Architectural Photography

Members Forum - November 8, 2023

Jennifer Powell

History of Architectural Photography

- Photography of interior / exterior buildings, including other structures
- In 1826 the oldest known photograph was taken
- A scene out a window of a courtyard in France & took 8 hrs to expose

View from the Window at Le Gras by Joseph NicéphoreNiépce, 1826-27 ©www.thoughtco.com

History - 1830's

- Beginning of Architectural Photography
- Purpose was document buildings and share with people around the world
- 2 Approaches:
  - Elevation: 2D image of the building, emphasizing details and imitates a drawing
  - Perspective: 3D image from a diagonal, bringing in the surrounding

Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris (1841) by J.P.G Prangey ©www.archinect.com

Paris' Boulevard du Temple (1839) by J.M.L Daguerre ©www.archinect.com

History - Late 1940's

- After WWII, modern architecture became a status of a better life
- First time people included to promote life in these spaces
- Architectural photography became acknowledged as "real" art

Julius Shulman's 1947 photograph of the Kaufmann House

History - 1950's

- Architects were hiring photographers
- Photographers became more creative with shadows, compositions and techniques
- Graphic art

Julius Shulman's photos show America's mid-...

Visit ›

Decades ago, Erica Stoller accompanied her father, the architectural photographer Ezra

Photography of Ezra Stoller

6 of 10

Today

- Share travel photos
- Document architecture
- Document history
- 1 Point vs 2 Point perspective

Today

- Photos of house for sale & vacation rental
- Advertise architects’ & designers’ work

Today

Abstract & Fine Art

- Architecture is already art
- Strong design elements

Recommended Equipment

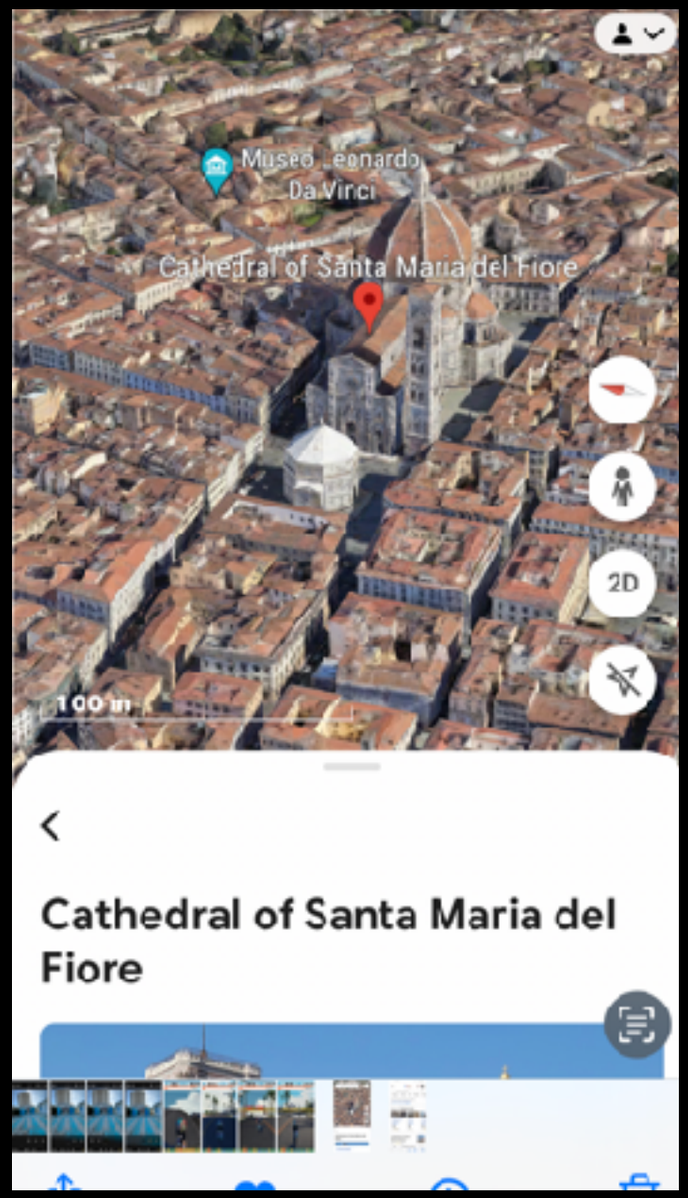
- Wide angle lens 16 - 35 mm, Fish Eye, Tilt Shift
- Phone - Ultra wide .5 setting
- Tripod & external flash (if allowed inside building)
- Polarizer for outside glare
- Zoom lens for details

