Everyday Abstracts

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Agenda

- What is an abstract?
- What makes a photograph abstract?
- Visual design in abstract photography
- Techniques
- Images
- Show & Tell

What Is An Abstract?

ab·stract [adj. ab-strakt, ab-strakt; n. ab-strakt; v. ab-strakt for 10–13, ab-strakt for 14] Show IPA

5. Fine Arts . a. of or pertaining to the formal aspect of art, *emphasizing lines, colors, generalized or geometrical forms, etc., especially with reference to their relationship to one another.*

b. (often initial capital letter) *pertaining to the nonrepresentational* art styles of the 20th century.

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/abstract

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Me … Just a few years ago

What Makes a Photograph Abstract?

- In painting, many semi-representational forms are accepted as abstracts
  - Impressionism
  - Cubism
  - Fauvism
- Typically any image that is non-representational will be considered abstract
- Pieces of the whole (abstraction or macro)
- Intentional camera movement (impressionism)

Communicating Visually

- Abstracts communicate different things to different people
  - Depends on point of view and mood
- Arrangement of elements in the picture space dictates some emotional responses/reactions

What is Visual Design?

- Using graphical elements rather than words to communicate
- Where we put things matters
  - Contrasts
  - Balance
  - Harmony
  - Repetition

Visual Design in Abstract Photography

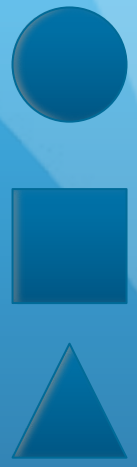
- Line
- Shape
- Color
- Texture
- Perspective

Line

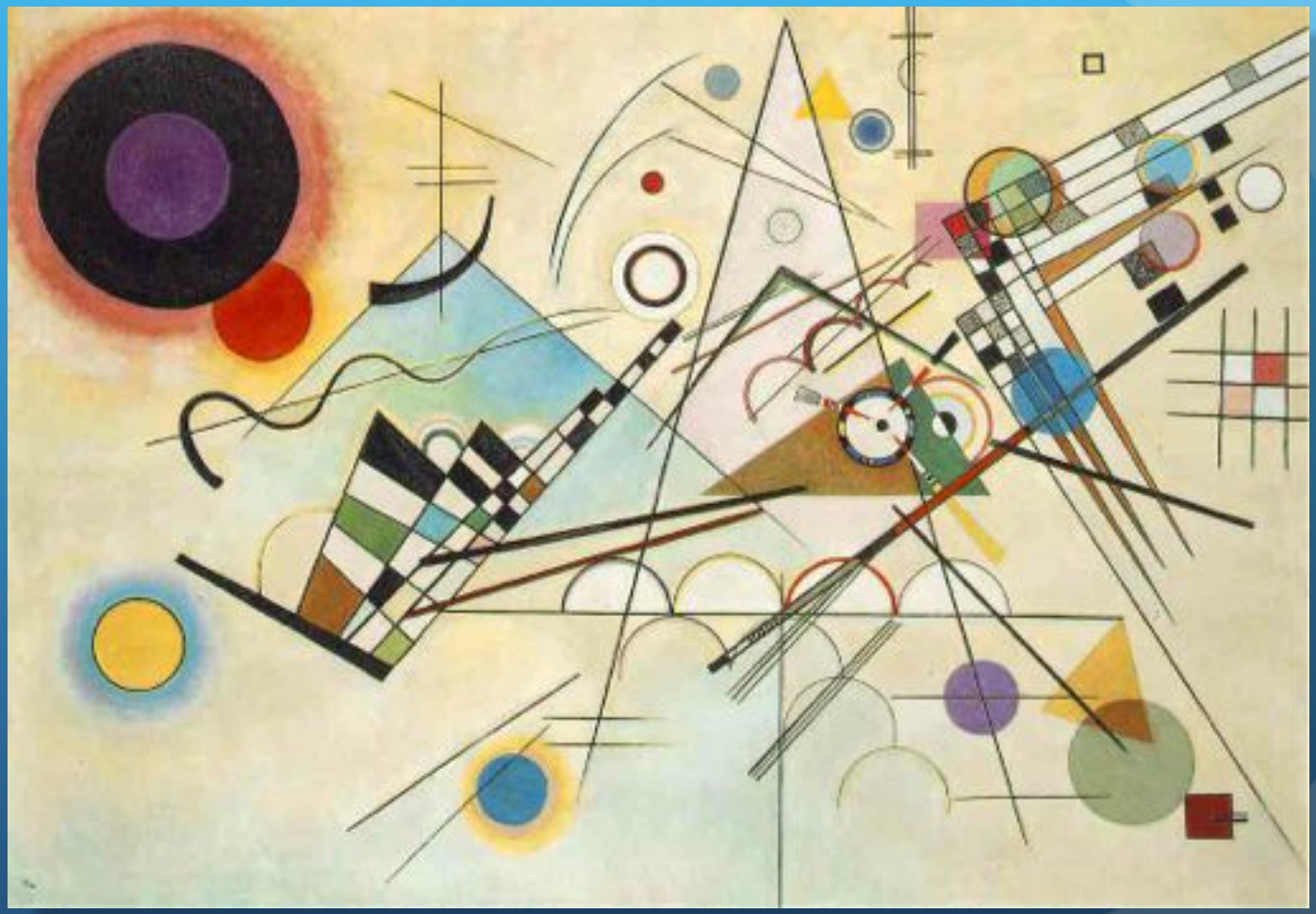
- 4 types of lines
  - Contour – Outline shapes
  - Dividing – May outline shapes, but also divide spaces
  - Decoration – Embellish objects
  - Gesture – Show or suggest motion, direction and velocity
- 3 line styles
  - Straight – Suggest directness
  - Curved – Suggest laziness or restlessness
  - Zigzag – Suggest high energy
- 4 directions of lines
  - Horizontal – Static. Suggests peace or rest
  - Vertical – Static. Suggests strength
  - Oblique – Dynamic. Suggests motion
  - Diagonal – Dynamic. Suggests structure

Shapes

- Circle – Most powerful shape, suggests feminine qualities, completeness, eternity
- Square – Suggests stability and organization
- Equilateral Triangle – Suggests masculine qualities, movement and directs the eye
- Organic – Imply the object depicted



Composition VIII
Wassily Kandinsky



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Color

- Harmonious
- Complimentary
- Psychology
  - Red – Passion, Intensity, Love
  - Blue – Calming, Serenity
  - Yellow – Cheerful, Warm
  - Green – Peace, Harmony
  - Orange – Flamboyant, Exciting
  - Purple – Wealth, Wisdom, Respect

Texture

- Two types of texture
  - Tactile
  - Implied
- Tactile – Things like rust or sand paper that we relate to the texture of the object in life
- Implied – The way a surface looks as if it feels

Blue Poles
Jackson Pollock

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Perspective

- Perspective cannot exist in a photograph
- Can be implied through visual techniques
  - Converging lines
  - Overlapping shapes
  - Size differences
  - Tonal differences
  - Saturation differences
  - Depth of field

Nude Descending a Staircase, #2
Marcel Duchamp

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Techniques

- Macro
  - Light Table
  - Flowers
- Close Up
- Montage
- Camera Toss
- Rounding

