

Tick-Tock

By Marilyn Nieves

Happy New Year!

No matter which winter holiday you celebrate, it's always a busy season as the year comes to an end. Whether you've been rushing to buy presents or tying up loose ends for your business, the end of the year has everyone thinking, "my, how time flies!"

With that in mind, what better concept to photograph this month than time itself?



Why the Concept of Time is Important as Stock



There's no disputing that time plays a major role in our lives. We keep an eye on the clock as we go through our day-to-day routines, but we also measure the passage of time in terms of seasons, years, decades, etc. Time is wrapped up in so many emotions that are ripe for stock. Emotions like nostalgia for the past, enjoying the present moment, running late, and looking forward to the future. We mark the passing of time with celebrations such as birthdays, New Year's, and anniversaries. There is so much material here for stock that it can be a bit overwhelming, so let's look at some ideas and examples for photographing time.

Photographing the Concept of Time for Stock

When we think of time, our immediate thoughts usually go to the time displayed on a clock. Thinking in literal terms is a perfectly good way to start out photographing this theme. You can also add variety by capturing the different tools we use to measure time. A few examples that come to mind are the hourglass, stopwatch, sundial, digital clock, or a lovely vintage pocket watch.



Exploring how to photograph these ordinary objects in creative ways can be a lot of fun, but let's also think about how we can depict time in other ways to make it appealing to stock photo buyers.

Conceptualizing Time

Conceptualizing is about storytelling — interpreting an idea. Time as a theme for stock can be quite broad and highly sought after. Challenge yourself to interpret the concept literally and also in a more subtle or abstract way. It's a great exercise in exploring creative ways of interpreting the same message.



Think of time as an event. To get their message across to their consumers, businesses use stock images that will capture their consumers' attention and that they can relate to. Think about

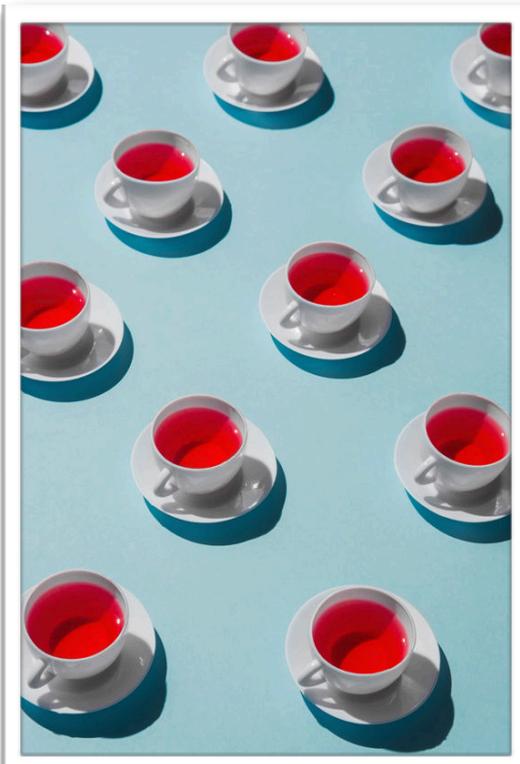


events that most people can relate to instantly. This photo of a mother reading to her child at night gives a hint to the notion that it's bedtime or story time before bed.

In this next photo, the same concept of bedtime is depicted literally with a child sleeping next to their favorite plush toy.

A teapot pouring tea into a cup tells us it's teatime in a very literal way.

However, this photo below also screams teatime, but in a more abstract way, with a repeating pattern of a graphic-like teacup. The concept is also enhanced with the use of contrasting primary colors to create a high-energy photo that really stands out.



The next examples are for “party time.” With a few similar party props, you can depict “party time” in a fun, whimsical way such as the photo to the right.

In the photo below, a group of young adults celebrating with noise makers is inviting you to a party. The photographer chose to get close and fill the frame to really get the viewer’s attention.

With these examples, you can see how a single idea can be executed in vastly different ways while expressing a similar message.