- Settings - Aperture Priority, F8 for details, RAW

How to get great shots

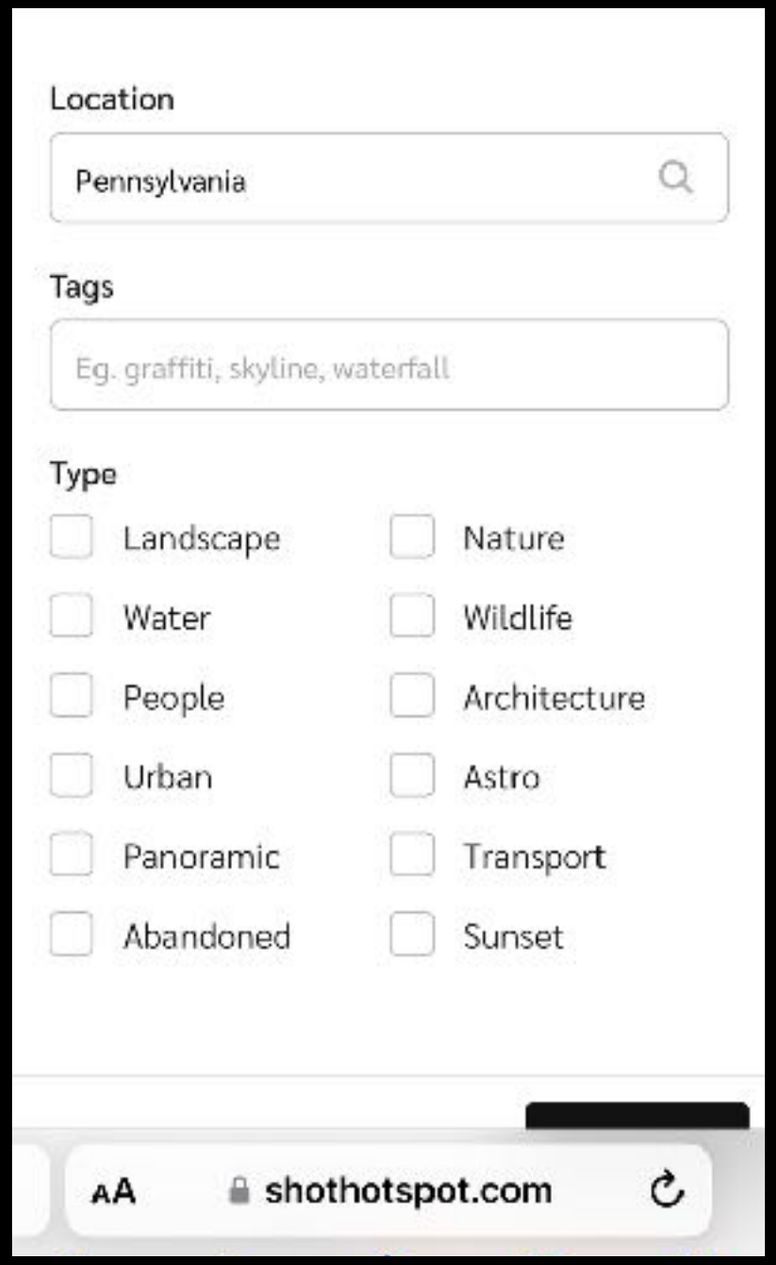
Research locations

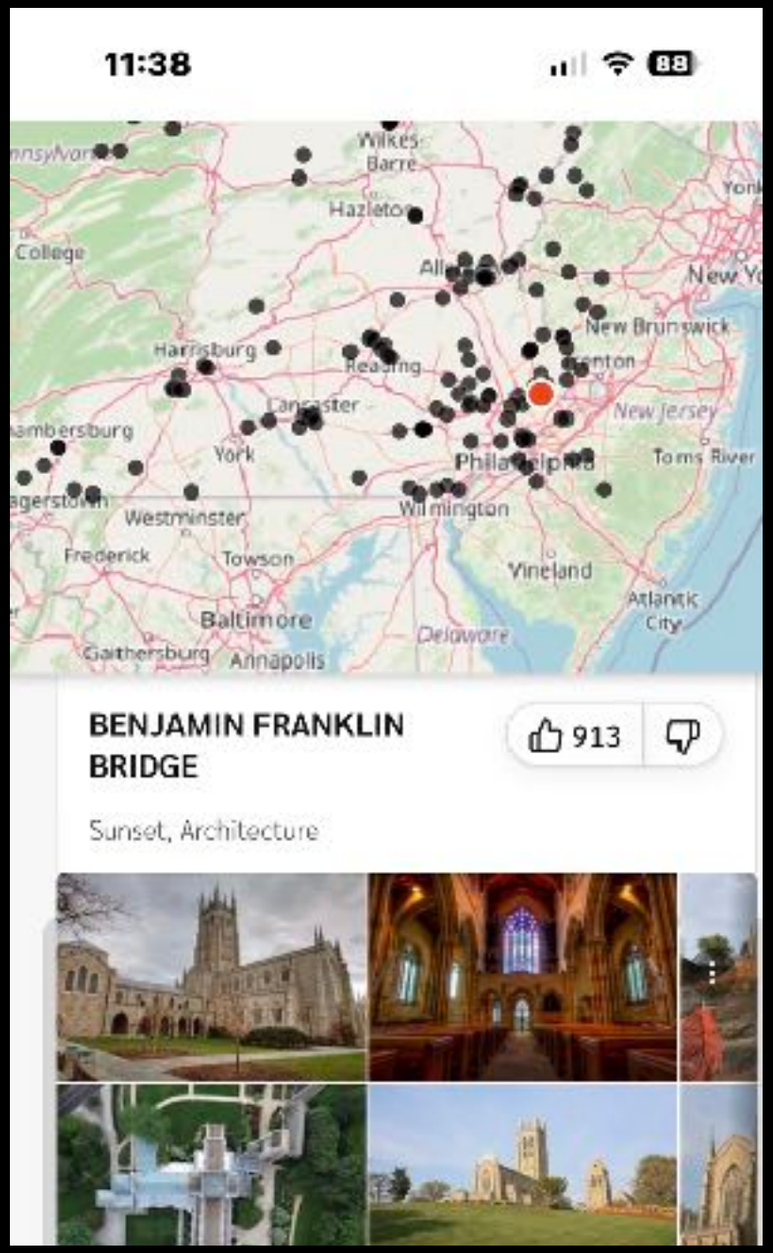
- Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest)
  - Type location in search
  - Use Hash Tags
  - Look up Tourism pages
- Google Earth
- Google Maps
- Google Search - Image



