

A definition:

In the visual arts—in particular painting, graphic design, photography, and sculpture—**composition** is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject of a work. It can also be thought of as the organization of the elements of art according to the principles of art.

- Successful compositions come from the way that artists use the elements and principles of design.
 - Line
 - Shape (organic vs inorganic),
 - Texture
 - Value
 - Color
 - Unity and Variety
 - Balance
 - Scale and Proportion
 - Rhythm
 - Emphasis
 - Space (positive and negative)

Line



Robert Mapplethorpe, Patty Smith, 1975

Shape



Gary Winogrand, 1963, Rhino, Central Park Zoo

Unity and Variety/Color



Edward Burtynsky, Manufacturing #17, Deda Chicken Processing Plant, Dehui City, Jilin Province, China, 2005

Scale and Proportion



Lisette Model, Untitled NY Jazz, 1943

Space



Ansel Adams, 1948, Mono Lake

Some ways to think about organizing a composition

These are commonly followed ideas and a good
place to start.

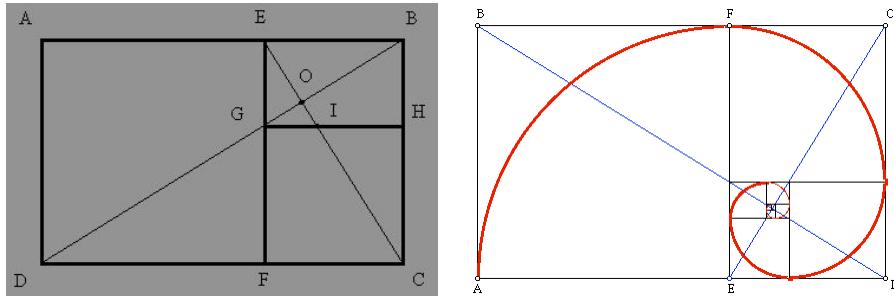
*But remember, the rules are always
made to be broken!*

Some ways to think about organizing a composition

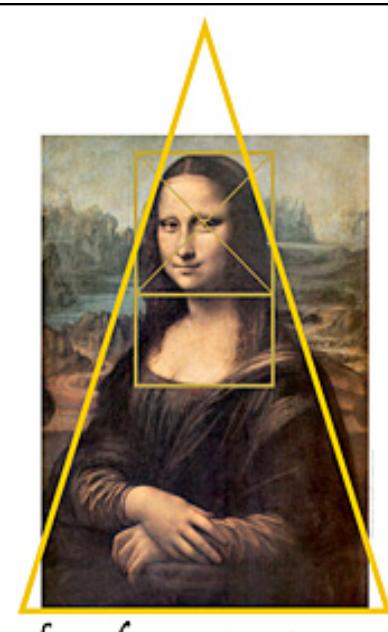
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The Golden Mean/Rectangle also known as the Divine Proportion

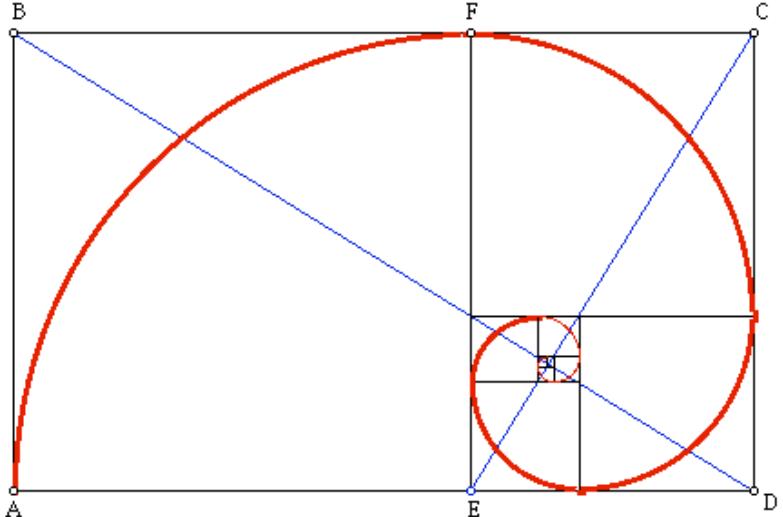


This model is based on mathematical formulas. It was thought to be the the most beautiful proportions to use to create images. This was also thought to be sent to folks by God through math – and so it was labeled as divine.