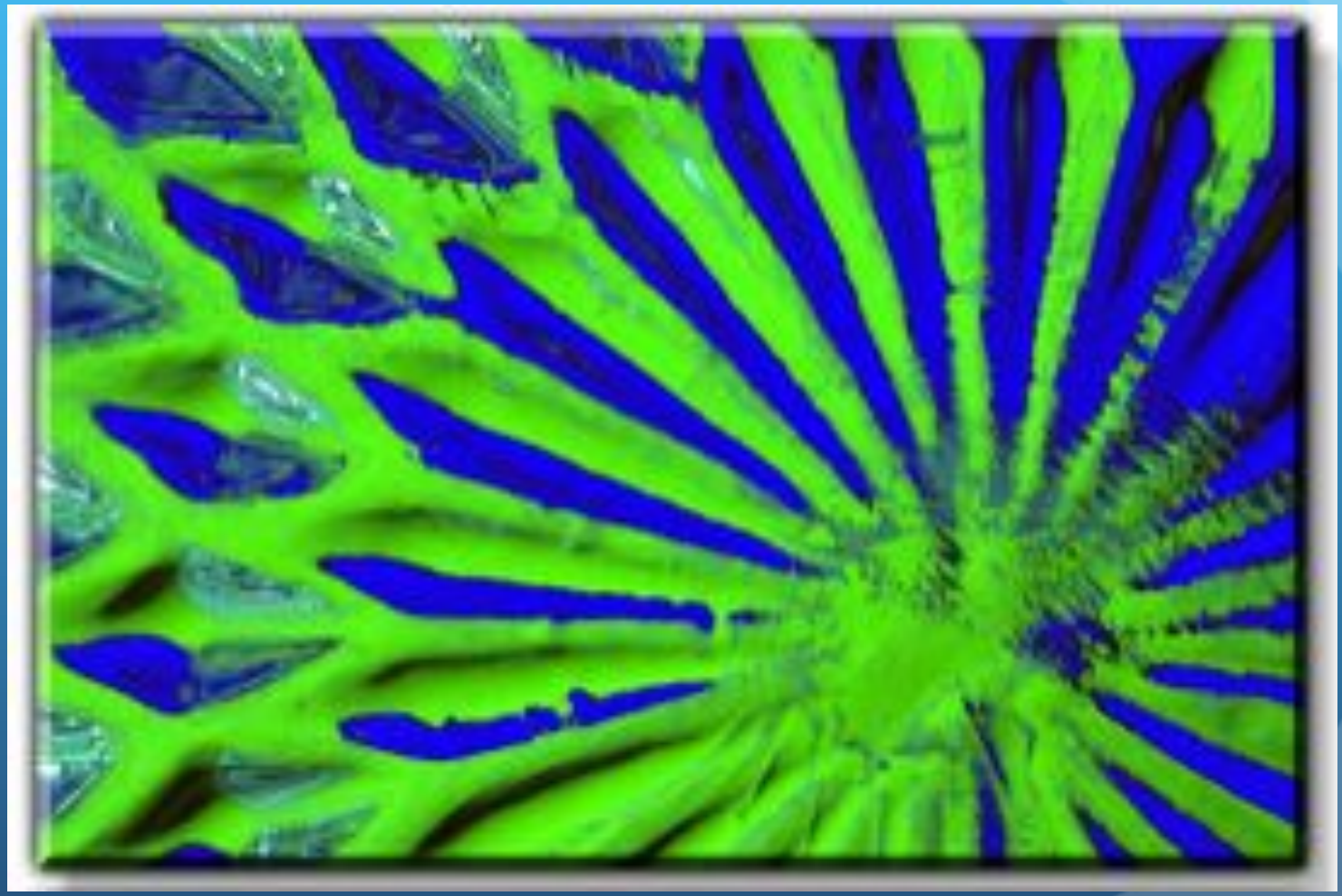
Macro

- Technically Means 1:1 up to 10:1
  - Area of the sensor is equal to or larger than the area being photographed
- Doesn’t require a big investment
  - Reversing ring with wide angle lens will do
  - Extension tubes reduce focus distance
- Manual focus
- Optional equipment:
  - Tripod
  - Live View
  - Focusing rail

Macro – Light Table Technique

- Light table projects through gels
- Cheap glass sits on plexiglass above gels
- Camera on tripod over top of the glass
  - Use Live View to get precise focus
- Use cable release or self-timer to avoid touching the camera during the exposure
- Use mirror lockup to keep camera even steadier

Macro – Light Table



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Macro – Flowers Technique

- Large flowers make easier subjects to work with
- Camera on tripod close to petals
  - Use Live View to get precise focus
- Use cable release or self-timer to avoid touching the camera during the exposure
- Use mirror lockup to keep camera even steadier

Macro – Flowers

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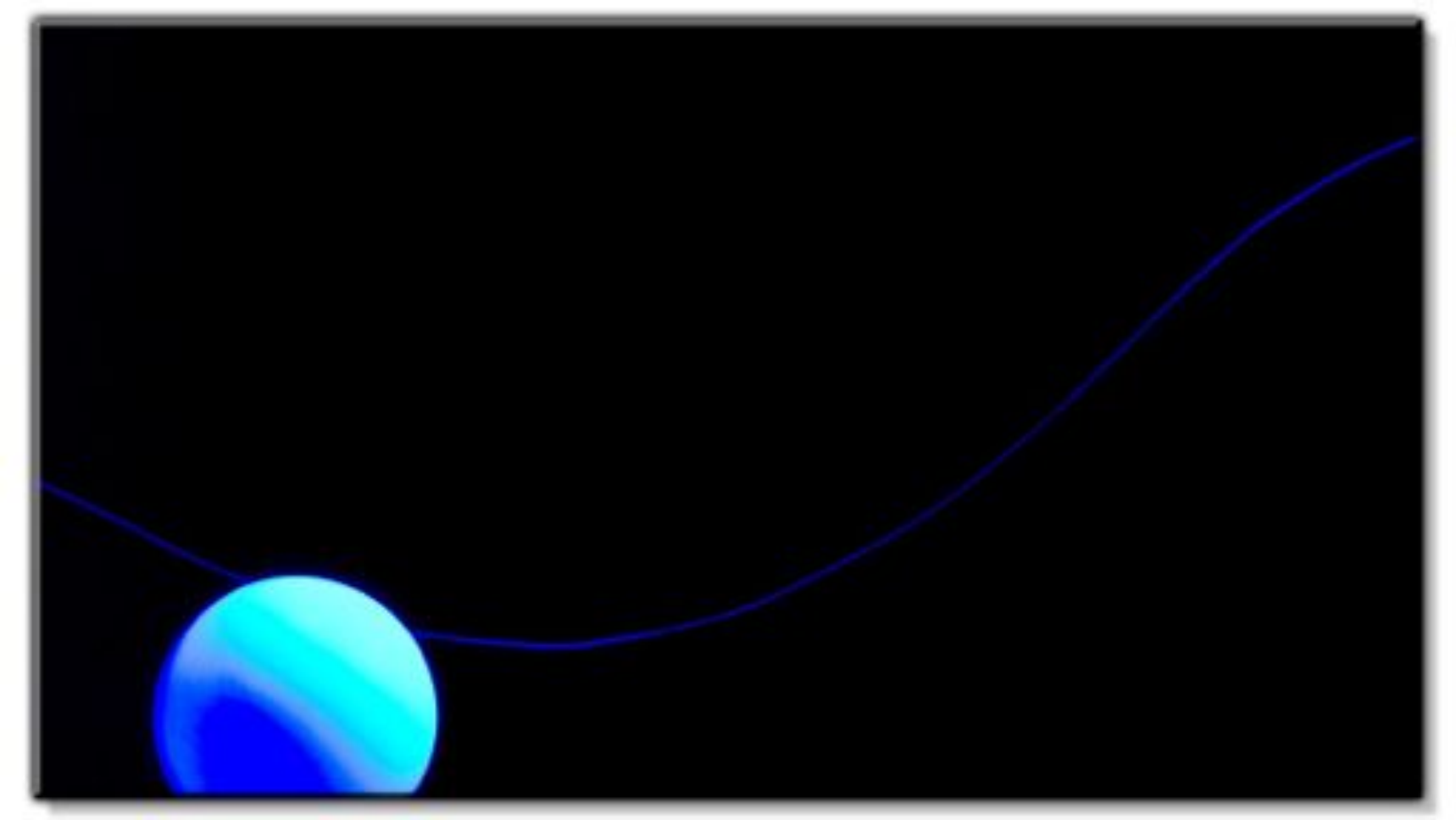
Close Up

- So close that the object is not recognizable
- Visual design elements become the focus

