

VISUAL STORYTELLING



What is Composition?

Composition is the arrangement of elements within an image. It is a means for an artist to convey specific emotions, stories, or meanings within a singular arrangement. It is where you place your subject(s) in relation to each other. It is how you use color to create contrast. It is the size of your subject compared to the empty space around them.

Focal points

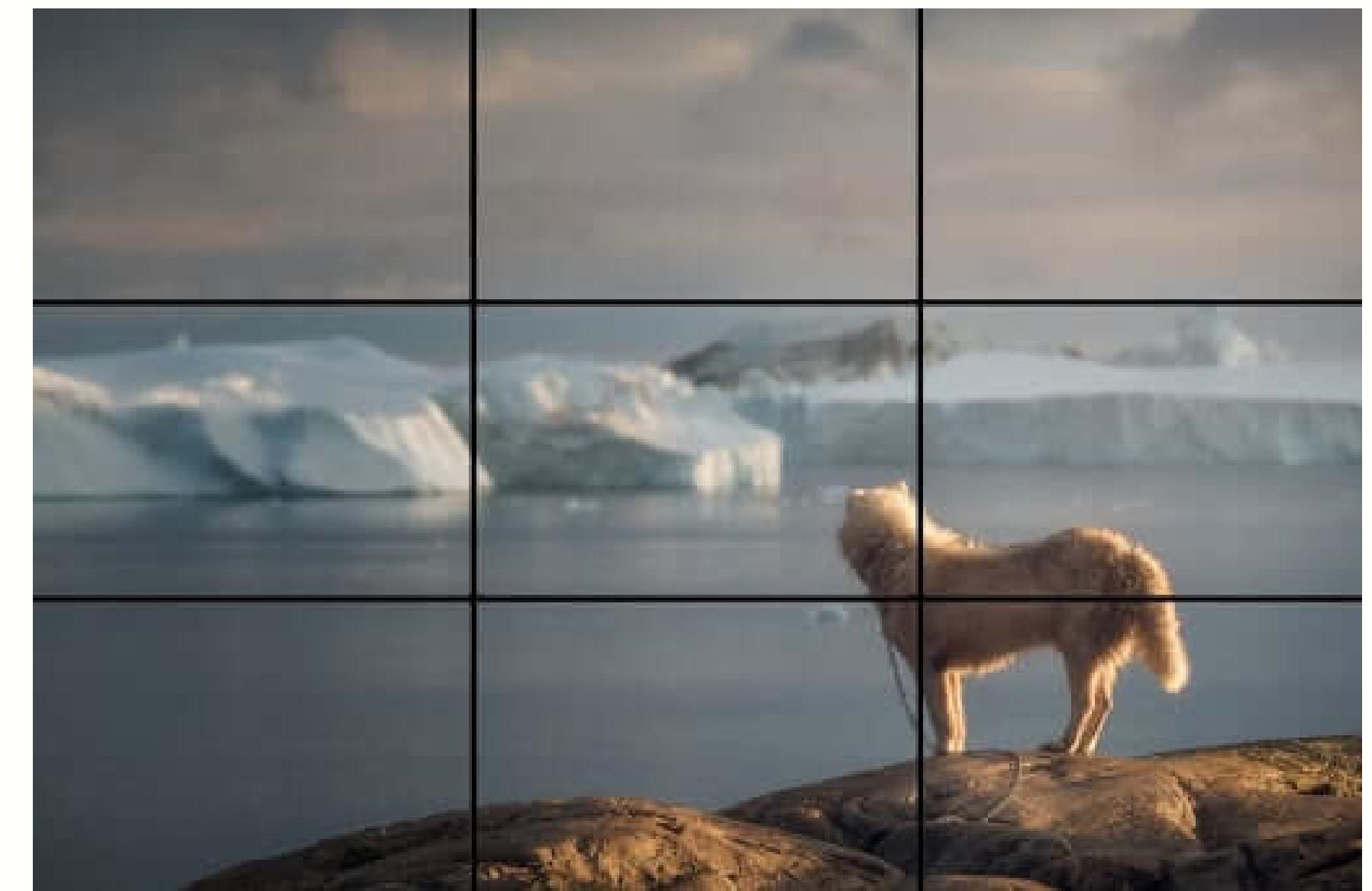
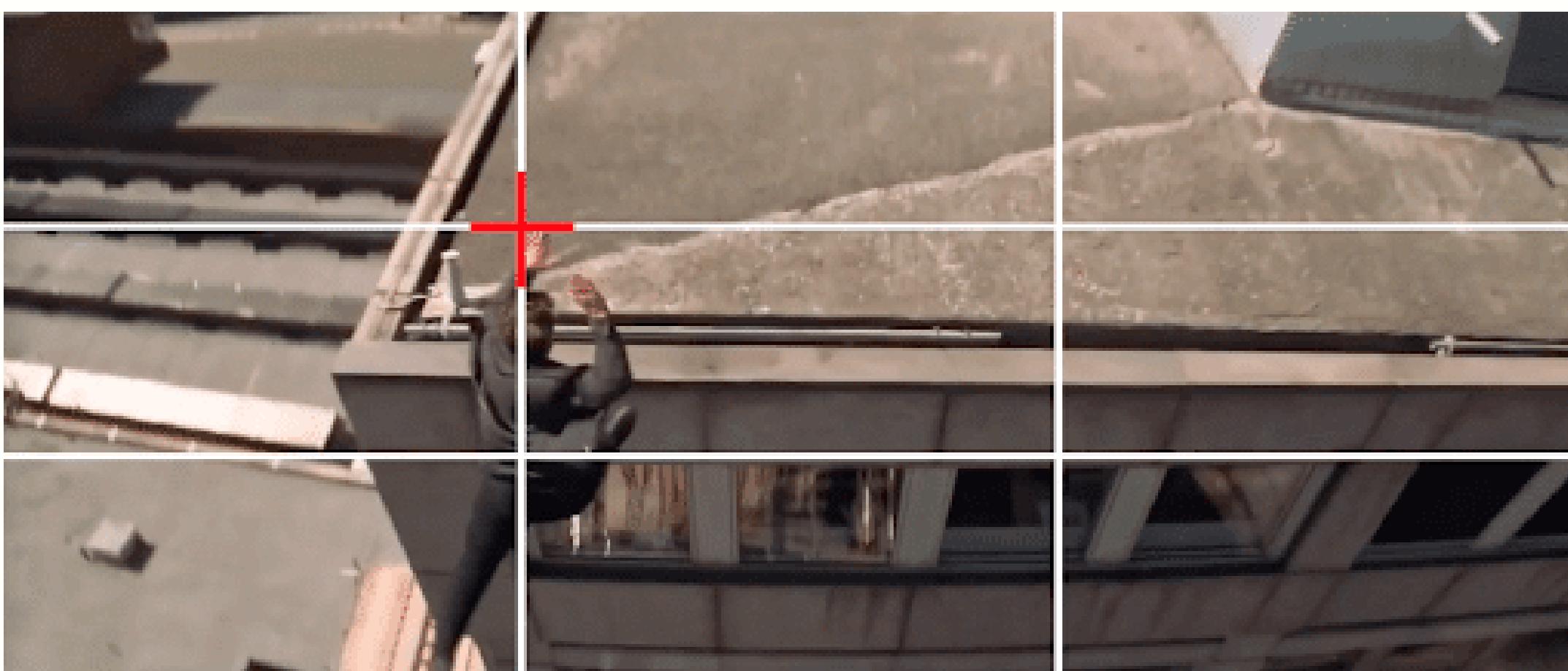
