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Rhythm in Nature

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Indiana State University, Department of Art

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I. Introduction

"We don't make a photograph just with a camera; we bring to the act of photography all the books we have read, the movies we have seen, the music we have heard, the people we have loved."

Ansel Adams

A. Entry into Photography

I am intrigued by the world of nature. I have a compulsion to immerse myself in it. I want to see each and every detail that I can. I believe that by learning more about the detail of things, we learn more about the whole and I believe that this compulsion is connected with my childhood.

As I was growing up, my family camped a lot, traveled to different sections of the United States, hiked, fished, and swam, but most of all I remember discovering nature with my mom in our own backyard—watching spiders weave their webs, seeing tiny pinecones mature, waking up to freshly fallen snow, and wondering if the heavily laden evergreen boughs would break. We took hikes through our back yard just to look around, laugh, share, and be thankful. Shooting nature takes me back to some of those family times and I find that photographing patterns in nature not only yields fascinating subjects; but also reveals the incredible intricacy and beauty of the world around me, leaving me to stand in awe of the power of the Creator.

Part of the process of photography is deciding what to place within the frame of the photograph and what to leave out. A successful picture requires and unites both technical and artistic skills. On one side I must be a rational technician who sets up the camera, chooses an exposure setting, and goes through the mechanics of photography. The other side is a sensitive artist who intuitively reacts to a subject and decides on matters of composition and design. I consider the whole process of photography, from click to print, a discipline of control that's critical for me as a nature photographer. From
inspiration to the making of a print; the process has great potential to create something that broadens our visual experience.

I love to find a surprising and exciting detail to capture so that anyone who sees my photographs can also be surprised and excited. I use the same equipment, the same film, the same technology to photograph the same scene other photographers have shot, but it is my vision you see in my photographs. None of us sees exactly the same thing, and those surprises and the ability to share them with the viewer are what drive me to photograph what I discover.

Photography has become an extension of who I am in a variety of ways. I was a musician and a graphic designer before I became a photographer and although they are different studies, they share the common principle of rhythm, which depends largely upon the elements of pattern and movement to achieve its effects. Pattern and movement in music is heard; in photography, it is seen. The wonderful thing about rhythm is that no matter how it is experienced, it is felt in the very depths of our being.

B. Rhythm as a Design Element in Photography

"In Photography, that is photo-graphics, you’re dealing with the graphic elements that are common to all visual arts. You must be conscious of the basic building blocks of design; color, line, pattern, texture, form, and rhythm. These become your visual vocabulary, and photographic technique provides the (harmonious arrangement of parts or elements as to form a whole — which is communication) syntax. The synthesis of the two is communication." — John Shaw

The word rhythm infers repetition in arrangement. Visual rhythm develops when there is sufficient repetition of lines, shapes, or colors to produce movement. Perhaps because of my musical background, rhythm is one of my favorite design elements. Rhythm produces visual energy in a photograph that we can feel very much the same way we feel the rhythm we hear in music.
Author David Lauer, in his book Design Basics, speaks about the use of rhythm in visual arts: "...rhythm, can also be a visual sensation. We commonly speak of rhythm when watching the movement displayed by athletes, dancers, or some workers performing manual tasks. In a similar way the quality of rhythm can be applied to the visual arts, in which the idea is again basically related to movement. Here the concept refers to the movement of the viewer's eye, a movement across recurrent motifs providing the repetition inherent in the idea of rhythm."

The principles of balance, proportion, rhythm, emphasis, and harmony (unity) are used to organize or arrange structural elements of design. The way in which these principles are applied affects the expressive content or message of the photograph.

Because harmony invokes togetherness and agreement, patterns become harmonious when the elements in a scene are unified. The items don’t have to be exact duplicates of one another, but they need to blend together, as in the pattern of cracked mud beds, fields of flowers, or the lines and swirls in the fur of an animal’s coat.

In rhythm, repetition creates directional movement. Rushing water, winding trails, and delicate flower petals are a few examples of rhythm in a photograph. Rhythm can also be created with structural elements such as a row of trees, a well-tended field, or a rustic fence.