Research Places of Interest

- ShotHotSpot.com
- Geo-tagging from phones
- Filter by place and type of photo



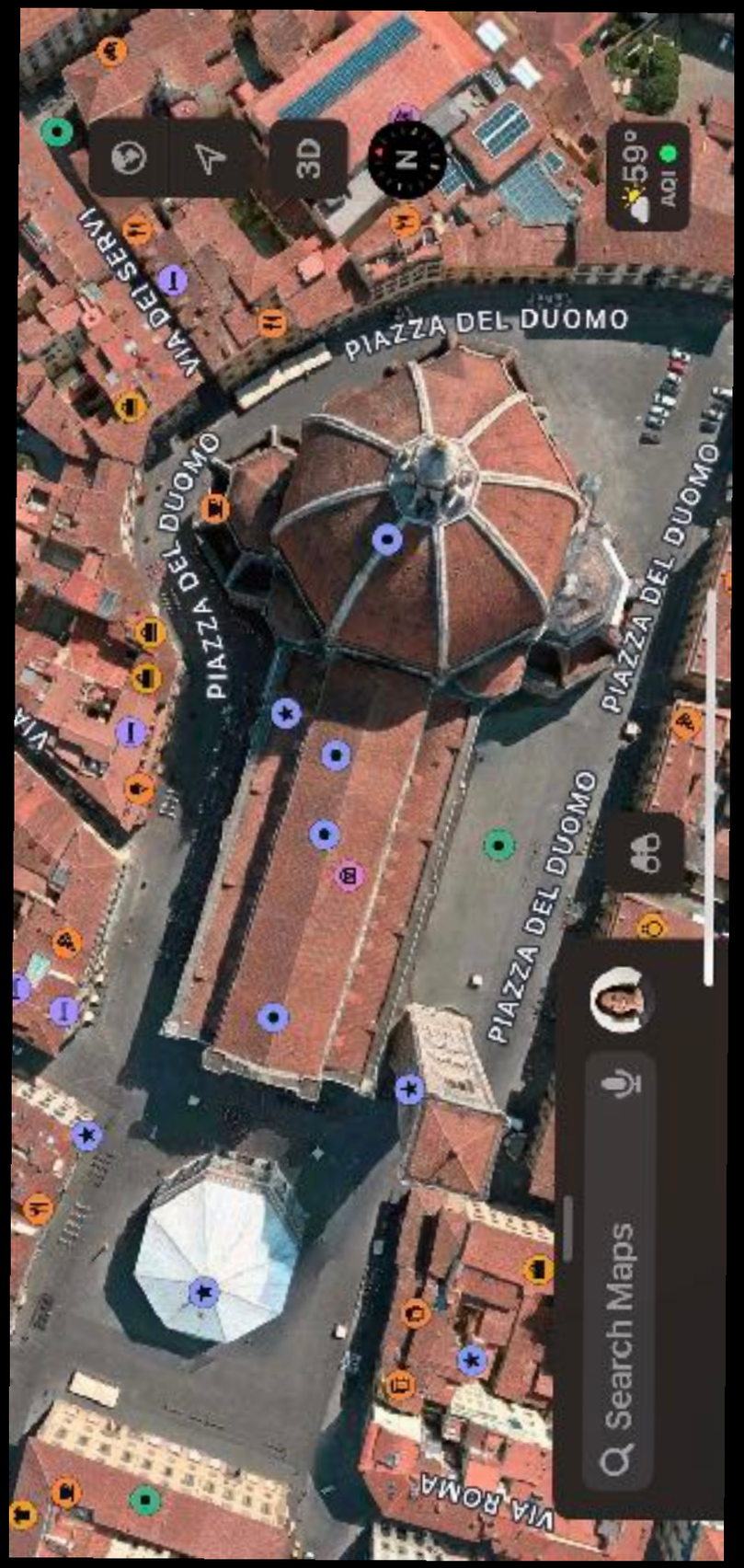


Research

- What to expect
- Clues about best vantage points
- Indication of lighting

Research

- Look at a Google Maps for position position of the building
  - Sun
  - Vantage point



Approach to getting a great shot

- First Impressions
- Zoom out on Landscape
- People for context and scale
- Be patient

