



## Monthly Newsletter: May 2026

### May Photography Club Highlights

Our May club meeting began with the typical Cape Town winter storms. Heavy rain and bad weather forced us to postpone by a week, thank you to everyone for your understanding and flexibility. When we finally gathered, things took a different turn: instead of our usual interclub competition, we experimented with having **AI judge the photos**. The results were eye-opening. While AI can evaluate technical aspects, it cannot truly understand the emotions we felt when capturing the image. It reminded us that AI is just a tool, it will never replace the human connection behind photography.

That reflection leads us perfectly into this month's theme. Photography is all about creativity, storytelling, and seeing the world in your own unique way. Yet even in an art form filled with freedom, a few composition "rules" can help turn a good photo into a great one. Techniques like the Rule of Thirds, Leading Lines, Frames Within Frames, Patterns & Symmetry, Fill the Frame, and Diagonals can guide the eye and bring energy to an image.

Of course, elements like colour, texture, light, shape, and contrast also play a vital role. But here's the funny thing about photography rules: they're useful to learn... and just as useful to break. Sometimes the most powerful image is the one that ignores every guideline and simply captures a feeling, a moment, or a story.

So, as we look back on May's meeting and ahead to our next adventures, we ask: *Are there really rules in photography... or is it all about breaking them?*

*Let's start with the rules in May and in June Lets break them.*

*The editor*



## May Results

Our May judging was different; we used AI to judge photos. The AI provided purely technical scores and feedback, no emotion, no judgment, and no personal bias. Members are free to read, ignore, agree, or disagree with its input, just as we often do with human judges.

The real value remains in our conversations and shared perspectives. AI wasn't present when the photos were taken and cannot grasp the feelings or stories behind them; it only evaluates technical aspects.

Human judging is never perfect either, we've all disagreed with scores before. AI is simply another tool, another viewpoint to consider. It follows rules consistently, offers editing suggestions, and adds insights without replacing the heart of photography, which lies in human emotion and artistic expression.

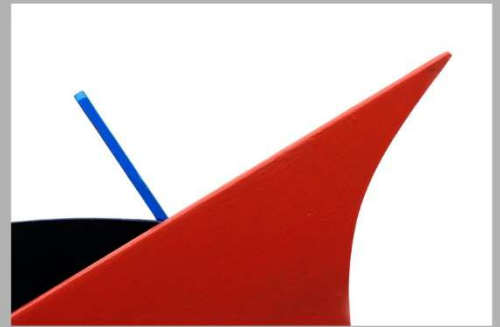
In May, we tested AI on members' photos. Some feedback aligned with our views, some didn't, and that's the point. It's clean, rule-based, and emotionless, while we bring the passion and meaning that make photography an art.

Even with AI judging our members, and our members testing AI. We still had top quality photos from members

May Photos



May Photos



May Photos



May Photos



May Photos



## **Club Meeting Information:**

Our next meetings will be on the following dates in April remember the closing dates of Photo Vault (PV)

Meeting	PV Closing Date	Meeting Date	Set Subject
Club Black&White @ 18h00	31 May 2026	9 June	Lighthouse / Street Photography
Club Normal @ 19h15	31 May 2026	9 June	Street Photography

### **Take note:**

- June **Set Subject** is A Cell Phone Street Photography
- June is also our **Bi-Monthly Black White Meeting**
- **A Cell Phone Street Photography**

This category is dedicated to street photography captured with a mobile phone; the image must have been made using a smartphone or tablet camera. The image should depict an authentic interest, or urban detail. Manipulation is allowed, but the capture must be made with the phone, and the image must reflect spontaneity and authenticity rather than a staged or heavily composite scene

## **Outings, Workshops and Courses**

### **Outings:**

#### **Velddrif Kuifkop Weekend 25-28 August.**

Self-catering midweek break, bird cruise on Cracklin' Rosie, maybe wildflowers are in bloom ect.  
Contact Nettie for more information



**Vergelegen Wine Estate- Calling** all photographers the launch the **4th edition** of their annual photography contest, and this year they introduce a striking new theme: **Black & White Photography**.

### Contest Details:

- Photos must be taken at Vergelegen during April–May.
- Black & White only.
- Limited to two photographs entered per person
- Camera, Smartphone, and Junior categories, plus People's Choice.

If you see something interesting on Facebook or any groups, please share with the group.

### **Audio-Visual**

Invitation: AV Showcase Day

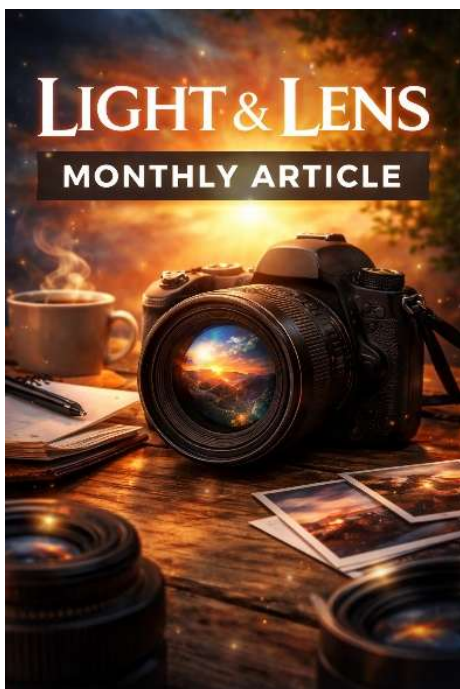
Join the AV community for a relaxed evening of sharing

Audio-Visual productions on the big screen, not a competition, just creativity, stories, and good company.

