Improving Your Photography
Photo Review Session

by Excio

REVIEW BY:

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INITIAL THOUGHTS

This is an extraordinary work of art. A nude photograph of an anonymous lady shot in monochrome - very expressive, emotional, and powerful while still appearing simple.

Photographs such as this are used to express strong emotions and would easily pass as a form of surrealism photography. Oftentimes, the picture may not have an underlying meaning and would have been captured to incite emotions in viewer's or it could be that the photographer just wanted to lay emphasis on some elements like lines, shapes, texture etc.

THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Things that stand out in this photograph which contribute to it being aesthetically beautiful are as follows.
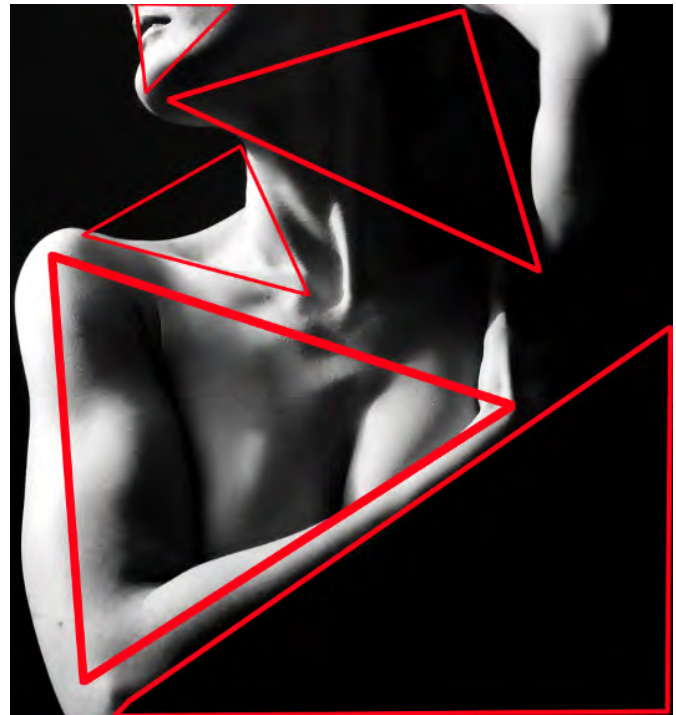
HIGH CONTRAST

The presence of the high contrast easily demarcates the black and white elements in the photograph. The body of the model is well highlighted causing the easy differentiation between the model and the rest of the frame. The careful and intentional use of light causes the picture to have lots of depth which allows the intricate details of the body; like the high cheek bones, the flattering bust line, the neck, jawline etc.

LINES AND CURVES

The use of lines and curves to divide space and to balance elements in certain areas of the photo is done very well. For instance, the jawline to the face of the model, the shoulder line on the left side towards the elbow, down to the arm leading to the elbow which is also well divided by the light that comes from the neck.

COMPOSITION

Interestingly, the photograph contains a lot of triangular composition. This type of composition is very different from the popular rule of thirds, it seeks to balance elements closely related but that fall in triangular portions of the frame making the picture more pleasing to the eye. It often helps to track the relationship between elements.

The first prominent triangle is the one that starts from the shoulder on the left side of the picture to the hand that goes to the arm that leads to the armpit, towards the collar bone and back to the shoulder. Another is the small triangle obvious on the face caused by the highlights. Yet another perfect triangle is created by the shadows from the lower part of the elbow towards the armpit back to the right end of the frame and back to the elbow. Finally, another obvious triangle goes from the jawline towards the second arm that goes up and back to the jawline.

MAKING THIS PHOTO EVEN BETTER

One thing to point out however, that would have made this picture better, is the distracting shadows as a result of the type of lighting used.

LIGHTING

While the use of harsh light was necessary to get a perfect contrast between the body and the rest of the frame, the shadows cause distractions due to the sharp and clear-cut distinctions. This could prevent the viewers eye from flowing with the model's body structure.

The use of a soft light with an increased intensity would have created softer and better transitioning from highlights to mid-tones and obvious shadows.

In the images below, you can see the areas of sharp transition between lighted areas and shadows outlined in red. A similar picture, shot by myself, with the use of soft lights is included for comparison.