

BASICS OF BETTER UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

COMPOSITION



OPTICAL OCEAN SALES
UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT

COMPOSITION

Design Your Photos

- ▶ **Horizontal or Vertical Orientation**
- ▶ **Rule of Thirds**
- ▶ **Dynamic Diagonals**
- ▶ **Focal Point of Interest**
- Eye Contact
- ▶ **Enclosure**

Next to lighting and exposure, nothing is more important to photography - and it costs nothing to achieve.



HORIZONTAL

GOOD FOR LANDSCAPES

Horizontal orientation of the camera is fine for reefscapes, fish or when the subject is wider than it is taller.



HORIZONTAL

EMPHASIZE MOVEMENT

Also good for cropping out un-interesting backgrounds and emphasizing movement with fish.



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VERTICAL

ISOLATE WITH WATER

Add dramatic background lighting and perspective from light to dark, use strobe fill for close focus/wide angle.





RULE OF THIRDS

WORK THE CORNERS FROM THE CENTER

Divide your frame with two horizontal and two vertical lines. Place a focal point of interest at the intersections, rather than the center.

Also consider using the resulting negative space to frame your subject and add dramatic perspective.

Most cameras have a gridlines feature in their viewfinder or screen - use it to help frame and balance your composition.



DRAMATIC DIAGONALS

TWIST AND TURN

Aligning your subjects, or using your background to frame diagonally, adds motion and drama to compositions. Twist, tilt and turn your camera constantly to work the corners and create diagonals.





FOCAL POINT

LET YOUR EYE MOVE & REST

Create a comfortable journey through the photo for the viewer to enter, travel, and finally rest upon a focal point of interest.



FOCAL POINT

THE EYES HAVE IT

As animals ourselves, we want to look other animals in the eyes. Eyes also tell a story and communicate. Try to create a conversation.



ENCLOSURE

CATCH THE MOMENT

Use caves, wrecks, or other larger plants and structures to frame the subject. Slow shutter speeds and shoot using available light.



ENCLOSURE

EMPHASIZE WITH LIGHT

Lighting an enclosed subject can be difficult as you either have to silhouette the outside edge, or just kiss the subject with light.



A PLACE TO SWIM TO USE NEGATIVE SPACE

Use negative space to create
a natural area for an animal –
and your eye – to swim to.



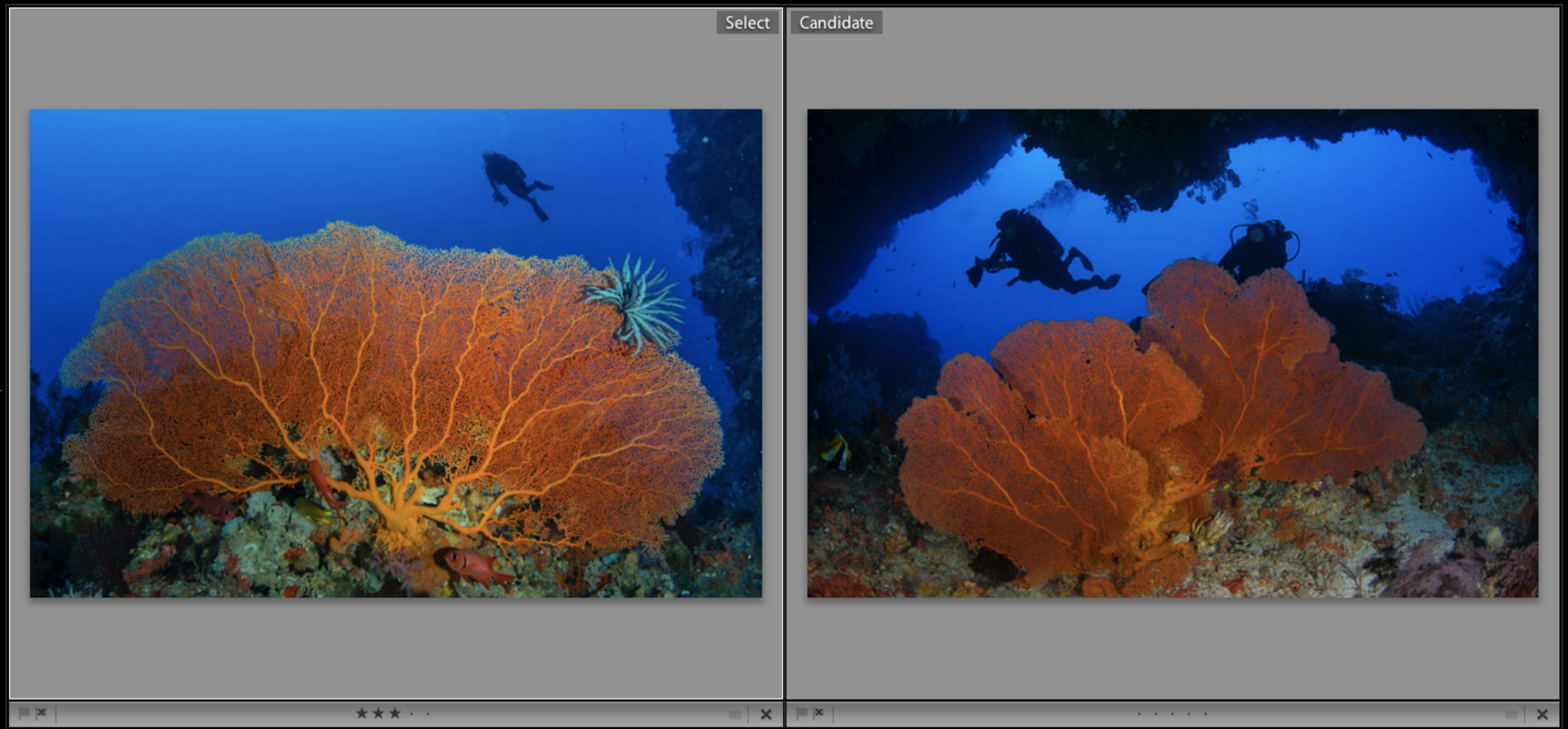
COMPOSITION

TRY DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Try to go through these ideas in your mind when you approach your subjects, think through each as you shoot.

Work with different compositions and lighting, shooting each several different ways. Ask yourself if it's balanced, has motion and is the best framing for the shot.

Then fine-tune later in post-processing and look at what might be best to create the strongest images.



COMPOSITION

OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ▶ **Balance** - Does it feel right?
- ▶ **Amputation/Crop** - If you do it, consider where to cut.
- ▶ **Horizon Line** - Near surface or bottom.
- ▶ **Color Composition** - Contrasting complimentary colors create opportunity.
- ▶ **Textures** - use to frame focal point.





Part of the “Basics of UW Photography” Series

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More handbooks and other free information at:

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