

Art Of The Diptych

WHEN TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE | BY KRISTIN ZECCHINELLI OF SHUTTER SISTERS



We strive in photography to shoot “the shot,” often concentrating on one singular image at a time. This is how I, too, shoot most days, but I also love going through a shoot, or filtering through my own archives, seeing how certain images seem to want to be together. Alone they’re lovely, but when placed together, they tell an even stronger story.

The diptych—two images combined into a single frame or presented together—originated in art as a drawing or painting in two parts. The format of the pictures was typically landscape or portrait, usually the same size. Pronounced “dip-tick,” the word comes from the Greek root “dis,” meaning two, and “ptykhe,” meaning fold, and was the name of the folding



writing tablets used in Roman times. Two boards, most commonly wood, but also bone or metal, were hinged together, the inner faces covered with a layer of wax that could be inscribed.

As in many forms of artistic expression derived from art of the past, photography adopted the process of the diptych for our own artistic medium. In photography, the diptych

has become a popular format where pairs of portraits, images or themed pictures are used together to complement one another. For the photographic diptych format to work, there should be some commonality between the pictures in the image. They should share some aesthetic, subject, color, theme or form.

Look for thematic, compositional and other visual synergies that will make your images more powerful together.

IDEAS FOR DIPTYCHS

- A common color thread
- One wide shot and one close-up
- Similar shapes
- Thematic connection
- The same shot at varying times, like day and night, or winter and spring
- Portrait shoots, especially valuable in couple shoots

Play with photo ratios and with placement of photos. The diptych doesn't need to be side by side or equal ratios, though this can be a good place to start. Experiment!

Photography is visual communication, our way of seeing the world around us through our lens, and sharing its stories, ideas and feelings through our images. A diptych is an additional creative tool, post-shoot, to help us photographers tell an impactful story.

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