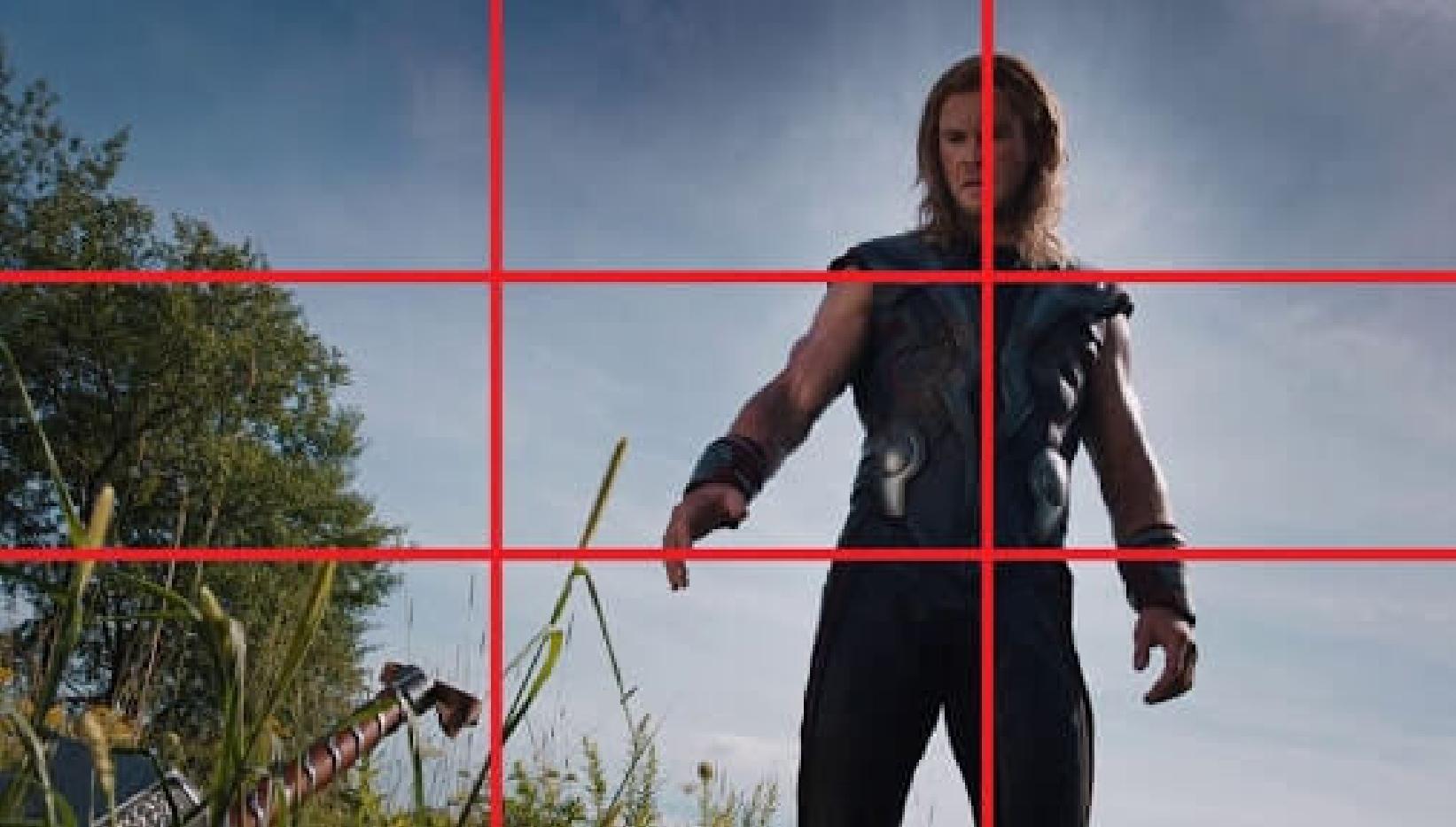
To start, let's talk about focal points. As the name suggests, this is a point of focus — where you want the eye to go. Often this point is the main subject or idea of the image, the thing that matters most in how the image is read.



