

AN EDITION OF BOOK REVIEWS!

\$24.95

ISSUE 120
WINTER 2025

Better Photography

Mastering Weddings In-Camera

Photographer –
Mauricio Arias



ANDREW MIELZYNSKI'S INTIMATE LANDSCAPES • WILDLIFE WITH STAS ZAKHAROV

MURRAY WHITE'S BEAUTIFUL CURVES • JACKIE RANKEN'S CHALLENGES





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: St Andrews, South Georgia

CAMERA: Fujifilm GFX100S II, 500mm f/5.6

EXPOSURE: 1/2000 second @ f5.6, ISO 250

SITUATION: "If you receive the Almost Weekly Newsletter in your Inbox, you might remember this photo of the bay at St Andrews and the 700,000 penguins crowding the lower moraines. I lamented not being able to show you all the detail captured on a web post, so I thought, let's share it on the printed page. Hopefully you get a better idea of just how many penguins there are – and this is only a small section of the colony (just in case you were trying to count up to 700,000)."

WILL YOU BE OUR PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR?

We have four categories to enter and each category offers a \$750 first prize, but to win the \$2000 'Photographer of the Year' Award, we will be judging your top four entries!

This is the only amateur photo competition in the world judged each year by the same three Grand Masters of Photography, providing a level of consistency not found anywhere else!

Every entry receives a score and a brief judge's comment. Win Bronze, Silver or Gold Awards. Plus there are four fantastic Category Awards and the prestigious **Better Photography Photographer of the Year 2025** title with a \$2000 cash prize!

New: The Photographer of the Year will be featured in Better Photography Magazine.

Visit www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com for more information. Entry is only \$20 per image or 5 entries for just \$80.

PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR



Three Grand Master Judges

- Peter Eastway, AIPP Grand Master of Photography
- Tony Hewitt, AIPP Grand Master of Photography
- David Oliver, AIPP Grand Master of Photography

2024 Photographer of the Year:
Elizabeth Storms



\$2000 Cash Prize for First Place

- Four Category Prizes of \$750 each
- Winner portfolio in Better Photography magazine
- All entries receive a score
- PLUS a brief judge's comment
- Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards
- Award Certificates can be printed

Entries close 30/6/25

Get a head start with your entries this year!

**Purchase Peter Eastway's comprehensive
"How To Win Photo Competitions"
for just \$47.50, a 50% saving!
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www.betterphotographyeducation.com**



2025

Four Categories:

- 1. Emotive Portraits**
- 2. Classic Landscapes**
- 3. Revealing Nature**
- 4. Your Choice Open**

HOW TO ENTER

1. The Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year 2025 Award is open to all non-professional photographers. A non-professional photographer does not work full-time as a photographer and has earned less than AUS \$10,000 in the past 12 months from photography.

2. Entrants retain full copyright of their images.

3. You may enter as many times as you wish. Entry is AUS \$20 (approx US \$15) per entry. There is an Early Bird discount of one free entry for every four paid entries, up until one week before the final closing date (23 June 2025) – so blocks of five entries for \$80.

4. There are four categories: Emotive Portraits, Classic Landscapes, Revealing Nature and 'Your Choice Open'. You can enter in one or more categories.

5. The judges are looking for a professional standard of presentation and a highly creative approach or treatment.

6. The images presented for judging must be photographic in origin and any post-production must be the work of the entrant. AI images and AI-generated components are not allowed. We want to see YOUR work!

7. To ensure we have recent work, entries must be from original exposures made on or after 1 July 2020. Please do not remove the EXIF data from your entry files as this may invalidate your entry.

8. Entry is online only at:
www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com.

9. To enter online, you will need to register. Competition winners may be asked to prove their non-professional status and provide raw files to show no generative AI has been used.

10. The judging process is as follows:
• Each judge will score each Entry out of 100 and the average will be presented as a score out of 100.

11. Only one entry is required to win a Category. However, to win the overall Photographer of the Year, an Entrant will need to have entered a minimum of four entries to make a 'Portfolio'. A Portfolio comprises the four highest scoring entries by an Entrant, no matter how many entries an Entrant submitted or how many categories.

12. The 5 Portfolios with the highest aggregates will be judged separately. The judges will vote for the Portfolio that best represents the Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year. This will be a process of consultation and discussion.

13. For each Category, the 5 entries with the highest score will be judged a second time to determine the Category winner. This will also be a process of consultation and discussion and the Photographer of the Year is ineligible to win a category.

14. Prizes: AUS \$2000 for the Photographer of the Year. AUS \$750 for each Category winner. Total prize money:

AUS \$5000. The Photographer of the Year will also have a feature article in *Better Photography* magazine.

15. By entering this competition, the Entrant (copyright owner) grants to *Better Photography* magazine and associated companies (the 'Organisers') the right to reproduce in print and online any image submitted for publicity or educational purposes in Australia and overseas.

16. If necessary, it is the Entrant's responsibility to obtain any and all permissions, including the model releases and/or copyright owner's permission if required, to have the images judged and possibly displayed and published.

17. The Organisers will interpret the application of these rules and make decisions on any questions not specifically covered by them. No correspondence will be entered into regarding any decision.

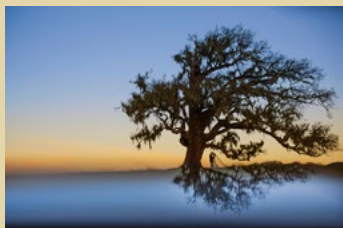
18. Entries will be accepted online from 15 April to 30 June 2025.

19. Enquiries concerning the competition can be directed to kim@betterphotography.com.

20. The results will be published online and in *Better Photography* magazine from 31 July 2025.

21. This is a summary of the rules. The complete rules can be found with the competition entry details at:
www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com.

Enter at: www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com



Cover photo by Mauricio Arias.
See article on page 30.

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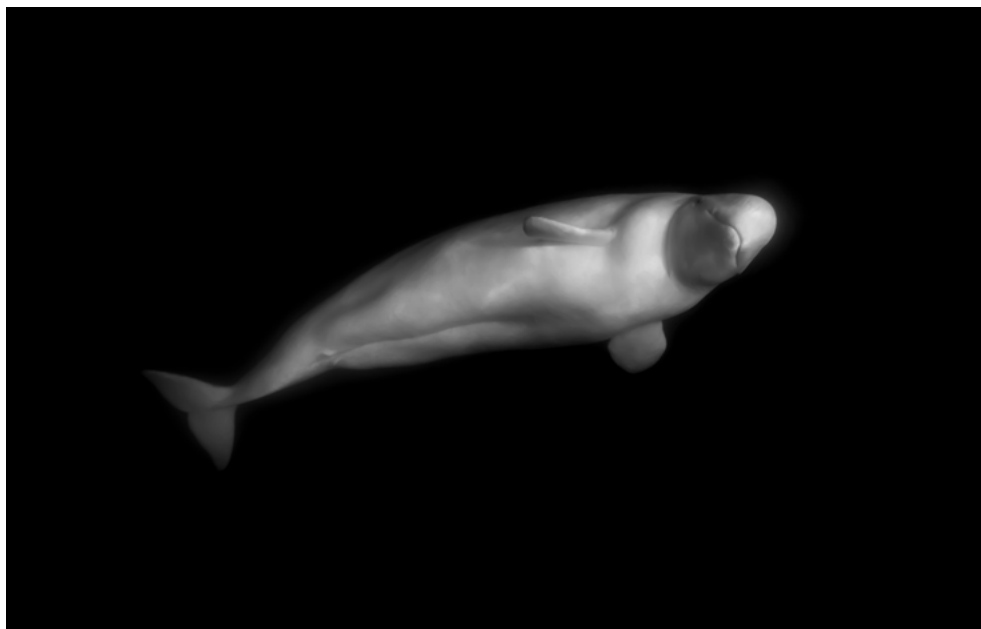


Photo by Stas Zakharov. See article on page 40.



Photo by Nick Melidonis. See article on page 90.

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Here's an easy technique to help you fast-track the aesthetic side of your photography. By Peter Eastway.

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Stas Zakharov: Wildlife Photographer 40

There's little glamour when it comes to wildlife and wilderness photography – or maybe just a little. We interview Stas Zakharov about his work.

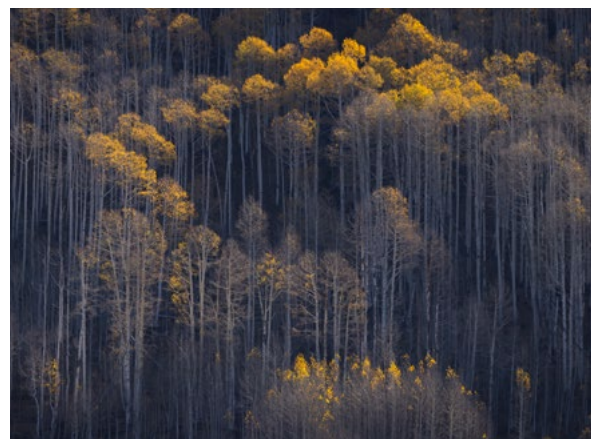


Photo by Andrew Mielzynski. See article on page 20.



Photo from "Mars – Photographs from the NASA Archives". See article on page 18.



Photo by David Moore. See article on page 54.

Panasonic Lumix S1RII

Panasonic's Lumix S1RII features a newly developed 44.3-megapixel BSI CMOS sensor with a high-speed readout that benefits still and video shooters alike. Action and wildlife photographers can enjoy 40 fps High Speed Burst shooting to capture the peak of the action and then choose their 'decisive moment'. Landscape photographers wanting to create giant prints will appreciate the high-resolution mode, allowing for hand-held shooting at up to 177-megapixels and including a higher dynamic range.

Also improved is Lumix's real-time subject recognition Phase Hybrid AF with AI tracking. It quickly and precisely detects human eyes and faces and follows a subject's movements smoothly. With high-speed continuous shooting at up to 40 fps and AF tracking, moving subjects can be captured accurately and effortlessly. And not sure when the action is going to happen? Try the SH pre-burst mode which starts taking pictures before the shutter is fully pressed, ensuring you never miss a shot.

Image stabilisation has become so good these days that the main problem is keeping the subject still, not the camera! The Lumix S1RII achieves 8.0-stop shutter speed compensation with in-body stabilisation. New for the industry is 'cropless E.I.S.' which provides advanced digital stabilisation without cropping in on the field of view and is achieved by using lens correction information to smooth out shaky footage (this feature is only available with Lumix L Mount lenses).

The S1RII is the first Lumix camera to provide 8K video recording with 14-stops dynamic range. A versatile flexible framing (Open Gate) feature has been enhanced, offering higher resolution at 6.4K (3:2). This will allow video producers to capture vertical and horizontal video in one take, streamlining content delivery for applications such as YouTube and Instagram Stories. Furthermore, up to 8.1K / 7.2K will be possible with a future firmware update. Body only price is \$5499.



Sony FE 400-800mm f6.3-8 G OSS

First there was the 70-200mm. Then the 100-300mm and 100-400mm. These have been partially replaced by 100-500mm and 150-600mm lenses, so what's next? Perhaps Sony has the answer with its FE 400-800mm f6.3-8 G OSS super-telephoto zoom. It will have to be a firm favourite with both sport and wildlife photographers who need to get in close to their subjects.

Sony's brand new Alpha lens is claimed to flaunt high resolution performance across the entire zoom range, as well as fast, precise and accurate AF (autofocus). In addition, the inner-zoom design means that the overall length of the lens doesn't change as you zoom in and out, and also means the lens's centre of gravity changes very little. So despite its long focal length, it makes the lens very easy to use. And did we say it was a long lens? It's also compatible with the separately sold 1.4x and 2x teleconverters that can extend the maximum focal length to 1600mm.

The FE 400-800mm F6.3-8 G OSS has an 11-blade circular aperture that helps to create beautiful bokeh with a smooth, creamy background when shooting with a narrow depth-of-field (a wide aperture setting). Six ED (Extra-low Dispersion) glass elements effectively control chromatic aberration, whilst flare and ghosting in backlit conditions are also suppressed for beautiful photography.

Inside, two precision linear motors drive the lens's focus group for fast, accurate focusing. Tracking keeps up with the 120 fps maximum burst speed of the Alpha 9 III and quiet operation means you won't be drawing attention to yourself. A focus range switch (FULL/10m-NEAR/∞-8m) can also be used to optimise control for different subject distances. Focus breathing is suppressed for refined movie quality.

The FE 400-800mm F6.3-8 G OSS can easily be used hand-held without shake-induced blur, courtesy of the built-in Optical SteadyShot image stabilisation. Stabilisation is even better with an Alpha body that includes image stabilisation. Expected price is \$4399.



Home > Camera Lenses > Mirrorless Lenses > Sigma 28-105mm f/2.8 DG DN Art Lens for L-Mount

Sigma 28-105mm f/2.8 DG DN Art Lens for L-Mount

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28-105mm F2.8 DG DN | Art

Lens Construction	Number of Diaphragm Blades	Minimum Aperture	Minimum Focusing Distance
18 elements in 13 groups	12 Blades	F22	40 cm/ 15.8 in.
Maximum Magnification Ratio	Filter Size	Dimensions	Weight
1:3.1	ø 82 mm	ø 87.8 mm × 157.9 mm 3.5in. × 6.2in.	995 g/ 35.1 oz.
Camera Type	Mirrorless		
Corresponding Mount	L-Mount , Sony E-mount		
Sensor Format	Full-frame [DG]		

*Values are for L-Mount

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Fujifilm GFX100RF

At just 735 grams, this must be the lightest, smallest, large format digital camera around! Fujifilm has just released the GFX100RF!

It's a specialty camera with a fixed lens the equivalent of 28mm on a 'full-frame' sensor. And it's very stylish with a clean chrome top deck and a traditional 'leatherette'-like finish. This is a camera for photographers who already have it all, or who are pursuing a genre like street or travel photography where they don't want to compromise on image quality, just because their camera is small.

The 35mm f4 is a fixed lens, so unlike the other GFX cameras, you won't be changing lenses around, but if you're wanting to follow in the footsteps of famous documentary and photojournalism photographers, the lens is plenty wide enough and there are more than sufficient pixels to allow generous cropping as well. In fact, Fujifilm is encouraging us to crop with a new aspect ratio dial, allowing you to switch between nine different formats, from square to panorama. And there are 20 film simulations so if your aim is to shoot everything 'in-camera', there should be minimal adjustments required in post-production.

The GFX100RF features Fujifilm's high-speed 102-megapixel Large Format CMOS II sensor and its X Processor 5. You can also shoot 4K/30P video at 4:2:2 10-bit and the built-in AI subject detection will actually make it a lot easier to shoot from the hip than it was in the old days!



Nikon Z5II

The Z5II includes the superior shooting functions and performance of high-end Nikon cameras while offering an even greater ability to respond to a wide variety of dark or dimly lit scenes and situations. Equipped with the same EXPEED 7 image-processing engine as the Nikon Z9 and Z8, it also offers subject detection powered by deep learning (AI) technology and makes focusing on the intended subject easier with highly accurate, high-speed autofocus in approximately one-third of the time required by the Nikon Z5.

In addition, the back-illuminated CMOS sensor suppresses blur and noise for beautiful rendering of the textures and details of subjects and scenes, even in dimly lit situations, such as when shooting indoors or capturing night landscapes. The Z5II also supports Imaging Recipes, downloadable imaging presets created by Nikon and creators, as well as Flexible Color Picture Control that allows users to precisely control colour balance.

And there's a host of additional features, such as a Pre-Release Capture function capable of recording images buffered up to one second before the shutter-release button is fully pressed. Nikon's portrait functions include Rich Tone Portrait mode that produces radiant and beautiful rendering of skin textures and Skin Softening, that smooths the skin while leaving hair, eyes and other details sharp.

The new Z5II supports Hi-Res Zoom with video recording that allows users to zoom in on their subject with no loss in resolution when using a prime lens or when the telephoto end of a zoom lens doesn't quite have the reach. It's also the first Nikon Z series camera to support internal recording of N-RAW video to an SD card, plus it supports recording of N-Log video which offers subtle and rich tonal gradation. Expected body only price is \$2699.



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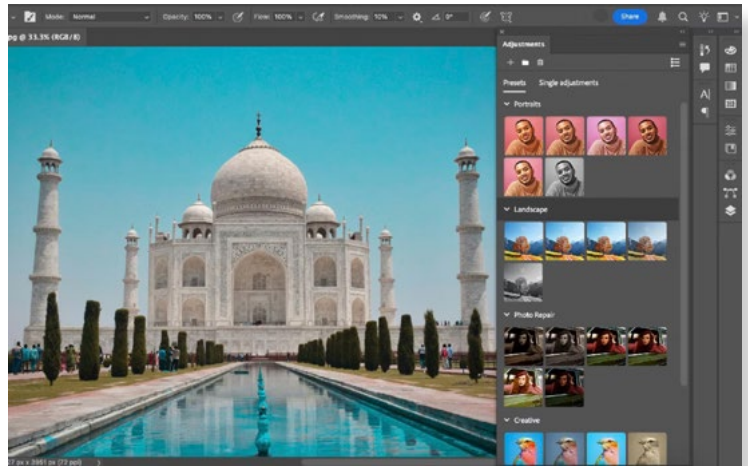
Given most of us are paying a monthly subscription for Photoshop and all its updates, we don't tend to pay it much attention, yet Photoshop remains the most sophisticated image editor on the market (but now equalled by Affinity Photo, we'd suggest). There are things you can do in Photoshop that you can't do in Lightroom and while that might not matter for the majority of photographers, it's something all advanced photographers need to be aware of.

This year, Photoshop has been upgraded to make it easier to edit our photographs with presets. While we've been able to add adjustment layers from a special panel for years, now you can select a preset or a single adjustment from a panel with an improved design, using a thumbnail to help you visualise what the change will do. For long-time users of Photoshop, this might seem like a dumbing-down of the software, bringing it in line with Lightroom and other apps that start with the assumption the user knows very little, so the software will do it for them.

And let's face it, with photography essentially a process of recognition, whether we're looking for a suitable framing through the viewfinder or an appropriate preset from a drop-down list of alternatives, it just makes sense for Photoshop to follow along. Even better, for those with a little more experience, we can use this feature to create our own presets and adjustment layers without having to use the Actions panel. This could be fun!

Now, don't get us wrong. We're not in favour of all the changes the younger computer generations impose on us. Who at Apple thought it was a good idea to introduce a bloody big blue icon to remind us that our caps lock is on, but was not smart enough to allow a large contingent of users the ability to turn it off? Unfortunately for us, software is so sophisticated these days that the programmers appear to be making changes simply to justify their existence – or perhaps they are warming us up for the wholesale introduction of AI into our workflow?

But if that is the case, surely full AI means we won't need to use a computer at all?



Sony FE 16mm F1.8 G

As the photography world matures, lenses we used to dream of or fantasise about are actually coming to fruition! Now, it's true that most old-timers didn't specifically fantasise about a 16mm f1.8 lens, but they certainly wondered how a wide-aperture ultra wide-angle lens could perform.

Well, now Sony owners need wonder no more with the release of the FE 16mm f1.8 G. Sony claims the new G lens has a beautiful bokeh and outstanding close-up performance. Certainly, with an ultra wide-angle you'll need to get in close to your subject if you're going to throw the background sufficiently out-of-focus to enjoy the bokeh; but once you do, the 11-blade circular aperture goes to work to produce that creamy background many photographers love. The lens has a minimum focus distance of 0.15 m/0.5 ft.

The optical design includes two AA (Advanced Aspherical) elements for high image resolution at all apertures. One Super ED (Extra-low Dispersion) glass element and three ED elements suppress chromatic aberration right out to the image periphery, whilst an optimised lens coating minimises flare and ghosting.

One of the challenges for lens designers with DSLR cameras was to keep the lens itself reasonably small and light. The wider the aperture, the more difficult this became, but the mirrorless lenses don't seem to suffer in the same way. The new Sony 16mm measures just 73.8x75 mm and weighs only 304 g. So, it is small, lightweight and mobile while, Sony claims, delivering spectacular imaging performance for a wide range of subjects including landscapes, architecture and starry skies.

Inside, two XD (extreme dynamic) linear motors ensure fast, precise AF and tracking. A control algorithm developed specifically for the XD linear motors achieves an enhanced response that largely negates delay and vibration that are likely to occur when driving a large-diameter focus lens group. And the FE 16mm f1.8 G's advanced lens technology reduces focus breathing for smoother video footage.

Expected selling price is \$1898.



Creative Photography Workshops

Travel Photography Tours

Small Travel groups
Guides/Tutors
Mike Langford & Jackie Ranken

2025 China Landscapes

November 4 -18 (1space left)

2025 Japan (2 spaces left)

November 21-3 Dec Autumn

2026 Japan (1 Space left)

January 12 - 25 Winter

2026 Uzbekistan (4 spaces left)

October 18 - 1 November



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Small groups: Maximum six

Tutors: **Mike Langford & Jackie Ranken**

2025 Workshop Dates

May	1 - 6	Autumn Colours (3 Places left)
May	15 - 20	Central Otago (2 places left)
June	16 - 21	Canterbury Lakes (Full)
July	17 - 22	Mt Cook (1 place left)
Oct	9 - 14	South Westland (2 Places left)

2026 Workshop Dates

March	27 - 31	The Catlins
May	2 - 8	Karamea
May 29 - 2 June		Central Otago
June	15 - 20	Canterbury Lakes

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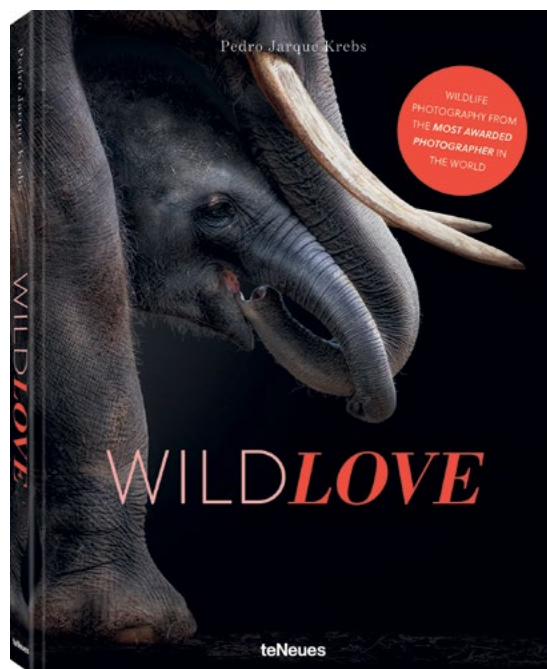
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WildLOVE

We published Pedro Jarque Krebs' portfolio a few issues ago, but with the release of his new book, we just had to share a few more of his amazing animal portraits.



WildLOVE is published by teNeues

It's interesting what the world misses out on because of unintended bureaucracy! Nature and wildlife photographers generally work within a knot of tight rules and regulations. You can't do this, you can't do that, but it's not always easy to see from a photograph whether they have or they haven't.

Now, some rules are important for wildlife photography competitions, especially if you have judges who are more expert in wildlife than they are in cameras. Submitting a photo of a three-legged flamingo might earn extra points because of the subject's rarity, even if it is fake news. Taking a documentary approach to what is permitted in an entry is a sensible starting point for competitions.

Unfortunately, there is often collateral damage. The rules and regulations of many photo competitions would preclude photographer Pedro Jarque Krebs from entering much of his finest work. Why? Because Pedro edits the raw file more than is allowed. Competitions simply say no editing, no cloning, no changing, whereas what they're really trying to protect is the authenticity of the subject – but authenticity can be a subjective concept! One thing you can't deny about Pedro's work is its stark authenticity. The moments he has captured, the expressions, the gestures, the poses – they are not only believable, they are pure magic!

Of course, Pedro does win photography awards, but not necessarily in the premium wildlife competitions. His publisher claims he is the most awarded photographer in the world

(no doubt Pedro will be slightly embarrassed, but hey, whatever it takes to sell a few books) and he has won awards in the *Better Photography* magazine competition on many occasions. Unfortunately, it is only with the publication of his books that the rest of the wildlife world gets to see his beautiful compositions.

Approach

As we reported in *BP116*, Pedro's distinctive animal portraiture evolved from an early desire he had to work with animals in a photographic studio.

"The initial idea was simple: put the animal in the studio, with a dark/black background and work with studio lights, as one does with portraits of people. At that time, digital equipment did not exist so the logistics for carrying out this idea were extremely complicated, especially in the case of wild, dangerous or large animals. For example, getting an elephant or a lion into a photo studio was practically impossible, at least for me.

"So initially I was limited to working with small animals such as amphibians or reptiles. For the other animals, I had to park the project, but when digital technology came along, it opened up a new window of possibilities for realising my idea. I began to experiment with making animal portraits, either in captivity or in semi-freedom and darkening the background in post-production to get the result I wanted."



Narcissus © Pedro Jarque Krebs



The Future King © Pedro Jarque Krebs

There are three approaches Pedro can take. "The first may be to have the animal located in front of a cave or against a naturally dark background, but this is not very common. The second method is to use an artificial light source, such as one or several flashes in a bank and use the camera's exposure settings to achieve the dark background. The third method is to darken the background or 'burn' it in post-production.

"When I started editing the photo to darken the backgrounds, I discovered that I liked the result much better, because when you are not in a real photo studio, the animal behaves naturally, without fear and without stress. And here again an important ethical consideration is consolidated: that of not disturbing or upsetting the animal. I began to get more interesting poses and interactions between the same animals that would be unthinkable in a studio."

Pedro explains that there are many situations where a black background could conceivably be natural, so he is quite comfortable making the changes to his files. "In this sense, I believe that my photography is creative more than documentary, but without altering the essence of the subject. The technique merely highlights the essence of the animal as it is presented to me, with its own complete freedom of movement.

"Photos with animals in a real studio usually show a frightened subject. My way of working avoids this and produces more interesting and spontaneous results."



Readers may remember this photo from BP116 – now published in *WildLOVE*.

We love Pedro's approach to animal portraiture and while we understand why the world of wildlife and nature photography competitions cannot always embrace his style, no one can deny both the art and the craft of his mission.

WildLOVE is Pedro's second book. It is published by teNeues, has 224 lavishly printed colour pages, 23x30 cm dimensions, is a hard cover and can be purchased online or in better bookshops! Highly recommended.



Introspection © Pedro Jarque Krebs



Full-colour freedom © Pedro Jarque Krebs

MARS

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE NASA ARCHIVES



Writes Rob Manning, “Those of us who conceive, design, test and operate machines that land on and explore other planets, experience a myriad of conflicting emotions about what we are privileged to do. On the one hand, we are proud that we have been entrusted to do what few others do – to boldly cross the reaches of the solar system and expand humanity’s knowledge of the universe. On the other hand, we worry endlessly that our Mars machines, like so many before, will fail because of a simple oversight.”

As I flipped through the pages of Taschen’s new book, *Mars, Photographs from the NASA Archives*, I was mesmerised by the landscapes. Wide. Expansive. Barren. Windswept. They are truly out of this world and yet I could see similarities with Earth. A huge windswept plain seemed to corral a rookery of beautiful shaped and manicured sand dunes in a manner that was similar to back home, yet quite distinctively different. It reminded me of what I observe on aerial flights over parts of Australia and the USA. Death Valley springs to mind.

