



CAMERA OBSCURA

&

ABSTRACT

PHOTOGRAPHY

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Creative Learning & Public Programs Officer

Devonport Regional Gallery

TASK:

1. Visit the exhibition: ***Fathom, Sam Beckman***

20th March-1st May in the Little Gallery at the Devonport Regional Gallery.

Look at the photographic images and how they are not in focus but rather representative of something instead. This is an example of “Abstract photography”.

2. Using a camera or smartphone, create a series of abstract photographic images following the guidelines in these instructions. Send in your photographs to share.

3. Experiment with making a camera obscura– turn one of your rooms at home into a giant camera!

YOU WILL NEED:

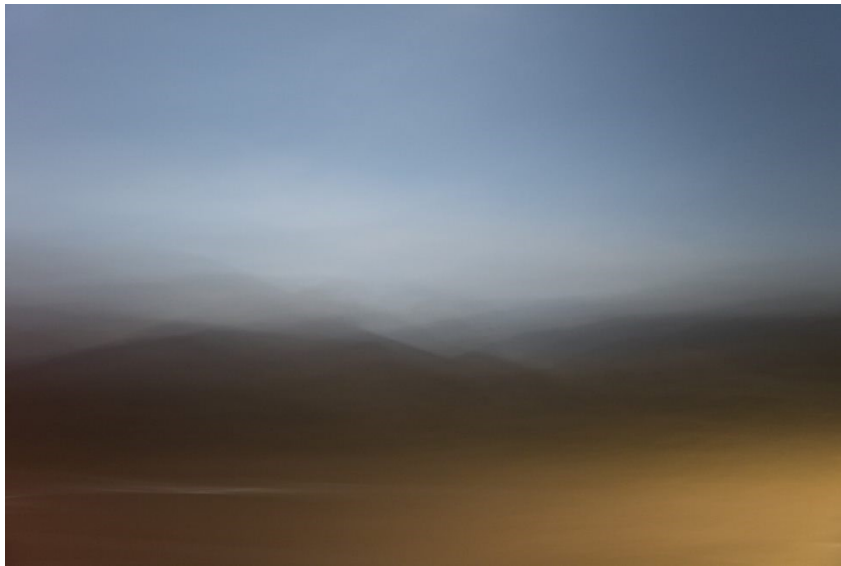
- A camera or smartphone
- An email address or way of sharing your abstract images
- Garbage bag and/ or a large piece of cardboard big enough to block out your window
- Scissors
- A room you can make totally dark using the cardboard and garbage bag



There are many way to achieve an abstract image when taking photos.

Sam Beckman takes images of the landscape while being driven around in a car or walking through the bush using a long shutter speed on his camera. This creates movement and adds an element of mystery to the abstract blurred images you can see in his exhibition ***Fathom***, showing in the Little Gallery at the Devonport Regional Gallery from 20th March—1st of May 2021.

Visit the exhibition to have a closer look at the effects Beckman has achieved using movement to create abstract images



Sam Beckman, *The Lake in the Hills*



Sam Beckman, *Carbonised*

FROM THE ARTIST...

The photographs in Fathom investigate the emotive side of our interactions and relationships with the natural world. On the one hand contemplating the inevitability and drama of fire in the Australian bush, and on the other, recognising the restorative energy that time in nature provides, this exhibition is an invitation to reflect on personal and subjective connections to the landscapes around us.

Sam Beckman



Sam Beckman, *Canopy*



Sam Beckman, *Thread*

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

But first...what is abstract? Abstract in art terms refers to art that does not accurately represent visual reality. A definition from tate.org.uk states:

Abstract art is art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect.

Abstract photography is challenging to define. It is taking a subject and forcing the viewer to look at it in a different way. This may cause the subject to lose its original meaning or purpose.

From: <https://expertphotography.com/complete-guide-abstract-photography-112-tips/>



Colin Knowles, *Skytrain Abstract*, 2012.

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

As noted on adorama.com:

Formally speaking, abstract photography is a method of expressing ideas and emotions with photographed image elements without the intention of creating a traditional or realistic image. By avoiding and going beyond the usual representations of an object, scene, or any particular element, it reveals details that are normally ignored and triggers the viewer's imagination.

From: <https://www.adorama.com/alc/abstract-photography-for-beginners-9-tips-for-capturing-stunning-abstract-images/>

Some Tips For Taking good abstract photographs:

- **Simplicity.** Having less is often more. Keeping your photos simple without having too much clutter or trying to fit in too much keeps your images visually lighter. Look for shapes not subjects, zoom right in and crop images to include only part of the whole.



SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- **Composition.** Although the usual rules for composition in photography are not used when taking abstract photos, (such as the [rule of thirds](#)) Think about order, balance between shapes, patterns textures and colours. These factors effect how people view your photographs and how their eye will be lead through the picture. They also influence mood and feeling in your photos and how the viewer interprets the image.
- Experiment using black and white photography taking away colour information to create more mystery in your images.



Edward Weston, "[Cabbage Leaf](#)," 1931.

