

Viral St James Photo competition - No 7 'Architecture'

It had to happen – you put an Architect in charge of a photo competition and he is bound to have Architecture as a subject at some point...

I remember my professor at University telling us students that the space between buildings is at least as important as the buildings themselves...just a thought.

We'll talk about focal length and perspective this time. Camera phone have fairly limited zoom and, because it is usually a 'digital' zoom, there will be a loss of clarity as you zoom in. However, they generally start with a fairly wide angle of view, which works well for taking photos of buildings.

Focal length (which varies in Zoom lenses) on compact or DSLR cameras is represented as an 'f' number – I won't bother to describe what this means in technical terms (mainly because I don't really understand it myself, and it doesn't matter!), but the thing to remember is the smaller the f number, the wider the photo angle and the more of the view fitted in to the picture.

The 4 photos below show the effect of changing the focal length or f number, using 2 different zoom lenses on a DSLR:



Focal length 16 mm - very wide angle



24 mm – wide angle mm 'standard' lens – theoretically representing the human eyes view



50 mm 'standard' lens – This, supposedly represents the field of view of a human eye



105mm – short Telephoto

Unless you are wanting to pick out a detail of a building, or you are the other side of a valley, you probably will not use any longer lenses for Architectural Photography.

Focal length and the level of the lens when the photo is taken have a significant effect on perspective. Perspective is what makes an image appear in three dimensions, as opposed to an elevation drawing like this...

26th May 2020



This photo, with a 16mm very wide lens was taken with me holding the camera as level as possible – in a commercial shoot you might even use a tripod and spirit level. Even so, there is distortion in the verticals – not necessarily a bad thing, but certainly a thing!

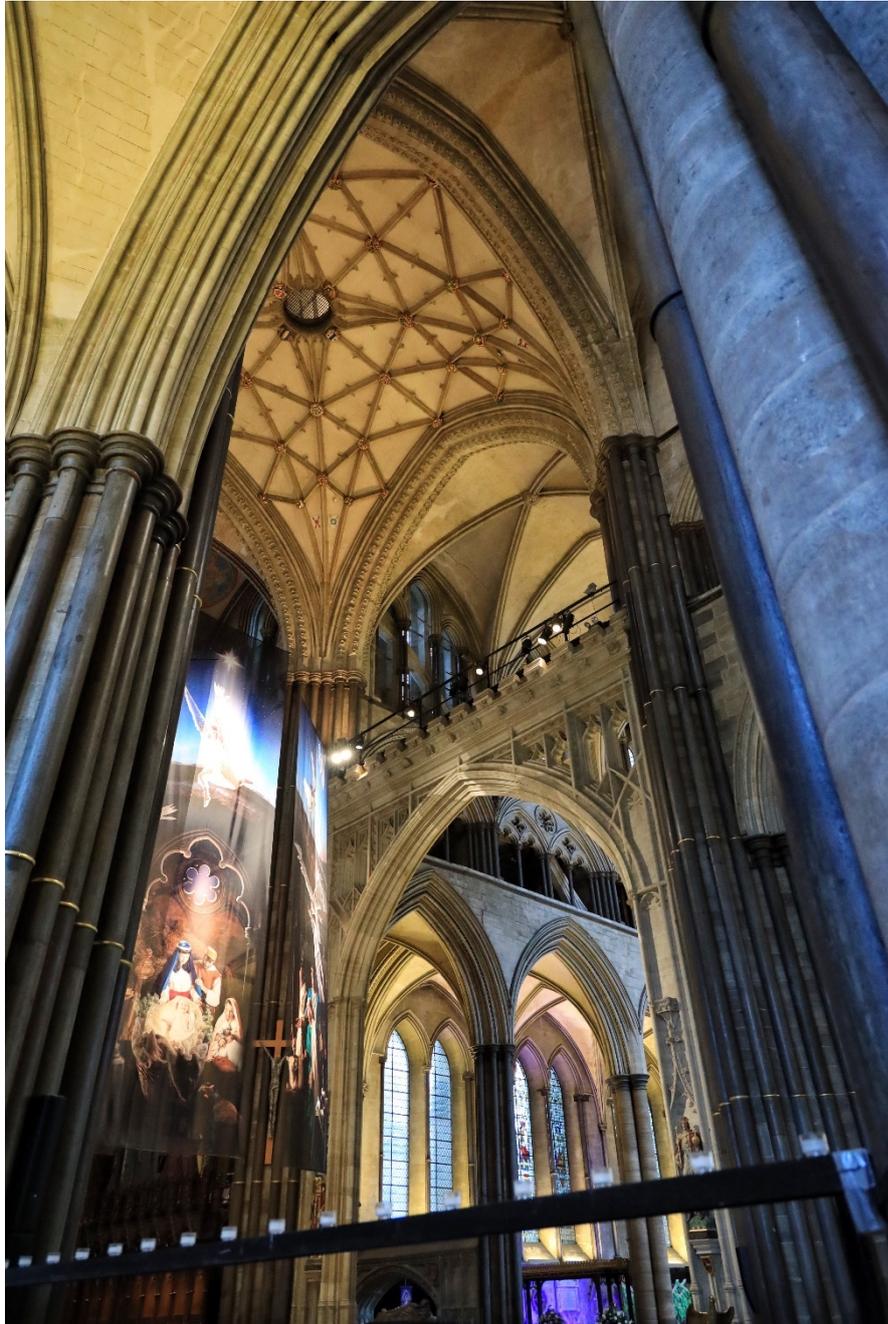
Basically, the more level the camera is, the more vertical the uprights in the photo should be...

26th May 2020



While for this one I'm below the subject looking up – same lens as before. The verticals converge up, giving the photo a distorted dynamism – arguably more effective than the previous picture

The above effect can be very obvious in situations like within a cathedral, where the height of the building means that you are probably using the camera in Portrait (as above) but you need to point the camera upwards to get all the ceiling detail...



Salisbury Cathedral
nativity scene
2019-20 taken with
a 24mm lens

The converging
piers give a strong
impression of
height and
strength.