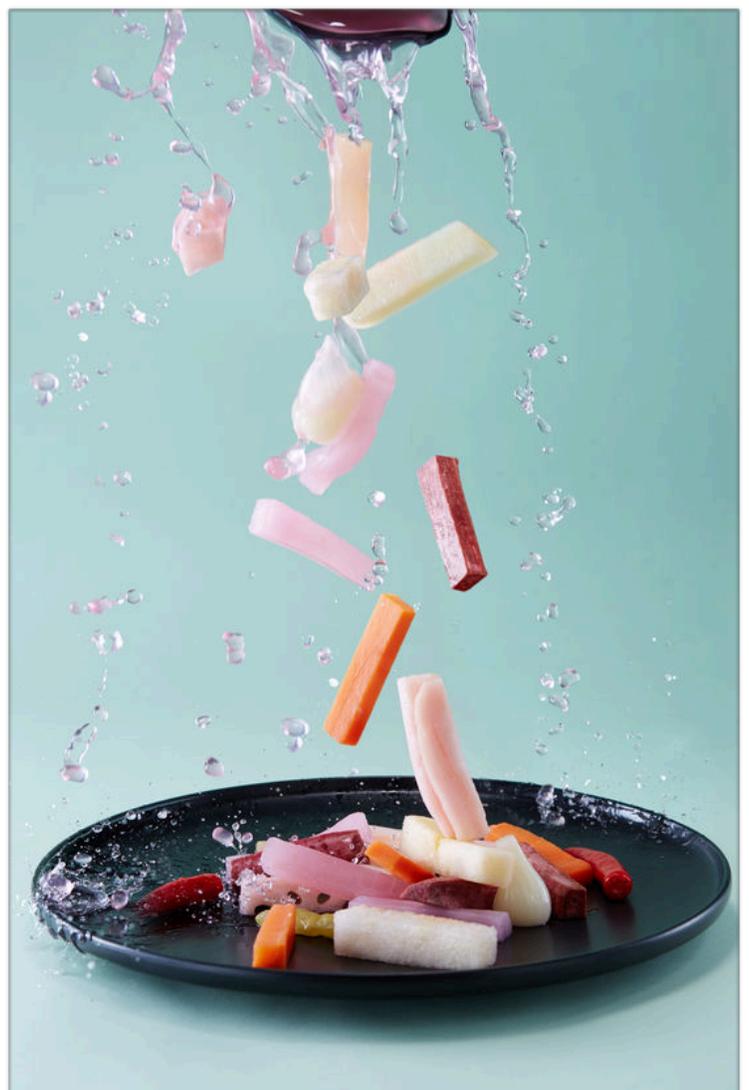


Passage of Time

Time can be fast or slow. In the photo below, time is flying by with the creative use of motion blur.

And here on the right, by using motion blur, the photographer was able to give a sense of busyness and rushing by blurring the business people as they walked by. (Check out Roadmap #87 Long Exposures for tons of tips on using a slow shutter speed to blur motion.)

Alternatively, freezing the action in an exaggerated way can also emphasize the concept of time like this dish of fruits and vegetables suspended in mid-air. To create a "frozen in time" shot like this you'll need to use a fast shutter speed of 1/500th of a second or faster.

