Get in the habit of considering and exploring viewpoint options whenever you come across something that you want to take a picture of.

In addition to looking for vantage points that will put your subject and its surroundings into a satisfying visual arrangement (SEE THE CHAPTER ON COMPOSITION BEGINNING ON PAGE 74), take thematic considerations into account as well. Ask yourself, *Are there viewpoints that include secondary elements that will bolster the thematic conveyances of the main subject? Are there viewpoints that should be avoided because they include elements that contradict the stylistic delivery I'm after?*

Avoid "tunnel vision"—the tendency to notice only the main subject in your viewfinder or on your LCD. Get in the habit of looking all around the scene to see if improvements could be made to the shot by moving the camera to a different vantage point or tilting it at a different angle.

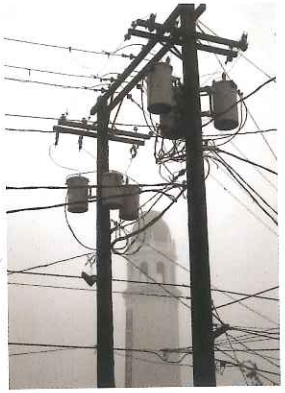
Challenge yourself to find ever-new ways of seeing the world through your camera—and be sure to take full advantage digital photography's greatest of advantage over film: the freedom to take plenty of pictures without worrying about processing costs.

These two perspectives of a historic tower in NW Washington State were chosen because of the "framing" effect provided by the lightposts and telephone poles. Framing adds compositional strength to an image and helps direct the viewer's attention. SEE **FRAMING,** PAGE 90.

Think outside the box—or (as in this case) *inside* a nearby building when considering vantage points.

Here, interaction between angular, curved, and ornate forms result in a strong composition. SEE **LINES AND CURVES,** PAGE 102.

These two viewpoints present the tower in less conventional ways—the viewer has to search to find its form within each image. SEE **VISUAL HIERARCHY,** PAGE 94, AND **INTENTIONAL DISTRACTION,** PAGE 190.



Exploring different vantage points applies to all kinds of subjects and situations.

Here, the search for effective points of view takes place in miniature proportions.

Be thorough when exploring points of view for an image. Take plenty of pictures as you go; take chances as well—all you have to lose is a few MB of disk space.

I located this antique toy airplane online and purchased it from a seller in Scotland for a very reasonable price. The Web makes prop-collecting (pardon the pun) easier than ever.

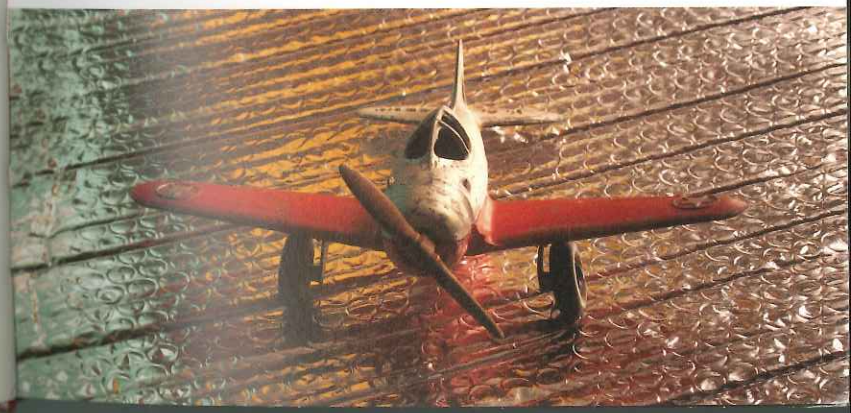
In addition to giving examples of viewpoint exploration, these images also introduce a number of topics that are covered in the pages ahead:

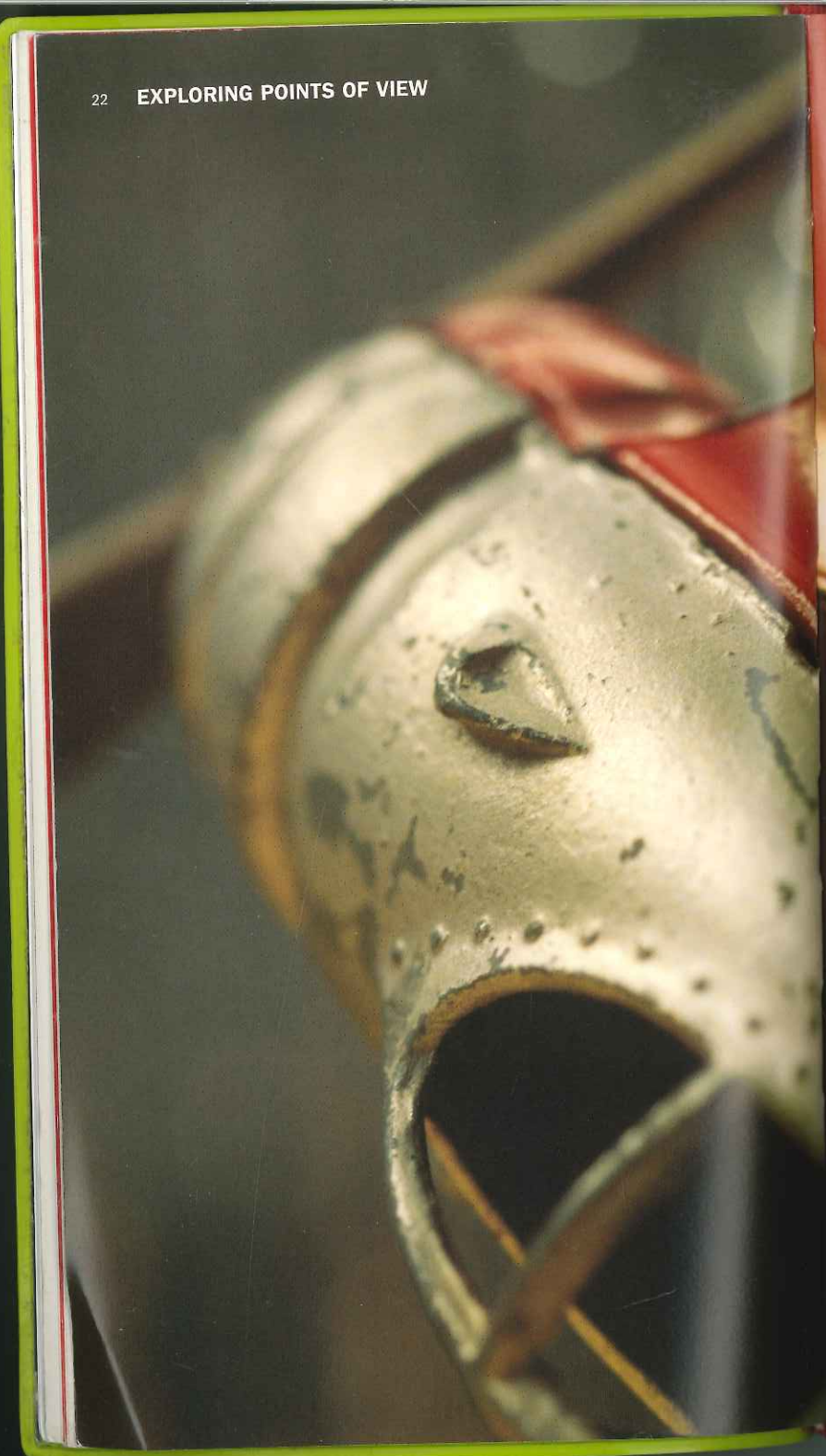
CROPPING (PAGES 34-37). Excess image-area has been removed (cropped) from each of these photos. Cropping can be used to change the proportions of an image; to remove unwanted elements; and to create a stronger overall composition.

BACKDROP (PAGES 38-69). A scrap of metallic insulation was chosen as a backdrop for the plane because it echoed the metal construction of the subject, reflected color throughout the scene, and provided an intentionally ambiguous backing that contrasted well with the plane itself.

DIRECT AND REFLECTED LIGHT (PAGES 256-299): A single 500-watt quartz bulb (inexpensive and very bright) was used to light these shots. Color was added throughout each scene by reflecting light off of colored sheets of paper that were held out-of-frame. AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS USED FOR IMAGES THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK ARE FEATURED ON PAGES 258-259.

JUXTAPOSITION (PAGES 248-249). The toy plane's antiquity was intentionally amplified by contrasting it with a shiny, modern backdrop.





