# *Still Life*

*A still life is an artwork that focuses on inanimate (non-living) objects, arranged and observed carefully by the artist.*
*There are two kinds of still life:*
*'Found' and 'Created'*









# *Why artists create still life*

*1. Total control over a world*

*Unlike landscapes or portraits, nothing moves unless the artist moves it. That control is deeply satisfying:*

*Light can be shaped exactly*
*Objects can be placed with intention*
*Time can be slowed down or even "stopped"*

*Painters like Giorgio Morandi spent a lifetime rearranging bottles and boxes—finding endless variation in small shifts.*

*The pleasure comes from refinement and quiet perfection.*









*2. A way to study seeing itself*

*Still life is a training ground for perception:*

*How does light fall across a curved surface?*
*What is the true colour of a shadow?*
*How do textures differ?*

*Photographers like Irving Penn turned everyday objects into studies of form and light.*

*There's satisfaction in really seeing something most people overlook.*



*3. Turning the ordinary into something meaningful*

*A bowl of fruit, a jug, a pair of shoes—these are humble things.*
*Yet artists elevate them.*

*In the tradition of Vanitas painting, objects carry meaning:*
*Fruit → abundance or decay*
*Skulls → mortality*
*Flowers → beauty that fades*
*Depicting the transience of life*

*There's a quiet satisfaction in embedding ideas about life, time and death into simple arrangements.*



*4. A meditative, almost calming practice*

*Still life often suits a slower, reflective temperament:*

*Repetition (moving objects millimetres at a time)*
*Silence*
*Focus*

*For many artists, it's less about "producing" and more about being present.*
*That alone can be deeply rewarding.*

*5. Storytelling without people*

*Objects can suggest human presence without showing it:*

*A half-peeled orange*
*An open book*
*A worn pair of boots*

*Photographers like Edward Weston used objects to hint at human experience in a subtle, poetic way.*





*What the viewer feels*

*1. Stillness and calm*

*A good still life slows you down.*

*There's no action—so you begin to notice:*

*Light*
*Texture*
*Composition*

*It can feel almost like a pause in time.*

## 2. Heightened awareness

Viewers often walk away seeing everyday objects differently.

A lemon is no longer just a lemon—it's:

Colour
Shape
Light
Impermanence

*3. Quiet emotion or nostalgia*

*Because the objects are familiar, they can trigger memory:*

*Kitchen scenes*
*Childhood*
*Domestic life*

*This emotional response is often subtle, not dramatic.*

*4. A sense of meaning beneath the surface*

*Even when not obvious, viewers often feel that the arrangement "means something."*

*That tension—between ordinary objects and deeper ideas—is part of the intrigue.*

