

Composition — Cropping is interesting



You don't have to show everything in your artwork.

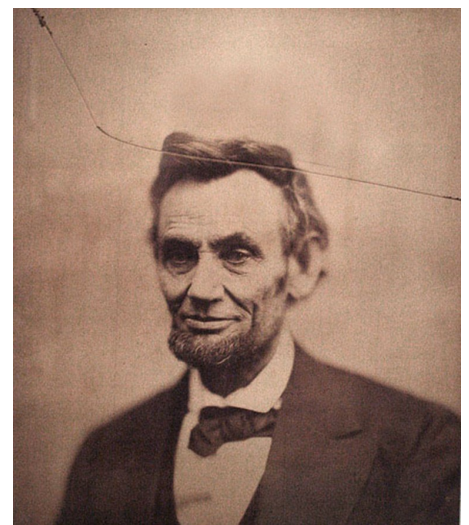
In fact, it often makes for a much more interesting looking artwork if you **do not** show everything.



Nobody is disturbed by an artwork that is cropped.

You don't need to show all of Abraham Lincoln in order to show who he is.

In fact, if you crop his face, you make a more interesting artwork, and you have less to draw. Not cropping makes for less interesting artworks that are more work for the artist.



Alexander Gardner, **The "Cracked Glass"**
Portrait of Abraham Lincoln, 1865

Composition — Rookies are self-centred



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, **Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne**, 1806

Ever since you were a kid, you put the most important thing in the middle of your artwork.

The result of that is that central compositions tend to make your artworks childlike.

There ways to get around this: if you **intentionally** break symmetry and **intentionally** force the most interesting parts off centre, you get a much more interesting.

Artists change the composition in order to keep the viewer interested.

The composition on the right of this page is very unusual—and so much more captivating because of it.

Beginners always choose central compositions.



Right smack in the middle



A little better, but symmetrical



Much better

Composition — Tilting adds drama



Diego Velázquez, **Portrait of Pope Innocent X**, c. 1650

Tilting the frame makes the viewer feel sense that things are on shaky ground.

In this portrait of Pope Innocent X, he is holding a letter from the artist that could decide the future of the artist and his family for generations to come.

The pope has a decision to make, and it all depends on how he reacts to the contents of the letter.

So how do you show how this sense of drama? A central composition certainly does not work. But tilting the frame helps to tell the story.



A painfully central composition



A non-central, balanced composition is a little better...



A tilted, non-central composition with a narrow frame creates a **sense of drama**—everything depends on the letter