C. My Influences

One of my earliest influences in photography has to be my great-aunt, Opal Burnham. Aunt Opal was a professional studio photographer and our official family chronicler. I can remember watching as she recorded family gatherings, carefully framing each subject, kneeling down to photograph children at their level. We often talked about photographic techniques and equipment, and it was her advice I sought when I decided to buy my first serious camera. Aunt Opal had her own studio in Terre Haute and was active in photography during the 1940's through the 1980's, retiring due
to physical and mental deterioration when she was around 72.

Since I knew Aunt Opal mainly as a studio photographer who also took our family snapshots, imagine my surprise when her daughter called to offer me some of the thousands of slides Aunt Opal left when she died. Included in the box were many nature shots, landscapes and close ups of flowers, leaves and trees...exactly the same types of photographs I have been taking for years. Apparently, on her own time, when she had time to shoot what she wanted to shoot, Aunt Opal was drawn to nature, much the same way I have been. Aunt Opal was able to carve out a successful career in studio photography, but I like knowing that in her heart she loved to photograph nature, and I wish she were still here so I could share with her some of my photographs and the adventures I’ve had in obtaining them.

The way I see nature and choose to shoot flowers is very much related to the way artist Georgia O’Keeffe chose to paint. Three of her paintings in particular, “Iris,” “Light Iris” and “Music” are incredible in their use of line, color and movement. O’Keeffe seeks out the intimate details of each flower she paints, creating large canvases one can almost enter physically. The lines of her flowers are so erotically sensuous one almost feels embarrassed and yet unspeakably moved after stepping away from them. O’Keeffe was well aware of the emotions she evoked with her paintings; it was exactly what she was trying to convey. Although O’Keeffe denied that her paintings were purposefully erotic, she fully intended to grab the viewer in any way she could. She once said, “Most people in the city rush around so, they have no time to look at a flower. I want them to see it whether they want to or not.” (Figures 1&2)

Those same intimate lines and movements are what I seek to capture in my close up photography of nature and flowers. I want my viewer to see the details and parts that will forever alter the way they view that subject. Seeing an iris in a garden is pleasant, but stepping up to that iris, bending over it and entering the intricate folds to
experience the soft, velvet petals tipped with exotic color is an experience that should never be forgotten.

I had often seen and admired Rod Planck’s nature photographs in National Geographic, Outdoor Photography and other major magazines. Planck was able to capture that intricate detail I saw and wanted to photograph. When I had the chance to attend a workshop he conducted in Michigan, I jumped at the opportunity. It was a breakthrough experience in my photographic career.

By 2003, I had made my film and equipment choices, and was struggling to learn how to capture the images I wanted to produce. At the Planck workshop, a small group of us spent many hours each day in the field with Planck and other professional photographers, learning techniques and receiving hands on instruction as well as one on one critiques. In Michigan, I learned the Five Stop Metering System, which compensates for the 18% tone that camera meters use in assessing an image. The system gave me the knowledge and confidence to see and deal with light and tonality in any give scene.

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Five Stop Metering System Chart

Planck introduced me to and encouraged me to try the +4 diopter adapter to take extreme close ups. The diopter allows me to focus up to one-quarter meter on the details of nature. I loved it. Close up photography opened a new frontier for me in nature photography. With this tool and the metering system I learned at the workshop, I began to learn the process of visualizing, then capturing a subject.
One final element has been a factor in my growth as a photographer—my love of music. Music has always been a part of my life. I graduated from college with a double major in Physical Education and Music. I am acutely aware of rhythm, and find and feel it in all that I do. Just as music creates images in my mind, images create a rhythm I want to photograph. From the gentle breathing of a child asleep on my shoulder to the tap, tap, tap of a blind man walking down the street to the ebb and flow of the ocean on wet, dark rocks, rhythm rules all of life.

I hear, see and feel the rhythm flowing along striations in the sandstone of the Wave, in the corkscrew formations of the slot canyons of Arizona, in the natural progression of the petals of a flower, in the intricate patterns of a zebra’s stripes. There is slow deliberate rhythm in the veins of a leaf, fast and furious rhythm in the rush of water down a mountain. All of it feels like life to me and I want to show it, capture it—let my viewers hear it in my images.