Regardless of what kind of photo you are shooting—portrait, still life, landscape, studio or spur-of-the-moment—be sure to investigate radical points of view. Very often, these viewpoints reveal aspects of a subject's beauty that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Most of the photos in this book were taken using a pocket digital camera. These photos, however, were taken with a digital SLR equipped with a "macro" lens (a type of lens that is able to take very sharp close-up photos, SEE PAGE 323). The blurred background in each photo is the result of the lens' very shallow depth of field capability. SEE **DEPTH OF FIELD,** PAGES 306-309.

Embrace opportunity! Take pictures whenever you find yourself viewing the world from a novel perspective. Each of these photos was taken through the window of an airliner using a pocket digital camera.

You are keeping your camera with you at all times... right?

If a ride on an airplane isn't in your near future, consider taking an elevator to the upper floor of a tall building and taking photos from there; visit the top of a parking garage; hike to the peak of a scenic overlook. *Remember: Your camera depends on you to take it to exciting vantage points.*

The colors in each of these photos were originally quite muted (thanks to the plexiglass window and the less-than-transparent air between the camera and its subjects). Color and contrast controls within Photoshop were used to amplify the hues in each image to ready them for presentation. SEE LEVELS ADJUSTMENTS, PAGE 332, AND HUE AND SATURATION, PAGE 336.

Be on the lookout for interesting clouds—whether they are above or below your head. SEE **COLLECT CLOUDS,** PAGE 196.

It's not every day that you find yourself above a 14,000-foot volcano. I was glad to have my camera on hand as the airliner I was traveling in passed over the glacier-covered flanks of Mt. Rainier.

Sometimes an image's "flaws" add to its visual or thematic presentation. The motion-blur in this photo resulted from the movement of the airplane from which it was taken. I saved the shot since the effect seemed to enhance the feeling of bustle in this rush-hour freeway scene. SEE **SHAKE IT,** PAGE 242.

Micro photo opportunities are everywhere. Becoming aware of them means you'll never run out of intriguing and readily available subject matter.

Take close-ups of toys, fabric, plants, people, animals, soil, asphalt, and anything else that is all-too-easy to overlook when your attention is being held up by larger matters. Shoot images that are abstract, representational and anywhere in between.

Nearly all digital cameras have a close-up setting that allows them to focus on subjects that are very near the lens. Consult your manual if you are unsure of how to use this feature on your camera.

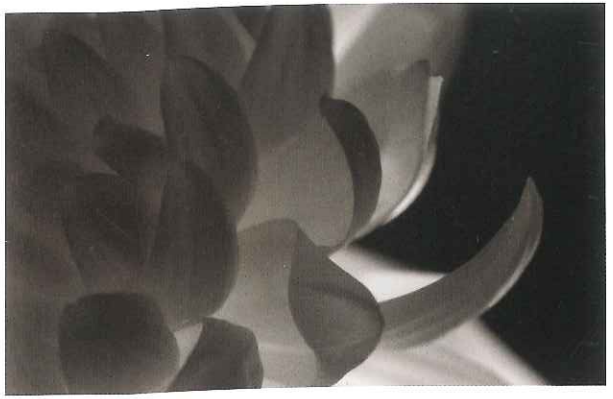
Digital SLRs can accept "macro" lenses that are specifically designed for ultra close-ups. The following spread provides a dramatic example of a macro lens' capabilities.

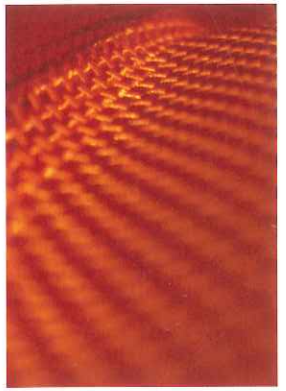
This close-up of a dahlia's petals was taken with a hi-tech camera and a low-tech light source. The camera: a digital SLR with a macro lens. The light source: a simple flashlight, aimed from behind the flower. see **BACK-LIGHTING,** PAGES 278-281 AND **FLASHLIGHTS,** PAGE 284.

Close-ups can reveal surprising beauty in commonplace items.

The sturdy weave of a messenger bag makes an interesting abstraction when seen up close. Shots like this could be featured as they are or used as a backdrops within a digital composition.