The Golden Mean began its use during the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a great cultural movement which brought about a period of scientific revolution and artistic transformation, at the dawn of modern European history. It marks the transitional period between the end of the middle Ages and the start of the Modern Age. The Renaissance is usually considered to have begun in the 14th century in Italy and the 16th century in northern Europe.

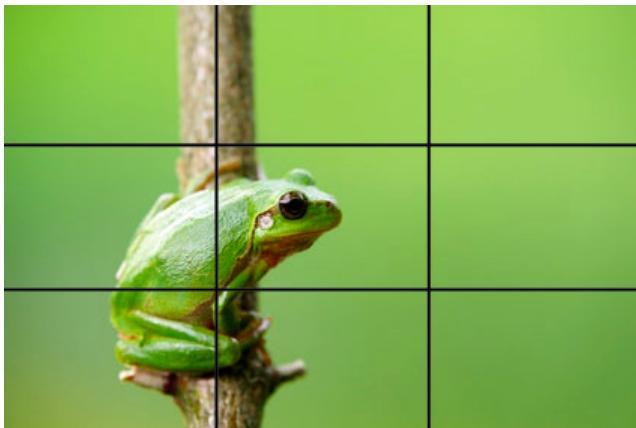
The Monalisa by Leonardo Divinci was considered to be the most perfectly balanced image ever painted.