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- **Angle.** Think about the angle of your images. You can try taking shots from different and unusual angles or try flipping the image to different angles once you have taken the photo. This can give different perspectives and views of the subject.



NIKON D7000 + 105mm f/2.8 @ 105mm, ISO 100, 1/40, f/3.2. From: <https://photographylife.com/abstract-photography-tips-and-ideas>



NIKON D7000 + 17-55mm f/2.8 @ 55mm, ISO 1000, 1/50, f/2.8

From: <https://photographylife.com/abstract-photography-tips-and-ideas>

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- **Lighting.** Play around with Silhouettes, backlighting and shadows to create visually interesting images. Use a lamp or torch to achieve directional lighting trying different variants of string harsh lighting and soft lighting. Night photography using lights to create effects is also a fun way of creating abstract images.



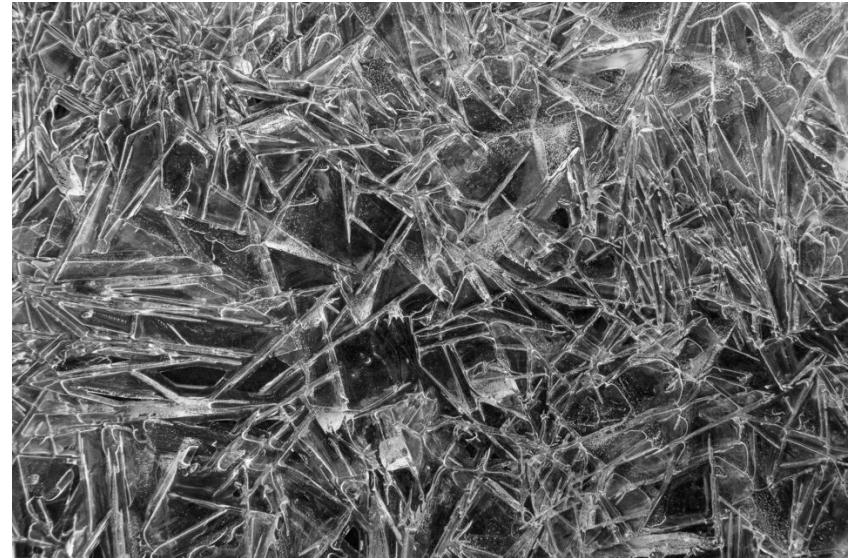
If you have a camera that you can adjust the shutter speed on try some night photography using lights to create pattern such as this one.



Nick Ares, *Abstract Tree Blur*,

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- **Close up photography.** Zooming in or only photographing a small area of your subjects such as people and the built environment and subjects in nature, such as animals, insects and flowers. By zooming right in only part of the picture is available to the viewer and only part of the information of the subject matter is provided which can help add mystery and intrigue the viewer.



Canon EOS 80D + EF-S18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS STM @ 18mm, ISO 100, 1/50, f/7.1 . From <https://photographylife.com/abstract-photography-tips-and-ideas>

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- **Long Exposure.** If you have a camera that you can adjust the shutter speed on, try slowing down the shutter speed to capture images that are blurred (such as Sam Beckman's images). This can be good for capturing movement. Try it with things like moving water, clouds, light trails at night (as mentioned) or movement from your own arm taking the shot.



NIKON D800E + 70-200mm f/4 @ 78mm, ISO
100, 1/5, f/7.1



<https://photofocus.com/photography/long-exposures-for-abstract-art/>



Abstract Tree Blur, Nick Ares

SOME TIPS FOR TAKING ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- **Lines, Shapes, Shadows and Patterns.** Look for interesting lines, shapes shadows and patterns and think about cropping your images to only contain part of the information of the subject matter so it creates an image that does not represent any easily recognisable “thing” but rather a visually interesting abstract composition instead.