While taking photos of a tall and elegant flagpole, I chanced to look down and see what I considered to be the even more beautiful forms of its cable tie-off. Be on the lookout for unexpected close-up photo opportunities whenever you have your camera in-hand.





A macro lens can bring tiny subject matter up to a size where it can be more fully appreciated.

The macro lens used for this shot captured a significant amount of detail in both the wasp and its paper backdrop. Notice the tiny hairs on the wasp's body and the fibers in the paper behind it.

SEE **LENSES,** PAGE 322.

The spotlight effect was achieved by aiming a flashlight from above. The blue highlights on the wasp were added by directing a simple key-chain light at its body.

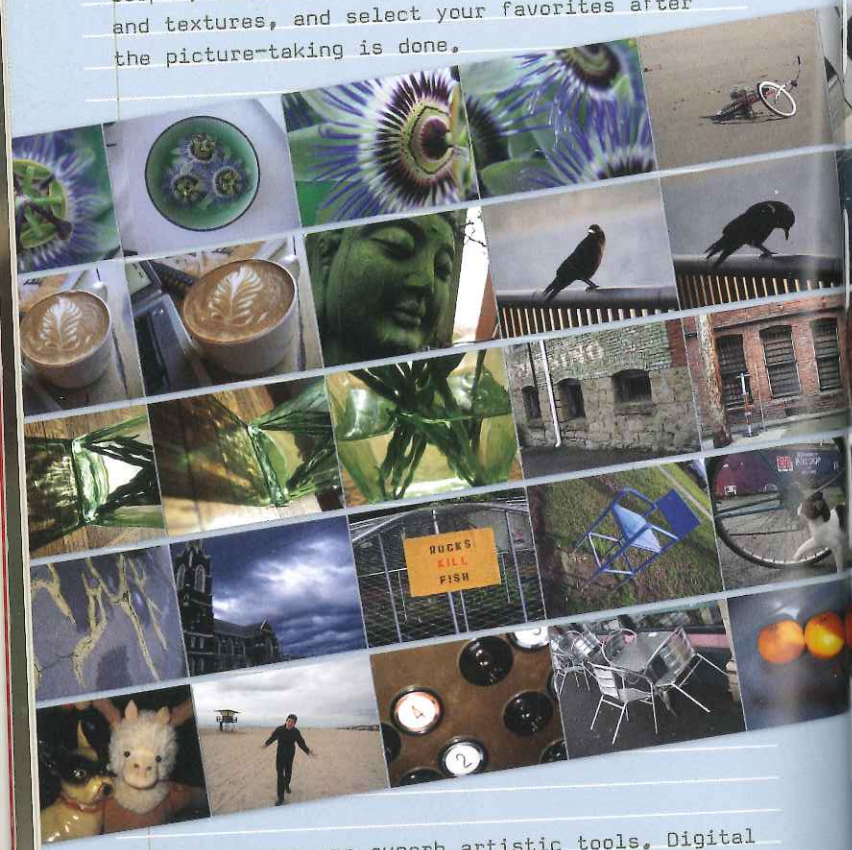
SEE **FLASHLIGHTS**, PAGE 284, AND **MINI-SPOT,** PAGE 286.

I found the body of this wasp on my front porch and thought it would be a perfect subject for my macro lens. And, since it was a paper-making wasp, I decided to use a sheet of paper (complete with a printed pattern of flowers) as a backdrop for the scene. Train yourself to think of all kinds of found objects and happenstance occurrences as potential subject matter for photos.

SEE **BEYOND THE OBVIOUS,** PAGE 202, AND **HAPPENSTANCE HAPPENS,** PAGE 216.

You CAN take it with you.

