

Exploring Photography and Composition through Reframing

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty level: Easy

Messy level: Low



Left to right: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Ladder against Studio Wall with Black Chow (Bo-Bo)*, 1959–60, gelatin silver print, gift of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe's Abiquiu House, Ladder Against Studio Wall*, 1959–60, gelatin silver print, gift of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum



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To view more images from *Georgia O'Keeffe, Photographer*, visit the [MFAH website](#).

This activity uses black-and-white photography to explore Georgia O'Keeffe's technique of reframing and how slight changes in positioning can impact the composition of the image. Georgia O'Keeffe is widely known for her paintings and lifelong devotion to her artistic practice. Her sensitivity to details and love for shape and value were evident in her choice of clothing and collection of objects, as well as in her practice of drawing and photography.

Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Using words like line, texture, shape, value, and form, describe how each object in one of these images contributes to the composition.

Example: The wall creates a strong line in the composition.

2. O'Keeffe's photography technique is unique because she was the only photographer at the time to practice reframing. This process included photographing the same scene or object repeatedly from slightly varying angles. Looking at the photos of her ladder, what is similar and different between the two?

3. O'Keeffe creates strong compositions by reducing landscapes and objects to studies of shape, form, and value. Which composition has a greater range in value from black to white? What elements within the photo create that larger range?

Gather These Materials

- 2–3 large objects that you would like to photograph outside
- Digital camera, tablet, or phone

Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Find large objects that you would like to photograph. They should be able to stand on their own.
2. Place them outside in a space that has good lighting. Look at what backdrop or space the object is in, considering how it complements or detracts from the object. Remove or reframe anything distracting.
3. Set your camera/phone to black and white.
4. Look through the viewfinder and observe the different angles and compositions that you can capture.
5. Take your first photo.
6. Leaving the object in place, take 5–10 images from different viewpoints. This process is known as reframing.
7. Now, try adding or removing additional elements from the photo. Example: In the second example of the chair, the hanging planter could be removed so the pole reads as an undisturbed white line.
8. Among the photos you've taken, which do you like best? Why?