Close Up



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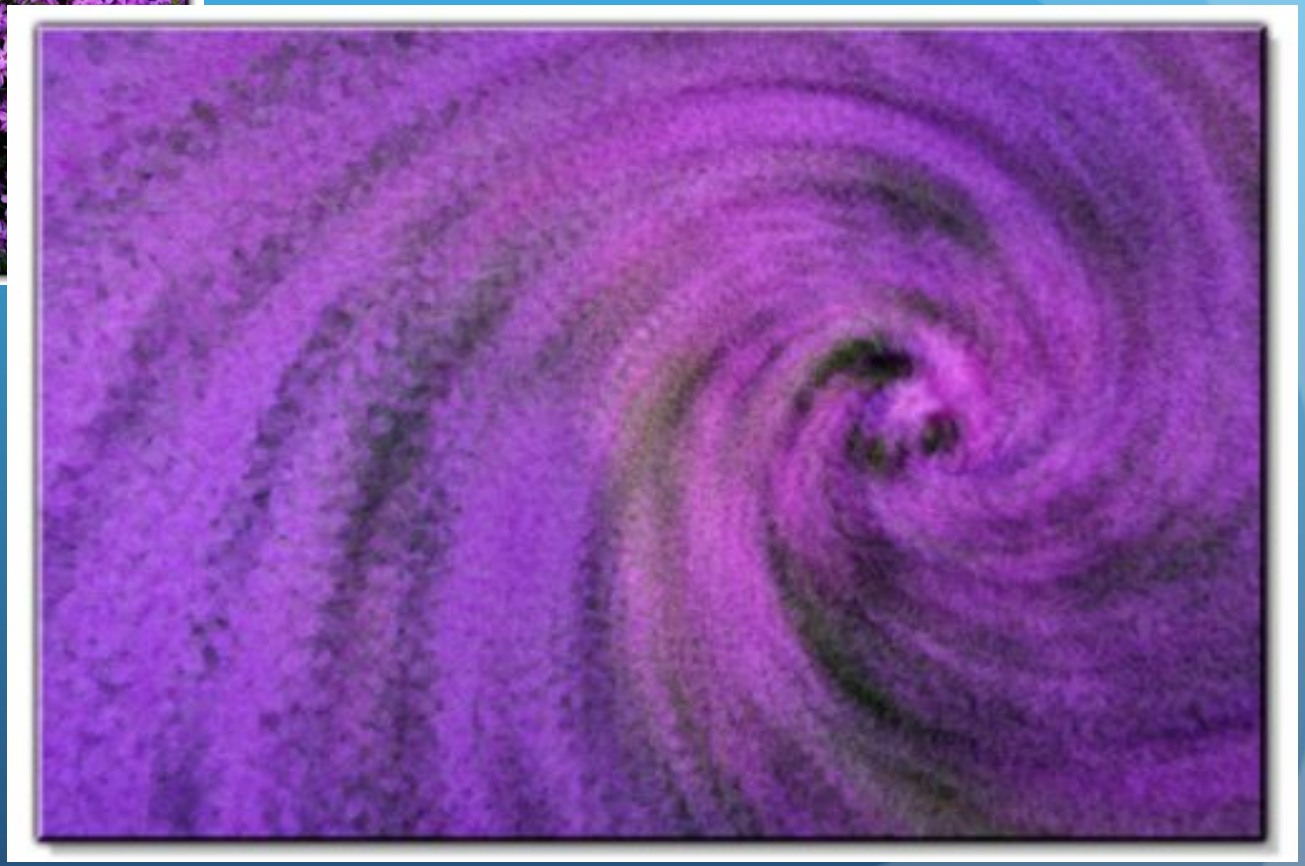
Montage

- Photoshop technique
- Something to do photographically on cold or rainy days
- Use photos that you've already taken
- Strong graphic lines tend to work best
- Types
  - Multiple exposure montage
  - Reverse montage
  - Mirror montage

Montage – Multiple Exposures Technique

- Shoot a series of images slightly out of register
  - Panning or zoom and rotate
- Open series of images in PS
  - Typical series are 9, 10 and 16 exposures
- Copy each image into a new layer of one image
- Adjust the Opacity of each additional layer by 1/Layer #
  - 2nd layer is 50% Opacity (1/2)
  - 3rd layer is 33% Opacity (1/3)
  - 4th layer is 25% Opacity (1/4)
  - 5th layer is 20% Opacity (1/5)
  - 6th layer is 17% Opacity (1/6)
  - 7th layer is 14% Opacity (1/7)
  - 8th layer is 13% Opacity (1/8)
  - 9th layer is 11% Opacity (1/9)
  - 10th layer is 10% Opacity (1/10)

Montage – Multiple Exposures



Reverse Montage Technique

- Open image in PS
- Duplicate the Background layer – Layer, Duplicate Layer…
- Flip or rotate Background copy layer – Edit, Transform, then Flip Horizontal or Flip Vertical or Rotate 180°
- Change Blend Mode of Background copy layer to Multiply
  - Alternate technique – Change Opacity of Background copy layer to 50%
  - Alternate #2 – Change Blend Mode of Background copy layer to Overlay or Softlight

Reverse Montage

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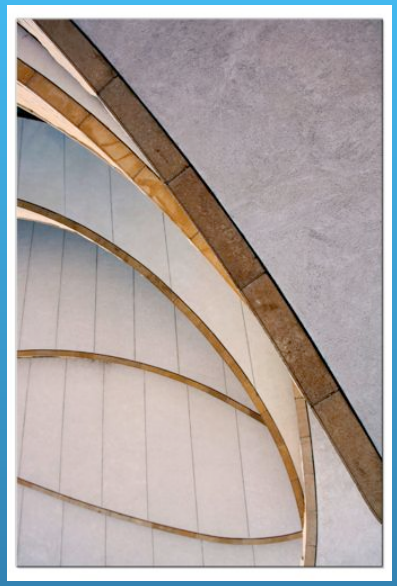
Mirror Montage Technique

- Open image in PS
- Unlock Background layer – Double-click Background layer, press OK (renames as Layer 0)
- Resize the Canvas – Image, Canvas size…
  - 100% for Width or Height (whichever direction you want to mirror)
  - Select an Achor for the outside edge of the montage
    - Default is expand in all directions
- Duplicate Layer 0 – Layer, Duplicate layer…
- Flip Layer 0 copy – Edit, Transform, then Flip Horizontal or Flip Vertical (depending on where the mirroring is occurring)
- Use Move tool to move Layer 0 copy to fill open canvas

Mirror Montage



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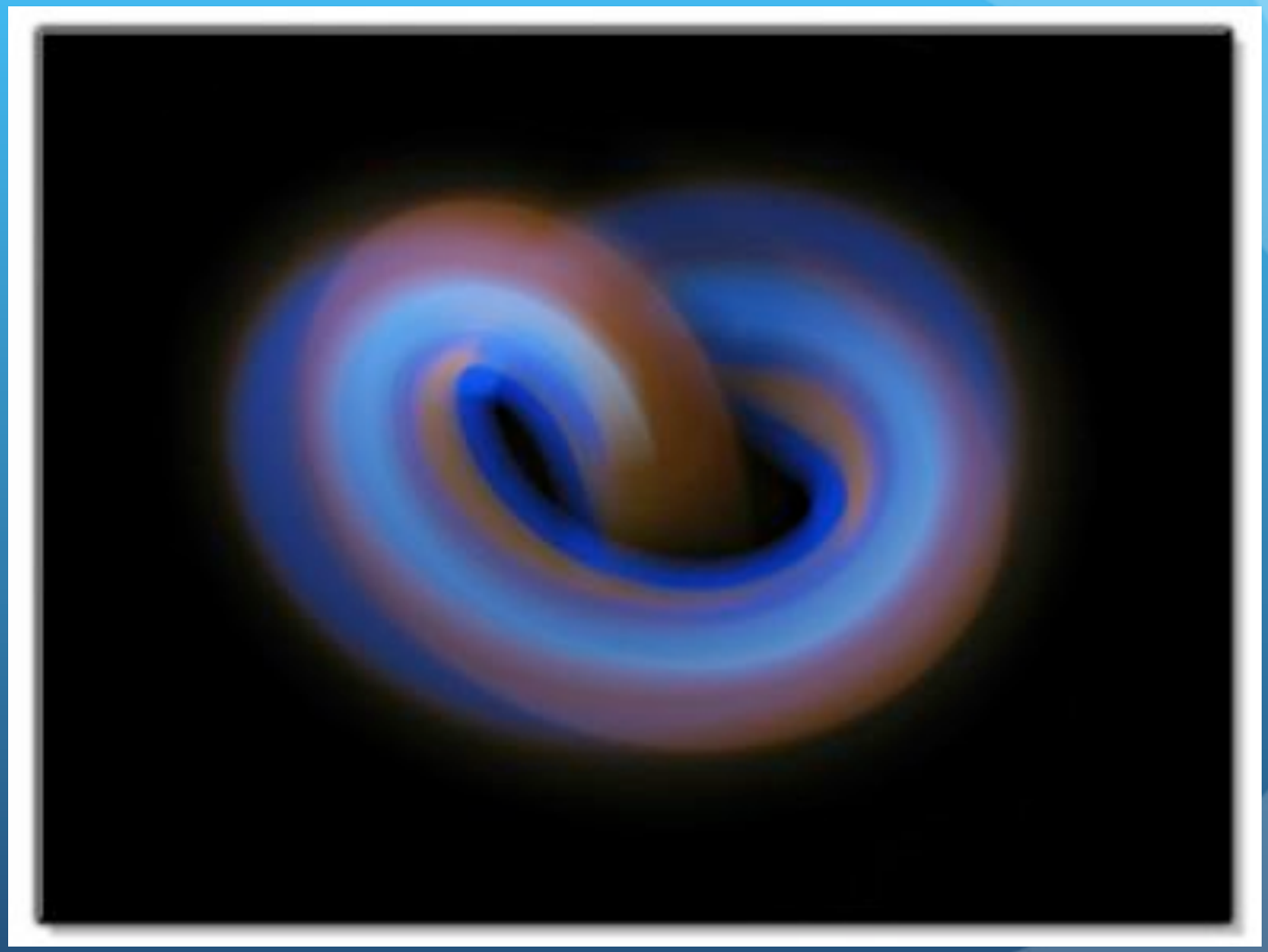
Camera Toss