II. Technical Considerations

To the layman, the act of picking up a camera and pressing the shutter—taking a picture—is a simple process. Photography, on the other hand, is so much more. There are many variations of film, cameras, and accessory equipment, all of which affect the final outcome. There are artistic decisions, as well...should one fill the frame with the subject, or include surrounding environment, or choose macro for extreme close-ups. There are thousands of decisions that can be made, and two photographers, photographing the same subject will come away with two totally different photographs. Photography is more about the making of photographs than the taking of them.

A. Choices

As I became serious about photography, I had to make some major decisions. It was nature that I wanted to photograph and it was the colors in nature that fascinated me,
so obviously I decided to work with color film. This choice led to my next decision, color negative vs. color positive film.

Color negative film creates a color reversed or negative image from which photographs are printed to paper. Transparency film, sometimes referred to as slide or positive film, on the other hand produces a positive image on a transparent base.

Transparency film is generally less forgiving of exposure errors, is sharper, and has better color reproduction. By using color positive film I have more control over how I capture the image. An added feature of transparency film is that it has a longer life span than color prints.

I decided to use color transparency film, and moved on to make a decision about which of several commercial transparency films would produce the color and detail that I wanted to capture.

Early in the process of choosing a type of film, I determined I would require a relatively slow (ISO 50 - 200) speed film, because I wanted to print very large and/or isolate very minute details. Using a slow film cuts down on the visual grain that naturally occurs.

(Figure 3) Sometimes I like colors that are so saturated they practically scream. Some photographers find this disturbing and use films that tone down colors to be less saturated than the original subject. There is no right or wrong here, because photography is an art, not a science, and there is always room for artistic interpretation.

Different brands of film handle colors in different ways, so I experimented with Fuji and Kodak. I quickly determined that while Kodak film was well suited for portraiture and was a fine general purpose film, Fuji produced the colors and detail that I love.

Fuji slide films have very narrow latitude for error and that challenge is another
reason I like them. Using Fuji film required me to learn how to meter correctly, which
gave me more control over the end product, and allowed me to achieve richly saturated
colors in my nature images. My two films of choice are Fujichrome Provia 100 and
Fujichrome Velvia 50.

B. Film & Filters

The most striking characteristic of Fujichrome Velvia 50 is its ultrasaturated
rendition of color. I love the rich intensity and depth of color, especially the reds
and oranges. This feature of Velvia is troublesome in portraiture, but striking when
photographing sunrises and sunsets. Velvia is extremely fine-grained, very sharp
and very contrasty. I usually avoid using Velvia in midday sunlight or other lighting
situations where the contrast is extreme, because shadow detail usually is nonexistent.

Fujichrome Provia 100 slide film is sharp and fine grained, although not quite as
sharp or fine grained as Velvia 50. The colors are saturated, but not too saturated.
Unlike Velvia, where the depth of the color saturation is more intense than the original
subject, Provia more closely matches what you see with your eyes to the colors
reproduced on film. Provia is less contrasty than Velvia and better suited for the harsher
light of midday.

I use filters, although sparingly, and when in the field I almost always have two or
three types in my camera bag. A filter does not make a mediocre composition into a
good photograph. If the shot framed in your viewfinder can’t stand on its own, a filter
won’t help. A filter can be used to enhance a good shot or to correct color when lighting
conditions are less than optimal. The Fuji films that I use for nature photography are
fairly neutral, daylight balanced slide films. The filters that I use are based on my
experience with their color tendencies in different natural lighting situations. Primarily,
I am concerned with light that has a cool color temperature when photographing
a warm toned subject. Warm colors can be greatly affected by cool lighting. Cool
lighting is the direct effect of too many blue color wavelengths bouncing around. Blue wavelengths contaminate warm colors, and this effect can be accentuated on some films. There are two different filters that I employ when using Velvia and photographing warm toned subjects under cool lighting conditions: the 81B (many brands), and the Heliopan KR3. The 81B and KR3 filters are often referred to as “warming filters” because of their warming effect under cool lighting. Essentially, I use these filters as color correction filters under cool lighting conditions, not as enhancing filters.