Through six decades of NASA’s pioneering research missions, the mysteries of the red planet have been gradually uncovered, revealing a world not so unlike our own that likely once supported life. Science and art collide as NASA’s orbiter missions capture aerial views of ancient riverbeds, polar ice caps, dust storms, vast canyons and towering volcanoes in an endlessly varied landscape. Later, as they traverse Mars’s rugged surface, NASA’s rovers have operated as mechanical extensions of humankind for the past 25 years, drilling holes, searching for traces of water and marvelling at mountain ranges and panoramic sunsets.

And then I turned the page to see a set of ugly tyre tracks running straight through those beautiful dunes, marring the

perfect landscape and I found myself wondering, will mankind do to Mars what has already been done to Earth?

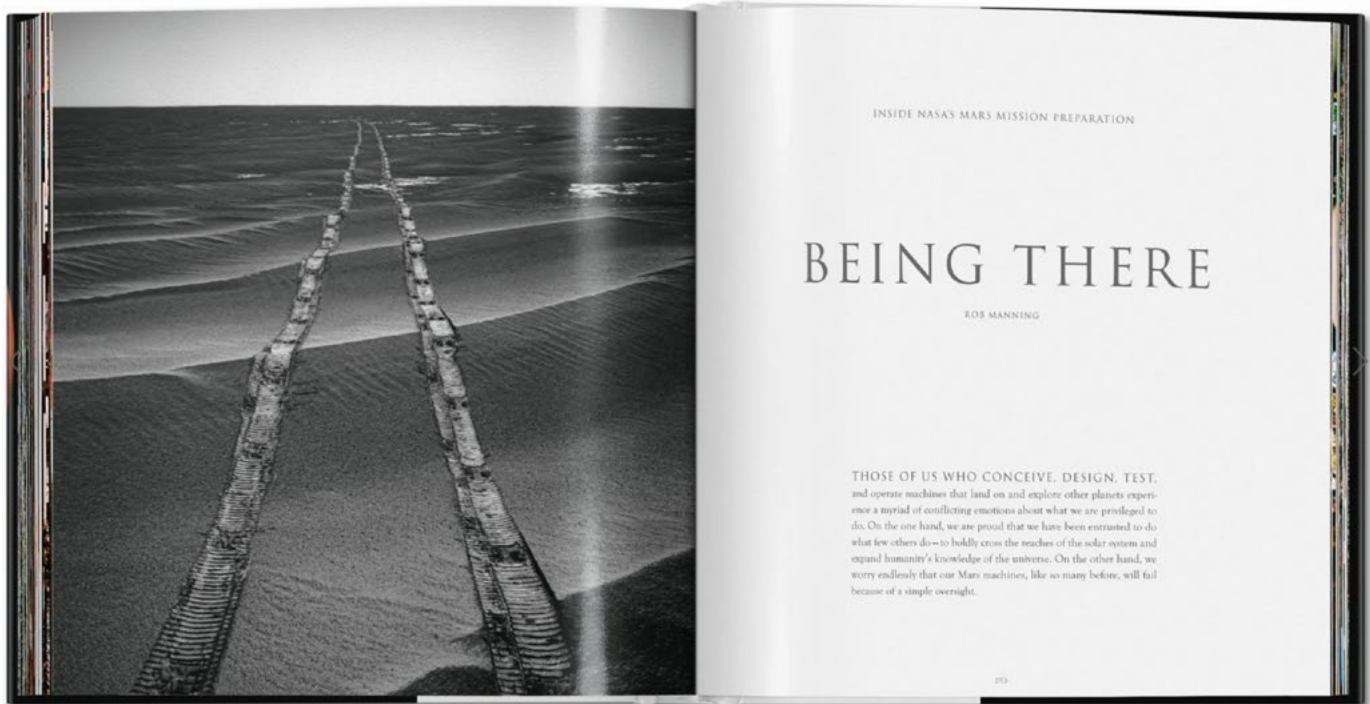
To photograph Death Valley, you need a couple of days of strong winds to remove the footprints and tyre tracks and then you need to get up really early the next morning so you can put back your footprints before anyone else! As harsh as Death Valley is, you can always see a sign of man. Even photographing Australia’s Lakes Eyre and Frome from the air, you’ll see tyre tracks alongside the footprints of stray camels and cattle. On Earth, there is nowhere you can go without stumbling across something man-made (and for those who will suggest the wilds of Antarctica, that doesn’t count because we can’t get there anyway!)

It was a fleeting thought and I’m all right now! Surely these tracks will be blown away by Martian gales in the near future, they are probably gone already and Mars is once again a barren, lifeless (as far as we know) landscape.

So, why the mention of this book in *Better Photography*? Taschen publishes lots of great photography books and we’re on its PR list, so that’s why I saw the book.

And I loved it because as I flipped through its pages, I had the same sense of exploration and anticipation I get when travelling to a new location on boring old Mother Earth. I think for many photographers, it’s the sense of adventure we love when we walk out of our homes with a bag full of cameras and lenses. Mars is somewhere I will never visit. I won’t go to the interior of Antarctica either, but as I write this, I’m about to explore Patagonia, the Atacama Desert and Easter Island. I love that sense of adventure and anticipation.

And I think you will enjoy *Mars, Photographs from the NASA Archives*. RRP \$145.



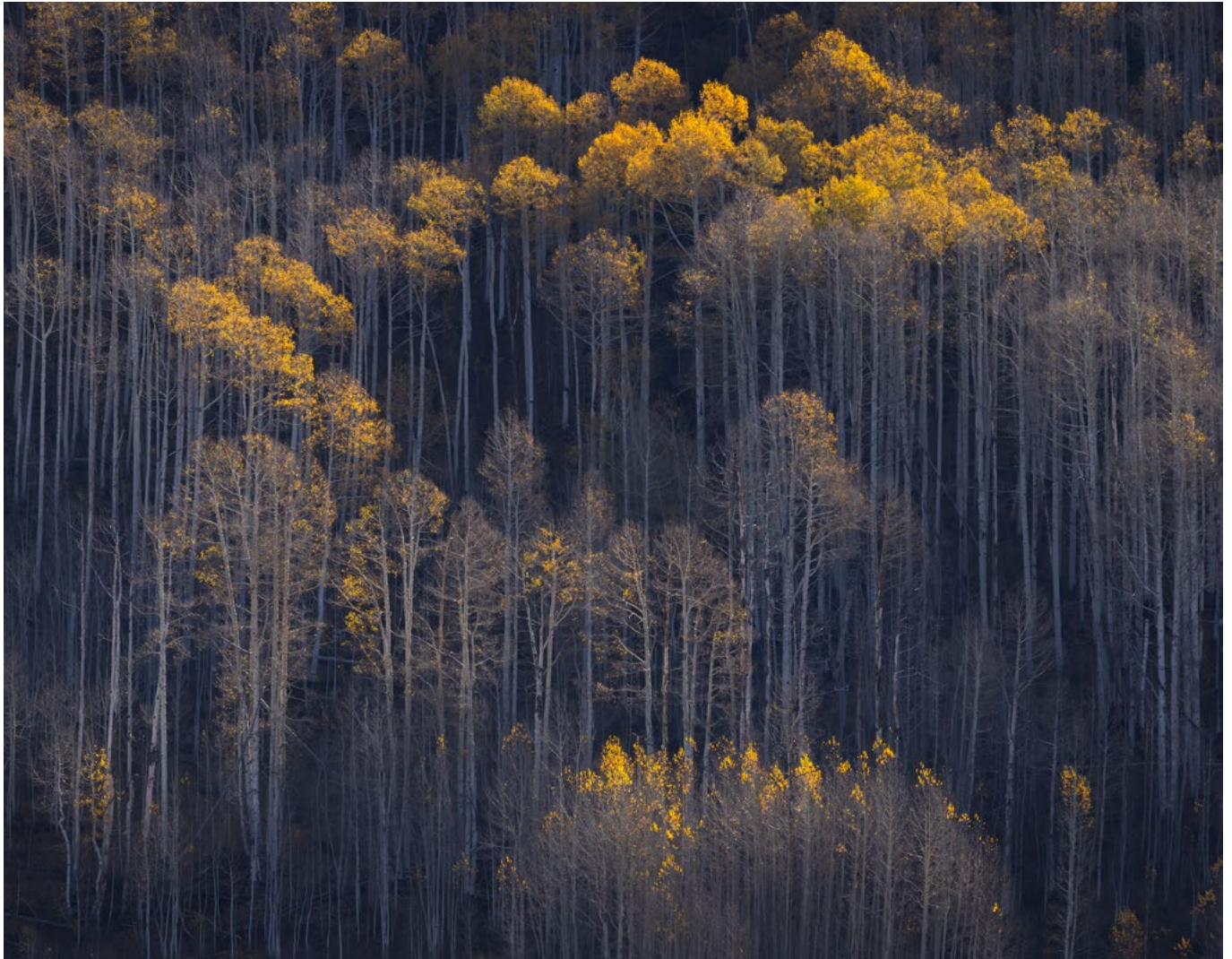
The Contemplative Landscape





Aftermath of a fire, Jasper, Alberat, Canada

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANDREW MIELZYNSKI



Winner and runner-up of the International Landscape Photographer of the Year in 2023 and 2024, Andrew Mielzynski photographs a gentle and very personal type of intimate landscape. We asked him how!



Whether you're reading this article for the first time, or writing it like the editor, we all have a fascination with how great photographers capture great photographs. And what the editor has learnt over the years is that it's as much about a photographer's background as any conscious effort to work in a particular genre.

Andrew Mielzynski seems to reflect this reality in many different ways. While he acknowledges the type of photography he gravitates towards, he might not always be consciously aware of where he is being taken.

Above: Late fall, Aspens on a hill, Utah, United States

Left: Athlone, Ireland



Vermont, United States



Grey Country, Ontario, Canada



Grey County, Southern Ontario, Canada

Explains Andrew, “I am a general photographer. I started photographing wildlife and intimate scenes where I live. I have also been a sports photographer, photographing the World Cup of Ski Racing for 14 years and photographing professional waterskiing. I live in Toronto, so I have also enjoyed street photography and I admire the work that has come from past and current street photographers.

“COVID definitely had an impact on my photography.

Suddenly, the streets were empty and I felt that some of the allure of street photography was lost. However, I have always loved landscape photography, especially intimate landscapes and so during COVID, I started driving out into nature to try and capture its beauty.”

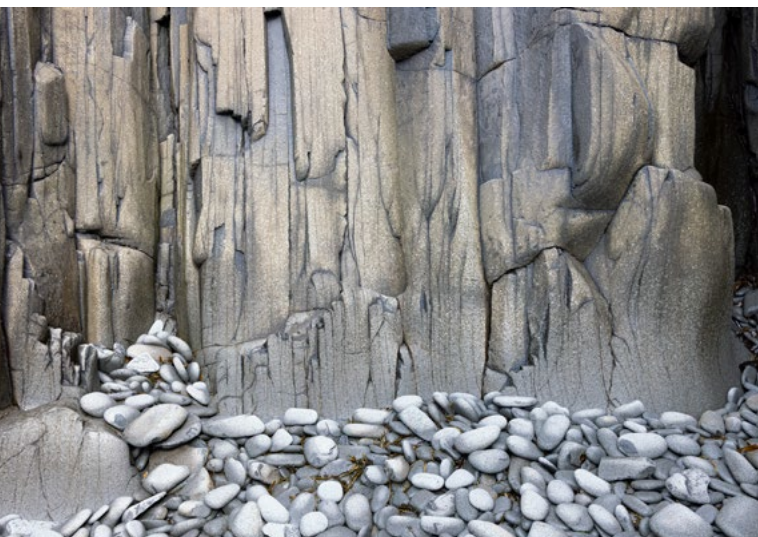
Insight

Andrew’s photographic journey began at his parents’ cottage which faced west on the shores of beautiful Georgian Bay. Here he experienced spectacular sunsets and magical light, plus he had fabulous woodlands and forests all around. His parents would take him on hikes, picking mushrooms (safely we hope) and identifying different trees, birds and animals.

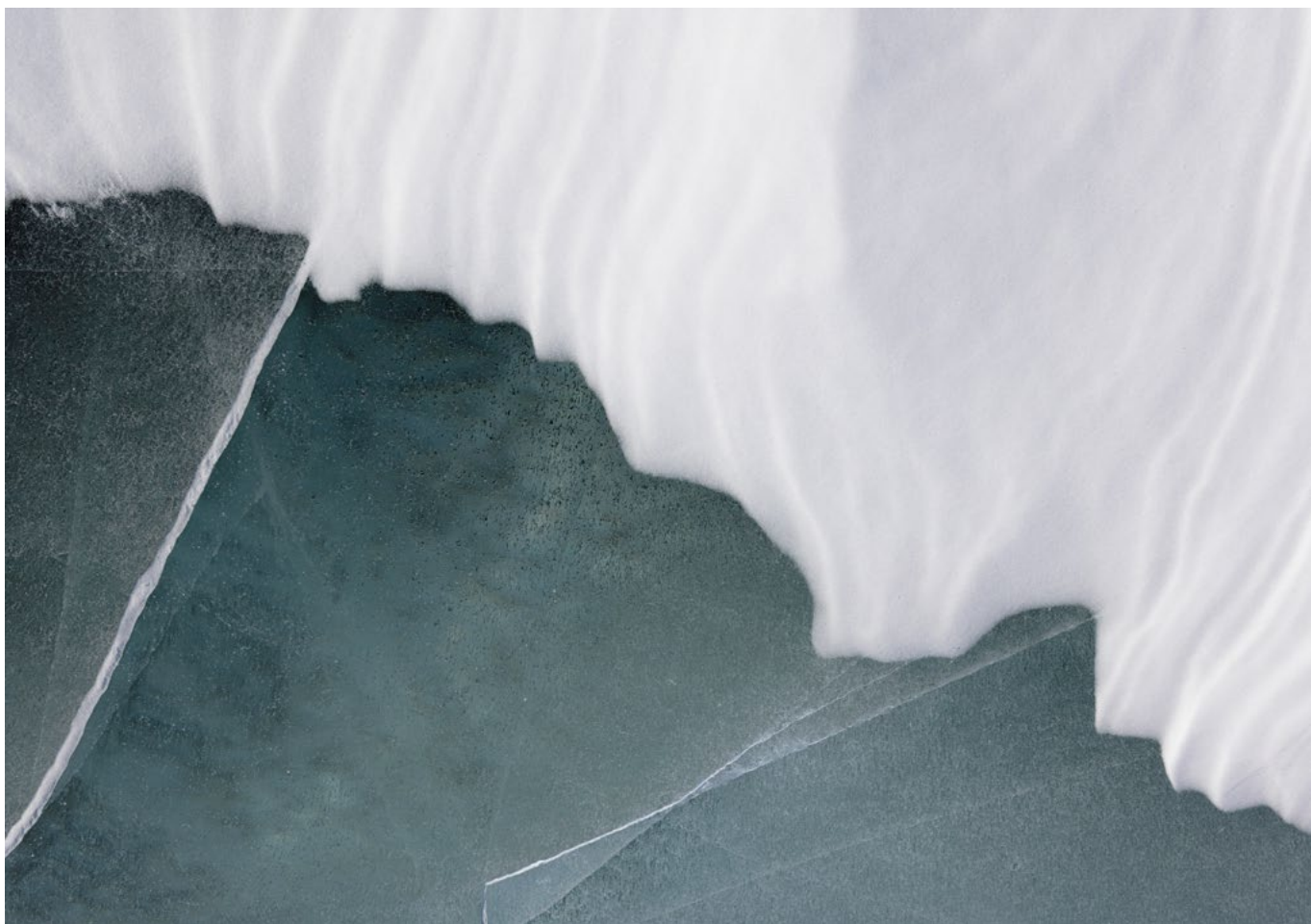
“One time, my parents invited a good friend up for the weekend. He brought his Minolta SLR film camera with him and encouraged me to take a few photographs with it. Two weeks later, he showed up with three prints, one of a pair of flying ducks, one of a frog and one, of course, of our fabulous sunsets. I still have those prints all these years later. The images were soft and blurry, but when I saw them, I was filled with an immense feeling of pride and accomplishment. I was hooked!

“Unfortunately, in those days, 12-year-olds didn’t have cameras or even phones for that matter and I had to wait until I finished university and started working before I could purchase my first film camera, a Nikon FA.

“I had also started a family at that time, with two young children who kept me very busy, but I would wake up early



Nova Scotia, Canada



Ice edge, Alberta, Canada

every morning, before anyone else and go out and photograph small scenes, like frost on strawberry plants, raindrops on leaves and textures on driftwood. My love for small intimate scenes started early on and has never waned."

Andrew now lives in Thornbury and his love for nature and the art of photography is as strong as ever. "The most important thing about photography for me is the enjoyment and calm I get from being out in the field. I get lost in a scene and any personal problems I have just disappear. I get huge satisfaction out of creating an image that I'm happy with, so most of my work is for personal consumption.

"I would like to put together a book for myself and for my two daughters at some point, not to sell, but just so my work is in print and off my hard drives. In the past couple of years, I've started posting on Instagram and Facebook. I have also entered some high-profile competitions, which I have been very fortunate to do well in. I feel a great sense of accomplishment and pride from this."

His awards include first place in the 2024 International Landscape Photographer of the Year (and second place the year before), first place in the 2024 Natural Landscape Photography Awards, second place in the landscape category of the 2024 Minimalist Photography Awards and second place in the 2024 Close Up Photographer of the Year in the Intimate Landscape category.

Andrew loves getting immersed in the natural world, slowing down, seeing. He looks for minimalism – simple,

uncluttered compositions, graphics and small intimate scenes. He cites as inspiration photographers such as Eliot Porter, Shinzo Maeda, Charles Cramer, Freeman Patterson, William Neill, Alex Noriega, Richard Martin, Bruce Percy, Jennifer Renwick and Eric Bennett – but admits there are many others.

"I look for harmony, balance and a pleasing distribution of elements within the frame. I also look for relationships between those elements and perhaps I am looking for things that many



Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada





Mesquite Dune, Death Valley, United States



Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada

people would miss or walk by. However, I feel that photography is all about seeing things that most people wouldn't notice."

Mechanics

While Andrew began with a Nikon SLR camera, when he began shooting sport photography, Canon equipment was way ahead in areas that were important to him, so he switched.

"When I photographed ski racing, 95% of the equipment used by other photographers was Canon. Nowadays, of course, all camera makes are fabulous and you see lots of Sony and Nikon equipment at sport events too. I have no particular obligation to any camera gear that I own and the only reason that I don't switch is because I have invested in so many Canon lenses!"

Andrew's current kit includes a Canon EOS R5 mirrorless body with EF 16-35mm f4, RF 24-105mm, EF 70-20 f2.8 and EF 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 L IS USM lenses. And for a tripod, Andrew's a fan of FLM's CP30-L4 II. "I really love this tripod. It is built so well and is extremely light and rugged."

For post-production, he employs both Photoshop and Lightroom with Topaz and Nik plug-ins, but he says he tries to keep a very light hand with a very minimal approach. "I try to get it right in-camera. I very rarely saturate images and I watch my histogram very carefully, both while out in the field and in post-

production. Mirrorless camera bodies are fabulous in that I can see what's going on while I work. I often shoot with an idea of how I'm going to process the image based on what I see on the back of my camera."

While Andrew has made a number of photo books, they have been more related to sport and family events. He uses Blurb and has recently opened a Graphistudio account, saying he's excited to work with them. "I also recently bought a Canon printer and I am looking forward to printing (and selling) some of my images. I have been fortunate enough to have requests for printed work.

"I have always enjoyed spending time in nature and photography has been a gift that has enabled me to see and appreciate things that I would not have noticed otherwise.

"I love to slow down, observe and discover small, intimate scenes." And perhaps that is the secret.

*You can follow Andrew on Instagram at **andrewmielzynski**.*

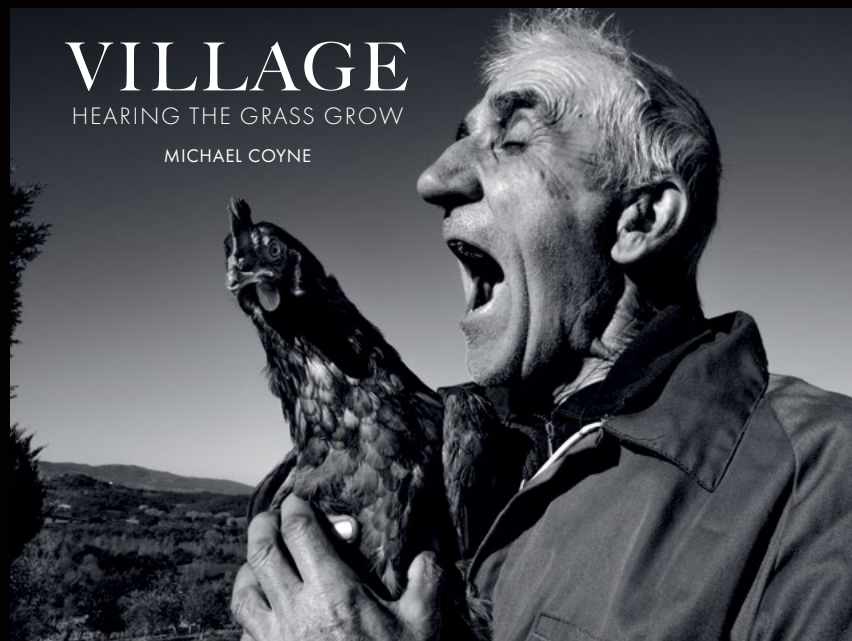
*You can also see his winning landscape portfolios at **www.internationallandscapephotographer.com**.*

For this article, Andrew has kindly provided us with a selection of his new and less-known work.

VILLAGE

HEARING THE GRASS GROW

BY MICHAEL COYNE



Around the world traditions are disappearing, languages are being forgotten and cultures washed away.

The main culprit is urbanisation resulting in the wholesale disappearance of villages and village life. It is this that Michael Coyne has made his mission to capture through his probing lens.

This stunning collection guides us through a disappearing way of life at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries.

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-PETER EASTWAY, BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

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International Weddings



With A Difference



All wedding photos by Mauricio Arias.

Photographer Mauricio Arias might be recording reality, but he's doing so with a highly imaginative eye.

Imagine you've just been asked to photograph a wedding. It seems simple enough, but when you dig into the details, suddenly there is a host of photographic challenges in front of you. The bride and groom both want to be photographed before the ceremony, but they are at different locations. The inside of the church is very dark and the pastor won't allow you to use flash. There are 10 bridesmaids. You need to do the family portraits outside at a vineyard in bright sunlight. And then there are the wedding breakfast photos with all the guests.

As a wedding photographer, you're not just shooting portraits, you're doing everything from close-ups of the food and footwear to magnificent landscapes with fill-flash on the bridal couple. Wedding photography is arguably the most challenging of all photographic disciplines simply because it is so varied: a wedding photographer needs to be able to do it all.

So, you've been asked to shoot one wedding. Now, think what it's like to be a professional wedding photographer and competing in a crowded market where you not only need to create amazing wedding photos every time, you need to offer something that's different. What's your unique selling proposition? Why should a couple hire you instead of another photographer?

When you look through Mauricio Arias's portfolio, you realise he has indeed created a unique approach to the art of wedding photography. There's something special about the way he captures a wedding, how he positions his camera and frames his subject, when he chooses to take the exposure. Of course, Mauricio also takes the standard bread-and-butter wedding photos, the group shots and the venue overview, but what sets him apart is a novel documentary style in full and vibrant colour.



Sonoma, California

One of Mauricio's 'techniques' is to include out-of-focus foreground and background elements, creating a sense of magic and mystery, or perhaps just adding in a colour wash. Here, he's using a shiny surface – the screen of his phone – to reflect the tree and the couple standing underneath. However, it's the tree that is significant.

"The couple have deep connections to this area. Their legacy stretches back several generations and so the 'family tree' becomes a meaningful icon, establishing where they've come from and where they're going to."

"Most of my photos use existing light and there's not much work done in post-production, except to ensure I keep the detail in the highlights. I then dodge and burn the main elements to create a compositional balance. Really, that's all."

While post-production may remain minimal, it works simply because of the strength of the original capture. There's no doubt post-production can be very effective, but only if there's a great capture to start with – and this is Mauricio's focus.

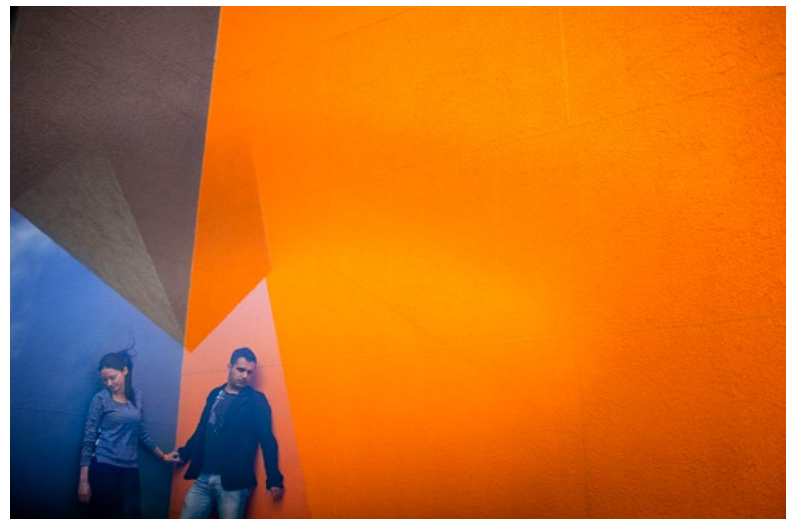


All wedding photos by Mauricio Arias.