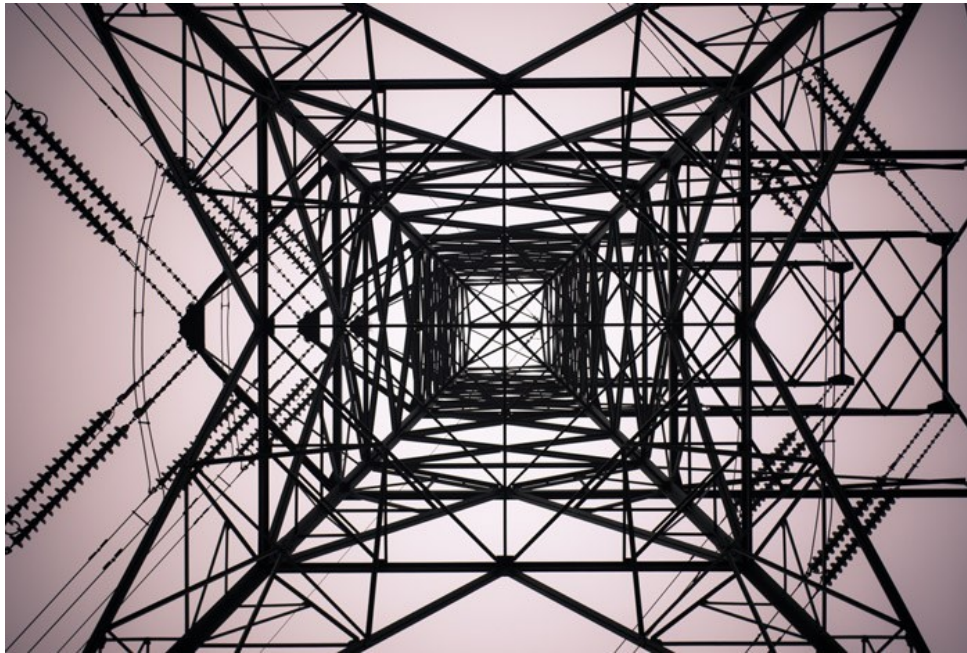


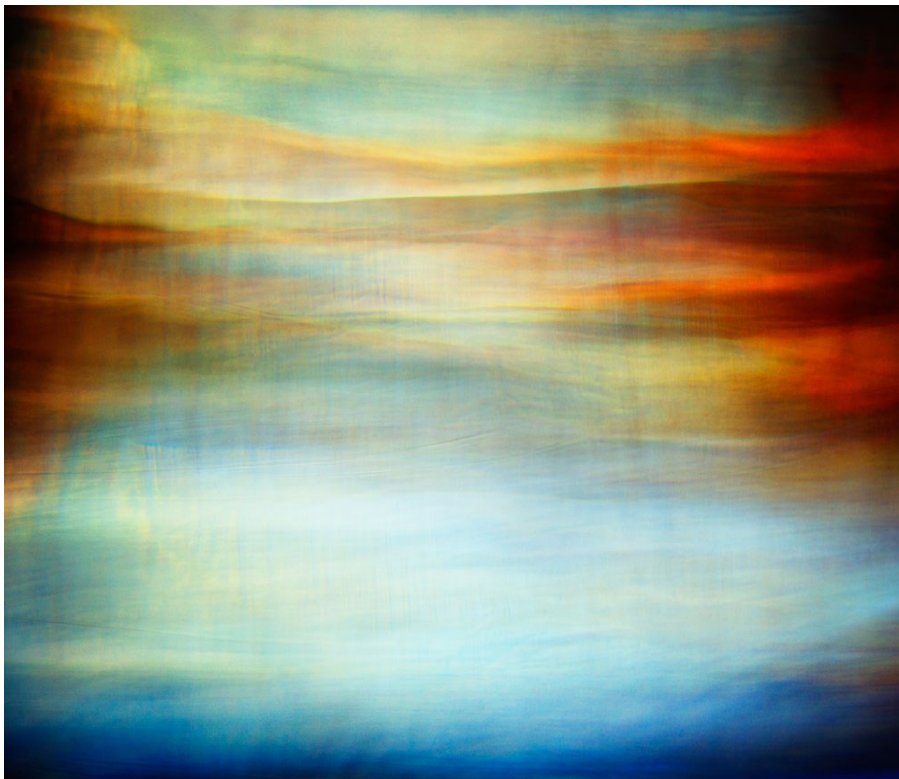
Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash



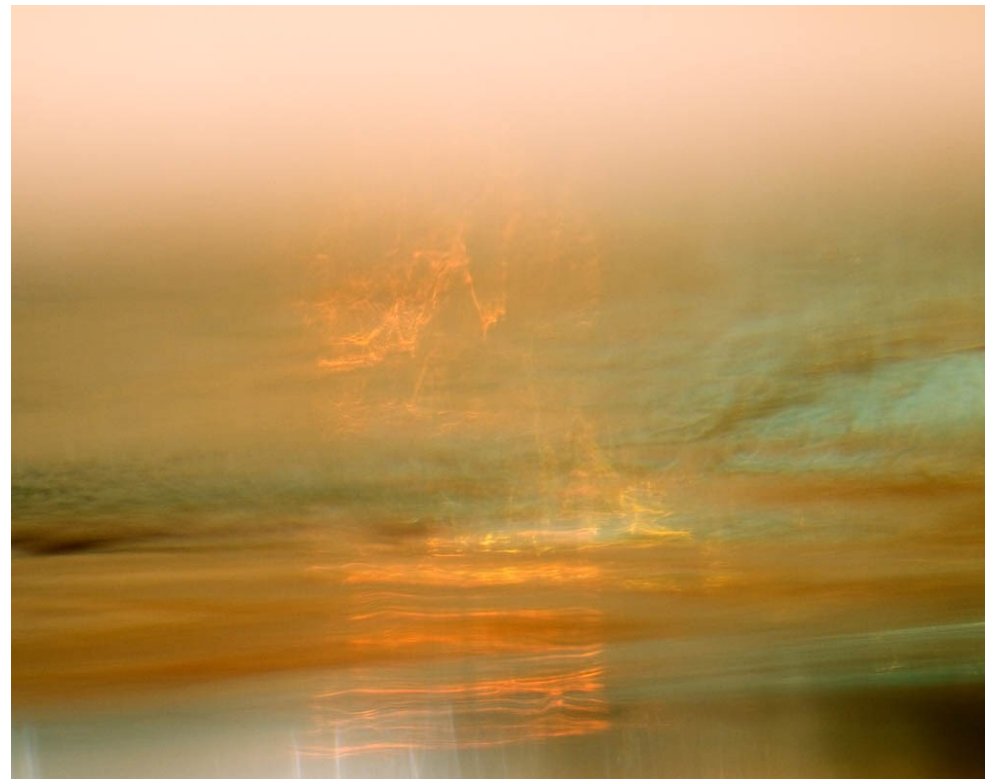
Aaron Siskind, 2005,

SOME EXAMPLES OF ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:

Frances Seward

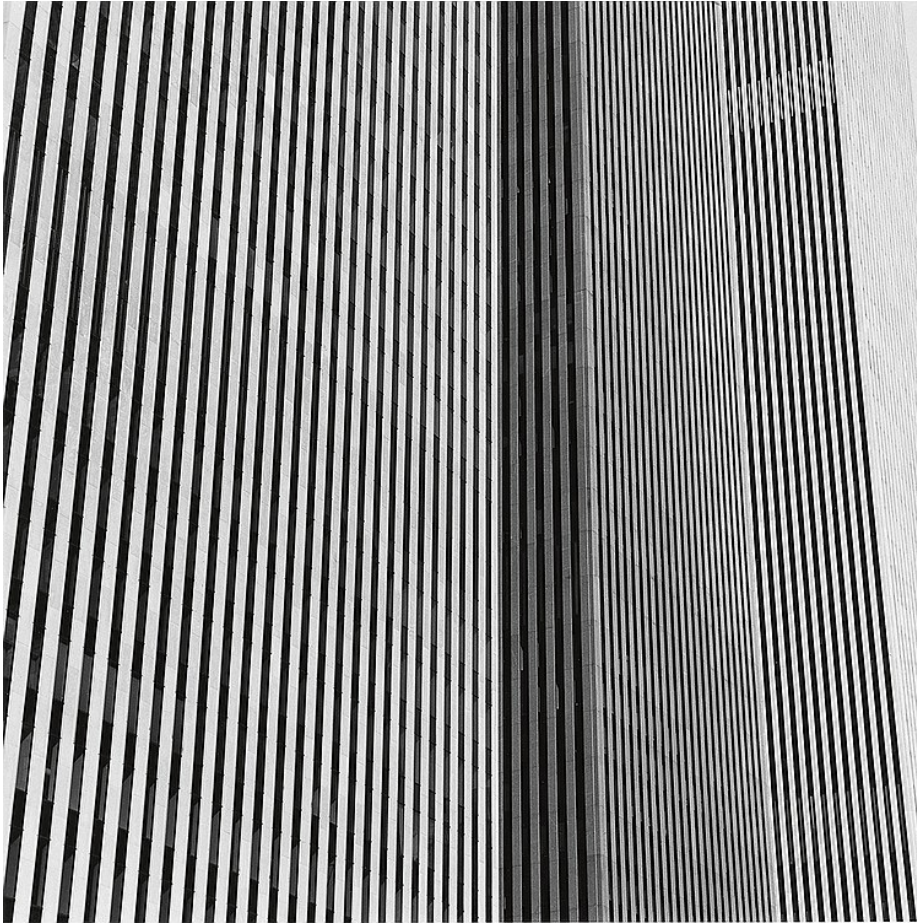


After Japan II, 2012



The Belly of the Earth, 2011

SOME EXAMPLES OF ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:



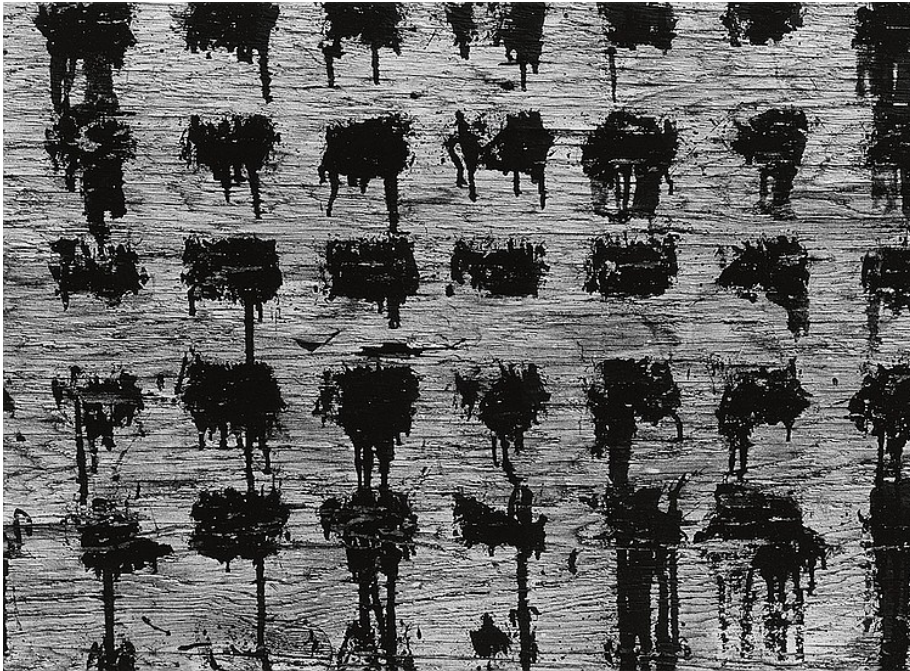
Harry Callahan, *New York City*, 1974



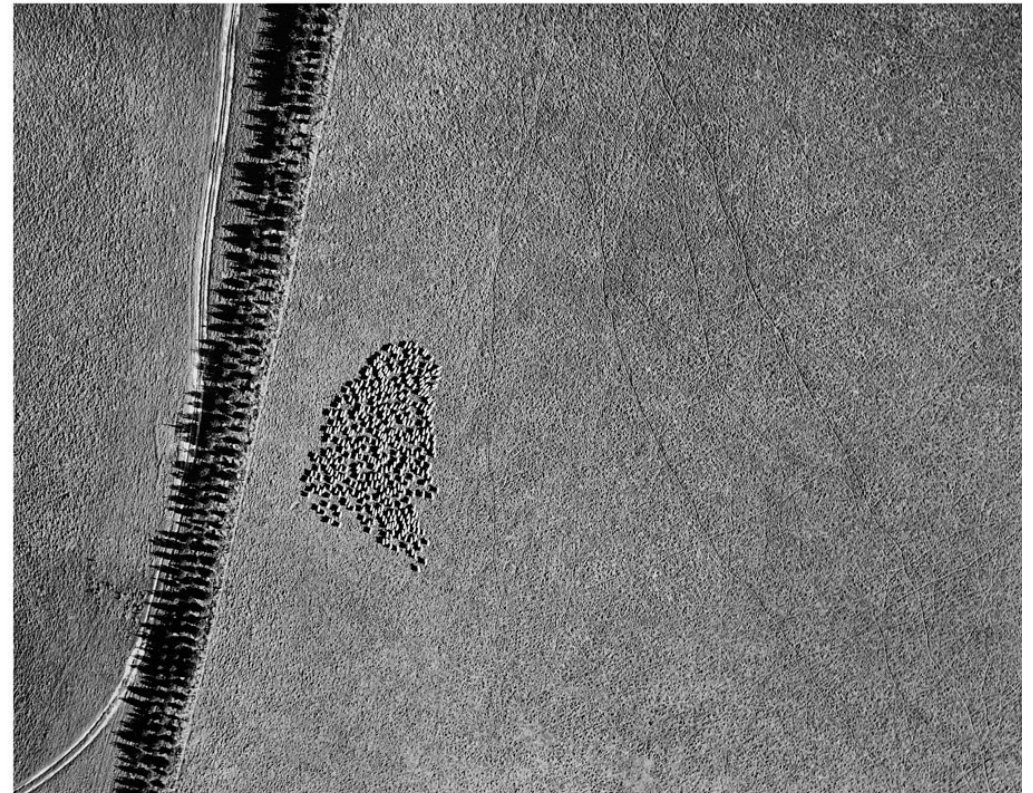
Ola Kolehmainen, *L'Hotel*, 2002

What do you think Callahan and Kolehmainen have used as the subject matter for their abstract photographs? Why do you think this? Notice the very straight lines and linear structure of the images. Perhaps this is something you can experiment with when taking your photographs?

SOME EXAMPLES OF ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS:



