

Portrait vs. Landscape



This exercise is about the vertical view, something I'm not afraid to try. Or am I?

If you asked me before this exercise I'd say that turning the camera through 90 is second nature. Clearly, I'm a photographer, not a snapper.

Looking through my photo library tells a different story. Not the 'photographer' bit, I'd like to think I'm a decent apprentice if not the real deal. However, most of my shots are, as it goes, landscape.

As a thinking man, I do consider the final result and where it will be viewed and the canvases on the wall

story says at least a 3rd are portrait. Files in my photo library say otherwise - 90% are landscape.

In Mitigation, photographs are today (sadly) mostly viewed on landscape screens and the modern format of some digital cameras - 4:3 ratio - hardly emphasises the value of the 3:2 format sported by true 35mm derivatives. Especially when used in a portrait orientation.

This first page starts to tell a story. Top left kinda works, bottom left really doesn't. Both taken with the same lens at the same setting. The landscape picture tells a people story and has a natural 'flow'; the portrait shot is devoid of story or genuine interest.

On the right is the complete opposite! Does the person make the difference? Well, it helps but it certainly isn't the deal breaker. Again, same lens and position; just a different frame.





On the day I took most of the pictures in the round, portrait first, then a circuit doing the same thing using a landscape orientation as requested by the exercise.

As I couldn't remember exactly how they were framed and at what focal length, the approach between the two is sometimes very different. As with the first page I did cheat on a few towards the end and take them sequentially. The people in the scenes betray me!

Pottery Stall

The subject in this case really did lend itself to landscape - the stall was horizontally arranged. To make it worse, when I came to do the landscape sweep the stall holder was packing away due to a quiet day! However, the van in the background does make a different sort of picture.



In this case it's a draw I think.

The Cafe

At first glance, this one looks a little like a draw too. Just off Ludlow's market area, this little courtyard presents a host of photo opportunities. Both shots were taken from from just inside the passage that leads to it.

The portrait shot works for me by showing the social element, along with the alignment to the tall-ish building. However, the landscape shot which, is taken from a wider setting, also suites the same scene. I just which I hadn't cut off the top of the roof.

On page one, only either portrait or landscape worked. Page two, both work in their own way.





I confess – I cheated on this page. After walking around the market – the following shots – I found these two new viewpoints that I thought would be a shame to miss out.

St Laurence's

The lefthand pictures show shops and a pub garden in the foreground, with St Laurence's church in the background. Portrait is the winner here! Moving into the scene would have helped the landscape shot but I don't feel it would have helped much.

Court Café

Potential draw here; though for me the portrait shot wins by a whisker. The portrait shot is nicely balanced and the open sky adds an element of lightness independent of exposure. It also focuses on the people, which for me adds interest.

The landscape shot also works (for me) with the window on the left giving a feel of the environment and the full view of the potted topiary display.





The Willow Worker

The initial portrait shot presented some exposure issues with the subject being under cover. The shot to the left worked out reasonably though.

I think the portrait shot gives a little more focus to the subject though; the landscape shot is more environmental.

Fruit and Veg

Initially I'd have said the landscape pic of the veg store is better. It shows more of the produce and has some human interest.

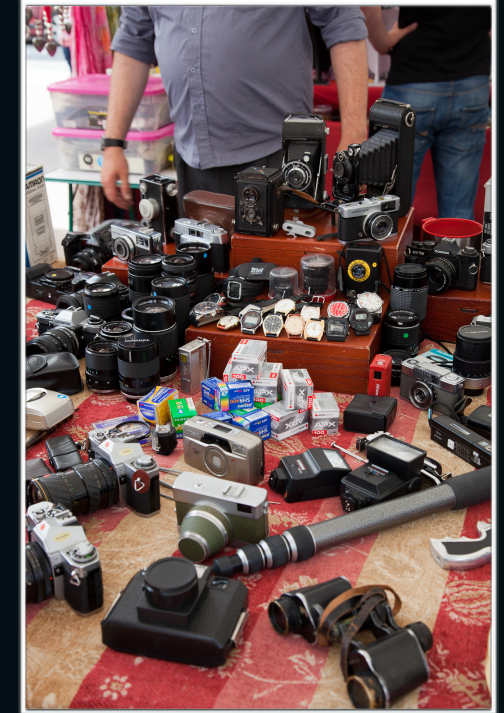
However, the portrait shot just seems more natural. It just conveys more of market feel - colours, the produce, the roof and the transaction are all there.



Camera Stall 1

Picture one - to the right - presents a tricky decision. I like the landscape shot because of the movement and because shown by the stall owner and because it covers vast array of gear.

The portrait picture that I took first still has some character and you can see I approached it in a different way.



Camera Stall 2

I really like the slide storage focus on the portrait shot in this pair.

The landscape picture is OK, the phone provides some balance and the inclusion of the books to the right without them being cropped is also more pleasing.

However, isolating the slide storage rack with the Polaroid and Brownie cameras on top has an element of irony.



Camera Stall 3

Portrait again here I think!

The landscape shot has too many distractions, whereas the portrait picture shows off the tiers of the stall much better.

Cat Handrail

Er, portrait again!

Once again there's something too distracting with the landscape shot; the portrait format does lend itself better to the shot though.

Framing further over to the right may have helped, so maybe I goofed there.



Jammy

This is a tough one - both have there merits.

I like the portrait shot because of the way it fades into the background and it also accentuates the depth of field. The portrait shot was taken wide-open at F4, with the landscape at F8.

Cheesy

Both of these, I fear, are a little under-exposed; I should have compensated due to the predominantly white facia. However, while the landscape format suits the stall front, once again the human interest/action wins for me.

Having said that, the red coat does make for some serious contrast!





Our Olive

The olive stall shots have fairly even merit too. I must confess that the one to the left falls into standard portrait category anyway.

From a technical perspective a touch of fill-light would have helped the portrait shot, or perhaps just more exposure compensation.



The Market

This pair show a 'classic landscape' type scene that really does work better as portrait.

Portrait here tells a story starting with the produce in the foreground leading the eye into the bustle of the market, aided in this case by the couple looking at the fruit.

The open spaces at the front in the landscape shot adds little interest and focuses the viewer on the fruit in the foreground, rather than lead into the action further back.





Shop Window

In both orientations a big improvement could have been made by a polariser - I'm not sure why it wasn't in my day bag or already fitted this lens. It normally lives on it!

That aside I think landscape is the winner here. It's better balanced with the



Chalk Board

Once again both would have benefitted from a polariser - the windows and the chalk-board.

With regard to composition the predominantly vertical lines of the portrait shot work a much better; the landscape picture has wasted space and struggles to get itself in order. Is it my choice of composition? Perhaps of course, but that doesn't take anything away from the portrait version.



Mid Market

The shots in the centre of the market actually look in different directions, and once again both have their merits. Both have human interest but the landscape shot is lacking something. The central character provides some focus and the stall hoods lead into the gentleman nicely, but still the tighter crop of the portrait picture and the more prevalent town centre background add more interest. The balance of the shot is right biased but I think this adds to the interest of the picture.

Juliette's Balcony

No contest here - portrait! The landscape capture lacks a focal point but does have a nice central shape and flow from the bottom right towards the lefthand table with the brolley.



The portrait picture provides good balance, a focal point and some intrigue. The tighter crop also brings out the textures; it's fair to say the nature of the subject also lends itself to the format.