The 81B filter is part a series, from A, B, C, D to EF with A having the least warming effect and EF the greatest. The 81 series filters have a yellow/amber cast, which absorbs excess blue light waves. Blue light waves occur in natural light, and give photographs taken in shade a cool blue cast. I use the 81B when photographing subjects that are yellow, pink, red or brown under heavy overcast or in open shade lighting to assure more natural color.

The Heliopan KR3 is also part of a series, which includes the KR3, 6, 12, and 15 with the KR3 having the least warming effect. The color of the KR3 is a combination of the 81A filter with a touch of magenta mixed in. Like the 81 series, the KR filters are used to absorb any excess blue occurring in natural light, and the added touch of magenta makes this my filter of choice when photographing yellow, pink or white wildflowers under a green forest canopy. I also found it useful when photographing in the red rock country of southern Utah while photographing canyon walls in the shade. The KR3 was very useful for holding the natural orange color I found in certain types of sandstone.

Polarizing Filter

Another filter I use is a Polarizing filter, which comes in two types—linear and circular. Linear polarizing filters are not well suited to SLR photography because they affect the electronic sensors of the more modern, automatic cameras. I use a circular
polarizer to offset the effects of glare or light reflection, both in the entire scene and on specific objects in the scene.

Polarizing filters are commonly used to darken a blue sky by eliminating the reflection of light on tiny water droplets in the atmosphere. The darkening effect can range from a slightly deeper than normal blue to an over-saturated, nearly black blue, and the photographer must understand and control this dramatic range. Polarizing filters have the greatest effect when used at a 90-degree angle to the sun.

Less common, but as dramatic, polarizers can be used to reduce reflections on water and other wet surfaces. Water can reflect the sky resulting in a milky, dense look. Use of a polarizing filter will reduce those reflections, resulting in water that seems crystal clear and transparent. On wet or waxy leaves, light reflections can render color quite flat, but use of a polarizer can return the rich vibrant color.

Side lit, shiny objects can often be color corrected by use of a polarizer to reduce reflections and glare. In southern Utah, I found the polarizer helpful in restoring the rich orange color to the craggy hoodoos when side lighting gave them a flat, yellow appearance.

C. Equipment

Multi-element close-up lens

A lens that includes multi-element close-up capabilities extends a lens’ closest focusing distance. It is a highly corrected lens that eliminates field curvature and renders excellent optical performance. The lens I work most often with is a Tamron multi-element, 70 - 300mm with macro capabilities.

Close-up, filter type lenses

Close-up filter type lenses are attached to a lens much like a filter and produce no
light loss or change in apertures when they are used. Extreme close-up photography lets you explore the intricate details of nature. You can fill the frame with the eye of an insect or create a colorful abstract using minute details. A close-up lens allows you to zoom into your subject much the way a microscope works to magnify tiny objects. A close-up lens’ strength designation indicates the distance at which the camera lens will be focused, in fractions of a meter, when the camera lens is focused at infinity. Depending on the focal length of the lens you are using, +1 close-up lens will focus the camera lens at one meter; a +2 close-up lens at a half-meter; a +3 close-up lens at a one-third meter and so on. The closer you can focus with a given camera lens, the bigger the subject will be on film, so the higher the designation number of the close-up lens, the greater the magnification.

Tripod - an important compositional tool

A tripod is essential not only for consistently creating sharp images but also for consistently creating precisely composed photographs. Hand holding a camera while composing offers speed and flexibility in framing. Once the tripod is in position, there is time to slow down, study framing and fine-tune the composition if necessary. Having the ability to contemplate an unchanging image through the camera’s viewfinder while it is attached to a stable tripod is a wonderful compositional aid. Often all sorts of distracting elements are revealed with further scrutiny. A dead branch may poke out of nowhere into the corner of the frame or a dried blade of grass may create a white line through the background of the image. Sometimes a closer look might reveal the sun about to go rolling out of the photograph because of a tilted horizon.

III. Rhythm in Photography

A. Finding (seeing) the rhythm

"Rhythm's importance can be demonstrated by noting how many important rhythmic cycles we observe in nature—consider the alternating tension and
relaxation in the heart’s beating or in the ocean’s waves, the revolutions of the earth around the sun, or the comings and goings of generations. Each of us has personal rhythms to our days, weeks, and years. Life, indeed, would be chaotic without rhythm. Participating in the tempo of this flow gives us each amounts of excitement and calm, yearning and contentment, yin and yang. It is natural that we would employ rhythms to organize and unify our works, much as they do the rest of our experience.”

