

March 2025 Assignment - The Photography of Architecture

To be shown at the April general meeting

By John Bare

Why do we have to learn how to shoot buildings?

First, architecture is more than just buildings, although buildings constitute most of what we consider architecture. It can, however, include bridges, towers - anything that has been designed and built by man.



Second, we encounter architecture every day. *Good* architecture is considered sculpture we can walk through. When we're travelling, or even exploring locally, we come across structures that are historic or notable - or both - that inspire us to want to document it. But we need to more than just document it. We always want to compose an image that will capture the attention of the viewers and make them want to explore the image.



Consider shooting during the "blue hour", when your subject might be illuminated either on the outside or the inside.



Be sure to look for interesting details and vignettes in any building you photograph. Doors and windows are obvious suggestions, but look closely for antique hardware, sculptural details, and other distinguishing features that can lend themselves to strong compositions.



Don't forget to explore the interiors of buildings, which also can yield outstanding spaces and details. You will probably need to increase the ISO setting on your camera to compensate for lower light levels. Many historic buildings, especially churches and cathedrals, do not allow the use of tripods.



What techniques do we use for architectural photography? First and foremost, we must compose our image thoughtfully (as with everything we shoot!) Show the environment around the building, place it in its "space." Make sure you leave enough space around the subject so you can correct perspective distortion without cropping out relevant environmental information. That said, watch your background to be sure it doesn't distract from your subject. Distorted perspective, the appearance that the building is falling over, can be corrected in post-production, in Lightroom Develop, Camera Raw, or Photoshop. Vertical lines in the building should be vertical lines in your image.



And one absolutely vital tool when shooting architecture: a polarizing filter. A polarizer helps darken the sky behind your subject, yielding increased contrast between your subject and the background sky. But be aware, when shooting with a wide-angle lens, that you don't end up with a darker area in the middle of lighter areas of sky. Remember that you can rotate the filter to adjust the darkness of the sky.

