Composition for Landscape and Macro Photography

- Learning how to compose will make photos more appealing
- There are “rules/tools” of composition
- Called “rules” but could be called “guidelines”
- Breaking them is permissible
- These guidelines can be applied to the art world in general
- What are they and how should we apply them?

The Rule of Thirds

- Divides a frame into thirds, using horizontal and vertical lines
- Place essential elements along these lines or intersection points
- Creates asymmetry that gives vitality
- Compositions with subjects in the middle are often dull and static
- Consider using high or low horizons – high horizons enhance the vastness of the ground; low horizons increase the expanse of the sky – what is your subject? Ground or sky?

Rule of Visual Weight

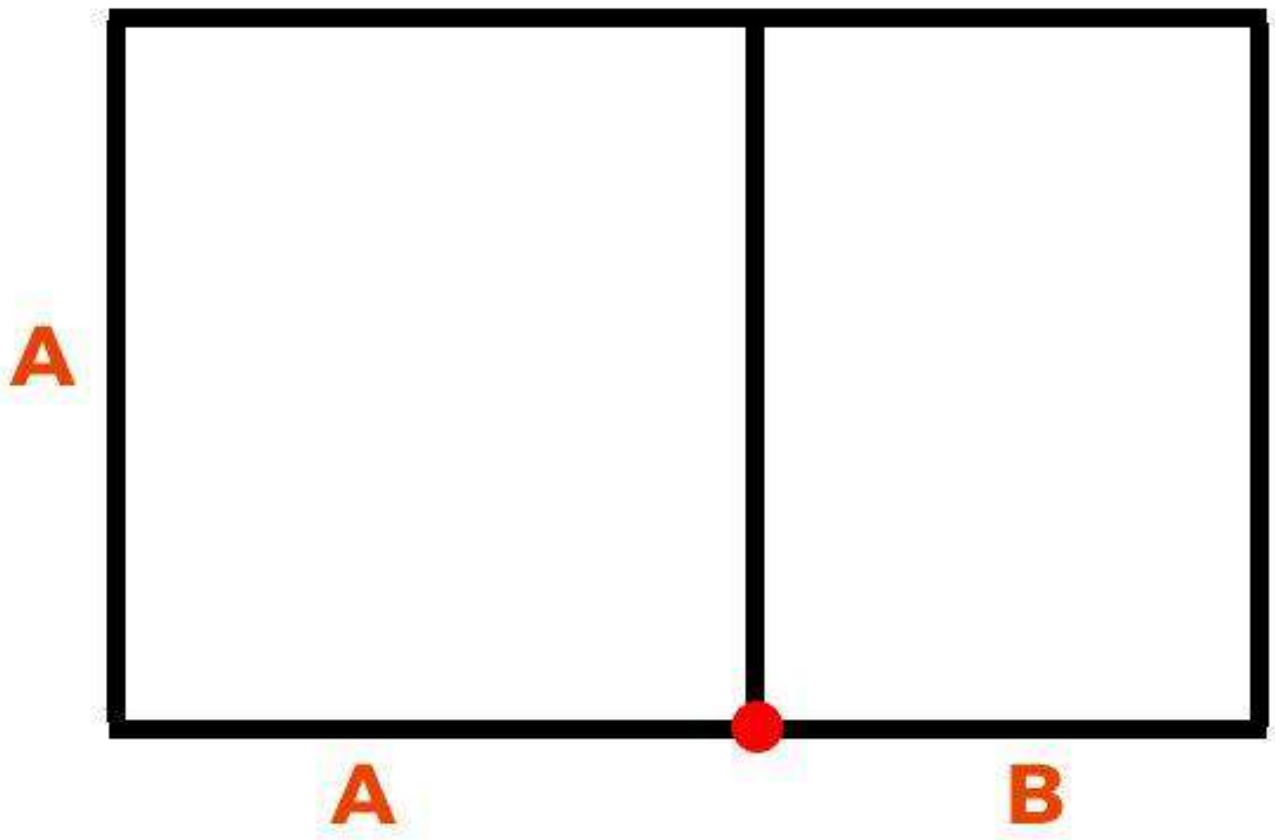
- Every photograph is composed of visual weight or a dominating theme.
- The photographer controls the placement of visual weight –
  - where to place the horizon line – near the top or the bottom of the frame
  - selective focus – what is in focus and what is not
  - suggested motion – frozen action or implied motion
  - contrast – light tones are perceived as lighter in weight than their darker-toned counterparts
  - color – reds, oranges and yellows are advancing colors while blues, greens and purples recede