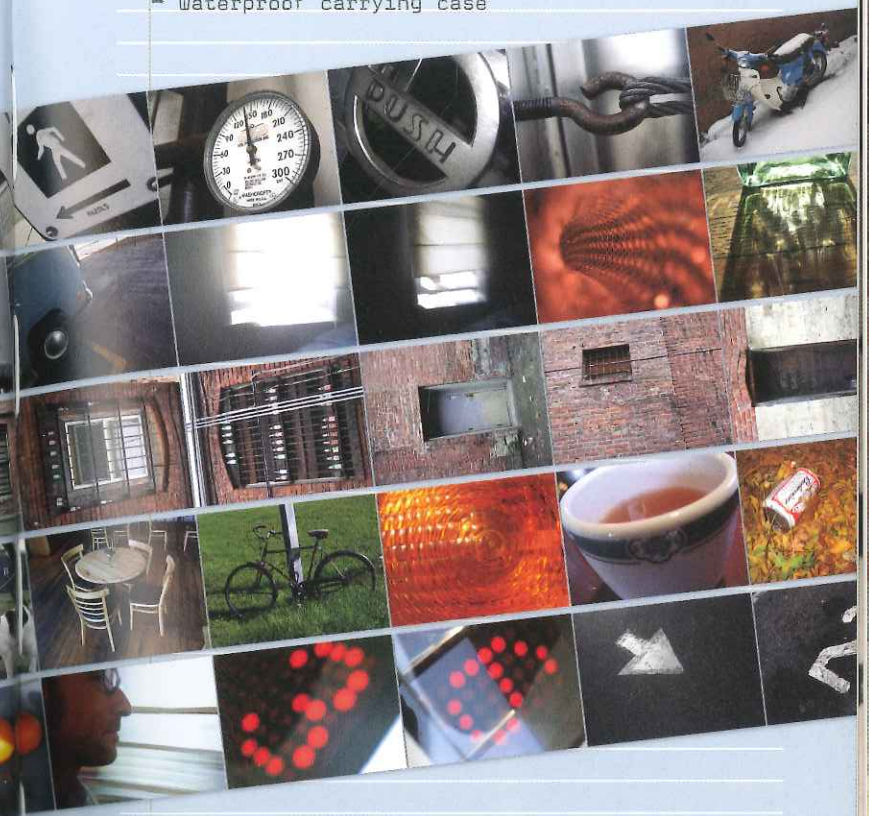
They are words worth remembering—and ones that are oft-repeated throughout this book: Keep your camera with you **as much as possible** and take **lots** of pics when the shooting is good. Take pictures of people, plants, animals, landscapes, everyday objects, unique occurrences and textures, and select your favorites after the picture-taking is done.



Film cameras are superb artistic tools. Digital cameras, however, have an advantage over film when it comes to being able to review pictures on the spot. In addition, you don't have to worry about film or processing costs. **Take advantage of these perks—shoot lots of images and don't be afraid to take chances!**

Everyday checklist:

- Pocket digi-cam
- Extra battery
- Media card
- Waterproof carrying case



Advanced photoshoot (minimal) checklist:

- Digital SLR or advanced digital camera
- At least one extra battery
- Large capacity media card(s)
- Tripod
- Portable reflectors (see page 258)
- Lens-cleaning equipment
- Extra lenses (opt., see page 322)
- Flash unit w/ batteries (opt.)
- Waterproof bag/case

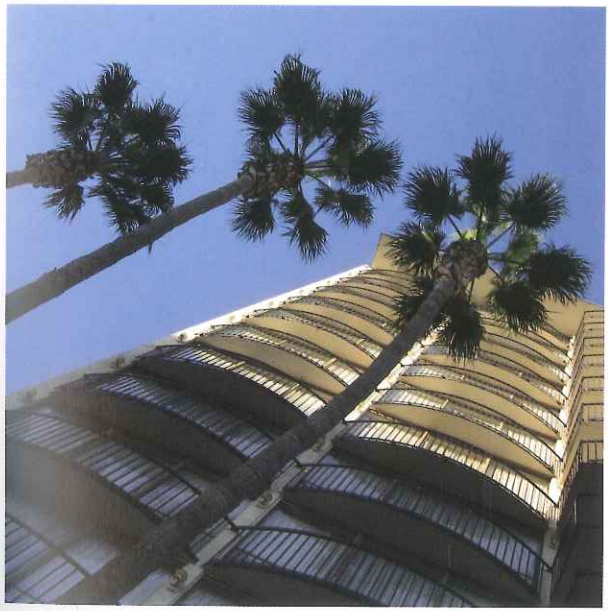
Many images can benefit from a skewed presentation.

A visually dynamic result can be obtained by tilting the camera—even if what you are aiming at is perfectly still. SEE CONVEYING ACTION, PAGES 166-169.

Many people find it unnatural to hold their camera at an odd angle when composing a shot. *Get over it! Experiment! Have fun!* If picture-taking perspectives such as these are new to you, take note of the photos you see and enjoy in books, on the web and in advertising. You may be surprised to find how common it is for professional photographers to shoot from all kinds of canted angles.