- Can be scary!
  - Do not try this with your DSLR
- Read about it in Wired Magazine
  http://howto.wired.com/wiki/Snap_a_Camera-Toss_Picture
- Things you'll need
  - Point and shoot camera
  - Self-timer
  - Manual controls
  - Lights (Christmas Lights, Candles, Computer Monitor)
  - Much darker background (2 stops or more)

Camera Toss Technique

- Lights – At least 3 inches apart
- Set the camera to manual focus
- Set the focus at the approximate distance to the subject ~ 3 feet away
- Set the camera on Manual
  - Shutter speed ½ sec – 1 sec
  - Aperture f/5.6
- Set the self-timer to 2 seconds
- Press the shutter release and toss
  - Rotation is a good thing

Camera Toss



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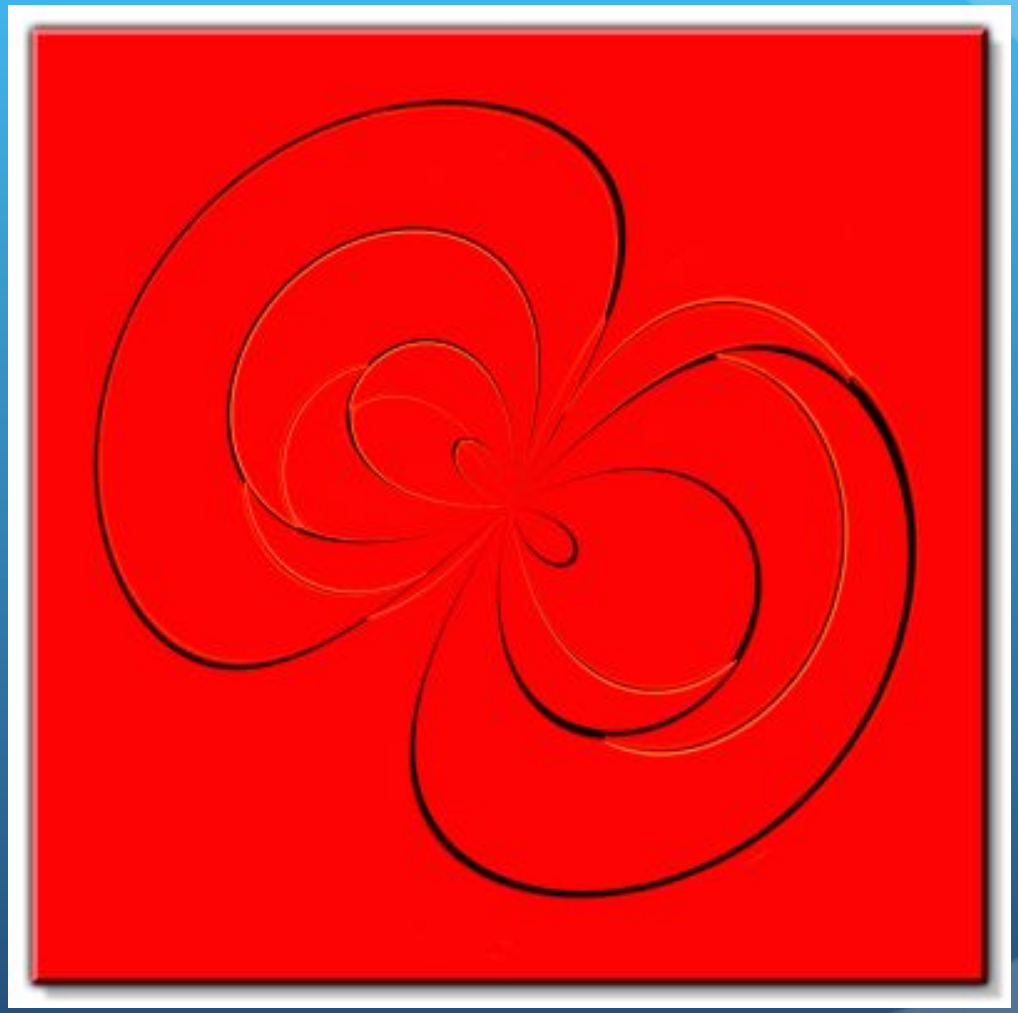
Rounding Technique

- Photoshop technique
- Use photos that you've already taken
- Strong graphic lines tend to work best
- Creates an oval image in a rectangle
- Can be transformed to a circle in a square

Rounding Technique

- Open image in PS
- Map Polar to Rectangular Coordinates – Filter, Distort, Polar Coordinates…, Polar to Rectangular
- Rotate Image 180° – Image, Image Rotation, 180°
- Map Rectangular to Polar – Filter, Distort, Polar Coordinates…, Rectangular to Polar
- Optionally Resize to Square – Image, Image Size, Uncheck Constrain Proportions, Set Height = Width