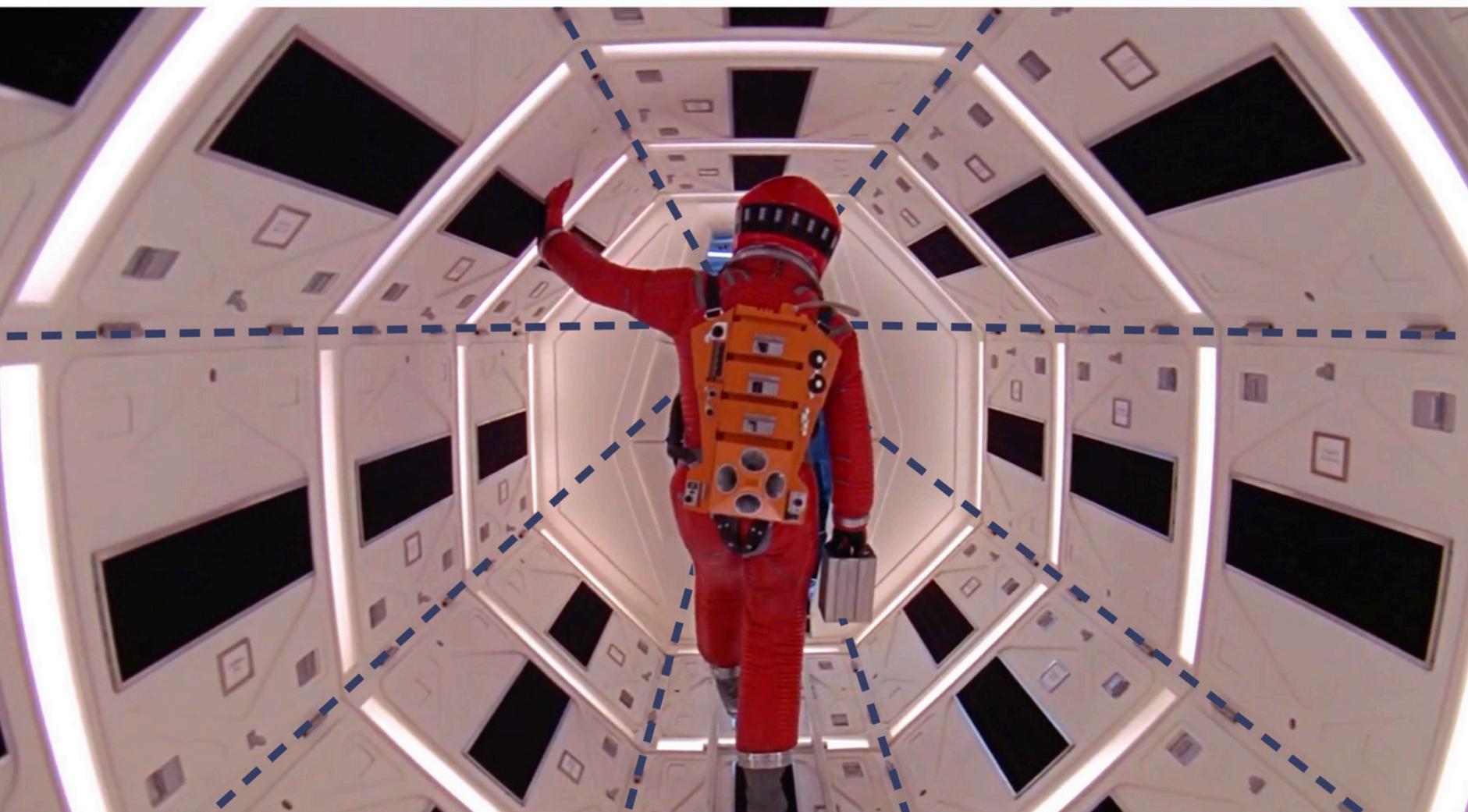


Rule of Thirds

The Rule of Thirds is the process of dividing an image into thirds, using two horizontal and two vertical lines. This imaginary grid yields nine segments with four intersection points. When you position the most important elements of your image at these intersection points, you produce a much more natural image. It is also suggested that the horizon is placed on either the top or bottom horizontal lines.



LEADING LINES



Leading lines are actual lines (or sometimes imaginary ones) in a shot, that lead the eye to key elements in the scene. Artists use this technique to direct the viewer's eye but they also use it to connect the character to essential objects, situations, or secondary subjects. Whatever your eye is drawn to in a scene, leading lines probably have something to do with it. In this shot from Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (dotted lines added for emphasis), notice the lines created by the production design focus our attention on the lead character as well as help "push" them forward



LEADING LINES

Leading lines found in nature are much less distinct, but equally effective. Naturally occurring leading lines can be found in rivers, horizon lines, or mountain ridges. In this photo, the slope as well as the waterline curve our eyes directly towards the natural focal point (the sun).



Vertical leading lines guide the viewer's eye upward or downward in the frame. This shot from the film Trainspotting uses the vertical lines from the architecture of the building to guide our eye downward toward the subject at the bottom of the frame.