### **Next JAP training starts 10 Oct 2026**

A general application form will be available to download from this section of the PSSA website as of **1st July 2026**. The closing date for applications will be **1st August 2026**.

**Light & Lens Monthly Articles** – looking for some ideas on what you want to read about and send me some interesting articles that I can use



## Light & Lens Monthly Article

by Carima van den Berg

### Back to Basics: 10 Composition Rules in Photography 📷

Photography is creative, exciting, frustrating, inspiring and sometimes completely accidental. One minute you're carefully planning the perfect shot, the next minute your finger slips, the horizon tilts, and somehow it becomes your favourite image of the day.

But whether you shoot with a professional camera or your cellphone, composition is one of the most important tools in photography. It's what helps guide the viewer's eye, create balance, and turn a simple snapshot into something memorable.

The good news? You don't need expensive gear to improve your composition, just a little awareness and a willingness to experiment.

So, let's dust off the basics and revisit some classic composition "rules" photographers love to talk about... and occasionally ignore completely.

#### 1. Rule of Thirds

Probably the most famous photography rule of all time.

Imagine your photo divided into nine equal blocks with two horizontal and two vertical lines. Instead of placing your subject right in the middle, try positioning it along one of those lines or intersections. It instantly creates a more balanced and interesting image.

(And yes, your camera probably already has this grid setting hidden somewhere in the menu you never open.)

## **2. Leading Lines**

Roads, fences, staircases, rivers, hallways, anything that creates a line can help lead the viewer's eye through the photograph.

Leading lines naturally pull attention toward your subject and help create depth in an image. They also make viewers feel like they're stepping into the scene instead of just looking at it.

## **3. Diagonals**

Horizontal lines feel calm. Vertical lines feel strong. Diagonal lines? They bring energy and movement.

Even if your subject is standing perfectly still, diagonals can create the feeling that something is about to happen. They add drama, action, and excitement to a photo.

Just don't overdo it, too many diagonals can make a photo feel like the photographer fell over while taking it.

## **4. Frame Within a Frame**

Windows, doorways, arches, branches, tunnels, these can all act as natural frames around your subject.

This technique adds depth and helps draw attention exactly where you want it. It's also a great excuse to photograph people standing dramatically in doorways while pretending you're directing a movie scene.

## **5. Fill the Frame**

Sometimes the problem with a photo isn't the subject... it's everything else around it.

By moving closer and filling the frame with your subject, you remove distractions and allow details, textures, and emotions to shine. It's especially powerful in portraits and wildlife photography.

Bonus tip: Zoom with your feet occasionally.

## **6. Patterns & Repetition**

Humans love patterns. Repeating shapes, colours, windows, trees, or waves create visually pleasing images almost instantly.

The fun part? Breaking the pattern. One object that's different from the rest immediately grabs attention and adds interest to the shot.

## **7. Symmetry**

Perfect symmetry can make an image feel calm, powerful, and satisfying. Reflections in water, buildings, bridges, and architecture work beautifully for this.

Of course, perfect symmetry also means spending five minutes trying to stand exactly in the middle while people watch you wondering what on earth you're doing.

## 8. Figure to Ground

This simply means making your subject stand out from the background.

A bright subject against a dark background, or a dark subject against a bright sky, creates separation and instantly pulls attention to the important part of the image.

If your background is messy or distracting, this technique can save the day.

## 9. The Golden Ratio

Now we enter the fancy art-school part of photography.

The Golden Ratio is based on natural balance and flow, often shown as a spiral guiding the viewer's eye through the image. It's been used in art, architecture, and photography for centuries.

Do most photographers fully understand it? Debatable.

Do they still nod wisely when someone mentions it? Absolutely.

## 10. Centre the Dominant Eye

In portraits, placing the subject's dominant eye near the centre of the image creates a stronger connection with the viewer.

It gives the strange but wonderful feeling that the person in the photo is following you with their eyes, slightly creepy, but very effective.

## The Real Secret?

Composition rules are useful. They help us learn, improve, and train our eyes to see differently. But photography is still art, and art isn't meant to live inside a box forever.

Some of the best photographs ever taken break every single "rule" in the book.

So, learn the rules. Practice them. Experiment with them.

And then sometimes... forget them completely.

Because maybe the real joy of photography isn't in getting everything perfectly balanced, perfectly sharp, or perfectly composed.

Maybe it's simply about seeing a moment, capturing it, and enjoying the process.

***Here's the question:***

***What if we threw out all the rules... and just enjoyed photography?***

## **Additional Information:**

Our **website** is being updated regularly, go and have a look.

Visit our **Facebook** page, invite friends to like our Facebook page.

Webpage: <https://helderbergphoto.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/helderbergphoto/>