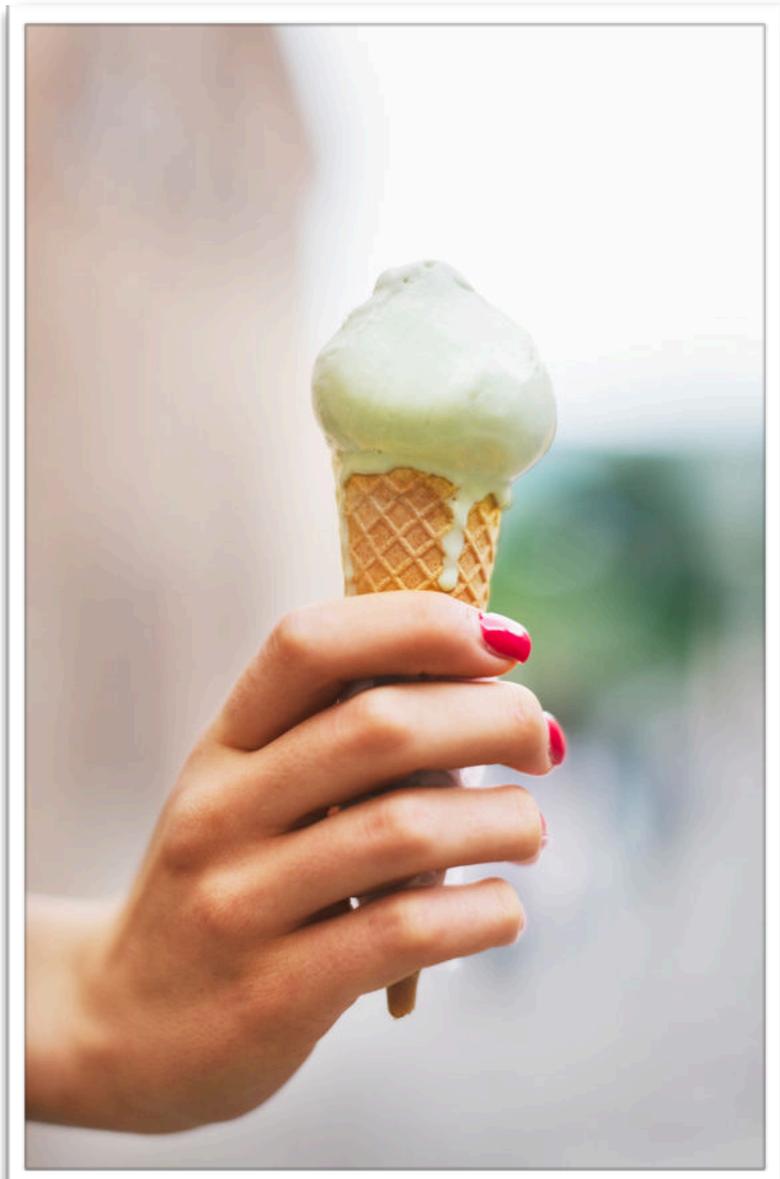


And here, ice cream melting on a woman's hand makes us think she's been holding it for a long time.

Since the passage of time usually implies change, another great way to tackle this concept is through a series. Imagine capturing a landscape in its various stages throughout the year. While each will also illustrate a particular season, the series as a whole will again emphasize a long period of time passing.

Obviously, a series like this will take months to create, but it's worth keeping an eye out for places that you could return to throughout the seasons to capture the changes as they occur.

On the bottom right, you can see time through the progression of the beans and how they have grown over the time period they were each planted.



Tips for photographing the concept of Time

As you can see, ideas for photographing time run the gamut. I recommend that before heading out with your camera, take some time to think about how you want to approach this concept. It's definitely one of those themes you have to sit with and brainstorm before you head out to shoot. Think about your message and how you can easily translate that into a photo that will clearly describe your intent.

Pay attention to the different advertisements you see on a daily basis and their messages. Many of them revolve around time. (Limited time offer. Saving you time. Don't delay.)

As you're brainstorming, it might be helpful to remember some of the common phrases and expressions we have related to time:

- ▶ Before and After
- ▶ Out of time
- ▶ Time is money
- ▶ Wasting time
- ▶ Running Late
- ▶ Time heals all wounds
- ▶ Time flies when you're having fun

Pick a thread that interests you and explore it with your camera.

Keywording

If you want your photos to be found, you have to make sure you keyword them properly. Conceptual images can sometimes be a bit more difficult to keyword, so let's take a look at a few.

Here's how I would keyword the following images:



Flower, echinacea, plant, isolated, growth, progression, aging, before and after, change, evolution, sequence.



Running, subway, shoes, passenger, city, late, fast, hurry, on the move, moving forward, beat the clock.

Harbor, clock, time, old, decay, out of time, aged, rusty, clock, concept, outdoors, river, broken.

Referee, timeout, time, gestures, man, people, isolated, stop.



I hope that you have fun shooting this month's theme. Now get out there and make the most of some quality time with your camera!