Michael Delahunt

What I love about photography are the surprises; those unexpected movements when something in the center of a flower catches my eye, or I round a bend in the woods to come face to face with what seems to be the largest elk in the world, or drive down the road toward a rainstorm with rolling gray-blue clouds, or chase a brilliant red sunset from Terre Haute to Marshall so I can get an uncluttered shot, or stand in awe as the rising sun reveals majestic mountains reflected in the still waters of a lake. I love nature because sometimes it just takes my breath away, and I photograph nature because I want to share that feeling with others.

(Figure 4) Of all nature’s awesome beauty, though, I feel the flower truly is one of God’s remarkable creations. I love to study the intricate details of a fern’s unfurling leaf. Tight buds spring out to become huge flowers with velvety soft flower petals that curve so delicately and in colors I could never imagine. Sometimes I throw out different kinds of flower seeds in the Spring so I can watch as they grow, be surprised when they bloom, and photograph them at the peak of their beauty and color.

My personal challenge in photography, whether shooting flowers or landscapes or rolling water, is to find and capture the rhythm of life. As Lauer states: “Rhythm is a basic characteristic of nature. The pattern of the seasons, of day and night, of the tides, all exhibit a regular rhythm. This rhythm consists of successive patterns in which the same elements reappear in a regular order. (Figures 5) In a design or painting, this would be termed an alternating rhythm. (Figures 6) Patterns and Sequence: Another type of rhythm is called
progression, or progressive rhythm.

Again, the rhythm involves repetition, but repetition of a shape that changes in a regular manner. This type of rhythm is most often achieved with a progressive variation of the size of a shape, though its color, value, or texture could be the varying element.  

I've been fortunate to take at least three major trips to shoot photographs in areas that are outside my usual area of comfort. In 2003, I went to Michigan to participate in a week long nature photo workshop; in 2005, I traveled west to shoot the slot canyons of Arizona, and the Wave in southern Utah, and this year I went to Alaska where I was able to see and photograph glaciers. The experience of each trip has added to my growth as a person, just as the photos I took added to my portfolio. In Michigan, I mastered metering by sheer stubborn determination. In southern Utah, I traveled into the desert alone with the briefest of directions on how to find my goal...and none on how to get back...but I made it! In Alaska, I learned how very coldly dangerous a glacier could be as I literally hung over the edge of a crevasse to photograph its depths.

B. Capturing the Image

"When you go out to photograph, expect nothing, but be ready for anything."

Joel Meyerowitz

Brenda Tharp is a nature photographer who teaches at workshops and writes magazine articles. Her approach to nature photography is traditional, strong in the use of the elements of visual design. In her article, "The Art of Nature," she specifically discusses the use of visual rhythm, which produces tension and energy, directs the eye where the photographer wants the viewer to look, and produces a structure that can pull the photograph together. Nature is full of rhythm and sometimes the challenge is not in seeing or capturing it, but isolating and using that rhythm to produce the desired effect. Rhythm can be seen in the ripples of a sand dune, rolling hills, a rushing stream.
Rhythm can be combined with other visual elements such as contrast or balance to strengthen any image. The rhythm of the rolling hills can be contrasted with the stillness of a mountain lake to create balance and composition. Tharp mentions the well known Rule of Thirds, but suggests that we shouldn’t feel trapped by such rules. She says we should use our intuition to place objects where they are visually most pleasing to us. If we do that, we may find that we end up with a photo that automatically complies with the Rule of Thirds. This seems to be her subtle way of suggesting that as artists we should be able to forget the rules because they should be second nature to us.  

Rhythm of the Slot Canyons = adagio (slow movement, restful, at ease)  

(Figure 7) I first read about and saw images from the slot canyons of Page, Arizona in a travel magazine. I was awestruck by the colors and lines, and became obsessed with a desire to go to the slots for a photo shoot. A friend and I planned the trip for two years, but in the end, she backed out and I went alone.  