Artificial or man made structures produce the most distinct leading lines. Things like streets, fences, buildings, and bridges all have very distinguished features and lines that can be used in your compositions.





Diagonal leading lines are great at creating depth. They often move across the frame in a diagonal direction, but also deeper into the shot.

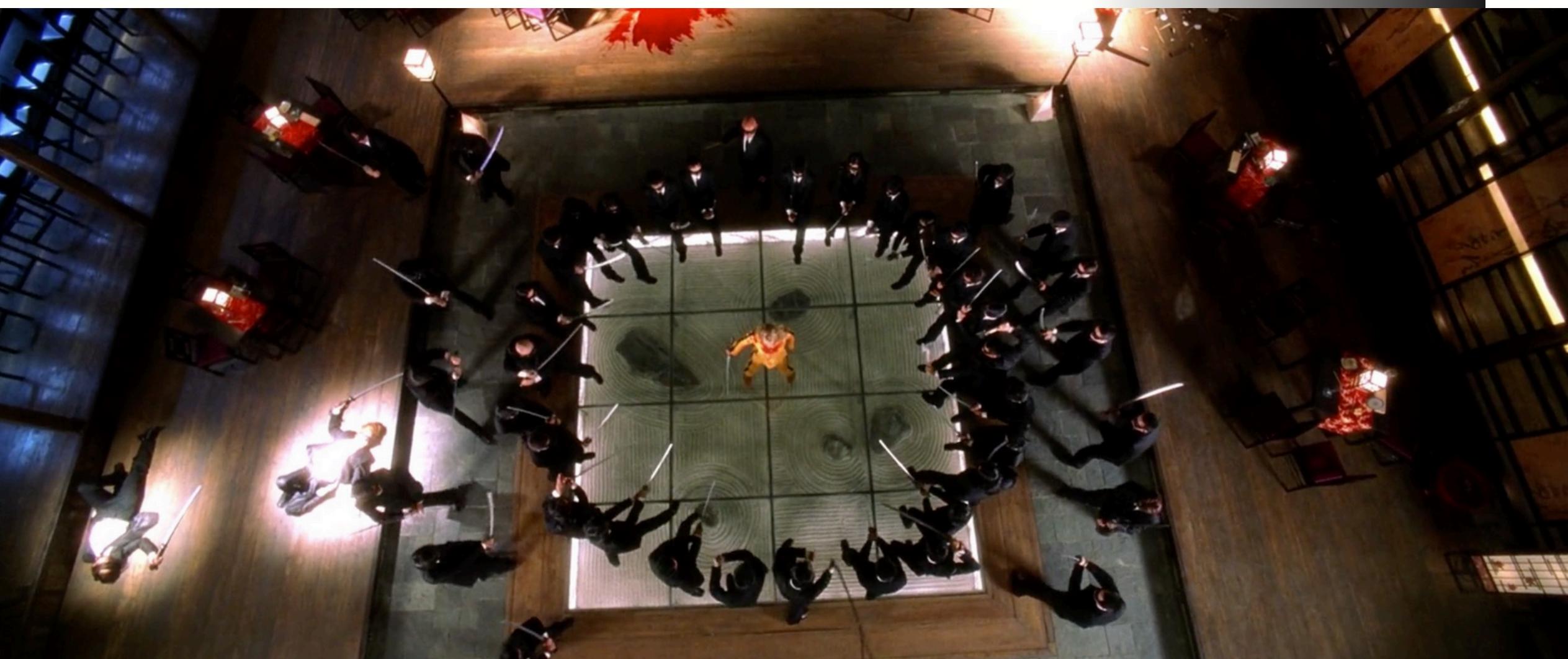
converging leading lines from various directions converge toward one space or subject. This technique is called one-point perspective and it was one of Stanley Kubrick's most common types of composition.



SHAPES

We find shapes everywhere in the world and just like these other elements of composition, shapes bring with them a certain context and meaning. Triangles are often used to illustrate strength and power dynamics, suggesting a hierarchy. Consider the triangle formed by the blocking in this shot and how even though the subject in the middle is center-framed, he is clearly powerless in this situation.