Rounding – Optional Square



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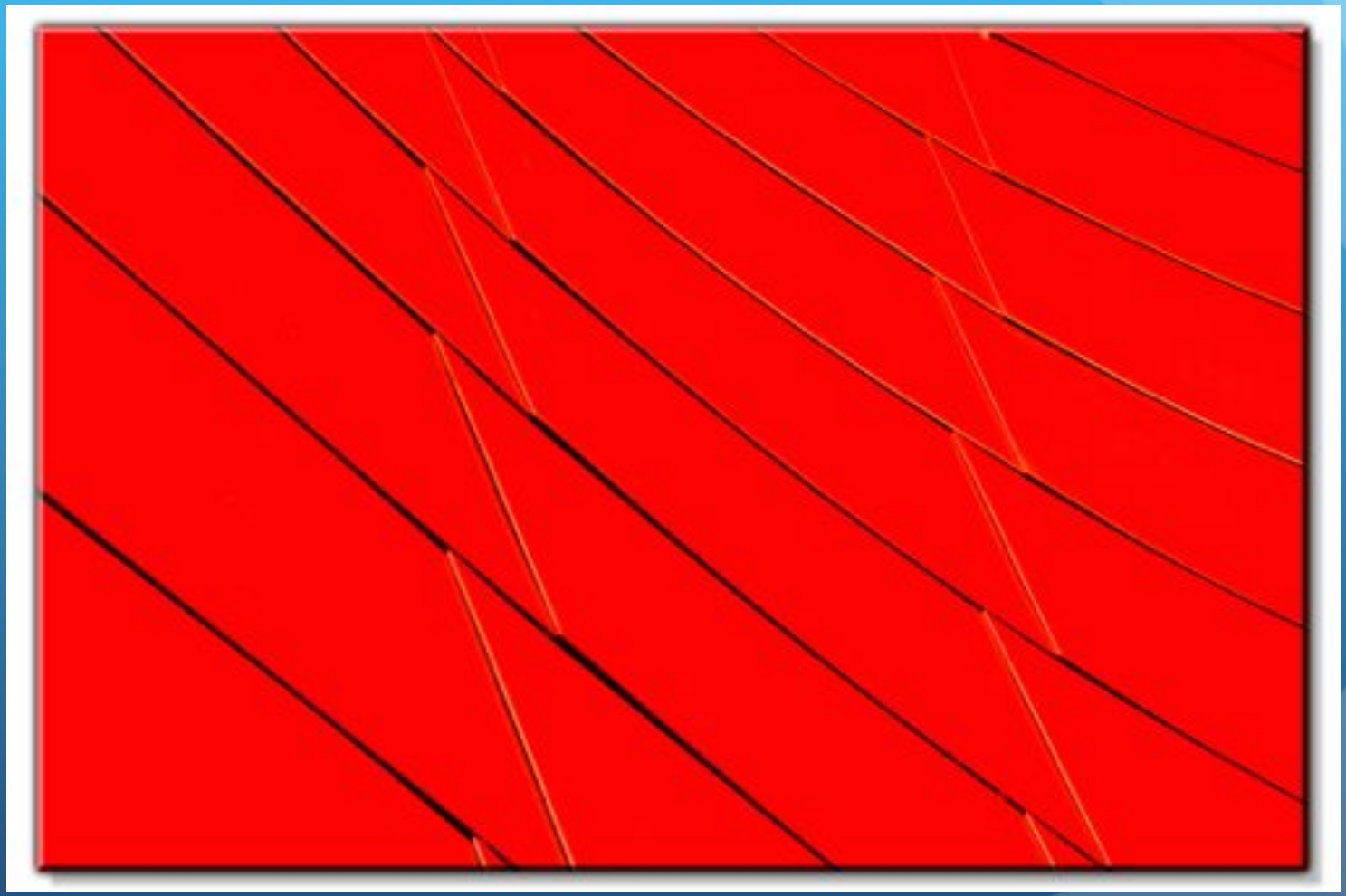
Rounding - Original



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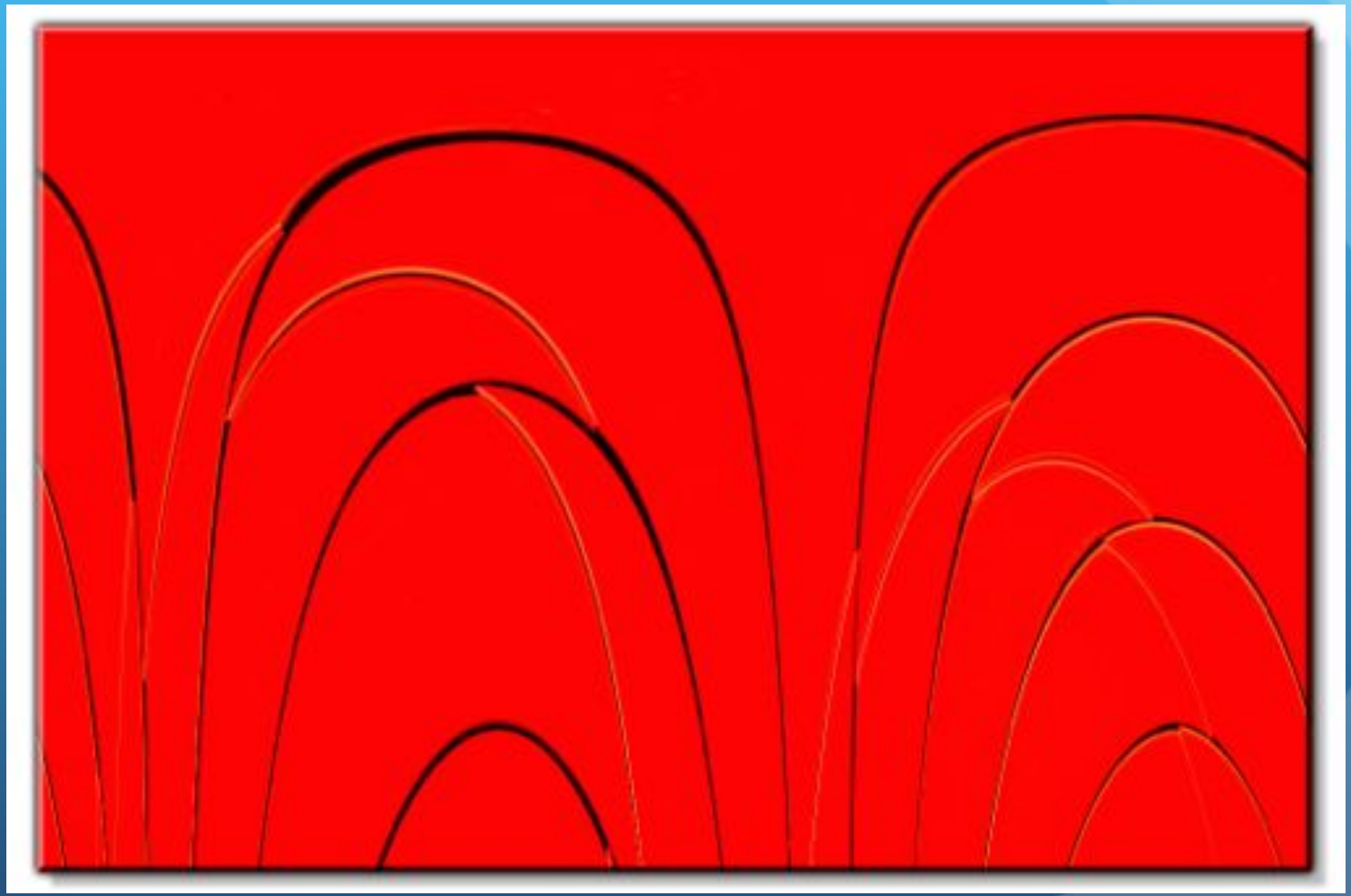
Rounding – Polar to Rectangular