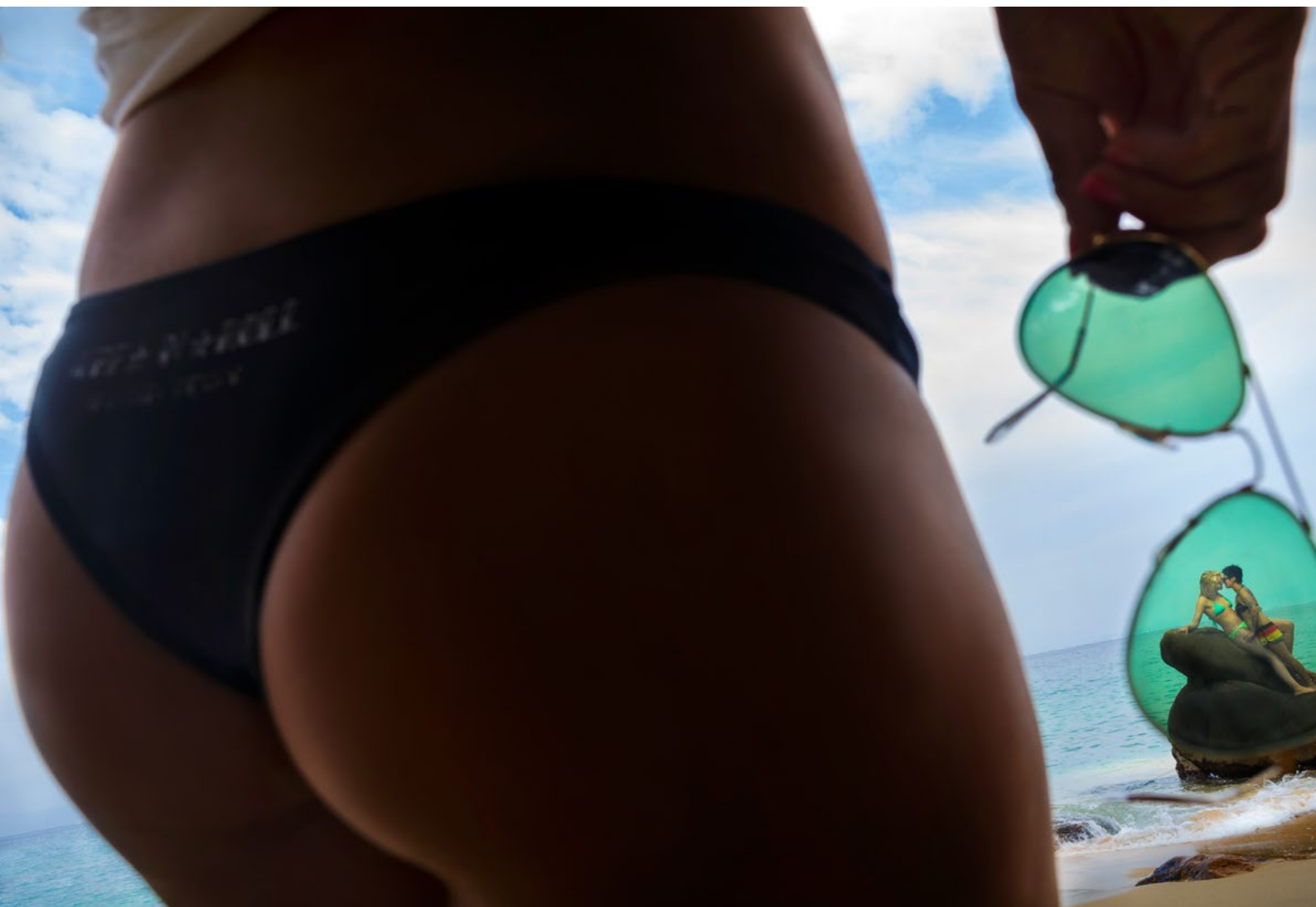
Insight

Named one of the ten best wedding photographers in the world, Mauricio Arias now leads a double life, shooting weddings and helping Italian album and print manufacturer Graphistudio with its marketing and promotion.

However, in many ways he fell into photography. After leaving Nicaragua for political reasons, he moved to California where he discovered he was quite good at taking photographs of people. "I needed a job and it was a God-given blessing when I discovered I could take photos. Even better, people liked the photos I took for them – it was a great surprise for me!"



Today, Mauricio's work is celebrated by some of the most respected organisations and publications in the industry, including MyWed.com, Fearless Photographers, Junebug Weddings and the International Society of Professional Wedding Photographers. He has been named Photographer of the Year by *MyWed.com* and received the Best of the Best Award three years in a row from Junebug Weddings. He was also named in the Top 10 Photographers of the Year by Fearless Photographers and has featured in *HuffingtonPost*, *CNN*, *Feature Shoot* and *Bride Envy*.



Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

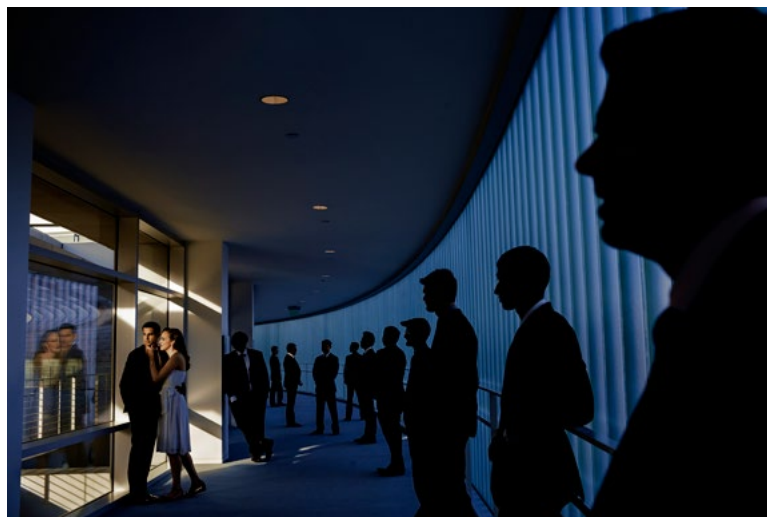
There's no doubt this is an unusual wedding photograph, a woman's shapely behind and a pair of green sunglasses in her hand. But look a little closer to decide if Mauricio met the brief or not!

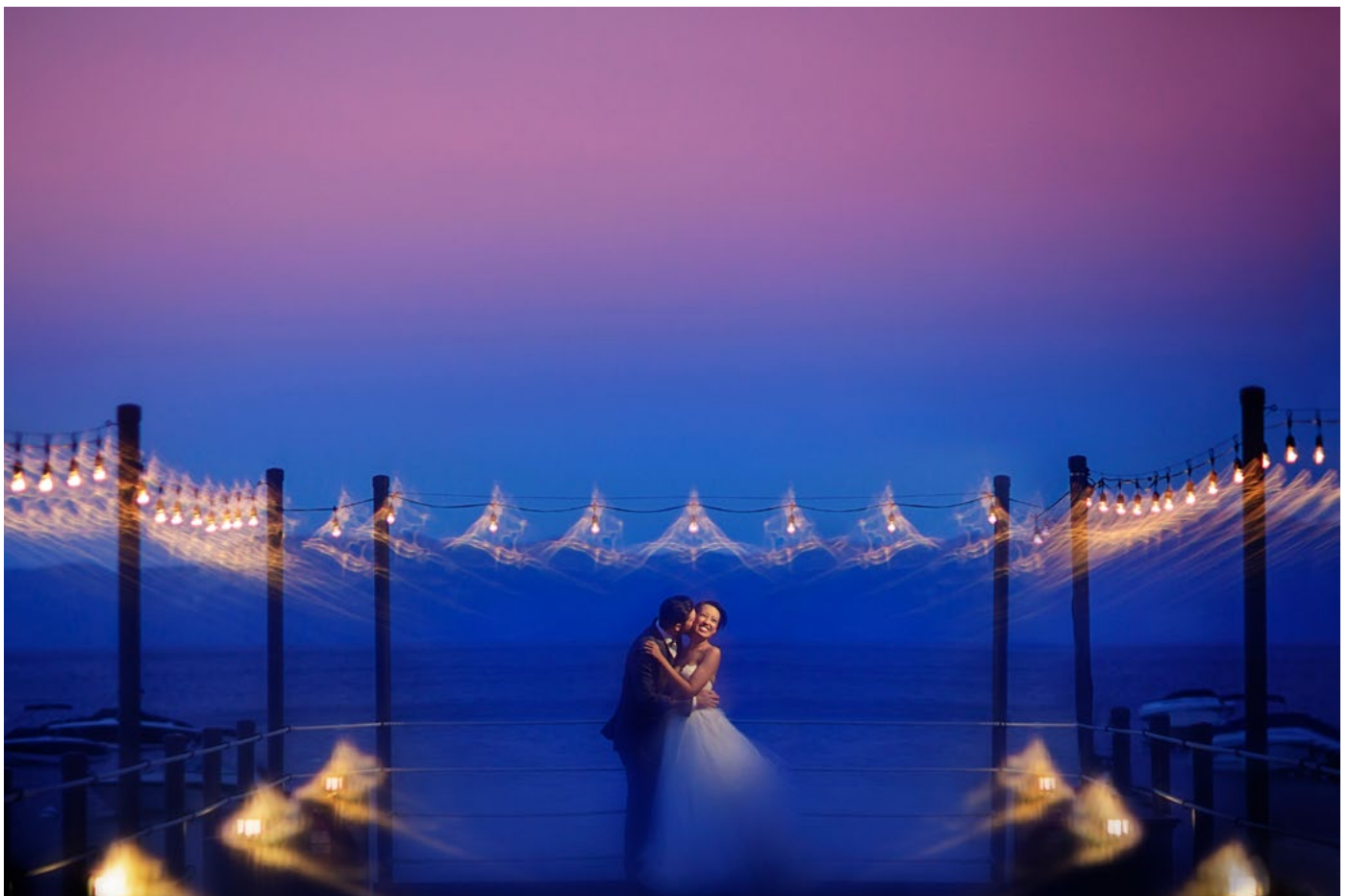
"This photo was inspired by the couple's sentiment from our first interview. They explained to me that their wedding was to be sexy and romantic – and these are the words I had in my head all day while I was photographing them."

Mauricio confides that it's when you have a clear direction that opportunities will present themselves. "We took a sunset cruise off the coast and decided to stop off at a little island for a walk. The girl in the foreground is actually the wife of the captain of the boat we were on, so I asked if it would be okay for her to help set up the image, framing the same-sex couple within one of the lenses. This photo probably makes more sense to the couple. It says a lot about who they are and what they're like, but I also love the fact that other people might not appreciate this photo as much as they did!"

While Mauricio's style is relaxed and understated, every photograph is intentional. "As a wedding photographer, I spend about 90% of the day documenting the couple's experience. The mantra I keep in mind is, 'What is this photograph about?' Each moment has a subject, a context and a feeling I want to convey. By asking this question, I can determine my position, distance, lens, aperture, shutter speed and the most appropriate light to capture who they are, what they do and how they relate to their family, friends and surroundings.

"The remaining 10% of my work consists of portraits, which fall into two categories. Some portraits simply highlight the beauty and happiness of the day, while others are more abstract –almost like inside jokes between the couple and me. These abstract portraits are inspired by the couple's history, the venue where they're getting married and ideas they've shared with me. I use these details – these textures, stories and personal elements –







to interpret their feelings, filter what's around me and create a photograph that reflects their unique story.

"While I'm a wedding photographer by profession, I also like to experiment and train myself in different disciplines of photography. Wedding photography draws on many skills at different times, so it's important to keep expanding my abilities.

"For instance, I like to challenge myself to take a good photo anywhere. I could be in bed, sitting at the airport or going to the park with my daughter. This prepares me for photographing weddings when you simply don't know what is going to happen next.

"Photography helps me find both a balance and a focus in life. It brings me peace and helps me to approach problems by seeing the order of the divine in the ordinary chaos of life."

Mechanics

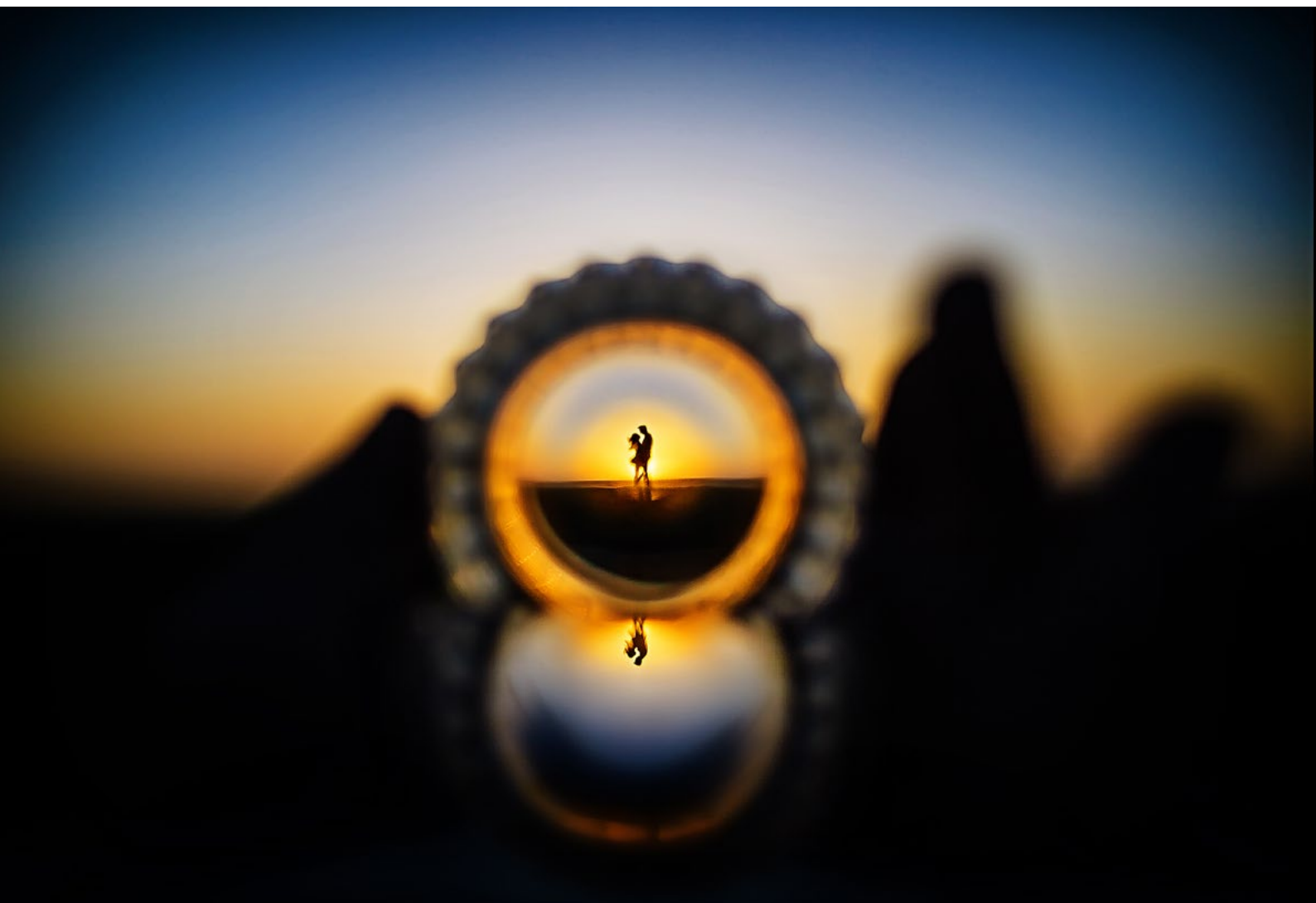
Mauricio has trained himself to work primarily with wide-aperture 35mm and 85mm prime lenses, these days on a Canon EOS 5D Mark III, but he also experiments with different equipment and lenses from time to time, such as tilt-shift lenses.

"However, my canvas is certainly based on the 35mm f1.4 and 85mm f1.2 Canon lenses. These lenses have a particular look

to them, especially when it comes to capturing the light and how it behaves. I've been using these lenses for so long now, I even know how to use their little imperfections to build some personality into my work."



All wedding photos by Mauricio Arias.



All wedding photos by Mauricio Arias.

To edit his shoot, Mauricio uses PhotoMechanic for making his selections and then Photoshop for the final post-production, using an Asus monitor.

"My approach to post-production is to recover the real colours, reflecting the way it really was on that day. In general,



my palette features strong colours with lots of contrast between warm and cold hues. I don't use composites or alter the reality of a moment, but I will take multiple exposures in-camera from time to time.

"Not all images are created equal and so I use post-production to better express them. For instance, some portraits need to be dramatic while others present better when processed more softly. It's all based on the feeling and story they are representing."

Working with Graphistudio so closely, naturally enough Mauricio is a huge fan of the printed image, especially albums.

"I love to make albums and wall art because it's a way to convey the wedding or family's story and to bring people's memories into their daily life. An album or a print helps them remember a great time, full of happiness and wonder. I know this will have a positive impact on their life."

To see more of Mauricio's work, visit:

<https://mauricioarias.art/>

https://www.instagram.com/the_mauricio_arias/



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Peter Eastway's Lightroom Atelier – Easy Online Learning

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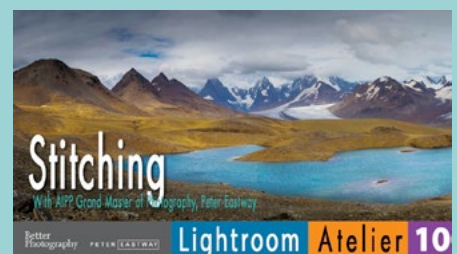
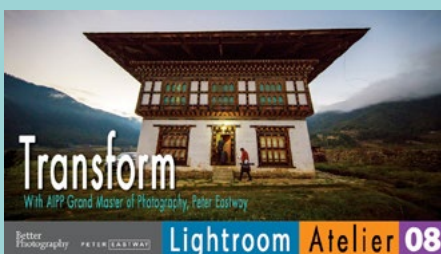
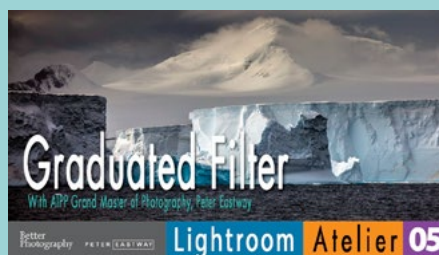
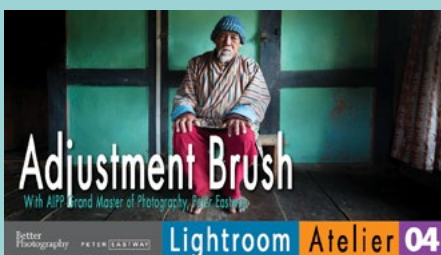
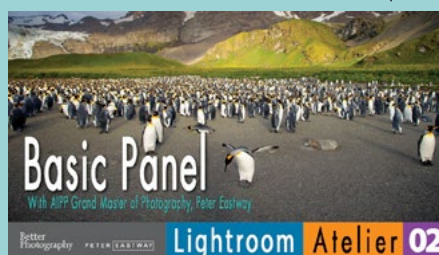
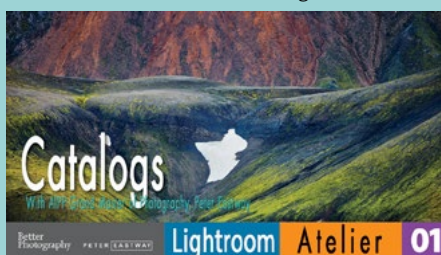
you'll need if you're happy with the average results that come out of your camera. However, as all creative photographers soon discover, using Lightroom isn't just a matter of sliding controls left or right, it's also an amazing tool with unlimited creativity – if you know how to use it properly. The reason you'll be interested in Peter Eastway's **Lightroom Atelier** is because you like what you see on these pages and you'd like to achieve something similar with your own work. If that's you, check out the free lesson on our website and follow the links ...

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Atelier**

Lightroom Atelier – some of the techniques you will learn





Stas Zakharov



**Brown bear and
wolf, Finland**



Polar bear, Svalbard

There's little glamour when it comes to wildlife and wilderness photography

– or maybe just a little. We interview Stas Zakharov about his work.

What makes an underwater photographer? Stas Zakharov will tell you that having a mother, a father and a grandfather as scuba divers is a great place to start! From as early as he can remember he was swimming and diving, becoming licensed at the age of 14. And he wasn't just diving in his Russian homeland, but in some pretty exotic locations like Egypt, Croatia and Turkey!

And there was good reason for those exotic locations: the water was a lot warmer than the White Sea in the north of Russia, but maybe Stas hasn't really learnt the lesson because when I met him on board Aurora Expedition's Greg Mortimer, not only was he the ship's photographer, he was actively photographing the snorkelling group whenever he could!

Now living with his wife in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, Stas has built a business leading keen wildlife photographers on exploratory journeys, supplemented by his work as an expedition team member and Zodiac driver on expedition ships.

Insight

As the photographer with the expedition team, one of Stas's roles is to give the passengers an introductory presentation on getting the most from their photography while onboard. At the beginning of our March voyage to Antarctica and South

Georgia, Stas did his thing and while I was comfortable with the techniques he was suggesting, I was very impressed with the breadth of his wildlife portfolio. He has been to some simply amazing places – and that in itself is a story! If you have the drive and the passion, it seems you can go almost anywhere in this world to find amazing wildlife opportunities.

Explained Stas, "At some stage, I realised there was more to underwater photography than just coral reefs and colourful fish. I went to South Africa to see a sardine run and this was the beginning of travelling with purpose. Next, I bought a camera and housing and visited Greenland, photographing people and icebergs from underwater. Then it was to the Bahamas for the hammerhead sharks – and this was probably my first 'proper' underwater shoot, even if I were using very simple, cheap equipment back then."

In the Bahamas, Stas saw a lot of experienced underwater photographers with big cameras and all the right gear. Many of them were on photo tours and in his mind, this looked like the job for him.

"I met underwater photographer Mike Korostelev and we started working together, taking guests to different places around the world. This allowed me to travel a lot without spending my own money to get there! Mike is also very passionate and together we'd help each other invent interesting



Orcas hunting herring, Norway

projects to new destinations. While initially these were all underwater locations, it didn't take us long to realise there was a whole world topside as well. It's probably a little strange to graduate from underwater photography to the top as most photographers progress in the opposite direction!

"When I emigrated from Russia to Georgia, I realised I needed more money than I was earning from our business, so some friends suggested polar guiding could be a possibility. I had all the certificates and skills, so I applied to a number of companies and now I mainly work with Aurora Expeditions."

The Approach

As a wildlife photographer, Stas feels it is perhaps a little easier to find great underwater locations because it's a relatively unexplored field. Finding new locations is essentially a matter of he and his partners looking for a great idea and turning it into a project. "And if I am lucky enough, I might get to take some great photos as well."

Stas has photographed Beluga whales, sharks and orcas and his next goal is narwhals. "What I'm looking for are subjects and angles that haven't been photographed before, but this takes a lot of research. Sometimes, a program lends itself to taking a group of photographers along as well and I have a core group of guests who are interested in the same things.

"With topside photography, it's much the same approach. If I want to see a particular animal, I visit the location and see what I can get."

As a wildlife photographer, Stas says he is looking for unique behaviours. For example, on our trip, he photographed



European Bison, Central Russia



Leopard Seal, Antarctica

a penguin who had lost her egg to a predatory skua. "I have a photograph of the penguin looking helplessly as the skua breaks open and eats the egg – in some ways, it's a heartbreaking image, but it's what wildlife photography is all about.

"Some subjects are relatively easy to photograph if you go to the right locations, such as the jaguars in Brazil, but for other animals, access can be a lot trickier and it may take several trips

to get the photographs you want. There are no guarantees for wildlife photographers.

"For me, the most important thing about travelling to remote locations is the personal experience. Second is the photograph. I know for many photographers the picture comes first and sometimes to get their shots, these photographers are using photo traps and baits. But I don't want to shoot this way. I like to see the animal with my own eyes, so it is the personal experience first."

Equipment

Like a lot of Nikon users, it's hard to go past the Nikon D850 for image quality and, having purchased a custom Subal UW850 underwater housing, this remains Stas's camera of choice for his underwater work. However, topside he is using the new Nikon Z8 with a Nikkor 180-600mm telephoto.

"I'm mainly using a 16-35mm wide-angle zoom underwater, or perhaps a fish-eye. Underwater, you're rarely using normal focal length lenses because you need to get very close to your subject." Stas explains that this is the universal rule for underwater photography – the closer the better, because of the way water distorts the image and soaks up the light. A slight increase in distance not only decreases the light you have to play with, any lack of clarity in the water is also amplified.

"Good gear is important. I worked out that if you want to take good shots, you need expensive gear. It's not something you can fudge, you just have to spend the money."



Steller sea lion, Kamchatka



Tiger shark, Maldives

"My first camera was very basic and it meant it was virtually impossible to shoot in low light. It didn't have the ISO response needed. On the other hand, another friend believes all you need is your creativity. I think it's a bit of both, plus you need to understand what wildlife photography is all about.

"You can't expect to take a great shot the first time, although having said that, with good equipment it is possible to get great shots very easily! However, at the heart of a great photograph is a great idea.

"This is where I really appreciate my friends Mike and Dmitry Kokh. We often work together on ideas, inviting each other on trips, making projects happen. It's great if you have friends with whom you can share your ideas and interests."

Stas confesses there's a healthy competition between him and his friends, but there's nothing wrong with that! And he also feels it's becoming a little harder to take images with a difference, given how popular photography has become. "We used to shoot a lot of projects with drones before the governments introduced all their restrictions – it was a lot of fun, but now you have to think carefully about all the regulations." Such is the life of a wildlife photographer.

Leopard Seal

So, to what extent will Stas go to get his photographs? His underwater photographs of a remarkable leopard seal will help explain things!

"The leopard seal is a big, beautiful animal, one of the top predators in Antarctica. They are very reclusive and so it is quite rare to see and photograph them. You really have to make it happen."



Dugong, Egypt

Stas organised a small yacht to sail down to Antarctica on a 26-day expedition, specifically to photograph leopard seals. They were in a 20-metre steel yacht specially designed for polar excursions with 14 people on board – four crew, two guides and eight guests. There were 6 cabins and it's four days from Ushuaia to Antarctica across the Drake Passage – and four days back! They anchored for seven days just off Cuverville Island. And they waited. "The weather was amazing and fortunately for us, from up on the hill we could count around a dozen leopard seals in the area. We employed the services of an experienced



Sperm whale, Mauritius

photography guide, Bartoz Strozynsky and for almost a week we swam unsuccessfully in the same spot.

"One of the issues topside photographers mightn't think about so much is that underwater photography is very reliant on clear water. While topside we might be able to orchestrate great light or an interesting background, underwater you're generally following your subject and taking the conditions you're given. Of course, travelling to Antarctica is likely to provide clean water, but even so, the visibility conditions can change dramatically within a matter of metres or minutes.

"Finally, we succeeded. Mostly leopard seals try to avoid us, but one became friendly enough to spend an hour or so

with us underwater. I can remember at the time realising how remarkable it was to be underwater with a leopard seal – the experience. Unfortunately, the dome on my water housing was fogged, so the first 600 photos or so were all trashed! However, after half an hour, the condensation disappeared and the next 600 photos were great – until the leopard seal started to behave more aggressively."

Leopard seals can be over three-metres long and have a huge mouth full of sharp teeth, so when you're swimming in their environment, an aggressive leopard seal can be very intimidating. Stas and his group left the water for the Zodiac and even on the way back to the yacht, the leopard seal continued to chase them!

"There were many other encounters, but none as good as this, so basically we had a one-hour shoot on a 26-day voyage! Of course, we spent time looking around other parts of Antarctica and shooting general photography, but this is what it can take to get great wildlife photos."

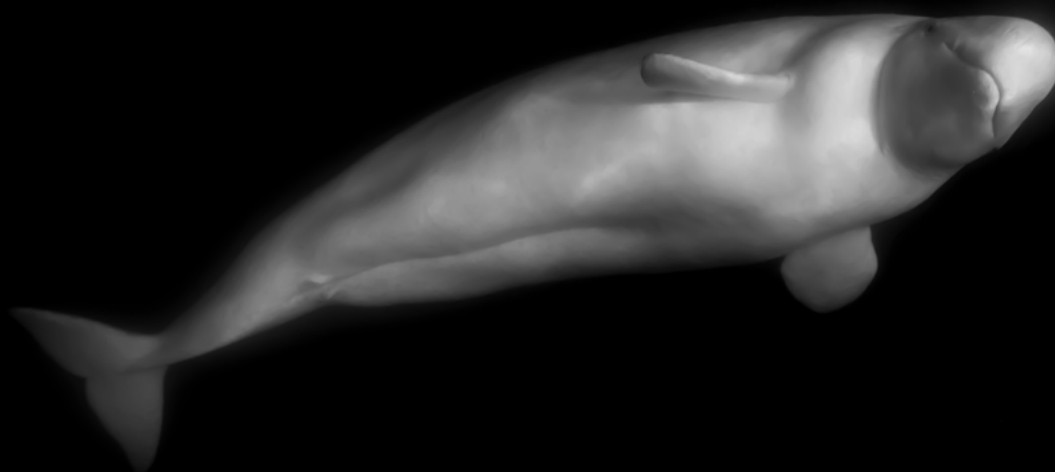
Beluga Whale

Beluga (which means "white" in Russian) whales are notoriously difficult to find and to photograph. Nothing has changed, but Stas's approach to capturing his photograph is very different!

