

Minimalist Photography - Elegant Simplicity



By Ed Konczal

The appeal of minimalism is its elegant simplicity. I have long admired the work of graphic artists and how they arrange objects into compelling works. They master the view that less is more. And so it is with minimalist photography. There are various definitions for minimalism, but my is, well, minimal -- eliminate objects in the image to the absolute minimum and arrange them into a dramatic image whose meaning the viewer instantly grasps. Contrary to some approaches that say the objects in the image should not be recognizable, I believe they must be.

In the main image (Windows) there is an overall symmetry -- the lattice work of the windows and the curtain behind them. But what makes this image work is the folding of the curtain to the right. This breaks or offsets the symmetry and makes the image work as a minimalist image.



The second image (Lost in the Blue) is a simple still life. The background is uniformly blue. The cherry breaks this uniformity and the stem adds to the compositional appeal - it starts from the lower left and leads the eye to the cherry. Table top still life photography permits

you to manipulate the selection and placement of objects. Therefore, it lends itself to minimalism, but I found that it also causes you to be a bit more creative.



I got the idea for the third image (Screws) when I was contemplating some home repairs. I looked at the top of a screw and instantly thought of this image. Once you start on your minimalist journey, you will find that your creative juices will flow and image ideas will continually pop up in your mind's eye. The reason is that you can easily visualize images that only included a few objects, colors or themes. But be careful when you are driving.

Minimalism is not limited to table tops. The world outside has a wealth of opportunities. You just have to look for them always with the mindset of less is more and with the idea of symmetry that is offset by some object.

The fourth image (Lone Leaf) was found while I was walking around a college campus. I found what seemed to be the perfect leaf and placed on the tree bark. The texture of the leaf and the bark enhance each other. Minimalist images are sometimes found and sometimes improvised.



The minimalist switch in my head is always on. While I was driving on some back streets, I saw a school with bright yellow, red and blue tiles. I reminded myself to go back. Suggestion - write down your items so you don't forget to explore them. I went back, when school was out and walked around trying to see how I could use the colors and shapes. Then I saw it (Yellow to Red) a beam of yellow that ended at a wall of red. The colored tiles and the beam line ending at the wall makes the image. In this case I had to try different angles and shape combinations. Let the images come to you, don't try to rush or force them.



So far the images I have presented are primarily taken within a rather small camera to object distance. However, minimalism can be extended to longer reach. In my Gathering Storm Cloud series, I take images of seemingly menacing cloud formations and punctuate them by added a single object. In the (Liberty) image the shadow of the majestic Statue of



Liberty stands against the background of the cloud formation. Simple, but elegantly simple.

Now let's look at how minimalism can be combined with another of my favorite photographic venues - abstracts. The image (Anomaly) was taken using polarizing filters.



I placed a polarizing filter on a light box and one on the camera. This added the abstract effect. The minimalist aspect is that the bottle has red contents but what came out was blue, an anomaly.

Another example (In Focus) shows the combination of minimalist and abstracts. These are children's part toys. The one closest to the camera is in focus and using full aperture, the rest go into an abstract blur. I was fortunate to have this image published in the book Photos That Inspire (Wiley).



Now go out there with you camera and become a minimalist photographer