Circles can bring an entirely different dynamic to a composition. In some cases, a sense of calm orderliness or, in this shot from Kill Bill Vol. 1, being surrounded on all sides by the enemy.





Frame within a frame

There are certain compositional techniques that make a shot visually beautiful. There are other compositional techniques that are effective at visually telling a story. The frame within a frame does both. Creating a frame within a frame is as simple as finding any shape or visual element in your scene that can frame your subject within the shot. This can be set pieces like doorways, windows, or furniture.





Contrast

Contrast in art is the technique of using unlike visual elements in juxtaposition to create meaning and intensify the characteristics of the work. Artists utilize various elements at their disposal to create contrast such as shadows, light, color, size, shapes, and more.





COMPLEMENTARY

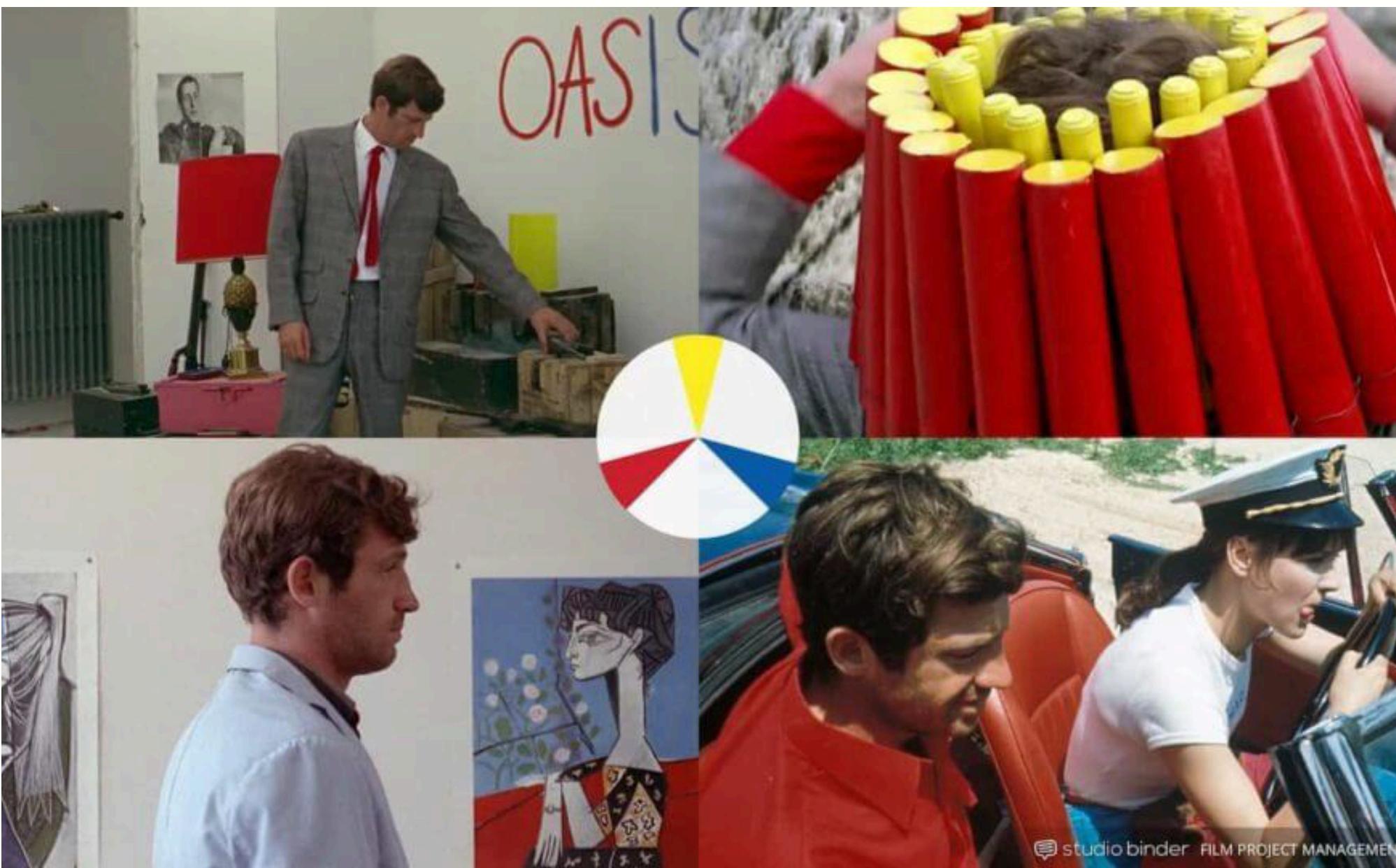
COLOR

Complementary color schemes provide the most amount of contrast because they fall on opposite sides of the color wheel.