"The photograph is taken in the White Sea, north of St Petersburg. It's a small sea with the Solovetsky Islands in the middle where they mined salt in the past, but importantly there's a cape where Beluga whales come every day on the falling tide. They are very reliable, so unlike Antarctica where we had to search for the leopard seals the belugas are always there. But that doesn't mean they are easy to photograph."



Pigmy Blue Whale, Sri Lanka



Beluga Whale, White Sea

"I have my own boat and for four seasons, I tried to get good photographs. Everyone told me it was impossible, especially since the belugas were likely to avoid me!

"Just before the fourth season, a friend asked if I had seen how they photographed belugas in Canada and why didn't we try the same technique. He showed me a short video where the photographer was towed behind the boat, at low speed and sang to the whales. Yes, you have to sing because that's what attracts the belugas. If you don't sing, you don't see them!

"The trick is to go as slow as you can with the boat. The rope is 10 to 15 metres long and you're tied by your ankles, so I'm looking backwards with my camera. Initially, the belugas came along and scrubbed themselves on the tow rope, which wasn't much good since I was looking in the opposite direction.

"We spent around 10 days for maybe six hours a day. You have to be patient because it takes a lot of time. And you need a good boat driver and some good luck! But eventually I got my shots.

"The original photos look dirty because of the poor water visibility and the colour of the water is actually yellow green with plankton. However, presenting the image in black and white works much better – I think this rendition shows the innocence of the animal and because it is white, it just works."

Stas is not an extensive user of post-production. He enjoys Lightroom for its cataloguing and when processing his files, both

clarity and dehaze sliders will get a good workout, especially for images like his beluga whales.

"I use very simple settings, but I do like the way I can emphasise details like the eyes, making them more contrasty. However, the cameras are so good these days that, even in poor light, the raw files retain plenty of detail.

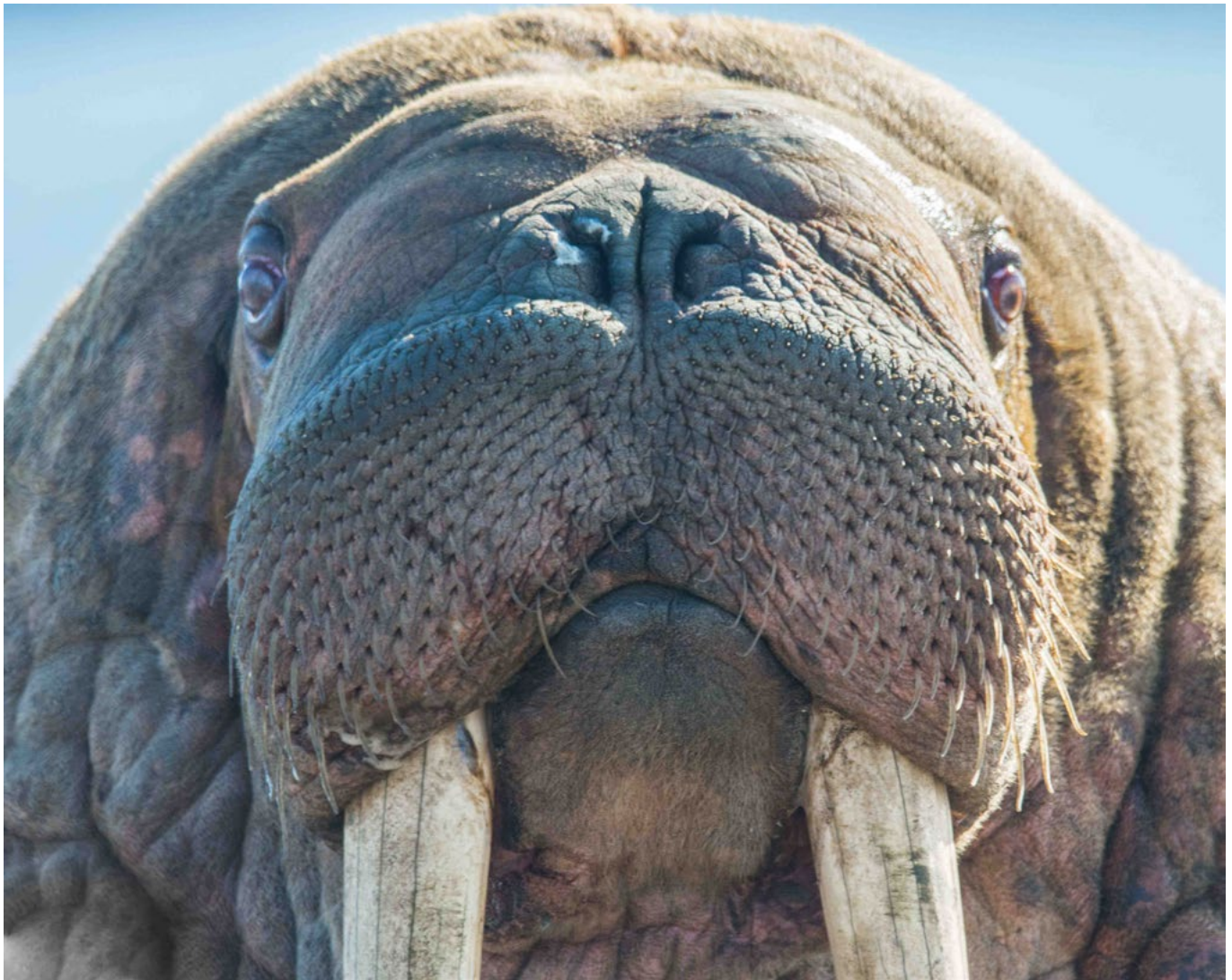
"For underwater photography, processing is especially important to get the right colour balance, but even so, it still relies on a good sensor which works well at high ISO settings."

The Bear and the Wolf

Comparatively speaking, Stas finds his land-based photography relatively straightforward. Talking about his forest photo of a bear and a wolf, he suggests this is a pretty common situation because, in this area of Finland, right on the border with Russia, there is no hunting, no fences and lots of animals.

"Some photographers like to leave out baits for the animals. This is usually considered bad form because when the animals become reliant on the bait, they are easy to kill. However, this is a special situation because it's a safe zone for the wildlife. The organisers will prepare a hide for you to sit in and leave out salmon for the bears and meat for the wolves. Or maybe a bag of dog food!

"It is a little unusual to have both the wolf and the bear in the same frame, so that was an element of luck. However, it doesn't



Walrus, Chukotka

take a lot of work because it's all done for you. You can spend the night in the hide if you wish to or return before sunrise for a second chance."

And just in case you were wondering, Stas takes his wife along as she enjoys just watching the animals.

The Walrus

There's nothing more impressive than a full-frame portrait of an old walrus! It might not be the most beautiful face you'll ever see, but it is full of character and history. This is where many of us will have to wait until access to Russia is once again free because, while there are walrus in Svalbard, the really big colonies are in Russia.

"There wasn't much information about the north coast of Russia when I visited and tourism wasn't as developed as it is now. I tried locations close to Moscow, but even this required a helicopter to get to a small village and from there it was 120 kilometres with a snowmobile over the tundra. I got nothing on this trip and on the way back we ran out of petrol."

The second trip was much more successful and emphasises the importance of photographers being able to drink vodka! Explained Stas, "I made a friend at a conference for marine animals. We drank vodka together and suddenly everything

became very easy. He worked in a national park and was able to organise access for me – including a speedboat and a vehicle."

In Svalbard, you might be lucky to see a few hundred walrus hauled out on a beach, but in Russia you can find thousands. And the walrus themselves are much larger.

"It was a long bumpy ride out to a remote cape, but when we arrived there were around 5000 walrus lying on the beach. It was a wall of walrus with just me and the ranger, crawling on the ground towards them. We managed to get within five to seven metres and I took a ton of photographs.

"My only regret is these photos were all taken on my old camera, which is a bit sad. Perhaps I'll have to go back again!

"I love the symmetry of the portrait, the big old male, his long whiskers and massive tusks. We spent four or five hours mesmerised by the experience.

"A lot of my travel is done with very little money and it's as much about the passion and the connections as it is about the photographs. And now that I'm a professional photographer, I can use these photos to sell my trips and photo tours."

It doesn't seem to be a bad way to earn a living! You can see more of Stas's photography at <https://staszakharov.com>



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- A special Polar Photography eBook
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 - A one hour telephone advice before you go
 - Our experience in what to take and what it's like (both Kim and Peter have voyaged with Aurora Expeditions)
 - As much assistance as you need to book your voyage
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We're not expert enough to help you with flights and other travel bookings, but we can certainly assist with your booking with Aurora.

For more information, email Kim Valenti (kim@betterphotography.com) or Peter Eastway (eastway@betterphotography.com).

PHOTO CHALLENGES

Jackie Ranken explains how photographic challenges of all kinds can be an incredibly helpful pathway to creative growth.

Camera club challenges and photography workshops that encourage you to use specific camera techniques can push you into unfamiliar territory, leading you to create images you might never have considered before. That, of course, is the whole point: to encourage experimentation with new techniques or subjects outside your usual comfort zone. However, taking on a photo challenge doesn't mean abandoning what you already know. Instead, it's about applying your existing skills while layering in fresh approaches.

Think of it as following 'the way', a concept rooted in the ancient Chinese philosophy of Daoism which encourages harmony with the natural, balanced order of the universe. In the same way, photography challenges can guide you to breaking new ground while being true to yourself.

Unlike commercial photography, where a client dictates the vision and final image, camera club challenges serve as a catalyst for self-discovery. They offer an opportunity to refine your style while embracing new perspectives and techniques.

Re-imagining Irving Penn

One particularly effective challenge involves drawing inspiration from a well known photograph and using it as the foundation for your own creative interpretation. Recently, I set myself the task of re-imagining Irving Penn's iconic image *The Woman with a Bottle*. This exercise encouraged me to explore shooting

through a bottle, using it as a frame, playing with focus and experimenting with different lighting conditions. I considered shallow versus deep depth-of-field, changing focal lengths and tested various compositions using subjects and techniques that resonated with me.

The defining idea was to ensure the woman remained the subject, not the bottle. I didn't have a live model or a large space like Penn did, but I did have a small sculpture and simple backdrops to start my exploration.

Personal Symbolism in Photography

The first step was sourcing a bottle. It needed to be clear of labels. I didn't have a wine bottle, but I did have a gin bottle. Interestingly, I have mostly given up drinking alcohol (especially spirits), so the bottle unexpectedly became a metaphor for my own change of habits.

The sculpture I used has been in our home since Mike and I moved to New Zealand in 2003. As I photographed it, I found myself identifying with its shape, feeling the curves of its form and its pose as it seemed to contemplate the bottle.

A simple black background helped simplify the shot while allowing me to create in-camera multiple exposures, (since the dark tones would naturally sit behind the lighter elements). From there, the process of creation took over. I moved from one idea to another, searching for compositions that satisfied my aesthetic while trying to remain focused on the task at hand.

Experimenting with Composition and Exposure



Image 1: My Starting Point

f9 @ 1.3 seconds, ISO 200 (Canon EOS R5, double exposure – Average mode)

Holding up a cardboard sheet to control lighting on the bottle, I focused on the sculpture's face. I liked how the woman seemed to emerge from the bottle. The sharp focus on her and her central (bullseye) position gave her strength and ensured the bottle didn't dominate the frame.

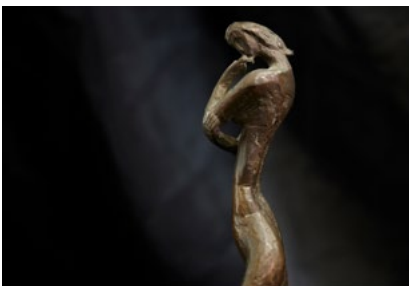


Image 2: Double Exposure with Shallow Depth-of-Field

f4 @ 13 seconds, ISO 200 (Canon EOS R5, double exposure – Average mode)

I felt comfortable using this technique since I practise it often. The sculpture's hip was reflected in the bottle and I noticed a faint hue of my mauve-coloured top appearing in the reflection. To add more visual interest, I Blu-Tacked a small branch to the black background.



Image 3: Double Exposure with Baking Tray

Changing the relationship between the bottle and sculpture, I moved the bottle closer to the lens while using a shallow depth-of-field (by setting the aperture at f4). This soft focus visually pulled the sculpture forward. To further frame the subject and add texture, I incorporated a double exposure using a baking tray.

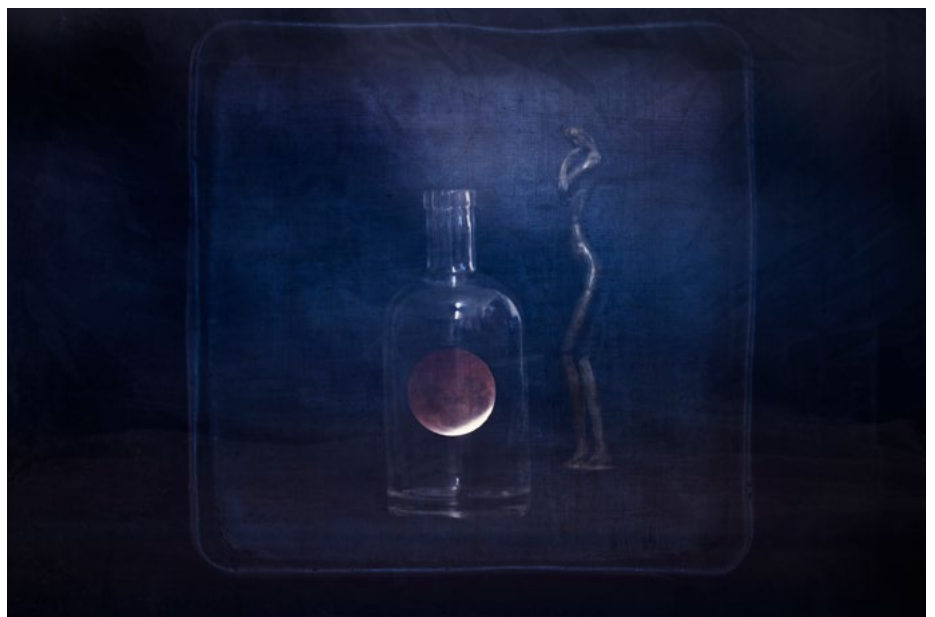


Image 4: Moonshine

That evening, a total lunar eclipse was forecast creating a Blood Moon. When Mike and I went out to photograph it, I brought along my memory card to continue my multiple exposure experiments. A friend later named this photograph "Moonshine", an apt title given the symbolism of the bottle.

Enjoy yourself

By embracing these exercises with an open mind, you'll develop a deeper connection to your work and refine your unique photographic voice.

Whether it's a themed project, a technical exercise, or an interpretation of a famous image, the challenge lies not just in

execution, but in making the photograph truly your own. For me, straight photographs rarely feel complete – I naturally gravitate toward creating multi-layered narratives that give images depth and personal meaning.

A single challenge can be the beginning of an entirely new way of seeing.



Image 5: White Background and Final Experimentation

On my final day of shooting for this exercise, I swapped the background to white and even dusted the sculpture with flour to make a high key version. My favourite shots came at the end of the session when I began using intentional camera movement (ICM).



Final Image:

f29 @ 0.6 seconds, ISO 320

This final image was far removed from my original concept. In total, I captured over 80 images during this process. Here, I've shared just a few highlights to illustrate my thought process. What I want to emphasise is that nothing comes from nothing, the act of making and doing is not just part of the process, it is the process.

Imagining a **Real Australia**

Curator Stephen Zagala looks back at Australia's Golden Years

of street photography – or are they yet to come?

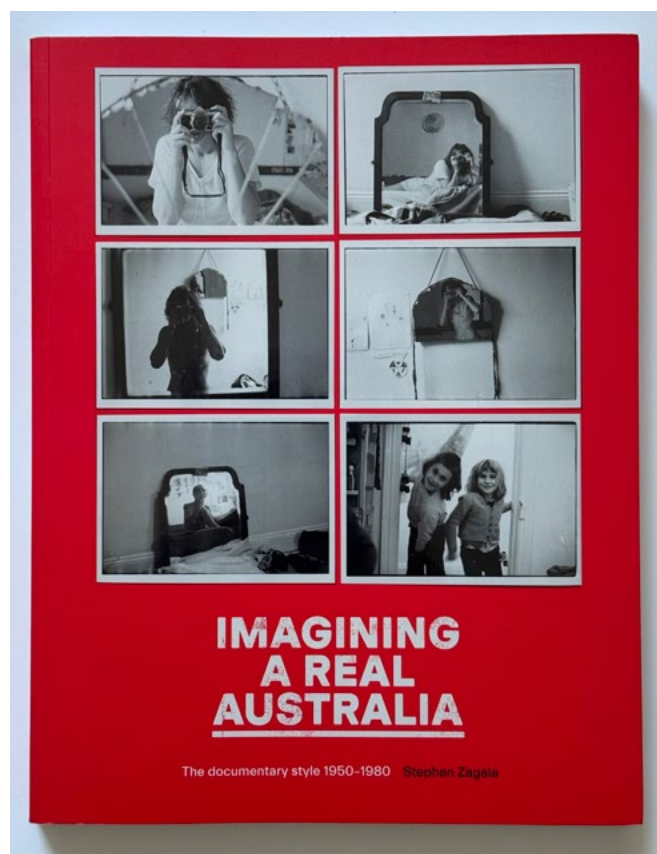
It's hard to imagine life today without our smartphones and the immediacy of both stills and video. Within seconds, your life can literally be sent all around the world, assuming there's someone out there interested enough to look. Yet only 50 or so years ago, the world and Australia were very different places. In fact, many photographers were still trying to deal with the new miniature film format that today we call full-frame.

Looking back on these times, there is a finite number of photos for history to choose from. How someone like Stephen Zagala will look back on the first quarter of this century is likely to be very different – what photos and which photographers will rise to the top of the list?

Fortunately for Stephen, he has chosen the middle of the twentieth century for his book, *Imagining A Real Australia*, and most of the photographers (and many of the photographs) are familiar. It seems to be a well considered list, as you might expect from an author with Stephen's experience. He has curated more than 60 exhibitions including Bill Henson Shuffles the Deck; Museum of Australian Photography 2014 and Tracy Moffatt: Narratives. He was principle curator at the Museum of Australian Photography from 2006 to 2017 and a research fellow at the South Australian Museum between 2017 and 2024.

So what is documentary photography? And has it always been a contested genre?

Writes Stephen, "If you carry a smartphone, you almost certainly carry a camera. And chances are that you use that smartphone camera to document things around you, which you then share as visual proof of where you are, who you've



Imagining A Real Australia



Laurence LE GUAY
Untitled
(fashion queue with masked child)
1960

8

9

What great imagination for a fashion shoot. Laurence Le Guay, way back in 1960. Is this documentary? Or doesn't it matter now that it's 65-years-old?

"What I like about this book is the way Stephen takes us on a journey through the history of Australian documentary photography. It's fantastic to have a parochial perspective, rather than one imposed by European and American authorities."

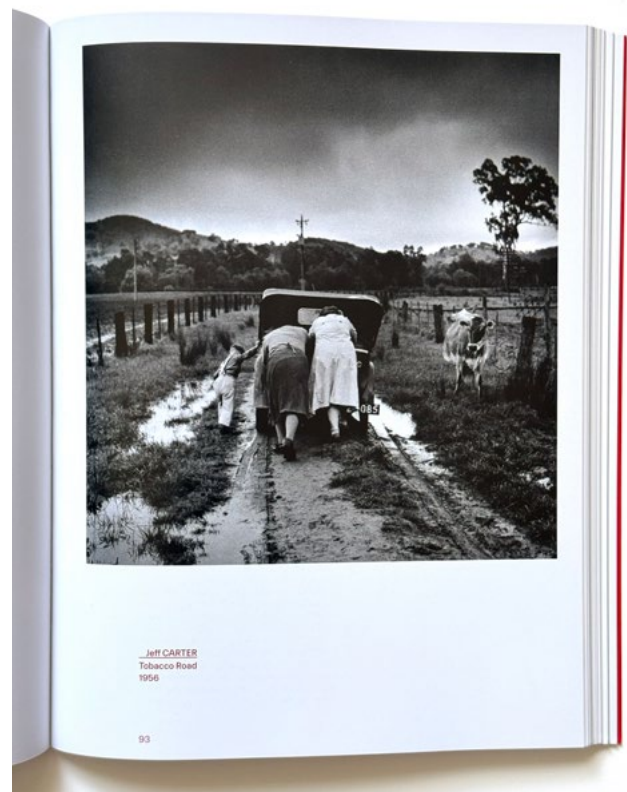


Carol Jerrems' Vale Street, 1975 was notorious in photography circles around this time.

met, or what you're about to eat. Few still believe the old adage that 'the camera never lies'. We know that photographers capture selective views of reality and that scenes are often staged for the camera. We're also aware that photographic images can be convincingly doctored using computer software, or even conceived by artificial intelligence (AI). But, despite all this, we still use photography to document life as it is being lived. With our point-and-shoot smartphones in hand, we make photographs as a way of embedding ourselves in the real world.

"There is a popular notion that photography has always been driven by these documentary ambitions and that the main purpose of a photograph is to provide a reliable record of reality. But the history of photography is populated by all kinds of images, which are often invested in fantasy and fabulation rather than facts. Ever since its invention, the purpose of the camera has been contested, if not confused. A range of questions were asked of the camera in the nineteenth century: Is it a miraculous artistic device or does it undermine the craft of drawing and painting? Is it an instrument of scientific research or is it a revolutionary means of education? Is it an impartial witness or a conjuror of illusion? People working in the sciences, industry,

Right: Jeff Carter's Tobacco Road, 1956 is an iconic documentary photograph. The editor has his own copy!





David MOORE
Painting the Himalaya
1950

One of the editor's favourite photos by David Moore, *Painting the Himalaya*, 1950.

commerce and the arts have all weighed into these debates ever since then. Over time, the camera has shown that it can be all these things and more. The important thing to note is that, across all its applications, the camera composes ways of looking: it constructs perspectives on things.

"There was a time, during the middle decades of the twentieth century, when a documentary way of looking dominated photographic practice. This golden age of documentary image-making rose to prominence in the 1950s and held sway until the early 1980s, when a broader range of photographic styles began to proliferate and gain popularity.

"The verb 'to document' is commonly used to describe any type of record-taking, but in the history of photography it refers to a specific style of image-making. This documentary style, sometimes called 'factual photography', is aimed at educating the public and engaging their interest in the realities of contemporary life. Documentary photographers favour topics that are timely and socially relevant and they capture them in ways that are bold and invested with a sense of immediacy.

"The person credited with advancing the documentary style in this sense is the Scottish film-maker and critic, John Grierson (1898-1972)."

What I like about this book is the way Stephen takes us on a journey through the history of Australian documentary

photography. It's fantastic to have a parochial perspective, rather than one imposed by European and American authorities. Stephen is also very pragmatic in his views, as confirmed by his publisher.

"Documentary photography offers one way of looking, but this type of looking is also about feeling.

"It is a style of making photographs designed to draw people into the world and activate their interest in something beyond themselves.

"Australian documentary photography was at its height from the 1950s to the 1970s. A time of great flux – social, political and cultural – was reflected in the photographs of Max Dupain, Carol Jerrems, William Yang, Rennie Ellis, David Moore, Mervyn Bishop, Sue Ford and others.

"A time when the gritty documentary photography that emerged in the US after World War II, hand-held film cameras, instamatic colour film, Polaroid cameras and the arrival of television all pushed photography in a revolutionary new direction. *Imagining a Real Australia* is a stunning testament to a time when photographers turned their lenses on real people living real lives."

Imagining A Real Australia is published by New South Publishing and is available now. Paperback, 208pp, 260x200 mm. RRP \$59.99.

Ahead of the Curve

Murray White has been thinking again, challenging us to look at our photography not just as a craft, but also as art – and all the grey matter that entails!

Subjectivity lies central to our assessment of aesthetic value in any art form, to the point that what is seen as meritorious in the eyes of one critic may not even be recognised by another. Compounding this disparity in photography is the immediacy and pure nature of the medium, where there are seemingly fewer factors to consider than in other visual art forms. We typically present only pictorial content



free of brushstrokes, chisel gouges, substrate choices and a myriad of other artistic inputs that are integral to more 'hands-on' activities.

In the making of an image, our artistic spirit is effectively revealed by a single creative veneer, not articulated over a more complex range of contributing layers. Such concentrated expression can imply a basic work narrative; a suggestion of simplicity that may lead to a hasty comprehension of its merit. This 'rapid fire' type of assessment, (typically based on our ingrained visual preferences), may partly, or even completely, overlook a photograph's more subdued virtues.

In many cases, our ability as a viewer to define that which holds appeal is often harder to explain than that which does not. We tend to be more aware of a visual distraction, an 'error' of focus or exposure, or some other characteristic that sits at odds with our expectation of the image. That recognisable deficiency could well be easier to identify than any esoteric qualities that may quietly underpin the composition as a whole.

Aesthetic Zombie

Unfortunately, critical assessment of photography often prioritises those conspicuous merits of subject clarity and compositional norms as if they were cardinal principles. We tend to value the legacy of craft and any obvious elements

THE FOREST TSUNAMI

Soft lighting and a sense of symmetry has helped to give life to these buttressed tree roots in a way that would be difficult to achieve had I adopted a more conventional composition, where the compelling lines would have been arranged to lead into the frame. In this case, the dominant central 'S' curve begins and ends nowhere, but I believe this strategy strengthens the layered separation and parallel relationship between these flowing elements. To me, the 'vibe' is often way more important than a design simply born of convention.



THE PEACOCK

Although there is an appealing deflection of line in the drooping structure of these fronds, I think it is the implied curvature of the canopy itself that speaks of graceful natural beauty. This extroverted tree fern confirms of a simple elegance through the composition's peaceful symmetry and its unifying misty atmosphere. We may also feel a strengthened sense of form in the visual appreciation of its circular outline, compared with the mostly straight entities surrounding it.



ANCHORED

Curves provide a sense of energy to a stagnant image and although this still life is just that, one's eyes may be encouraged to flow with the contours. The solitary pebble and its ring of sand in the lower left of the image probably act as the centre of interest and certainly provide visual stability with their 'closed' structure. This feature's proximity to the edges is a little close in the conventional wisdom perhaps, but I think in keeping with a composition that insists on dragging our eyes around its curves and beyond the extremities of what is shown.

of accepted design, rather than appraise the photographer's personal insight in a more holistic sense. For this reason, it is entirely possible to create a photograph that is competent and visually acceptable (it has no 'errors'), but is an aesthetic zombie in the sense that it exists in silence without an emotional pulse.