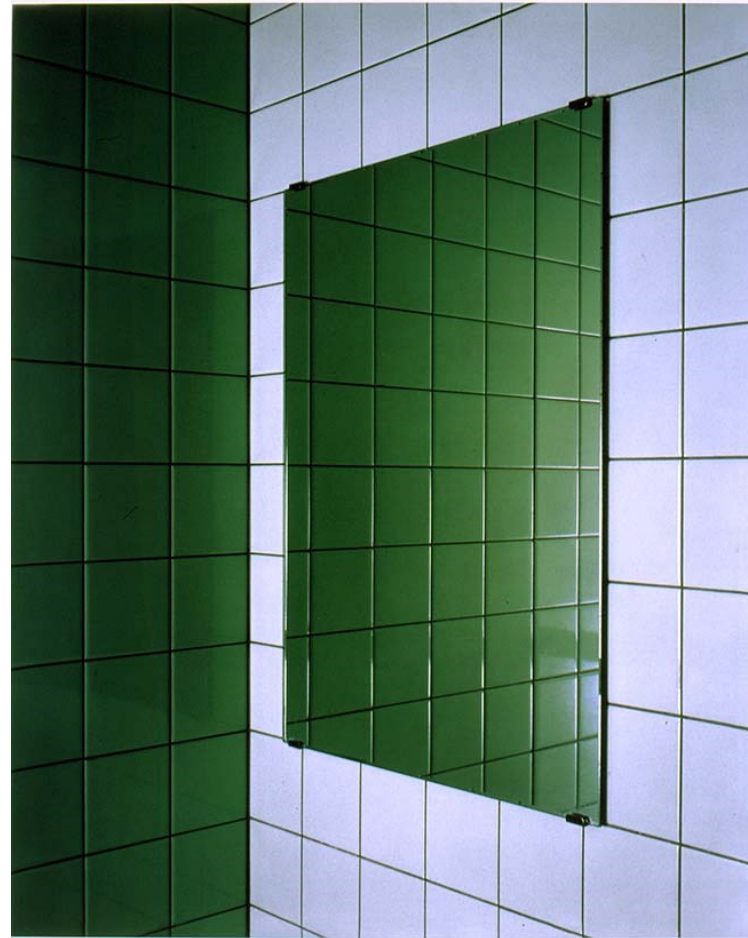
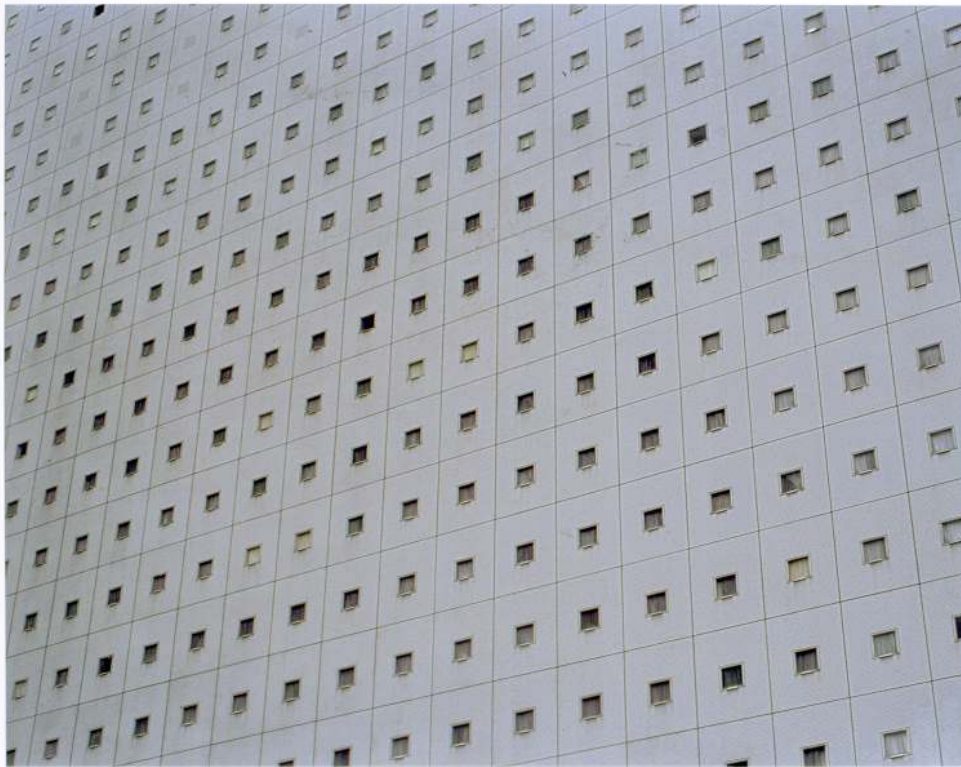
Aaron Siskind, *Chicago 42*, 1952.



Jackie Ranken, *Sheep*, 2000

The photograph on the right by Jackie Ranken is a good example of using a different angle to capture different perspectives of a subject. This is an aerial shot of a paddock with some sheep in it. The contrast of the shadows and greyscale format create an interesting abstract composition. You might like to play around with different perspectives and angles when taking your photographs.

**SOME EXAMPLES OF ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE DEVONPORT REGIONAL GALLERY'S
PERMANENT COLLECTION: Simon Cuthbert**



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN...

Get your artists eyes into gear and camera at the ready.
Go out into the world or have a look around your home.
Experiment and see what kind of abstract images you can
create using the guidelines and methods mentioned.