Golden Ratio

- Golden ratio is a ratio of approximately 1.618 to 1
- Uses a spiral created by a series of equally proportioned rectangles
- Place a focal point on smallest part of the spiral
- Place other vital elements along or near the rest of the spiral

- Take a line - divide it into two sections

- Then create a golden rectangle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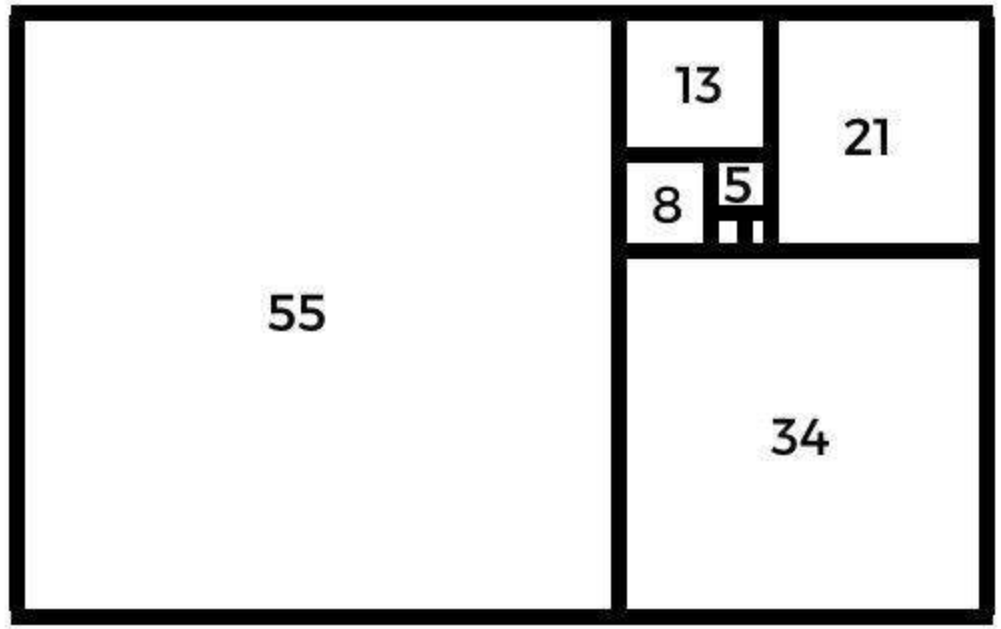
- Add smaller golden rectangles inside larger ones