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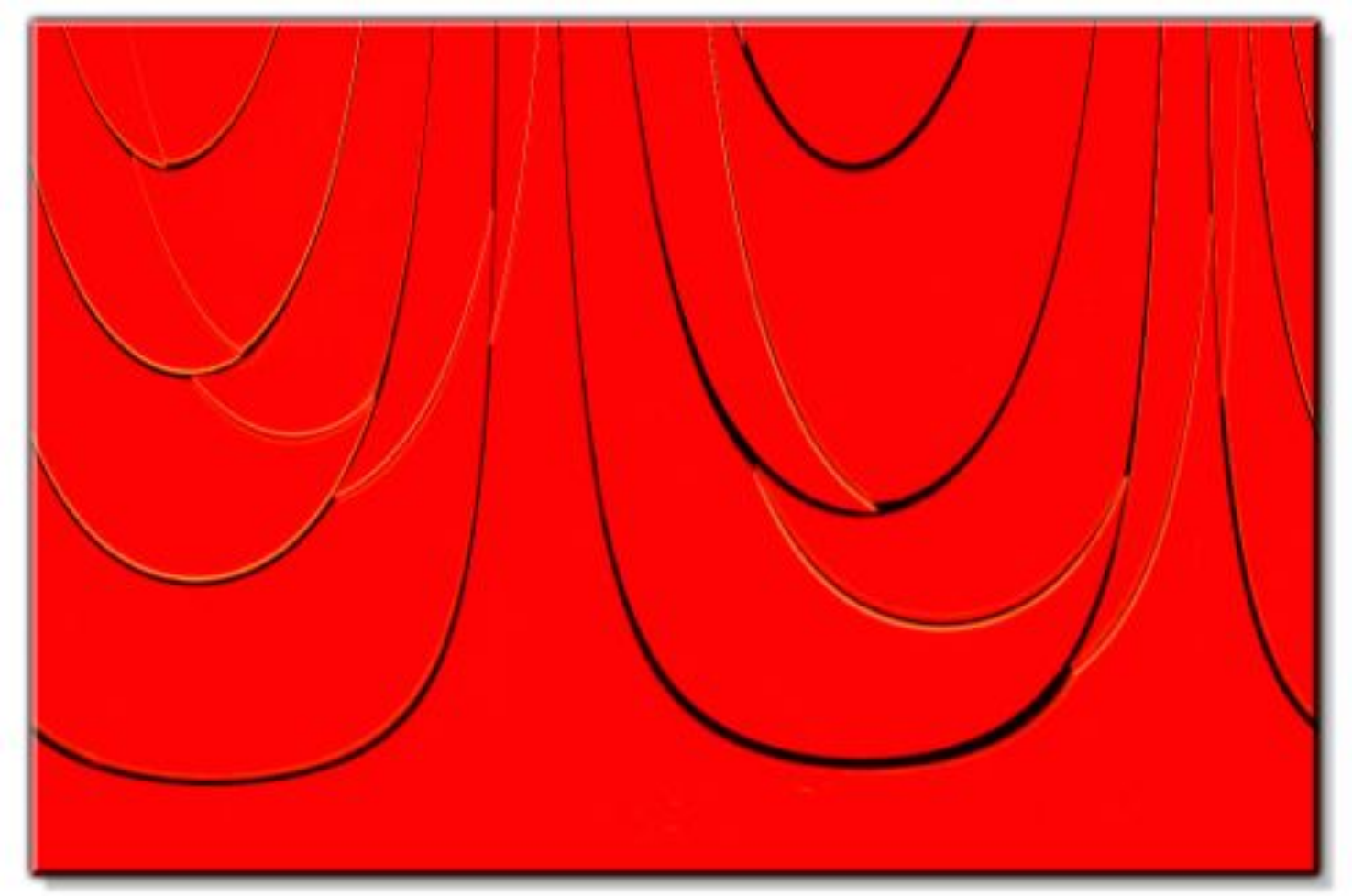
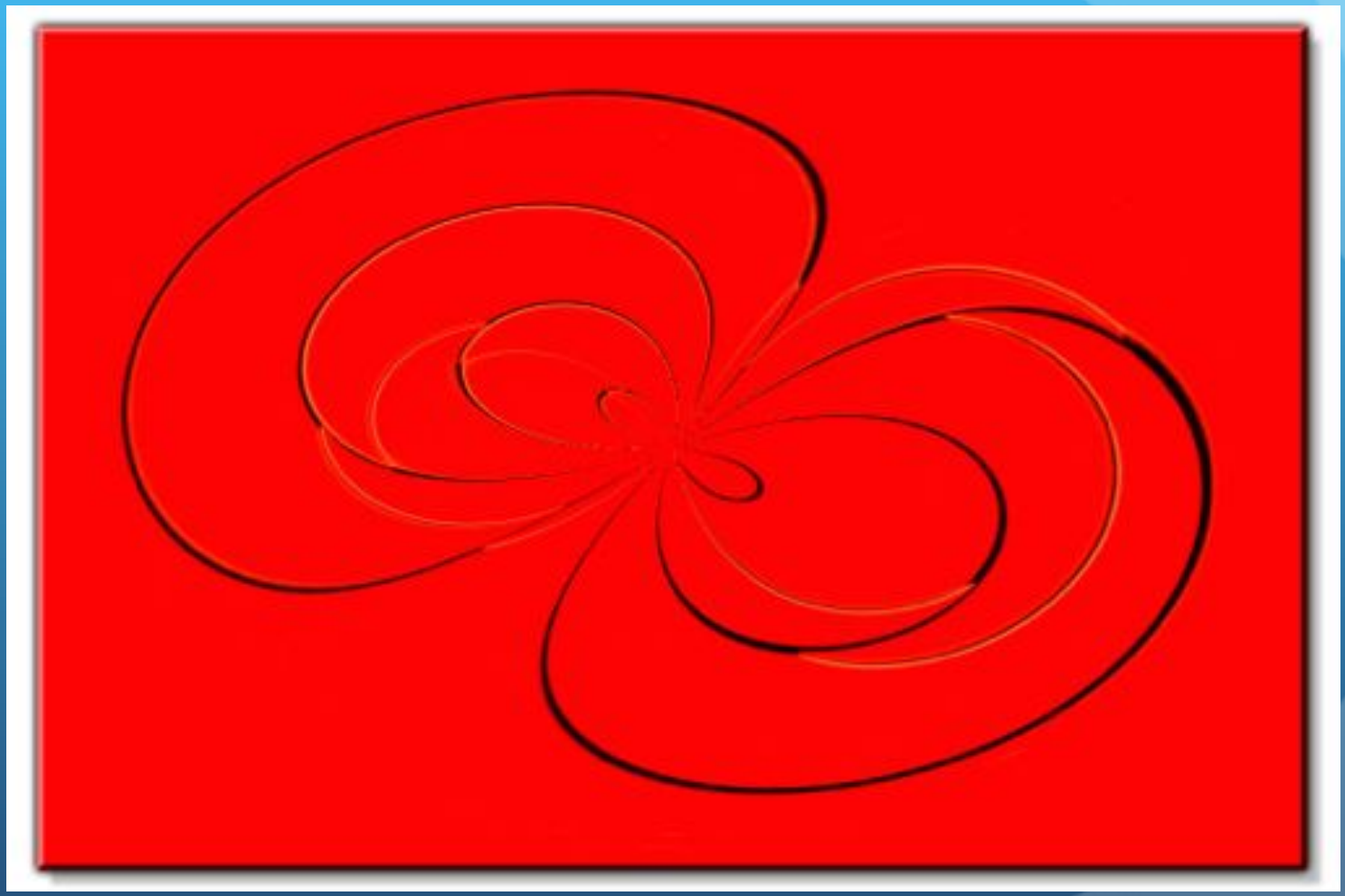
Rounding – Rotate 180°



