

Landscape Assignment (new, utopian, untouched wilderness, scenic, adventure, travel, urban/suburban/rural, industrial, transforming, man vs. nature, consumer, consumed, urbex, destroyed, dystopian, old, ruins, etc.)

Purpose: Portray the character and mood of the particular place and moment, much like you would make a portrait of a person, or convey a message or observation about the world using a place as an example or metaphor.

Requirements: Shoot fifty (*minimum!*) images that are not shot from home and do not show your home or property. Really you should shoot more like 250 – 500 photos over multiple adventures. Adventures! What's not to like?

Composition:

- There are interesting elements in the foreground, middle ground and background. The Olympic Mountains off in the distance over the water, especially when washed out in midday light – boring. The Olympics off in the distance, with an old barn off to one side in the middle distance and some dead thistle heads in the foreground rimmed with morning light – better.
- The horizon line is often not right in the middle of the frame. Lines, framing, suggestive forms, diagonals, zigzags, s-curves, balance, rhythm and texture are employed to provide interest and help move the viewer's eye around the scene.
- Lines, diagonals, zigzags and s-curves could take literal form, like the line of a fence or road, the diagonal of a leaning tree or hill slope, or the s-curve of a wave's edge on the shore or meandering stream. They could also be implied by the way other elements are lined up or arranged in a scene: three boulders forming a line because your mind automatically wants to connect the dots; a setting sun, a lighthouse, and a foreground clump of dune grass forming a curve – etc.
- You might include a suggestion of movement, or have the landscape inhabited somehow with an animal or person or manmade or natural object that has some personality and character to it.
- The horizon should be level unless tilting it allows you to compose a better image.

Lighting:

- You want great colors and/or amazing lighting or atmosphere. Most landscape photography is done during the “golden hours” in the morning and evening, when the sun is low in the sky and the light is coming in from the sides. This highlights textures and forms, and the less intense light means that shadows are not as harsh.
- YOU MAY FIND A GREAT SCENE BUT HAVE LOUSY LIGHT. If that happens, explore it, then come back when conditions are right and shoot more.
- **Pay attention and hope for interesting weather** – partially cloudy skies, storms blowing in, lightning, fog, snow/ice, sundogs, rainbows, halos and fogbows, night skies with moonlight or starlight.
- **PAY ATTENTION, ANTICIPATE AND MOVE FAST** – you often have to be prepared and not afraid to run like hell to catch those magic moments, because they pass quickly. It's super-fun and so worth it.

Technical:

- Use small aperture/high f-stop numbers (f/11 and above) to get a large depth of field if you want the whole scene in focus (usually, but not 100% always).
- Use the lowest ISOs you can and still get the depth of field you want.
- Tripods are often required to get quality images during the best light of morning and evening.

Subjects and places to look (they're not automatically interesting, but they often hold possibilities):

- State, National and city parks, ocean beaches and mountain trails, wheat fields and wastelands – Washington State is full of epic scenery. Browse guidebooks and travel recommendations and plan an outing.
- Places where nature and man intersect, collide, entwine, wrap, pierce, entangle, frame, etc.
- Old barns and buildings, farms and fields, junkyards, dumps, landfills, quarries
- Winding paths, dirt roads, railways, bridges, overpasses (views from underneath are often interesting)
- Buses, bus stations, trains, railway stations, airplanes, airports, ferries, ferry terminals, boats and docks
- Waterfalls and waterways, beaches, lakes, pools, puddles
- Libraries, museums, college campuses, theaters; churches, graveyards, cemeteries
- Factories, construction sites, power plants and power lines