CREATING STORYTELLING IMAGES AND VIDEO

In this video, we are going to be talking about creating storytelling images and videos for use in your digital story.

One of the important aspects of what we will be talking about today is how to make storytelling images with the tools that you have available to you. So, for most folks those tools are probably something like a smart phone or a point-and-shoot camera, or maybe a tablet. And it's important to keep in mind that those types of devices generally make those decisions for you. So, it's important to learn what tools, that device, that phone offers you in terms of controlling things like exposure and focus and other important aspects of making a photograph.

My other tip to keep in mind before we jump into some different approaches, in terms of constructing storytelling images, is to take lots of photographs. So, try anything and everything and then you see what works.

We are going to be talking about lighting, lines and frames, space, perspective, colour, and reflections.

So, here we have three photographs on the screen that are talking about different aspects of lighting.

Now, generally when you are making photographs you want to have as much light as possible. So, if you're photographing inside a building or a dimly lit space, you want to try and open up the blinds if possible, open up the windows, turn on your lights, and just give your device or your phone as much light to work with.

Now, the images on the screen here they don't necessarily have a lot of light to work with. But I wanted to show them in terms of thinking about where your light source is in relation to what you're taking a photo of and where you are standing as the photographer.

So, on the left here we have an image of a couple of my friends, we're camping and there's a campfire and that's the main light source. And that's off to the side, it's illuminating our campsite from the right-hand side and because there's not a

lot of light, you don't see a lot of detail but you do see some of the shapes and items that denote that we are at a campsite. The other main light source in this image is the moon.

You can see it peaking out from behind the tree on the right-hand side of the image. And both of these light sources are off to the side of the subject and this is something that, normally you wouldn't want to do, normally you'd want to have as much light as possible.

But we can think about how this image makes us feel in terms of you know, we can feel that it's dusk, we can feel it getting dark, we can feel that the day is ending, and maybe some peaceful feelings there.

In the middle of the screen we have an image of a sunset that's obscured by some trees. And because the light source is behind the trees, it's created a silhouette. So, we can't see many of the details of the trees but we can see the shapes. So, moving the light source behind what you're taking a photograph of and placing the subject right between you and the light source will create this silhouette effect.

So, if you want to obscure the details and just focus on shapes maybe focus on some textures, creating a silhouette by moving the light source behind your subject is one way to do that.

And then on the right-hand side here, we have an image that was taken just after sunrise. The light source, the sun, is off to the left-hand side and it's shining through some fog from the early morning. So, we can think about how the light source being off to the side is illuminating the fog and sort of, the feelings we can get from that. We get a sense of time and place.

So again, generally you want to have as much light as possible, sort-of fill your space with light, but if that's not possible, maybe you want to be thinking about where you are in relation to your light source and the subject or the thing that you're taking the photograph of.

So, now we're going to look at lines and then we're going to look at frames. But lines are one technique when we're thinking about images that take us on a journey.

Right, so lines can direct and they can re-direct our visual attention. Here we have an image on the left of two types of lines, we have some trees that are standing very tall and forming straight lines right up into the sky and taking us into the sky with them and then we also have this pathway that's directing us through the forest. So, we can think of the way that the line of the pathway is taking us on a journey and the lines of the trees are taking us up from the ground into the sky.

Similarly, the image next to it, we have some different lines but the most dominant line here is the sidewalk. And you can see that it is sort of, receding into the distance and creating this sense of a journey or a destination and also the sense of perspective as well.

Next to that we have this image of the Vancouver library, downtown and just some interesting lines right, so we can see the way that the lines take us through the image, direct our visual attention, but also create just a sense of visual interest that sort of, disrupts the expected viewing experience and we really have to look at the repetition of the lines and the shapes that are happening here.

And then we have the image on the farthest right-hand side of the line, street-dividing line in downtown Canmore that's directing our visual attention from the front of the frame of the photograph all the way to the middle and the back and towards the mountain.

So, we really get this sense of journey, of directing our visual attention towards you know, something, and following the line on this journey and also the sense of scale and perspective.

So, in the same way we can think about frames as a way to direct our visual attention. Framing tells the viewer where to look and also what you want them to see. Frames can obscure some things and they can also bring order to a chaotic scene.

So, here we have an image on the left. This is actually me in the bathtub. And we can see the way in which this frame of the doorway hides some of the visual clutter, not all of it but some of the visual clutter of this bathroom and creates a more peaceful sense and really focuses on the peaceful feelings that I had here in this bathtub and hides some of the visual clutter on the counter.

Next to that, we have an image of a river in Quebec and this was shot through an old, wooden-covered bridge. And just using the frame of the architectural element of the bridge to really sort of, give a sense of looking in on something right, so it's directing your visual attention towards that people that are on the river, But it's also giving the sense that we are looking in at this scene from a different place or a different perspective right, so it's really creating that element of a frame that's taking us slightly outside of the scene, we're not necessarily part of that scene, we're just looking in on it.

Next to that, we have an image of the Vancouver skyline shot through a doorway and here we get the sense of place and space. Similar to the lines you know, we have this image that's inviting us in somewhere but it's also obscuring certain elements of the scene, keeping them hidden. Right, so we get this, almost voyeuristic sense of looking in on a space through the frame.

And then on the right-hand side, I have a little bit of a looser definition of a frame here, but we can see how the smallest person at the very bottom of the rock, closest to the lake is framed by the other two people who are looking out onto

the lake as well. And how that sense of framing creates some visual interest. It's disrupting what we expect, it's playing with our sense of scale and size, and everyone is sort of framing the person that's down by the water and really directing our attention through the scene.