I have long held the belief that the intrinsic vision of all photographers vastly outweighs any traditional guidelines that may otherwise shape their work, but being able to validate and effectively use that creativity is essential. Ideally, we should harness our visual intention as a motivational force and at the same time strive to understand what structural platform can best voice that concept. To identify and develop an underlying framework of our choosing is not only desirable to help establish a visually consistent style, but its familiar stability can inspire us to explore more creative arrangements over time.

For example, one feature that entered my photographic life and has now become an ongoing source of inspiration and meaning, is the use of curves. Unlike those 'curves' called upon in post-production for mostly remedial purposes, I find that the pictorial use of curves can provide a foundational strength within my work and give visual purpose to otherwise trivial elements. Perhaps for many other photographers the adoption of a similar

thematic constant helps to fill in the gaps between those qualities of their composition that are traditionally strategic and those individual choices that may be harder to define.

In my experience, choosing to develop a process that revolves around a particular design element, helps liberate subjects from unexpected settings and prompts a type of visual investigation that builds on previous work. I am not suggesting that curves have some indispensable quality that must be incorporated in everybody's work; far from it, we will all have an individual appreciation of what works for our own photography and that is the joy of diversity. What is important is being able to recognise that supportive visual partner for us and allow it to contribute to our unique stamp on the world.

Elegant and Fluid

For me, curves have provided that rewarding influence on my landscape captures without necessarily being an explanatory or even logical inclusion. Nature itself leads the way in this respect, where almost nothing in our environment can be seen to exist as a straight line, but the reason for this manifestation is indeterminable. Despite its appeal, our appreciation of this natural quality is often blurred by scale, detached observation or



THE QUICKENING

Multiple curvatures are given strength in this composition when juxtaposed against the dominant angular line dissecting the image. Volumetric substance is a feature of both the rock and single cascade drop, implying commonality of structure and purpose but illustrating very different behaviours. The continuous cycle of Nature is easily recognised as a theme and is perhaps echoed in a naturally curved pathway flowing through the composition.



GRAVITATE

A circle is perhaps the ultimate expression of a curve with no identifiable beginning or end to its dominance. This capture builds on that symbolism with a subject portrayed so large it seems to have displaced virtually everything else from the frame. While the emphasis on scale and inevitable attraction was my primary motivation in this setting, I'm not sure that the same hypnotic relationship would be achieved with two rectilinear objects occupying a similar stage.

a restrictive vantage point. While personal interpretation is rarely universal, there is some consistency to be explored. Perhaps it is worth remembering that even the flat horizon line of the ocean is undeniably curved when appraised from a viewpoint further out in space.

For many, curvilinear shapes are felt to be elegant and fluid structures, in many ways reminding us of humanity itself. We usually consider a subject as beautiful and harmonious when rounded lines guide our eyes on a smooth and gradual pathway over the subject. Eye movement within a rectilinear composition, on the other hand, sometimes involves an abrupt transition in direction from one segment to another, resulting in a dramatic or even disturbing experience for the viewer; a visual outcome not without advantage, but one to be used in the knowledge of its power.

Curved lines may present in many ways photographically – we can use subject placement to create an implied 'C' or 'S' curve through the composition and this is a very common strategy to convey a sense of perspective or depth, especially in a landscape. The so called Golden Mean is a more complex mathematical arrangement (made familiar through sympathetic

studies of some shells, flower petals and even the human body), that utilises a short and ever decreasing spiral of pleasing geometric proportions to draw our eye into the picture.

Less formal structures are also readily observed in Nature, bringing a rounded architecture to virtually everything we see. Sand dunes, tree branches and rock formations are just a few examples of where curves are the rule and not the exception. A curve can be seen explicitly in wave action on the coast, around river bends and in the design of flower petals. More subtle arrangements can be found in the uniform segregation of stones, through wind-blown vegetation, or around the contours of a cloud bank. With sufficient practice and impartial observation, the environment can provide a limitless resource of curves for our photographic practice.

Prescriptive Influences

Of course, the recognition and effective visual use of these structures are two quite different skills. I routinely look for the most twisted trees, the roundest of rocks and the grandest of undulating sandhills, but just finding these subjects does not in itself make the composition. Yes, the raw material may



THE ANGUISH WITHIN

Flowing curves often remind us of the human form and with a little imagination, that form can be found in the least likely of places. As this image may show, with bilateral symmetry and the magic of a unifying monochromatic capture, even eroded shapes in a sandstone wall can take on unexpected possibilities. In many cases, structural curves are not just a symbolic support act, but can drive the aesthetic vision itself.

invigorate my creativity, but the real expressive satisfaction lies in how I decide to respond to and then reveal or make use of these forms.

For example, sometimes I choose to juxtapose a curve with straighter pictorial shapes to emphasise the distinctive attributes of both elements. Perhaps I will position the curve to suggest a volumetric quality, or to provide a repetitive link throughout the image. It could be that the curve is best represented as a shadow, or a circle, or a more intricate web of twists. I believe that personal response, which makes a value judgement at this time, should be permitted to express its unique take on the subject, unrestrained by those more prescriptive influences of conventionality.

While the use of flowing lines in an image holds an almost magnetic charm, it is an attraction of variable value. To a viewer, that sensual 'S' curve or spiral may be no more or less appealing than a graphic crescent or twist. A rainbow inherently holds no more aesthetic weight than a bent blade of grass if our vision is capable of asserting that thought. We will all find a different way to express our interpretation of a scene, based on our personal motivations, previous experiences or perhaps in response to the visual work of others.

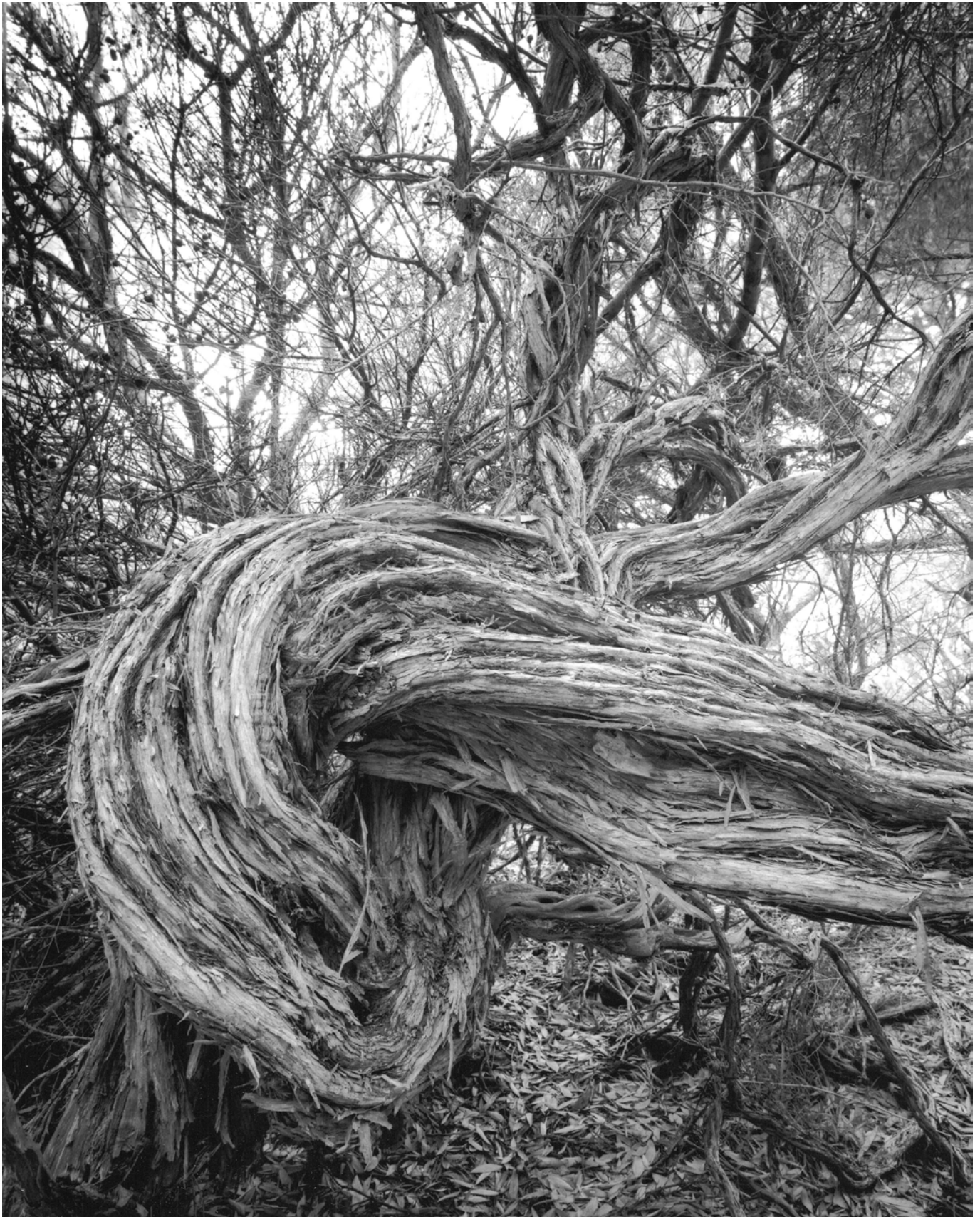
I guess that voice of reason inside our heads reinforcing no edge distraction, or rule of thirds, or whatever, will always drive at least part of our visual agenda, but perhaps there's more to an image than what we feel obliged to do. In fact, what it should do, what it must do (perhaps above all else) is convey our individual response in a manner consistent with our interpretation; not be a servant to a generic template of predictability. For me, despite knowing my idea and its intimate presentation are unlikely to be seen by many as stimulating content, I would rather aim for that more lofty ideal and fail, than settle for what may be a visually safe but essentially voiceless expression.

Subjectivity will always influence artistic assessment, but I wonder whether creative decisions can realistically be separated into those that are worthy and those that are not? Ideally, the basics of our craft should be above reproach, but perhaps given the choice, this really is just a peripheral issue. Truly inspirational photography is largely expressed through strength of conviction and that inherent need to communicate a deeper view. The use of curves (or a visual philosophy of equal value to you) may well help voice a concept with such commitment, that the traditional tools of its construction fall silent, channelling a vision that truly speaks from the heart.



POINT OF CONTACT

Direct sun has illuminated this subject with a harshness that clearly defines its shape, both as a curved rock and its neighbouring shadow. Although much lies hidden in darkness, our eyes (and brain) are probably still comfortable 'filling in' any missing detail with an assumed response (yes, humans are also capable of 'generative fill')! In many cases of such graphic simplicity, our sense of a continuous curved surface remains strong even when part of the shape is missing.



FRAYED

The monochromatic capture of this subject has probably helped to simplify what could have been an overwhelming sense of confusion in colour. This complex blend of curves, twists and spirals implies, I think, a single structure left to unravel before our eyes. The prominent foreground curl sets the scene and probably imposes more a suggestion of unity among chaos than is actually the case. Would a similar composition etched with straight lines be as graceful and easy to understand?

The DIGITAL PORTFOLIO



Quick and easy portfolios for sharing on your tablet and phone.

By Peter Eastway.

Most of us have one or more photography projects on the boil, but what do we do with the photos when we're finished? We know what we should do with them – turn them into prints, frames or photo books, but chances are many of our projects are still on our hard drives, invisible to the world.

Let's fix this. Let's come up with a quick and cheerful way of turning a project into something we can share – easily.

As much as we love the printed image, creating a print or a photo book is an extra step that many of us don't complete, so this means our 'presentation' needs to be digital. However, just because the electrons on our screens are fleeting, doesn't mean our on-screen photos can't look like prints. We just need to add a white border around the edges.

And since we're creating a digital print, there's nothing stopping us from adding in a caption, a title or even our name as the photographer.

So, how many photos do we need? Let's start with six images. Yep, just six! We might have 60 or 600, but let's face it, only our family and biggest fans will put up with a long presentation. The attention span for most people is a minute or so at best, so if you offer to show someone just six photos, it's not a big imposition for them. They can appease you with just a short time investment and who knows, maybe your photos are actually worth looking at!

Once we've made up our six images into their presentation format, put them on your tablet in a folder or album of their own

and you're done. Next time you're out with friends (or family), you can pull out your tablet or phone and share away. Even better, if you have a social media account, you can post them as an album – or maybe one a day for (nearly) a week!

Here are two ways to create your presentation images – and no doubt there are many others as well.

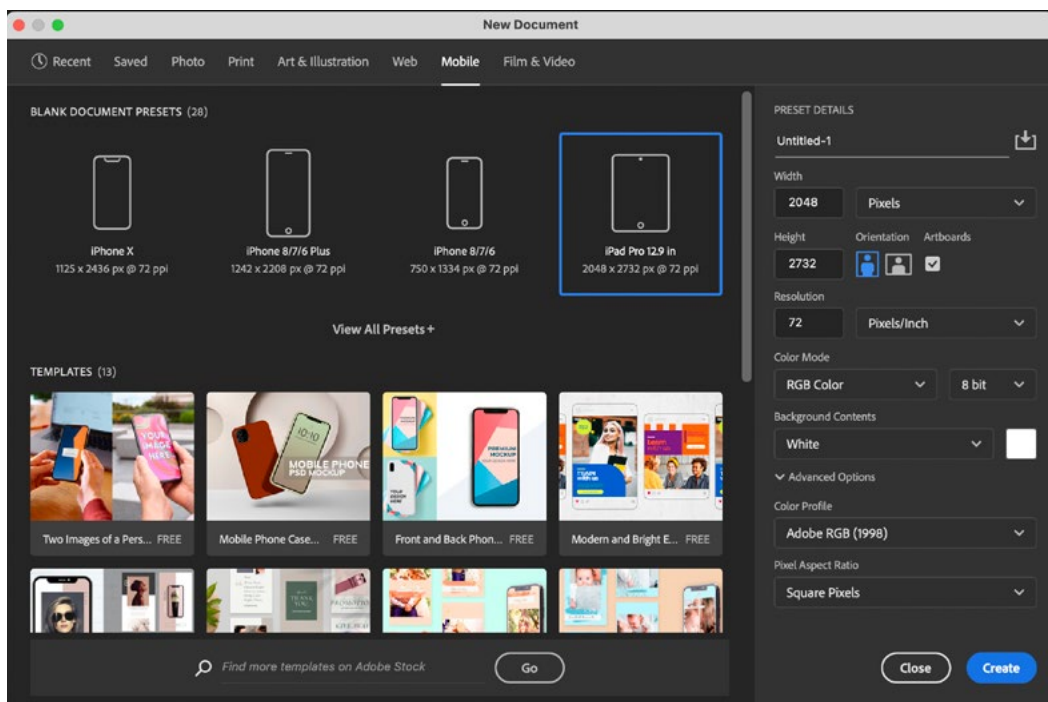
Photoshop

The objective is to create a set of JPG files on a 'canvas' that is roughly the same format (shape) as the screen on your tablet or phone. Of course, tablets and phones vary in shape and size, but even if you don't get it exactly right, your device will position the images in the centre of the screen.

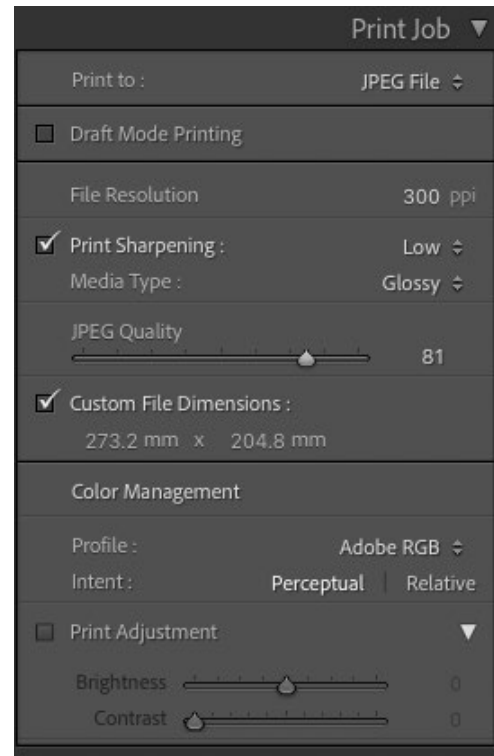
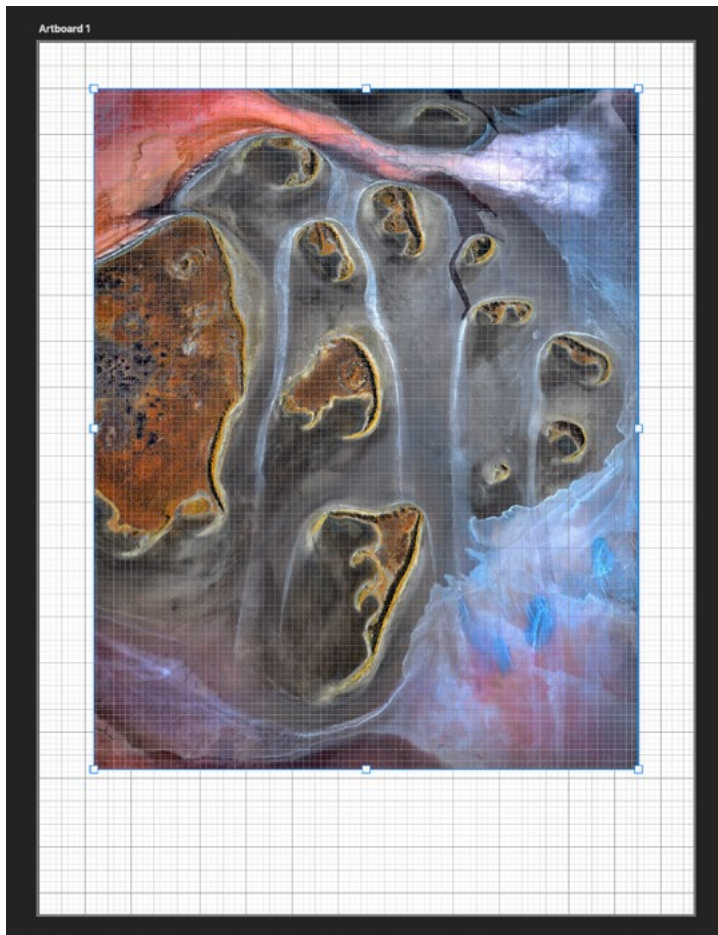
Photoshop actually has a number of digital file templates which will set the actual pixel count for various screens, so pick one of these. Or if in doubt, just make your canvas a standard A4 size at 300 ppi. So, start with a blank file in Photoshop and you can make the background any colour you like, but a white border is a great choice, possibly black.

Next, you need to output your six photos from Lightroom. Again, you can make them exactly the right size if you want to, but I just output a file that is larger than I need and then I resize it when I drop it into Photoshop, using the transform tool. So, open the first photo in Photoshop, select it all, copy it, close it and now, paste the photo onto your canvas.

You can set up some guides or use the grid display in Photoshop to help you position the photo within the canvas.



In Photoshop, under the Mobile presets you'll find ready-to-use templates for sizing your canvas. Or you can create it manually, of course!



Left: In Photoshop, you can turn on guides and/or grids to help you position your photo on the canvas.

Above: In Lightroom, use the Print Job panel so you can view your pages correctly on-screen, whether horizontal or vertical.

As you can see in the example, I've left a white border around the edges, and there is more space at the bottom so I can place my title and signature line down there.

Finally, add in your text using the text tool. I usually make my text a grey rather than black, simply because I don't want the text to overpower the photo in any way. That's it, you now have your first photo. Flatten the image and save it as a JPG (or if you have the legacy save feature turned on, you will be able to save it as a JPG directly).

Keep the file open and add in your next five photos, one at a time over the top. If a photo is a different ratio to the one below, you will need to turn the visibility of the lower layers off. Using Photoshop is a bit clunky, but it works and offers more customisation than Lightroom, especially when it comes to text. However, Lightroom can do all this more easily if you're happy with limited text options.

Lightroom

The advantage of using Lightroom is you don't have to output JPG files and create a layered file in Photoshop. You can just use the Print module directly with your raw files.

The Print module will default to a vertical orientation, because that's the way the paper goes through the printer. This works fine for square and portrait format photos, but not for landscapes or panoramas. Sure, landscape and panoramas will fit, but they are sitting sideways on the screen in Lightroom. I find this difficult to view, especially when you're adding text, but there is a way around this.

When creating our portfolio pieces in the print module, we're not outputting to a printer, but to a JPG file. So, before you get

too involved in setting up the margins and sizing, scroll down to the Print Job panel on the right side and in the Print To drop-down box, select JPEG File. Leave Draft Mode unchecked, leave File Resolution at 300 ppi (it will be more than you need), set the Print Sharpening to taste and JPEG quality to 80 or higher. Finally, click the Custom File Dimension checkbox – this is how you can view the print job horizontally.

I set mine to 273.2x204.8 mm. I can't set the number of pixels here (because it's a print module), so I used millimetres instead. This setting is just to get the ratio of the image correct and, with 300 ppi set above, the file will be much bigger than required. Then again, I find that sending larger files than necessary actually renders better on screens and, remember, people can pinch and enlarge your photos for a closer look, so the suggested settings seem to work all around!

For vertical orientation, just change the dimensions in the Custom file Dimension box the other way around – 204.8x273.2 mm. And finally, I set the profile to AdobeRGB and leave the intent as Perceptual.

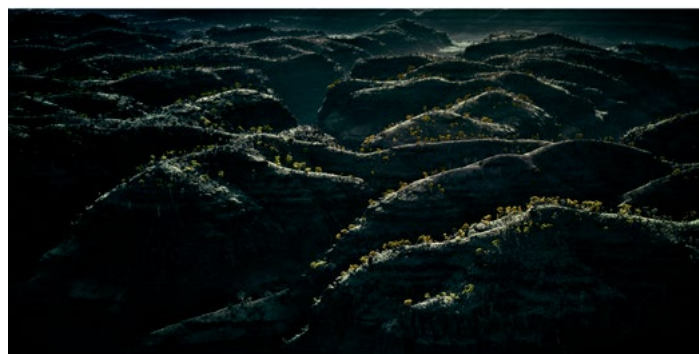
Now you can scroll back up the panels and use the Layout and Page options to position the photo in the middle of the page and add in the text.

For the text, I use the Identity Plate. Click on the little down arrow in the sample plate area and choose Edit or Custom to create your text. While there are other text options available (drawing the information from the photos metadata), there don't seem to be suitable formatting options for what I want and so I have stuck with the Identity Plate. But look around, you may find other options.

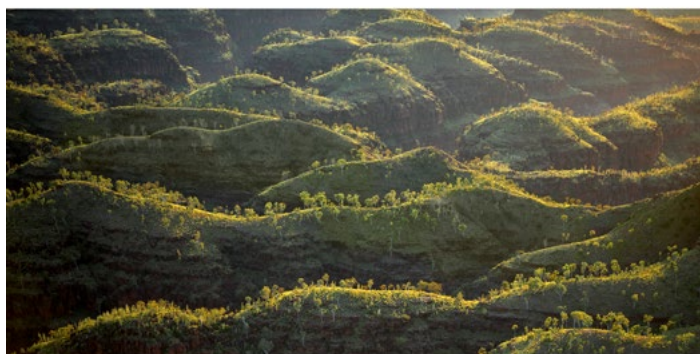
Once you're set up, you can instantly see how the photos will



Red Ranges, W.A.



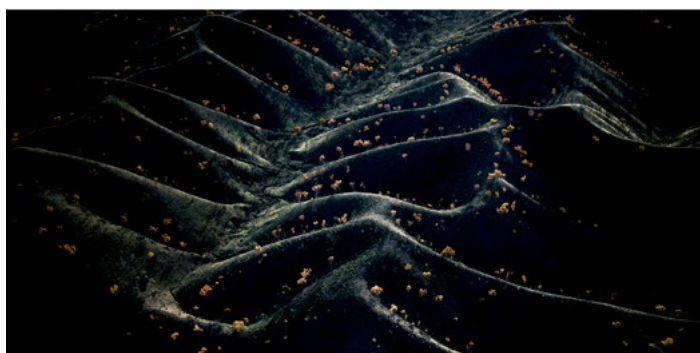
Red Ranges, W.A.



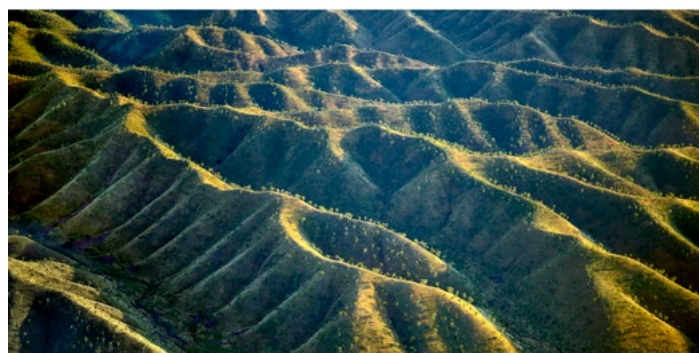
Red Ranges, W.A.



Red Ranges, W.A.



Red Ranges, W.A.



Red Ranges, W.A.

look on the white or coloured canvas. Now all you need to do is click the Print to File button.

Presenting Your Work

With your six photos output as JPEGs, all you need to do is email or airdrop them to your device and save them into your photo

album. Make a new album just for your six images and now you're ready to share!

We've suggested six photos, but of course there's nothing stopping you creating 60 or 600. It's all just a matter how good a show person you are and whether you can keep the banter going as your audience flips through your masterpieces.

Creative Communities

Should you join a camera club? Are you better off photographing with friends?

Or perhaps we should all go it alone! Len Metcalf takes a look

at the social side of photography.

In a world full of individuals and so much isolation, developing communities becomes paramount for our emotional health. As digital communication increased, so did the ease of connecting with people with similar interests. Friendships formed, no matter by what means, become very important to our well-being. Creative friendships that support our art making practices are extra important for so many of us emotional creatives. Without them, I doubt I would still be making art if I am honest about it all.

As a master facilitator with a lifetime of experience as an educator, the forming of meaningful healthy groups now comes easily to me. Every tour, workshop and class is automatically a learning community that centres around my facilitation skills and my interests in art and photography. It was something I studied and thought about in depth. This article is specifically written to share that knowledge.

The skills needed to form and run a group aren't as hard as it may seem and I would like to ask you to consider organising and running some art communities yourself. Build healthy ones around you and your interests.

To start, I suggest you find someone else with whom you can create a bit of a plan. This is far easier than doing it yourself. Co-hosting is so much easier than doing it alone. Then the first question to answer is, what are you trying to achieve? To answer that question I would like to divert onto a tangent full of real examples of groups that I have seen and participated in.

The Art Date

The simple art date involves going to an art gallery with a friend and wandering around an exhibition together. Whilst there, make an effort to walk together and talk about the art with each other. I much prefer talking to someone about the art than experiencing it by myself. This is because I learn so much through verbalising my feelings and thoughts, asking questions and, most importantly, listening to what others see and feel. It becomes an educational experience for me. So much more arises from this practice. Ideas seem to surface. The experience of art appreciation is so different.

Perhaps an art date is meeting up and going to an inspiring location together to make art. You may like to wander together, or you may want to wander alone and make definitive plans as to where and when you will meet again. With one photographer, we leapfrogged each other. One stopping to make art, the other wandering past to something else, 50 or 100 metres apart and you don't even notice the other artist working. I like to wander at my own pace and put in place meeting spots and time frames. Usually revolving around food and cups of tea.