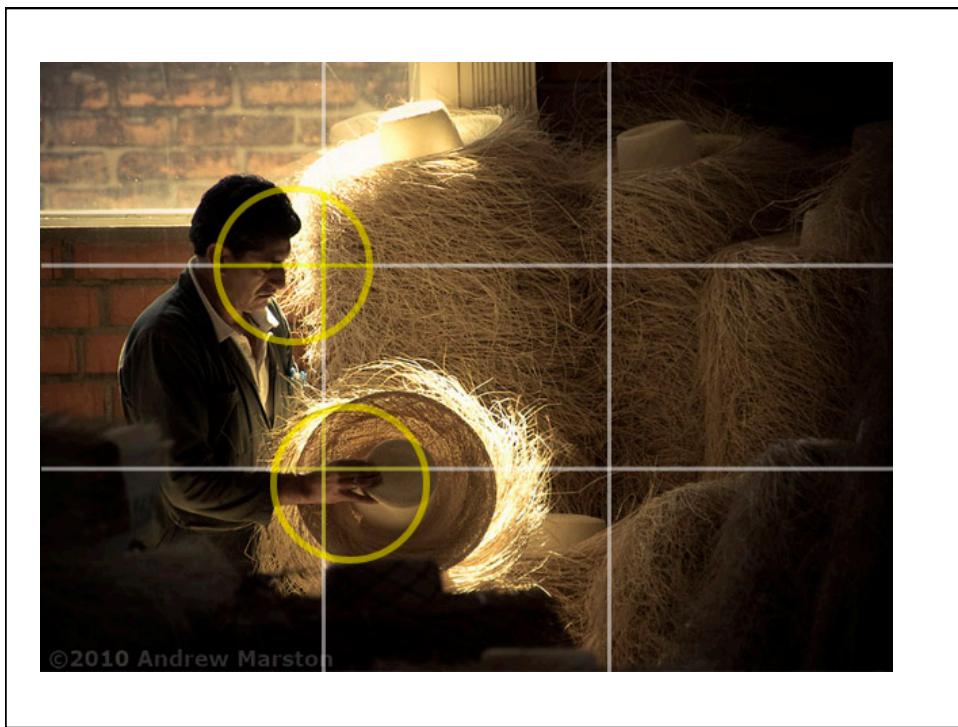
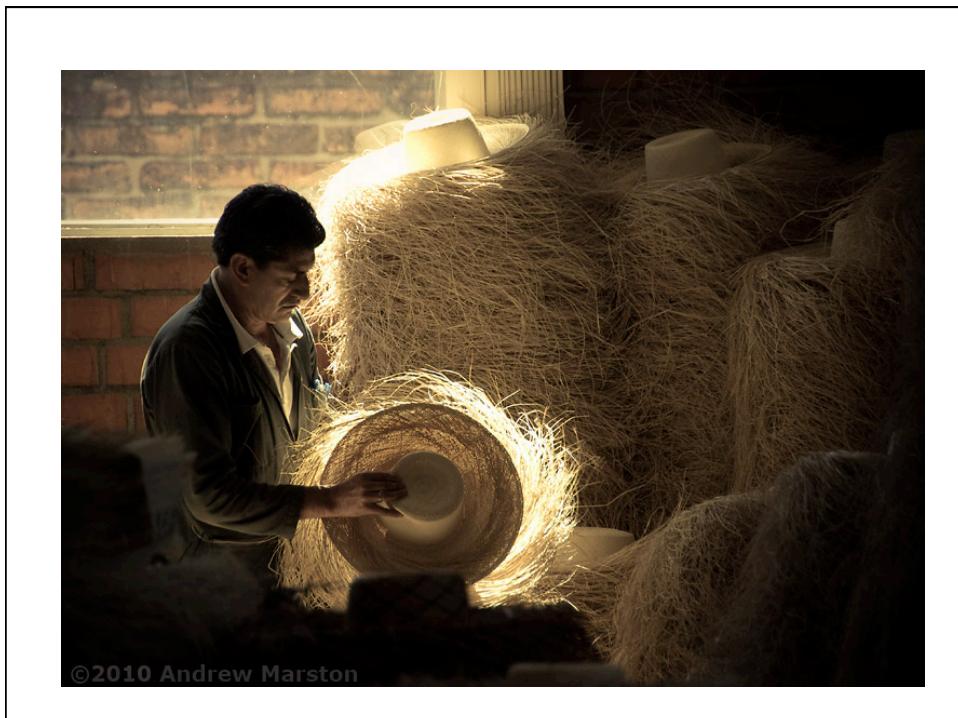
If you are using this to create an image, think about the way that your eye moves through this space. The idea is to start the viewer's eye at point A, up and around to F and then following the spiral through to its end where the blue lines intersect. Where you place objects within these boxes will lead the viewer's eye to where those lines cross – the focal point.