*It is the 'story' or 'motif'.*

# *Keys to Success*

*What you will need*

*A sturdy tripod and a cable release if you have one.*

*Camera*

*Lights:*
*flash, LEDs, table lamps, reflectors, natural/window light*

*Backgrounds*

*Props*

*A sturdy surface*

*A plan - that's flexible*


canon

*Considerations*

*Keep it simple.  Use objects that relate to each other.*

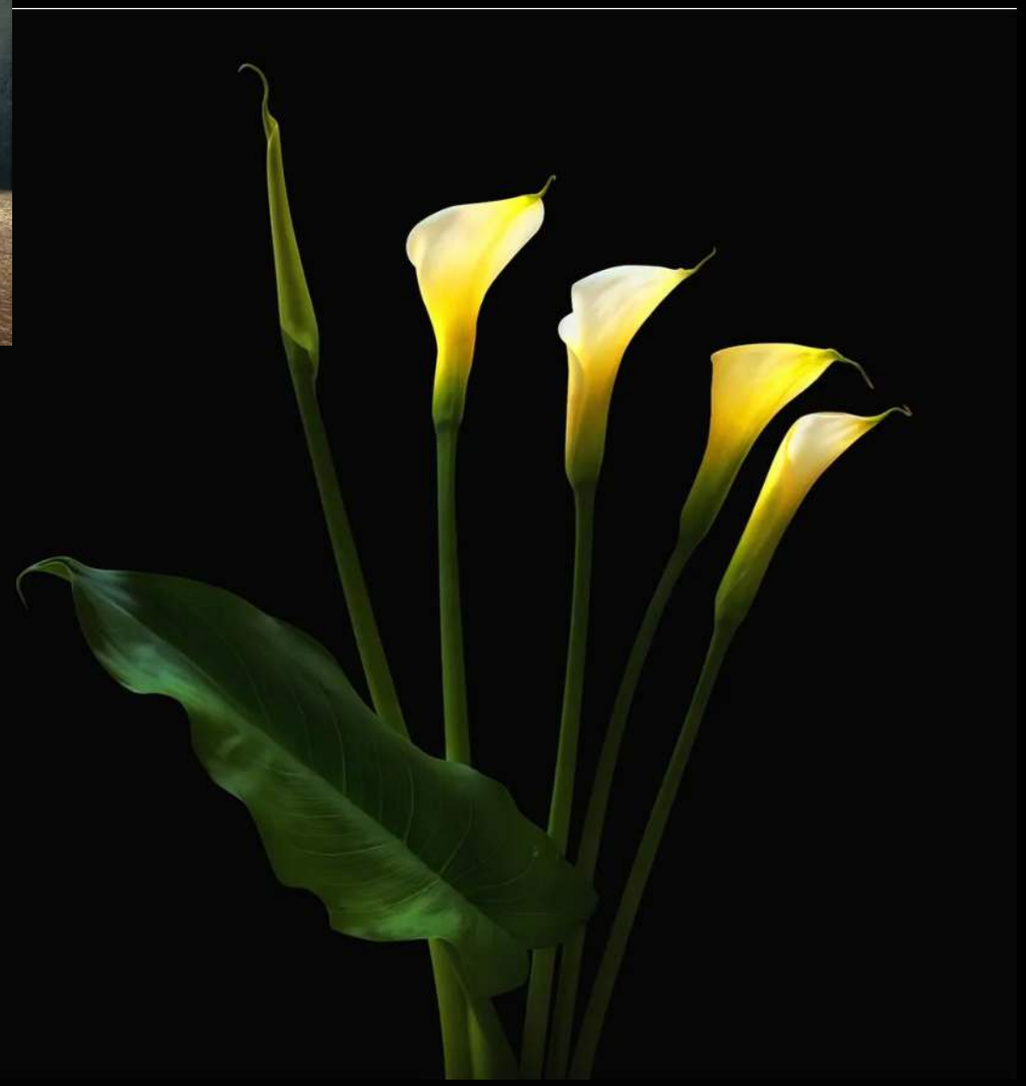
*Consider your backdrop.  Does it complement your idea?  Is it too dominant?*

*Arrange for diagonal lines, stagger objects, use negative space.*

*Experiment with lighting.  Source and direction are important.*
*Look where the shadows are falling.*
*What do you want to convey - bright and colourful or dark and moody?*

*Try different camera angles - from above, from below.*





*Lighting.*

*Window light/ natural light*

*Desk lamp for directional lighting*
*Highlight the subject*

*Black out the room, make it dark and moody.*

*Look where the light is falling. Where are the shadows?*
*Highlight the main object or the centre of the arrangement*

*Try "Painting with Light". Black out the room totally, wave a torch over the arrangement using a long exposure. Practise to get it right.*







*Experiment*

*Try complementary colours.*

*Try monochrome*

*Consider your purpose.*
*Is it a story?  Is it a study of related objects?  Is it a study of textures?*