Gordon Undy used to tell me he'd go camping with his photography buddies for a weekend or a week. They would meet after dark around the campfire for dinner. The rest of the time, each pursued their art alone. It was a different balance of art making and community. You need to find the balance that works for you and your group.

The Artists Club

Another community that I have been a key figure in and organiser in creating, is a pub meet for alternative artists. To give us something to talk about and focus on, I instigated a show and tell night. Each person was asked to bring an artwork. It could be their own or one that inspires them. We take turns showing the artwork and talking about it. We spend between five and fifteen minutes talking about each artwork. Ours is open to artists in any creative genre. We have animators, painters, photographers, actors, poets, musicians, potters and draftspersons showing up. Some nights we are so lucky to get performative pieces. A poet reading his poem or someone else's, or an actor doing some lines. I thought one night it would be good to do something else, but was soon talked out of it, when I was clearly shown how special the sharing and discussions from this group were. It turns out people were working on art and using the group for motivation.

Dedicated Art Making Groups

One of my friends has a group of textile art makers who meet for a day every month or two. They have a theme for food, drinks and dress-ups just to add a bit of fun. They meet at someone's



Len has shared a series of tree studies to accompany his article this issue.

house or in their creative space. Each brings what they are working on and throughout the day they socialise, discuss and work on their art together.

Another friend has 'finish our projects' afternoons. She invites all her creative friends to her house and people bring their unfinished projects to work on. Social and clearly focused on finishing things.

I created a small bookmaking group that met fortnightly for a day. We all worked on handmade photography books for a specific art prize. We started by reviewing previous entries for inspiration. Then we talked about ideas and sought each other's feedback. Then we made dummies, experimented and tried things. We prepared our entries for the competition. We discussed and reviewed each other's entries. My box of books wasn't accepted into the show, but I learned a lot by being so

much more experimental because of the support of my peers. I came away with a beautiful box of books.

The Project of Passion

This is when a group is formed for a set length of time. They meet, usually monthly and seek feedback on each individual's art project. This is how art schools teach, though being full-time educational institutions, the process is faster and students meet with their mentors and facilitators weekly. This is how I learnt photography and took my art making to that next level. Each individual works on a project that is important to them. Working on a deliverable physical product, such as a book, an exhibition or a portfolio of prints makes this so much more worthwhile. Many camera clubs that do this, round it off with a public exhibition of the works. When I run these in person,



each photographer has to bring physical prints to class with the goal of bringing ten to twenty each session. Feedback from the whole group is sought and suggestions for moving forward are proposed. When it is a paid class, I ensure to give each person my own suggestions and encouragement. Having a predetermined time frame helps, with a set deadline to finish by. When I do this online, each posts the images in an online community so that they can be viewed and discussed. I use this when working with someone in one-on-one sessions too.

Trips Away

I love going away with other creatives to photograph and make art. This is why I love running my photography tours and workshops. Once everyone is settled in, I find myself inspired. I do like to lead by example and get people excited about where we are and art making, by doing it myself too. I find I am making incredible art in the last few days of the trip. I am organising commercial photography trips and also non-commercial ones with friends. I want to go on as many as I can.

Photographic trips to locations can be as short as wandering into the city for an evening or a day, to spending a week or a month on the road or at a specific location. Renting a space to stay makes the trip so wonderful. The possibilities are endless. My favourites are camped in the wilderness having walked or canoed into some place beautifully remote. If you don't want to do the organising, then come away with me or one of the many photographers running tours and workshops. Though mine, I must say, are rather special and are highly recommended!

Online Communities

I have been involved with online creative communities for a very long time. My first one where I really felt a sense of community was the 'Large Format Photography Forum'. I could search out common questions, dive into the resources and ask specific questions. It was the print swaps in this community that started my passion for collecting other people's photography. It also gave a pile of reference prints to judge my own work against. Flickr was another I was heavily involved in during its formative



years. I deleted my account over a copyright fear, that was probably more conspiracy theory rather than anything real, and lost that early following for my work.

Facebook is full of creative communities and so many organisations have their own.

Len's Lounge – Online

This is the fourth online creative community I have created. The one that I had during COVID was vibrant and full of so much creativity and art. Unfortunately it also drained me. I took on too many online sessions and as you know, too much zooming is bad for our health.

The latest version of our community is now free, unless you choose to be in my Focused Lens classes. It also houses my other online learning courses in composition, drawing and my Master Class.

The difference is our community isn't driven by algorithms, advertising and negativity. We work hard on being a healthy and supportive creative community. Members are educated on how to critique the work of others and feedback is only given when asked for. Otherwise we keep the conversation positive and encouraging. Members who aren't interested in looking after and supporting other creatives are removed.

I recommend you join us now and help us create an alternative positive creative community full of inspiration.

<http://lenslounge.online>

How To Run A Group

Here are some thoughts and guidelines for you to think about. What are you trying to achieve? Defining why you want to create a group is really the first step. You may have a creative friend you would like to do this with already. Perhaps working out why and what with them would be a good first step. Reasons you might wish to consider are: socialising and creating friendships, feedback, support, encouragement, making, finishing, creating, discussing, inspiration, educational, learning and development. Don't forget that having fun is a good enough reason in itself. Making art is another indispensable goal.



Who would you like to invite? Existing friends and creatives, other specialists or generalists, people you don't know, family, camera club members as an offshoot, and...

Where should you run it? At a public venue, at your home, rotating around members' homes, at your studio or at a community studio, on location...

How often, how long and how to organise? Some groups do well weekly, whilst others need time in-between and may fare much better monthly or even every six weeks. You may like to meet for three hours or even a whole day. Perhaps you might make it a week away. Locations are often quieter in the off season; and Monday to Friday is quieter still and often cheaper to book. This is where working out who, what and why first helps as this will dictate the answer to this question.

I find putting things into regular patterns really helps me. One group I run meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the evening. We run this every month except January, so that people know when we are on. Planning out multiple dates in advance helps people organise themselves. Being able to put things into my calendar is so incredibly helpful for me. Last minute is often very difficult.

Facilitating the Group

Personally, I think this is what makes or breaks a good creative group. Occasionally groups run exceptionally well on their own, but this generally happens when there are good listeners and negotiators in the group and everyone is focused on making things work. Often groups fail because the group welfare and cohesion isn't being looked after. I like to use the word 'facilitator' to describe the role and things that need to be done. They can be done by the group and they don't necessarily need to be done by one person. So rather than focusing on the person, let's just focus on the things we need to consider and maintain.

Organising

Someone needs to take the lead with all the organisation. The where and when, what to bring. Times, rooms, bookings,



timetables, public transport, etc. They also need to be co-ordinating the group communications.

You will need a way to communicate with everyone. Perhaps it's a social media group, or a communication app group. Unfortunately everyone is different on this. I currently have groups I communicate with via email, Len's Lounge, WhatsApp, Telegram, Messenger, Facebook and other social media platforms. What will suit your group?

Timekeeping

Some groups need a timekeeper. When we are doing our 'show and tell' we divide our time by the amount of people who have something to show, so we know how long to spend on each person. We try to keep to two hours, but often go to two and a half hours as we go over when the conversation becomes really interesting. We remind the group when we do, so as to put a limit on how long we go over for. In other groups with different goals, timekeeping might not be even needed.

Supportive Encouragement

It is amazing how often people will concentrate on the negative and tear someone else's creative work apart with lots of, 'You need to do...'. Replace this by telling people where they are going right and what is interesting about the artwork. In the groups I run I set guidelines and have meaningful discussions about how to give feedback to other members of the group. Then as the facilitator, I make it my role to ensure this is followed. This is something I work very hard at as I know how it feels to have my artworks trashed by someone who thinks they can fix them. Tell people where they are going right and creativity will blossom. Tell them where they are failing and you risk destroying their creative spark and enthusiasm. Work on creating positive and supportive communities. Some people love having their work deconstructed, so put the onus on them to ask for that sort of feedback, rather than assuming everyone else wants that too.

When we go on walks, the group travels at the pace of the slowest member. This metaphor is also true for feedback and



support. The more we support each other at the level that the most anxious artist in the group needs, the nicer and more encouraging the group is for everyone.

Including everyone in discussions is another way of creating a supportive environment. I take time to encourage people to speak up. If someone leans forward to say something then pulls away, I often ask them if there is anything they would like to add. It is too easy to let the loudest person take the floor and dominate the conversation. Being supportive means spreading the conversation around everyone.

I put effort into creating a safe space for everyone. I do this by ensuring we use appropriate language and being careful about what we say and do. I want everyone to feel welcome and free of judgement.

Mood and Energy Monitor

It is important to keep an eye on the group. Sticking blindly to the plan seems to get us in trouble. By monitoring the energy, you can speed things up or slow them down. Call a break. Change something or even add food. It takes stepping back and looking around the room or space and actively monitoring everyone. Look to see how engaged they are. Look at their body language and examine what they are doing. If they are on their phone, they aren't engaged, unless they are taking photos or processing them! Are they leaning into the conversation? Are people talking in small groups?

In my classroom, if the group starts to wane with their energy, I take a break and return to do something else with them. As a teacher and facilitator, I have come to realise that I am the centre of the group. If things aren't going well, it is because I am not doing my job well enough.

Collaboration Encourager

Putting effort into encouraging collaborative ideas and suggestions is well worth the effort. Having lots of ideas to play with seems to expand the options and increases the sense of creativity. I frame it as ideas and suggestions. Once ideas start flowing in, they come from everywhere. It is this collaborative discussion that boosts the group.

I love to ask the group what they need and what they would like. This leads to collaborative decision making and can be as simple as asking, "When shall we meet again, how long for?". Perhaps asking if we should do it the same next time, or change things that didn't work?

We need to be flexible and keep adapting. It would be impossible to run something perfectly the first time. It is a winding road of exploration. Working with everyone creates a sense of community. Bottom line is that we want to create a healthy community that people want to return to and participate in. Sharing ideas and collaborations works so well to do this.

Food

Food is an amazing leveller and brings people together. The act of sharing and eating together changes the group. Wherever possible, it's worth putting this into your plans. Bring a plate or 'pot luck' meals are so wonderful. Perhaps sharing fruit or sweets might work. With some groups I know, the meals become an integral part of the gathering.

I hope I have inspired you to start your own creative group, whether it is going on an art date or something bigger and more adventurous. Go on, take a risk and make it happen. Making art together and supporting each other makes it so worthwhile. I don't think I'd enjoy my life as much without these incredible creative groups in my life.

Len Metcalf is a lens based artist who fell in love with photography at an early age. He has pursued a lifetime of art making. His portfolios are featured in many international collections, like PhotoMuse and The Indian Museum of Photography. He runs photography tours and workshops. And photographers travel the globe to spend time learning from him. With a lifetime of educational experience, Len's skills in teaching and mentoring are par excellence. You will grow and develop quickly when you choose Len as your mentor. To find out more about Len please visit his website <http://lenmetcalf.com>. Email: len@lensschool.com

LEN'S LOUNGE

A CREATIVE ONLINE COMMUNITY FOR LEARNING AND GROWTH

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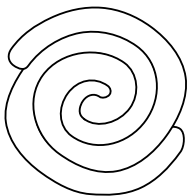
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A high quality, quarterly publication that celebrates the art of photography. Curated by Len to showcase meaningful bodies of work by inspiring artists. Limited edition, hand embossed and

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10:10:10

Here's an easy technique to help you fast track
the aesthetic side of your photography.

By Peter Eastway.



Screen shots from a series of Influences videos in Peter's Photo Process online photography course.

Photography is a lot easier than it used to be, but a lot harder as well. What do I mean by this contradictory statement?

In the 'old days' when I walked 10 miles to school in bare feet over frozen ground, photography was a very manual process. For me, cameras had just begun to include an exposure meter and offer aperture-priority or shutter-priority exposure control. There was no program mode or autofocus and we couldn't see the results immediately on the back of the camera. We had to wait, often several weeks before we could work out if what we'd done was successful or not. The road from beginner to expert was a long one, whereas today, all the technical issues are either handled by the camera or you're given instant feedback – and so you can learn the craft of photography very quickly.

I see the work of a lot of photographers and, technically, it is fabulous.

Photos That Look Good

However, where modern photographers seem to struggle is with the aesthetics. While technically correct, their photos are missing the emotion, emphasis, gesture or the composition that makes a great photograph.

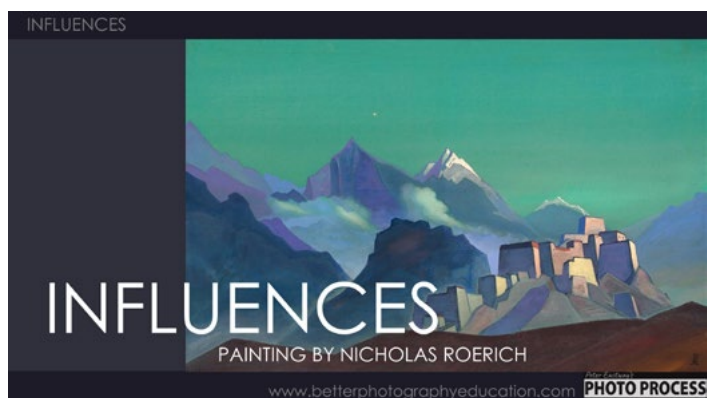
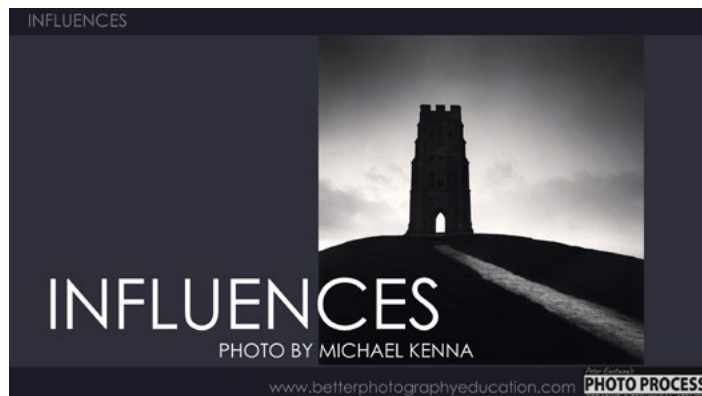
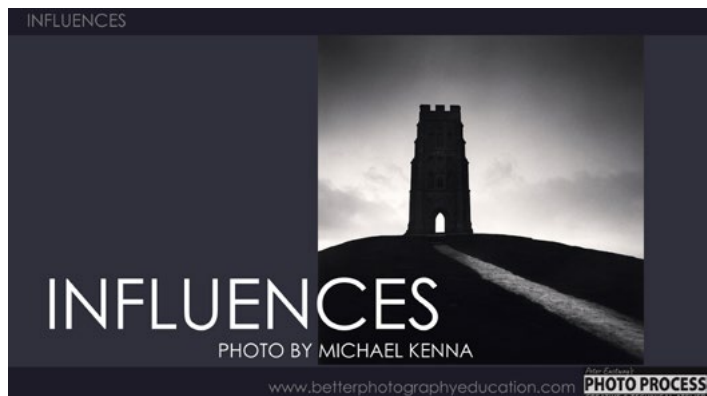
In the old days, once I got to school and warmed up my feet, I could go to the library and look at one or two photography

books. Books were our inspiration and we could look and learn. However, there was a limited supply of books – and limited funds with which to buy our own. Building aesthetic expertise took a long time, usually years as we gradually assimilated the work of the great artists and photographers, gradually incorporating their ideas into our own expression.

But having spent the years in photography, photographers like me are now in the comfortable position of being able to combine the perfection created by modern technology with our background – and this is often the difference between me and my students. Students can create technically great photographs, just like me, but perhaps their composition, camera angle or choice of subject doesn't generate images with the same power or impact. Why?

I think the answer is the experience of lots of different ideas. Over the years, I have built up a database of photographs, paintings and other influences (film, travel, literature, etc.) that I like and remember, so every time I put the camera to my eye, I'm using this experience to create my image. I'm also relying on my expertise in post-production to allow me to turn an average looking raw file into a much more masterful presentation piece. But it's not post-production that is guiding me, it's my experience of the finished works of other photographers and artists. It's their images that are directing me to my final result.

So, how can we short-circuit these years of experience?



Focus On The Positive

I don't think you can read an article like this and walk away an expert, but I do hope you can read this article and set yourself a program of development based on the work of photographers you applaud.

In some ways, this should be really easy because we have instant access to any material we want. If you want to study the work of Irving Penn, you visit his website or type in his name to Google search.

Perhaps we have access to too much material. We are bombarded with imagery all day, but most of this imagery is dross. It's neither well considered nor created, rather it is imagery with a different purpose – here's me next to the Eiffel Tower, here's my croissant and coffee in Paris. Most of the imagery we encounter is not designed to be a work of art and while we can discuss what art actually is, I think you get the point. If our visual world is filled with below average content, where does the inspiration come from for our own work?

So, what about social media, like Facebook and Instagram? Surely we're seeing some great work here and we certainly are! Once you scroll past all the adverts and crap photos, the good ones really do stand out and this is what we should focus on.

When I give presentations with Len Metcalf, he is very insistent that the feedback he and the group provide to each other is positive. At the risk of incorrectly paraphrasing Len, there's no point hammering in the things that are wrong in a photograph, rather, concentrate on the things that are right.

As I write this, I can't remember where I got the idea for 10:10:10. Perhaps I am stealing it from someone much smarter than me, but I do remember a photographer on one of my workshops, Dan Warbrick, telling me how he would create folders on his computer for photographers whose work he admired. It

was his research tool, his database of ideas. Now Dan isn't that much younger than me, but while I was still collecting books, he was way ahead of me in researching the work that he liked by using the power of the internet.

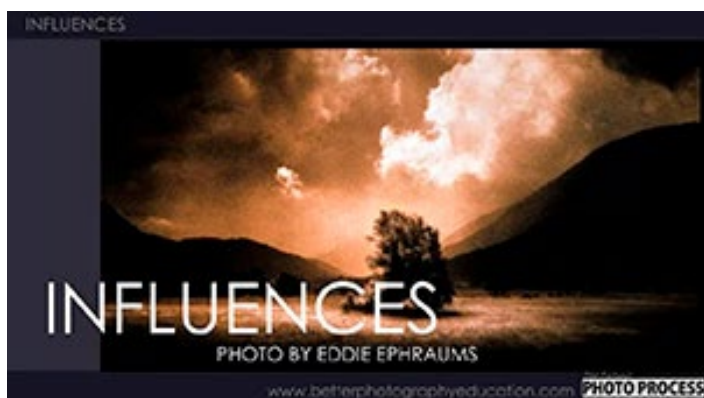
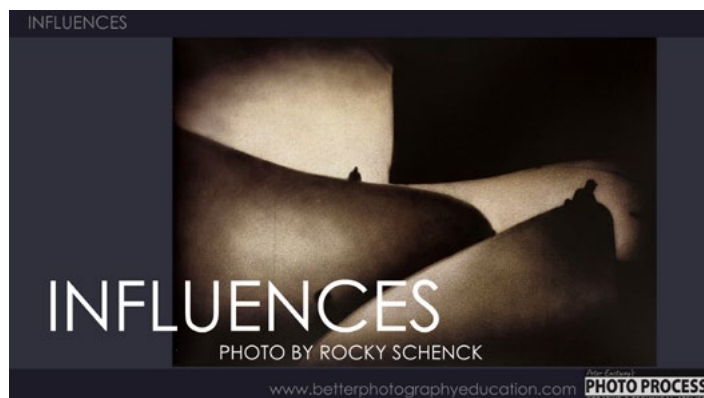
10:10:10

So, here's the program – and it should possibly be 10:10:10:10, but let's not worry about semantics. Here's what you need to do:

1. Select ten photographers or artists whose work you really admire.
2. Create 10 folders on your computer and fill them with 10 photos or paintings by each of your photographers or artists. They don't have to be high quality or high resolution reproductions, as long as you can see why you like them.
3. Now, over the next 10 weeks, spend one hour each week, writing down 10 things you like about each of the photos you've collected.

The way I suggest this when I give workshops is to put aside the same time every week, say Sunday evening at 7:30. Pour yourself a glass of wine (red works a lot better if you're wondering), grab a sheet of paper and a pen, and open up your computer. Bring up the first photograph, take a sip of wine and ask yourself, 'Why do I love this photograph? What aspects of the photograph make me happy? What is it that appeals to me?'

So, what are you going to write? I love the choice of the subject – it's different and interesting. I like the square frame and how the subject is bang in the middle. Or how the subject is tucked away in the corner, but is balanced with lots of negative space. I like the use of diagonal lines and how they cross the horizon in the centre. Or the way the road creates an 'S' shape in the centre of the landscape. I like how the photographer has



used primarily cool colours in the palette. How the colours are super-saturated or gently pastel. I like the unusual angle selected – I must look for more unusual angles myself.

There's no right or wrong about what you write. Just jot down 10 things you like about the photo. Or 7 things or 15. Explore the photo and explain to yourself why you like the photo.

Spend an hour on each photographer or artist. Spend five minutes on each of their photos and that's 50 minutes, plus 10 minutes for daydreaming and not paying proper attention. At the end, you will have written down 100 positive aspects you like. You might be repeating yourself a lot – and that's okay. The idea is to ingrain into your subconscious what you like about the photographs so that, the next time you're out with your camera, these thoughts and ideas are washing around somewhere in your subconscious. (Psychiatrists and psychologists, please forgive my simplified explanation – I'm sure it could be explained much better!)

Over the next 10 weeks (it might take three months if you're away on a holiday, etc. and that's also okay), you're adding 100 positive ideas into your database. You're reinforcing what you like about your favourite photographs, but not just in a casual way. It's easy to look at a photo and think that you like it, but why do you like it? This is the key point of this exercise. You can spend 50 years gradually working things out or spend a much shorter time consciously educating yourself.

Plagiarism?

So, isn't this copying other people's work? All art is influenced by something, but being influenced is not making a copy. I'm not suggesting you put a subject into a studio corner just like Irving Penn, but you might be influenced by his wrap-around

lighting and how he positions his subject within the frame, often breaking all the 'normal' rules of composition.

AI is making the same claim. It's not copying the work of a single artist, it's copying the work of every artist who has ever had a work presented on the internet! Mind you, all my friends would buy the photography annuals and pore over the pages, looking for ideas and inspiration. Not to make copies, but to be influenced. So, what's the difference?

On the opening page of this article is a series of thumbnails of video titles. These are artists and photographers who have influenced me. They are from the Photo Process online photography course (visit www.betterphotographyeducation.com for more information), where I talk through 10 images from each artist or photographer, explaining what it is that grabs me about their work. It's the basis for the 10:10:10 idea.

By all means, use some of these photographers for your own 10:10:10 program, but I believe you will get better results by looking around for photographers whose work you really admire. Spend the next week or so trawling the internet for famous or not-so-famous photographers whose work you admire. If you're into wildlife photography, you could concentrate on wildlife photographers, but I'd hesitate before recommending this wholeheartedly. I'm known as a landscape photographer who uses light, but I learnt all about light from portrait photographers. Don't do what Google and its algorithms are already doing to you, limiting your results to what it thinks you want to see. Look outside the square, look for work that is edgy and different, work that will challenge you. If you don't like it, don't add it into your 10:10:10, but the process of researching what you like will already be working!

And just maybe your 10:10:10 will become 50:10:10 and you'll still think you can learn more!

I'm not a liar **I'm An Artist**

What should photographs be? Is there a rule? Is there an agreement?

Maybe, but what is the reality of photography? What is it?

Peter Eastway pontificates.

On board Aurora Expedition's Sylvia Earle last year, I gave a presentation about my photography and how I edited my files. Most of the passengers weren't photographers, although I'm sure they all used their phones to take photos, so I explained how I used Lightroom and Photoshop to enhance the images I capture. I showed them how adjustment layers and masks worked and how the same techniques can now be done on their phones. Once you have the concept, the execution is essentially the same, no matter what device you are using.

At the end of the presentation, an elderly gentleman approached me with a scowl on his face. He stood square on, looked me directly in the eye and challenged me: "So you're a liar."

I've given many presentations like this, but I confess, I'd never had anyone appear so disgusted (except perhaps a group of Tasmanians who didn't like what I did to Lake Oberon in the Western Arthurs).

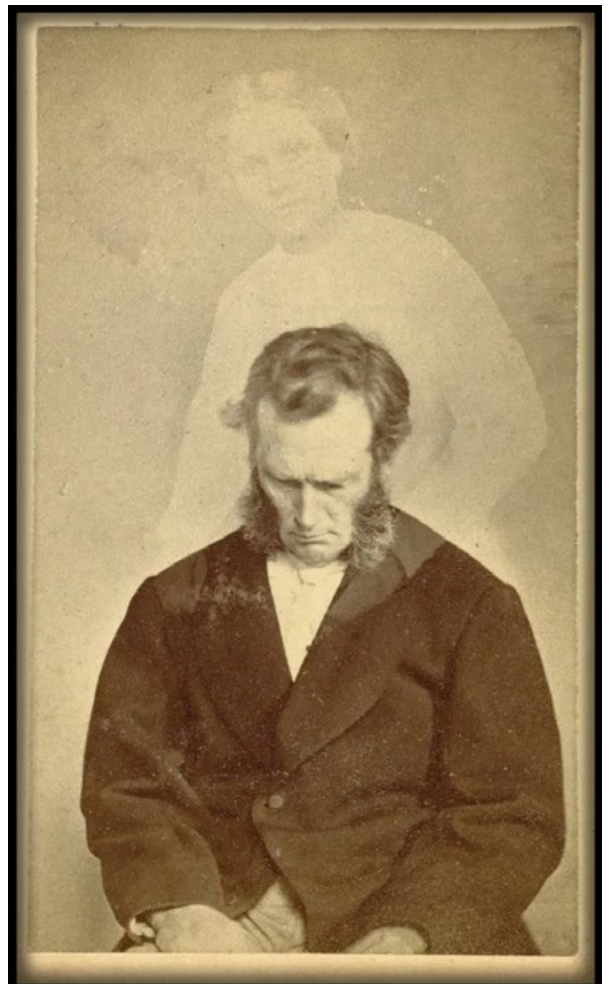
How dare I change photographs so they don't reflect reality. What did I think I was doing?

Incorrect Beliefs

When we read a book, we don't complain about works of fiction. As a society, our education teaches us the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Of course, if an author pretends that a book is non-fiction when it's not, there is hell to pay.

We don't like to be lied to, but we do accept that the written word isn't always factual.

Right: Since the dawn of photography, photographers have been using multiple exposures to create things that are not real. It's not something new!