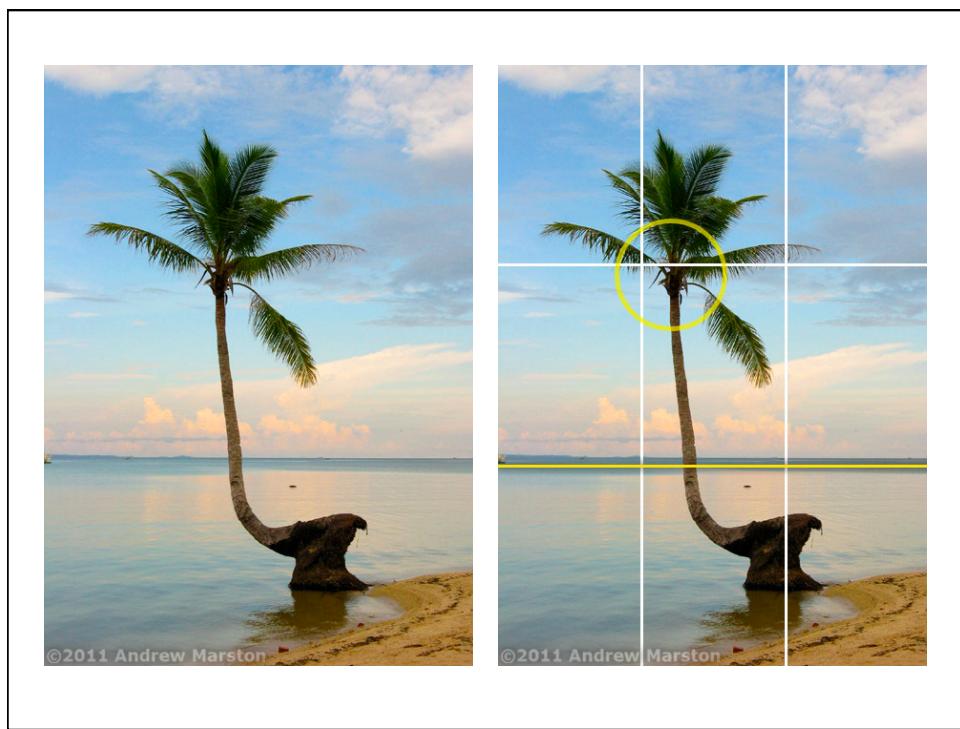
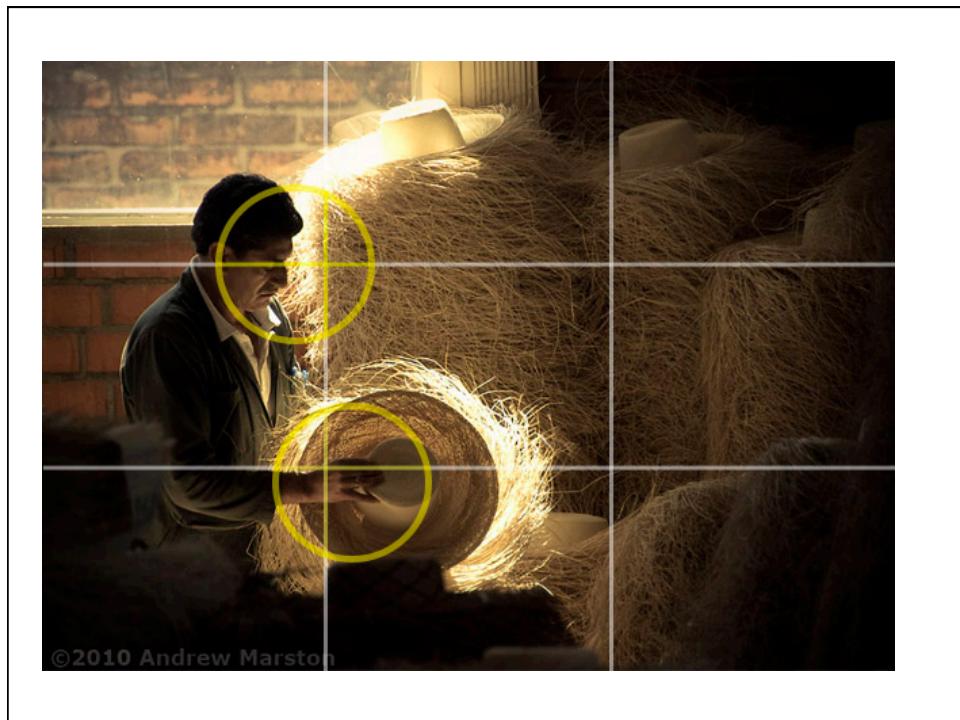
Rule of Thirds

This is a modified version of the Divine proportion which lots of people use now. If your camera gives you the option of putting up a grid on its view screen, it's giving you a guide to work with this rule.



This guideline says that an image should be imagined as divided into nine equal parts by two equally spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines, and that important compositional elements should be placed along these lines or their intersections.





Golden Triangles



Another rule is the "Golden Triangles". It's more convenient for pieces with diagonal lines. There are three triangles with corresponding shapes. Just roughly place three subjects with approximate equal sizes in these triangles and this rule will be kept



Now! Head on out and make some images!