Triadic color schemes are created between three colors of equal distance or position on the color wheel. In this example from Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le Fou*, a triadic combination using saturated, primary colors helps create images that really pop on screen. *Pierre le Fou* (1965) • Triadic Colors

Analogous colors sit next to each other on the color wheel. These combinations yield a more consistent color palette without slipping into a full monochromatic scheme, which utilizes gradations of a single color.



Different Types of Camera Angles



Low Angle Shot
Empower



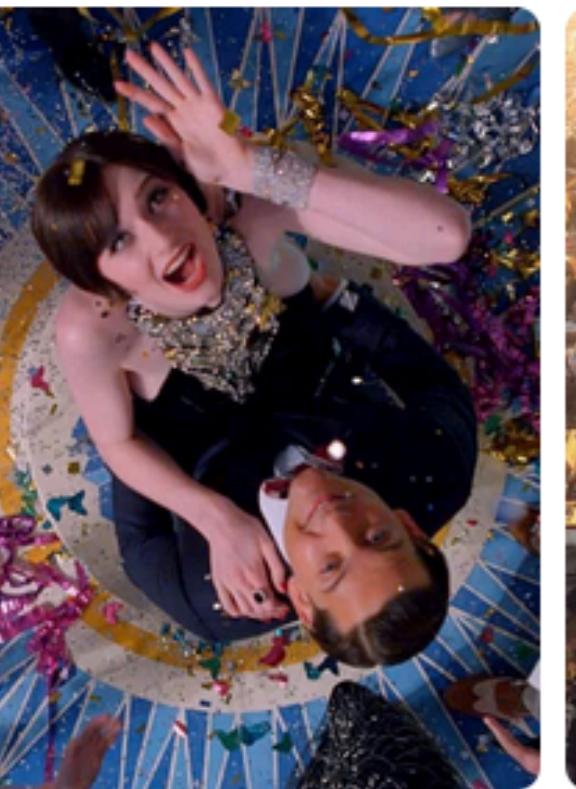
Eye Level Shot
Connect



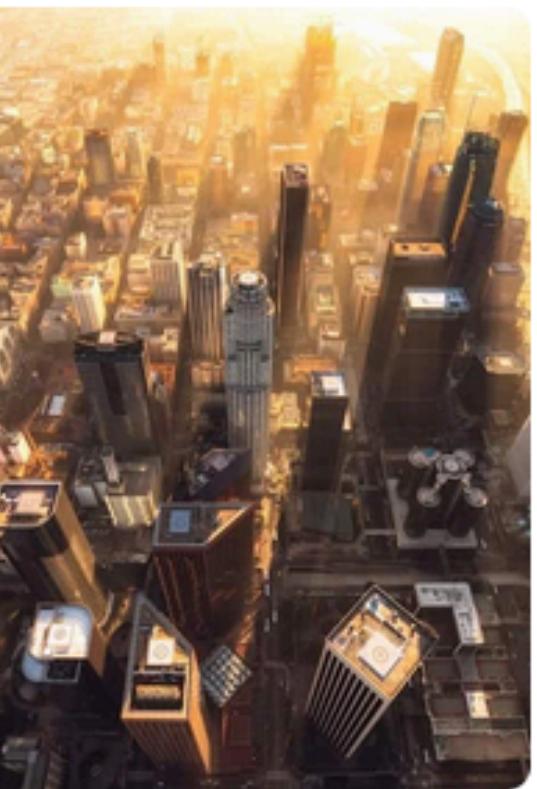
High Angle Shot
Depower



Dutch Angle Shot
Disorient



Overhead Shot
Omniscience



Aerial Shot
Awe & Scale