The slot canyons are spread across Navajo and Hopi Indian reservations in Arizona. The canyons are sacred to the Indians and tourists are limited to one hour visits. As I traveled into and through the slot canyons with their stunning light beams, I was very aware of the native presence and the mystical belief of the Indians that this was a place to commune with the spirits. The shapes and the colors of the stone change with the changing light. Because the canyons are very narrow, the slightest movement of the sun across the sky above created an ever changing flow of light in rhythmic shifting patterns.  

I found myself wanting to go back over and over again, because from hour to hour the sun’s light glowed with different colors while the time of day from minute to minute revealed new and exciting shapes and shadows.  

When I began shooting in slot canyons, I realized that the type of light source that
produced the warm glow on the sandstone walls was reflected light, bouncing off one wall to a nearby wall. I shot the canyons over several days and at different times of the day to capture what I felt to be the most dramatic colors. Because of the narrow cramped places in the slots, and people moving through the pathways, I used a wide-angle lens, with a magenta warming filter. I used both Fujichrome Velvia and Provia to capture the warm hues, and mounted my camera on a tripod to stabilize it for the necessary slow shutter speeds in the low light conditions. The dramatic contrast of light and dark in the abstract forms of sandstone and their shapes produced exactly the stunning photos that I had dreamed of for two years.

Rhythm of the Wave (water lines) = capriccio (quick, improvisational, spirited)

(Figure 8) The Wave is a stretch of desert that spans the border of Arizona and Utah, and is also on Indian land. It is an environmentally fragile area and therefore a daily quota system has been set by the BLM (Bureau of Land Management). Only 20 people are allowed into the area each day. Ten permits are granted by reservation and ten additional visitors may enter a lottery for permission to hike into the area.

I visited the Wave on the same trip that took me to the slot canyons. The Wave is sandstone that has been etched into wavelike patterns by water that flows through the area as flash floods following torrential desert rainstorms. Like the slot canyons, The Wave is pure rhythm. The flowing lines echo the path water takes as it rushes down the mountain into the canyon.

Unlike the slot canyons, the Wave is a vast open area. I shot using a polarizer to cut the glare of the direct sunlight, and to darken the blue sky. The sandstone is a warm orange tone and the complementary blue of the sky gave me some very striking color to capture. I shot mostly in Fujichrome Provia 100 because of the intense sunlight and contrasty conditions. Also, as usual, I shot using a tripod and a wide-angle lens. The
area is very spread out and I wanted to capture the progressive rhythm of the water etched patterns in the rock.

**Rhythm of the Glacier** = **staccato (abrupt with dynamic contrast)**

(Figure 9) This summer, I traveled with some family members to Alaska. While not primarily a photo shoot, I did take advantage of the opportunity to visit and photograph Alaskan glaciers. I had no idea what to expect in the way of conditions, and having never seen a glacier, had no preconceived images in mind. I found the glacier cold, small and non-threatening from a distance, but in fact, once we were on the glacier, I found it to be big, dangerous and difficult to photograph.

Glaciers are constantly moving, albeit so slowly that the movement is not actually felt. Movement, however can be one of the most dangerous aspects of being on a glacier. The smooth and slippery surfaces are etched by many crevasses. A fall into any of these frigid, bottomless cracks is almost certain death.

Temperature is also a problem when photographing a glacier. The cold affects cameras, lenses and batteries. Keeping the camera warm and un-fogged was a challenge. The temperature affects colors, as well. Although the glacier itself is white or colorless, it appears blue because of ultraviolet rays. The blue is very intense and must be the origin of the term “ice blue.” In spite of the challenges (which included having a guide hold onto the back of my coat as I shot into one of the crevasses) I was very happy with the images I managed to capture.

As is my custom, I used my trusty tripod to allow for long exposures, shot with a wide angle lens to convey the vastness of the glacier, and used a polarizer to cut the glare from the icy, wet surfaces. We were only allowed to stay on the glacier for an hour, so I had to make instant decisions and shoot quickly to get the shots I wanted.
Rhythm of the Water (Michigan) = vivace (brisk, lively, spirited)

(Figure 10) In Michigan, we went out each day in both early and late light. Our class sessions and critiques were after 10:00 a.m. and before the evening sun slipped low in the sky. Rod Planck, who was the photographer in charge, is a nature photographer and Michigan is his home territory, so he taxied us around to all the wilderness areas he liked to shoot. Many of these locations involved water. From falling streams to mirrored lakes to boggy fields of flowers and insects, we studied water.

