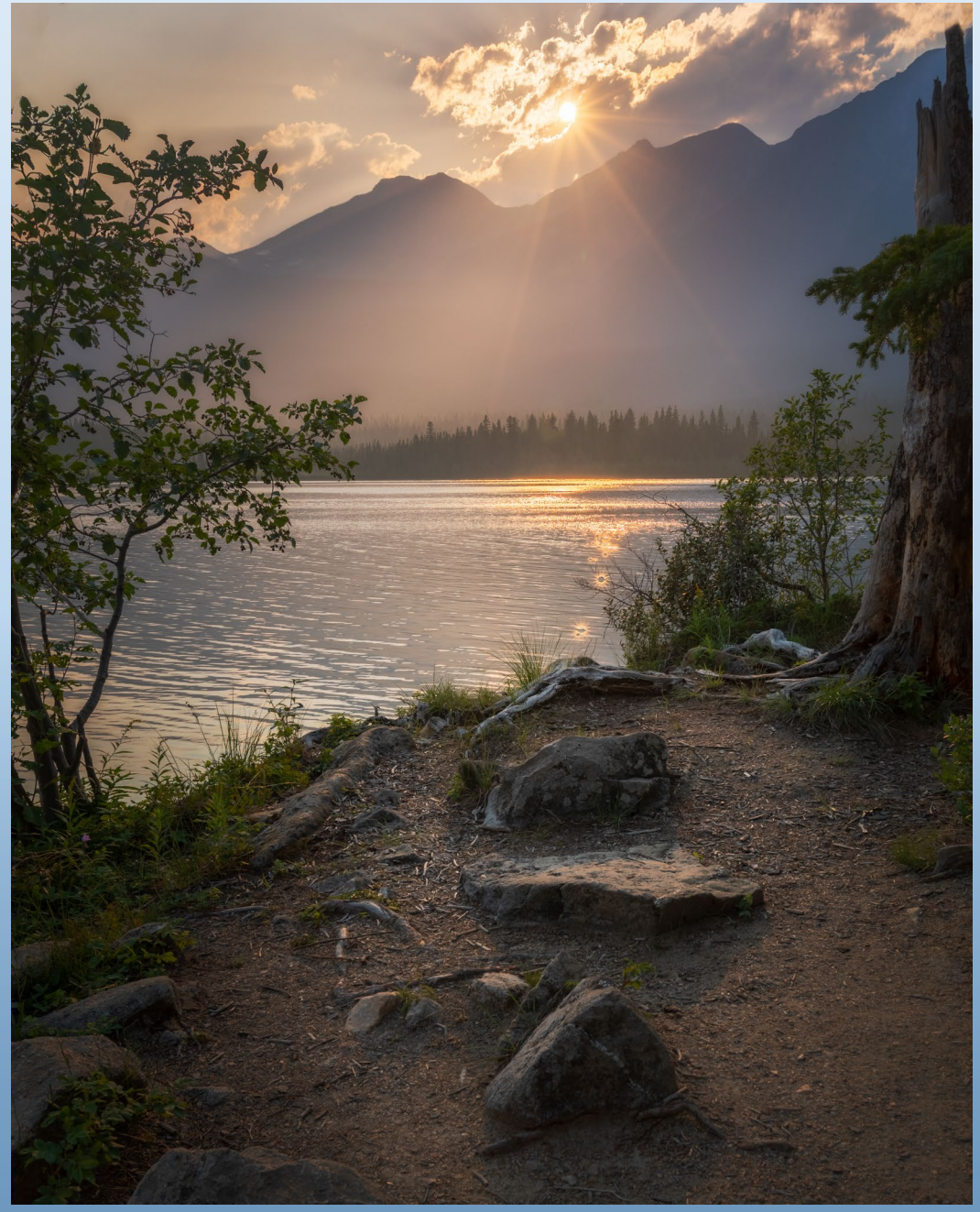
Divide frame in thirds, horizontally and vertically, place subject on one of the lines. Visually the strongest placement of objects in the frame is where the lines cross (the “power points”).