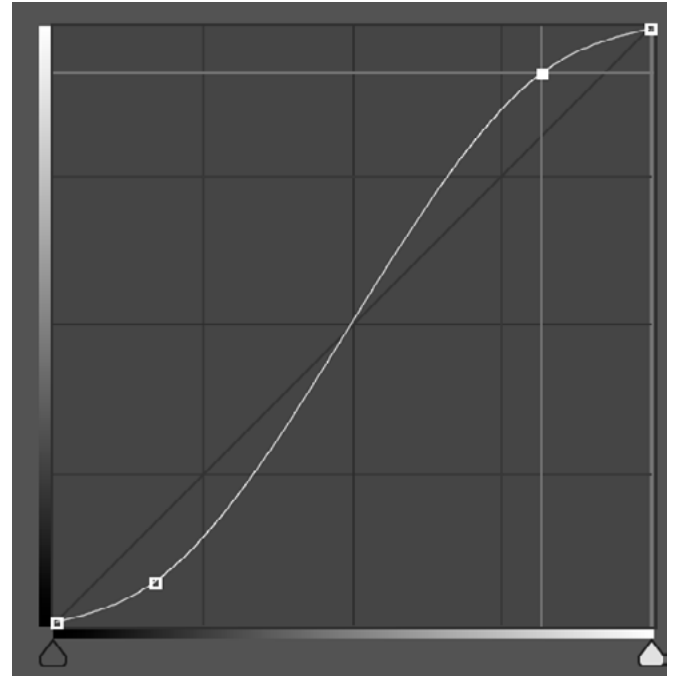
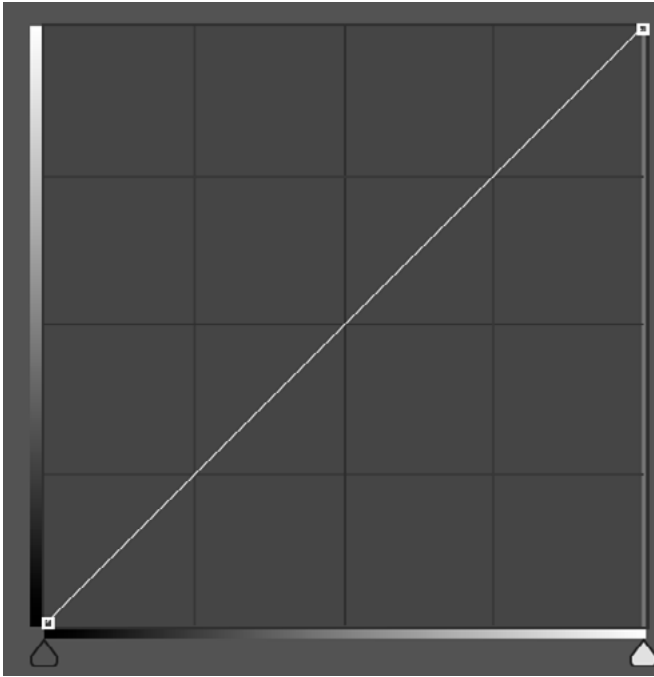




Some composites are certainly fabrics of the imagination. Here St Gregory's in Ani, Eastern Turkey is photographed in boring midday sunshine, so a new sky was introduced and then a lady from the village below coaxed into walking along the trail. It's not real. But it could be.



Which photo do you like the look of the most? Simple answer, isn't it, yet the dull looking shot is the raw file captured by the camera (on an iPhone). Some editing has been done by the camera itself, so why is this any different to a photographer taking creative control?



A raw file has a straight line curve, which doesn't match our perception of reality, so film and camera manufacturers have introduced a 'curve' so that what we see in a photograph is more closely aligned to what we see. But it's not real! Or is it?

Older generations rarely learnt about photography at school, or if they did, it was with a photography club or similar.

However, everyone knew that a camera could record a scene accurately and for most people, that's as far as they looked.

Unfortunately for them, this incorrect belief can lead to disappointment when they view photographs which they expect to be accurate representations of reality. Even the briefest overview of the history of photography is full of examples where photographers have 'fabricated' images, sometimes in an abstract way, but often so realistically that the photo looks like a true depiction of reality.

Think of fashion and glamour photographs where make-up and lighting have enhanced a model. Think of travel brochures with picture-perfect blue skies. Think of Hollywood movie posters where actors are superimposed on each other. People who believe photographs are real simply haven't thought closely about the matter as yet.

The younger generations are much more discerning and they are fortunate because they allow themselves to enjoy all types of photography, both fiction and non-fiction.

In-Camera Bravado

There is nothing old-fashioned or easy about taking photographs that are non-fiction. The capture in itself can be an artform, but we must remember that even true depictions can lie because of their context. It's not only what you include in the photograph that matters, more often it's what you exclude that creates the confusion – or the lie.

And there are good reasons why we want photographs to tell the truth. A news or documentary photographer is expected to be factual. We don't like wildlife photographers showing us photos of penguins with two heads or a sports photographer showing a surfer on a huge wave that wasn't really that big.

There are many reasons in-camera photography remains incredibly important. I'm not discounting 'real' photographs, but I am questioning anyone's unfailing belief that all photographs should be the same, should be factual. And with the introduction of AI, we should be questioning every image we see.

But let's put all this aside. For some people, 'in-camera' photography is all about pressing the button and that's it! The result is the final photograph and this process means it's 'true'. We have done nothing to the file, just like we used to do in the days of film. Except we didn't. We'd press the shutter and then Mr Kodak would process the film, adjusting the colour and exposure so 'it looked correct'. Even with transparency film we could adjust the development to produce different results, so while our photos were not edited by us afterwards, the results were not unedited either.

However, compared to a composite image of a lady walking up to a church under a stormy sky, in-camera photos are certainly much truer and if this is the approach you wish to take for your photography, go right ahead! It's as valid as any other approach. Enjoy it.

But are the photos you take really real? What is 'real'?

Acceptable Changes

The photos taken by all cameras, whether a phone camera or an expensive mirrorless model, start as a linear raw file. What does this mean? A camera doesn't capture in colour. It captures a monochrome raw file and, using a mosaic of red, green and blue filters, it creates a colour photo. All the colours you see are 'calculated' by the camera from the raw file – the raw file is edited.

Similarly, the exposure captured is linear, but humans don't see linearly. We're constantly changing the exposure with our eyes and our brain has a big part in the action as well. As film manufacturers discovered last century, a linear exposure doesn't

give a realistic rendition. It looks low in contrast and unnatural, so they applied gamma or tone 'curves' to the film that created a more realistic result. It looked real, but whether it approximated reality or not who can say?

That same approach is used by every digital camera manufacturer, so the 'straight out of camera' file that is captured is edited before you even get to see it on the camera's screen. However, the way that file is edited is different from camera to camera, manufacturer to manufacturer.

For instance, when I use my iPhone to capture a photo, the result is automatically enhanced to add detail in the shadows and highlights, detail that wasn't visible in the original file. It also plays around with the colours, usually making them more saturated and warmer. So, while the photo captured might be straight out of the camera, Apple has edited for us.

If the cameras are editing our photos anyway, why can't we edit the photos ourselves? Obviously we can and we do, so what is the difference between a machine doing it and a human? If we allow a camera to edit our files (and we are given no choice), why can't we edit them?

The answer is because then the photo is not straight out of camera. It doesn't fit a definition which struggles to be relevant.

Too Much Change

Today we all edit our photos, whether it's on our phone or using an app like Lightroom. Even 'in-camera' photographers are having their photos edited for them, whether they like it or not.

However, let's agree that these are just basic edits to get the photo looking like it is a real depiction of the subject.

How much change can we make before it is no longer real? How much editing can I do before I'm a liar?

Take for example the three versions of my photo of the fur seals playing in the sunshine. Most people would look at the lightest one and think that was straight out of the camera, but that's not right. As the photographer, I intentionally made the exposure darker for a host of technical reasons, that then allowed me to create the final edit.

But let's for a minute pretend the lighter photograph was what the camera captured. After all, it was a very bright day with full sunshine. Am I able to darken the exposure this much and still have a real photograph, or am I a liar? Some people say yes, some no. There is no consensus. It's just a matter of opinion – and we shouldn't call people liars just because they have a different opinion!

Following the logic through, to my mind, I must already be a liar because what I actually did was choose to make the photo darker when I captured it.

Technically, my dark photo is unedited, straight out of camera. I pass all the rules. However, ethically, I feel I have interpreted the scene. Photography is a form of communication and I try to strengthen that communication as best I can. It's like writing an article or giving a presentation – I need to communicate what I am thinking and feeling to the audience. Photography is no different.

So, I don't feel like I'm a liar, rather I'm an artist (or perhaps just a user of 'spin').

What Do Photographers Do?

Throughout history, photographers have manipulated the photograph – to make it look better or to deceive the viewer.

Antarctic photographer Frank Hurley got into a lot of trouble with the 'authorities' (Charles Bean) because he used multiple exposures to create his photographs.

This was over 100 years ago and all done in the darkroom (not Lightroom)! Why did he do it? I've read several biographies about Hurley, all with justifications. In the case of his war time photographs, he felt he couldn't capture what it was like to be in the theatre of war with a single photo, so he used several photographs composited together to better reflect reality. The resulting photographs were magnificent, but his boss felt that photographs should be straight out of camera to be real.

In Antarctica, he was using glass plates which were very sensitive to the colour blue, which meant in his black and white photos, the skies looked paper white – but Hurley knew there were clouds there, so he'd edit the photo to include a different sky. Technically, the photograph is a lie; practically it tells a much more accurate story. Ethically, did he do the right thing?

Now, I can't excuse Hurley in the same way for his photograph of the James Caird leaving Elephant Island because the original photograph actually shows two boats arriving at Elephant Island. However, he wasn't dealing with the woke restrictions of modern life, he was simply illustrating a key point in the story where a boat of six brave sailors left the relative safety of Cape Wild. The location is correct, the boat is correct, but his removal of the second boat makes the photo a lie.

Yet Frank Hurley was only doing what photographers did. He was illustrating something that had really happened. An artist could have painted this same scene without getting into trouble, but because a photograph was used to illustrate the story, some people believe different rules should apply.

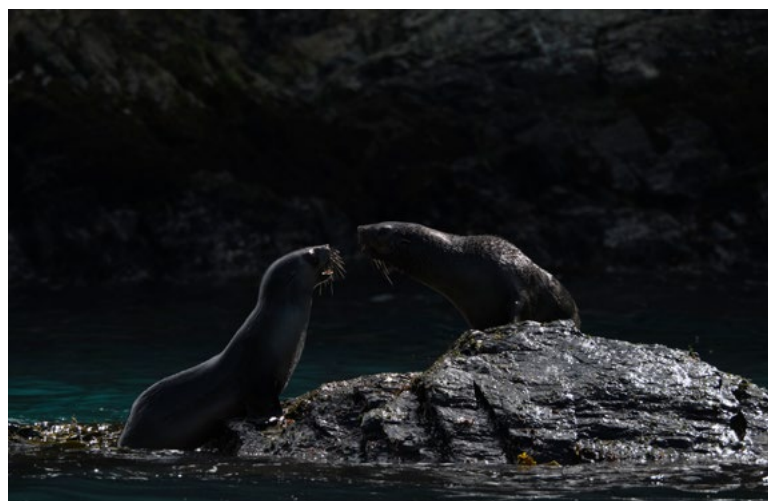
Not all photographers worked like Hurley. Some, like his contemporary war photographer Hubert Wilkins, another amazing Australian polar explorer, were definitely 'in-camera' photographers, but the point to take away is that Hurley wasn't doing anything unusual as far as photographers were concerned, although it's also true the general population had no idea what he was doing!

What Should I Do?

Most people playing with their phones and editing the photographs aren't thinking about the ethics of photography. They will proudly show their edited photographs to friends and family and I think that's exactly how it should be. They are not using the photographs as evidence in a court case, they are using them to communicate.

Interestingly, many people look at well finished photographs these days and immediately think they have been 'Photoshopped'. Even the most 'honest' photographs can be looked upon with scepticism. In some ways this is sad because we no longer fully believe what we see in a photograph, but as suggested in the beginning we never should have in the first place.

So what about the photographs you see around the ship? Many of them are mine, photographed on the most expensive camera equipment you can buy and lovingly edited to the best of my ability. Do they look like the in-camera exposures I made? I certainly hope not.



How far can you edit a photo before it's not real? In the three images above, the light photo (bottom left) is probably what the eye saw, however, the dark photo (bottom right) is how the raw file was exposed. I intentionally darkened the exposure to ensure I retained detail in the highlights. Then for the final image (top), dodging and burning emphasised the important areas of the subject and subdued the background. So is this still real?

The camera is a wonderful device, but it is actually quite limited. Importantly, it can only apply one global setting to everything in the photograph, but invariably the best results are achieved when you can process parts of the photograph separately.

This is what photo editing is all about and while your phone has some great editing software, there are other apps that

allow you to do the same selective editing done on apps like Lightroom and Photoshop.

If my edited photographs look different from the camera's file, great! So they should because I'm an artist. I don't want to be limited by the arbitrary capture made by my camera when I can communicate and express in so many different ways.

But this does not make me a liar. Nor are you!

Take your **Visual** **Communication** *to another level*

by Mike Langford

Photographs by themselves often communicate just a single idea or narrative but if we wish to communicate these ideas and narratives in greater depth, then we need to employ the use of visual sequences which we often do in the form of photo essays, photo books or photographic exhibitions.

When it comes to travel stories, my preferred medium is audio-visual, the mechanics and aesthetics of which are perfect to take the viewer on a visual journey. This way, you can easily share your travel adventures with family and friends through your computer or TV. (Think of something much more sophisticated than the slide shows of the past).

As I have been using this medium since starting my journey in photography back in 1980, by completing a postgraduate diploma in multi-media communication at the Wellington school of design, I have been able to learn and grow with the changes in technology over the past forty years, starting with multi-projector slide shows that incorporated dissolves that linked images together in a sequence form; followed by the inclusion of video that would then allow for movement to become infused into the sequencing.

Twenty years later, with the development of digital computer technology, anything and everything is now possible and specific audio-visual programs such as 'Pro Show Gold' and 'FotoMagico' have made the medium much easier to use and more accessible to anyone interested.

My preferred platform is the FotoMagico program which you can download for free at:

<https://fotomagico.com/>, <https://helpx.adobe.com/nz/lightroom-classic/help/creating-slide-shows-basic-workflow.html>

To better illustrate why and how I use the mechanics of this medium, I will link you to three A/Vs that we have recently uploaded to YouTube to communicate our tours to potential clients.

The first one features a tour we are running later this year to South East China.

To see it, click on the link below but only do this after you have read this article so you will know what you are looking at and how it all works:

<https://www.qccp.co.nz/photography-workshops/south-china-creative-landscape-tour>

The same goes for the second one on Japan in Autumn, which we are also running later this year:

<https://www.qccp.co.nz/photography-workshops/japan-autumn-photography>

All the photographs are made by both myself and Jackie Ranken, with the production by me through the FotoMagico program.

When we travel, we are regularly photographing the same things at the same time and so we have come to an agreement that when it comes to choosing the images we will only use the one that works best regardless of who took it.

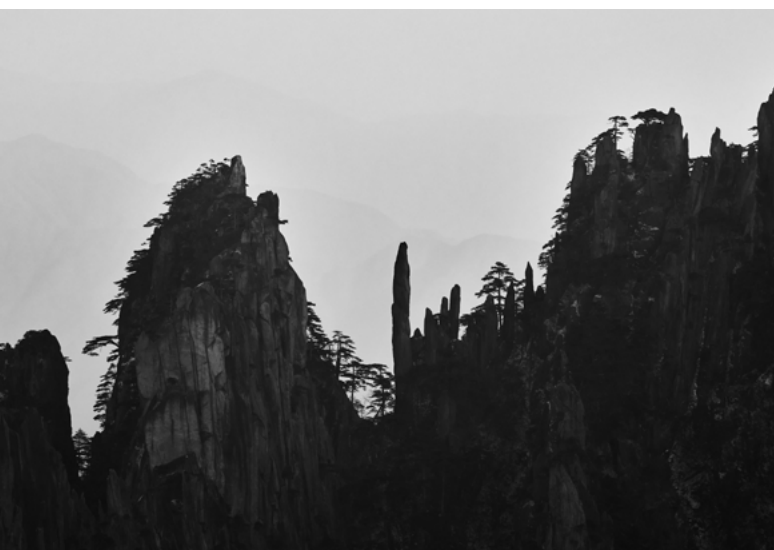
As it happens we both have the same number of images in each program, which is very socially correct of us.

Music

The music needs to be relevant to the visuals and to have a tempo that is in keeping with the mood you wish to communicate. The faster the tempo the more images you will need and the shorter the time they can be up on screen for. (Fast may be great for advertising a product or something like



Hunganshan Dissolve created from the below images



Hunganshan 1 by Mike Langford



Hunganshan 2 by Jackie Ranken



Ginkakuji Temple 1

that but it is unsustainable as a pure entertainment medium). There are various commercial music libraries that you can purchase copyright releases from with my favourite being 'Triple Scoop Music', which has a vast range of moods and styles. The music for the Japan A/V is from them. There are also copyright free music sites available on the internet which can offer something suitable and for the China A/V I have used one of those and have just looped the one track for this.

Whatever you do, make sure you do the right thing by copyright, especially if you are making something to put onto YouTube or to show on some other public platform.

Length

For a seven-minute show, (which is around the time length I recommend), I will usually use around sixty images including some video clips with a screen time of around five to seven seconds and a dissolve time of between three and four seconds. I try to keep this as a constant during the body of the piece and then slightly longer towards the end.

This way, the timing of the visuals stays the same as the beat of the music and everything becomes harmonious and flows almost seamlessly.



Shoren-in Temple 1



Ginkakuji Temple 2

Audio-visuals can be as simple or as complex as you choose but the most important thing is that they need to be kept short and to the point, otherwise you will lose the viewers' interest.

Zooming and Panning

Within the audio-visual medium, we are all familiar with the use of a technique that is commonly referred to as the 'Ken Burns' effect, whereby you can instil a sense of movement by either panning or zooming in on a single frame.

This technique creates a more cinematic feel to a sequence that keeps the viewer engaged for longer.

I like to use this technique sparingly so that it is there but you are unaware that it is being used. This comes down to the adage of: 'If you are aware of the technique, then it has been overused.'

Most times I will only create a movement of 10% and keep this the same for most of the program, which makes it almost impossible to detect but which at the same time creates a feeling of movement.

Dissolving

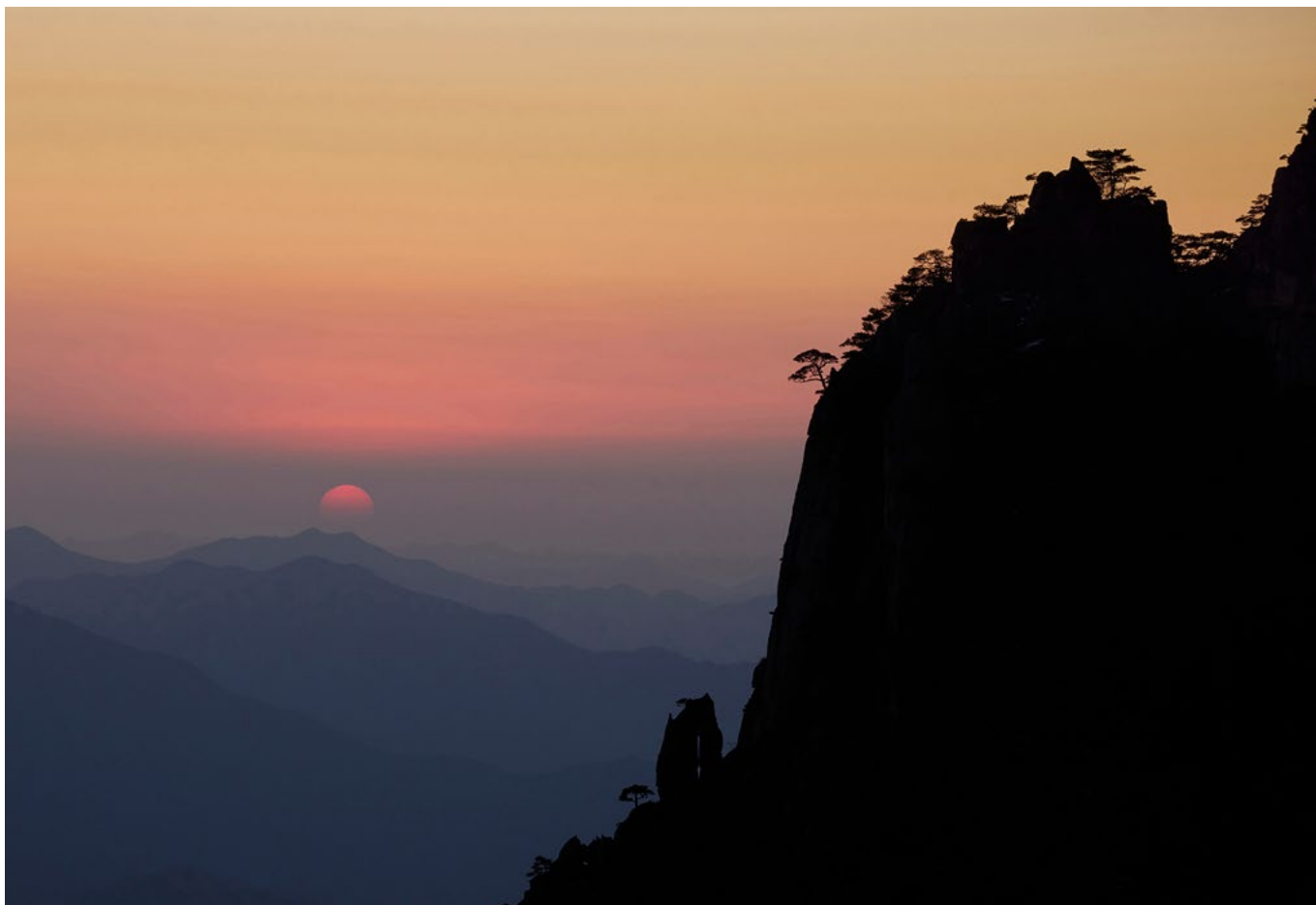
I like to use the dissolve technique to move from one image into another. This can be made much more effective if the subject



Shoren-in Temple 2



Xihai Dissolve 1



Xihai Dissolve 2



Ryoan-ji Temple

in one image can move freely into a space in the following the image. This way they can just flow into each other's spaces and don't become muddled or conflicted.

I try to achieve this by choosing a shot that has a bright central area followed by a shot that has a dark central area. When shooting for an audio-visual I try to keep my subject in the centre of the frame so that this remains the constant area of change and focus.

Double Exposure

One of the creative results of the dissolve is that halfway through the transition between the two images a double exposure is created that is often even more interesting than either of the initial images.

This is well illustrated in the dissolve created in the China A/V, from Huangshan 1 (see page 85 for examples), which was made by me and Huangshan 2 which was made by Jackie. The dissolve image is taken from the halfway point during a four-second dissolve and has created a very surreal and painterly look that reminds me of the classic landscape paintings from the Song period of the 12th century in China.

Pull Focus

Pull focus is a cinematic technique that I use that moves the eye from one subject to another by a change in focus. In A/V terms, this can be achieved by making one frame with the focus on just the foreground followed by a second frame that is just focused on the background. To achieve this, you need to be on a tripod with a long lens and a narrow aperture (f/4 or narrower). There

are several examples of this throughout the Japan A/V where the focus starts on a foreground branch which then moves to something in the background, in this case from a foreground branch to a sand mound at Ginkakuji Temple in Kyoto, (see page 86 for examples).

A second example is a little further on where I pull focus from some leaves at the Shoren-in Temple and then change the focus in the second image to the interior of the temple. Notice that I have also changed the exposure in the second shot so we can see more clearly inside the temple (see page 86 for examples).

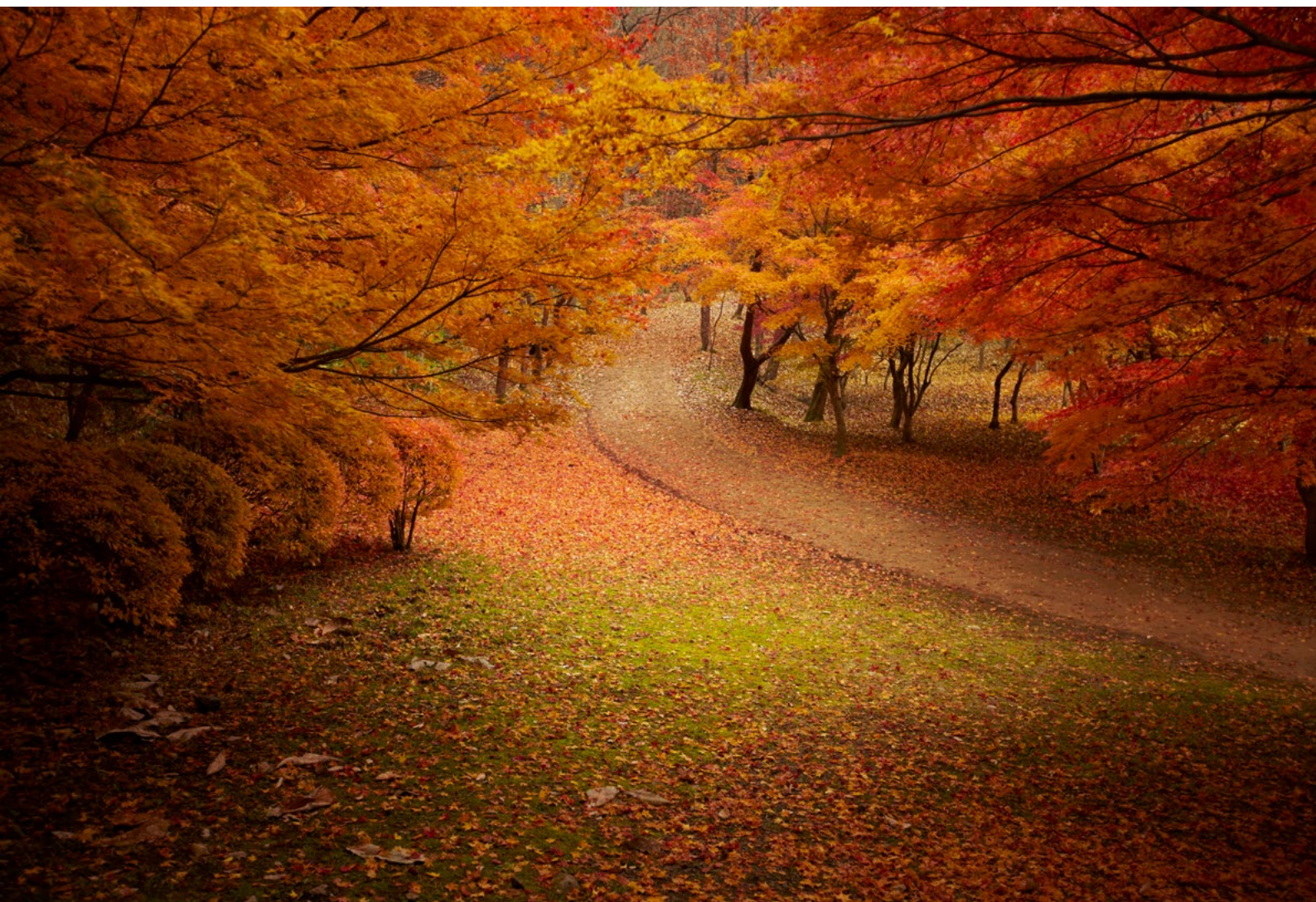
All images like this need to be thought through at the time of photographing as to try and achieve this through post production is very time consuming if not impossible.

Time-Lapse Transitions

We all love the idea of a daytime frame dissolving into a dusk or night time frame but who has the time to leave the tripod set up in the same place for that long?

