



Still Life Photography

Definition: A still life is an image of an inanimate object or a few related objects arranged in a pleasing way, (typically) on a table top.

- Subjects used should have a common theme, such as subject, color or textures.
- Look for inspiration from the old masters, florist designs and gift shop displays.
- Not all still lifes have to be on a table, can be “found”, such a grouping of flowers.
- While arranging the set up, the rules of composition still apply, such as diagonals, rule of thirds, visual weight, etc. Make sure the set up is not too busy.
- Your backdrop is also very important to the image. It can change the whole look of the image. Make sure your backdrop is free from unwanted marks and folds.
- Lighting in still lifes can be controlled. Use it to direct the viewer’s attention.
- Make sure lighting is not too harsh. Instead it should be softer and diffused. This can be achieved by using a light box, using flash compensation on your camera, and if using ambient light, make sure the sun is not shining directly in the window.
- Side lighting adds some drama and accents textures and shadows.
- You can add fill light by using a light source or a reflector for more even lighting.
- Make sure you have the proper white balance setting on your camera. Usually AWB is sufficient.
- Use a tripod and remote shutter release or timer.
- Periodically check you LCD screen to make sure the positioning of items look good and that there are no flaws that were unnoticed with the naked eye.
- It takes a lot of time and patience to do still lifes, as you may have to keep re-arranging the set up.

This site has more explanations and examples of still lifes:

<http://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/still-life-photography/>

Photo credits: Irene Dowdy and Michelle Tinger