13
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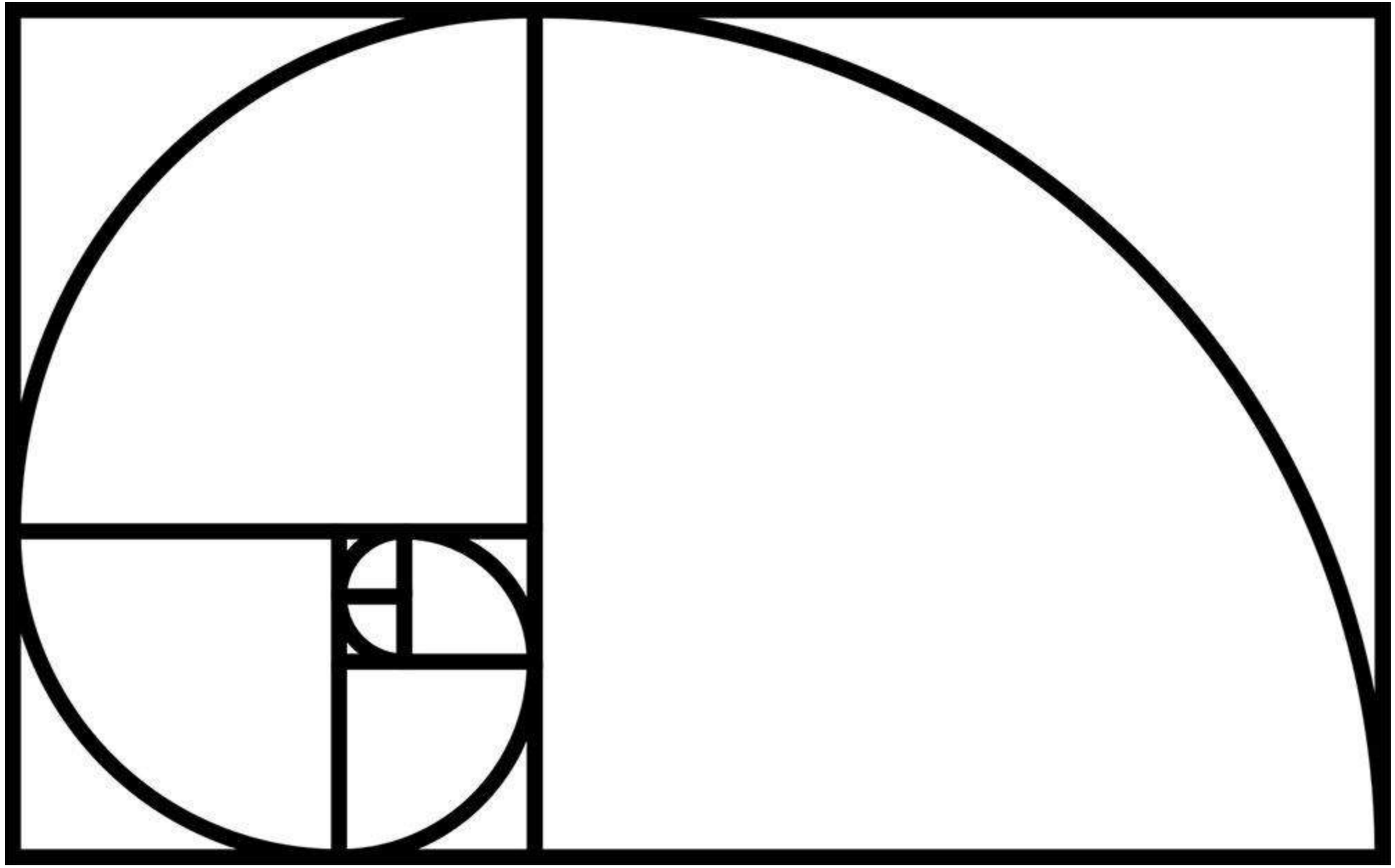
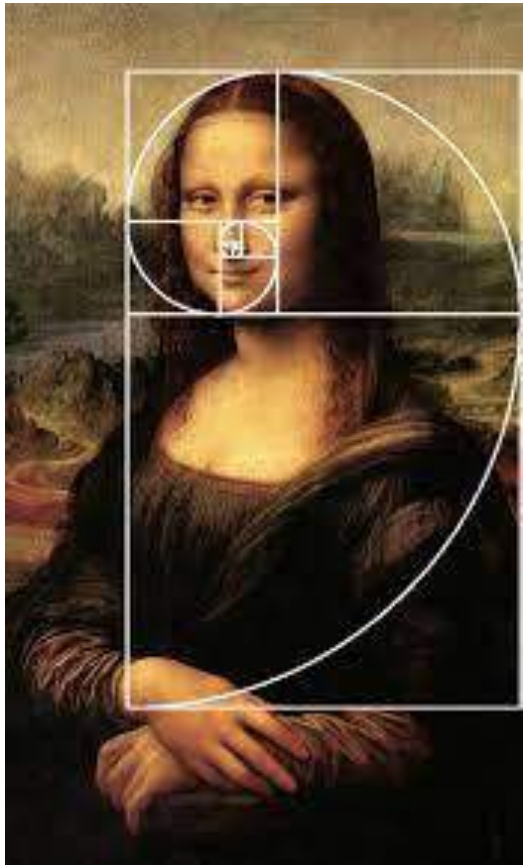
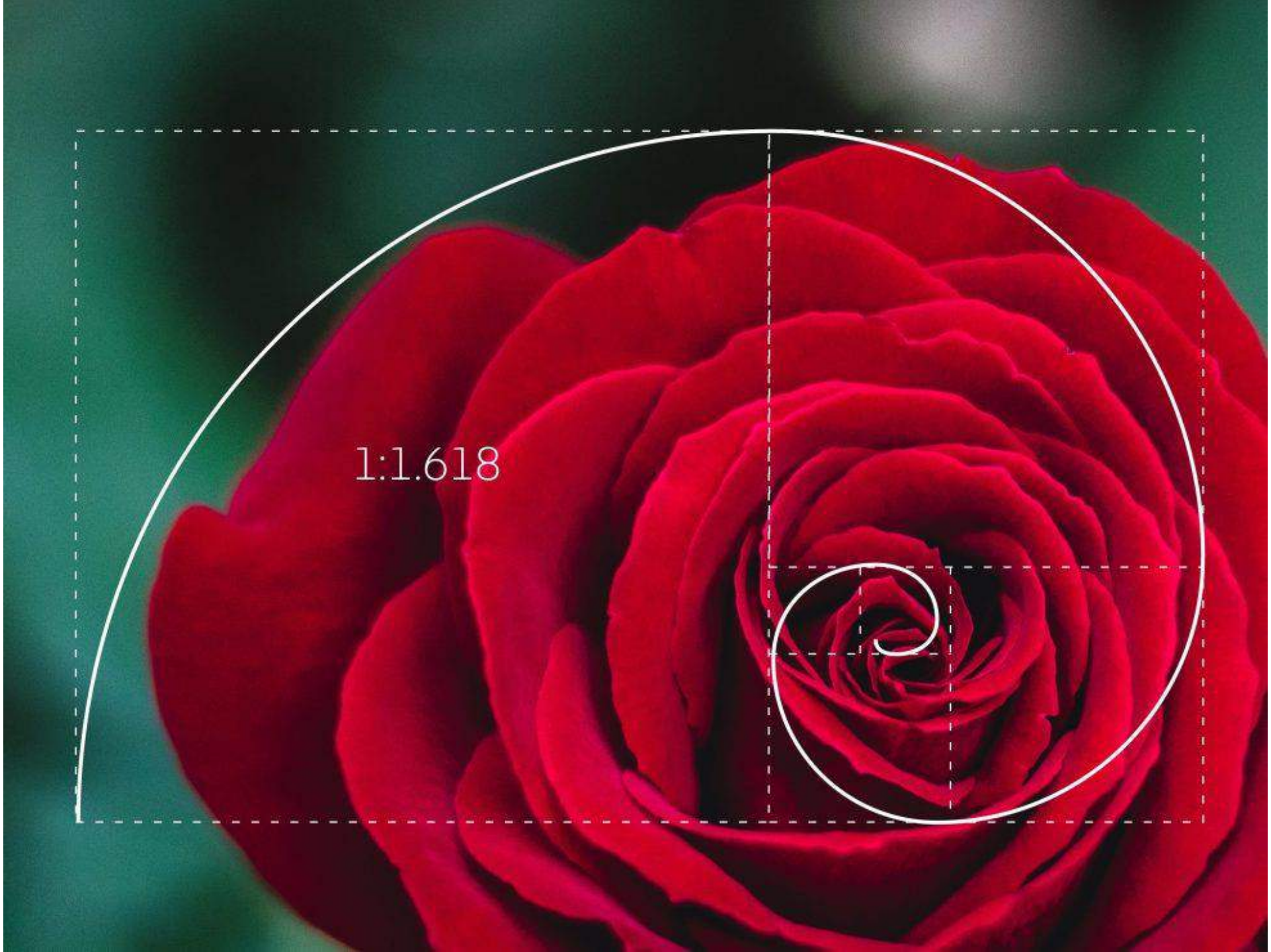
- A Fibonacci spiral is created by drawing circular arcs from opposite corners of each square
- Rectangles on which the spiral is based follow a mathematical sequence discovered by Leonardo Fibonacci