Tip: Don't be bashful about it when you tilt your camera to frame a scene. Avoid taking shots that look as though they are crooked by accident—such as when the horizon line in a landscape is almost, but not quite level.

Keep in mind that a tilted presentation can also be achieved by *cropping* your image at an angle. SEE CROP, PAGES 34-37.



The presentation of many photos can be improved when unwanted or distracting elements are eliminated through cropping.

Cropping can be used to improve composition by changing the relationships between an image's borders and the elements inside. SEE THE COMPOSITION PRIMER ON PAGES 76-79.

Graphic designers almost always have to crop images to fit the proportional requirements of their layouts.

Most cameras and computers come packaged with software that can be used to digitally crop images.

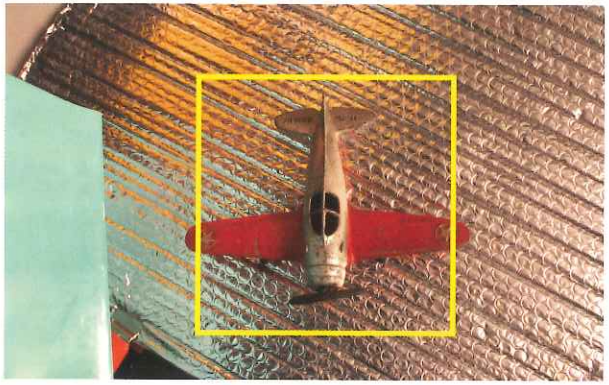
Each of the images, opposite, were featured on previous pages. The yellow boxes show how the originals were cropped.

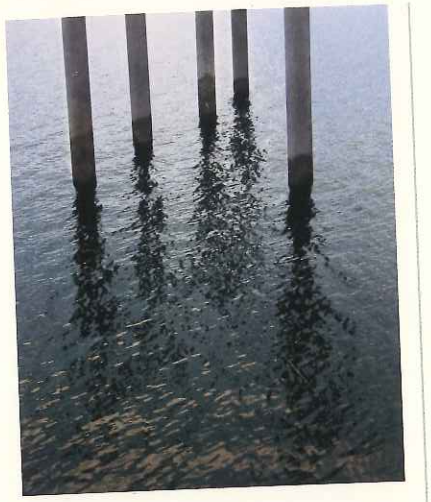
A square cropping was taken from this rectangular original so that the image would fit into its allotted space on the previous page.

It is often necessary to crop equipment (such as the blue reflector-panel seen to the left of the subject in this image) from shots taken in the studio.

I kept cropping tighter and tighter on this photo until I finally found a composition that I liked. If the resolution of an image is high enough, aggressive cropping such as this is feasible.

SEE, **SHARING PIXELS,** PAGE 124.

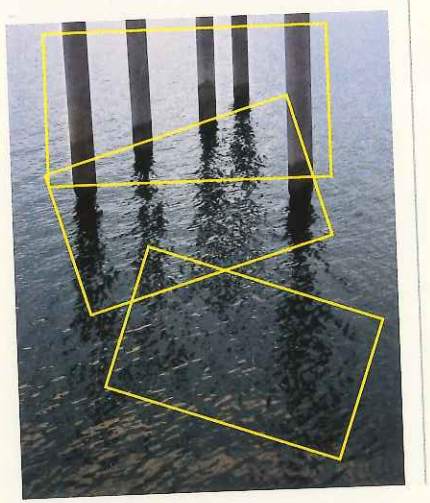




This cropping results in a highly structured composition. Here, the pillars are the main subjects and their reflections are a visual footnote. SEE **ABSTRACTION,** PAGES 230-233.

Keep your mind open to potential sub-images within larger photos. This shot of a group of pilings and their reflections (above) offered material for a several completely different compositions, both identifiable and abstract (opposite).

The reflections are given the dominant role in this active composition. Note how the tilted cropping enhances the dynamic presentation of the image. SEE **TILT,** PAGE 32, AND **VISUAL HIERARCHY,** PAGE 94.



An interesting abstraction is taken from a portion of the foreground; the pillars have been eliminated entirely from this composition. SEE **REFLECTIVE SURFACES,** PAGES 66-69.