

## INTRODUCTION

My inspiration for this assignment has undoubtedly come from Group f.64's straight photography, and more specifically some of the works by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, as shown in my research ([here](#) and [here](#)).

In keeping with Group f.64's era, I have chosen the format of high-contrast black and white, allowing form, shape and contrast to be more prominent. The irony here, of course, is that I have processed the images to achieve this result. Nonetheless, this assignment is my homage to the group, using the native landscapes features in and around the region I currently call home.

My collection is entitled 'Shapes of Nature'.

## TECHNICAL INFO

### Aperture

For this assignment, my intention was to use a deep depth of field which is achieved by using smaller apertures (the smaller the aperture, the larger the number). The aperture on my Nikon 20mm f/2.8D lens that achieves the sharpest results is f/8, so I wanted to use this where possible. The hyperfocal distance for these settings is 5.5 feet, which was very easy for me to estimate visually. I found this combination gave me the intended results of maximum sharpness from the foreground (beginning at half of the hyperfocal distance) through to infinity. As the first of my sessions was on a boat, I needed to have as fast a shutter speed as possible, to negate any potential movement on-board. For this reason, I specifically didn't use the smaller f/stops which would have meant the camera automatically choosing slightly longer shutter speeds to compensate.

I am not aware of the optimum f/stop on my 70-300mm zoom lens, although I would assume it to be different according to the focal length. I tried to stay in a similar aperture range with this lens too, not going wider than f/8. The hyperfocal distance using, for example, an 85mm lens at f/8 would be 99 feet which is not only much more difficult to estimate but it also more importantly means that 49.5 foot of the foreground between you and the 99 foot mark, will be out of focus.

### Focal length

I used my 20mm lens to intentionally capture as wide a scene as possible. On my Nikon d750, which is a full frame camera, I believe this gives a range of around 94 degrees. This was especially useful when shooting the rugged coastline, allowing as much as possible to be included within the frame. When shooting close-ups, for example the tree, the wide angle allowed me to be very close to the tree yet still capture some of the surrounding area and indeed the background. I wanted to highlight the root system and this lens granted this, with one of the roots practically jumping right out at me, yet still in focus. For the images of the sand dunes, I wanted the ripple pattern of the surface of the dunes to feel very close to the viewer, something that only really happens when shooting with a shorter lens.

I used my 70-300mm for many of the images shot on the boat trip, as it was just not possible to get close enough to the subject. This lens loses sharpness on the longer focal lengths, so where possible, I tried to keep to the 70mm end. Purposefully not using the longer focal distances avoided the images appearing flatter than need be.

### Viewpoint

My aim was to represent the scenery exactly as it is, so I chose the viewpoint to mimic that of a 'passer-by'. When shooting patterns in the sand or details of trees, I adopted a low view point using the 20mm wide angle – I wanted the patterns or the roots to feel as if they were right under the viewer's nose.

## EVALUATION

Subject-wise, my plan was to showcase shapes and objects created by mother nature, highlighted by light and shade. The barren land and native vegetation of this region is nothing short of fascinating, so I wanted to focus on the rock formations and sand dunes, as well as some of the local trees. There is a cohesion of interesting shapes and patterns throughout the selection of images.

Converting everything to black and white helped to connect each subject matter further, without the dominating influence of colour. The light and subsequent shadows cast over the landscapes create compelling contrasts, from the rough irregular rocks to the silky-smooth sand, and the reflective quality of the water.

I found the hyperfocal distance theory to be an extremely useful tool, especially at the shorter focal lengths – this may be because I found it easier to estimate the 'shorter' distances visually through the viewfinder, but my understanding is that it is generally more efficient at these distances.

At the post-production stage of my third session, I discovered that many of the images I shot in the desert, using focal lengths of 100mm and longer, were just not sharp enough. Unfortunately, this ruled out many of the shots I had taken of sand dunes. It was hugely disappointing as compositionally, these images were as I had good and I had captured exactly what I had intended. My learnings are that for landscape photography, rather than shooting from a distance, you need to be physically immersed in the scene and shoot with a wide-angle lens to capture what is around you. Not only does this view point translate nicely to the viewer, it is inherently easier to achieve sharper images and a maximum depth of field under these circumstances.

This loss prompted me to do a fourth session in the desert, shooting exclusively with my 20mm lens. I could have easily presented my assignment without reshooting the specific dune images, however, as these types of images were the essence of my initial concept, I felt it was important to include them, as well as proving to myself that I could fix my mistakes.

This series could be developed further by creating a more abstract set of images, shooting close-up details of the different subjects. I can imagine a series of images where the viewer would be hard-pushed to distinguish between tree bark + rock or sand + water. To further compound the abstract quality, a shallow depth of field could be incredibly interesting.

I definitely want to expand on shooting sand dunes at some point in the future. I am really pleased with the two images from this collection where you can see the wave-like patterns on the surface. The deeper you go into the desert, the larger the dunes, which would result in more powerful images. However, this would require a very different type of trip.

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