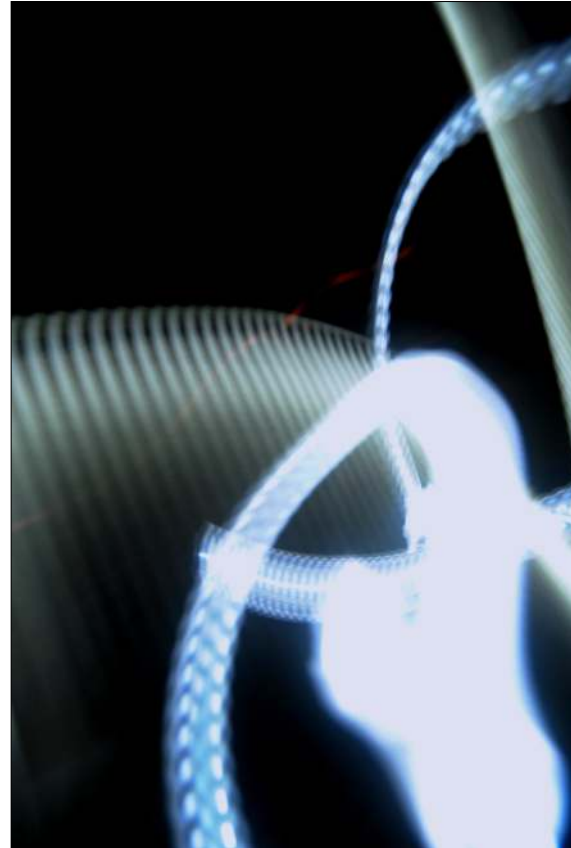


**DON'T FORGET TO SHARE YOUR RESULTS
WITH OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY!**

SEND IMAGES TO

ARTGALLERY@DEVONPORT.TAS.GOV.AU

MY RESULTS...



I took these images on my Nikon digital SLR camera with a slow shutter speed at night using a torch as a light source to create patterns.



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MY RESULTS...



I took this close up picture of a leaf with the sun behind it on my phone camera. It is un-edited.

I took this image on my Nikon digital SLR camera with the shutter open to let in a lot of light so the picture is over exposed. It is un-edited.



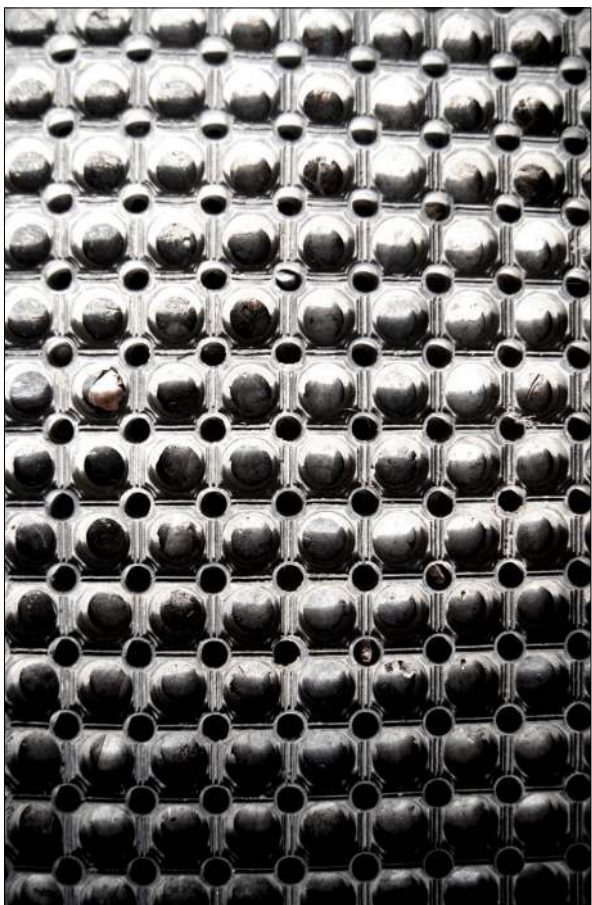
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MY RESULTS...



This is a photograph of my mud matt at the backdoor looking down from above. I took it using my Nikon DSLR camera and did some quick edits in *Photoshop* software.

I took this image on my phone camera and took out the colour using photo editing app *Snapseed*.