Rounding – Rectangular to Polar



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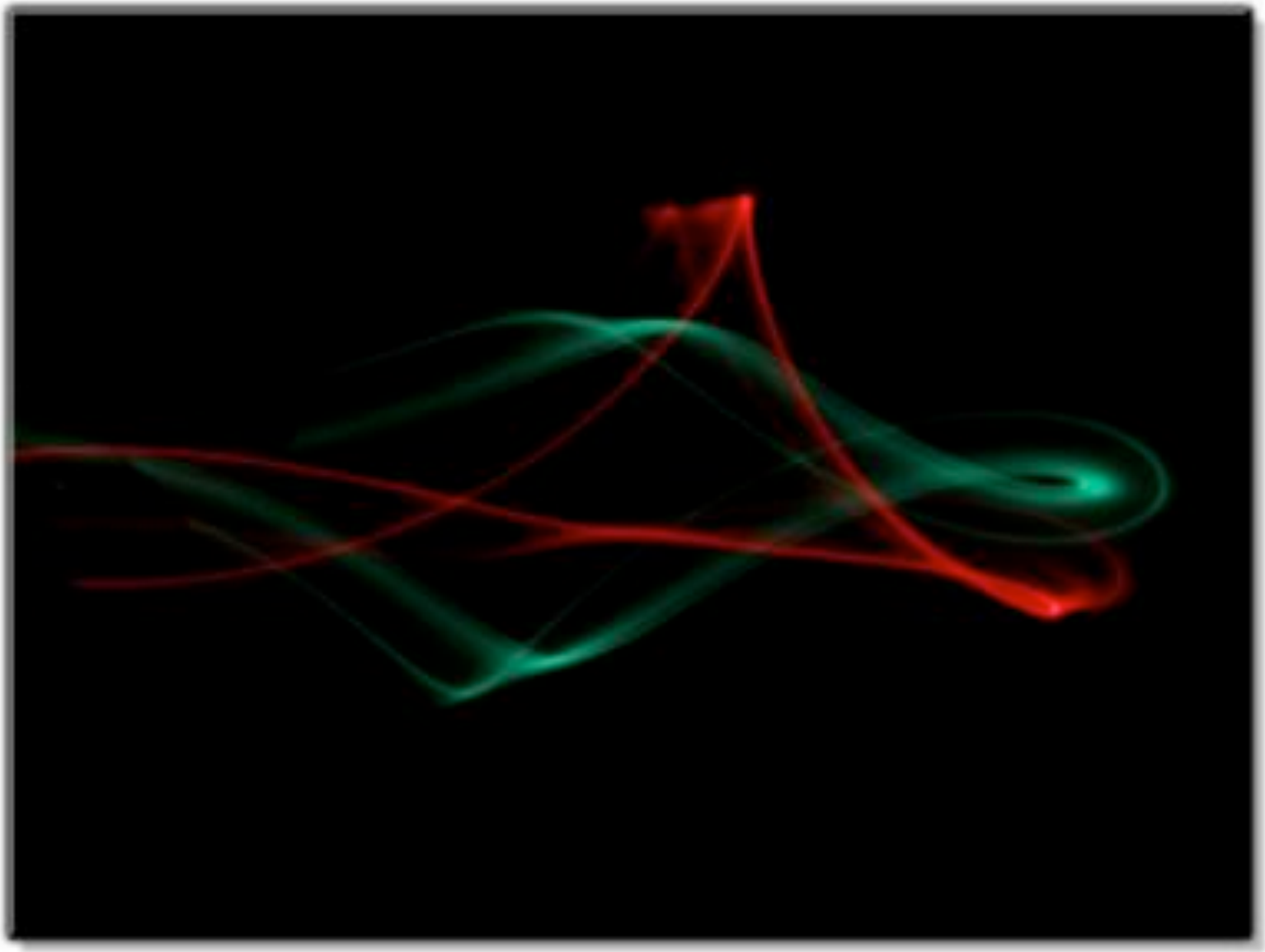

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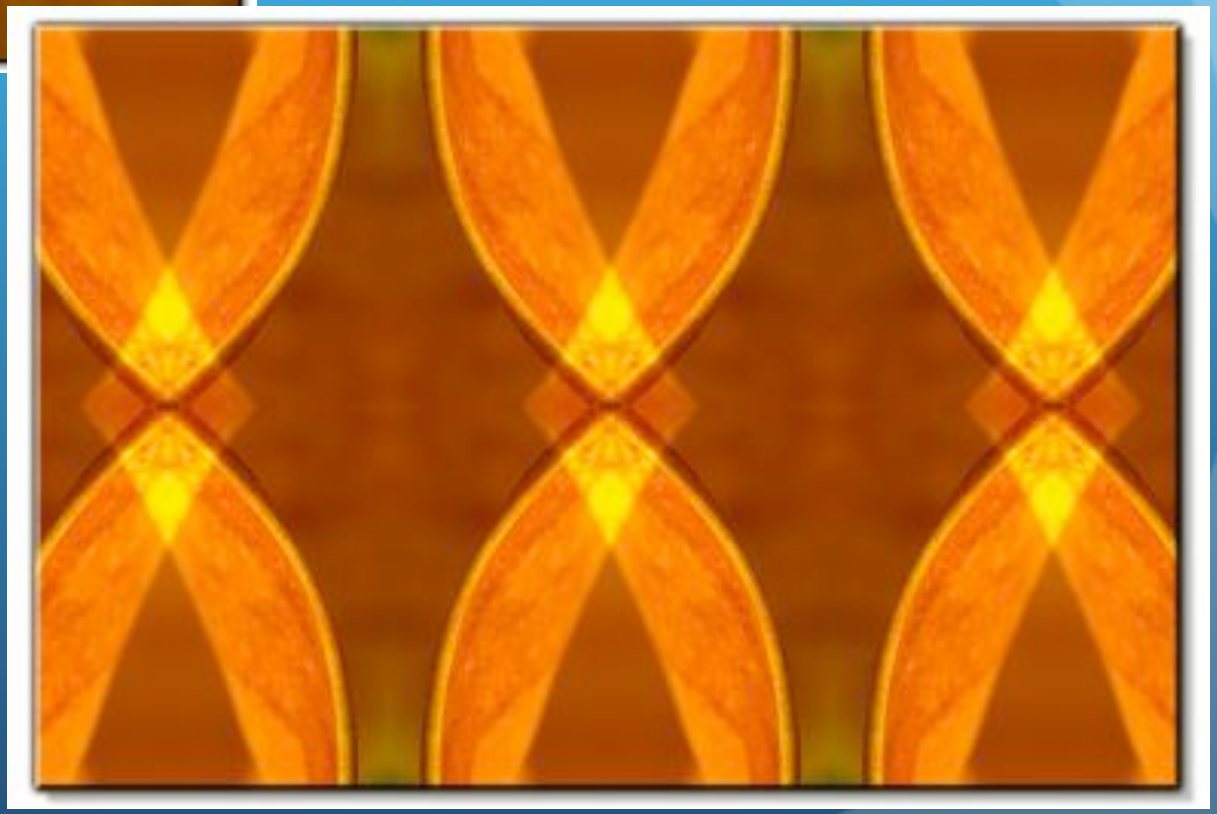

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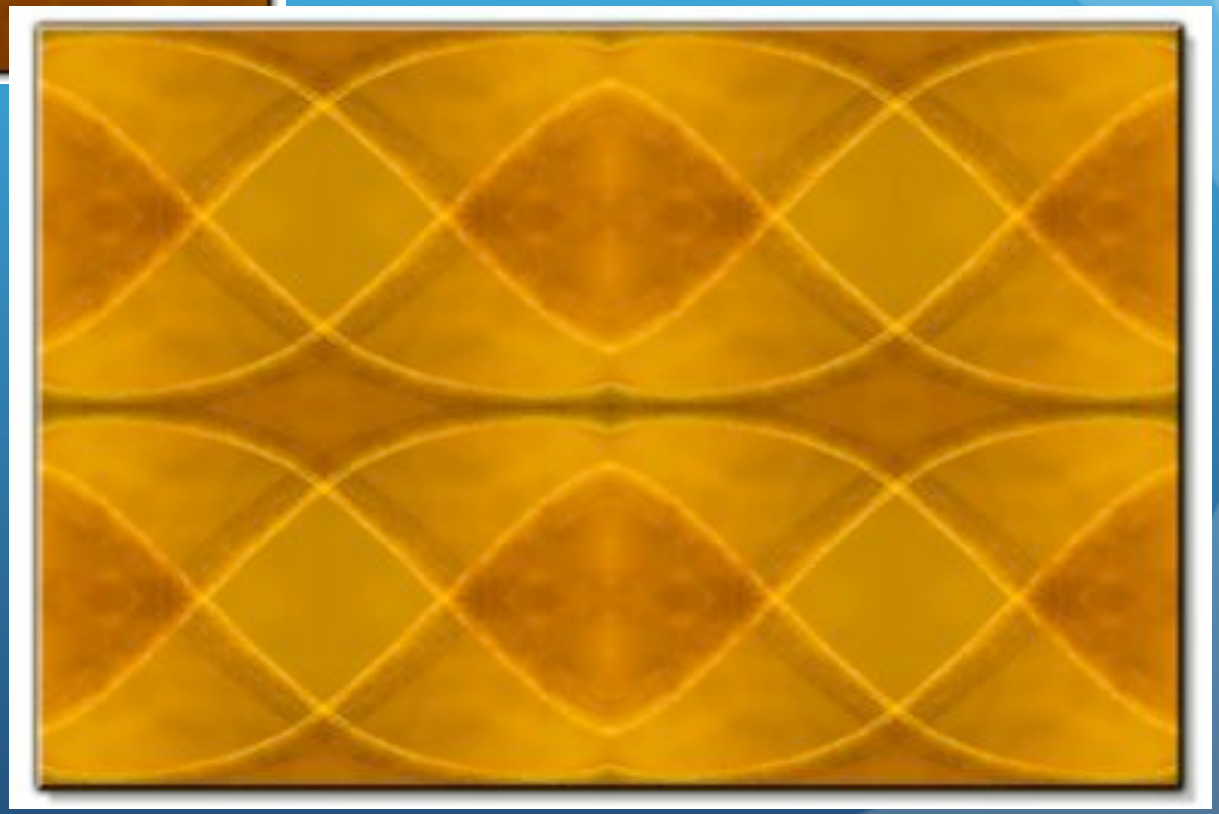