*Experiment with everyday objects like cutlery, old shoes.*

*Devise a story from every day activities like making jam.*









*Use a tripod.*

*Try different angles such as viewed from above, below, from the side*

*Composition*

*Create triangles, diagonal lines*
*Use the  odd numbers rule*
*Negative space*

*Most important.....*
*Try to create a motif or story*









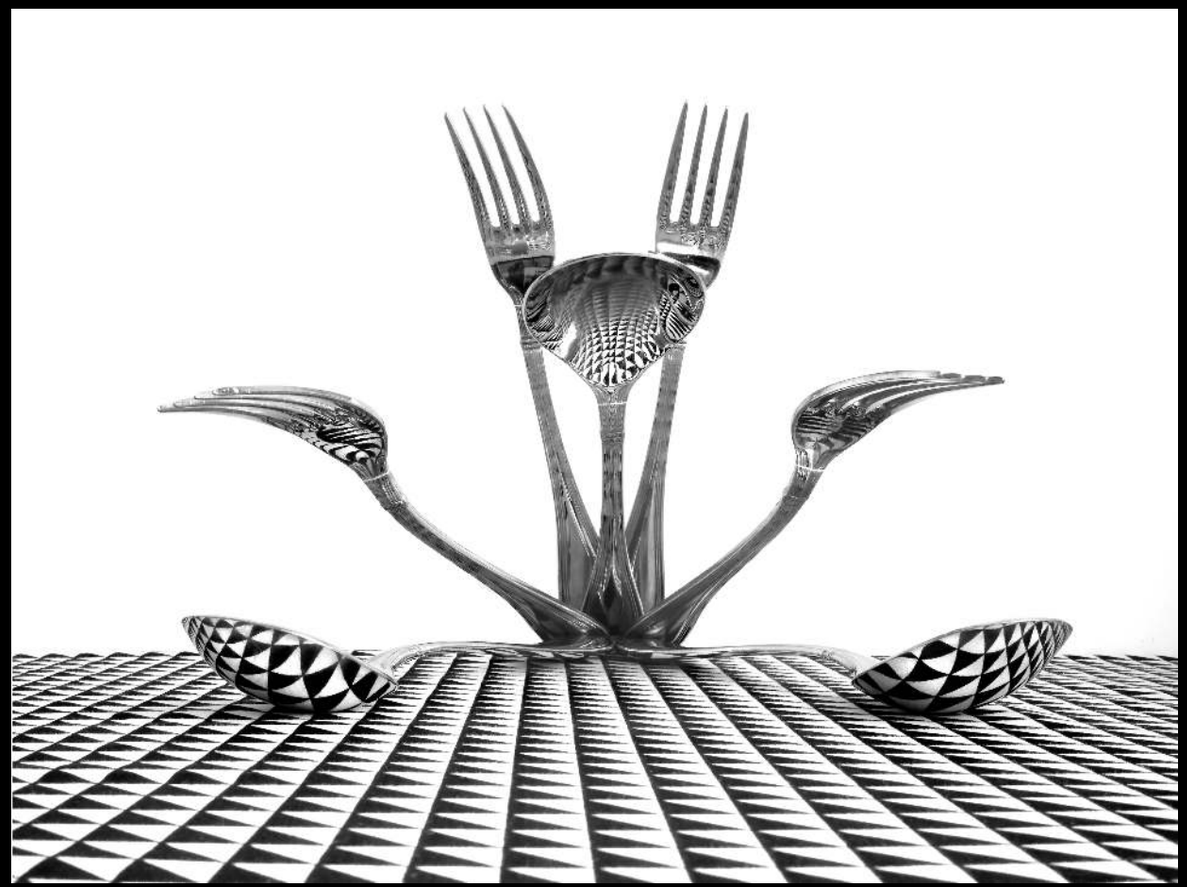


*Amuse your viewers*

*Add a surprise*

*Photograph something unusual or in an unusual way*

*Break the rules*







*Time is your friend*

*Take all day*

*Rearrange, rearrange, rearrange*

*If you don't like your first 'take' - do it again*

*If it's not working leave it and do something else.*
*It will be there when you return.*