Approach

- Shoot from different angles
- Shoot at different times

Approach

- Multiple shots
- Zoom in on details

Light

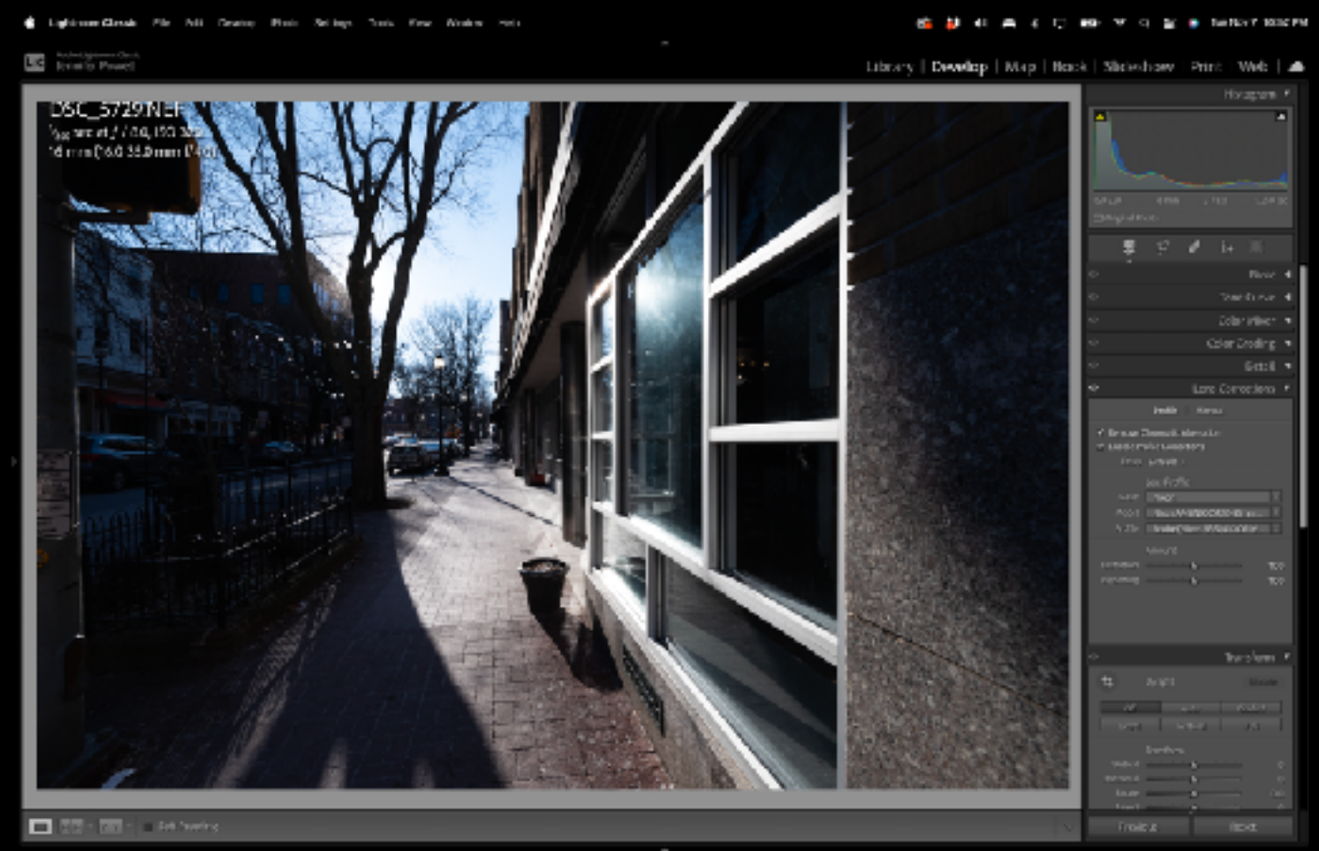
- The most important element
- Wait, the light will change

6:41 PM

6:53 PM

Light

- Fall & Winter - little haze
- Late afternoon - low sun
- Sunny - harsh shadows
- Great for graphic design