Rule of Thirds

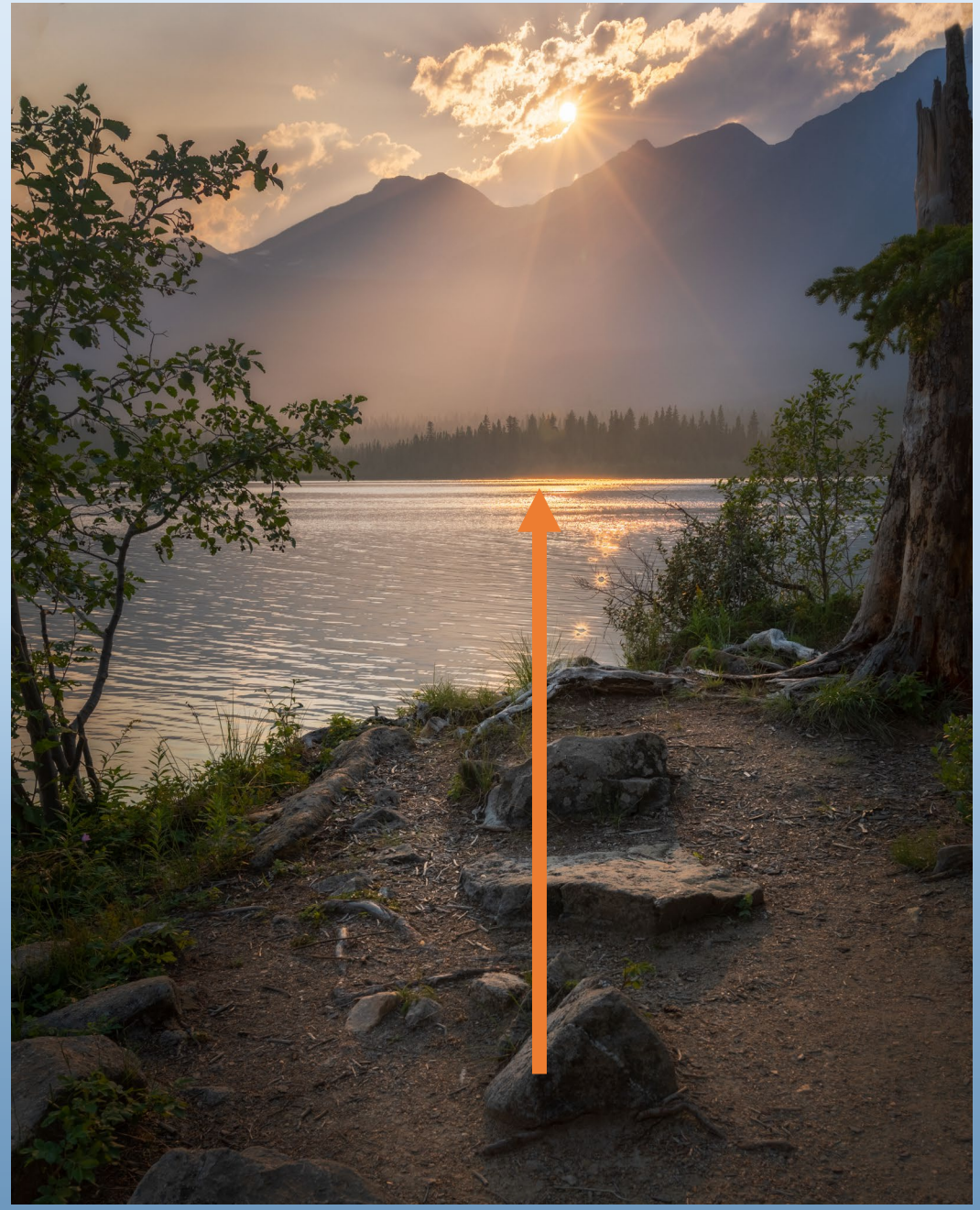


Leading lines

Leading lines are actual or implied lines that lead the viewer’s eye into the composition.



Leading lines



Leading lines

Leading lines

Odd numbers

Odd numbers, or groups of odd numbers, make for a visually appealing composition. .

Odd numbers

Odd numbers