

## Look Along the Edges

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As you know, I'm a photographer – and that actually feels like a massive understatement. I am *consumed* by photography. I go to bed thinking about it; I wake up thinking about it. So in addition to spending a lot of time behind my cameras, I also read a lot of things related to the craft, including a book that I recently completed called "LIDLIPS." "LIDLIPS" is actually an acronym for "Things I Didn't Learn In Photo School." The author is accomplished professional photographer Syl Arena who is also a gifted teacher and overall communicator. His book is more of a treatise on the human side of photography, something I celebrate.

Anyway, the book comprises 100 observations about the world of photography, but truth be told they're really observations about life that can be applied to photography. One of them, number 92, if I remember correctly, reads as follows:

### Look along the edges to find the in-between

Without serenity as its opposite, chaos is not chaotic – it's normal. Likewise, light cannot be known in the absence of darkness, just as poverty cannot be understood in absence of wealth. Contrast adds power to images. For dramatic light, seek not the storm. Rather, race to where it collides with the calm. For social commentary, show not the child in squalor. Rather, show the child in squalor that washes against the shore of prosperity. To create powerful images, look for the scenes in-between. As you wander, you'll not find contrast in the middle. Rather you'll find it along the edges.

Wow, does that ring true to me, especially within the context of storytelling, the other thing that consumes me. Readers of my books, articles and blog posts, in addition to the participants in my workshops, are always asking me where my ideas for stories come from, and truth be told, I have a hard time answering. But after reading Syl's book it occurs to me that rather unwittingly I spend a lot of time finding the in-between, seeking what dwells there as the grist for the storytelling mill. Stories don't always come from so-called aha moments; more often than not they come from the shadowy but rich space that exists between the aha moments. It's the connection that breed intrigue and interest, not the "points of light" that are frankly rather easy to find.

Photographers who have taken the time to really understand how their cameras work know that autofocus works because the camera seeks lines of contrast upon which to base their focusing decisions. Point your camera at the blue sky and try to focus: the camera will zoom in and out, in and out, seeking contrast that it will never find in the monochrome sheet of blue sky.

But move the view slightly to include a wisp of cloud and the camera will focus instantly because of the contrast between blue sky and white cloud.

Story focus also happens when the storyteller seeks contrast, as Mr. Arena points out so eloquently. If you're looking for stories to enrich a marketing tale, or to empower a sales encounter, or to change the way you deliver a message, don't look for the sky or the cloud; look for the place where they touch.

Thanks for reading.

*Note: If you'd like to read Syl Arena's Lessons I Didn't Learn in Photo School (which I strongly recommend), you can buy it [here](#). For more information about Syl, his workshops and his photography, please visit his blog [here](#).*