Embrace the weather

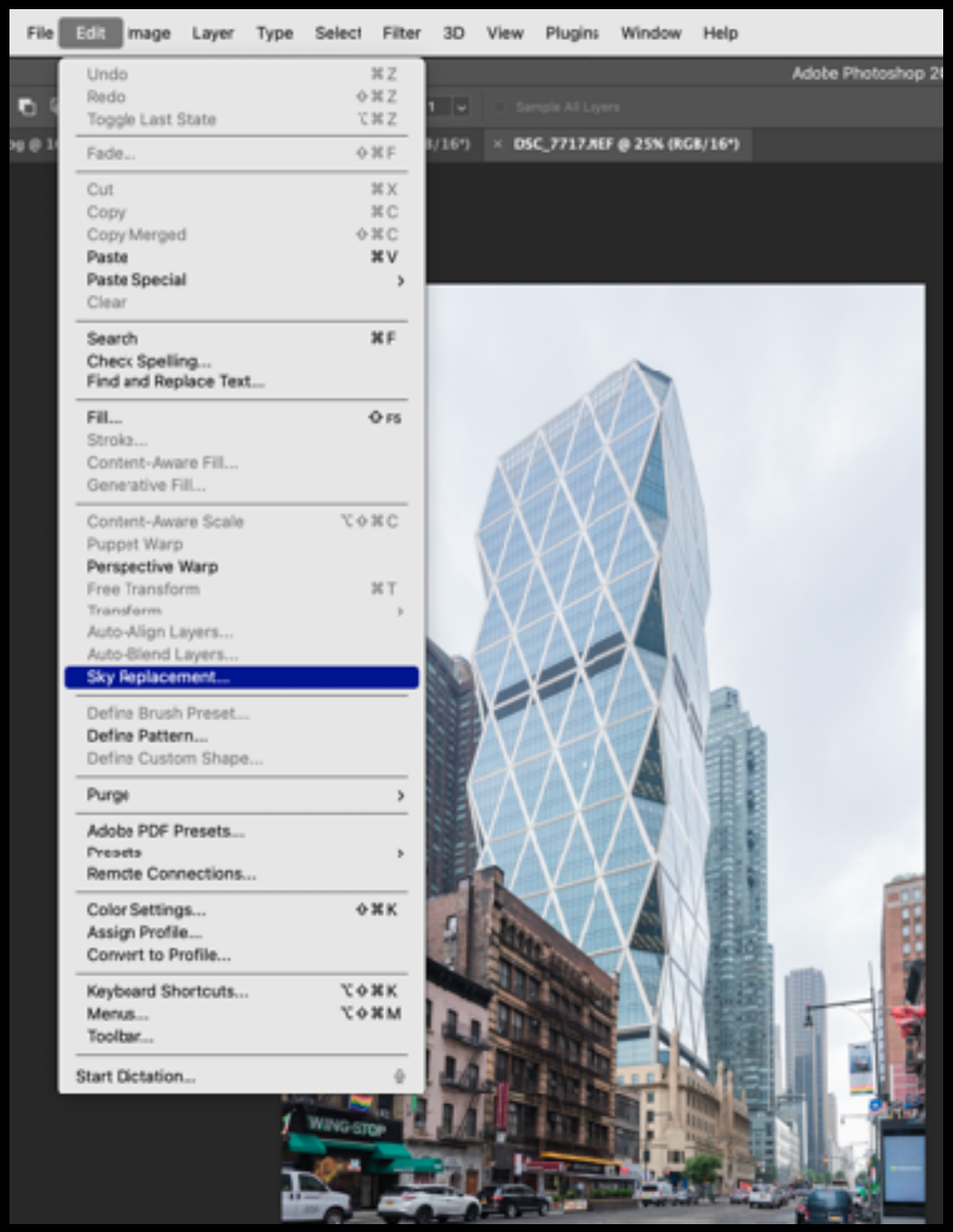
- Cloudy
  - Low tonal contrast
  - Capture detail
  - Big light box
- Stormy
  - Moody
  - Increase contrast for drama