Next, we're going to be talking about space In particular, we're going to be talking about empty space or negative space. And this idea of empty space or negative space, this is where you're really leaving room for emotional reaction. So, you can use negative space to make your subject very small or set your subject off to one side of your image and this can be visually surprising. So, our eye generally, is going to be looking for the subject or the most important part of the photograph, in the centre, but by using negative space to move the subject off to one side, it sort of, forces the eye to look around the image and find the subject, or the most important part.

So, here in the left-hand image on the screen we can see that I'm using negative space to offset the image of the old barn and the negative space in this image also can create a sense of, maybe scale or a feeling of loneliness or emptiness.

Very similar is the image on the right but it's a different feeling because we have the bright blue sky and the golden, just-cut wheat. But again, you can see how there's a lot of negative or empty space in this image and it gives it an expansive feeling. It leaves a lot of space for emotion, it leaves a lot of space for consideration and it sort of, forces your eye to move around the photograph to really get a sense of what's happening here.

Next, we'll be talking about perspective. So, we can think about perspective and scale as disrupting our visual expectations. And this is one way to make the sort of, taken-for-granted or the things that we don't see everyday, it can make them visible through different perspective and scale techniques.

So, think about turning your phone or your camera towards the sky or down to the ground. If it's possible, you can think about getting down onto different levels depending on what you're photographing and what your subject is.

So, on the left-hand side here, we have an image where I was standing in the forest and just turned my camera straight up, or turned my phone straight up into the sky and here we really see how tall the trees are. It gives us the sense as the

viewer that we are very small. So, this perspective really challenges sort of, how we would normally expect to walk through a forest. If we're looking at eye level, it's really jarring to suddenly look up and to get a sense of scale and perspective that's different than how we normally view the world.

The middle image here is of my dog, Ellie. And you can see that I've gotten down at her level, she's a very small dog, but you wouldn't know that from this photograph, right? By photographing her at her level it gives her a sense of importance right, and we really see the world through her eyes, so to say. But, we can think about how getting down onto her level and photographing her at her eye-level really changes the sense of perspective and scale.

And then on the right-hand side I have an image of myself standing with some very inappropriate footwear for the weather you know, some wet canvas shoes standing on some rocks that are covered in a little smattering of snow. And we can think about just, you know, turning your phone or your camera down towards the ground and making the taken-for-granted or the sometimes invisible, visible here. So, we don't normally always look directly down at the ground where we

are moving. But, by taking a moment to turn my phone all the way down and focusing on the small details of the rocks and the snow, you really get a sense you know, taking a pause, taking a moment, the texture on the ground, and my wet feet.

Right, so drawing attention to some details that normally you wouldn't necessarily make the prominent feature in your photograph. So, perspective and scale is one way to disrupt visual expectations and make the taken-for-granted more visible.

We're going to talk a little bit about colour here. And mainly, I like to think about colour as an adjective in a sentence. So, colour can add feelings and emotions to your story, different colours have different connotations, they can be evocative of different emotions, feelings, you know, a sense of calm or a sense of chaos can come from different colours particularly when paired with different narratives happening in a digital story.

So, on the left here, we have this image of a bright, blue-ish, green, teal painted wall with a crack running down it, leading to this bright, vibrant, yellow flowers

emerging from the concrete. And we can think about how these bright, yellow flowers create a sense of joyfulness where we wouldn't expect to find it.

Similarly, the image on, or in the centre of your screen is me, there I am, photographed against this bright, yellow background with different yellows and oranges happening here. As we can think about how differently this image might feel if I was photographed against a grey background or a very drab background. Now we have this bright, vibrant image and we can think about all of the feelings that these colours of orange and yellow might evoke within us. And then the image all the way onto the right is of a very calm, serene, scene in Tofino but we have these pops of colour with the red buildings and the red dock.

So, we can think about how that pop of colour directs our attention to the man-made aspects of this image, and how it would feel if maybe the red wasn't there. So, we can consider how colour can direct our attention but also, how can it make us feel.

Finally, the last technique, in terms of creating storytelling images that I want to talk about here is reflections. So, reflections again, like lines and frames they can

direct our visual attention, they can also disrupt and distort expected visual realities.

So, on the left-hand side we have this image of a coffee shop more interesting is the reflection of the buildings behind me in the coffee shop window. So, we can think about how this image creates a sense of space and time but also there's a distortion happening here. We can't see into the store, we can only see then buildings that are being reflected in the window. So, it causes us to have to look deeper into the image to see what is the reflection and what is you know, what aspects of this image are in the store window.

The image in the centre of the screen is of a mountain in British Columbia, or a very large hill that's being reflected into the lake below. So, we can think about how this image sort of, disrupts our expected visual reality in terms of almost how mirror-like the reflection is. We can also think about how this image might make us feel if we were to flip it upside-down so that the reflection is above and the actual mountain is below. So, in this case we can consider how the reflection sort

of, can disrupt our expected visual reality. Also, again it forces our eye to look more closely and consider what is the reflection and what is reality.

And again, very similar themes in the image all the way onto the right of a storefront in Victoria for a coffee shop called "Hey Happy." And here we can see the "Hey Happy" sign on a very grey, drab day. And this is a way to create some visual interest, so, we can see the reflection, something's reflected and we see it twice or maybe multiple times. It can give that element of the image a sense of importance. And again, it disrupts our expected visual reality and causes us to look more closely into the image to really figure out what's happening here.

So, those are some tips and tricks in terms of constructing your own storytelling images for use in your digital story. I'm just going to end on this image of a wooden trail leading us through the rainforest. And thank you for coming on this journey with me to consider some of the elements of making your own images