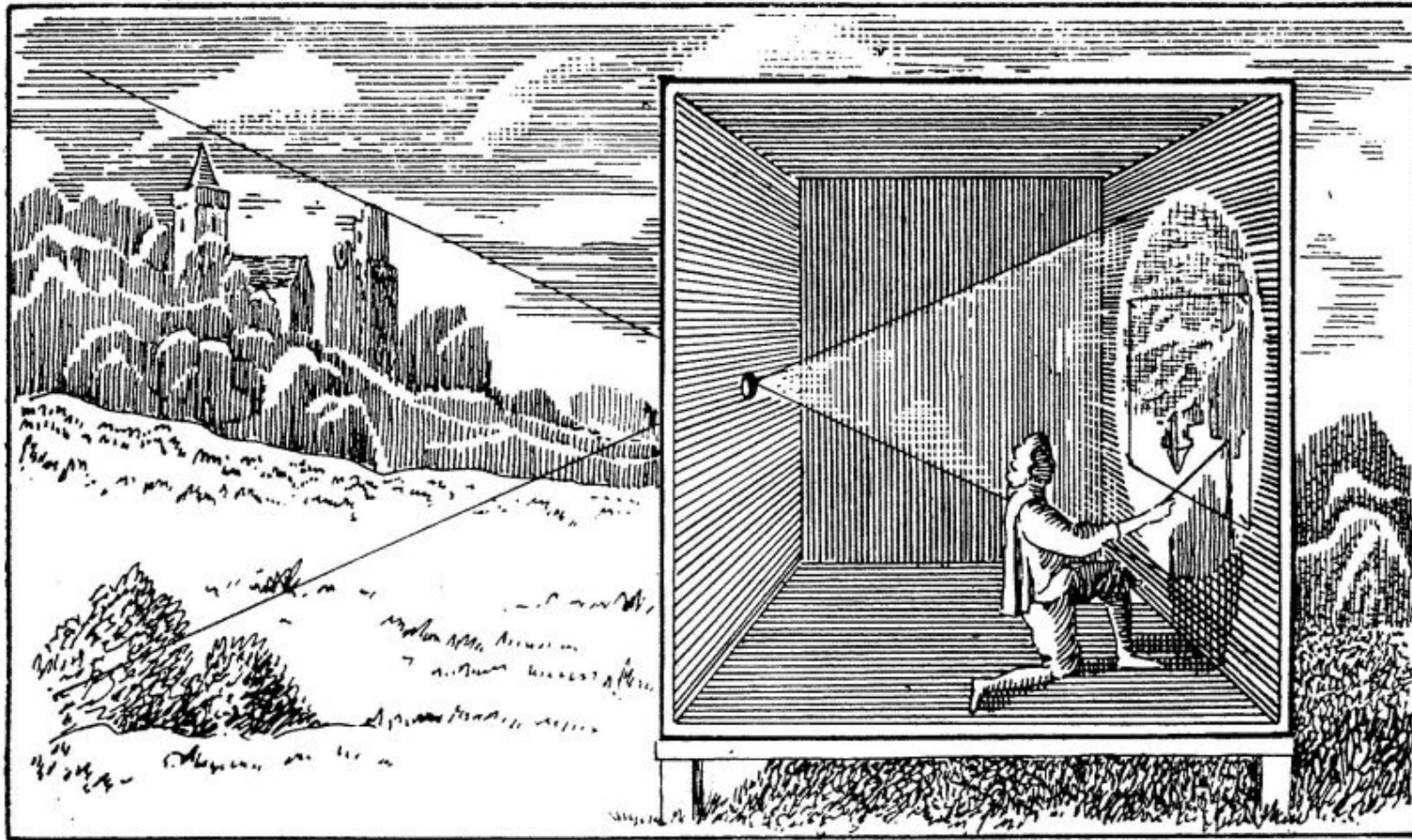
I took this photo of a spring onion seed pod in my garden up close using my phone camera and edited it in *Snapseed* photo editing app.

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MAKING A CAMERA OBSCURA AT HOME- TURNING A ROOM INTO A CAMERA!



A diagram of a camera obscura in action!

Camera Obscura is a Latin word for “dark room” and they have existed for over 3000 years! Light travelling through a small hole onto the wall of your room is the basic technique for a camera obscura. The image projected onto the wall inside is a reflection of the scene outside the window and will be projected upside down, much the same as our eyes receive images on the retina (lense in the eye) before our brain turns it back up the right way.

<https://mygobe.com/magazine/how-to-make-a-camera-obscura-at-home/>



Camera Obscura by Abelardo Morell: *Chrysler Building, Hotel Room*



Camera Obscura by Abelardo Morell: *View of Central Park Looking North.*

MAKING A CAMERA OBSCURA AT HOME- TURNING A ROOM INTO A CAMERA!

The room before I blocked out the window.



The window in my room that had to be blocked out.

STEP 1:

Choose a suitable room during bright daylight hours that you can easily make completely dark. The darker the better. A room with one small window can work well. Cover any light sources into the room with layers of garbage bags or card and tape. This includes gaps under and around the doors also.



I used a couple of layers of garbage bags taped up well to block out all the light coming through the window.



I also put a few garbage bags over the skylight in the room and around the door where the light was getting in.

STEP 2:

Cut a small hole about the size of a 10 cent piece out of the garbage bag over the window. Turn off the lights and let your eyes adjust. You should start to see patterns on the walls around you. As your eyes adjust you may start to recognise things from the landscape outside...only they will appear upside down!



This image shows my result of the tree outside reflected on the wall in the room. It was upside down so I flipped the picture upside down to see the tree the right way up.



In this picture you can clearly see where the side of my house is reflected on the wall in the room. You can see the downpipe, window frame and reflection in the window, there are even colours! You can also see the window I have blocked out and the hole where the light is getting in acting like a lens for my camera obscura.

MY RESULTS.

*NOTE: I used an Iphone camera with a slow shutter speed and a phone holder to take these photographs as the room was so dark. You can clearly see the side of my house and the tree and sky outside...there were even colours!



MY RESULTS



Home
IS WHERE THE 'ART IS

**SHARE YOUR
CREATIONS!**

Send in your abstract photography and camera obscura results to share with the *Home Is Where the 'Art Is* creative online community to:

artgallery@devonport.tas.gov.au

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