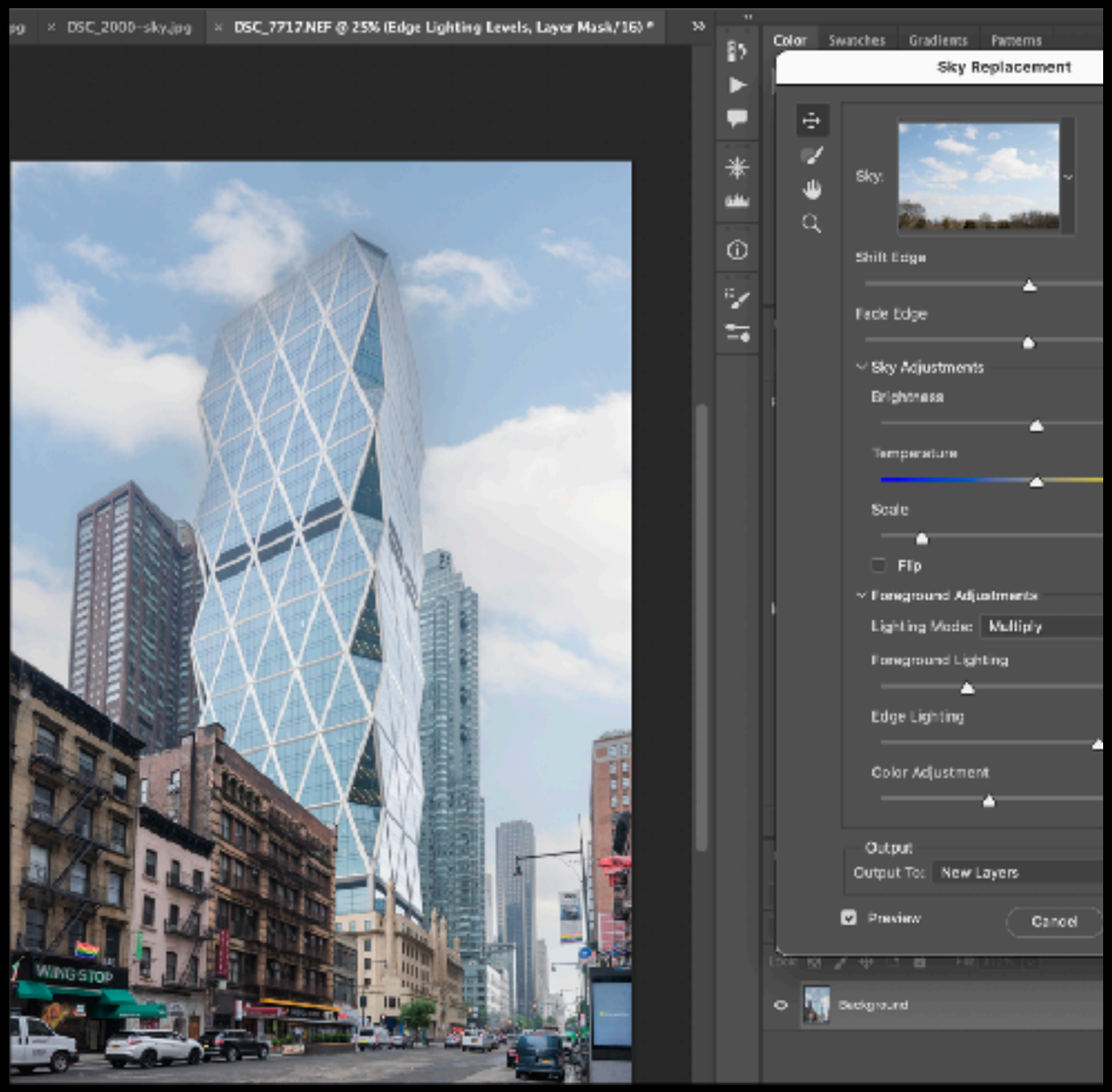
Backlighting

- Problem:
  - Throws off the exposure readings
  - Creates muddied colors
  - Causes sun spots
- Solution:
  - Use a lens hood
  - Tilt camera down slightly
  - Use an object to block the sun

Weather - Post Production

- Adjust brightness, sharpness & saturation in Lightroom
- Export into Photoshop & replace the sky





Perspective Control

- Architectural Photography - vertical lines that are parallel and not converging
- Camera’s focal plane should be perpendicular to the ground
- Utilize grid in viewfinder
- Raise camera and use tilt screen

Perspective Control

Step back and zoom in

Fixing Convergence

- When the building is tall, fix in post
- Draw guided lines in the Transform Develop Module.
- Allow extra space for cropping

Fixing Perspective - in phone

Edit, Crop

Straighten

Horizontal

Vertical

Graphic Art

- What catches your eye
- Don’t need to photography the whole thing
- Look for patterns & contrast

Important Elements

- Architecture is all about shapes, line, color, pattern, texture & space
- Look at the details
- Play with different compositions

Interesting Design Elements

- Windows, door frames, arches
- Observe and capture how light interacts with space

I love
stairs !!!!!

Motion

Composition

- Pay attention to symmetry

- Don’t forget depth and leading lines

Unique

- Especially with famous buildings, do something different
- Look at components
- Use other things to frame it
- Things that represent the feel of the architecture

Interiors

- High Dynamic Range
- Different light sources, colors and intensities
- Expose for inside & for outside
    1. Bracket shots & HDR
    2. Ambient + flash shot. Layers & masks
- Tripod required

Flash

Ambient

Combined in Photoshop

Where is Architecture

- Everywhere
- Its where we live, shop, work & worship
- Phones make it possible to take photos without notice