As it happened on our last trip into China, Jackie had made a morning shot of the Xihai Grand Canyon that was much better than mine but just by chance it matched in almost perfectly with the same shot I had made at dusk. So in the A/V program I was able to line just the two images and dissolve from one to the other, creating a sense of a time-lapse sequence, (see page 87 for examples). You can see this happening in the first sequence in the China A/V.

In the Canon EF and RF series of cameras there is a time-lapse mode in the camera that allows you to set the speed and



Shiroyama Park

duration of your time-lapse sequence and creates MP4 straight out of the camera. When shooting a time-lapse sequence, I try to make each frame with a quite slow shutter speed so that the movements dissolve into each other. If the shutter is faster than 1/15 of a second then the moving shapes will become stilted as they will have sharp edges.

To see examples of this method, watch the following A/V which is at the bottom of this page:

<https://www.qccp.co.nz/photography-workshops/mackenzie-winter>

Movie Mode

A technique I occasionally like to use, is to transition from a still photograph to a moving one. This comes out of the adage, 'If it moves, then turn on the video!'

In our older EF DSLR Canon cameras, if we made a photograph using the picture style modes in JPEGs, then the movie would come out the same way. This is the case in the Ryoan-ji frame which was shot in-camera as a monochrome sepia image and then also outputted as a monochrome sepia movie. With the new Canon RF cameras, the movie now always reverts to the raw colour mode and we now need to change it to whatever we want in post-production. Check your own camera to see what happens for you.

With the Ryoan-ji water feature frame in the Japan A/V, it was very easy to just switch the camera to video as I was already on a tripod. The dissolve from the still to the movie adds movement to the water which also adds the sound of the water splashing which has been made even more audible by ducting the music sound track during this sequence.

This idea is even more pronounced at the end of the Japan A/V with the Shiroyama Park shot taken in Takayama. This sequence starts with a single frame of an autumn landscape which then crosses over to the video in which a man appears to walk into the frame and through it, while at the same time ringing a bell with which to alert any native bears to his presence.

Using the in-camera slow motion movie mode is also very easy to use and to apply, as can also be seen in the falling snow sequences in the Mt Cook/Mackenzie winter A/V which was outputted from the camera as a MP4:

<https://www.qccp.co.nz/photography-workshops/mackenzie-winter>

The important thing with all techniques is to be subtle in their application.

This way you will continue to engage the viewer and entertain them with the subject and not the techniques.

NZ REVISITED

**Nick Melidonis explores the South Island's braided rivers and adds
in his love of infrared!**

In February 2025, I embarked on a month-long road trip to New Zealand's South Island. I had two friends with me, Athena Georgiou, who is one of Australia's top birding photographers and a Sony presenter (<https://www.instagram.com/athena.georgiou.photography/>), and her husband Basil who did the driving. I had been to New Zealand on numerous photo shoots, but this was Athena's first trip.

I put together an itinerary to cover the main attractions of the South Island. This included Christchurch to Kaikoura (birding and whales for Athena), through the Lindis Pass to Westport and Cape Foulwind; Westport to Fox and Frans Josef glaciers; glaciers through Wanaka to Queenstown; Queenstown to Milford Sound; Milford to Te Anua; Te Anua to Invercargill. Here, Athena and Basil decided to spend three nights on Stewart Island while I pushed on to the Catlins, staying in Kaka Point. We rejoined in Invercargill and drove to Twizel where we spent four nights to explore Mt

Cook, Lakes Tekapo and Pukaki and from Twizel via Arthur's Pass to Christchurch and finally home to Australia. We were blessed by excellent weather, save for a couple of rainy days which was unusual for NZ.

Attempting Something New

On previous trips to NZ, I shot with Canon SLRs and lenses, mostly EOS 5D bodies, concentrating on the vast offerings of New Zealand's amazing landscapes and thermal areas. I have recently changed over to Sony cameras and this time I had a Sony Alpha 1 body; a 24–105mm G Master lens; a 16–35mm G Master; a new Sony 70–200mm II lens with macro capabilities (brilliant, sharp lens with exceptional macro); a 14–24mm Tokina Art Series lens with rear slot filter capabilities for ND filters (another very sharp lens) and an old Sony A7R II body converted to infrared. I also had a set of ND filters for long exposure photography with 3, 6 and 10 stops in the set. Included in my kit was a custom bag with a Mavic 3 drone; three batteries and the DJI RC Pro controller.

Athena also had a Sony A1 camera, plus longer lenses for bird photography and a set of ND filters as well. We both recently became interested in long exposure minimalist photography



This composition of the Waipapa Lighthouse in the Catlins was shot with my infrared converted Sony A7R II camera and a 14mm Tokina Art Series lens. I enjoyed the way infrared renders dramatic skies with the blue of the sky turning black to provide contrast to the white clouds. The foreground grass also turns white to contrast the path leading to the lighthouse. With normal black and white images, foliage, trees and grass are a much darker colour. When I straightened the converging verticals of the lighthouse by using the perspective crop tool in Photoshop, the lighthouse appeared small and squat. I selected the top half of the image and used the transform tool to increase the height of the lighthouse to what it should have been.



This Sony A1 image of Milford Sound was a more traditional landscape image, again produced with an incoming morning tide so I had some submerged logs and rocks covered with luminescent lichen to give a pleasing foreground. For photographers visiting Milford Sound, you will be delighted by the ever-changing light conditions which provide endless compositions.

and hoped to find some subject matter around the South Island's coastlines.

On this trip, I wanted to try something I had not attempted before in NZ, so I added infrared photography and drone footage to the mix. Infrared photography provides other-worldly black and white views that are very different from conventional black and white, as I will illustrate. And I wanted to use a drone to capture a feature of New Zealand that is not easily found in other countries: braided rivers.

Infrared Photography

There have been a few articles recently in *Better Photography* on infrared so I will keep this part brief. If you have an old camera body that isn't getting much use, but still accepts your collection of lenses, then for a modest conversion cost, you can have a lot of fun with this genre and obtain some interesting, surreal, dream-like qualities that the medium produces.

The good news is that shooting infrared today with digital cameras is a breeze (well, almost) and you can shoot infrared with predictable results and with the same ease as shooting

with visible light. The wavelength for infrared light is from about 650 to 2000 nanometers, while visible light is from around 400 to 650 nanometers (my Sony camera was converted to 720 nanometers). The reason objects look different when captured with infrared cameras is that they reflect portions of the infrared spectrum in different ways. We see a red object because it reflects red light and absorbs other colours or wavelengths.

In the same way, different objects reflect and absorb different portions of the infrared spectrum and so the greyscale rendition will differ from a black and white image shot with visible light. Blue skies will render very dark to 'pop' the white clouds and vegetation appears very light in colour because chlorophyll in plants emits lots of infrared radiation.

The varying sensitivity to infrared light also means that shooting in harsh or difficult light conditions will often produce images that are very pleasing, whereas those conditions would have produced unsatisfactory colour images. To maximise your enjoyment from digital infrared photography, a little time invested in understanding the process and the slight quirks in the workflow will be well rewarded.



Mavic 3 drone image of the Tasman River flowing into Lake Tekapo. The glacial 'flour' in the water, together with glacial melt and reflections of the blue sky above, gives the river and lake the bright blue colour. I like to process my aerial shots in a similar fashion to Peter Eastway and Tony Hewitt's interpretations, with bright vibrant colour unlike the dull, literal colours of the RAW files.

Colour Versus Infrared

If you travel with both a normal digital camera and an infrared converted camera, then your choice of which to use can depend on the following:

- If the reason for capturing the image is the strong colour in the scene (afterglow at sunset or strong colours of the main subject matter), then use the normal camera.
- In contrasty light, harsh midday sun and backlit objects, consider the infrared camera. I must admit that I mostly shot my infrared images as a set of three bracketed exposures, at plus and minus 2 stops, to ensure I captured a full range of tones. You can shoot all day with infrared, whereas the strong contrast of harsh midday light will often restrict effective shooting with visible light.
- Scenes with strong shapes, structures, form and simple lines work well in infrared as the viewer will see fewer distractions with the absence of colour.
- Landscape images shot at dawn or dusk can also be successfully captured in infrared.
- Images which contain a lot of foliage will certainly heighten the surreal look of infrared as they will be rendered almost white. New Zealand's rainforests provided some amazing subject matter. Normal black and white images will render foliage dark. This means that certain objects (for example, temples and buildings) can stand out in infrared, providing good separation from the surrounding lighter foliage.
- Infrared images will produce a soft, creamy look on skin, hiding many blemishes that don't reflect infrared light. Many wedding photographers carry a converted IR camera for just this reason.

As with most photographic decisions, the final choice is very much a matter of taste or artistic preference. I found that shooting infrared can produce very different results from visible light, depending on the subject matter, the material it's composed from, the temperature, weather and time of day. Shooting a test image and observing it on the LCD screen will quickly reveal whether it is worth pursuing the subject matter further.

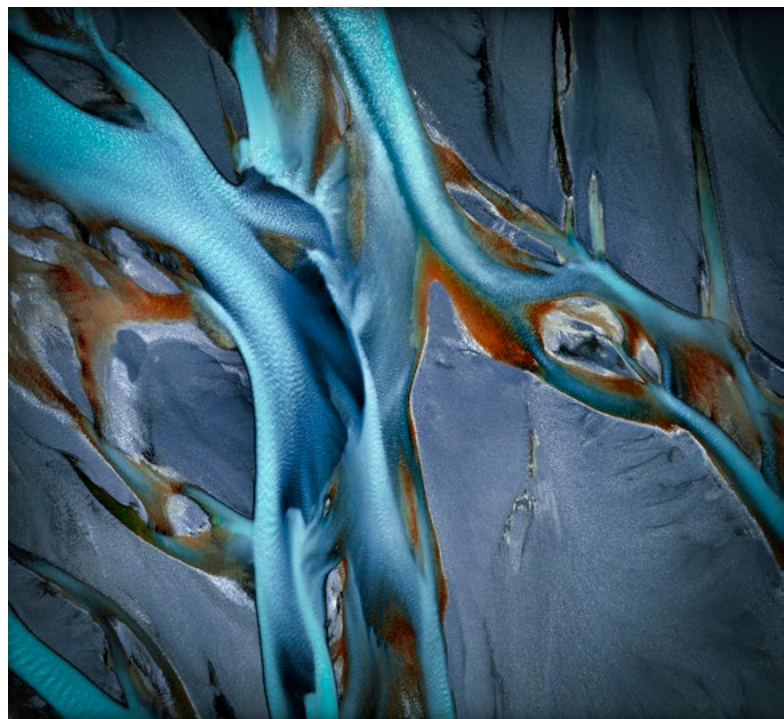
To save a lot of hassle these days, with infrared I just bracket my exposures plus and minus two stops. This way I can easily do an HDR merge in Lightroom, ensuring I have captured all the information I need.

Overall, there is less noise with infrared images and if the image is converted to black and white, the noise appears like grain which is the way we expect to see infrared images shot with IR film. As with normal visible light images, most of the noise is found in the blue channel.

Conversion to Infrared

Most compact digital cameras can be converted as well as the majority of mirrorless and digital SLRs. There are several filters available for the conversions and they are a matter of choice. For example:

- Standard IR – this allows a colour effect called the blue-sky as well as good black and white conversions.
- Enhanced Colour IR – this provides a more colourful IR effect, but the resulting black and white image has less contrast.
- Deep BW IR – this is the filter of choice to produce the best black and white IR images with the maximum tonal range,



Mavic 3 drone image of the braided Tasman River shot near the Jollie River, near Mount Cook. Again, the resolution and detail of the images from the Hasselblad camera in the drone blew me away. I could clearly see the ripples on the rivulets very clearly. To help the contrast and detail of the drone images I used SHAPE or ALCE (Advanced Local Contrast Enhancement), a plug-in from Know How Transfer <https://www.knowhowtransfer.com/photoshop-professional-plugins/shape/> in the processing. I wrote an article on the plug-in in a previous issue of *Better Photography*.



A very useful feature of the Mavic 3 drone is its ability to shoot three-image panoramas and stitch them in the drone. In this image, the braided river flowing into the lake with mountains in the background made a very pleasing composition. Very little processing was done to this image and again the almost 1.5 metre image was pin sharp with great resolution.

meaning darker skies and brighter foliage. However, colour is not possible due to the cut-off of the colour spectrum. This filter is the one I use as I like the more traditional, full toned black and white effect.

There are many organisations on the web that offer digital IR camera conversions; the one I used for all three of my infrared conversions (and recently my astro photography H Alpha conversion) was 'Imaging by Design', phone (03) 9419 5247, 56 Easey street, Collingwood, 3066 Victoria.

At the time of writing this article costs were:

- **Compact camera** **\$295.00**
- **Mirrorless** **\$395.00**
- **Full-frame compact** **\$495.00**
- **SLR crop sensor** **\$495.00**
- **Full-frame Mirrorless and SLR** **\$595.00**

Drones and Braided Rivers

Many years ago, I led a tour to Iceland and there I came across braided rivers (Iceland has some of the best), but I wasn't carrying a drone and my itinerary didn't include aerial photography.

When I did the research for this New Zealand trip, I came across many articles which whetted my appetite to shoot braided rivers. Time and budget did not include aerial photography, so I decided to shoot the braided rivers with a drone.

Braided rivers are formed when sediment and gravel build up on the riverbed, causing the water to flow down a new channel. This creates a network of river channels separated by islands called braid bars. With its high rainfall and glacial environment, New Zealand appeared an excellent choice to try for braided rivers.

I found the DJI Mavic 3 an excellent choice for many reasons. The Mavic 3 features two cameras. The primary shooter is a 20MP 4/3" Hasselblad sensor, with an adjustable aperture. The raw files it produces are excellent with sharp images and plenty of resolution. The secondary camera is a 12MP telephoto that shoots in 4K/30 fps and supports up to 4x digital zoom and 28x hybrid zoom.

The Mavic 3 has a 15 km range and a flight time of around 43 minutes per battery (I had three batteries). It allowed me to shoot bracketed images for maximum tonal range. It also had very good panorama mode which included a stitched three shot horizontal or vertical panorama; a 9-shot stitched wide-angle panorama that covered a lot of area and a 360-degree sphere which I didn't use.

The resolution and quality of the images made processing and interpretation of the files very easy and if upscaling was required in either Photoshop or Topaz Photo AI, this was easily accomplished.

Shooting with drones in National Parks is not allowed in NZ unless you have special permits and as most of the South Island is geared to tourism, there are small airfields everywhere and drones had to be at least 4 kms from any airfield. I had to do a lot of research to find out where I could use the drone!

The first attempt was on the second day as we left Christchurch on our way to Kiakoura. We followed the Waimakariri River for about 30 kms to where Google maps appeared to show a reasonable bunch of braided rivers. We found that the images shown on Google Maps can be very different to what is actually on the ground as they could have been shot at a different time or season, but still they were a reasonable indicator.

We found the spot on the map and I launched the drone. The results were disappointing to say the least. As we were travelling during summer, the rivers were basically dry with few



I was also shooting some 'straight' colour and black and white images with my Sony A1 camera. This is Milford Sound's Mitre Peak as the tide was coming in. It is a 3-image stitched pano processed in black and white with Photoshop and NIK Silver Efex Pro. As you can see, it produced a classic black and white rendition, quite different to the infrared images.

'braids' and as this water wasn't coming from a glacier, I got a dirty green colour for the water instead of the bright blue I was hoping to get.

I knew my best chance was to wait until I got to Twizel and then try one of the long roads along Lakes Tekapo or Pukaki where the rivers were fuller. The water was a beautiful blue from the glaciers and I could launch the drone where the braids would flow into the lakes themselves.

Disaster and Success

Twizel was our last stop before returning to Christchurch and we had four nights there, plenty of time I thought to capture the braided rivers. On arrival in Twizel, the sky was blue with little cloud and I thought, "Great, the sky reflection on the water from above will give me the vibrant blue rivulets or braids I want."

We booked into our accommodation and headed up the Eastern side of Lake Pukaki along Hayman Road. I knew that about 50 kms up this road, there was a car park and a road leading to the river shoreline where I could launch the drone close to the river. The spots I had chosen were at least 4 kms from the Glentanner Airport on the lake's western edge. The road was unpaved gravel, but not too bad a surface.

Ten kilometres from our destination, we shredded a tyre. We had some fun changing the tyre with the 'toy' they include as a spare today and Basil was not happy to continue up this road with no second spare. We made our way slowly back, feeling disappointed and somewhat apprehensive about finding a spare. We were driving an Audi Quattro all-wheel drive and tyres

for European cars in small locations such as Twizel could be hard to find.

As luck would have it, there was one tyre available which we booked for early next morning repair. After the tyre was replaced, we headed back along the unpaved road until we reached our destination.

We had another magic blue-sky day. I launched the drone and was blown away by the images of the bright blue braids I was getting. Adjusting your composition with a drone is such fun as you can change height or distance, as well as rotate the drone to get just the composition you want, an instant artist's palette.

After about an hour in the air, I decided to try the area where the river braids meet the amazing blue of Lake Pukaki itself.

This produced the best shots yet and after another hour in the air, I was done with lots of possibles available for processing. When downloading the images, I couldn't believe my luck in the range of compositions, but what blew me away the most were the panoramas.

That night, we were treated to an incredible BBQ with old friends and local Twizel residents (and some of Australia's and New Zealand's top photographers) - Mike Langford and Jackie Rankin (authors for this good magazine).

I hope you'll try something different on your next journey. It's getting out of your comfort zone with new challenges that will preserve your mojo and keep you motivated.

May the pixels be with you.



An old preserved schoolhouse in the Catlins produced a stark effect in infrared, using the foreground grass turned almost white with a dramatic sky.



Popular for infrared photography are rainforests and trees. The path leading to the Matai Falls in the Catlins produced a dramatic landscape. One advantage of shooting infrared is the ability to get great shots with no blown highlights in the middle of the day.

A Future of Photography

How many of us saw how AI would impact photography? How many of us really know what will happen in the future? Well, some possibly know a little more than others, so we sat down for a short chat with Shaun Mah, General Manager of Electronic Imaging & Optical Devices Divisions at Fujifilm Australia – and asked a few questions!



Q: With the prevalence of phones across all generations, what is the demographic of the people buying Fujifilm's mirrorless cameras? Who are they and why do they need something in addition to their phone?

A: While it's easy to reach in your pocket and take out your phone to capture life's important moments, we're still seeing a lot of demand for cameras that help people do this as well.

According to our latest report, over half of Aussies intend to create photographs this year and cite the quality of the equipment they use as extremely important. We've seen the demand for high-quality yet compact devices rise recently, which is reflected more broadly in the sales figures of some of our latest product offerings, like the X-M5 and the viral X100VI – both of which sold out incredibly quickly. At Fujifilm, we believe we have something to offer everyone – regardless of their photography prowess.

Our more accessible range, the X-Series, while it tends to skew towards a younger demographic who are earlier on in their photography or even videography journeys, still offers the technical capabilities we're renowned for and then some. Whereas the GFX range, which is geared toward professional photographers and videographers and ultimately those who are a lot further on in their journey, still continues to generate high demand and buzz which results in further investment in our top-of-the-range cameras from our loyal community.



Q: Which Fujifilm mirrorless cameras are being used the most for social media and content creation – and how are they being used?

A: For social media and content creation, we're primarily seeing users gravitate towards the X-M5 and X100VI. This is largely due to demand for features like built-in microphones and noise-cancelling capabilities as well as being compact and lightweight. These features, including the devices' rotating, flip screen, lend themselves perfectly to content creation and mean that the cameras can adapt to changing trends such as the rise of short-form content or death of the microphone. Ultimately, the X-Series range allows for flexibility and capturing a wide range of styles.

Q: Fujifilm is still developing large format cameras (GFX) – who is the market for these cameras? Do you have a customer profile for them? Why do they want so many pixels and such high quality?

A: The GFX series is really for photographers and videographers who want to create high-resolution imagery and videography that is clear, crisp and sharp. Our latest offering, the GFX100RF features an impressive 102-megapixel, high-speed sensor and 'Aspect Ratio Dial', allowing you to switch between nine shooting aspect ratios and the most user-friendly GFX System experience yet, making it the perfect tool for photographers



HOW TO WIN PHOTO COMPETITIONS

An eBook & Movie Compendium by Peter Eastway

FAIPP HonFAIPP HonFNZIPP APPL GMPhotogI MNZIPP



I have judged many photo competitions and there are lots of little things that entrants forget to do. If only I could let them know *before* they entered, they could do so much better!

Well, as a judge I'm not allowed to ring up and help entrants, but I can offer to you what I have learnt over the last thirty years that will give you a great headstart.

Of course, no one can give you an iron-clad guarantee that you will read my eBook or view my movies and then win the next photo competition you enter – and I explain why in the eBook.

However, what I can guarantee you is that

if you read my eBook and watch the accompanying movies, you will greatly improve the quality of your photography.

You see, whether you're aiming to win a photography competition or just take a better photograph, the advice is very similar.

And I know that the techniques and approaches I've developed over the years will help you capture and produce better photographs.

My eBook and movie package is called **How To Win Photo Competitions**, 2nd Edition. It's hard to believe I wrote the first edition over 10 years ago!

The eBook begins with a little about me. Why? Well, it's easy enough to write a book about winning photography competitions, but I will gently suggest it's much better if the author has experience, not just in winning competitions, but in judging them too.

Over the years, I've been lucky enough to win quite a number competitions, plus I have a lot of international experience as a judge and competition organiser.

Add in my role as a magazine editor for 30 years and I hope I'm able to communicate my message extremely well.

The 'compendium' comprises four eBooks and a series of movies:

- Your Competition Approach
- Capture Techniques
- Processing Techniques
- Feedback Examples
- Feedback Movie Examples

The eBooks can be downloaded for reading and the movies can be streamed online.

(*Better Photography* subscribers will have seen the Feedback Examples already, but the Feedback Movie Examples are completely new.)

The eBook has lots of photographs and illustrations to explain exactly what I'm talking about and the new movie examples use real competition entries from real photographers.

The compendium is easy to read on a computer, laptop or iPad and it comes with a money-back guarantee. No, we won't refund your money if you don't win the next photo competition, but we will refund you if you're not completely satisfied.

This package has been carefully thought through and presented to give everyone a chance at winning a photo competition. Follow the directions and you'll be surprised at what you can achieve as a photographer!

– Peter Eastway

For more information, please visit:

www.betterphotographyeducation.com

and enthusiasts to capture their passions. What we have learnt from the wildly successful X100 Series is that professional and aspiring photographers alike want high-quality images, without the fuss of having to change lenses, and the GFX100RF is the culmination of that.

The GFX series allows users to focus on the moments they are seeing through the lens, without sacrificing the quality or colour grading that we've become famous for. Part of what is so exciting about this series is the broad range of images we see created, from editorial to travel, wildlife, food – and everything in-between!

Q: 'Content creation' is a great way to describe and encapsulate photography and video production – and a host of ancillary disciplines. However, in general we see a loss of craft across social media platforms – a lack of understanding of light, composition and timing. This is mainly due to the huge number of newcomers to content creation and the volume of content being uploaded, but even at the top end, craft no longer seems so important. Content certainly is. Do you see this and if so, why is it happening? Does it need to be rectified? Or is the quality being produced 'good enough'?

A: To us, 'content creation' is really about empowering those with an interest in visual storytelling. We believe content creation offers endless possibilities, so we encourage creatives of all kinds to find a medium that reflects their own personal experiences and allows them to express themselves and tell their stories creatively.

At Fujifilm, we've worked hard to create our #greenblooded community of creators who share this passion – we're consistently seeing a hunger to learn, improve and upskill across the board. To us, celebrating the work of experienced photographers, with a developed understanding of the craft behind the 'content', is really important. This is also a great way to educate those new to 'creating' and we're actively looking for new ways to harness the depth of knowledge within the Fujifilm community.

Q: What is the future of photography as we knew it prior to 2020? Will cameras like the GFX become like the old monorail view camera the editor still uses from time to time, merely an interest for a few grey-haired stalwarts? Or can you envisage a renaissance for the art of still photography – in which case, when and how?

A: At Fujifilm, we recognise that there are different 'creators' – be that social-first content creators or traditional photographers. Although the requirements and needs of these groups are different, we think that this difference makes the future of Australian photography and content creation really exciting! You'll see this is broadly reflected in our product development – we're continuing to focus on our GFX system, for those professional photographers and those further along in their journeys, as well as the more accessible X-Series for creators with a social focus.



Q: There's no doubt photography has exploded in recent years – everyone is a photographer. However, within this explosion there remains my readership, photographers who still love the printed photograph, definitely love the new digital workflow which makes it so accessible and importantly, have the cash to buy new toys. In many ways, it's hard to imagine how cameras can get much better for 'serious' photographers. What do you see changing and improving in the future?

A: We agree – while new trends such as AI-generated music are taking off within the social space, we think the classic printed photograph is still revered among all ages. All I can say is watch this space, as there's lots of work going on in the background to develop our product offerings and take it to the next level, particularly as technology evolves.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the elephant in the room. Will we even need cameras in the future or will photography disappear in favour of AI-created images, to become a craft of minor interest like gravure printing? What impact will AI image generation have on not only photography, but video production as well? And what does this mean for Fujifilm?

A: While there are understandable anxieties around the rise of AI, like any new technology, it's bringing new opportunities too! Interestingly, in our report, we had an equal split of creators who are concerned and those who are excited (39%) about the arrival of AI – with easing workflow cited as a particular benefit. We think that true innovation lies in the hands of creators – ultimately, we don't think that AI can replace human ingenuity!

Q: How will Fujifilm integrate AI features into its cameras in the future? Maybe you already have!

A: We're always looking for new ways to innovate and AI is one way to do this. We've already implemented AI technologies into our X100VI camera. The X-Processor 5 uses deep-learning AI technology to detect a range of moving subjects – this can include animals, birds, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, airplanes, trains, insects and drones!



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"The best book on photography you will ever buy!" *Peter's Mother-in-Law*



Peter Eastway



The New Tradition

"This is seriously one of the most definitive photographic books I have seen in the last 25 years. It belongs on every photographer's bookshelf and will change the way you view your own photographic journey!" *Tony Hewitt, AIPP Grand Master of Photography*

In *The New Tradition*, photographer Peter Eastway presents a series of 100 photographs that traces the progression of photography from film to digital. For some images, he explains how the photograph was taken and the steps involved in post-production. For others, he simply presents a story, an experience or an opinion on an aspect of photography. So, methods and fables. This is a book written for photographers who are interested in the art and craft of photography – and who are enjoying the ride as technology continues to open up new opportunities for creative

expression. *The New Tradition* has been lavishly produced, sparing no expense in its preparation, printing and binding. Measuring 300x300 mm with 272 pages, the hard cover tome is destined to be a classic in photographic literature! If you like what you see, give yourself a great gift for your future and purchase a copy of *The New Tradition*.

PRICE RRP \$80

For postage and packaging within Australia add \$15, to NZ add \$35 and for the rest of the world, add \$80.



Purchase the book at www.betterphotography.com in the online shop.

The true beauty of photography is found in the **photographic print** and to celebrate the publication of *The New Tradition*, Peter Eastway is making available 'photographer size' copies of some of the photos found in his book.

You can purchase a **signed, limited edition print** and a book for as little as \$345.

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