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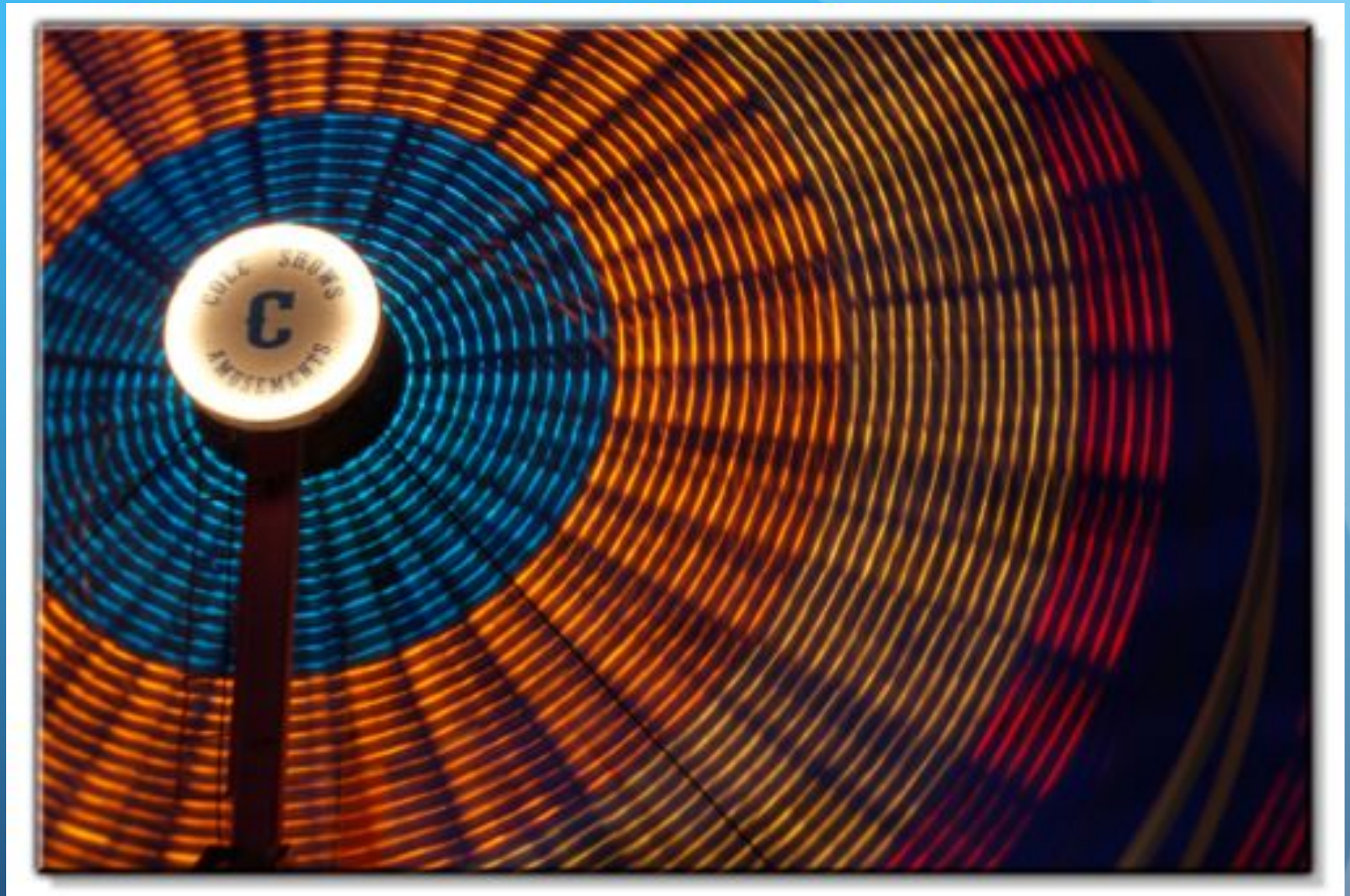
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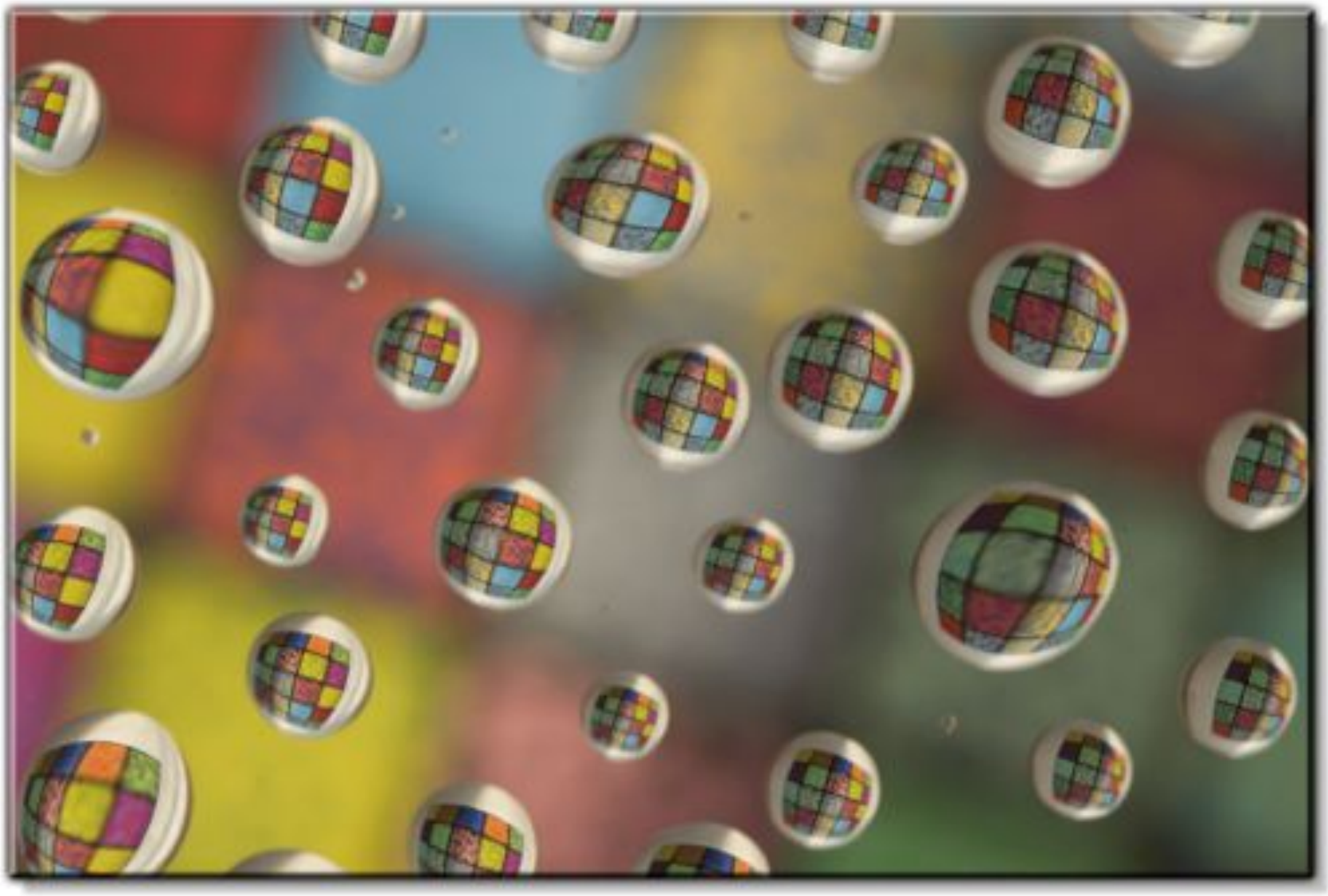

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Show & Tell