Water moves in seemingly mysterious ways, but those rhythms are more predictable than we think. Water ripples over stones in its path, runs smoothly over the depths, and splits itself in foaming fury to go around large rocks. Water seems soft, but always, when it chooses a path, water wins out over landscape.

The color of water gives clues to its depth and its origin. The water in Michigan has a great deal of iron and the resulting rusty, brown color is distinctive. Light through the foam of a rushing stream looks almost buttery, and I learned to meter for that.

Before the Michigan workshop, I photographed mostly in black and white because I felt I had more control over the final images. The workshop was all about color, though, so we studied metering and learned about light. Once I began to understand the Five Stop Metering System, I became excited about color. Metering gave me more control over tones and colors, highlights and shadows.

IV. Conclusion

It can be said that rhythm is the most basic of concepts. We are lulled in the womb by the rhythm of our mother’s heartbeat. Our lives are ruled by the rhythm of night and day, the changing of the seasons, the passing of our years from youth to old age.

There are many definitions of the word and the concept that is rhythm and many of
those definitions struggle with the fact that rhythm is easy to recognize in music, not so much in the visual arts. It’s there, but in the visual arts we have to see or feel it rather than hear it. The key to this is in the feeling of it. If there is rhythm in music, you can hear it, but you must also feel it. The deaf can dance because they can feel the beat or rhythm of music. In photography, that is also true. A visually impaired person can still see and feel the patterns of an image when they can’t see the details.

Rhythm can be seen in photography, but it must also be felt. Rhythm is spiritual in every meaning of that word. It speaks to the spirit in each of us and connects us to that external spirit no one can really understand.

It is this rhythm I want to see and feel and convey in every photo that I take. I want my viewers to feel the rhythm of life.
Figure 1

*Light Iris, 1930*

Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

*Georgia O’Keeffe*

Figure 2

*Light Violet Iris*

Pigment print of color positive

© 2004 Karen Page
Figure 3

Red Sunset

Pigment print of color positive

© 2005 Karen Page
Figure 4

*Forest Fern*

Pigment print of color positive

© 2006 Karen Page
Figure 5

*Alternating Rhythm*

Pigment print of color positive

© 2005 Karen Page
Figure 6

Progressive Rhythm

Pigment print of color positive

© 2005 Karen Page
Figure 7

*Adagio Slots*

Pigment print of color positive

© 2006 Karen Page
Figure 8

*Capriccio Wave*

Pigment print of color positive

© 2006 Karen Page
Figure 9

Glacier Falls

Pigment print of color positive
© 2006 Karen Page
Figure 10

*Vivace Falls*

Pigment print of color positive

© 2003 Karen Page


6 Laurer, pg 106.


Selected Bibliography


Artist Statement

I find that photographing rhythmic patterns in nature not only yields fascinating subjects; but also reveals the incredible intricacy and beauty of the world around me, leaving me to stand in awe of the power of the Creator.

It can be said that rhythm is the most basic of concepts. We are lulled in the womb by the rhythm of our mother’s heartbeat. Our lives are ruled by the rhythm of night and day, the changing of the seasons, the passing of our years from youth to old age.

There are many definitions of the word and the concept that is rhythm and many of those definitions struggle with the fact that rhythm is easy to recognize in music, not so much in the visual arts. It’s there, but in the visual arts we have to see or feel it rather than hear it. The key to this is in the feeling of it. If there is rhythm in music, you can hear it, but you must also feel it. The deaf can dance because they can feel the beat or rhythm of music. In photography, that is also true. A visually impaired person can still see and feel the patterns of an image when they can’t see the details.

Rhythm can be seen in photography, but it must also be felt. Rhythm is spiritual in every meaning of that word. It speaks to the spirit in each of us and connects us to that external spirit no one can really understand.

It is this rhythm I want to see and feel and convey in every photo that I take. I want my viewers to feel the rhythm of life.