- This spiral is prolific in nature, most notably in the Nautilus shell
- Used in architecture and by famous photographers such as Ansel Adams
- Some have called the rule of thirds an oversimplified version of the golden ratio. Adding another vertical line to the golden rectangle creates a close facsimile of the rule of thirds

- The Mona Lisa uses this golden ratio.
- In photography, the golden ratio can be used **to identify the main subject while still leading the viewer's eye through the entire image**.




1:1.618

- Can rotate or move these spirals
- Use your imagination or an overlay as a guide when cropping

Rule of Odds

- Odd number of elements is visually more appealing than an even number of elements
- Even numbers can be equally divided into halves, splitting viewer’s attention
- A viewer is unable to divide odd numbers subconsciously, compositions following the rule of odds appear more balanced and unified
- Place your main subject in the center; doing so will give it the desired attention

Rule of Space

- Subjects in motion can be made more captivating by following the rule of space
- Leave space in the direction where the subject is moving or looking so viewer can follow their line of sight
- In our culture, we read from left to right. Where should the space be found?

Centered composition

- Rules suggest centering a subject is not desirable, but sometimes that is exactly what is needed
- Placing a subject in the middle immerses it with its surrounding; helps amplify the subject's connection with its environment
- Central composition is useful because it highlights subjects – giving them power and authority

Color

- Color temperature can create depth, emphasize objects and evoke specific moods
- Warm colors consist of red, orange, and yellow while cool colors consist of purple, blue, and green
- Warm colors appear to advance while cool colors appear to recede
- Can use color to create depth and emphasize certain elements

- Color can be used to create focal points
- A single color alone is neither warm nor cool; color temperature is relative and dependent on the other colors within a scene
- With colors like red and green, easy to determine which is warm and which is cool
- When there are two cool colors such as blue and green, green is often perceived as warm while blue is perceived as cool

- Color temperature can be used to create a **mood**
- Warm colors evoke feelings of happiness, passion, and excitement; cool colors tend to evoke a more relaxing and calming mood
- Choice of color can help influence the story you tell
- Absence of color can be a compositional choice

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Negative Space

- Negative space is the empty space around and between the subject
- With more empty space, less the feeling of being crowded
- Negative space will highlight a subject and make it stand out
- Negative space may appear simplistic, but it can be impactful

Leading Lines and S-curves

- Leading lines and S-curves are great tools in creating engaging compositions
- Leading lines attract the viewer towards the focal point
- Follow these lines until they converge and vanish on the horizon
- Placing subjects where lines meet helps elevate their visual importance
- Leading lines can be physical or implied – roads, streams and the like or could be light, stones, wakes in water

- S-curves use the curve shape to create a more balanced picture
- Helpful to induce a sense of movement
- S-curves with a downward slope can give a sense of a fast action; an upward slope increases tensions, making images more dramatic
- S-curves' sense of movement encourages eyes to sweep back and forth; thus, objects placed along the curve get more attention

Leading Lines

S-Curves

Visual Paths

- Can be confused with leading lines
- Leading lines guide the one to the main subject
- Visual paths lead one to explore different elements within image
- Can use visual paths so attention is directed to a focal point; in the process, they will also notice other details
- Can be both implied and physical; such paths come in many forms - color, light, and shape

Vertical Lines

- Vertical lines exude strength denoting size and height
- Appear more active or somewhat aggressive
- Can convey moods ranging from growth to power
- To further highlight vertical lines, use a vertical format (portrait)
- Vertical format encourages eyes to move up and down
- Vertical lines give a feeling of height and majesty

Horizontal Lines

- Can evoke feelings of restfulness and stability
- To accentuate feelings of peacefulness consider using a horizontal format (landscape)
- Horizontal format encourages eyes to move from left to right
- Used to encompass large scenes such as seascapes or mountains